

Impoliteness Strategies Reflected in *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024) Movie

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ABSTRACT

Language is a mirror of social life and power relations. In film discourse, verbal interaction not only delivers narrative meaning but also exposes ideological and emotional conflicts among characters. This study investigates the impoliteness strategies reflected in *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024), using Culpeper's (1996) theory as its main analytical framework. The research applies a qualitative descriptive approach to identify and interpret the forms and functions of impoliteness strategies used by the main characters, particularly Proximus Caesar, Noa, and Mae. The data are taken from the movie script and analyzed contextually to reveal the pragmatic functions of language. The findings indicate that all five types of impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper appear in the movie: bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness. Each strategy performs different communicative roles such as asserting dominance, challenging authority, expressing resistance, and conveying emotional conflict. The study concludes that impoliteness in this film serves not only as an instrument of verbal aggression but also as a symbolic tool for establishing ideological power, resistance, and social identity in a post-apocalyptic society. Furthermore, the findings imply that analyzing impoliteness in fictional narratives offers critical insights into the dynamics of power and resistance, bridging the gap between cinematic discourse and real-world sociopolitical interactions.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is more than a system of words and grammar; it is a social and cultural practice that reflects how individuals express identity, emotion, and power. In everyday life, communication can serve both harmonious and confrontational functions. People may use language to build relationships or to challenge and attack others. The way people choose words reveals how they negotiate meaning within social hierarchies. As Halliday (1978) states, language functions as a social semiotic that expresses meaning within a specific cultural and interpersonal context. Every utterance carries social meaning, and the manner in which people speak determines how they maintain or threaten social relationships.

In many societies, politeness is seen as an essential part of communication. It maintains

respect, social balance, and cooperation among interlocutors. However, not all communication is polite or harmonious. In real life and in fictional worlds such as films, impolite language insults, mockery, or verbal threats often emerges as a powerful means of expressing emotion, tension, or authority. The phenomenon of impoliteness has attracted considerable attention in pragmatics because it involves the deliberate violation of social norms for communicative effect. As Culpeper (2016) argues, impoliteness occurs when a speaker intentionally attacks the hearer's face or when the hearer perceives an utterance as face-threatening. Unlike politeness, which aims to maintain positive relationships, impoliteness serves to disrupt or redefine them. It may be used to express anger, sarcasm, or even humor.

In contemporary communication, impoliteness can be observed across various domains from online discourse to daily interactions and fictional narratives. Social media interactions, for instance, often display verbal aggression, cyberbullying, and sarcasm, which reflect real-world power struggles (Chatzakou et al., 2019). In film narratives, similar linguistic behaviors are scripted to depict social tension and character dynamics (Chilton, 2004). Through impolite dialogue, filmmakers create dramatic tension and reveal moral or ideological conflict. As a reflection of society, film dialogue often mirrors how people use language to dominate, resist, or emotionally engage with others.

Understanding impoliteness in film thus helps reveal how language represents power and social identity. In pragmatics, Culpeper's model of impoliteness is particularly relevant because it categorizes face-threatening acts into five main strategies: bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness (Culpeper, 2016). Each type reflects a different way of attacking the interlocutor's "face," whether through direct confrontation, exclusion, restriction of freedom, mockery, or silence.

Moreover, impoliteness itself are prevalent in real life and can also be found in literary works, such as in the film *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024), directed by Wes Ball. The film continues the Planet of the Apes saga, set many generations after Caesar's leadership. Apes have developed advanced societies while humans live in primitive conditions. Within this setting, Proximus Caesar, a self-proclaimed ruler, manipulates Caesar's legacy to justify oppression and conquest. In contrast, Noa, a young ape from the Eagle Clan, embarks on a journey to free his captured family and rediscover the true meaning of Caesar's values. The tension between domination and resistance is expressed largely through language through orders, insults, sarcastic remarks, and verbal challenges.

The phenomenon of impoliteness is central to this narrative because power, authority, and rebellion are largely communicated through speech. In *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024), linguistic expressions such as commands, insults, sarcasm, and verbal challenges function not merely as dialogue, but as tools to assert dominance, manipulate ideology, and resist oppression. These forms of face-threatening acts reflect the hierarchical social structure within the film and reveal the emotional and ideological conflicts between characters.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of impoliteness strategies employed by the characters in *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* and to explain their pragmatic functions in relation to the film's ideological and emotional conflicts, based on Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework.

Related studies have consistently demonstrated the applicability of impoliteness theory in analyzing film and television discourse. Using Culpeper's model, (Ardhy et al., 2024) identified all five impoliteness strategies in *The Simpsons Movie*, with positive impoliteness as the most dominant strategy. Similarly, Nurjanah et al. (2024) found negative impoliteness to be the most frequent strategy in *Turning Red*. Novera and Amalia (2025) reported the dominance of positive impoliteness in *Wednesday* (Season 1), while Sibarani (2025) identified negative impoliteness as the most prevalent strategy in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. These studies indicate that impoliteness strategies are widely used in fictional narratives to represent power relations and social conflict.

Despite the growing body of research on impoliteness in film, studies focusing specifically

on *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024) remain limited. The film presents distinctive linguistic data that highlight power-oriented impoliteness within a rigid hierarchical system, particularly in the context of authoritarian leadership and resistance. Investigating these interactions is essential to understand how language functions as a means of domination and control, as well as a form of opposition, which has not been explicitly addressed in previous studies.

Based on this background, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of impoliteness strategies are used by the characters in *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024), based on Culpeper's (1996) model?
2. What pragmatic functions do these impoliteness strategies serve in expressing ideological and emotional conflicts within the film?

This research is conducted because impoliteness plays a crucial role in shaping the film's narrative structure, character dynamics, and ideological tensions. The frequent use of face-threatening acts enables characters to assert authority, challenge power, negotiate survival, and construct social identity. By analyzing these impoliteness strategies, the study seeks to reveal how linguistic aggression operates within the story and how impolite discourse reflects broader themes of manipulation, authoritarianism, resistance, and power imbalance represented in the film.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Concept of Impoliteness Strategy

The concept of impoliteness has become an influential topic in pragmatic and sociolinguistic research, particularly in discussions of facework and interpersonal conflict. Early theories of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) established the framework for understanding face as a fundamental social need. According to their model, communication is oriented toward maintaining the hearer's positive and negative face. However, scholars later argued that impoliteness is not simply the absence of politeness, but rather a deliberate communicative practice designed to attack face. Culpeper (1996) defines impoliteness as behaviour that conflicts with expectations of politeness and intentionally damages the target's face. This view is supported by Tracy and Tracy (1998), who state that impoliteness arises when speakers purposefully disrupt social harmony or express hostility within interaction.

From a discourse perspective, impoliteness is understood as socially situated and context-dependent. Lowe (2009) emphasise that impoliteness is constructed through interactional negotiation, where participants evaluate utterances based on norms, expectations, and relational goals. This means that an utterance is perceived as impolite not solely because of its form, but because of how it is interpreted within a given social relationship. Empirical studies in film, political debates, and online communication also show that impoliteness functions as a strategic tool to assert power, challenge authority, express aggression, or display emotional stance (Bousfield, 2008)

In addition to these theoretical foundations, impoliteness has been examined in various communicative settings. Researchers have studied impoliteness in classrooms, family interactions, digital platforms, television scripts, and cinematic dialogue to illustrate how conflict and face attacks contribute to character construction and narrative tension (Dynel, 2013). These findings show that impoliteness is a systematic linguistic phenomenon that speakers use intentionally and creatively. Thus, the concept of impoliteness strategy refers to patterned ways in which speakers intentionally violate social expectations to threaten face, negotiate power, and construct interpersonal meaning.

The Types of Impoliteness Strategy

Culpeper (1996) developed the most widely adopted taxonomy of impoliteness strategies, later expanded in Culpeper (1996). His framework identifies five major strategies: bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and

withholding politeness. These strategies describe how speakers linguistically attack face through direct or indirect means.

Bald on record impoliteness involves performing face threatening acts in a direct, explicit, and unmitigated manner. Unlike Brown and Levinson's (1987) idea that bald on record forms may be neutral in certain contexts, Culpeper (1996) argues that when used intentionally, these expressions function as overtly aggressive acts. Empirical research by Bousfield (2007) shows that unsoftened commands, insults, and hostile directives exemplify this strategy, often used to assert dominance or escalate conflict in interaction.

Positive impoliteness threatens the hearer's positive face the desire to be appreciated, approved of, and included. According to Culpeper (2005), this strategy includes behaviours such as ignoring someone's presence, excluding them from interaction, attacking their social identity, or expressing disinterest. Dynel (2015) notes that positive impoliteness is frequently used in media dialogue to represent conflict, emotional distance, or strained relationships, making it a powerful tool in character construction.

Negative impoliteness involves damaging the hearer's negative face, which relates to autonomy, freedom of action, and freedom from imposition. This strategy includes threats, ridicule, dismissive attitudes, coercive directives, and invading personal space (Bousfield, 2008). Culpeper (2016) adds that negative impoliteness often appears in interactions where power asymmetry is present, such as hierarchical relationships or institutional settings, because it functions as a mechanism to enforce control or intimidation.

Sarcasm or mock politeness uses insincere polite forms to indirectly deliver face attacks. Dynel (2013) explains that sarcasm maintains a polite surface structure while implying criticism or hostility underneath. This strategy allows speakers to engage in conflict while preserving plausible deniability, making it a subtle yet effective form of impoliteness in competitive or tense interactions.

Withholding politeness occurs when a speaker intentionally fails to perform expected polite behaviours, such as greetings, acknowledgements, or responses. Culpeper (1996) notes that silence, refusal to engage, or lack of reciprocity can signal rejection or disrespect. Bousfield (2007) further argues that withholding politeness is a potent strategy because the violation of expectations creates psychological discomfort and can escalate interpersonal conflict.

Research Gap and Novelty

Despite the extensive analysis of impoliteness in various film genres such as *The Simpsons*, *Turning Red*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding post-apocalyptic narratives featuring reversed power dynamics between species. Specifically, no previous study has applied Culpeper's framework to *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024). This research addresses that gap by investigating the unique sociolinguistic context of the film, where advanced ape societies exert dominance over primitive humans. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of how impoliteness strategies are utilized to construct and challenge authority within this specific interspecies hierarchy, providing new insights into power-oriented communication that have not been covered in earlier pragmatic research.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method because it focuses on interpreting meaning rather than quantifying data. The primary data source is the official movie script of *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024), directed by Wes Ball. The data selection process specifically focused on dialogues involving the main characters: Proximus Caesar, Noa, and Mae, that contained indicators of verbal aggression, face-threatening acts, or strategic silence, ensuring that the analysis captured the core dynamics of power and resistance within the narrative. The analysis procedure was conducted systematically through three integrated steps: identification, categorization, and interpretation. During identification, utterances exhibiting verbal aggression,

sarcasm, exclusion, or deliberate silence were collected from the script. Subsequently, categorization involved mapping each selected utterance to one of Culpeper's (1996) five impoliteness strategies based on their linguistic form and intended face attack. Finally, interpretation examined the pragmatic and narrative functions of those strategies within the film's social context, linking language use to character motivation and ideological conflict. To ensure the reliability of the data analysis and minimize subjectivity, the researcher employed peer checking and triangulated the findings with external film analyses and reviews to validate the categorization of impoliteness strategies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research show that *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (2024)* presents a complex and systematic use of impoliteness strategies as theorized by Culpeper. Rather than functioning as random instances of verbal hostility, impoliteness in the film is deeply embedded within character relationships, ideological struggles, and the construction of dominance. As indicated in Table 1, all five impoliteness strategies are present, though with varying frequency: bald on-record impoliteness appears three times, positive impoliteness four times, negative impoliteness five times, sarcasm or mock politeness once, and withholding politeness three times. This distribution suggests that the film intentionally employs linguistic aggression to reflect broader themes of power, oppression, resistance, and moral conflict.

Table 1. Impoliteness Strategies in *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (2024)*

Impoliteness strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bald on Record Impoliteness	3	15,79%
Positive Impoliteness	4	21,05%
Negative Impoliteness	5	26,32%
Sarcasm or Mock Politeness	2	10,53%
Total	19	100%

Source: The film *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes (2024)*

1. Bald on Record Impoliteness

Bald on record impoliteness involves direct face-threatening acts delivered without mitigation (Culpeper, 1996). In the film, it is strongly associated with Proximus, whose dictatorship relies heavily on coercive and emotionally forceful speech. His verbal behavior reinforces his authority while simultaneously suppressing individual agency among his followers.

Excerpt 1

Taken from minutes 15:22 - 15:35

Proximus: "You cannot trust a human."

In this scene, Mae is confined and watched by the Proximus apes. The situation is tense because Mae has just been captured and Noa has been brought into Proximus's domain. When Noa shows sympathy or curiosity towards Mae, Proximus enters and immediately interrupts the interaction. He stands tall, stares down at Mae with a condescending gaze, then utters this sentence in a loud, emphatic voice. The surrounding apes fall silent, listening. Proximus's words not only brand Mae in a negative light, but also humiliate her in front of Noa and the rest of the ape community. His attitude suggests that humans are considered a threat and despicable. Visually, the camera focuses on Mae, who appears tense and offended, indicating that Proximus's verbal attack has successfully degraded her.

Excerpt 2

Taken from minutes 20:45 - 20:52

Proximus: “*Stand now!*”

This direct imperative is delivered with force, leaving Noa no room for negotiation or refusal. Proximus’s tone and posture in this moment demonstrate that the command is not a request but a demand grounded in dominance. The utterance disrupts Noa’s autonomy by forcing immediate compliance. This highlights the connection between language and hierarchical control—Proximus’s speech does not merely communicate orders; it constructs the social reality in which Noa is subordinate. Culpeper’s theory explains that the harshness of the command itself is an attack on Noa’s face, and the scene exemplifies how language enforces physical and psychological submission.

Excerpt 3

Taken from minutes 35:10 - 35:18

Proximus: “*Pull!*”

During a labor-intensive scene, Proximus’s aggressive command “Pull!” functions as a linguistic projection of authority. It reduces the apes to the status of laborers who must obey without question. The harshness with which the utterance is delivered creates an atmosphere of oppression, where language is used to dehumanize and objectify. The command strips the apes of any individuality, reinforcing an environment that mirrors forced labor systems in real-world historical contexts. This indicates that bald on-record impoliteness in the film is not merely character-driven but thematically connected to the larger critique of tyranny and exploitation.

2. Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness aims to damage the hearer’s positive face their need to be appreciated, included, and socially valued (Culpeper, 1996). In this film, it is mainly expressed through emotional exclusion, dismissal, and identity-based humiliation. Characters who appear socially or morally superior often use this strategy to deny belonging or recognition to others.

Excerpt 1

Taken from minutes 25:30 - 25:40

Proximus: “*I am Caesar.*”

Proximus asserts ownership over the title “Caesar,” demanding the crowd repeat it. This declaration functions as an ideological attack on Noa, who believes in the legacy of the true Caesar. By claiming the title, Proximus symbolically erases the historical figure that Noa reveres. This creates emotional distance and social exclusion, as Noa’s values and identity are invalidated in front of others. The strategy is a deliberate attempt to undermine Noa’s positive face and to proclaim that only Proximus’s version of Caesar and thus his ideology matters. This aligns with Bousfield’s (2008) argument that impoliteness reinforces power hierarchies, especially in contexts involving collective identity.

Excerpt 2

Taken from minutes 40:50–41:00

Proximus “*You think you understand Caesar? You understand nothing.*”

Noa’s efforts to warn his community are ignored by the elders. Their dismissive gestures and silence communicate that Noa’s voice does not matter. This not only invalidates his concerns but also denies him a sense of belonging within the clan. Here, positive impoliteness functions subtly but powerfully: by refusing to engage with him, the elders send a message that Noa occupies a

diminished role in the social hierarchy. The emotional neglect experienced by Noa foreshadows his eventual journey toward independence and leadership.

Excerpt 3

Taken from minutes 55:20–55:30

Proximus: *“Your loyalty is pathetic.”*

In this scene, Proximus openly insults Noa by calling his loyalty “pathetic.” This direct belittling attack damages Noa’s positive face, undermining his need to be respected and valued. By mocking Noa’s sincerity and commitment, Proximus positions him as weak and misguided in front of others. This humiliation reinforces Proximus’s ideological dominance and strengthens the power hierarchy he seeks to maintain. The utterance exemplifies positive impoliteness through explicit ridicule and the denial of social worth

Excerpt 4

Taken from minutes 32:05–32:15

Proximus: *“You are nothing without me, Noa.”*

Proximus undermines Noa by declaring that he is nothing without him. This statement directly attacks Noa’s identity and self-worth, making him appear insignificant in front of others. By belittling Noa’s abilities and value, Proximus positions him as weak and dependent on his authority. This strategy damages Noa’s positive face—his need to be appreciated, recognized, and seen as competent. In this context, positive impoliteness is used to assert Proximus’s ideological dominance and reinforce the social hierarchy he has established.

3. Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness refers to communicative behaviour that attacks the hearer’s negative face, which includes freedom of action, autonomy, and freedom from imposition (Culpeper, 1996). This type of impoliteness typically manifests through threats, coercive directives, ridicule, dismissive attitudes, or invasion of personal space. In *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, negative impoliteness becomes a dominant strategy employed by authoritarian characters particularly Proximus whose leadership relies heavily on fear, domination, and the restriction of others’ agency. The film demonstrates how this strategy supports ideological control, reinforces unequal power relations, and shapes character dynamics.

Excerpt 1

Taken from minutes 30:40 – 30:50

Proximus: *“I will get inside, no matter how many apes it costs me.”*

This utterance exemplifies a direct threat that aggressively undermines the autonomy and safety of the apes under Proximus’s leadership. By explicitly stating that he is willing to sacrifice an unspecified number of apes, Proximus positions them as expendable resources rather than individuals with agency. According to Culpeper (1996), threats and coercive expressions function as core realizations of negative impoliteness because they impose force, restrict freedom, and generate fear. In this scene, Proximus’s statement reinforces a hierarchical power structure where his will overrides the autonomy of others. The command also serves as an ideological reminder that loyalty to Proximus demands unquestioning obedience, regardless of personal cost. Thus, negative impoliteness here functions to maintain dominance, enforce compliance, and normalize violence.

Excerpt 2

Taken from minutes 45:15 – 45:25

Proximus: *“Humans must be destroyed.”*

This declaration constitutes a broad but forceful threat that directly targets the existence and autonomy of humans, specifically Mae. The utterance strips humans of moral and social legitimacy, reducing them to an enemy that must be eliminated. Culpeper (2016) explain that negative impoliteness becomes especially potent when used in ideological conflict, as it frames the out-group as a threat that must be controlled or eradicated. In this case, Proximus’s statement corners Mae psychologically, producing a sense of vulnerability and fear. It also functions at a structural level: by constructing humans as inherently dangerous or inferior, Proximus legitimizes violence as a political tool. This demonstrates how negative impoliteness not only serves interpersonal aggression but also operates as a mechanism of ideological persuasion within authoritarian discourse.

Excerpt 3

Taken from minutes 50:30 – 50:40

Proximus: *“Disobey me, and you will suffer.”*

This utterance presents a clear conditional threat, one of the strongest markers of negative impoliteness. The phrase “you will suffer” implies severe consequences and intentionally restricts the hearer’s ability to refuse or resist. Bousfield (2008) notes that such threats are designed to reduce the hearer’s agency by instilling fear and forcing compliance. In this scene, Proximus strategically humiliates Noa in front of others, using intimidation to reinforce the absolute nature of his authority. Public threats amplify the impoliteness because they not only coerce behaviour but also damage the target’s social standing and self-worth. Thus, the utterance demonstrates negative impoliteness as a psychologically manipulative tool used to maintain order, suppress dissent, and assert dominance in a visible and humiliating manner.

Excerpt 4

Taken from minutes 60:10 – 60:20

Proximus: *“Climb! Go!”*

Although Noa produces a direct imperative, this instance does not constitute negative impoliteness. Instead, it highlights the importance of intention and context when interpreting face-threatening acts. Culpeper (2016) emphasises that impoliteness is evaluated not only through linguistic form but through the speaker’s motive and relational dynamics. Here, Noa uses forceful directives not to dominate but to ensure the safety of others during an urgent moment. The context reveals concern rather than coercion. This contrast strengthens the analytical claim that negative impoliteness cannot be identified solely by grammatical structure; rather, it emerges when directives are used to impose control, restrict autonomy, or induce fear. Thus, this excerpt serves as a counterexample, illustrating how similar linguistic forms can produce different pragmatic effects depending on speaker intention and situational framing.

Excerpt 5

Taken from minutes 65:45 – 65:55

Proximus: *“Say one more word and I’ll break you.”*

This utterance represents one of the most explicit uses of negative impoliteness in the film. The threat of physical violence severely restricts Mae’s ability to speak or resist, attacking both her autonomy and her personal safety. The phrase “I’ll break you” conveys psychological terror and positions Proximus as an overpowering figure capable of controlling others through fear. (Garcia-

Pastor, 2008) notes that threats of physical harm are among the strongest realizations of negative impoliteness because they deprive the hearer of agency and impose absolute submission. The scene further intensifies the impoliteness by placing Mae in close physical proximity to Proximus, symbolizing the invasion of personal space a hallmark of this strategy. This instance illustrates how negative impoliteness functions not only at a verbal level but also through embodied intimidation, constructing Mae as powerless within the regime's hierarchy.

4. Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Sarcasm, or mock politeness, occurs when a speaker uses polite language insincerely to perform a covert attack on the hearer's face. According to Culpeper (1996), mock politeness superficially imitates politeness but functions pragmatically as an act of impoliteness because the speaker's real intention is to ridicule, criticize, or assert dominance. Sarcasm relies on contrast between literal meaning and intended meaning, producing implicit aggression masked by polite or positive forms. In *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, sarcasm is used to highlight power imbalances, expose hypocrisy, and enable subtle forms of resistance. The strategy becomes a way for characters to negotiate social tension while maintaining a veneer of politeness.

Excerpt 1

Taken from minutes 18:20 – 18:30

Proximus: *"What a wonderful day!"*

This utterance is delivered during a violent ceremonial display, making the cheerful tone deliberately inappropriate. The mismatch between the linguistic form and the brutal context creates sarcasm. As Dynel (2013) states, sarcastic politeness works by exaggerating positivity to mock or undermine the situation at hand. Proximus's exaggerated enthusiasm serves multiple pragmatic purposes. First, it reinforces his authority by implying that violence and subjugation are normal or even celebratory under his rule. Second, it highlights the ideological distortion in Proximus's leadership: cruelty is reframed as entertainment or achievement. This aligns with Haugh's (2010) that sarcasm often functions as a tool for manipulating social perception, enabling leaders to normalize aggression. In this scene, mock politeness becomes a mechanism to disguise brutality behind forced optimism, demonstrating how sarcasm can be weaponized to maintain control while masking hostility in performative positivity.

Excerpt 2

Taken from minutes 52:10 – 52:20

Proximus: *"Of course, Proximus... whatever you say."*

Mae's utterance represents a different use of mock politeness one driven not by dominance but by strategic survival. Her exaggerated deference signals insincerity, especially given that she is being coerced and monitored. Mock politeness often allows speakers to express subtle defiance or resistance while concealing their true intentions. Mae's tone functions as a protective shield: by sounding polite, she avoids immediate conflict, but at the same time, she subtly mocks Proximus's authoritarian expectations. Dynel (2013) notes that sarcasm can empower the less powerful by offering a covert way to challenge authority without direct confrontation. In this moment, Mae's insincerely compliant tone exposes the fragility of Proximus's power he requires performative obedience to maintain the illusion of control. Her mock politeness thus becomes a quiet form of rebellion, illustrating that impoliteness is not always overtly aggressive; it can also be a strategic act of resistance used by those in subordinate positions.

5. Withholding Politeness

Withholding politeness occurs when a speaker intentionally fails to provide expected courtesy (Culpeper, 2016). This strategy appears in emotionally charged moments and in scenes involving domination or resistance.

Excerpt 1

Taken from minute 44:03

Noa: “Have you seen my clan?”

The scene where Noa asks, “Have you seen my clan?” occurs after a major attack that destroyed the village and separated Noa from his family. Confused and desperate, Noa hopes to get information from Raka, the only other ape he encounters after escaping. However, when asked the question, Raka doesn’t answer immediately. Instead, he walks around, distracting Noa, and talks about something else first. His actions aren’t a sign of not listening, but rather a deliberate delay in responding. Raka’s behavior creates tension because Noa desperately needs an answer, while Raka simply leaves the question hanging. This is withhold politeness, a form of impoliteness where someone intentionally withholds or refuses to provide an expected answer. By delaying a response, Raka indirectly causes Noa to feel ignored, even though he ultimately intends to help. This scene demonstrates that Raka’s withholding an answer—while not malicious—still constitutes impoliteness because he fails to meet normal conversational expectations in such an emotional situation.

Excerpt 2

Taken from minute 48:03

Raka: “It’s embarrassing, you should be able to enjoy a song.”

In the scene where Raka says, “It’s embarrassing. You should be able to enjoy a song,” he is mocking Noa with a condescending sarcasm. This statement occurs when Noa refuses or is unable to sing along, and Raka responds to his refusal with a sarcastic tone to humiliate him. The statement “It’s embarrassing” directly attacks Noa’s self-esteem, while the subsequent “You should be able to enjoy a song” seems to imply that singing is something so easy that even an ordinary child can do it. In this way, Raka positions Noa as incompetent or unworthy, especially since Noa is the son of a leader and should be considered capable or worthy. Raka’s taunting demonstrates sarcasm/mock politeness, as he delivers the sentence as if giving advice, but actually has an insulting tone. This scene also demonstrates a power relationship, where Raka attempts to assert dominance and belittle Noa by using hurtful language to reinforce his superiority in the situation.

Excerpt 3

Taken from minute 58:06

Noa: “I must find my clan.”

In the scene where Noa solemnly says, “I must find my clan,” he is actually expressing the emotional urgency and immense responsibility of being part of his group. This statement indicates that Noa is speaking from a heart filled with burden, loss, and determination. However, Raka does not respond directly to this statement. Instead of showing empathy or providing a relevant answer, Raka changes the subject by saying, “Nova stays with her own kind... Follow Caesar’s word...” This response does not address Noa’s emotional request or need and even feels like a deliberate interruption of the conversation. Raka’s change of topic suggests he is uninterested in engaging with Noa’s concerns, or perhaps he wants to avoid committing to helping Noa find his clan. This action is a form of withhold politeness, as Raka withholds the response he should have given, whether it be support, a clear rejection, or an honest answer, and instead fills the conversation

with other topics that do not address Noa's needs. Raka's attitude shows emotional distance and lack of concern, and shows that he wants to control the direction of the conversation according to his own interests. This scene emphasizes the unequal interpersonal relationship, where Noa tries to open up, but Raka chooses to avoid him, thus creating tension and showing implicit rudeness through neglect and distraction.

Excerpt 4

Taken from minute 70:06

Noa: "Where is your mother now?"

In the scene where Noa asks, "Where is your mother now?", the atmosphere is tense because they still don't fully trust each other. Noa's question touches on the most personal aspects of Mae's life, regarding her family and her past. Instead of answering immediately, Mae remains silent for a long time, looking down, taking a breath, or looking away. This silence is no accident; it's a subtle rejection of the question. She seems to be weighing whether it's safe for her to share or whether Noa deserves the information. When someone is approached with a question that touches on trauma or painful memories, the initial response is usually silence, and Mae makes this very clear. After a long, awkward pause, Mae finally says quietly, "I'm alone." This answer doesn't really answer Noa's question, as Noa asked, "Where's your mother?" Instead, Mae gives a very general and non-specific answer. She chooses this to avoid emotional involvement and maintain distance. She doesn't mention whether her mother is missing, dead, kidnapped, or actually being hidden. In other words, she withheld information she clearly knew. Mae's actions constitute withhold politeness, a strategy of impoliteness according to Culpeper, in which speakers withhold responses, delay answers, or provide minimal answers to avoid social imperatives that typically require them to respond politely and completely. By withholding an answer, Mae not only ignores Noa's curiosity but also demonstrates that she is not yet ready to open up. Her prolonged silence creates distance, builds tension, and suggests that their relationship is not yet at a deep level of trust. Emotionally, this scene demonstrates that Mae is carrying significant trauma and secrets, and Noa's question inadvertently touches on unhealed wounds. By simply saying, "I'm alone," Mae seemingly closes the door on the conversation and signals that she doesn't want to discuss it further.

Excerpt 5

Taken from 70:30

Proximus: "Did Mae tell you how to get into that safe?"

In the scene where Proximus stares at Noa and asks, "Did Mae tell you how to get into that safe?", the situation is extremely tense and threatening. Proximus is clearly testing, pressuring, and extracting crucial information. Mae is standing right in front of a powerful, aggressive figure who is not afraid to use violence. Yet, when the question should have been answered, "Mae said nothing." She didn't defend herself, didn't explain, didn't even offer the slightest denial. Mae's silence is a meaningful act. It demonstrates fear, but also courage. She understands that answering Proximus's question, no matter how small, could endanger Noa, herself, and the entire remaining group of humans. Therefore, Mae chooses the safest yet riskiest strategy: withholding a response entirely. By not answering, she denies Proximus access to information, even though the consequences could be violent or punishing. This action is a clear example of withhold politeness. Mae deliberately withholds the socially expected contribution of answering questions as a form of passive refusal. This attitude also demonstrates a power dynamic: Proximus attempts to control the conversation, but Mae refuses to play within his established framework. Mae's silence creates distance, refuses to legitimize Proximus's control, and serves as a form of covert resistance. Furthermore, Mae's silence influences the atmosphere of the scene. Noa appears anxious,

knowing Mae is in danger, while Proximus becomes increasingly suspicious and aggressive. The audience senses that Mae holds important information but chooses to withhold it. Thus, Mae's silence is not simply an absence of speech but a communication act fraught with strategic, emotional, and dangerous significance.

Discussion

In *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024), the five impoliteness strategies appear not merely as interpersonal conflict but as essential narrative devices that reveal deeper political, social, and ideological tensions within the film's world. Impoliteness becomes a fundamental communicative tool in a society fractured by power struggles, misinformation, and competing versions of history. Proximus Caesar, as the primary antagonist, consistently employs impoliteness to maintain dominance and impose authority over other apes. His frequent use of bald on record and negative impoliteness demonstrates his authoritarian nature he governs through threats, intimidation, and the systematic erosion of individual dignity. By invoking Caesar's name in distorted ways to legitimize his own rule, Proximus weaponizes language to manipulate collective memory, silence opposition, and fabricate loyalty. His impoliteness is not accidental; it is a calculated political tactic designed to reinforce hierarchy and consolidate power.

Noa, on the other hand, represents a stark contrast both morally and pragmatically. When Noa uses impoliteness, it is not driven by a desire for control but by emotional pressure, self-defense, and moral resistance. His harsh expressions arise from grief, anger, and the traumatic loss of his clan. Through these emotionally charged moments, Noa's impoliteness becomes a form of ethical resistance, a refusal to accept injustice and a challenge to the oppressive system created by Proximus. Rather than functioning as a tool of domination, Noa's impoliteness highlights his humanity, empathy, and his struggle to restore balance and truth.

Mae adds a third dimension to the film's portrayal of impoliteness. Unlike Proximus or Noa, Mae employs strategies such as sarcasm and withholding politeness to protect herself, conceal vital information, and subtly challenge authority. Her impoliteness is quiet yet strategic; it allows her to maintain independence while navigating a dangerous environment where humans are marginalized. By selectively withholding politeness, Mae disrupts expectations and asserts control over conversations without openly provoking conflict. Her approach demonstrates that impoliteness can function as a form of intellectual resistance carefully calculated, controlled, and deeply tied to survival.

Comparing these findings with previous research highlights both consistencies and distinct variations in pragmatic usage. Like Ardhy et al. (2024), this study confirms the presence of all five strategies in film discourse, reinforcing the universality of Culpeper's framework across diverse genres. However, they identified positive impoliteness as the dominant strategy, this research found negative impoliteness and withholding politeness to be the most frequent. This divergence suggests that while other films may rely on ridicule or social exclusion to build character dynamics, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* utilizes verbal threats and strategic silence to reflect a high-stakes survival context. Furthermore, the prominence of negative impoliteness aligns with the findings of Nurjanah et al. (2024) and Sibarani (2025), indicating its effectiveness in portraying antagonistic power. However, the significant role of withholding politeness in this film, used by Mae to resist oppression, offers a novel perspective on silence as a weapon of the marginalized, differing from the more overt verbal aggression noted in earlier studies on *Turning Red* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

The broader thematic implication is that language itself becomes a battleground. The film illustrates how leaders like Proximus manipulate linguistic symbols and historical narratives to construct political myths, reflecting real-world patterns of authoritarian communication. As Leech (2014) notes, politeness and impoliteness are intertwined with moral judgments embedded in social interaction. In this context, impoliteness in the film embodies more than rudeness; it represents the struggle between truth and deception, oppression and liberation, ideology and moral

conscience.

From a pragmatic perspective, impoliteness in the film operates on two interconnected levels. First is the expressive level, where characters use impoliteness to release emotional tension anger, fear, grief, and frustration. Second is the ideological level, where impoliteness becomes a strategic mechanism for shaping, reinforcing, or resisting systems of power. Proximus's impoliteness enforces domination, while Noa and Mae's impoliteness confronts and destabilizes that domination. Together, these layers depict impoliteness as a symbolic representation of the film's central moral conflict: the battle for justice, identity, and historical truth.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis concludes that *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (2024) reflects a complex system of impoliteness strategies that mirror human social behavior in a post-apocalyptic context. All five of Culpeper's strategies: bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness, appear throughout the film and serve distinct pragmatic and narrative purposes. The findings reveal that negative impoliteness and withholding politeness are the most dominant strategies, each accounting for 26.32% of the data. Proximus Caesar's speech demonstrates how impoliteness constructs authority through overt threats, while Noa and Mae utilize impoliteness to express defiance and conceal vital information, respectively.

The implications of this study suggest that impoliteness functions as a significant instrument for ideological power and social construction. It acts as a bridge between cinematic discourse and real-world sociopolitical interactions, illustrating how language is weaponized to enforce domination or facilitate survival.

Despite these insights, the study has several limitations. First, the analysis relied exclusively on the movie script, focusing primarily on verbal interaction without an in-depth examination of non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, or intonation that might alter the interpretation of impoliteness. Second, the data collection was limited to the main characters, which may not fully represent the linguistic behaviors of the broader ape society depicted in the film.

Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt a multimodal approach to capture both verbal and non-verbal aspects of impoliteness. Additionally, comparative studies analyzing impoliteness across different *Planet of the Apes* films or other dystopian narratives are suggested to further understand how genre and setting influence the pragmatic functions of conflict and power.

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