

## EL4252 Honours Year: Sessions No. 6/7

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### 0. Culture v. personality. Speech community v. individual strategy. Genre v. pragmatics

Culture/community v. context v. personal disposition

1. Has attracted a lot of research (see *Journal of Pragmatics* at the end – the more recent ones are available on line through the NUS library website [www.linc.nus.edu.sg](http://www.linc.nus.edu.sg)). Most of you will have background on speech acts and co-operation.

This section is within the broad strand of **pragmatics**. Two strands in the treatment of politeness

(a) Leech (2003; 1983) and (b) Brown and Levinson (1987). We will also look at Richard Watson's perspective and Culpeper's (2011) *Impoliteness* as well as some other extensions to the work.

Which level are we concerned with? A lot of terms; for starters: *politeness, courtesy, civility, etiquette, kindness, charity, love, respect, (good) manners, good behaviour, (good) breeding, urbanity, gentility, polish, urbanity, gentlemanly/ladylike behaviour, gallantry, refinement, cordiality, civilisation and suavity.*

I see **three** levels. Important for us to make these distinctions.

(a) Ultimate good intentions towards the *other* (cf. Psalm 28.3: 'Do not drag me away with the ungodly, with evildoers, who speak civilly to neighbours, with malice in their hearts').

(b) Illocutions that are polite (Leech uses the term 'courtesy') – eg compliments are inherently polite ('courteous') whereas requests are inherently impolite ('non-courteous').

(c) Formulations and surface structures that are 'literally' polite – eg sarcastic statements are polite on the surface.

## LEECH

### 2. Leech on the inadequacy of the CP on its own

(a) Reason for indirection not provided — what is the motivation for wanting your hearer to derive your 'message' by implicature?

(b) Does not allow you to reach implicature — if you understand that there has been a *flouting* (or *violation*) of the CP or its maxims, we still need *something else* to reach the most appropriate implicature.

(i) A: Stella and Colin are a very nice couple, aren't they?

B: Well, Colin is a very nice fellow, I think.

(ii) P: Someone has left the door of the fridge open again.

C: It wasn't me.

(iii) W: Didn't you enjoy yesterday evening at Cynthia's? Good company.

X: [*Dishonestly*] Oh yes, wonderful.

(iv) Y: What do you think? Do you like the dress?

Z: The dressmaker must have taken a lot of trouble over it. It has such an intricate pattern. All those tiny stitches. When we had to sew Lee Ching's dress, it took me ages.

### 3. Leech's Principle (PP)

'Minimise (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs' ('Maximise [other things being equal] the expression of polite beliefs')

The maxims of Leech's Politeness Principle (PP) are:

(I) TACT MAXIM (in directives and commissives)

(a) Minimise cost to *other* [(b) Maximise benefit to *other*]

(II) GENEROSITY MAXIM (in directives and commissives)

(a) Minimise benefit to *self* [(b) Maximise cost to *self*]

(III) APPROBATION MAXIM (in expressives and assertives)

(a) Minimise dispraise of *other* [(b) Maximise praise of *other*]

(IV) MODESTY MAXIM (in expressives and assertives)

(a) Minimise praise of *self* [(b) Maximise dispraise of *self*]

(V) AGREEMENT MAXIM (in assertives)

(a) Minimise disagreement between *self* and *other*

[(b) Maximise agreement between *self* and *other*]

(VI) SYMPATHY MAXIM (in assertives)

(a) Minimise antipathy between *self* and *other* [(b) Maximise sympathy between *self* and *other*]

The 2003 reformulation (in LumiNUS Files):

<b>Generosity/Tact</b>	Place a high value on <i>other's</i> wants, a low value on <i>self's</i> wants
<b>Approbation/Modesty</b>	Place a high value on <i>other's</i> qualities, a low value on <i>self's</i> qualities
<b>Agreement</b>	Place a high value on <i>other's</i> opinions, a low value on <i>self's</i> opinions
<b>Sympathy</b>	Place a high value on <i>other's</i> feelings, a low value on <i>self's</i> feelings
<b>Obligation [= indebtedness]</b>	Place a high value on <i>self's</i> obligation to <i>other</i> , a low value on <i>other's</i> obligation to <i>self</i>

[Leech 2003]

The notion of *self* and *other* is also culturally defined. Is one's *spouse* or one's *family* one's *self* or *other*? Is it impolite to praise one's husband or one's children or one's company?

3. **Irony Principle: a sub-principle** (being polite on the surface only) – to be distinguished from **situational**, **cosmic** or **dramatic irony**.

- Woman spills curry on her white dress and exclaims, 'Oh, that's just great!'
- Mum says to her child: 'After completing your most important activities, make sure you play around with your maths homework.'

4. **Banter Principle: another sub-principle** (being impolite on the surface only)

5. **Various scales**

(a) Cost-benefit scale

(b) Indirectness scale

(c) Optionality scale

(d) Authority (*where in the hierarchy?*) and Social distance (*how close?*)

The higher up in the hierarchy, and the more distant the addressee is, the greater the need for the addresser to (a) *minimise cost* to addressee, (b) be *more indirect* to the addressee, and (c) provide *more options* for the addressee.

## 6. Comparing cultures

(a) Are the categories ethnocentric in themselves?

(b) Can we 'weigh' the maxims against each other (the English are more 'tactful', the Japanese are more 'modest')?

(Compare this against the *Journal of Pragmatics* articles at the end.)

## 7. To summarise

**Rhetoric:** 'The point about the term *rhetoric* . . . is the focus it places on a goal-oriented speech situation, in which s uses language in order to produce a particular effect in the mind of h' [Leech, p. 15].

**Interpersonal** and **textual** rhetorics:

*Interpersonal rhetoric:* CP, PP, IP, etc.

*Textual rhetoric:* Processibility Principle, Clarity Principle, Economy Principle, and Expressivity Principle.

## [8. Some texts for analysis \(click here\)](#)

## BROWN & LEVINSON

### 9. Brown and Levinson's strictures on (i) Sperber and Wilson; and (ii) Leech

[W]e do not believe that these recent modifications of the Gricean programme are wholly successful, and specifically do not consider that wholesale reduction of the maxims has been well motivated.

[I]f we are permitted to invent a maxim for every regularity in language use, not only will we have an infinite number of maxims, but pragmatic theory will be too unconstrained to permit the recognition of any counter-examples . . . the distribution of politeness (who has to be polite to whom) is socially controlled: it is not as if there were some basic modicum of politeness owed by each to all . . . every discernible pattern of language use does not, *eo ipso*, require a maxim or principle to produce it. [By the way, *eo ipso* /eɪəʊ 'ɪpsəʊ/= 'by that very act (or quality); through that alone; thereby'.]

### 10. Politeness is different from Co-operation

### 11. Brown and Levinson's 'face'

(a) Negative face

= **Don't disturb me, leave me alone; don't inconvenience me**

(b) Positive face

= **Like me, and be envious of me, appreciate me**

### 12. Face-threatening acts (FTAs)

(a) Threatening H's negative face

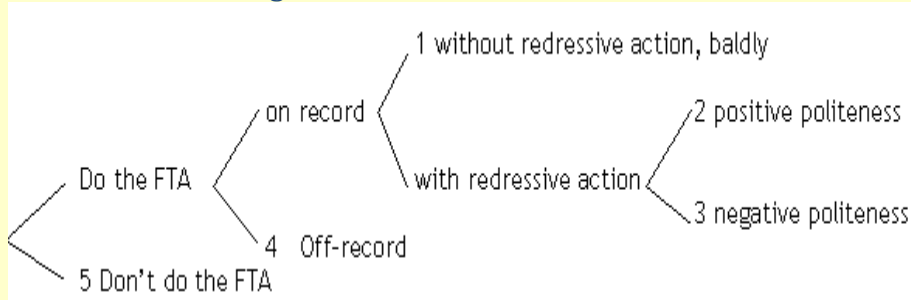
(b) Threatening H's positive face

(c) Threatening S's negative face

(d) Threatening S's positive face

Haugh (2007) suggests three perspectives: **expressive politeness**<sup>1</sup> (from the speaker's perspective), **classificatory politeness**<sup>1</sup> (from the hearer's perspective) and **interactional achievement politeness**<sup>1</sup> (the joint accomplishment by both speaker and hearer).

### 13. Choice of strategies available



*off-record* = FTA done ambiguously;

*on-record* = FTA done unambiguously

*with redressive action* = FTA done taking into account politeness requirements;

*baldly* = FTA done bluntly

### 14. The variables is assessing the seriousness of an FTA

(Compare this with the continua in tenor: power, frequency and affective involvement)

(a) D: 'social distance of S and H' [= **Leech's horizontal distance**]

(b) P: 'relative "power" of S and H' [= **Leech's vertical distance**]

(c) R: 'absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture' [= **Leech's cost-benefit scale**]

Formula:  $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$

D1: Excuse me, would you by any chance have the time?

D2: Got the time, mate?

P1: Excuse me sir, would it be all right if I smoke?

P2: Mind if I smoke?

R1: Look, I'm terribly sorry to bother you but would there be any chance of your lending me just enough money to get a railway ticket to get home to Penang. I must have dropped my wallet and I just don't know what to do.

R2: Hey, got change for a dollar?

[See Spencer-Oatey and Žegarac \(2017\), 'Power, Solidarity and \(Im\)politeness' \(in LumiNUS Files\)](#)

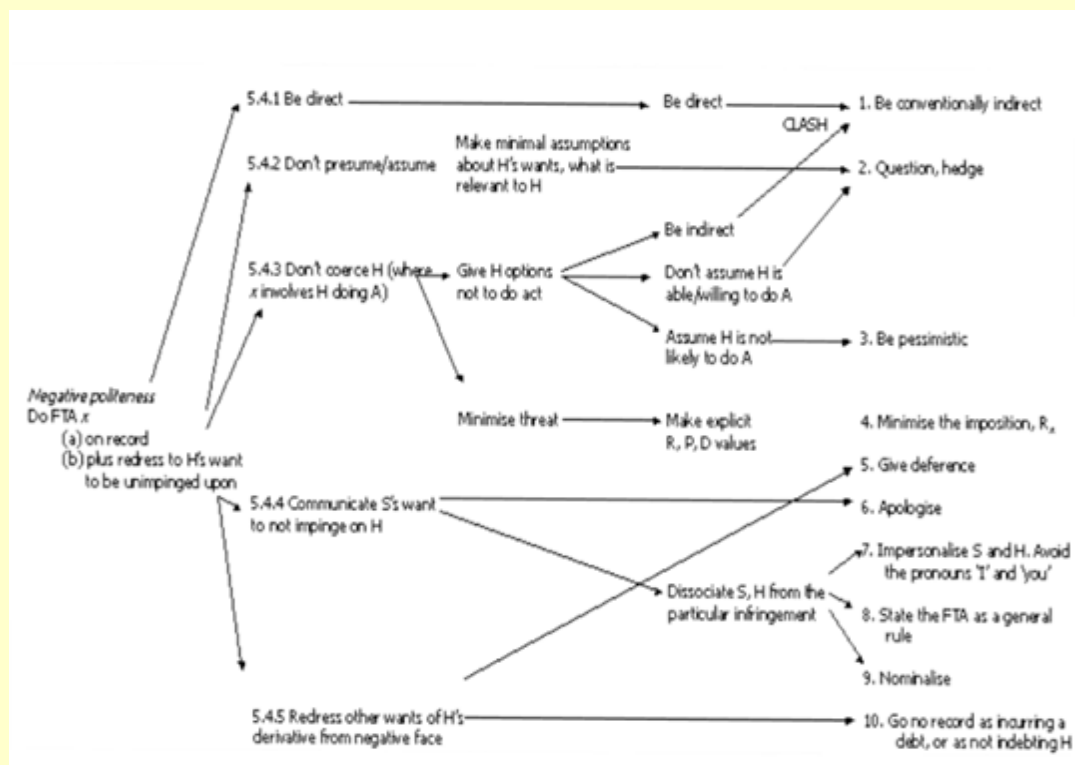
They quote B&L but also refer to French and Raven's (1959) categories of power:

- Legitimate P (a functional of the formally institutionalised social roles of participants)
- Referent P (the power a person has due to the qualities they are perceived as having by others)
- Expert P (the power a person has in virtue of their knowledge and skills)
- Reward P (the extent and way a person is in a position to reward others if others act in an approved fashion)
- Coercive P (the use of pressure on others to comply)

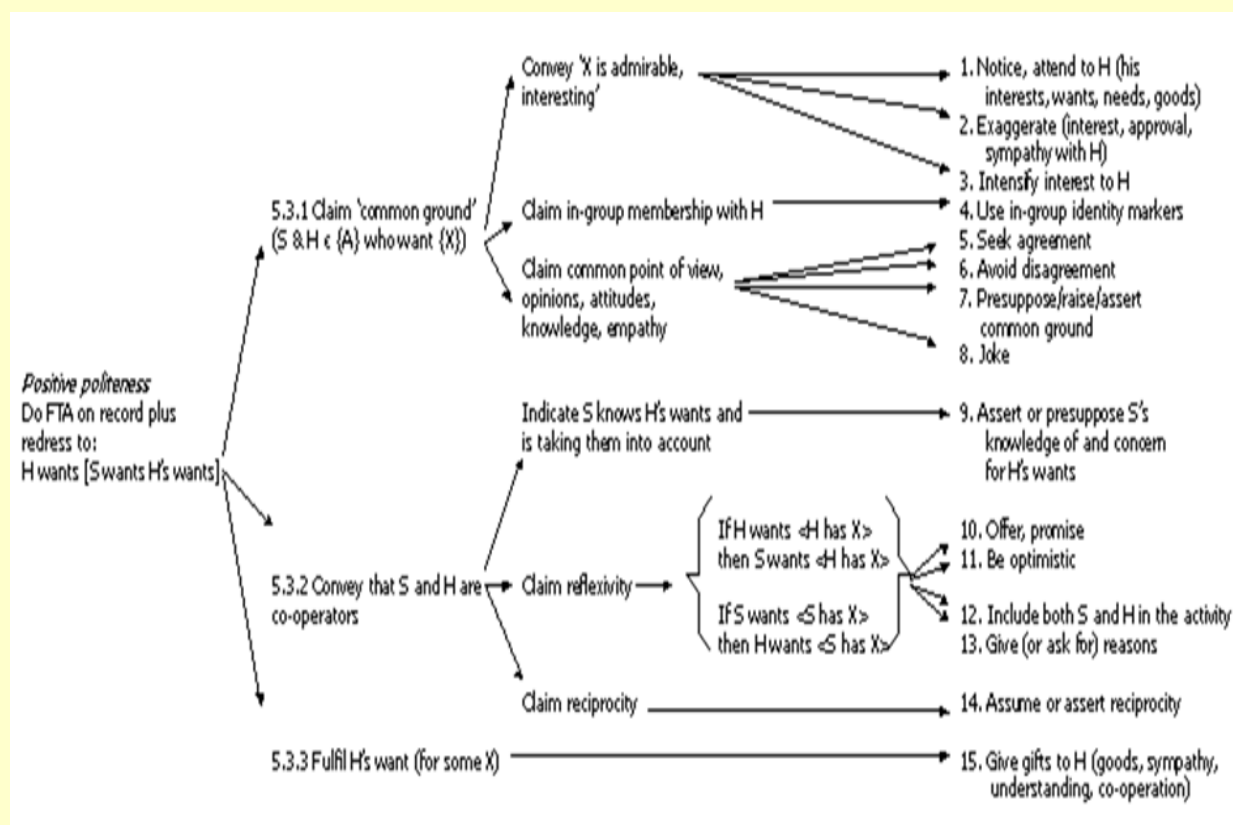
Situation: A group of six professionals working in a university in the UK are members of a job interview panel. They are meeting before he interviews to agree on the various details of how those are to be conducted. The members of the panel (whose real names are not given here) are: **James Jones** (Professor), **Dr Susan Smith** (Lecturer), **Ms Melinda May** (student rep), **Mr Bill Browne** (Head of Dept), **Professor Rachel Roberts** (Faculty Dean) and **Dr Peter Paterson** (external panel member from another faculty).

The meeting started 5 minutes late because Rachel was late, as she had another meeting before this. James suggested that the panel should discuss and agree on questions. During this discussion Rachel arrived at sat at a seat left for her. Rachel thanked the panel for starting off the discussion and finalising he arrangements. James suggested that a member with good handwriting should volunteer to write down the questions, and each person could dictate the question. Susan volunteered to do this. When Peter started dictating he question, 'What contribution to the post will you make as a team player', Bill interrupted him suggesting that he should begin by describing why team work was important. Peter explained calmly that he would give the context in the actual interview but was just dictating the question for the record.

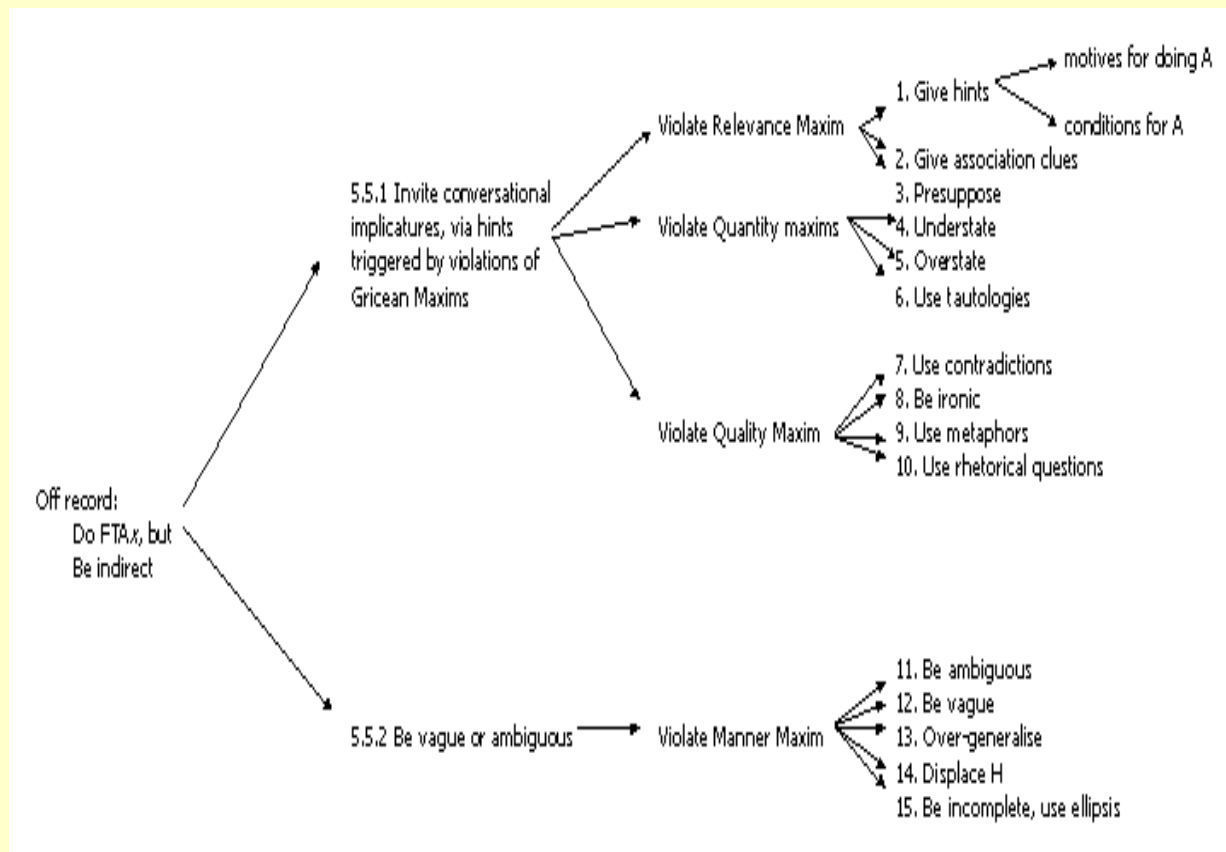
## Negative politeness strategies



## Positive politeness strategies



## Off-record strategies



## 15. Some critiques

- Western bias (eg Sachiko Ide (1993) talks about the Japanese concept of discernment and Gu (1990) talks about the Chinese concept of *lǐmào*).
- 'Surely ... the degree to which a social act is considered to be an imposition, ie,  $R_x$ , depends crucially on P and D. So in order for the model person to be able to assess the value for R, s/he has to be able to calculate values for D and P first. No indication is given as to how this might be done.' (Watts *et al.*, p. 9)
- 'The fundamental notion of face ... must be questioned more thoroughly' (p. 9). 'We merely wish to suggest that there is a danger of generalising a metaphor which implies the need to maintain status (cf. "to lose face"), and the need to struggle for status and thereby power (cf. "to save face") and the need to pretend that what one says or does really does reflect what one thinks whilst not knowing that this is not the case (cf. "to put on a good face") to other forms of socio-cultural organisation' (p. 10).
- 'It is not clear whether Goffman's original notion of face can be extended in the way Brown and Levinson extend it to cover freedom of action and freedom from imposition ... How is negative face to be understood in a culture in which the possessions of individuals are at one and the same time the possessions of the community, or in which the individual's right to act depends crucially on the consent of the community?' (p. 10)

Spencer-Oatey (2002) revises the notion of face (pp. 540–542), taken from Culpeper (2005).

### Face

(defined with reference to Goffman (1972: 5): 'the positive social *value* a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' [Spencer-Oatey's emphasis])

Quality face: 'We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positive in terms of our personal qualities, eg, our confidence, abilities, appearance etc.'

Social identity face: 'We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, eg, as group leader, valued customer, close friend.'

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### Sociality rights

(defined as 'fundamental personal/ social *entitlements* that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others' [Spencer-Oatey's emphasis])

Equity rights: 'We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly, that we are not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about, that we are not taken advantage of or exploited, and that we receive the benefits to which we are entitled.'

Association rights: 'We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them.'

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## 16. The speech-act v. pragmatics approach: rules v. principles

The speech-act approach emphasises **rules** rather than **principles**. Phonology, syntax and semantics are governed by rules; pragmatics is governed by principles (or maxims) (Thomas 1995: 107–8):

- Rules are all or nothing, principles are more or less.
- Rules are exclusive, principles can co-occur.
- Rules are constitutive, principles are regulative.
- Rules are definite, principles are probabilistic.
- Rules are conventional, principles are motivated.

[17. More texts for analysis](#) (click here)

## 18. General points

- We might need to distinguish between (a) good intentions towards the hearer, (b) beneficial or favourable speech acts to the hearer, and (c) polite surface formulations. They generally correlate but not necessarily. The labels *politeness* and *courtesy* are often used interchangeably and sometimes in relation to these three levels
- Both the Leech as well as the Brown-and-Levinson framework have built into their frameworks features of the context, in particular the *tenor*. Brown and Levinson also bring into question the *need* or the *urgency* for the FTA to be performed. This is also a contextual feature.

## SOME INITIAL DEVELOPMENTS ON IMPOLITENESS

### 19. Developments on impoliteness

But some researchers maintain that it is necessary to extend the strategies to cover *nastiness* or *impoliteness*:

**Rudanko**: '[A]cting in a way other than politely [is not] necessarily the same as the absence of politeness ... Nastiness consists in adding something gratuitously to offend the hearer... Given the scale from 1 to 5 [...] with 1 being "Do the FTA on record without redressive action, baldly", this new strategy may be numbered and labelled [as the 0-strategy] "Do the FTA on record with aggravating action employing nastiness"' (Rudanko 1993: 167).

**Culpeper** (1996, 1998, 2005) has a theory of impoliteness, which he finds especially useful for dramatic dialogue: 'in drama, impoliteness is not thrown in haphazardly for audience entertainment: it serves other purposes. Conflict in interaction appears either as a symptom, or as a cause of, social disharmony, and where there are tensions between characters we are more likely to see developments in character and plot' (1998: 86).

**Bousfield** (2007) reworks Culpeper's superstrategies (themselves based on Brown & Levinson), and restructures them 'along simpler lines with two overarching "tactics"' as given on page 95 of his book:

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#### I. On record impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to *explicitly* (a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant, or some combination thereof. The attack is made in an unambiguous way given the context in which it occurs.



## 2. Off record impoliteness

The use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant's face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature (cf. Grice [1975] 1989) and can be cancelled (eg. denied, or an account / post-modification / elaboration offered, etc.) but where '... one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others' (Culpeper 2005: 44), given the context in which it occurs.

*Sarcasm and the Withholding of Politeness where it is expected* would also come under this heading, as follows:

### (a) Sarcasm

Sarcasm constitutes the use of individual or combined strategies which, on the surface, appear to be appropriate but which are meant to be taken as meaning the opposite in terms of face-management. The utterance that appears, on the surface, to positively constitute, maintain, or enhance the face of the intended recipient(s) actually threatens, attacks and/or damages the face of the recipient(s) (see Culpeper 2005) given the context in which it occurs.

### (b) Withhold politeness

More specifically, withhold politeness where politeness would appear to be expected or mandatory. Withholding politeness is within the Off-Record category as '[...] politeness has to be communicated [...] the absence of communicated politeness may, *ceteris paribus*, be taken as the absence of polite attitude' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 5)

Bousfield also develops the dynamics of impoliteness and computes a series of response options after the 'triggering' event. (Chapters 6 and 7) and the way the turn-taking system can be exploited in this context (Chapter 8). He talks about '**pre-impoliteness**' sequences: examples in italics below.

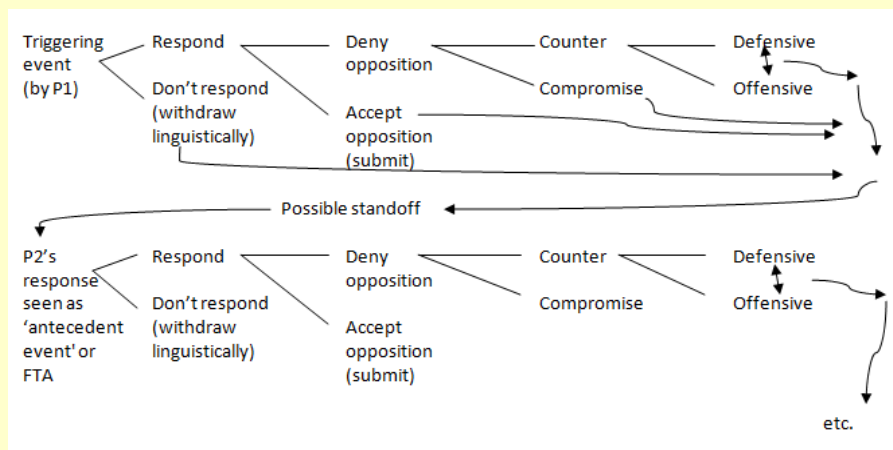
S1 is a male sergeant inspecting the barrack room; S3 is a female recruit. S1 inspects S3's clothing.

S1: so where . have you been washing your kit

S2: in the toilets sergeant

S1: in the fucking toilets . *right you people pin your ears back and listen to me* . okay it is not acceptable to <stop> washing your kit . you will wash your kit people tell me that females are more hygienic than men . at the moment I find that very very hard to believe I can guarantee you the males over there have been taking their kit to the laundry . you people . so far are not impressing me . disgusting . alright your kit is in the locker but it is not fucking clean

Once the triggering event occurs, the parties have various options as illustrated in the diagram.



(From Bousfield, p 202)

S1 Gordon Ramsay (restaurant owner and head chef) berates S2 Owen (Chef de Partie – ie a middle ranking chef)

S1: what's going on here you ..... what is going on what about <indistinct> fucking foie gras . eh you arsehole . you lost it again . you lost it again . what's your big deal . why don't you fuck off home then go on fuck off home then eh arsehole . why don't you fuck off home then .. why don't you fuck off home ..

S2: I don't want to Gordon



S1: why are you fucking it up  
 S2: <indistinct>  
 S1: have you lost it  
 S2: no Gordon  
 S1: well fucking wake up dickhead  
 S2: yes Gordon .....

S1: what's the big deal <why isn't there any fucking foie gras> do you want to go home and cry to mummy again .  
 S2: \*no Gordon\*

S1: \*are you\* a fucking wuss [= weak, unmanly person]  
 S2: no Gordon ..

S1: guy puts himself in the shit fucks the kitchen stands there bubbling like a fucking baby .....

S2: sorry Gordon ....

S1: *have you any bite back as a guy have you any bollocks you*  
 S2: yes Gordon

S1: *have you fuck as far as I'm concerned they're in your arsehole*  
 S2: <oui Gordon>

## Culpeper (2011)

### 20. A revised notion of impoliteness: impoliteness as *perlocution*

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My own definitions of impoliteness have evolved over the last dozen years, the last being:

Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communities face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2). (Culpeper 2005a: 38)

This is not the definition that I will be using in this book ... Below I give the definition of impoliteness that reflects my current thinking. It will be elaborated throughout this book.

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not.

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*Intention* is seen as one component, and not provide the over-riding basis for analysis as it was in the standard Gricean approach.

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For some definitions of impoliteness, intentionality is criterial. However, people take offence even if they know that the behaviour that caused it was not fully intentional. We can accommodate this by taking intentionality to be a scalar concept comprised of various components, not all of which may be in focus. People can still take offence if

they know intentionality to be weakly involved, that is, somebody was merely responsible for an act and/or could foresee its offensive effects.

## 21. An overall movement towards a complex of factors

He agrees with Ross, for example, about ‘the tendency to underestimate the impact of situational factors and to overestimate the role of dispositional factors in controlling behaviour’ (Ross 1977: 183).

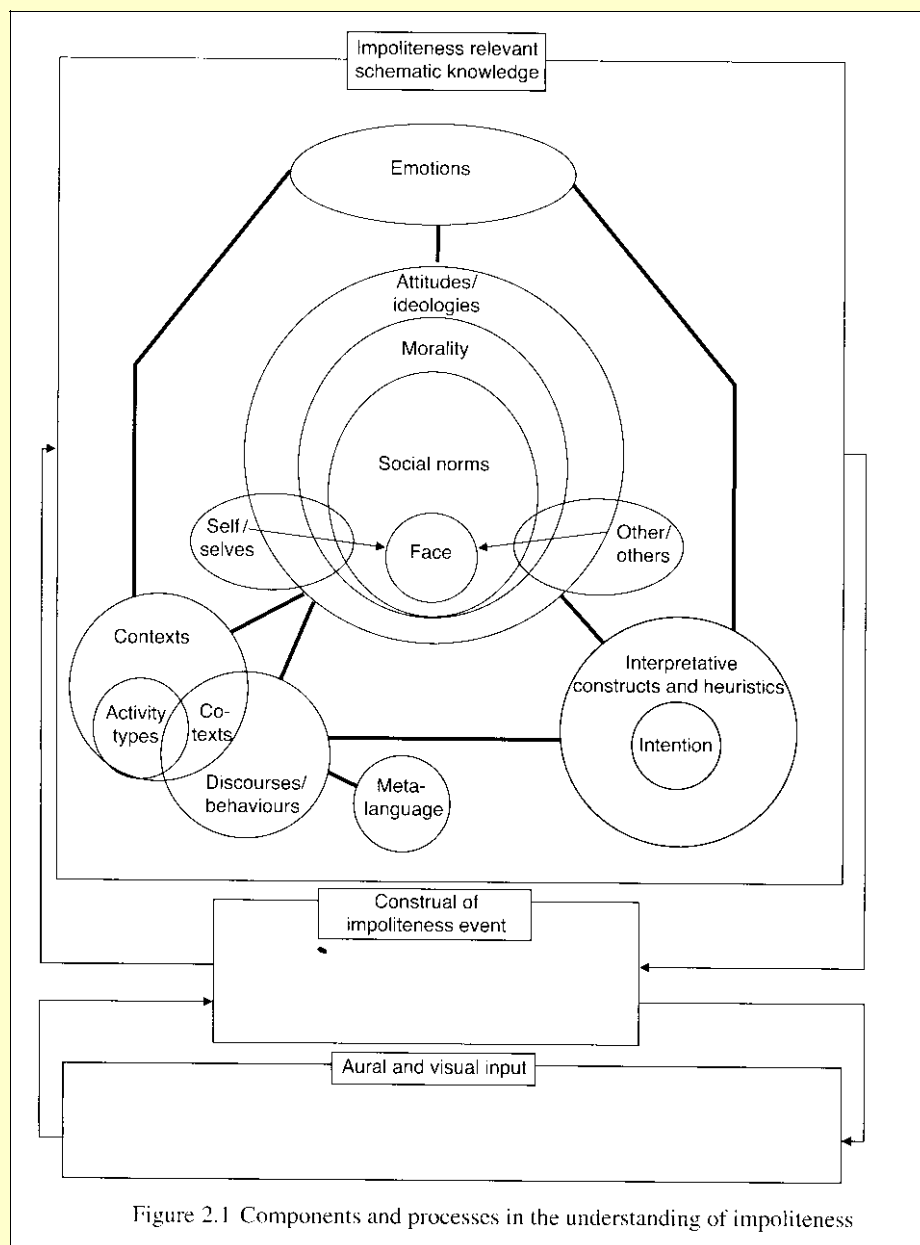
The overall framework for understanding the components and processes in understanding impoliteness is provided in the diagram below.

Three rectangular **boxes** represent important and identifiable components.

**Line arrows** show linkages between the components. Understanding is a combination of top-down processes (ie determined by knowledge in memory) and bottom-up processes (ie determined by visual/aural stimuli) and comprehensive is cyclic.

The **thick bold lines** connecting the items around the edge to those more in the centre are best conceived of as multiple and diffuse (two-way) connections of varying strengths to all other concepts in the box.

The framework can be generalisable to consider *politeness* rather than just *impoliteness*.



## 22. Metalanguage

The labels provide an evaluation, which can be mapped onto a conceptual space (p. 10).

Table 3.13 *Metalinguistic labels provided for 100 reported impoliteness events*

Semantic domain	Metalinguistic label
PATRONISING (x32)	patronising/patronised (x5), arrogant (4), condescending (x3), put down (x3), snobby (x2), mocking (x3), degrading (x2), disregarding, belittling, disrespectful, abuse of power, bossy, authoritarian, superiority, showing off authority, take the piss, showing off
INCONSIDERATE (x28)	inconsiderate (x4), insensitive (x4), unthoughtful (x3), thoughtless (2), indifferent, unfeeling, unhelpful, spoke without thinking, offhand, offish, careless, uncaring, tactful (not), unsubtle, jumping to conclusion, impatient, harsh, blunt, abrupt
RUDE (x23)	rude (x22), impolite
AGGRESSIVE (x 18)	aggressive/aggression (x6), bullying (x5), intimidating/intimidation (x4), violent, threatening, confrontational
INAPPROPRIATE (x 16)	inappropriate (x4), unnecessary/not necessary (x5), unacceptable/not acceptable (x 2), over-the-top (x 2), over-familiar, make something into a big deal
HURTFUL (x 16)	hurtful (x 16), insult/insulting (x3), mean (x2), nasty, not very nice, spiteful, cruel, heartless, unkind, bitter
JOKING (x7)	joking, banter, teasing, possible joke, harsh joke, humour, joking
CHILDISH (x6)	childish (x3), ignorant (x2), immature
TABOO (x6)	swearing (x2), taboo, toilet humour, bad taste, non-PC
OTHER GROUPS AND ITEMS (x44)	offensive (x3), selfish (x3), sarcasm (x2), sarcastic, sexist (x2), unfair, unprofessional, unreasonable, anger, judgemental, shown up, urging me, angry, annoying, irritating, bitchy, common, laddish, confused, defensive, ganging up, grumpy, horrible, idiotic, impersonal, intrusive, judgmental, mooching, moody, obnoxious, out of character, petty, scheming

## 23. Conventionalised formulaic impoliteness which can be intensified

There are conventionalised formulaic politeness and impoliteness and they can be intensified.

### Insults

#### 1. Personalised negative vocatives

- [you] [fucking/ rotten/ dirty/ fat/ little/ etc.] [moron/ fuck/ plonker/ dickhead/ berk/ pig/ shit/ bastard/ loser/ liar/ minx/ brat/ slut/ squirt/ sod/ bugger/ etc.] [you]

#### 2. Personalised negative assertions

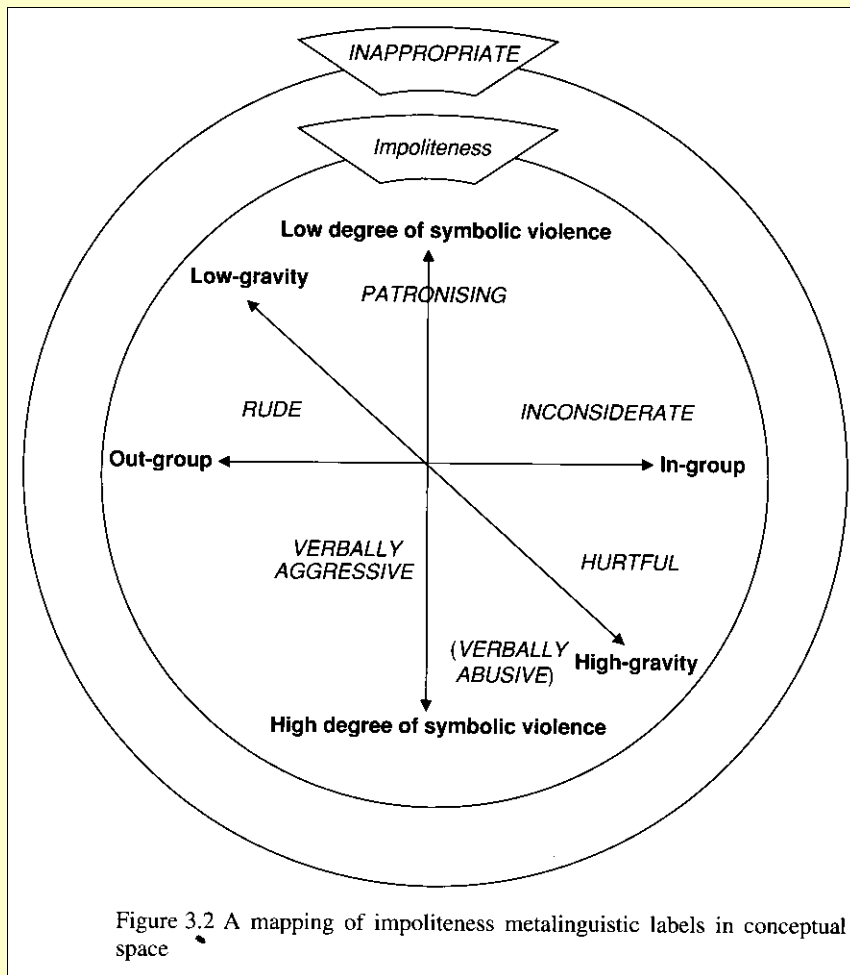
- [you] [are] [so/ such a] [shit/ stink/ thick/ stupid/ bitchy/ bitch/ hypocrite/ disappointment/ gay/ nuts/ nuttier than a fruit cake/ hopeless/ pathetic/ fussy / terrible/ fat/ ugly/ etc.]

- [you] [can't do] [anything right/ basic arithmetic/ etc.]

- [you] [disgust me] / [make me] [sick/ etc.]

#### 3. Personalised negative references

- [your] [stinking/ little] [mouth/ act/ arse/ body/ corpse/ hands/ guts/ trap/ breath/ etc.]



#### 4 Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)

- [the] [daft] [bimbo]
- [she] ['s] [nutzo]

#### Pointed criticisms/ complaints

- [that/ this/ it] [is/ was] [absolutely/ extraordinarily/ unspeakably/ etc.] [bad/ rubbish/ crap/ horrible/ terrible/ etc.]

#### Unpalatable questions and/ or presuppositions

- why do you make my life impossible?
- which lie are you telling me?
- what's gone wrong now?
- you want to argue with me or you want to go to jail?
- I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience.

#### Condescensions (see also the use of 'little' in Insults)

- [that] ['s/ is being] [babyish/ childish/ etc.]

#### Message enforcers

- listen here (preface)
- you got [it/ that]? (tag)
- do you understand [me]? (tag)

#### Dismissals

- [go] [away]
- [get] [lost/ out]
- [fuck/ piss/ shove] [off]

Rank ordered offensive words in Britain in 2000 (1997 rank order in brackets)

1. cunt (1)	11. shag (8)	21. bugger (21)
2. motherfucker (2)	12. whore (13)	22. balls (22)
3. fuck (3)	13. twat (10)	23. Jew (24)
4. wanker (4)	14. piss off (12)	24. sodding (23)
5. nigger (11)	15. spastic (14)	25. Jesus Christ (26)
6. bastard (5)	16. slag (18)	26. crap (25)
7. prick (7)	17. shit (15)	27. bloody (27)
8. bollocks (6)	18. dickhead (19)	28. God (28)
9. arsehole (9)	19. pissed off (16)	
10. Paki (17)	20. arse (20)	

## 24. The co-text affects politeness construal

The reciprocity norm (Gouldner 1960) proposes that behaviour, prosocial, antisocial or of some other kind, should be matched – it is a kind of ‘tit-for-tat’ prescription. Setting the (im)politeness threshold at a particular point constrains the interlocutor to match it. Reciprocal polite ‘thank yous’ sometimes repeating themselves over several exchanges, are not uncommon in British culture. Conversely, reciprocal impolite exchanges are also not uncommon. People tend not to ‘turn the other cheek’, but to retaliate in kind in British and North American cultures. Research in aggression has repeatedly shown that verbal insults and taunts are reciprocated (see the references given in Baron and Richardson 1994: 142).

## 25. Spencer-Oatey’s face

Culpeper uses Spencer-Oatey’s expansion of B&L face:

- *Quality face*: the desire for people to evaluate us positive in terms of our personal qualities (competence, abilities, appearance, etc.)
- *Social identity face*: the desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles (group leader, valued customer, close friend, etc.)
- *Relational face*: the relationship between the participants (eg distance–closeness, equality–inequality, perceptions of role rights and obligations), and the ways in which the relationship is managed or negotiated

He also employs her notion of **sociality rights** (fundamental social entitlements that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others), which involve

- **equity rights** (fairness and reciprocity)
- **association rights** (being entitled to associate with others in keeping with the type of relationship they have with them)

## 26. Summary

The degree of offence depends on

- *Attitudinal factors*
  - *which (and to what extent) expectations/desires/beliefs infringed are cognitively active*
  - *their emotional sensitivity*
- *Linguistic-pragmatic factors*
  - *how the offence is conventionally ranked*
  - *the use of intensification (taboo, prosodic reinforcement)*
  - *amount of inferential work required*
  - *how the behaviour matches up with other semiotic signals or the context*

- *Contextual and co-textual factors*
  - *how positively or negatively valued the behaviour is in the culture*
  - *how far face (sociality rights) are exposed*
  - *how far power structures are abused*
  - *how far the behaviour is legitimised*
  - *whether the behaviour is in- or out-group*
  - *the (im)politeness threshold set by the co-text*
  - *the degree of intentionality ascribed to the actor*
  - *the kind of person the communicator is understood to be*
  - *the perspective of the person taking offence*

## 27. Haugh & Bousfield's (2012) mock impoliteness

- developing from the notion of banter ('clearly untrue')

- but 'banter or mock impoliteness might allow someone to utter something closer to their true feelings in an exaggerated form at the same time as posing it in a manner where it will be interpreted on the surface at least as non-serious' (Mills 2003:124).

- Brown and Levinson (1987) themselves note that while insulting someone in front of an audience in a joking manner may be treated by the audience as 'merely an assertion of intimacy', the addressee, on the other hand, who has been 'wounded by an accurate dart', may be 'forced to accept it lightly even though he may know better' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 229).

## 28. Multiple functions of mock impoliteness

The first function associated with mock impoliteness is **reinforcing solidarity**, which Culpeper (2011) suggests generally 'takes place between equals, typically friends, and is reciprocal' - although Haugh's (2010, 2011) analysis of humour deployed in interactions between unacquainted Australian speakers of English suggests that this generalisation does not necessarily hold across all varieties of English. The second function, **cloaked coercion**, involves the use of humour 'in the service of power to minimally disguise the oppressive intent, ie as a repressive discourse strategy' (Holmes, 2000: 176). The third and final function of mock impoliteness is that it may be deployed for the **amusement** of at least some of the participants, namely, as a form of exploitative humour that 'involves pain for the target but pleasure for other participants' (Culpeper, 2011: 215).

## 29. 'Non-polite' rather than impolite:

The notion of 'non-impolite' is used here to refer to an 'allowable offence' that is evaluated as neither polite nor impolite, but in being potentially open to evaluation as impolite is closer in some respects, of course, to the latter. What we mean by 'offence' is that the talk or conduct involves a threat to the target's person or identity (cf. 'face' in a Goffmanian sense as utilised by Bousfield, 2008, 2010).

... we suggest that mock impoliteness should be analysed as an evaluation in its own right rather than being seen as simply a variant form of politeness or impoliteness.

## 30. Data

(1) GCSAusE02: 2:24 "Threaten his life"

(Tony has been talking about his night out and the service he got from one of the bartenders)

102 T: and then he was just like- spent most of the  
 103 time like flirting with these chicks. (0.9)  
 104 while he's meant to be working?  
 105 (1.2)  
 106 T: po:or work ethic, (0.5) that's what that is.  
 107 (0.7)  
 108 A: ho:rrible,  
 109 (1.0)  
 110 T: .hh  
 111 A: should find out where he lives and threaten  
 112 his life,  
 113 (4.6)

114 A: there's one thing I forgot to bring,=  
115 T: =f(hh)ind out where he li(hh)ves and  
116 threaten his li:fe (.) hehahaha I'm so(h)rry,  
117 .hh I only just caught up to what you were

(2) 12:10:08: 0:46 "Biscuit"

(James reaches for a biscuit and then consumes most of it in one bite)

31 B: so that'll make it about, four hundred  
32 and seventy five will it?  
33 (0.8)  
34 J: m(h)m. (0.2) I'd say so.  
33 (0.4)  
33 S: ba:sically that run you went on this  
34 morning James you might as well've  
35 not bothered. ((laughs loudly))  
36 M: ((laughs))  
37 B: ((laughs))  
38 J: ((pulls face, shakes head, then  
39 shrugs and smiles whilst eating))  
40 D: ((laughs))  
41 Se: ((laughs))

(3) GCSAusE06: 1:03 "Nobhead"

(Nathan is telling Danz on which day of the week he was born)

23 N: so you were born  
24 on Sunday, (0.5) of the fir:st month, (0.5) of (.)  
25 the twenty-seventh day of nineteen eighty three=  
26 D: =↑no:, not ↑February ma:n  
27 (0.2)  
28 N: oh, yo:u're a nobhea:d.  
29 (0.6)  
30 D: °what° ( . ) h ha ↑hehehehe .hhhh

(4) 12:10:08: 2:00 "Media whore"

80 S: hey was on Monday mornin (.) again on the  
81 telly: (.) an Monday evening twice on  
82 the fucking news (1.0) fucking four times  
83 on the the fucking telly ((laughs))  
84 M: ((laughs))  
85 B: ((laughs))  
86 D: fucking 'ell  
87 Se: ((laughs))  
88 S: an they only played my bit they didn't  
89 play the lads' [before ]  
90 D: [did they]  
91 S: thi played my bit yeah (.) cos I think I'd  
92 been I'd I'd bigged up the North East  
93 people y'see said what they wanted to  
94 [hear]  
95 D: [you:] big headed you big headed [bastard]  
96 S: [( )]  
97 All: ((lots of laughter))  
97 D: [you big headed ] fucking bastard  
98 S: [yeah cos I were] \*all\* li(h)ke that 'Good old  
99 North East'



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## EL4252: Honours Year: Some Texts for Analysis: Politeness

### Adversarial discourse

In a court of law, court hearings are presided over by the judge, and there are two parties in dispute – this could be the plaintiff (the party claiming redress or damages) against the defendant in civil cases, or the prosecutor (generally the state) against the defendant in criminal cases. In some hearings, there might be a jury. In parliament, in countries where parties are strongly pitted against each other, the speaker is the chair.

	Address direction	
Direct and re-direct examination	Prosecution/defence → witness	Witness → prosecution/defence
Cross and re-cross examination	Defence/prosecution → witness	Witness → defence/ prosecution
Judge	Judge → witness	Witness → judge

### Address options in courtroom discourse

Cheng & Wagner, *Exploring Courtroom Discourse: The Language of Power and Control*

### A. Politeness in legal settings: Extract from Bill Clinton's deposition

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/pjones/docs/clintondep031398.htm>

(Mr Fisher is Paula Jones's lawyer; Mr Bennett is Bill Clinton's. Q = questions [from Fisher], A = answers [from Clinton]; witness = Clinton)

**Q.** (1) Let me hand you what has been marked Deposition Exhibit 5.

**Mr Fisher:** (2) I'm afraid I only have one extra copy of this one, but if you'll send it back to me, you can look at that copy.

**Mr Bennett:** (3) Do you have a copy for the Judge?

**Mr Fisher:** (4) No, but I'll send that one down after I ask only one or two questions. If you have an objection so that she needs to see it, I'll pass that down.

**Mr Bennett:** (5) I could make a suggestion. If you have a series of documents you're going to be questioning about, out of courtesy to the other lawyers and the Court, I would be happy to take those and reproduce them so there's enough copies for everyone.

**Mr Fisher:** (6) I think there are only one or two letters for which I only have one copy.

**Judge Wright:** (7) Why don't we take him up on his offer and make a copy for the Court and one for Mr Ruff and I'd, I don't know who else. Mr Bristow might like to have a copy.

**Mr Bennett:** (8) Could you give me, maybe you could go on to another area or some direct questions to the president, and give me everything that you want copied, and I'll have several copies made.

**Judge Wright:** (9) Actually you can give them to Barry Ward, if you don't want Mr Bennett to see them until you present them, and so you don't mind if Barry takes them?

**Mr Bennett:** (10) No, Your Honour, I'm just trying to expedite things.

**Judge Wright:** (11) Sure.

**Mr Fisher:** (12) The things that I have only one copy of are things that were produced just in the last day or so, and with travel arrangements here and everything, I had a hard time co-ordinating that.

**The Witness:** (13) I know what this document is.

**Mr Bennett:** (14) Wait until he asks you a question.

**Mr Fisher:** (15) At the next break I'll do that.

**Judge Wright:** (16) All right.

**Mr Bennett:** (17) Okay, fine. Okay. What's your question to the president?

**Mr Fisher:** (18) Did you have an objection about this particular –

**Mr Bennett:** (19) No, I don't have an objection.

**Q.** (20) Is this a copy of a sexual harassment policy that you signed when you were the governor of the state of Arkansas?

**A.** (21) It is. I signed it in 1987, and I'm fairly sure that I was, we were the first or one of the very first states to actually have a clearly defined sexual harassment policy.

**Mr Fisher:** (22) Objection, non-responsive beginning with the words, 'I'm fairly sure.'

**Q.** (23) Mr President, the criteria there under Roman numeral III were actually federal guidelines that you were adopting as the policy in the state, correct?

**A.** (24) Yes.

---

## B. Politeness in Parliamentary Debates

(source: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/>)

**Mrs Gillian Shephard** (North-West Norfolk): (1) I thank the right honourable Gentleman for making available to me a copy of his statement and the report at the correct time. All honourable Members will have found it helpful to have had individual copies of the parts of the report appropriate to their constituencies. I also welcome the right honourable Gentleman to his new responsibilities. I congratulate him, and I wish him well. We regret that his post has been demoted from Cabinet rank, feeling that that illustrates the Government's attitude to transport. However, I am sure that the right honourable Gentleman will perform his task well. I only hope that his ministerial career will not be affected by the poisoned chalice that he has been handed today. I am delighted that he has made an oral statement. It has come at the last possible moment, but that was not of his doing. [...] I have a number of questions for the right honourable Gentleman. Will he confirm the answer that the Minister for Transport in London gave on 27 July to my honourable Friend the Member for North Essex (Mr Jenkin) that less money will be spent next year on road construction and maintenance than was spent this year? If the position has altered in the light of his announcement, can he tell us by how much and in what way? [...] We welcome the setting up of properly resourced and equipped regional traffic control centres. Given that so many of the road schemes that the Minister has today delayed or scrapped have been the subject of reviews because of congestion problems, how quickly does he envisage road users experiencing real improvements on, say, the M1 and the M6? Many will be listening to his reply as they sit in jams and I do not think that further studies will be much comfort to them. [...]

**Dr Reid:** (2) I shall attempt to answer only 110 of those questions. First, I thank the right honourable Member for South-West Norfolk (Mrs Shephard) for her congratulations and am deeply moved by her concern about my future career prospects, but I think that I would rather take care of them. The fact that no less a person than the Deputy Prime Minister is in charge of the Department is a sign of the priority that we place on transport. As for the right honourable Lady's other questions, I shall avoid answering those that were merely personal abuse. [...] As for road maintenance, we have restored the cuts that took place under the Conservative Government.

**Mr Bernard Jenkin** (North Essex): (3) What about money for local authority roads maintenance?

**Dr Reid:** (4) The honourable Gentleman has a cheek interrupting as he does, when the Conservative Government, after 18 years, left us in a worse mess than any other Government have done. I shall give one example. The right honourable Lady had the brass neck [= *over-confidence, effrontery*] to criticise us implicitly about bypasses. We have given the go-ahead for 15. The highest number in any year during the 18 years of Conservative control of the transport system was 16, so this year, we have almost reached the highest figure that the Tories ever managed to achieve. Their record in their last three years was as follows: in 1994-95, they started the sum total of three bypasses; in 1995-96, they started

one; and in 1996-97, they started one. So, this year we are starting three times more than they did in their last three years and they ought to consider those figures before they speak (31/7/98)

### C. Politeness in a Singaporean 'talk cock' session

(source: Yang Mei Ling 1987/88)

- <S1> (1) What you say about slowdancing you know er -
- <S2> (2) Ya the girl grab me ah I don't want ah, then Asean scholar some more
- <S3> (3) (who's she?)
- <S2> (4) Ya you don't know, many years our junior one. I go there and 'buaya' [*flirt*, SCE from Malay] also you see. So wah - I tell you really 'shio'k' [*enjoyable*, SCE from colloq. Malay] ah then=
- <S1> (5) =She feels awkward also lah
- <S2> (6) Yah
- <S1> (7) Yah I will
- <S2> (8) I feel \*awkward\*, you know what I believe slowdance is or not?
- <S1> (9) \*You did it also what\*
- <S3> (10) Someone you really know well.
- <S2> (11) Yah because you know what, because I tell myself, when I slowdance ah, I can feel the electricity you know.
- <Others> (12) [*laugh*]
- <S1> (13) [*laugh*] ah so highly charged one ah [*laugh*]
- <S2> (14) I mean - it's suppose to release my energy you know - ZA::H
- <S1> (15) \* [*laugh*] Wah aiyo [*excl. (mock?) surprise*] -\*
- <Others> (16) \* [*laugh*]\*
- <S1> (17) I - I - I dare not go near you [*laugh*]
- <Others> (18) [*laugh*]
- <S1> (19) Sounds like a typical *haam sap lou* [*lecher*, Cantonese] er
- <Others> (20) [*laugh*]
- <S2> (21) Wha::t the heck [*laugh*], when I say I release my energy za::h - to you ah - then the girl will stun also say - wa:h I enjoy it man \*you know\*
- <Others> (22) \* [*laugh*]\*
- <S1> (23) That's love ah? [*laugh*]
- <S2> (24) To me y'know \*I -\*
- <S1> (25) \*The\* the worse thing is to be stiff er ---- or too: too much hands (er) it's even worse also -
- <S2> (26) Wa:h too much hands - you all haven't seen some of those guys oo:h=
- <S1> (27) =I've seen I've seen
- <S2> (28) Oh you've seen ah [*laugh*]

### D. Impoliteness in *Macbeth*

LADY MACBETH      Are you a man?  
MACBETH            Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
                         Which might appall the devil.  
LADY MACBETH      O proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts –  
Impostors to true fear – would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authoris'd by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

MACBETH

Prithee, see there!

Behold! look! lo! how say you?  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites. [Exit GHOST]

LADY MACBETH

What, quite unmann'd in folly?

MACBETH

If I stand here, I saw him.

LADY MACBETH

Fie, for shame!

[Macbeth III.iv.57–73]

## E. Interaction between Private Alves (PA) and sergeant (S1) in an American recruit training base

**S1:** you're going to mess up one of my squad leaders

**PA:**

**S1:** [*indistinct*] any way you can how about it= =don't

**PA:** =I=

**S1:** bullshit me now Alves you want to jump you want to

**PA:**

**S1:** jump on somebody= =JUMP ON ME then ...

**PA:** =no= who

**S1:** shut up Alves you're the one who is

**PA:** said that sergeant

**S1:** running your little mouth again you're the one

**PA:**

**S1:** intimidating and threatening my squad leaders ...

**PA:**

**S1:** bullshit tell that god damn lie to someone

**PA:** I didn't sergeant

**S1:** that believes your ass private you've already been

**PA:**

**S1:** proven to be a damn habitual liar

**PA:**

(Culpeper 1996: 360)

## E. Another Gordon Ramsay interaction

**S1** is Gordon, **S2** is a man, looks around 30, speaks with a high pitched voice in a Liverpool accent, **S3** is a woman, around 30, the chef de partie. **S4** is a female member of the kitchen staff. There are other kitchen staff present.

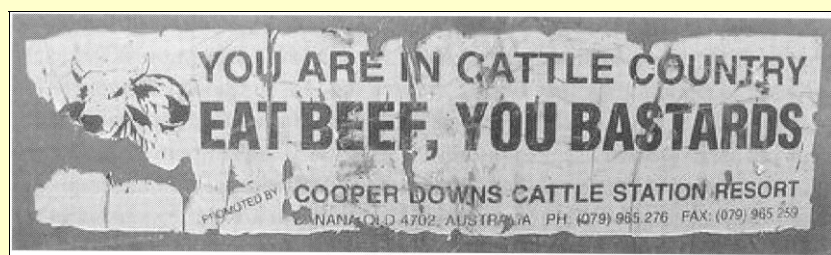
**1 S1:** And this is?

**2 S2:** Phil.

**3 S1:** Chef du cuisine [= head chef].

- 4 S2:** Yeah, well (*undecipherable*)
- 5 S1:** Anyway, it started off good, I arrived and thought it was quite a stunning and intimate little place, then the food arrived, solid rock-hard prawns, you dig deep you come across some mashed potatoes laced with f\*\*king apricots, tomatoes and a redcurrant jus [= meat juice] (*some talk*) what the f\*\*k were you thinking about putting apricots inside mashed potatoes?
- 6 S2:** You know what, I actually took the recipe from the *Good Food* magazine.
- 7 S1:** The *Good Food* magazine.
- 8 S2:** Ya.
- 9 S1:** That's the bullshit answer. What were you thinking about putting it together?
- 10 S2:** Well, why not? It's different.
- 11 S1:** You've got every right to be slightly f\*\*ked off about it, 'cos I would be if I cooked that shit, and here we are, on our current situation on our arse, and the chef over there wants to f\*\*king laugh about it.
- 12 S2:** What the f\*\*k do you want me to do as you stand there f\*\*king mouthing me off?
- 13 S1:** F\*\*k that. You've just shown me over the last three minutes that your attitude stinks (*some undecipherable talk*), you can't take criticism
- 14 S2:** I can take criticism, it's there's ways and means of going about getting criticism across, it's the way you speak, you speak arrogantly
- 15 S1:** How would you like to be spoken to?
- 16 S2:** Just like a normal person, like anyone would speak to anyone.
- 17 S1:** Now let's go the other way, shall we? Please be so kind to remove the apricot from the mashed potato.
- 18 S2:** See, now you're being f\*\*king sarcastic. [*Walks off to the back*]
- 19 S1:** Now I- I- I don't know how, we've got a problem here, yeah? And there's a f\*\*king issue with the food, now f\*\*king Mr Chipmunk in the f\*\*king corner's pissed off the fact that I'm telling him something constructive. If I can't get over that hurdle, I might as well f\*\*k off back on the train now, do you understand? Have a word with the chef, yeah? (*Some simultaneous talk*)
- 20 S2:** Excuse me there, if you want to talk to me, talk to me. (*More talk.*)
- 21 S3:** Did you like anything about the three courses?
- 22 S1:** There was one saving grace, yeah, there was. The sticky toffee pudding was f\*\*king delicious.
- 23 S3:** Oh
- 24 S4:** Oh, thank you Gordon

## F. Advertisements: 'Eat beef, you bastards', 'So where the bloody hell are you?'



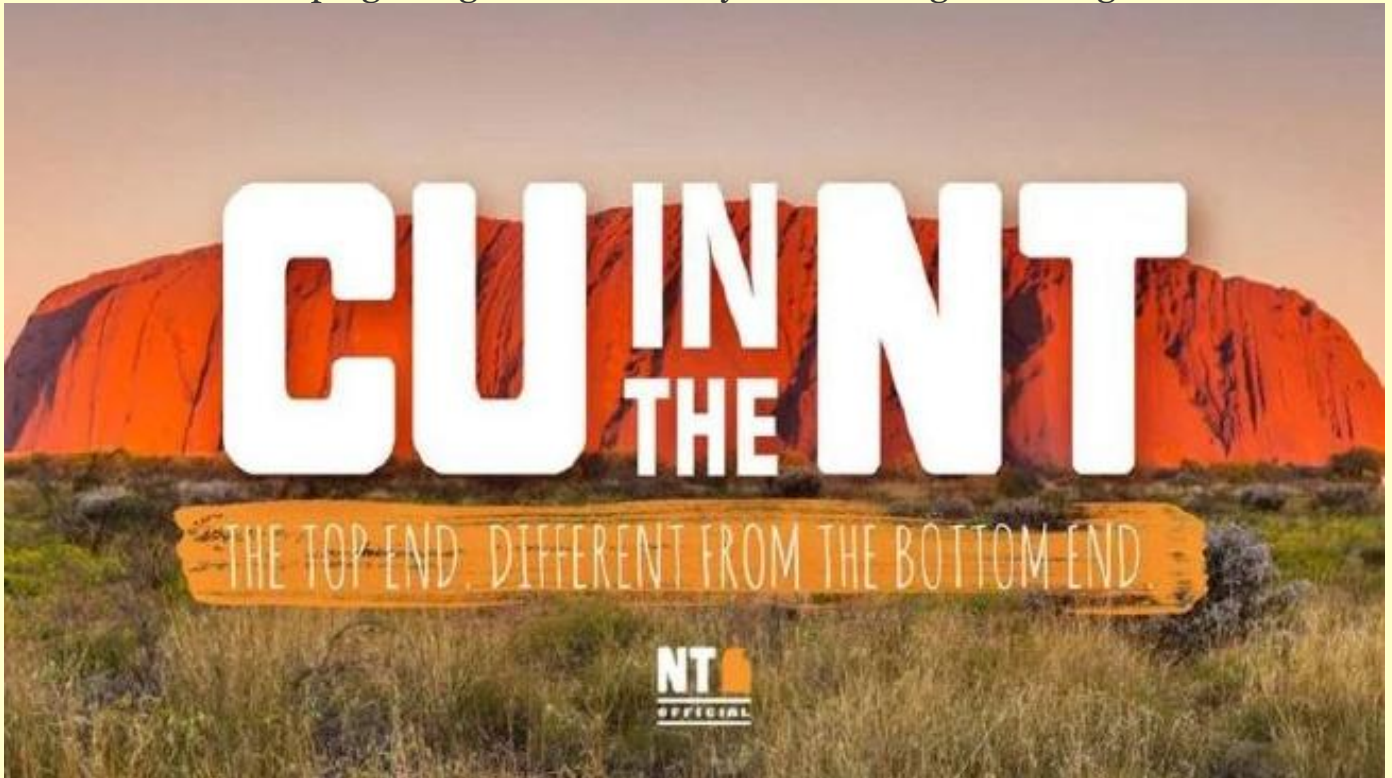
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pMOBVX88Kg>

We've poured you a beer ...  
 And we've had the camel shampooed ...  
 We've saved you spot on the beach ...  
 And we've got the sharks out of the pool ...  
 We got the roos off the green ...  
 And Bill's on the way to open the front gate ...  
 The taxi's waiting ...  
 And dinner's about to be served ...  
 We've turned on the lights ...  
 And we've been rehearsing for over forty thousand years ...  
 So where the bloody hell are you?



## G. Advertisement: CU in the NT

### CU in the NT: campaign slogan 'obscene' says advertising watchdog



The ASB said the 'CU in the NT' slogan is "extremely denigrating to women". Picture: NT Official

AAP

1:18PM January 4, 2017

The advertising industry watchdog has labelled a controversial guerrilla tourism campaign in the Northern Territory that isn't shy about going Down Under as obscene.

The Advertising Standards Board has upheld a complaint against a range of merchandise bearing the 'CU in the NT' slogan which argues it is "extremely denigrating to women".

"It is also promoting the acceptance of a highly derogatory term used instead of vagina and is offensive to women in general," the complaint to the ABS read.

The unofficial logo, which makers claim is designed to market the Territory to younger travellers, rippled across social media last November and generated international coverage.

T-shirts, singlets and bumper stickers that share a strong resemblance to official Tourism NT designs are also sold online.



As well as a social media campaign, T-shirts, singlets and bumper stickers are sold online. Picture: NT Official

The ASB agreed with the complaint's argument that the promotional material was "not funny or witty." "The community considered the 'c-word' to be obscene and not appropriate in advertising in any form," the ASB said. NT Official, the company behind the slogan, claims it's no different to acronyms such as "WTF" and "LMFAO" which the ASB doesn't deem to be offensive language. It said any adverse findings would "impose an overly strict moral view on a fine tradition of Australian humour and in particular the great tradition of the Aussie larrikin."



“Neither our social media posts nor our products make any reference or distinction along gender lines and do not advocate anything other than an appreciation of the natural beauty of the Northern Territory,” NT Official said in a statement to the ASB.

Despite the ruling, the industry body has no powers of enforcement.

AAP

## H. Graffiti dialogue

Found on a Lancaster University Library desk; from the handwriting it seems to be the case that each line as a different author

Good luck if you are revising for your exams!  
R U f\*\*king gay? Is U Mom a f\*\*king WHORE?  
VERY HARSH TWAT!

From Macmillan Dictionary:

**twat** noun [countable] offensive pronunciation: /twæt/, /twot/  
1 an extremely offensive word for a stupid person  
2 an extremely offensive word for a woman’s vagina (=sex organ)

## I. Notices

The Airport Community Charter is here to help you but we will not tolerate ...

- Drunkenness
- Insulting Words or Behaviour
- Threats or Actual Physical Violence
- Abusive Language

*Essex Police/BAA London Stansted, 2008*

Royal Mail employees are expected to treat customers with respect.

In return you don’t expect our people to tolerate abuse and bullying from customers.

We will challenge customers who verbally abuse, bully or threaten our people.

We will take the strongest legal action possible against anyone who physically attacks our people while they are trying to do their jobs.

*Royal Mail, Lancaster Sorting Office, 2004*

## J. Complaint letter

Below is a copy of a letter that won a competition in UK as complaint letter. Paragraphs numbered for reference.

Dear Cretins,

(1) I have been an NTL customer since 9th July 2001, when I signed up for your 3-in-one deal for cable TV, cable modem, and telephone. During this three-month period I have encountered inadequacy of service which I had not previously considered possible, as well as ignorance and stupidity of monolithic proportions. Please allow me to provide specific details,

(2) So that you can either pursue your professional prerogative, and seek to rectify these difficulties – or more likely (I suspect) so that you can have some entertaining reading material as you while away the working day smoking B&H and drinking vendor-coffee on the bog in your office:

(3) My initial installation was cancelled without warning, resulting in my spending an entire Saturday sitting on my fat arse waiting for your technician to arrive. When he did not arrive, I spent a further 57 minutes listening to your infuriating hold music, and the even more annoying Scottish robot woman telling me to look at your helpful website....HOW?

(4) I alleviated the boredom by playing with my testicles for a few minutes – an activity at which you are no-doubt both familiar and highly adept. The rescheduled installation then took place some two weeks later, although the technician did forget to bring a number of vital tools – such as a drill-bit, and his cerebrum. Two weeks later, my cable modem had still not arrived. After 15 telephone calls over 4 weeks my modem arrived... six weeks after I had requested it, and begun to pay for it.

(5) I estimate your Internet server’s downtime is roughly 35%... hours between about 6pm–midnight, Mon–Fri, and most of the weekend. I am still waiting for my telephone connection. I have made 9 calls on my mobile to your no-help line, and have been unhelpfully transferred to variety of disinterested individuals, who are it seems also highly skilled bollock jugglers.

(6) I have been informed that a telephone line is available (and someone will call me back); that no telephone line is available (and someone will call me back); that I will be transferred to someone who knows whether or not a telephone line is available (and then been cut off); that I will be transferred to someone (and then

been redirected to an answer machine informing me that your office is closed); that I will be transferred to someone and then been redirected to the irritating Scottish robot woman...and several other variations on this theme.

(7) Doubtless you are no longer reading this letter, as you have at least a thousand other dissatisfied customers to ignore, and also another one of those crucially important testicle-moments to attend to. Frankly I don't care, it's far more satisfying as a customer to voice my frustrations in print than to shout them at your unending hold music. Forgive me, therefore, if I continue.

(8) I thought BT were shit, that they had attained the holy piss-pot of god-awful customer relations, that no-one, anywhere, ever, could be more disinterested, less helpful or more obstructive to delivering service to their customers. That's why I chose NTL, and because, well, there isn't anyone else is there? How surprised I therefore was, when I discovered to my considerable dissatisfaction and disappointment what a useless shower of bastards you truly are. You are sputum-filled pieces of distended rectum incompetents of the highest order.

(9) British Telecom – wankers though they are – shine like brilliant beacons of success, in the filthy puss-filled mire of your seemingly limitless inadequacy. Suffice to say that I have now given up on my futile and foolhardy quest to receive any kind of service from you. I suggest that you cease any potential future attempts to extort payment from me for the services which you have so pointedly and catastrophically failed to deliver - any such activity will be greeted initially with hilarity and disbelief quickly be replaced by derision, and even perhaps bemused rage. I enclose two small deposits, selected with great care from my cats litter tray, as an expression of my utter and complete contempt for both you and your pointless company. I sincerely hope that they have not become desiccated during transit – they were satisfyingly moist at the time of posting, and I would feel considerable disappointment if you did not experience both their rich aroma and delicate texture. Consider them the very embodiment of my feelings towards NTL, and its worthless employees.

(10) Have a nice day – may it be the last in your miserable short life, you irritatingly incompetent and infuriatingly unhelpful bunch of twats.

John

(1) *NTL*: a cable company

(2) *B&H*: Benson & Hedges cigarette

(2) *bog*: toilet

(5) *bollock*: testicle

(8) *BT*: British Telecom

(9) *wanker*: general term of abuse (*lit.* 'masturbator')

## K. Email exchange

**From:** <James Lim>

**Date:** Monday, 27 August 2018 at 3:49 PM

**To:** <Mailing list administrator>

**Subject:** Re: INVITATION: <a talk>

I will not like to have any more emails from you, please delete me off your sender list. Thank you.

**From:** <Mailing list administrator>

**Sent:** 27 August 2018 4.59pm

**To:** <Ali Akhbar>, <Mailing list group>

**Subject:** RE: INVITATION: <a talk>

Hi <Ali>

No this was mistakenly sent. We have made recall but most of the users have already received it by then.

Can we remove it from the server of group or something?

Regards,  
<Khadijah>

**From:** <Mailing list administrator>

**Sent:** 27 August 2018 4.38pm

**To:** <Mailing list email group>

**Subject:** Re: INVITATION: <a talk>

FYI: <James Lim> has been removed from our list because we also "will not like" to send any more emails to him.

**From:** <Ali Akhbar>

**Sent:** Monday, 27 August 2018 4:54 PM

**To:** <Mailing list administrator>

**Subject:** RE: INVITATION: <a talk>

Hi, is this response meant for everyone to see?

**From:** <Mailing list administrator>

**Sent:** 27 August 2018 7.43pm

**To:** <Mailing list group>

**Subject:** AN APOLOGY

### AN APOLOGY

I would like to apologise on behalf of the <Organisation> for the series of emails that were sent to our full mailing list as a result of an uncalled-for action by us.

In particular, I would like to apologise to <James Lim> for our actions. We will remove you from our mailing list as requested. I'm sorry if this series of unfortunate events has caused you distress.

<CATHERINE LEE>

Deputy Director

<Organisation>