

Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies in the *Devil May Cry 3* Cutscenes: Analyzing the 'Chaos' Warm Welcome' Dialogues from Mission 13

Strategi Ketidaksantunan Culpeper dalam Cuplikan *Devil May Cry 3*: Analisis Dialog 'Sambutan Hangat Kekacauan' dari Misi 13

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on analysing the impoliteness strategies used in "Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening" within Culpeper's frameworks (1996, 2005, 2011), and Mission 13, Chaos' Warm Welcome in particular. It forms a qualitative analysis of 48 identified instances of impolite utterances where the predominant strategy was found to be sarcastic/mock politeness (43.75%). This was followed by negative impoliteness (22.92%), bald on record (18.75%), positive impoliteness (12.5%), and withholding politeness (2.08%). The utterances serve the purpose of demeaning and provoking conflict and character identities, seen in Dante's brutal counter to sharp challenges, paired with authoritarian aggression from Vergil, and Jester's manipulative taunts. The excerpts illustrate how conflict in a power relation and emotional engagement within video game discourse is shaped by intended narrative framework through impoliteness. By using linguistic aggression, this study aims to fill a gap within pragma-interactive media by character portrayal and player involvement. It also demonstrates digital narrative frameworks show the need for deeper examination of structures by expressing how storytelling in a digital form employs elements of rudeness multifunctionally as a driver of inner and outer conflict, character development, and immersion for the players. The findings highlight the loophole within interactive texts and the need to employ rudeness to build such texts.

Keywords: *Devil May Cry 3, impoliteness strategies, linguistic pragmatics, video game dialogue, virtual character interaction*

Intisari

Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis strategi ketidaksantunan yang digunakan dalam gim *Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening*, khususnya pada Misi 13 berjudul *Chaos' Warm Welcome*, dengan menggunakan teori Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011). Analisis dilakukan secara kualitatif terhadap 48 ujaran ketidaksantunan. Hasil temuan menunjukkan bahwa strategi ketidaksantunan yang paling dominan adalah ketidaksantunan sarkastik atau sopan semu (*sarcastic/mock politeness*) sebesar 43,75%. Strategi ini diikuti oleh ketidaksantunan negatif (22,92%), ketidaksantunan langsung (*bald on record*, 18,75%), ketidaksantunan positif (12,5%), dan penghindaran kesantunan (*withholding politeness*, 2,08%). Ujaran-ujaran tersebut berfungsi untuk merendahkan lawan tutur dan memicu konflik, sekaligus membentuk identitas karakter. Hal ini tampak pada reaksi brutal Dante terhadap tantangan tajam, agresi otoriter dari Vergil, serta ejekan manipulatif dari karakter Jester. Cuplikan dialog menggambarkan konflik dalam relasi kuasa dan keterlibatan emosional dalam wacana video game dibentuk melalui strategi ketidaksantunan yang selaras dengan kerangka naratif yang disengaja. Dengan menyoroti agresi linguistik, penelitian ini berupaya mengisi celah dalam kajian pragmatik media interaktif, khususnya dalam hal representasi karakter dan keterlibatan pemain. Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa kerangka naratif digital menuntut kajian yang lebih mendalam terhadap struktur naratif dengan menunjukkan bagaimana unsur ketidaksantunan dimanfaatkan secara multifungsi: sebagai pemicu konflik internal dan eksternal, sebagai alat pengembangan karakter, serta sebagai sarana memperdalam pengalaman imersif pemain. Temuan ini menyoroti adanya celah dalam teks interaktif dan pentingnya penggunaan ketidaksantunan untuk membangun dinamika tersebut.

Kata kunci: Strategi ketidaksantunan; Culpeper; Permainan Video; *Devil May Cry 3*

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INTRODUCTION

Social interpersonal interactions are frequently loaded with complicated shades, especially when concerning impoliteness elements. From a pragmatic perspective, language does not only focus on verbal communication, conversing, to as social actions known as speech acts. Austin (1962) stated that speaking only goes beyond passing information and includes actions to be done (Searle, 1969), which classifies speech into five dimensions: representative, directive, expressive, commissive and declarative. These dimensions view verbal interaction as an attempt to communicate, serving to define, build, maintain, or even subvert social systems and hierarchies. In this light, impoliteness arises as an attack user of language aimed at violating the face of another. social dynamics are bound to be at play where there is a structure. In Pragmatics, the study of 'social' language has centered impoliteness strategies as aggressive, adversarial, or even defiant acts of verbal violence that have been carefully crafted, designed, constructed for execution. Accidental rudeness is not something that exists but rather, something that is intended to be devoid of manners. Jonathan Culpeper is one of the first scholars who wrote widely on this topic. Impoliteness according to Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011) is, communicatively, a violence defined divergence strategies aimed at social violence, social disruption, disalignment of the interactants." His theory is different from face-saving actions highlighted in Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory as he focuses on face-threatening acts (FTAs) which seek to damage or challenge an individual's positive (desire to be liked) or negative (desire for autonomy) face.

Culpeper introduces a typology of five impoliteness strategies, which arise from the use of language to damage face (Culpeper 1996; 2005):

1. Bald on Record Impoliteness: Unqualified attack verbalized in blunt and direct utterance.
Example: "You're an idiot."
2. Positive Impoliteness: Strategies that damage the people's positive face through exclusion, belittlement or disregard.
Example: Ignoring someone's contribution or mocking the contribution itself or the person behaving in such a manner.
3. Negative Impoliteness: Threaten face by intruding, commanding, or demeaning autonomy.
Example: "Shut up and listen!"
4. Sarcasm/Mock Politeness: Politeness that is insincere used to covertly ridicule or castigate.
Example: "Great job ... on ruining everything!"
5. Withholding Politeness: Not showing the expected signs of politeness in situations where politeness is the norm.
Example: Failing to say thank you after receiving a favor.

Culpeper (2011) stressed once more that impoliteness is situationally motivated and located within the context of social relations, norms, expectations, and structure of power which makes it suitable for studying scripted dialogues in video games.

The evolution of video games, from gameplay mechanics to cinematic cutscenes, places them on an equal plane with film as a storytelling medium. Video game dialogue plays a crucial role in the storyline and reveals relationships, characters, and tension within themes. Unlike novels or films, video game dialogues take place within a dynamic framework where players have the option to interact and shape, observe, or both, adding a considerable layer of pragmatic meaning to conversations that take place in games. Narratives in video games can either be sequential like traditional films or offer player-divergent branching outcomes. They utilize dialogue, storytelling through environment, cutscenes, and player involvement to create an all-encompassing experience. As Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum (2011) noted, in narrative games, dialogues serve to construct the identity, tension, and emotional resonance central to the story framework.

Capcom published *Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening* in 2005, the game is a third-person action-adventure hack-and-slash, which serves as a prequel to the first installment, *Devil May Cry* (2001). The storyline revolves around Dante, who is a half-demon half-human fighter along with his violent family dynamics with twin brother Vergil. This story has underlying elements of brotherhood, identity, rebellion, and power, demonstrated through the over-the-top stylized, furious battles alongside character-driven fights. Dante's rebellious attitude along with his sharp and witty humor has defined swagger, while his twin brother Vergil displays apathetic elitism as a narrative foil. This game features numerous scenes that rely on dialogues of life insults, making it perfect for an analytical work about undermining primary social norms such as respect. Mission 13, named "Chaos's Warm Welcome" marks the climax of the conflict for the player. At this stage Dante and Vergil have a full-scale duel for dominance over their mother's amulet which serves escalating claim as the key to unlock demon world. Vergil's frustration at underlying ritual failure leads him to conclude more bloodshed is needed to resolve everything, while Dante countering as he always does mocks his brother. Their fight reaches a new level until they are interrupted by Mary (Lady) who changes the course of events, accusing Vergil of manipulating everything.

Vergil continues to disrespectfully call her trivial, deepening his contempt toward human frailty. The real puppeteer, strikingly Jester, who is revealed to be Arkham in disguise, claps for their struggle. Arkham exhibits his sadistic nature through crude taunts, such as uttering 'spanking' Mary. Upon dropping the Jester facade, he unveils his actual intention of using Mary's blood, as she is the descendant of the priestess who sealed the tower, to completely shatter Sparda's seal and gain demonic might. Although the trio puts up a final fight, Arkham effortlessly defeats them which initiates the tower's collapse. During this, Vergil loses consciousness and Dante, in a rare display of teamwork amidst the turmoil, rescues Mary from a fall. Examining the verbal rudeness techniques employed in this mission provide insight into how language serves as an interactive narrative device beyond as an advancement of combat. Through the dialogue analysis, this study attempts to identify all the impolite verbal behaviors which Culeper's (1996, 2005) framework deemed inappropriate based on the warmed welcome of chaos. Exploring the boundaries of digital storytelling through the lens of one-sided disrespect sheds light onto deeper themes like the construction of characters, hierarchical relations, and the artistry of language in game design.

Linguists have become increasingly interested in the study of impoliteness in recent years. Research focusing on power dynamics has been conducted in regard to impoliteness, character development, and emotion in literary works (Şekerci, 2023; Mohammed & Abbas, 2016; Ilić, 2018; Mourad, 2021; Pleyer, 2016; Karimi et al., 2022) and revealed the interesting dynamics of power relations, emotional expression, and character construction in impolite conversation in drama, fiction, and other narrative media. Likewise, numerous researchers (Yin, 2024; Karina et al., 2023; Erza & Hamzah, 2018; Wijayanti & Mubarak, 2020; Murti et al., 2024; Umaroh, 2023; Nisa et al., 2023; Sigalingging et al., 2025; Kharisma, 2023; Afriana & Mubarak, 2024) have also studied various forms of social media like talk shows, online magazines, and more. Most of these studies reveal the use of bald on record, positive impoliteness, and sarcastic remarks in public commentary and other confrontational exchanges directed at celebrities and political figures. Nonetheless, the studies which have been done on the strategies of non-interactive media such as television, films, or social media have focused on the broadcast content only.

Those analyses, although important, overlook the specific traits of interactive digital narratives, especially video narrations in the form of video games, where dialogue serves not only to reveal the plot but also to build and embody characters and power dynamics. Even though there is a growing understanding of video games as sophisticated narrative structures, to this date, there has been a lack of scholarly focus on in-game dialogues that reflect social

conflict, power conflict, and identity performance through the use of interactional tension and dominance through impoliteness. In particular, the implementation of impoliteness in character interaction systematically designed around missions where conversation is meant to conflict dramatize and shape the player's viewpoint is strikingly under-researched. This study bridges this gap by examining the application of several impoliteness strategies in the dialogue of Mission 13: "Chaos's Warm Welcome" of Devil May Cry 3 and analyzing character identity and power relations as contours shaped by these strategies within the narrative architecture of the game.

This study focuses on the application of impolite strategies in the dialogue of Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening, specifically Mission 13, "Chaos's Warm Welcome." Using Culpeper's (1996, 2005) framework on impoliteness, this research aims on identifying what constitutes impoliteness in terms of strategy, what purposes it serves in the narrative and character construction, and how it influences and engages the intended audience.

In order to direct this inquiry, the subsequent research questions are formulated:

1. What are the classifications of impoliteness strategies applied in the dialogue of Mission 13 "Chaos's Warm Welcome" in Devil May Cry 3?
2. In what ways do these strategies aid in the development of character and power relations identity and dominion as situated in the narrative?

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to assess the impoliteness strategies used in the dialogue of Mission 13 "Chaos' Warm Welcome" in Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening through Culpeper's (1996, 2011) framework on impoliteness. As Creswell (2013) states, qualitative research is focused on understanding the meaning that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem, providing context, interpretation, and understanding depth. The descriptive part of the study aligns with Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) qualitative research as an effort to systematically represent a phenomenon while interpreting it within the context of its nature.

The unit of analysis in this study is the utterance which is described as a complete communicative unit, pragmatic in nature, contextualised, framed meaning, bounded in relevance, and can be verbal or nonverbal. The definition of utterance is crucial for identification of impoliteness strategies because it captures a level where pragmatic functions in the form of threats, mockery, commands, or sarcasm are intentionally (socially) realized. This can be explained within the discourse-pragmatics framework (such as Culpeper, 2011; Goffman, 1981) where utterance is considered the fundamental vessel of social meaning not only contains language elements but also contextual dependencies.

For this analysis, the authors chose content analysis as defined by Krippendorff (2004), as it allows for a coherent approach to systematic interpretation of meaning, patterns, and functions within text. In this case, content analysis is performed to unravel how specific utterances contribute to threats, mockery, or coercive narrative impoliteness. The analytic steps involve determining meaning units, encoding relevant linguistic features, and interpreting them pragmatically. This study is aimed at revealing meaning in the multilayered discourse narrative-based impoliteness strategies, thus, the application of this approach is beneficial from a qualitative angle.

Data Collection

The primary data sets include character dialogues from the cutscenes of Mission 13. The data collection procedure included:

1. Observation of Gameplay: The researcher started with playing through the narrative and dialogic context given in Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening on PlayStation 2. The game

itself helps pinpoint which missions could serve as research sites by selecting those enriched with conversational data pertinent to the study of concern.

2. YouTube Retrieval: In order to fully capture character dialogues for a specific purpose, retrieval missions needed to be performed and each corresponding YouTube gameplay video had to be located and retrieved.
3. Manual Transcription: Through orthographic techniques which capture speaker ID, wording, and tone/emphasis, the dialogues were transcribed manually.

Data Analysis

The analysis combines local techniques and international qualitative approaches:

1. Structural Linguistic Analysis: The formal syntactic structure of impolite utterances is analysed through Immediate Constituent Analysis of clauses which reveals deeper understanding of their functional components.
2. Thematic Analysis, Braun & Clarke 2006: This approach examines several turns within the dialogue to highlight recurrent themes and functions of impoliteness, dominance, mockery, power negotiation.
3. Content Analysis: Contextual meaning and speaker intention are interpreted through the chosen words and phrases used.
4. Triangulation: Through cross-comparison of gameplay footage, YouTube transcripts, and supplemental fan-created materials such as game wikis and community authored transcripts, data reliability and accuracy were validated, strengthening information accuracy through multiple sources reinforcing the reliability.

Results were shared using informal and formal methods which blended contextual richness and linguistic precision.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This excerpt describes the results for the impoliteness strategies assessment within the dialogue of the cutscene for Mission 13: Chaos' Warm Welcome from Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening. Following the model of Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011), the study discovered 48 instances of impolite discourse, grouped as follows:

Table 1. The Table Presenting the Distribution of Impoliteness Strategies

Impoliteness Strategy	Number of Findings	Percentage
Bald on Record Impoliteness	9	18.75%
Positive Impoliteness	6	12.50%
Negative Impoliteness	11	22.92%
Sarcasm/Mock Politeness	21	43.75%
Withhold Politeness	1	2.08%
Total	48	100%

These results demonstrate that the dominant strategy was sarcasm/mock politeness, reaching its zenith at 43 percent, overtaken only slightly by negative impoliteness. The high presence of sarcasm is consistent with the game's overall tone, as characters such as Dante or Jester tend to mock opponents using ironic, rather sharp wit intended to exaggerate tension while reinforcing their rebellious or manipulative personas. Negative impoliteness, such as uttered in threats or commands, highlights dominant-submissive struggles, especially in lines spoken by Vergil. The infrequent occurrence of withhold politeness (one instance) emphasizes this strategy's character as a stark but effective means of indicating tension within a relationship as in the case of Mary ignoring Dante's lifesaving gesture. The disproportionate

distribution of described strategies and strategies, especially the scarcity of withhold politeness, suggests that Devil May Cry 3 is a game that favours hyperbolic verbal conflict over the use of passive aggression aligned with its narrative style that is fast-paced and fuelled by confrontation. These results support the notion that impoliteness in video games has been deliberately employed in character interaction, escalating tension within the story, and immersing the player in conflict-driven storytelling.

Discussion

The following sections elaborate on each discussed strategy:

1. Bald on Record Impoliteness

This strategy employs face threatening acts without mitigating any effects and doing so in a very direct manner. It focuses on aggression, contempt, abuse dominance, or some form of scorn. The dialogue below shows this behaviour:

(Example 1)



Picture 1. Vergil's bald on record impoliteness utterance toward Jester
(Vergil: "Damn you!" (DATA22/MS13/DMC3))

As described above, this utterance fits the prototypical structure of bald on record impoliteness. Anger towards Jester is expressed brutally and without any form of tempering. "Damn you" is one of the most emotionally laden phrases a person can use and suggests a wish, with clear intent, for some negative consequence to be inflicted on the speaker.

This moment follows a characterization by Jester that casts himself in the role of a manipulator behind the conflict he creates between Vergil and Dante. The phrase "Damn you" uttered without any form of mitigation speaks to anger and emotional breaking point. From a narrative viewpoint, this reinforces Vergil's identity as a volatile, prideful, confrontational figure. Further, it cements the imbalance as he reestablishes control through the suppressing acting verbal abuse, exclaiming his loss of composure and shunned dominance.

(Example 2)



Picture 2. Vergil's bald on record insult toward Mary
(Vergil: *"Is that what you think? Foolish girl."* (DATA11/MS13/DMC3))

This line exemplifies bald on record rudeness via rhetorical condescension and overt insult. The rhetorical question, "Is that what you think?" mocks Mary's aureate opinion rather than engaging with it. "Foolish girl" further exacerbates the affront by deeming her intellect as lacking and juvenile.

Calling her "foolish" suggests that Mary's rationality is weak. To further belittle her agency, "girl" is added. No softening tools or euphemisms are present suggesting that this time, bypassing mitigators reveals a desire to dominate. In this case, his utterance uncovers a feminist bias alongside authoritarian ideology illustrating domination of male over female and the means through which silence is enforced using oppressive language.

(Example 3)



Picture 3. Vergil's bald on record insult toward Jester
(Vergil: *"Insane buffoon."* (DATA17/MS13/DMC3))

In this succinct insult, Jester is labelled as both insane and a buffoon which embodies bald on record impoliteness. Each label carries a hefty dose of bald on record rudeness. Insanity undermines one's mental faculties while buffoonery dismisses any sense of seriousness.

This jester insult is incredibly harsh and blunt. In this case, it comes after Jester shows the full extent of his manipulative control over events. Vergil's tirade reveals contempt, but it also robs Jester of any status he might hold by depicting him as irrational and absurd. The insult's bluntness reinforces the narrative dynamic by raising the stakes of character conflict

and highlighting Vergil's readiness to retaliate against mockery or manipulation. This helps define Vergil as proud and dominant, which reinforces the ongoing conflict.

From these three examples, it is clear that the depiction of Vergil's character volatility, emotional, intellectual, and even authoritarian, fostered through "bald on record" impoliteness, is revealing something much deeper. Impolite anger serves neither as mere expression of rage nor random archetype; it aims to construct, negotiate character identity, as well as relationships of power within the narrative of the game. Through harsh unmediated words, Vergil antagonises people while reinforcing his narrative as a tragic antihero, silencing their dissent and responding to perceived threats to his control.

2. Positive Impoliteness

Strategies that harm the hearer's positive face (which is the desire to be liked, admired, included, or respected), are classified as positive impoliteness. Focusing on ridicule, challenge, or exclusion, such expressions attack the person's social identity, self-esteem, or worth. Its application in the dialogue is provided below.

(Example 4)



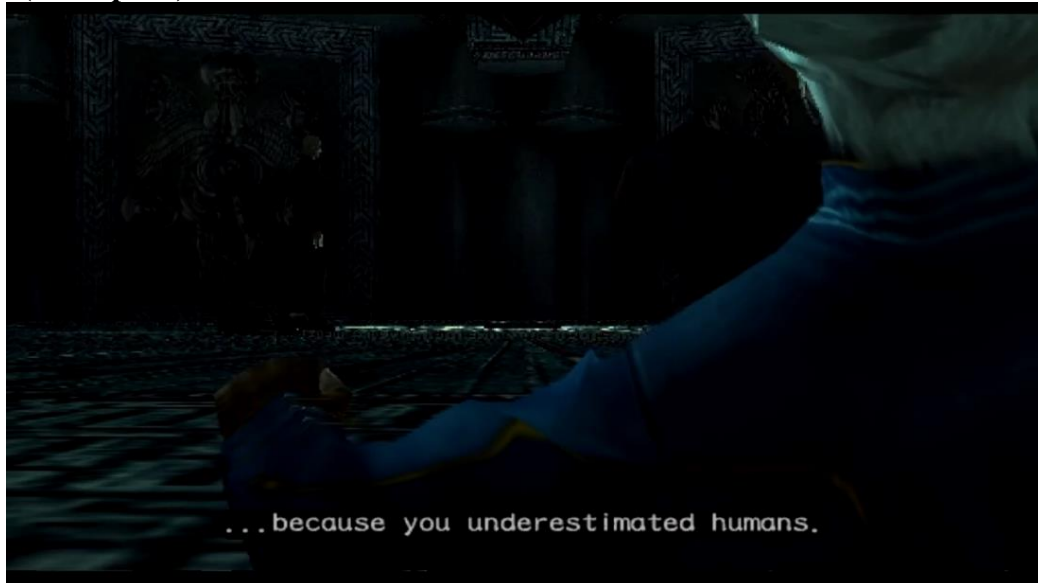
Picture 4. Dante's provocation toward Vergil to attack Vergil's positive face
(Dante: "Okay bro, come and get it, if you can." (DATA7/MS13/DMC3))

In positive impoliteness, Dante complained through mockery and challenge. Suggesting 'if you can' as a comment on Vergil's ability and strength casts doubt on his competence, adds insult to, then therefore avows Dante's mockery forms of lack person's dignity. Thus, "come and get it" is empty of courtesy and a naked challenge.

Exaggerated phrase "bro" implies camaraderie or kinship as he uses it here to mockingly express underlying affection. It dehumanises and diminishes Vergil and instead of affection, it functions as removal of sympathy. From Dante's perspective, the fight is not a serious existential danger, but in fact, a minor irritation, which he makes worse by making light of Vergil's self-importance.

Through this interaction, it illustrates Dante's whimsical disregard and mental dominance. It captures him as a tormentor that undermines attempts at intimidation while steadily unravelling Vergil's supposed supremacy. It insults Vergil's sense of self, identity and reputation as an admired and powerful figure, raising the emotional stakes and sibling rivalry within the already complex power dynamics of the story.

(Example 5)



Picture 5. Arkham criticizes Vergil's judgment toward human which led to his defeat
(Arkham: "*Because you've underestimated humans.*" (DATA24/MS13/DMC3))

This subtle form of positive impoliteness culminates into a more underlying layer of potent belittlement. This line by Arkham implicitly insults Vergil's intellect and strategic ability, which are crucial elements of his self-image, thus two core components of his self-image and ego. The assertion that Vergil has made a gross error beneath the bare surface of utterance not only expands but threatens in engulfing his self-claimed authority.

As the quote illustrates, it can be deduced that there is a certain degree of restraint in the manner and tone, making it seem calm and collected. The condescension laden within, "underestimated humans," shifts the balance, placing Arkham as a better judge of humans through his actions. This sentence is quiet in nature, yet full of deadly strokes; it results in a loss of control for Vergil and a gain for Arkham.

This instance stands out especially in relation to the participative dynamics of the story. Arkham, until now regarded as either passive or scheming from the shadows, now steps forth as the driving force revealing the cracks to Vergil's self-assuredness and heralding his decline.

(Example 6)



Picture 6. Dante's attempt to damage Jester's positive face
(Dante: "*Dude, the show's over!*" (DATA36/MS13/DMC3))

Dante disregards Jester's antics as “the theatrics” of the performance which shows straightforward positive impoliteness. The term ‘show’ strips Jester’s behaviour of any meaningful significance that can be treated with respect. When he claims that ‘the show is over’, Dante is effectively stating that Jester has lost any claim to being regarded as a threat and has been demoted to the imaginary role of an actor whose performance has finished and whose audience has vanished.

Dante’s “Dude” adds to the degradation by trivialising the reference and suggesting disrespect. As a result of this neutral to derogatory tone, Jester loses the status of a serious participant and becomes someone devoid of deserving attention as a peer.

From a story perspective, this statement shows an important change in their exchange. Dante takes command of the situation by verbally dismantling Jester, further humiliating him. This helps shape Dante’s character as confident and a casual, cool hero. It also restores balance by Jester being portrayed as a humorous side character rather than a worthy opponent.

The examples demonstrate how characters combat each other’s social identity and personal pride to gain control. In each example, some form of impoliteness is used in order to advance the story, whether it’s arousing anger (Dante to Vergil), changing established hierarchies (Arkham to Vergil), or rejecting another’s claim (Dante to Jester). In this way, positive impoliteness is more than just an author’s choice but an effective strategic decision to design action within the framework of the play and alter character identities to shift the balance of power in the plot of Devil May Cry 3.

3. Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness focuses on upsetting the hearer’s desire for freedom, autonomy, personal space. It deals with the desire to be unbothered and left alone. These strategies include: insults, orders, and any action that dismisses the hearer’s agency and treats them as subordinate, expendable, or voiceless. In the following examples from Devil May Cry 3, we will look at how this type of impoliteness is used in the narrative to expose the conflict and relations between the characters.

(Example 7)



Picture 7. Vergil’s threat to Dante

(Vergil: *"Why not? After all we share the same blood... I'll just use more of yours to undo daddy's little spell."*
(DATA6/MS13/DMC3))

As Dante’s elder brother, Vergil’s words epitomise negative impoliteness as he viciously insults Dante’s autonomy. His bodily integrity with “I’ll just use more of yours” dehumanises Dante. This phrase encapsulates the reduction of Dante where he is turned into nothing but a resource, his blood as a means to an end. This expression devoids and saps Dante of any agency and the disregard of his body becomes violation and the utterance of surrender.

Further, the term “daddy’s little spell” has an undertone of mockery that trivialises the severity of the matter. Vergil not only disrespects their father’s legacy by reducing Sparda’s seal to a childish game, but he also refuses to acknowledge Dante’s opposition to his scheme. The calm, nearly amused tone in which such a deep threat is uttered adds to the face-threatening act of the vulnerability, showcasing Vergil’s utter lack of sympathy and moral limit.

This statement showcases negative impoliteness featuring a threat, presumption, and objectification. It also serves to affirm dominance on behalf of Vergil while stripping Dante of any control over his own bodily autonomy and destiny. It establishes a central conflict around the borders of the brothers’ relationship and exposes the severity of Vergil’s pragmatic worldview.

(Example 8)



Picture 8. Vergil shooes jester while also attacking him
(Vergil: “Now leave!” (DATA19/MS13/DMC3))

In this example, Vergil’s curt issued statement directed at Jester showcases with clarity the use of negative impoliteness. The phrase “Now leave!” is both a standalone instruction and an affirmation. It lacks politeness markers and, granting the courtesy of a strategy devoid of request, it demands action which must be carried out instantly.

Most importantly, there is no recognition whatsoever regarding Jester’s presence, efforts, or worth. The command suggests that he is not welcome and that his opinion does not matter. By doing this, Vergil not only removes Jester’s ability to participate meaningfully in the dialogue, but also enforces a rigid and humiliating system of dominance. This is a textbook case of negative impoliteness through coercive speech.

(Example 9)



Picture 9. Jester threatens to beat Mary (up)

(Jester: *"Jester's gonna spank your butt"* (DATA16/MS13/DMC3))

Although "spank your butt" sounds juvenile on its own, uttering it in the context of a fighting scene makes it lose face. Jester's statement is a stark example of demeaning infantilisation through negative impoliteness.

With the use of the word "spank", Jester reduces Mary's worth as a serious adversary. Rather, the remark casts her as a defiant child who requires discipline, thus stripping her agency in a patronising way.

Their tone of further mockery serves to deepen the insult. Jester seeks not only psychological dominance by harming and threatening humiliation but simultaneously asserting a kind of trauma. The form of shame the infantilising language imposes upon her serves as a double-edged attack that maximises the shame bestowed upon her while simultaneously minimising the threat she poses.

In this case, negative impoliteness attacks Mary's self-image, social role, and self-esteem, revealing Jester's wish to dominate impactfully and vocally, unveiling his physically and verbally dominating nature.

These examples of negative impoliteness illustrate how in the game Devil May Cry 3, the characters tacitly attack each other's autonomy, freedom, and dignity. This occurs through direct threats with dominion (Vergil to Dante), commands (Vergil to Jester), or disguised humour in the form of belittling threats (Jester to Mary). All these acts have an overarching motive as tools of domination, through oppression, and denial of freedom. These strategies serve to deepen conflict within the character while simultaneously highlighting the intricate struggles of power that are key to the emotional and dramatic relationships in the story.

4. Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

A potent impoliteness strategy is mock politeness or far more commonly referred to as sarcasm, where seemingly polite phrases are uttered for hostile purposes. It is a type of verbal irony that subverts social norms of politeness in order to scorn, disrespect, or belittle the listener. As Culpeper (1996) indicates, such utterances, though disrespectful, can be framed as polite on the surface but will always have an underlining ethos of scorn. The following examples explain the workings of mock politeness from the game Devil May Cry 3, where it contributes to the intertwining suspense of the plot alongside the development of the characters.

(Example 10)



Picture 10. Jester sarcastically insult Dante and Vergil

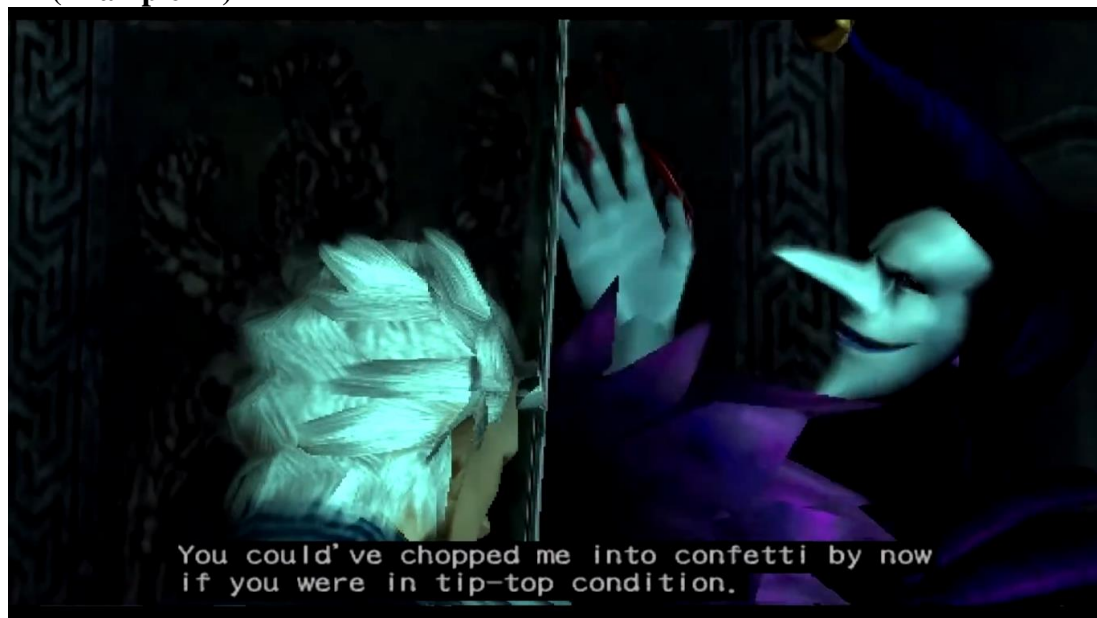
(Jester: *"Bravo! Bravo! I never dreamed that things would go so smoothly."* (DATA12/MS13/DMC3))

Jester's line is a clear example of mock politeness. Here, Jester showcases praise that is sarcastic in nature. At a glance, one would interpret him as applauding the events going on around him. However, the context betrays this where Dante and Vergil have fought each other into exhaustion fighting over who gets to control the next slice of pizza, which was part of serving his twisted plot to play them like puppets.

Jester's remark, "Bravo," serves to not only exaggerate the performance with mock praise but also reinforces the antagonistic undertone of insincerity. The performance element, while mocking the brothers, underscores Jester's amusement in their ongoing manipulation. Any supposed attributing statements devoid of appreciation would only be an indignant jab directed at the brothers' longing expression of gratitude for their clever exploitation.

While purposefully engineered to look celebratory, the facade works to corporeally humiliate the target of celebration, thus Jester becomes emotionally empty and a deeply sorry intellect. This sort of utterance serves as total disregard for fae courtesy, proving that contempt can be delivered from a tower of civility.

(Example 11)



Picture 11. Jester mocks Vergil's weakened state by praising his original capability
(Jester: *"You could have chopped me into confetti by now if you're in your tip-top condition."*
(DATA21/MS13/DMC3))

In this statement, Jester offers another prime example of graciousness that is masked by sarcasm. Clearly, Jester praises Vergil's strength, but the "if you're in tip-top condition" stipulation reveals that his counterpart is clearly not at full power and therefore no longer a threat.

The phrase "chopped me into confetti" is derogatory in nature and theatrical hyperbole, adding mockery to praise. It mocks not just Vergil's weak condition but also his pride in his fighting skills from a bygone era. The blend of former potential with current failure serves as a twofold insult that starkly contrasts Vergil's positive face: his need for social esteem, deference, competence, and acknowledgment.

Jester adds insult to injury by pretending to praise Vergil. The irony-drenched courtesy masks an offensive counteroffensive, demonstrating how irony can function as a potent psychological tool of verbal subjugation.

(Example 12)



Picture 12. Arkham is (seemingly) praising Mary, but he's actually belittle her intelligence (Arkham: "Good girl. Pure and innocent... just like your mother" (DATA25/MS13/DMC3))

Arkham's address to Mary is a sprightly exemplification of mock politeness where he combines cruelty and praise. The opening "Good girl" is overtly patronising, casting Mary into a role of a child and immature, diminutive, weak and functionally sidestepped acknowledged warrior.

The follow-up clause "Pure and innocent... just like your mother" adds more layers to the condescension. Mary's mother's ignorance, if we may graciously call it such, was a curse and a weakness for which she paid dearly, and now it appears Mary has inherited that curse. In this case instead of genuine affection, Arkham undermines with so-called kind words uttered to malign Mary's intellect and emotional resolve, igniting insecurities and self-doubt.

This form of sociopathy, emotionally exploitative and psychologically abusive, softens the slur of aggression with the fragility of sentimental language. This seriously undermines Arkham's more humane image. It becomes, in archetype, an example of sarcasm-as-weaponry. A calm and poised front employed to destabilise and control the addressee through concealed insults and emotional manipulation.

The examples above illustrate how mock politeness functions as a complex and often insidious form of impoliteness within Devil May Cry 3. Through sarcastic applause (Jester to Dante and Vergil), conditional praise (Jester to Vergil), and patronising affection (Arkham to Mary), characters are able to veil their hostility while heightening aggression. This further emphasises the manipulative nature of these circumstances that shape the narrative arcs alongside deepening the constructive conflict.

5. Withhold Politeness

This entails a passive-aggressive strategy that involves a lack of marked politeness to social norms like gratitude, apology, or acknowledgment whereby the speaker omits marked politeness. As mentioned by Culpeper (1996), forms of impoliteness leave some impact not from what is said, but because of what is not said, which makes this kind of tactic a very delicate yet powerful way of trying to attack or damage someone's face. The following example will show us this mechanism within Devil May Cry 3.

(Example 13)



Picture 13. Dante saves Mary, who is severely wounded and nearly collapses onto the rubble
(With the collapsing ground, Mary is about to fall and Dante grabs her hand at just the right moment. While Mary's collapse seems inevitable, Dante saving her does not warrant her thanking him)
(DATA39/MS13/DMC3)

This is an example of withholding politeness whereby in this case, without dialogue, Dante does not express social graces in manners of appreciation to Mary. To this is the act of saving makes one obliged to gratefully thank him, yet Mary does not verbalise even a single thank you.

The omission itself serves as a face-threatening act, in this case, targeting the positive face concerning Dante's appreciation, respect or emotional recognition of him. Rather than expressing thank you, emotionally detached gratitude, possible emotional disdain, or a deliberate attempt to not accept any relational emotional debt is conveyed through silence.

This omission becomes more significant considering the amount of sacrifice on the line. The physical act's intensity (saving a life) creates a stronger contrast to the emotional response or lack thereof. Mary's silence negates active contribution; rather, it constitutes a denial to participate and is understood as a refusal to be vulnerable. It exhibits control, guardedness, or rejection towards emotional openness.

In addition, considering the storyline of sorrow and a deep-rooted betrayal intertwined with Dante and Arkham, Mary's silence could also be interpreted as defiance aimed at the exhaustion of being placed in a subservient or dependent character. Emotional boundaries are maintained through a social interaction script physically surrendering the space which should signify trust.

Culpeper's theory explains that the refusal to perform expected forms of politeness creates imbalances of sociological power; it becomes a powerful form of impoliteness. Here, the failure to comply with social and emotional reciprocity serves to protect identity and personal power in a volatile emotional interaction.

The example above shows that silence on its own can be a form of rudeness. Mary not thanking Dante in Devil May Cry 3 goes beyond simple rudeness. It serves a purpose as a reply that maintains her emotional detachment and defies social expectations of relationships. Therefore, lack of social manners surfaces as an elaborate, face-threatening deed that upholds uncomfortable tension and intricacy in relations between characters.

CONCLUSION

Applying Culpeper's (1996, 2005, 2011) frameworks of impoliteness in pragmatics, this study focused on the specific impoliteness strategies within the dialogue of Mission 13: "Chaos's Warm Welcome" from Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening. The episode's character interactions analyzed revealed all five of Culpeper's impoliteness strategies, which include bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/mock politeness, and withholding politeness. These were not only present but also systematically employed within the episode.

For the first research question, the results described that mock politeness as sarcasm was the most frequently utilized strategy, particularly by Jester and Dante, who used exaggerated formal niceties to insult, anger, and manipulate others. Vergil exhibited negative impoliteness through commanding and dismissive phrases, empowering himself as he exerted control over the interactions. Actions of excludement were also classified as positive impoliteness through insulting and ridiculing social bonds to display open contempt. During conflicts that escalated, bald on record impoliteness occurred through emotionally intense confrontations, whereas withholding politeness was Mary's silence which, in contrast to social norms of expressing thanks during her interaction, functioned as a face threatening act.

In trying to answer the second research question, these strategies of impoliteness are pivotal in character identity and power relations in the story. Dante builds his rebellious, emotionally charged character through sarcastic irreverence, while Vergil's cold, commanding speech highlights his emotionally detached, ambitious persona. Jester's showy mockery reinforces manipulatively Instigatory role and Arkham's condescending, overly polite tone reveals psychologically controlled tactics. Even Mary's silence becomes a form of formidable resistance claiming emotional independence during a fragile, vulnerable moment. These actions, though simple, frame the characters, relate them to one another in a hierarchy, assign morals, define fluid power dynamics, and deepen the surrounding conflict of the moment.

This study shows that incivility in the dialogue of video games is neither decorative nor accidental in nature; it functions intentionally as a form of narrative structure for character development, emotional involvement, and conflict creation. Placing these results within the context of video game pragmatics situates the problem more broadly in terms of in-game speech and motivates further study of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of digital interactive narratives. The evolving nature of video games as complex narrative forms makes exploration of their characterization through dialogue and the impact of language on player experience and perception quite important.

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