



CHAOS IN A PRO-LIFE EVENT: AN ANALYSIS OF NEGATIVE IMPOLITENESS.

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Keywords

Negative impoliteness, Sociolinguistic, pro-life.

Abstract

A Pro-life event held by Student for Life turned chaotic. This phenomenon can be attributed to the occurrence of negative impoliteness strategies, which attack one's negative face-wants. This research is aimed to analyze the strategies and the functions of negative impoliteness in the event. This research is descriptive-qualitative, using observational and non-participatory techniques for the data collection. The collected data were analyzed according to the theory of Culpeper (1996, 2011) for the strategies of negative impoliteness and their functions. The results showed that there were negative impoliteness strategies done by the pro-choice audience to frighten, condescend, ridicule, scorn, invade, explicitly associate with negative aspects, and hinder the pro-life speakers and members, which were functioning as coercive and affective impoliteness, consequently turned the event chaotic. They knew and were able to act polite, but decided not to. Arguments aside, both parties should have engaged in a professional and mature attitude.

1. INTRODUCTION

Impoliteness is defined as a negative attitude toward specific behaviors that occur in specific contexts (Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2018). Impoliteness in debating is used as a means of pressuring their opponents to agree with them (Minoos & Ashkan, 2019). Though the possibility of being impolite is there, the chance of being professionally polite can also be achieved if either side decides to get rid of immature emotions so that the event or debate can flow professionally through surface acting (Lawler & Thye, 1999). But this does not always happen, because in some debates, one party may decide to attack one's negative face by applying negative impoliteness strategies. According to Culpeper (2016), negative impoliteness is the use of strategies intended to harm the addressee's negative face desires. Negative face refers to the freedom of speech and action that ones have that needs to be respected based on the perspective of society. Negative faces include the fundamental claim to territory, individual preserves, and the right to non-distraction (Borris & Zecho, 2018).

When impoliteness is brought, politeness should also be considered. The ability to build connection and communication with others while being careful not to offend them constitutes the speaker's strength within politeness (Sahib et al., 2023). Locher & Bousfield (2008) contend that impoliteness, the long-ignored "poor cousin" of politeness, ought to be carefully examined in light of the necessity to address conflictive interaction in language studies generally. However, Culpeper (2021) differentiates impoliteness and hate speech. According to him, impoliteness and hate speech both deal with offensive behavior, but they are not the same thing. In comparison to impoliteness, hateful speech is distinguished by more extreme behaviors, the emotion of hurt, along prejudice associations. However, this research will focus on the impoliteness phenomenon, rather than the possible analysis of hate speech. According to Graham (2007), analyzing impoliteness in conversation is difficult since different people have different opinions of what is and is not polite, and there are many different levels of politeness as well. However, in debates, the different purposes of disagreements along with their implications to both interlocutors are related to politeness issues (Sifianou, 2012). The moral standard of being polite should be known by both interlocutors (Culpeper & Tantucci, 2021). Although many studies have started to investigate the dynamics of impoliteness in interpersonal interactions, this is still a relatively recent effort to deepen our understanding of the complexity of this phenomenon (Spencer-Oatey, 2005).

This phenomenon can be seen in an event held by the Student for Life in Virginia Commonwealth University. The event turned chaotic with lots of insults, screaming, and even physical assaults. This raises some questions of what might cause this to happen? Who was at fault? And how was the tension be resolved? These questions might be answered by analysing the cause of the chaos, and what happens when the cause is expelled. In analysing this, the researchers used the theory of impoliteness by Culpeper (2011) regarding the negative impoliteness strategy. He states that there are six output strategies of negative impoliteness which are frighten, condescend - scorn or ridicule, invade other's space, explicitly associate other with negative aspect, put other's indebtedness on record, and hinder. These impoliteness strategies are done to fulfil three functions such as to be a coercive impoliteness, affective impoliteness, and entertaining impoliteness. As a qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), the data source is taken through the observational method and non-participatory technique, collecting and analysing the data from the utterances in the video documentation of the event. The similar previous study analysing impoliteness done by Ardila (2019) showed that the Spanish Parliament currently uses impoliteness as a potent rhetorical device. The theory of impoliteness may explain the cause of the chaos in the pro-life event. Interestingly, the chaos stops when those who are acting impolite are exiled from the room.

Pro-life is a movement against abortion and pro-choice is a movement supporting abortion. Arguments aside, having a debate with different perspectives should always be done professionally without the need to act immaturely by not letting the opposition talk or even engage in verbal or physical assault. When two sides, which have different opinions, could meet with a sense of maturity and professionalism, the debate could run well. When the people who were acting impolitely were omitted from the event, the heated debate became much more stable and professional. The researchers found it interesting that an event that was supposed to be well-planned, respectful, peaceful and professional could be directed to chaos because of negative impoliteness. Therefore, this research aims to find out the strategies of negative impoliteness and their function in Pro-Life Event.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scopus This article focuses on negative impoliteness, which is one of the strategies of impoliteness brought by Culpeper (2011). Negative impoliteness differs from positive impoliteness. Positive impoliteness triggers social dispute by damaging the positive face wants of the addressee. Positive face refers to the desire for one's personality to be valued by others, it demonstrates respect for the favorable self-image he asserts he has (Maha, 2014). The way a person wishes to be seen by his or her social group is also included in this. The acknowledgment of individual accomplishments is one illustration of a positive face as a painter would want other people to like his or her paintings. Negative face refers to the freedom of speech and action that one has, which needs to be respected from the perspective of society.

2.1. Negative Impoliteness

The core personal rights of an individual, such as his or her personal freedom and freedom of action, are included in the negative face. One's negative face is a disregard for all aspects that pose a risk to individual rights. The right to free speech is a well-known illustration of this, as it encompasses the desire to speak without interruption from others. Negative impoliteness according to Culpeper has six output strategies which are:

- 2.1.1. Frighten – this strategy is done to instil a belief that an action detrimental to other will occur
- 2.1.2. Condescend, scorn or ridicule – This strategy includes exaggerating one's own dominance, disparaging others (or their positions), treating them with disdain, and failing to take them seriously.
- 2.1.3. Invade other's space – placing oneself closer than a connection will allow, or it might also be interpreted metaphorically (asking for personal information).
- 2.1.4. Explicitly associate other with negative aspect - this might signify to personalize, as in the use of the pronouns "I" and "you."
- 2.1.5. Put other's indebtedness on record
- 2.1.6. Hinder – this includes hindering physically (block passage), as well as conversationally (deny turn, interrupt)

In discussing the functions of impoliteness, Culpeper suggests three main function of impoliteness which are coercive impoliteness, affective impoliteness, and entertaining Impoliteness. Emotional impoliteness is considered the same as affective impoliteness. In this case, the speaker and hearer may engage in conversation while experiencing a possible emotional outburst (Lawler & Thye, 2006). According to Culpeper (2011), affective impoliteness exhibits an overly heightened emotion, such as indignation, which suggests that the intention is to elicit a negative emotional state. Being Coercive is the other impoliteness's function. The use of coercive impoliteness appears to be more prevalent when another systemic social force or social situation is present. There are more egalitarian uses for accumulating social influence. Impoliteness also serves as entertainment. The goal or potential outcome of being unpleasant, including for entertainment, is to play up this aspect of impoliteness. Arguments based on emotions do not always have to be erroneous or presented in an unpleasant manner. Still, impolite rude arguments are often associated with specific false kinds of emotional arguments that involve appeals to unpleasant emotions. These Arguments are referred to as "destructive arguments" (Kienpointner, 2008).

A previous study of impoliteness between democrats and republicans by Minoos & Ashkan (2019) reveals that the two parties appear to have a similar pattern of using impoliteness tactics about the aforementioned topic, which is likely due to the needs of political discourse. This adds to the study of impoliteness in Spain's political debate by Ardila (2019) who found that the Spanish Parliament currently uses impoliteness as a potent rhetorical device. A previous study from Acheampong et al. (2021) describes the forms of impoliteness strategies, the verbal representations of those strategies, and the Ghanaian responses to those strategies. According to the study's findings, several different types of impoliteness tactics were used, including positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mimic politeness, withholding politeness, and bald-on-record impoliteness. A study by Khazraie & Talebzadeh (2020) of Wikipedia Talk finds the existence of impoliteness, the dominance of the defensive strategy of providing an explanation, the predominance of on-record impoliteness tactics over off-record techniques across all participants. Moreover, Sari et al. (2019) and Nasirli (2021) also found the existence of impoliteness in movies. This is supported by Kadhum & Abbas (2021) who found the dominant use of affective impoliteness in *The Marva Collins* movie. This research contributes to the analysis of impoliteness in a semi-formal political debate, which originally was supposed to be a question-and-answer session of a pro-life event.

1.2. Pro-life vs Pro-choice

Pro-life is a movement against abortion. According to Lee (2004) the argument of pro-life is basically (1) in the sense that we are entitled to rights, you and I have intrinsic value and worth. (2) We have intrinsic value according to who we are (what we are essentially). (3) Every one of us is a physical human being. (4) At conception, a physical human being forms. (5) Therefore, the presence of what is intrinsically valuable (as a subject of rights) follows. "What makes it immoral to kill you or me now would have also been present if you or I had been killed when we were children, toddlers, babies, or even fetuses or embryos". According to Hendricks (2023), generally speaking, abortions are unethical because they involve the death of a fetus to prevent a woman from carrying an undesired pregnancy to term. And whether or not fetuses are persons, this will still be the case (Hendricks, 2019). Abortion opponents challenge the fact that, regardless of cultural background, abortion is evil in the same way as homicide and theft are in any community, regardless of cultural beliefs (Lopez, 2012). Christians pro-lifers may argue that everyone is fearfully and wonderfully made according to Psalm 139:14 in the Bible. And others, regardless of beliefs, may generally argue that someone's value does not depend on how other perceive them, and dehumanizing a human is always immoral.

Pro-choice is a movement supporting abortion. Lopez (2012) states that Pro-choice advocates tend to focus greater attention on parents who do not want to have a child considering the future implications of having an unwanted child. According to Betzig & Lombardo (1992), compared to men, women stand to lose far more from an unplanned pregnancy. According to Harris (2008), a healthcare professional who believes that abortion is violent is merely ambivalent, conflicted, uncommitted to women's abortion rights, and has no business being in this field. They consider abortion as healthcare that supports women's rights.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research design is qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which is directed descriptively to investigate the phenomenon of negative impoliteness strategies and their functions in a pro-life event. The primary data of this research is taken from the utterances stated by the participants in the event, which was held by the Student for Life Community. The data source was collected using observational and non-participatory technique by Sudaryanto (2015) in the documentary of the event in a form of YouTube video posted by the Student for Life Channel (link: <https://youtu.be/ozpScjBQ93k>). The procedures that the researchers took were first watching the video, highlighting the impoliteness utterances, then writing the data as a transcript. The collected data were classified and analysed according to the theory of Culpeper (1996, 2011) for the strategies of negative impoliteness and the functions. The results of this research were presented descriptively.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The context of impoliteness that the researchers brought in this result and discussion is that, as the data source is taken from a formal event at Virginia Commonwealth University, the act of politeness from the audience is expected to be respectful, professional, peaceful, mature, and go according to the plan of the event. But all of those stated did not happen, as most of the audience decided to act the negative impoliteness, hence causing the event to be chaotic.

For example:

Data 1

Pro-choice audience: Fascists go home! (00:01)

At the beginning of the video, it was clearly shown that one side was not letting the other side convey their speech by intervening in their talking. This specifically was done by one of the audiences in the event who was supposed to be there to sit, listen, and ask questions respectfully. This goes in the context that the university has let the group of Students for Life hold their event in one of the campuses' meeting rooms. This means they have the right to legally share their ideas according to their freedom of speech right. The statement in data 1 was stated by one of the pro-choice audiences who was holding an amplifier, therefore not letting the speakers speak, as shown in the picture below:



Figure 1. Opening Scene

This is a clear illustration of what negative impoliteness looks like, obviously functioning as a coercive negative impoliteness. The interesting part at the beginning of the video is that most of the audience was not that different than this one particular man. They were all impolite, immature, and unprofessional which caused the event to be chaotic. They were able to make the event peaceful, by asking questions with polite manners, sitting in their prepared seats, and being collaborative with the speakers to whom they have chosen to be there. Interestingly, this could be achieved after all the audiences who did not want to be collaborative were expelled by law enforcement (probably the security). If they were not expelled as soon as possible, there would be a much worse accident, since there had already been a physical assault done by the pro-choices against the pro-lifers.

Their statement of “fascists go home” is not a solid argument after all. First, if they wanted to ask a question, they could have sat and waited for their turn to ask. Second, they shouted and screamed their argument repetitively which was very unclear. Third, there were no reasons, examples, or any further explanations as to why they were referring to the pro-lifers as “fascist”. It was worsened by the fact that they physically assaulted the cameraman, and at some point in the video, they also did to one of the pro-life speakers. This negative impoliteness was done with the strategy of frightening, condescending, scorning or ridiculing, contemptuous, not taking others seriously, invading other's space, and hindering (Culpeper, 2011). Interestingly, once the assailant had been expelled from the room, the more pro-choice audience shouted the same statement, not letting the pro-life speakers speak.

Data 2

Pro-life speaker : We would be happy to take any questions... (4:10)

Pro-choice audience : Fascists go home! Fascists go home! (repeatedly)

As stated above, the audience did not let the speakers speak. They kept screaming their arguments collectively, overrunning what the speakers had to say, causing the speakers to compete with the loud voice of the audience, as shown in the picture below:



Figure 2. Scene on Minute 4:10

The speakers kept saying to the audience to ask questions properly, and they would love to answer their questions properly as well. But the audience did not stop, yet increasing their volume and kept repeatedly saying “Fascists go home” without providing the reason why they were calling the speakers that. This was responded by one of the speakers in minute (5:31) “So the great irony of all of this, this is the type of behavior that is actually fascist, just so you know”. Responding to that, the audience kept screaming the same statement and adding the phrase “fu*k you” directed to the speakers. They kept shouting without having a mature understanding that the way they were conveying their arguments would never work. Moreover, at this point, they began clapping their hands and shouting collectively the utterance of:

Data 3

Audience : “F*ck pro-lifers! F*ck pro-lifers! F*ck pro-lifers!”

Speaker : ... we call a child in the womb nothing, a clump of tissue, a parasite, and dehumanizing that child allows us to killing...

Audience : “F*ck pro-lifers! F*ck pro-lifers! F*ck pro-lifers!” (6:10)

The chaos of the event shown in the video had made the pro-life speakers decide to put aside their planned speech and move directly to the question-and-answer section. At this point, the pro-choice audience told the pro-life speakers to go out, with their body language and verbal language, shouting and screaming at the speakers. It is quite interesting to see that in the minute 7:43, the audience went silent when one of the pro-choice audiences wanted to ask a question:



Figure 3. Scene on Minute 8:05

The rest of the audience who had shouted, screamed, and been out of control suddenly went silent, knowing that they needed to respect people’s talking. But sadly, this only applies to people on their side and does not apply to people who disagree with them. They could be respectful and polite, yet they decided not to be.

Data 4

Prochoice audience : ...outside of the womb...

Pro-life speaker : You're absolutely right Mam, that's why the pro-life movement has started... (audience began shouting again). You don't even allow me to answer her question, do you want me to answer her question? (8:05)

Prochoice audiences : NO!

The pro-choice audience did not implement the impoliteness strategy against their side, yet used their impoliteness strategy to shut the speakers (pro-life) up. They repeatedly did the strategy of hindering to the point that they frightened the speakers by calling them "Nazi" and shouting at them. The pro-life speakers wanted to calm the situation down, by asking them to ask properly so that they could be heard. But obviously, it did not work. One person spoke over the other, and the other kept shouting their argument, lifting their banner, disrupting the question-and-answer session.

Data 5

Prolife speaker : ...and will cause cardiac arrest, this needle using ultrasound (inaudible) technology will be inserted to the mother's womb and will cause...

Prochoice audience : Boo! Boo! (clapping) (16:00)

The speakers were always interrupted in the middle of their talking. The audience did not let them talk, while wanted to be heard through their screams. The event turned very aggressive, not even a question was answered properly due to the screaming, shouting, and interruptions. The same thing happened again at minute 26:27:

Data 6

Pro-choice audience : ...Forcing against their will, what are you going to say about that?

Pro-life speaker : ... when we talk about this a lot... (The audience began to shout) (26:38)

When one of the pro-choice speakers wanted to ask a question, the rest of the chaotic audience realized they needed to stop shouting for the question to be delivered, but once the speakers wanted to answer the question, they started to shout again. They also called the speakers with lots of other inappropriate words, such as, "scum" (minute 8:40), "dumbass" (minute 13:45), "bacon" (25:33), "nadired" (36:36), and "bitches" (36:44). These are not the proper way to convey arguments. Both sides can disagree on something, but this attitude is never justified. This is worsened by the fact that this event was not a debate, but rather, a regular speech or presentation. The audiences were expected to listen and by the time the question-and-answer began, they could ask the questions politely. If in a scenario that this was supposed to be a debate, there still should not be any chaos like this due to the shouting, interruption, and multiple negative impoliteness strategies done by the audience. The strategies of negative impoliteness and its function can be summed in the table below:

Table 1
Strategies and Functions

| No | Strategies | Explanation | Function | Explanation |
|----|--|---|------------------------|--|
| 1. | Frighten | The pro-choice audience collectively shouted at the pro-life speakers, screamed, and with a high tone showed aggressiveness | Coercive impoliteness | Reducing the pro-life speakers' value and respect, forcing them to shut up |
| 2. | Condescend, ridicule, or scorn | The pro-choice audience kept intervening in the pro-lifer's speech, using swear words a lot (fuck, scum, bacon, bitches, etc), showing aggressive body language, and did not take them seriously. | Affective impoliteness | The pro-choice audience was obviously angry, aggressive, and disrespectful. They used their impoliteness strategies against pro-life speakers but changed their attitude when one person from their side started to speak. |
| 3. | Invading spaces | The pro-choice audience assaulted the camera-man and one of the pro-life members psychically | Affective impoliteness | The pro-choice audience was driven out by their emotion justifying themselves to attack those who disagree with them in a formal college meeting. |
| 4. | Explicitly associate others with negative aspect | The pro-choice audience called the pro-life speakers inappropriate terms like Nazi or Fascist without providing further explanation as to why they said that. They shouted lots of disrespectful words, for example, referring to one with "bacon" or "bitches" | Affective impoliteness | The pro-choice audience thought that it was okay to call other people those terms, driven out by their anger seeing a group of people saying things they disagreed on. |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 5. | Put other's indebtedness on record | not found | | |
| 6. | Hinder | The pro-choice audience physically and conversationally hindered the pro-life speakers' speech, directly abusing freedom of speech and action. | Coercive and affective impoliteness | The pro-choice audience disrespected and devalued the pro-life speaker's existence, justifying themselves to shut the speakers up with loud voices, interruptions, and blocking manners. |

The chaos of the event kept worsening until law enforcement decided to take the pro-life speakers and members out of the room, which was done after the physical assault. In minute 41:17, the aggressive audience was finally not allowed to join the event, which was probably held in a new room, hence making the event much more peaceful. There were still many pro-choice audiences in the room, but they would love to collaborate respectfully, ask questions appropriately, sharing their ideas in maturity so that the event and the question-and-answer session could be held smoothly. In other words, if all had been respectful and had not applied the impoliteness strategy, the chaos could have been prevented.

5. CONCLUSION

This The chaos that happened in the event is caused by the use of negative impoliteness by the pro-choice audience against the pro-life speakers and members. The result of this research shows that there were negative impoliteness strategies done by the pro-choice audience to frighten, condescend, ridicule, scorn, invade space, explicitly associate with negative aspects, and hinder the pro-life speakers and members. They were functioning as coercive and affective impoliteness, which turned the event chaotic. The impoliteness was not just at the point that it was annoying, such as cursing, shouting, and interrupting, but it has become an assault, verbal and physical, against the pro-life members. The result also shows that the pro-choice audience knew how to act politely, and were able to do so, but they decided not to. They tried to be polite when one of them tried to speak, but suddenly screamed and shouted again when the pro-life speakers tried to answer the question. The next scene of the video shows that after all the disrespectful people were expelled, the event could flow peacefully and professionally. For future researchers, it is suggested that the theory of negative impoliteness can be used on other occasions when people may be intrigued easily hence acting out their emotions negatively. This may be expanded broader through psychological and sociological perspectives in sociolinguistics.

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