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IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES BASED ON CULPEPER'S MODEL: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A MAN CALLED OTTO

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Abstract

This research delves into a comprehensive analysis of impoliteness strategies used by Otto, the main character in the movie *A Man Called Otto*, drawing upon Culpeper's model. The objectives encompass the identification of the most common type of impoliteness strategy and the examination of the function associated with each type. Moreover, the qualitative discourse analysis method was used to gain a deeper and more holistic comprehension of the research objectives that encompass a broader context beyond sentences. Within this method, a total of 155 instances of Otto's impolite speech were meticulously examined. The findings revealed two facets: first, there are three types of impoliteness strategies, namely positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and withhold politeness. Among these, positive impoliteness emerged as the most frequently used strategy, followed by negative impoliteness and withhold politeness. Second, two functions attributed to the three impoliteness strategies used by the main character are found, namely affective impoliteness and coercive impoliteness.

Keywords: functions of impoliteness strategies, impoliteness strategies, types of impoliteness strategies

Introduction

Language functions as a set of rules that regulate the combination and use of symbols to create meaning. These rules include grammar, syntax, and semantics, orchestrating the creation of systematic and cohesive linguistic constructs. As a result, individuals are enabled to exchange information and ideas.

However, when using a language, individuals must be aware of its innate ability to reflect and maintain power imbalances and social hierarchies. Hence, appropriate language usage becomes essential in promoting social inclusion and equity, as underscored by Gary B. Palmer (Sharifian, 2015). Central to this ethos of linguistic responsibility is the cultivation of respectful discourse, wherein the tenets of politeness are instrumental.

Politeness, as an essential language construct, refers to a communication attitude that shows respect and consideration towards the interlocutor. This definition aligns seamlessly with the perspective explained by Janet Holmes, which



asserts that politeness serves as a channel for maintaining social harmony while avoiding potential disagreement (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). Furthermore, Lakoff defines politeness as a structured framework of interpersonal dynamics that has been deliberately designed to enhance the efficacy of interactions (Leech, 2014).

On the contrary, impoliteness is characterized by the use of inappropriate language. According to Jonathan Culpeper, impoliteness is conveyed through negative comments or attitudes toward specific behaviors in particular circumstances, which are based on social expectations, desires, and beliefs. For this reason, Culpeper asserts that impolite behavior occurs when individuals act in a way that contradicts others' expectations, desires, or beliefs concerning their behaviors (Culpeper et al., 2017).

Culpeper's research further suggests that impoliteness emerges when the interlocutor intentionally communicates face attack or when the recipient interprets the interlocutor's behavior as intentionally face-attacking. This aligns with the notion that impoliteness is developed through the interplay between the interlocutor and the recipient's expectations, beliefs, and perceptions.

Regarding the topic of impoliteness, it is noteworthy that the five super strategies of impoliteness—bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness—provide pertinent knowledge into the various ways in which impoliteness can occur in social interactions (Culpeper et al., 2017). Additionally, impoliteness strategies have three functions: affective, coercive, and entertaining (Culpeper, 2011).

Numerous studies have delved into the intricacies of impoliteness strategies in movies. For instance, the first study (Chintiabela, 2017) investigates impoliteness strategies used by the characters in the movie *Carrie* using Culpeper's model. Following that, the second study (Ratri & Ardi, 2019) concentrates on the impoliteness and power displayed by two particular characters in the movie *The Devil Wears Prada*, employing several theories of Culpeper, Bebé, and Bousfield. Lastly, a study by (Silviani, 2022) analyses the script of *12 Years Slave* movie identifying the types of impoliteness strategies and their functions using Culpeper's theory. All characters in the movie were examined.

Building upon previous research, this study is distinguished through its distinctive data source and research objectives. The movie chosen for analysis is *A Man Called Otto*, adapted from a Swedish book entitled *A Man Called Ove*, with particular emphasis on the impolite speech made by Otto during his interactions with other characters. Using Culpeper's model of impoliteness, this research seeks to achieve two following objectives: (1) to identify the most common type of impoliteness strategies used by the main character in *A Man Called Otto* and (2) to investigate the functions of the impoliteness strategies used by the main character in *A Man Called Otto*.

The Definition of Face

A North American sociologist Erving Goffman first introduced the concept of face in his original work *On-Face Work* in 1955. According to Goffman, face is a positive reputation that individuals attempt to form in social situations (Goffman, 2017). Twelve years later, Goffman sharpened the definition to make it more precise as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Culpeper & Haugh,

2014). Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson adopted Goffman's work to elucidate how politeness influenced human interactions. Face, as stated by Brown and Levinson, is a public persona that individuals wish to lay claim to (Culpeper et al., 2017). Inferentially, the two face-maintenance concepts differ from one another. Goffman's face refers to something individuals already own; thus, it is considered an afterthought. Conversely, Brown and Levinson view face as something individuals wish to possess, making it a before perspective that emphasizes establishing a desired image (Culpeper et al., 2017). Two additional explanations of face are offered straightforwardly. Craig, Tracy, and Spisak characterize face as a self-representation individuals display to others. Cupach and Metts, on the other hand, perceive it as the self-concepts of individuals manifested in specific interactions with others (Redmond, 2015).

Positive and Negative Face

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize two types of face as follows:

1) Positive Face

Similar to Goffman's definition of face, positive face is "the positive, consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants ... the want of every [person] that his wants be desirable to at least some other" (Culpeper et al., 2017). For instance, acknowledging individuals' presence, approving their opinions, and expressing admiration (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014).

2) Negative Face

On the other hand, negative face pertains to "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction ... the want of every [person] that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Culpeper et al., 2017). For example, it involves individuals being able to do what they want and are allowed to do so by others (Redmond, 2015).

The Definition of Impoliteness

Based on Culpeper, based on Culpeper, the term impoliteness is defined as situations where a face attack is intentionally conducted by the interlocutor, where the recipient interprets the action as intentionally attacking, or where both of these conditions occur (Leech, 2014). Later, Culpeper redefines it as unpleasant manners toward certain behaviors happening in specific situations. These manners are reliant on expectations, desires, and beliefs about social organization, specifically how someone intervenes in another individual's face in communication. Consequently, the attitude is seen unfavorably and is considered a cause of offense resulting from the emotional consequences an individual experiences (Jamet & Jobert, 2013).

According to Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, also known as Bebé, impoliteness is a purposeful choice rather than a failure to be politely used to achieve certain goals throughout a conversation, exhibiting pragmatic competence. Although impoliteness is portrayed as obstructive, it may be considered rational in specific circumstances (Arendholz, 2013). On the contrary, Jonathan Bousfield and Maria Sifianou Terkourafi contend that impoliteness does not involve either intentions or recognition of intentions. If such intentions are present, the behavior is considered rude rather than impolite. Thus, impoliteness is not always a deliberate or intentional act (Huang, 2017). These contrasting perspectives

highlight impoliteness' complexity and varied interpretations in pragmatic studies. Moreover, Culpeper adds that impoliteness involves negative behavior expressed through various emotions and conventionalized formulae, such as insults, criticism, challenges, condescension, dismissals, threats, and non-supportive intrusions (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014).

Types of Impoliteness Strategies

Culpeper (1996) identifies five impoliteness super strategies, which are described below:

1) Bald On-Record Impoliteness

The act that threatens an individual's face is clearly expressed. Different from Brown and Levinson's—where the minimal face is at stake, and the interlocutor's purpose is not to attack the recipient's face—this bald on-record is used when there are many faces at risk intending to attack the recipient's face down with the use of impolite language (Arendholz, 2013).

2) Positive Impoliteness

This strategy is used to attack the recipient's positive face by not accepting his desire. Positive impoliteness is performed by insulting another individual, refusing common ground with the recipient, choosing unpleasant or unwanted topics to talk about, employing irrelevant code, being ignorant in a conversation with others, awaiting disagreements, employing ambiguous and confidential language, and employing taboo words (Capone & Mey, 2016).

3) Negative Impoliteness

In contrast to positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness is intended to attack the recipient's negative face desire. For example, intimidating the recipient for his action that is viewed as harmful by the interlocutor, speaking rudely, mocking, not treating another interactant earnestly, and invading the recipient's space (Culpeper et al., 2017).

4) Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

This strategy is deceitful in that it appears polite and respectful on the surface but is actually meant to convey the opposite sentiment. Sarcasm or mock politeness is performed by using Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (Mohammed & Abbas, 2015).

5) Withhold Politeness

This strategy lacks of politeness that the recipient expects. For example, failing to thank others for something they give may be considered intentional impoliteness (Bączkowska, 2017).

Impoliteness Functions

According to Culpeper (2011), impoliteness events serve numerous functions. They are:

1) Affective Impoliteness

The first function of impoliteness involves aggression which is an angry response to frustration or provocation. In this event, the interlocutor directs their negative emotion toward the recipient to assign blame to the recipient. Consequently, the atmosphere between the interlocutor and the recipient becomes unpleasant or hostile (Bączkowska, 2017).

2) Coercive Impoliteness

The second function of impoliteness is to gain control and influence over the recipient by making oneself look superior. Coercive impoliteness arises when the interlocutor belongs to a higher and more influential social level than the recipient. Although it usually occurs in situations where there is a power imbalance, it can also occur when the interlocutor is equal to the recipient to gain social power (Mohammed & Abbas, 2015).

3) Entertaining Impoliteness

This impoliteness differs from the others in that it delivers enjoyment to the audience at the expense of harming individuals or groups (victims) throughout the course of the entertainment. However, the victim may or may not be aware of the harm done to them; hence, it often involves exploiting the victim merely for amusement (Fouad Kadhum & Fadhil Abbas, 2021).

Method

This study employed a qualitative discourse analysis methodology. The purpose of this method is to investigate and comprehend the meaning attributed to social problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Patricia Leavy, qualitative research creates meaning by exploring and investigating social situations and aims to uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts to gain a deeper understanding of some features of social life (2017). Concurrently, the discourse analysis method used in this study involves a comprehensive examination of language as it is used in practice. It goes beyond analyzing individual sentences to examine larger contextual factors (Gee, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, discourse analysis emphasizes understanding the various roles of language in a variety of context (Parker, 2015, p. 46).

The data for this study is obtained from the movie's transcription that is accessible on the website https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk using a documentation method as a data collection technique. According to Avril Coxhead, documentation method allows for the examination of various linguistic dimensions such as lexical choices, discourse nuances, pragmatic methodologies, linguistic conventions, and gender-related influences (Rose et al., 2020, p. 202). Specifically, the data collection process involved two steps. Initially, the movie was watched, followed by a thorough reading of the transcript. Subsequently, the collected data was coded according to Culpeper's model of impoliteness.

Findings and Discussion

Upon a comprehensive analysis of Otto's impolite speech, several types and functions of impoliteness strategies have been identified in accordance with Culpeper's model: (1) Otto uses three types of impoliteness strategies, namely positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and withhold politeness in which positive impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy, (2) the impoliteness strategies serve two functions within Otto's interactions which are affective impoliteness and coercive impoliteness.

Impoliteness Strategies Used by the Main Character in A Man Called Otto

The number of impoliteness strategies used by Otto according to Culpeper's model is examined in this sub-section wherein revealed 155 occurrences of impoliteness strategies, with Otto using positive impoliteness, negative

impoliteness, and withheld politeness during his interactions with strangers, neighbors, or colleagues.

1. Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness is used to undermine the positive face desires of the recipient by disregarding their need for appreciation and approval. It involves behaviors such as insulting others, refusing common ground, discussing unpleasant or unwanted topics, using irrelevant code, displaying ignorance during conversations, provoking disagreements, using ambiguous and confidential language, and using taboo words.

Otto, the main character, consistently demonstrated a preference for this impoliteness strategy, which manifested itself in 84 occurrences. As part of this discussion, three specific examples of positive impoliteness are provided as follows:

Example 1

Hardware clerk: "Uh, yeah, we don't charge by the foot. We charge by the yard."

Otto: "99 cents a yard is 33 cents a foot—times five, that's \$1.65. You charged me \$1.98."

Description of the scene:

Otto argues the total price of the rope with the hardware clerk. Subsequently, Otto challenges the clerk's pricing method, emphasizing a difference between the price per yard and the price per foot.

Analysis:

Otto attempts to invalidate the hardware clerk's pricing method by demonstrating his mathematical skill. As a result, the clerk experiences discomfort and embarrassment due to the public nature of their disagreement, making it challenging for the clerk to save face. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as a positive impoliteness as it undermines the recipient's positive face by provoking disagreement and causing discomfort.

Example 2:

Marisol: "Hm? Mm! I have a very good idea. You can be my driver's instructor."

Otto: "No. No, no, no. I don't have time for that."

Description of the scene:

Marisol suggests that Otto becomes her driving instructor. However, Otto promptly dismisses the idea, stating his lack of available time to fulfill such a commitment.

Analysis:

Otto strongly dismisses Marisol's request to be her driving instructor and does not provide any alternative solutions showing his disinterest and disregard for her needs. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as a positive impoliteness as his response fails to fulfill Marisol's positive face by dismissing her idea.

2. Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is used to undermine the negative face desires of the recipient by disregarding their privacy, autonomy, and independence. It involves behaviors such as intimidation, rudeness, mockery, lack of seriousness, and invasion of personal space.

Otto consistently demonstrated a preference for this impoliteness strategy, with a total of 59 occurrences identified. In this discussion, three examples of negative impoliteness are provided as follows:

Example 1:

Doctor: "Next. I suspect you have hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which

is a genetic enlargement of the—"

Otto: "I know. My father had it."

Description of the scene:

The doctor diagnoses Otto with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a genetic condition characterized by heart enlargement. However, before the doctor can complete the diagnosis, Otto interrupts mentioning his father's history with the same disease.

Analysis:

Otto's interruption, preventing the doctor from completing the diagnosis, signifies a violation of the conversational structure. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as negative impoliteness as it disregards the doctor's negative face desire to avoid being interrupted or hindered in conversation.

Example 2:

Otto: "I loaned you my garden hose last August. If you give it back to me, I'll bleed your radiators for you."

Anita: "Come in. So those new neighbors of yours, they seem quite lovely, don't you think?"

Description of the scene:

Otto approaches Reuben and Anita's house offering his assistance in bleeding the radiators. However, Otto conditions his offer on Anita returning the garden hose she borrowed from him last August.

Analysis:

Otto emphasizes his ownership and fosters indebtedness by reminding Anita of the borrowed garden hose. It implies that Anita's refusal to return the hose leads to the loss of assistance. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as a negative impoliteness as he prioritizes his own rights over Anita's autonomy and freedom regarding the hose.

3. Withhold Politeness

Withhold politeness is a strategy where the interlocutor refrains from using expected politeness expressions. It involves abstaining from common courtesy phrases, such as "thank you," "please," or "excuse me."

Otto consistently demonstrated a preference for this impoliteness strategy, with a total of 12 occurrences identified. To further illustrate this point, the following are three examples of withhold politeness:

Example 1:

Hardware customer: "Here. I got some change. Let me cover that extra 33 cents for you."

Otto: "Sir, I don't want your 33 cents! And this isn't about 33 cents! This is about the fact that I got five feet of rope because I want five feet of rope. And I shouldn't have to pay for six feet of rope if I don't want six feet."

Description of the scene:

The hardware customer in the queue offers to cover the additional 33 cents for Otto. However, Otto declines emphasizing that the issue is not solely about the 33 cents but rather the correct pricing.

Analysis:

Otto declines the hardware customer's offer without expressing gratitude but instead highlights his frustration by asserting the issue he is facing. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as withholding politeness as he refrains from using expected politeness expressions.

Example 2:

Otto: "I need to see everything you ever got from Dye & Merika.

Notices, letters. Do you have a copy of the power of attorney?"

Anita: "How do you know about that?"

Description of the scene:

Otto approaches Reuben and Anita's house and makes a prompt request for Anita's cooperation. This unexpected request caught Anita off guard as she had not informed Otto about the issue beforehand.

Analysis:

Otto's direct request to Anita for documents received from Dye & Merika and the existence of a power attorney, without using the word "please" or engaging in small talk beforehand, suggests that he is withholding politeness. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as a withheld politeness as he refrains from using pleasantries.

The amount and percentage of each impoliteness strategy used by Otto in his interactions are presented in Table III.1. It also highlights the strategy that Otto frequently uses.

No	Type of Impoliteness Strategy	Amount	Percentage
1.	Positive Impoliteness	84	54.19%
2.	Negative Impoliteness	59	38.06%
3.	Withhold Politeness	12	7.74%
	Total	155	100%

Table 1. The Amount of Impoliteness Strategy Used by Otto

To calculate the percentages, the following formula is used. This formula offers a systematic approach to determine the relative proportions based on the amount of impoliteness strategies data available.

Percentage =
$$\left(\frac{\text{Count of Impoliteness Strategy}}{\text{Total Number of Impoliteness Strategies}}\right) \times 100$$

Taking the positive impoliteness strategy as an example, the count of positive impoliteness is 84. By substituting this value into the formula, the percentage can be computed as follows:

Percentage of Positive Impoliteness =
$$\left(\frac{84}{155}\right) \times 100 = 54.19\%$$

Based on the calculation, it is evident that Otto mostly uses positive impoliteness in his interactions, with 84 occurrences (54.19%). The second most used strategy is negative impoliteness with 54 occurrences (38.06%). Lastly, withhold politeness is the least used strategy with 12 occurrences (7.74%).

The Functions of the Impoliteness Strategies Used by the Main Character in A Man Called Otto

This sub-chapter examines the functions of impoliteness strategies used by Otto during his interactions with strangers, neighbors, or colleagues. The examination applies Culpeper's model, which involves affective, coercive, and entertaining impoliteness. Through a comprehensive examination, two of the three functions were identified: affective and coercive impoliteness (see Appendix C). To facilitate the comprehension of the impoliteness strategies' functions, selected data, description of the scene, and analysis are provided.

1. Affective Impoliteness

Affective impoliteness is an assertive response triggered by feelings of anger, frustration, or provocation. The interlocutor expresses their negative emotions toward the recipient aiming to assign blame for the perceived issue. As a result, the interaction between the interlocutor and the recipient becomes unpleasant or hostile.

Otto demonstrated a preference for this function of impoliteness strategies, as evidenced by 104 occurrences. To illustrate the manifestation of the affective impoliteness function, three examples are provided below:

Example 1:

Hardware clerk: "You're good at math. Um... No, I know, but I can't put it into the computer the way that you just said."

Otto: "What the hell kind of computer can't do simple math? Can I speak to your manager?"

Description of the scene:

The hardware clerk acknowledges his inability to input the calculation into the computer as suggested by Otto. However, Otto finds it difficult to believe that a computer would be incapable of performing such a basic mathematical task. Analysis:

Through impoliteness strategies involving strong language and a request to speak with the manager, Otto conveys his frustration and holds the hardware clerk accountable for the perceived incompetence. This aggressive communication style emphasizes his dissatisfaction and assigns blame to the clerk for his inability to solve the problem. Therefore, Otto's impoliteness strategies illustrate the affective impoliteness function.

Example 2:

Boss: "Come on, Otto. You're the one who decided to leave. And you did get a nice severance package."

Otto: "You took me off Operations. You cut back on my hours. You made Terry, who I trained, my supervisor. Terry, who can barely figure out what year it is without his phone. So, yes, I took the severance package."

Description of the scene:

Otto's boss reminds him of his decision to leave the job and the favorable severance package he received. However, Otto responds by asserting that his boss's actions directly contributed to his retirement.

Analysis:

Otto implies a connection between his boss's actions during his employment, which impacted his job satisfaction, and his choice to retire. Through his criticism of his boss's decision-making and emphasis on these actions, Otto expresses his negative emotions and attributes responsibility to his boss for the circumstances that led to his retirement. Therefore, Otto's impoliteness strategies in this interaction demonstrate the affective impoliteness function.

2. Coercive Impoliteness

Coercive impoliteness displays authority and influence over the recipient, implying superiority. It typically occurs in situations where a power imbalance exists. However, it can also occur when the interlocutor and recipient are socially equal, as both individuals strive to gain social influence.

Otto demonstrated a preference for coercive impoliteness function, which is evident in 51 occurrences. To further illustrate this function, three examples are provided below:

Example 1:

Otto: "Don't you dare let that little rat dog of yours piss on my walkway again! I know it was you!"

Barb: "He's a nasty, bitter old man. And he has no idea who's doing that."

Description of the scene:

In a confrontation between Otto and Barb regarding her dog urinating on his walkway, Otto firmly warns Barb to prevent it from happening again and accuses her of being responsible. However, Barb dismisses Otto's claim and implies that he is mistaken about the true culprit.

Analysis:

Otto's impoliteness strategies, which involve threat and diminutive language directed at Barb and her dog, demonstrate his firm belief that she is accountable for the behavior. Through these strategies, Otto aims to intimidate Barb and establish his dominance, emphasizing his higher status and control over her. Therefore, Otto's impoliteness strategies illustrate the coercive impoliteness function.

Example 2:

Tommy: "Oh, sorry."

Otto: "All of you get outta here. Go, go. Take your ladder and go. Get outta here. All of you."

Description of the scene:

Tommy apologizes to Otto for taking something belonging to Sonya from the garage without Otto's permission. In response, Otto quickly and firmly instructs Tommy, along with the other neighbors present, Marisol and Anita, to leave. Analysis:

Otto conveys his disapproval of Tommy's action and asserts his ownership and control over Sonya's belongings by instructing Tommy and the others to leave. Otto's impoliteness strategies aim to establish dominance and convey his zero tolerance for unauthorized access to Sonya's possession. Therefore, Otto's impoliteness strategies in the interaction illustrate the coercive impoliteness function.

The amount and percentage of each impoliteness function used by Otto in his impoliteness strategies are presented in Table III.2. It also highlights the function that Otto frequently uses.

Table 2. The Amount of Impoliteness Functions Used by Otto

No	Impoliteness Function	Amount	Percentage
1.	Affective Impoliteness	104	67.1%
2.	Coercive Impoliteness	51	32.9%
	Total	155	100%

To calculate the percentages, the following formula is used. This formula offers a systematic approach to determine the relative proportions based on the amount of impoliteness functions data available.

amount of impoliteness functions data available.

$$Percentage = \left(\frac{Count\ of\ Impoliteness\ Function}{Total\ Number\ of\ Impoliteness\ Functions}\right) \times 100$$

Taking the affective impoliteness function as an example, the count of affective impoliteness is 104. By substituting this value into the formula, the percentage can be computed as follows:

Percentage of Affective Impoliteness =
$$\left(\frac{104}{155}\right) \times 100 = 67.1\%$$

Based on the calculation, it is evident that Otto mostly uses affective impoliteness function to express his negative emotions and assign blame, accounting for 104 occurrences (67.1%). Additionally, Otto uses coercive impoliteness function in 51 occurrences (32.9%) to assert control and influence over others.

Conclusion

After analyzing Otto's speech in *A Man Called Otto*, several findings are found. First, Otto uses three out of Culpeper's five impoliteness strategies for 155 occurrences consisting of positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and withhold politeness. Among the strategies, positive impoliteness emerges as the most frequently used strategy by Otto, with 84 occurrences (54.19%). It is followed by negative impoliteness with 59 occurrences (38.06%) and withhold politeness with 12 occurrences (7.74%). Furthermore, Otto uses impoliteness strategies that express negative emotions (affective impoliteness) and assert control (coercive impoliteness). Specifically, affective impoliteness is mostly used in Otto's interactions, observed in 104 occurrences (67.1%), while coercive impoliteness is evident in 51 occurrences (32.9%).

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