IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY MALAYSIAN NETIZENS IN RESPONSE TO THE MUSIC VIDEOS OF DRAG QUEENS

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Abstract: *Research in politeness studies concerning the use of verbal language or strategies for negative orientation has received less attention compared to the opposite orientation. In view of this, the present study aims at examining impoliteness strategies used by Malaysian netizens in computer-medicated communication (CMC) and explore the way the strategies were employed in discussing the topic of drag queens' performance. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse 254 impolite comments gathered in the form of words, phrases, and sentences based on Model of Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness strategies. The data were drawn from two music videos posted in YouTube.com and Instagram which depicts impoliteness in interaction amongst the users. The videos were chosen because the performance of drag queens or transvestite is amongst the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) issues that is persistently discussed by the netizens which often resulting in impolite comments. Findings showed that negative impoliteness was the most dominant type of impoliteness strategy used in their comments towards the issues. The second dominant type of impoliteness strategies used was sarcasm or mock politeness, followed by bald-on record strategy. Withhold politeness was not found to be used in the comments due to the nature the research context that is conducted in written discourse. The study revealed that impoliteness in CMC is veritably on the rise in Malaysia.*

Keywords: communicative strategies, computer-mediated communication, impoliteness strategies, drag queen, LGBT, netizen.

1. Introduction

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is an umbrella term covering all types of inter-human communication via networked computers and the web (Herring, 2007). Human communication via CMC can be synchronous (senders and recipients interact by exchanging messages during the same time interval) or asynchronous (senders and recipients interact by exchanging messages during different time intervals). CMC is not only a contemporary and powerful medium of communication but also an indispensable part of most social practice. The

most famous and easy social media for the people to get involve in CMC are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and more. These platforms enable them to exchange and discuss their ideas, views or opinions based on the topic posted anywhere at any point in time.

Every day, thousands of videos are being uploaded by YouTube account holders for netizens to observe and comment. The discussions might arouse uneasy feeling when there is a distinction in opinion that lead to disagreements among its users and finally impoliteness response is provoked. The impoliteness becomes more intense when the subject matter of discussion is not well accepted, for instance, something contrary to contrary to the norm of society. Online discussion encourages the users to act in a more unrestrained way and demonstrate disrespect amongst them as they do not have to deal with the consequences of what they do right away. This is driven by the nature of virtual communication that its users are faceless in which the effort to save face of the addressee and other users could be undermined. Plenty of investigations have shown that CMC is remarkable for extreme verbal aggression and self-disclosure of the users (Simmons, 1994).

The interest in impoliteness studies and other related areas have garnered increasing attention recently. Despite that, literature showed there a scarcity amount of research conducted on impoliteness in online interactions especially when discussing a social issue in the Malaysian setting. Malaysians are generally known to be polite and treat each other with utmost respect. Ali (2000) claims that Malaysians would ensure what they say is politely constructed when communicating with another especially when the subject matter is something of a different belief. Responding to this, Lustig and Koester (2006) termed Malaysians as "people with high tolerance". Politeness value in Malaysian society is said to be mostly honoured by the majority Malays who favour social indirectness, as exemplified by avoiding confrontation or loss of face (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007; Malhotra, Oly-Ndubisi & Agarwal, 2008). In view of that, Gee and Murata (2014) suggest that Malaysians are able to withstand whatever that comes their way. Otherwise, Malaysians can also exhibit the opposite features, such as the use of verbal aggression, disrespectful address titles and criticism according to the intended audience and the issue concerned. Low Yat Plaza incident in 2015 is one of the examples when the brawl had become a racial frenzy over social media and invited impolite comments from netizens. Thayalan (2017) found that Malaysians frequently used the strategy of 'insult' as a form of impolite talk in their respective comments regarding the said issue. To investigate if impoliteness is indeed on the rise in Malaysia, Malaysian impoliteness is the focus of the study as it is also considerably underrepresented in the literature, compared with politeness issues.

The music video of drag queens becomes the concern of subject matter to be investigated as their activities are amongst the controversial issues have caught Malaysian netizens' attention recently. Generally, transvestite is among LGBT group that is considered as a gender disorder group whose practice oppose to religion, culture, and beliefs of the majority of Malaysian. It is believed that the equal rights fought by this group would jeopardize the rules and norms of their community. Mufti of Pahang, Datuk Seri Dr. Abdul Rahman Osman said acknowledging LGBT's right and practice among Muslims is regarded as to 'reject' the commandment and the laws of Allah. In view of this, Islam hardly resists the LGBT group. Malaysia is a multicultural

country that declares Islam as the official religion. Therefore, the majority of Malaysians strongly reject LGBT because their practices are considered religious offense and contrary with their norms of society.

In this paper, the model of Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness strategies is utilised by the researchers to examine the types of impoliteness strategies used by netizens in response to the music video of drag queens posted in social media and explore the way impoliteness strategies were employed to achieve their goal of interaction

2. Impoliteness and Related Concepts

2.1 Impoliteness

Impoliteness is the negative angle towards specific behaviors occurring in specific contexts. Perceptions of impoliteness solely rely on the perceived interpretation of an interaction of what is proper and past events that may influence those interpretations (Mills 2005). Thus, the notion of impoliteness is extremely related to how an individual perceives it. Culpeper (2005) defines impoliteness as a "situation in face-attack intentionally, and/or the hearer perceives the face-attack as intentional" (p.38). Bousfield and Locher (2008) define impoliteness as "face-aggravating" behavior in a context while Goffman (1967) and Watts (2003) regards impoliteness as "aggressive facework. The study is based on Culpeper's (2011) definition of impoliteness that is "the use of strategies to attack the user's face and create social disruption" (p.350).

2.2 Face

The notion of face was first introduced by Goffman's (1955, 1967) in his seminal work. Face is defined as ''the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact'', with a line being understood as ''a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the users, especially himself'' (Goffman, 1955, p.213). Both positive and negative face describe the different levels of face needs. Positive face is the desire to be liked, appreciated and approve while negative face is the desire not to be imposed upon, intruded, or otherwise put upon.

2.3 Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs)

In relation to the notion of face, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce the term of FTA, face-threatening act, which typically cannot be avoided in human's interaction. In fact, the aim of politeness is therefore to redress face-threatening acts as a result everyone's mutual interest to do so (Brown and Levinson 1987). According to them, FTA is a human action (such as a warning or a threat) that may damage the hearer's positive or negative face. Threats to a negative face are actions by that an individual indicates that they are doing not will avoid close at hand one's freedom of action. Examples of these actions are orders, advice, and warnings. Threats to a positive face are actions that indicate that an individual does not care the addressee's feelings or desires for instances by carrying out criticism, disagreements, and mention of taboo topics. In accordance with that, once a particular FTA is performed, one needs to estimate the degree of the

face threat concerned. The less imposition of the act and also the less powerful and distant the opposite person is, the less polite one has to be.

Instead of attending FTA for enhancing or supporting face, impoliteness super-strategies are means of attacking face. Culpeper describes the use of FTAs in his five super-strategies as follows:

2.4 Impoliteness Strategies

For this, he suggests the following super-strategies:

1) Bald-on record impoliteness

The face threatening act (FTA) is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way where face is not irrelevant.

2) Positive impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants. Positive impoliteness output strategies are classified as below:

 a) ignore, snub the other
 b) exclude the other from an activity
 c) disassociate from the other
 d) be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic
 e) use inappropriate identity markers
 f) use obscure or secretive language
 g) seek disagreement
 h) make the other feel uncomfortable
 i) use taboo words
 j) call the other names

3) Negative impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants. Negative impoliteness output strategies are classified as below:

 a) frighten
 b) condescend, scorn or ridicule
 c) invade the other's space
 d) explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect
 e) put the other's indebtedness on record

4) Sarcasm or mock politeness

The FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.

5) Withhold politeness

The absence of politeness works in situations where it is expected.

2.5 Social Norms

Social norm is "a standard of behavior shared by a social group, commonly understood by its members authoritative or obligatory for them" (Anderson, 2000, p.17). According to Gilbert (2003), behaviors that do not conform to these values usually receive strong negative reactions about it. In light of this, Fraser (1990) notes a positive evaluation arises when an act corresponds to the norm and a negative evaluation is prompted when an act is conflicting the norm.

3. Method and Material

3.1 Materials

The main data of this study are comments made by online users of Instagram and YouTube in response to the LGBT issues. The material consists of 705 comments collected from a video on Instagram and YouTube posted on 10th November 2018. The comments can be accessed through:

a) **https://www.Instagram.com/koleksiYouTubeez/**
b) **https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ncptHEf0VTQ.**

From the whole comments, a total of 254 impolite comments were considered as samples and only these comments are considered as data regardless of their frequency of occurrence by the same or different users. Comments that were written in Bahasa Malaysia were also considered and taken as a data. These comments were translated into English as to suit the context of study.

3.1.1 Instagram video

The Instagram video, *"official muzik video Bobo di mana"* was posted by Instagram account of *koleksiYouTube*. It has garnered 136,428 views. The video contains a total number of 412 comments from its users (refer to the following link).
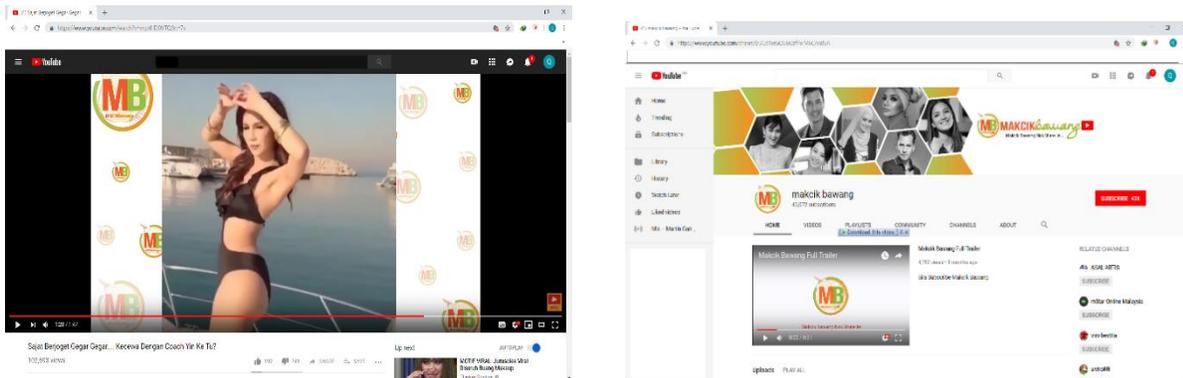
https://www.Instagram.com/koleksiYouTubeez/
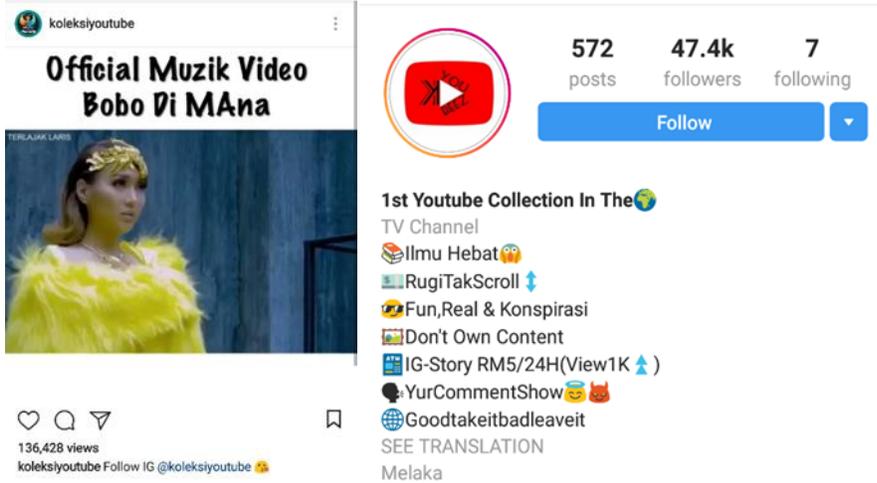
3.1.2 YouTube video

The YouTube video, "*Sajat Berjoget Gegar Gegar.... Kecewa Dengan Coach Yin Ke Tu*?" was posted by YouTube user of makcik bawang. It has 102,693 views. The video contains a total number of 293 comments from its users (refer to the following link).

https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ncptHEf0VTQ

The following are the details of the comments based on the two sources mentioned above.

Source	Total No. of comments	No. of impolite Comments	Other comments (disregarded)
Instagram	412	135	277
YouTube	293	119	174
Total	705	254	451

Table 1: The number of comments posted in Instagram and yotube videos

3.2 Instrument

Culpeper's (2011) model of Impoliteness Strategies was adopted to enable researchers to identify the types of impoliteness strategies employed in the comments of social media. To interpret the data, speech act theory was utilised to gain a better understanding of the production and realization of impolite remarks.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative content analysis is used to analyse the data. The process involves, searching for themes or patterns in data for description and explanations. The analysis of the data started with identification of impoliteness strategies in the user' comments. A list of relevant impoliteness strategies employed by the users in response the music videos of drag queens is deductively analysed based on Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness theory. The way impoliteness strategies used in the context of study is interpreted from the lenses of speech act theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Speech act theory helps examine utterances from the perspective of their function, rather than their form.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Types of Impoliteness Strategies

Based on the model of Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness strategies, there are a total of 254 occurrences of impoliteness strategies from both videos. Video on Instagram by @koleksiYouTube user has considerably higher frequency of occurrence compared to video on YouTube by makcik bawang's channels. This is because the video on Instagram has a total of 412 comments while the video on YouTube has 293. Only comments that adhered to Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Strategies are being recorded and collected to be analysed. The impoliteness strategies used on social media by users in their comments based on Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness strategies are highlighted in Table 4.1.

No	Types of Impoliteness Strategies	Instagram Video	YouTube Video	Number of Occurrences	Percentage
1	Positive impoliteness	18	33	51	20.0%
2	Negative impoliteness	44	39	83	32.7%
3	Sarcasm or mock politeness	38	29	67	26.4%
4	Bald-on record impoliteness	35	18	53	20.9%
5	Withhold politeness	0	0	0	0%
	Total	135	119	254	100%

Table 4.1: The findings of types of impoliteness strategies used on social media comments.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the most frequent strategy used by users of social media comments in this study is negative impoliteness, followed by sarcasm or mock politeness. Positive impoliteness, and last but not least bald-on record impoliteness. As for withhold politeness, there was no user found to employ this strategy. This strategy is usually applied in spoken discourse.

4.2 Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness strategies are employed by the users through the use of inappropriate identity markers or name-calling. The strategies also used with the intent to disassociate the target(s) from the other and make the target(s) feel uncomfortable. The following examples show how this was applied.

Example 4.2a

@anonymous *haha ni babi*
<@anonymous haha this is pig>   (user1)

In Example 4.2a, the FTA is done by using metaphor "this is pig" to make a negative reference to Sajjad for the purpose of insulting. Pig commonly used to disparage the human who stupid, disgusting and dirty. This is due to the fact that the creature is carrier of harmful diseases and has bad habit to wallow in mud. The literary device might be intended by user1 to make a negative reference to the target as a transvestite or transgendered person is commonly at risk of sexually

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transmitted diseases (STDs). In other respect, the use of 'pig' in the comment could be merely a choice of word for figurative expression of his/her annoyance with the target.

Example 4.2b

Pondan sial
< damn transvestite > (user2)

In example Example 4.3b, the FTA was imposed on Sajjad's face by associating the profanity 'sial' with inappropriate identity marker *'pondan'* or to call him as 'pondan sial' (damn transvestite). The language use was extremely abusive in both examples 4.3a and 4.3ab. This obviously damaged Sajjad's positive face as such name-calling denies his desire to be liked and approved by others.

Example 4.2c

Bior dye buat kt tmpat lain. Kt cni kite yg xbrslh pon kne bala
<let them do it at other places. Because if it's here then we all innocent people will be affected by the consequences or disaster>   (user3)

Example 4.3c illustrates the FTAs was imposed on the positive faces of targets by producing assaultive statement. The threat was aimed to disassociate the targets from the other Malaysian societies as they are believed to be disastrous. Thus, it is hoped that by isolating them at other place for making the performance would enable Malaysian societies to get rid of bad luck. The positive face of the targets was affected as their needs to be accepted are refused.

Example 4.2d
malu la kita sebagai orang islam...
< shameful for us who are muslim>   (user4)

Example 4.2e

Terdesak nk glamour sbb tu ikut sajat (Sajjad)
<desperate to be glamorous that why follow Sajat (Sajjad)>   (user5)

Both examples above shows the FTA was done in the users' criticism to make the target(s) feel uncomfortable. The first one was intended to criticize all the targets whose performance gave bad reputation to Muslims as a whole. The second example however was intended to condemn Dato Allif Syurkri for cooperating with Sajjad in making the music video. For this purpose, indignation was provoked towards him as if the production of music video with Sajjad was done for the sake of glamour.

4.3 Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is accomplished by applying its sub-strategies as illustrated is the following examples.

Example 4.3a

Sme² la kita dislike dn boikot produk² diorg ni. Duit kita diorg hbiskn bwt music video je. Bkn nk upgrade produk diorg

< **Let's dislike and boycott** their products. They spend our money on music videos only. Not to upgrade their products>   (user6)

In Example 4.3a, FTA is performed in the comment by encouraging others to unite together for banning the products sold by the targets. The action seemed to invade the other users' space or territory to do as commanded. Aside from that, it functions as a caution to the targets for producing such type of the music video. In so doing, negative face of the targets was threatened as the caution provokes feeling of anxiety that the sales of their products will drop off. Thus, the output strategy of negative impoliteness to frighten successfully applied. The same strategy also can be found in example 4.3b.

Example 4.3b

penghuni neraka sejati…very sad sad to be him...hukum dunia lepas la sbb xgne hukum hudud...ko trime la kt akhirat kelak

< true hell dwellers … very sad sad to be him.. he may escape in this world because the law of hudud does not applied.. Face it in the hereafter>   (user7)

Referring to Example 4.3b, FTA is done by giving a caution statement "*ko trime la kt akhirat kelak*". For this, sub-strategy of negative impoliteness to frighten is applied as it is intended to instill a belief that the target will get their karma and be punished accordingly in the afterlife. Negative face of the targets is threatened as their freedom of act is charged or imposed by the caution.

Example 4.3c

Dunia xgila, manusi yg gila babi macam xda Al-Quran dalam hidup... Elok rejam smpai mati je org cmni...

< the world is not crazy, human are **crazy like pigs** and **behave like there is no embracement of Al-Quran in life**…it's better to *stroke to* **death** this type of people…>
          (user8)

As seen in Example 4.3c, the FTAs are aimed at threating the targets and associating them with negative thing. The simile 'crazy like pigs' in the comment is used to negatively relate the craziness of the targets for behaving out of control like pigs' behavior as mentioned in Example 4.2a. In Malaysian contexts, when one is associated with animals it is often regarded as derogatory (Thayalan, 2017). This followed by a statement seemed to treat the targets with condescension by saying **"behave like there is no embracement of Al-Quran in life"**. The statement portrays the user's attitude of superiority (more religious in this case) for looking down on the targets as not being affiliated with a religion. The comment continues with a threat to suggest 'stroke to death' penalty to the targets for their misconducts. The caution is considerably relevant to frighten the targets with the caning penalty even not up to the level of causing the death since the penalty is practiced for certain cases in several states of Malaysia. For instance, caning is used as a form of corporal punishment in Terengganu under Section 68 of the Syariah Criminal Offences (Takzir) Enactment 2001 that can be imposed on those who attempted same-sex intercourse. The negatives impoliteness is successfully employed by achieving sub-strategies to frighten, condescend and associate the other with negative aspect.

4.4 Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Culpeper's understanding of sarcasm is seen as synonym of irony, indicates an effort on the part of the speaker to withhold politeness (the absence of politeness work where it would be expected), a factor significant when accounting for one's intentions. His understanding of sarcasm is close to Leech's (2016) conception of irony, as follows:

> "If you cause offence, at least do so in a way which does not overtly conflict with the PP [Politeness Principle], but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature." (p.82)

Apparently, sarcasm or mock politeness in this study is attempted to amuse, ridicule and insult.The following examples attest to this.

Example 4.4a

@anonymous nah your *fav* **song** hahahaha   (user9)

In Example 4.4a, the adjective **'fovourite'** in the phrase of "your favorite song" to describe the music video is to imply the opposite of its literal meaning- disfavour. Such the satirical remarks produced in the comment to make a mockery to the quality of the song. A delirious laugher expression **"hahahaha"** attached to the remarks is to emphasize the sarcasm made and amuse @anonymous (other user) as if he/ she favours that song. The whole utterance is performed made to create humor in order to entertain the other user(s) and cheer up the interaction rather than to attack the targets. This is also evident in the example below:

Example 4.4b

Aq tgh mkn nasi smbil buka ig min boleh pulk post bnda ni ...tercekik bhai...nsib hidup lg

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<I was eating rice while online on the Instagram and the admin post something like this... choked myself *bhai*….lucky I'm still alive > (user10)

As seen in Example 4.4b, the user stated that he/she was thankful as he/she still alive after choking on a mouthful of rice while watching the video. The ironic statement made refers to the content of video that was likely compelling enough to affect him/her that shock. Apparently, the claim made is merely expression to create suspense with the purpose to replenish the interaction with amusement or enjoyment.

Likewise, the following examples illustrate the same type of impoliteness used by the users but the purpose of the use is to condemn. Observe the following examples.

Example 4.4c
Ko joget lah puas2....nanti dlm kubur ko xsempat nk joget pulak...
<dance while you can...later in the grave you won't have time to dance>   (user11)

Example 4.4d
min aku rasa dh tiba masa untuk aku uninstall ig..
<admin I think it's time for me to uninstall Instagram>   (user12)

Similar to the previous examples, sarcasm in the above examples comes into play when there is contradiction between what is said and what is meant. In so doing, derogatory statement is made by the user in Example 4.4c when he/she feigned his/her concern for the targets to dance at full blast since they won't have the chance to do it in grave. The insincere concern is made to condemn the targets as the utterance is made to imply that their freedom to dance is only limited in the video because they will be punished once they died.

As for Example 4.4d, the user created suspense to uninstall Instagram as a note of irony to convey condemnation to the content of music video. Condemnation of the video in both examples is being accomplished by the users through the witty attack as a mean of their dismissal or rejection.

4.5 Bald-on Record Impoliteness

In applying this strategy, it can be seen that the FTAs were done in an uncompromisingly forthright way. In Example 4.5a, 4.5b and 4.5c below, the FTAs were imposed on both positive and negative face of the targets in the video who known as Sajjad, Lucinta Luna and Dato Aliff Syukri.

Example 4.5a

Lagu bdoh
<stupid song> (user13)

Example 4.5b

Jijik
<disgusting>   (user14)

Example 4.5c

@anonymous *mcm vid lucah*
<@anonymous like porn video >   (user15)

Example 4.5d

Rosak
< spoiled >   (user16)

Example 4.5e

Shameful!   (user17)

Generally, the strategy of bald-on record impoliteness in the comment was aimed to insult the targets in the video by using abusive and offensive remarks. In example 4.5a, the taboo word of 'bodoh' or 'stupid' was used to describe the filthy lyrics of the song while in Example 4.5.b and 4.5c, the abusive word 'disgusting' and negative reference "*mcm vid lucah" (*like porn video) were used to describe the obscene content of music video. Subsequent to that, the offensive remarks of 'spoiled' in example 4.5d and 'shameful' in example 4.5e were used to describe the targets' performance in the videos. The use of strategy is remarkably forthright to cause slur and degrading effect on the face of the targets.

4.6 Mixed Impoliteness

There are occasions when the type of impoliteness overlaps one another in single utterance. This is evident in the following examples.

Example 4.6a

Nie ke silikon man?
<Is this the silicone man?>   (user18)

In Example 4.6a, inappropriate identity marker 'silicon man' is used to address Lucinta Luna, a transgendered woman. The FTA was performed by asking unpalatable question with the intent to make a mockery for having new look of his breast by undergoing silicone implant. The right to transform the appearance of his breast by undergoing the procedure was intruded and thus, threaten his negative face. His positive face also threatened since his self-esteem on her appearance also affected by the mockery. Inappropriate identity marker used is not only to address the target as it is, but also as a mean to ridicule the target. Therefore, the strategy of

positive impoliteness is employed concurrently with negative politeness to attack the target's face. This study regards it as mixed impoliteness.

Example 4.6b

Nice dance abg sajatt 😂😂
<Nice dance brother Sajat 😂😂 >   (user19)

In Example 4.6b, the user praised Sajjad's performance of dancing but at the same time acknowledged the target a man by calling "*abg*" which means "brother". This example clearly shows that polite remark remains on the surface as the intended meaning is in opposition to it. The sarcastic compliment is used as irony in combination with name-calling to the target that is aimed to ridicule. The strategies used could be regarded as mixed impoliteness of sarcasm and positives impoliteness based on the sub-strategies of inappropriate identity marker used to achieve the goal of the user in interaction.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the use of impoliteness strategies in netizens' comments is influenced by the goal of interaction they aimed to achieve in response to the LGBT related issues. Generally, the goals or purposes of the netizens to give their comments in respond to the issues are to show their dismissal or rejection of the group, to criticize the misconducts of the group and to make a mockery of them. Based on that, negative face is highly affected by the comments made by netizens compared to positive face. For this reason, negative impoliteness the most frequently used in the comments as the strategies is designed to damage negative face of addressees. This is followed by the use of sarcasm or mock politeness strategies. Sarcasm is often used not to acknowledge or reprimand the target(s) of their misconducts in indirect way but with the intent to hurt or amuse the targets. For that reason, the use of bald-on record impoliteness strategies becomes the third most preferred strategies by netizens and positive impoliteness is the least preferred by netizens in their comment. Some overlaps are discovered from the data, resulting in combined strategies which are termed as 'mixed impoliteness' in this study.

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