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The Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies on *Ice Cube's* Songs

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Abstract : *Impoliteness, the behavior of human being and an expression of people, becomes one of problems among society, either it is spoken or written, related with social interaction of millions. Propelled by social problem among society, this study analyzes impoliteness strategies, specifically identifying the types and functions of impoliteness strategies contained in the lyrics of rap songs from Ice Cube. The total rap songs used in this study amounted to 10 rap songs. This research uses descriptive qualitative as a research method. There are 53 lines of stanza in lyrics taken and after being identified the data related to the type and function of Jonathan Culpeper's impolite strategy theory. The results of the analysis indicate that most used impoliteness strategy appears in the lyrics of rap songs from Ice Cube is Positive Impoliteness with 24 data. In the lyrics of the song, Ice Cube uses a lot of taboo words, unfamiliar words, and improper identity changes. In addition, the function Affective Impoliteness is the most used in the lyrics with 20 data. In addition, this study also describes the representation of the African-American race described by Ice Cube through the lyrics of the rap song. What can be found is the use of terms that refer to the African-American race, the way that the police treat the African-American race, and the representation of the injustices that the African-American race gets.*

Keywords : *Impoliteness Strategy, Ice Cube, positive impoliteness, and affective impoliteness, African-American race*

Abstrak : *Ketidaksopanan, perilaku manusia dan ekspresi orang, menjadi salah satu masalah di masyarakat, baik itu lisan atau tulisan, terkait dengan jutaan interaksi sosial. Didorong oleh masalah sosial di kalangan masyarakat, Penelitian ini menganalisis tentang strategi ketidaksantunan, khususnya mengidentifikasi tipe-tipe dan fungsi-fungsi dari strategi ketidaksantunan yang terdapat dalam lirik lagu rap dari Ice Cube. Total lagu rap yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini berjumlah 10 lagu rap. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif sebagai metode penelitian. Terdapat 53 baris lirik dari bait lagu yang digunakan sebagai data dan setelah diidentifikasi mencakup kedalam tipe dan fungsi dari teori strategi*



ketidaksantunan dari Jonathan Culpeper. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa strategi ketidaksantunan yang paling sering muncul dalam lirik lagu rap dari Ice Cube adalah ketidaksantunan positif sebanyak 24 data. Dalam lirik lagunya, Ice Cube banyak menggunakan kata-kata tabu, kata-kata tak biasa, maupun penggantian identitas yang tidak pantas. Sementara itu, fungsi dari strategi ketidaksantunan, yang sering digunakan adalah fungsi affective sebanyak 20 data. Hal ini dikarenakan Ice Cube yang menggunakan kata-kata yang berkaitan dengan norma sosial Selain itu juga dalam penelitian ini menjelaskan tentang penggambaran ras Afrika-Amerika yang di gambarkan Ice Cube melalui lirik-lirik lagu rapnya. Hal yang dapat ditemukan yaitu penggunaan istilah yang mengacu pada ras kulit hitam, perlakuan pihak polisi dalam memperlakukan ras Afrika-Amerika, dan juga penggambaran mengenai ketidakadilan yang didapatkan oleh ras Afrika-Amerika.

Kata Kunci : Strategi Ketidaksantunan, Ice Cube, ketidaksantunan positif, dan ketidaksantunan affective, ras Afrika-Amerika

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important component as the communication mediator system among society that is produced by the organs of the human voice.¹ People use language to communicate with others in their daily social interactions, such as speaking, expressing something, or thinking about and preserving relationships with others to meet their needs. It refers to how people interpret utterances by understanding the language. People have

to choose an appropriate language when communicating with other people, since it is a language that can facilitate good communication. Sometimes, people talk in a language that has another meaning and how to deliver the speech, such as using an impolite language.

In this case, Impoliteness has become one of the problems that has appeared among people. It often happens in society; the topic of impoliteness is one of the important things that influences our social interaction. Impoliteness appears

¹ Buchori, D. S. 2012. *Bahasa Indonesia Untuk Mahasiswa*. (Bogor: Granada sarana Pustaka, 2012), p. 1.

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not only in verbal or oral communication, for instance, in movies and debates, and in written forms, such as on social media, but also in both oral and written forms, such as in the lyrics of a song. Impoliteness as an attitude which appears in society that is involved in negative perceptions.² It can cause social problems among people.

This study focuses on the using of impoliteness by Ice Cube on his lyric of the rap song. The stanza in lyrics of rap song became object of this study. There are ten songs that used by Ice Cube, an American rapper with the real name O'Shea Jackson. Ice Cube was chosen since he is one of the rappers who represents two eras of rap songs; the Golden age of hip-hop and the Bling-bling era.

This study will analyze the types and functions of impoliteness, also the sociological background that relate into the impoliteness that presented in the lyric of rap song by Ice Cube. This study

uses the theory from Culpeper (1996) to analyze the types of impoliteness and other theory from Culpeper (2011) to analyze the functions of impoliteness. In addition, to analyze the relation of social background of the rapsong, the theory that used is from Suwardi Endraswara (2011) and George Tracey (2008). Through this study, it can conduct that the impoliteness strategy that found on Ice Cube' rap song and how Ice Cube represents African-American's life in his rap songs by using impoliteness sentences to retell the situation and condition of his race.

Most people still think impoliteness is a dark side of politeness. Impoliteness is a negative attitude toward specific behaviors in particular contexts.³ It means that impoliteness is language or behaviors which are negatively evaluated in a specific context. Impoliteness can cause a disharmony relationship between people. Impoliteness as communicative

² Culpeper, J. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.99.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

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strategies designed to attack face causes social conflict and disharmony.⁴ Impoliteness involves the attitude of the people, consisting of negative evaluation beliefs about behaviors in a specific social context, and the activation of that attitude by those in a specific social context. Culpeper mentions there are five kinds of impoliteness strategies⁵, there are:

1) **Bald on record**

Bald on record impoliteness is an act of face-threatening that performed by people directly, clear, and without any ambiguity or unambiguous statement.⁶

2) **Positive Impoliteness**

Positive impoliteness is the use of strategies addressed to breakdown the positive face of the addressee.⁷ This strategy is used to attack the face of someone who wants to be recognized in society. The realizations of positive impoliteness are in the form of:

- a) Not paying attention
- b) Not showing sympathy
- c) Using improper identity
- d) Using secret language
- e) Showing disagreement
- f) Using taboo language
- g) Ignoring,
- h) Calling someone with another name,
- i) Disassociating from the other,
- j) Excluding the other from an activity,
- k) making another comfortless.

3) **Negative Impoliteness**

Negative impoliteness uses strategies addressed to breakdown the negative face of the addressee.⁸ This strategy can sometimes be done if you underestimate other people, such showing a resentment to other people obviously. There are various kinds of negative impoliteness strategies.⁹

- a) Making someone frighten
- b) Disparaging

⁴ Culpeper, J. Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: The Weakest Link. *Journal of Politeness Research*, (2005), p. 38.

⁵ Culpeper, Jonathan. Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 25 (1996) p. 349-367.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 358.



- c) Scorning
- d) Doing something insincerity
- e) Understating the hearer
- f) Grabbing the hearer 's space
- g) Associating the other with a negative aspect explicitly,
- h) Putting someone to be dependent on one

4) Sarcasm or mock Politeness

It as a face-threatening act that uses mock or illusive politeness strategy. It means that people show and express a fake genuine feeling to other people.¹⁰

5) Withhold Politeness

Withhold politeness occurs when a speaker does not do politeness strategy as the hearer wishes, or the speaker does not respond to the hearer or just silent or failing to thank for someone's present.¹¹

Culpeper also states, there are three functions of impoliteness, the following are the explanation each of functions:

1) Affective impoliteness

Affective impoliteness is the directed display of strongly elevated emotion, like anger. Affective impoliteness has a common function like opposing specific identities, interpersonal relationships, social norms, etc.¹²

2) Coercive Impoliteness

Coercive impoliteness is impoliteness which attempts to rearrange the values between the producer and the target in which the producer gains more benefit or enhances or preserves its current benefits.¹³

3) Entertaining Impoliteness

The last function of impoliteness is entertaining impoliteness. Impoliteness leans to harm or makes people angry, it can be entertaining as well.¹⁴

This study also analysis about the representation of African-American people, to conduct the analysis, this study used theory from Endraswara, he

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

¹² Culpeper, J. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.223.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

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mentions sociology is a study that related to a relationship between people or it can also be said as an objective study of humans in the society.¹⁵ In addition, this study refers to social traditions and processes. During the social interaction, people sometimes looking into the social background of someone to avoid a social conflict and disharmony. Based on Tracey, the term of social background refers to a social demographics of person, including their race, nationality, color, creed, language, education, lifestyle, and sometimes religion includes as social background.¹⁶

The study about Impoliteness have been conducted by some researchers. There are some similarities and differences between the previous study and this study. The first is undergraduate with titled *Impoliteness Strategies and Power Performed by President Donald Trump on Twitter* by Doni Cahyono (2018). It explains the

impoliteness performed by people within this language in online communication, specifically through social media. The relevance of previous study with this present study is analyze the types of impoliteness in the sentence, but this present study also focuses on discussing the functions of impoliteness and the social background of Ice Cube's race, while previous study uses additional theories about social power to support the study.

Next is journal from Minha Hong, *Bloody Hell and Impoliteness in Australia English*, published in Intercultural Communication Volume 01, No.01. Hong only focused on the phrase "bloody hell" in the campaign of Tourism Australia Hong concluded that the impoliteness appears in the intercultural since Australians use it daily and do not take the term "bloody hell" as impolite. On the other side, the British thought that the phrase "bloody hell" is rude and impolite. The relevance of this research is the data sources, Hong

¹⁵ Endraswara, S. *Metodelogi Penelitian Sosiologi Sastra*. (Yogyakarta: CAPS, 2011) p. 2.

¹⁶ Tracey, E., G. 'From Judge to Justice: Social Background Theory and The Supreme Court.' *Jurnal Hein Online*, Vol. 86. (2008), p. 1348

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uses the data in the form of not dialogue of conversation, but one phrases, as same with this present study which also analyze about the phrases in song lyrics, but Hong uses the interview method while this present study focuses on library studies.

The last previous study is a journal from Monir Mirhosseini, Maryam Mardanshahi and Hamidreza Dowlatabadi (2017), entitled *Impoliteness Strategies Based on Culpeper's Model: An Analysis of Gender Differences between Two Characters in the movie "Mother"*, published in Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research Volume 04, No.03. This study declare that the male character has used more impoliteness strategies than the female character in their conversation when they do interact in the movie entitled "mother". This journal focuses on the role of speaker and hearer, male or female, that deals with gender. The relevance of previous study with this present study is analyze the types of

impoliteness in a sentence. The previous study uses additional gender theories to support the study. Meanwhile, this present study uses the theory of the functions of impoliteness to explain the function of each type and social background theory, to describe about representation of African-American people.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study belongs to the qualitative descriptive. Qualitative research is a tool for analyzing subjective meaning or the social problem of the phenomenon, issues, or habits by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than statistics and numbers.¹⁷ Meanwhile, descriptive research relates to an observation in collecting the data.¹⁸ Besides, descriptive study aims to draw

¹⁷ Flick, U. *An introduction to qualitative research* (5th ed.). (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2014) p. 542.

¹⁸ Walliman, N. *Research Methods: The Basics*. (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2017) p. 8.



and classify the phenomenon.¹⁹ It means that the feature and context of the phenomenon of impoliteness and representation of African-American used by the rapper in the lyrics of the rap songs can be viewed and described in this method.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Through this section, this study presents the findings by applying Jonathan Culpeper's theory. The study focuses on the types of impoliteness strategy and classifies the functions of impoliteness strategy in the stanza on lyric of rap song by Ice Cube, in which the rap song taken from two eras of hip-hop, Golden age Hip-hop and Jiggy Era. There are 53 data that can be indicated as impoliteness strategies, either types of impoliteness or functions of impoliteness. After analyze the types and functions of impoliteness strategy, this study finds the

social background that presented in the rap songs by Ice Cube.

A. The types and functions of Impoliteness Strategies in the Ice Cube's Rap song

1) Bald on Record

The following data, it presents one of kinds impoliteness strategies found on stanza of several lyric in the rap songs from an American rapper, Ice Cube. This section explains the data of bald on record impoliteness. In this study, there 12 data found that indicated as bald on record impoliteness.

Data 1

Until you put more hip-hop in
Then I might grin **but don't
pretend that you're down with
the scene**
And **go and diss me in a
magazine**

Ice Cube uses an imperative sentence directly to the subject "**you**" who became the target that addressed by Ice

¹⁹ Nassaji, H. 'Qualitative and descriptive research.' *Journals Permissions.nav*, vol.19, no.2 (2015), p. 129.

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Cube. It can be seen in the bold sentence **“but don't pretend that you're down with the scene”**. The sentence has the meaning that the target should not be pretend to be disappointed, because it will make Ice Cube as the speaker feels angry. Ice Cube in this stanza tries to command the subject **“you”** to obey what he said. He expressed his displeasure directly about his imperative utterance through the stanza. From the explanation above, it can be categorized as the using of bald on record impoliteness. The data shows the using of coercive impoliteness. In the bold lyric, Ice Cube forces the subject that he addressed on the rap song to obey what he wanted. It can be seen in the word **“don't pretend that you're down with the scene”**. It shows that Ice Cube feels has more power to saying what he wanted, includes give an imperative sentence **“don't pretend”**. Through the bold sentence, Ice Cube can present about his social status exist in the society. It is a command utterance without any ambiguous action. Furthermore, there are another line in this stanza that can be seen

if Ice Cube tries to show his social power, it can be found in the line **“go and diss me in a magazine”**. Through that line, Ice Cube tries to challenge the subject **“you”** to do something as the resistance action for Ice Cube.

2) Positive Impoliteness

There are 24 data of positive impoliteness found in the 10 rap songs by Ice Cube. The following data below shows that Ice Cube applied this impoliteness strategy.

Data 2

You don't associate with **the Negroes**
You wanna be just like **Jack**
But Jack, is calling you a nigga
behind your back
So back off genius

The first is the words **“The Negroes”** and the second one is the word **“Jack”**. Both of kinds shows that the rapper uses one of kinds positive impoliteness, namely calling someone with another name. The word **“The Negroes”** or known as negro, nigger, or nigga, and all of the word derivatives of the Latin word, that is **“Niger”** which means black, and used to refer an

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American Black or African-Americans.²⁰ The term of “**negro**” evolved to be used as representation of slaves. Thus, **the negroes** refer to the African-American or African-Americans people. Through this stanza, Ice Cube used that word as the representation of his race, it supported by the word “**es**”, which means more than one people. After that, Ice Cube also use the word “Jack”, it can consider as calling someone with others name. Based on *urbandictionary.com*, the word **Jack** refers to the one of slang word which have meaning fellow or friend. Through this stanza, Ice Cube shows he tries to tease the subject “**you**” who want to join his race and become friends. Therefore, Ice cube presents the using of coercive impoliteness as the function of impoliteness. It can be showed in the word “**The Negroes**”, as the explanation above, that word relates to the Ice Cube’s race, African-American or African-Americans

people. Therefore, the social status of one race group mentioned in this stanza.

3) Negative Impoliteness

The other types of impoliteness strategy that used by Ice Cube in his lyric of rap songs are negative impoliteness. In this study, data which classified as negative impoliteness are 7 data.

Data 3

Throw a house nigga in a ditch
Half-pint bitch, fucking your
homeboys
you little maggot
Eazy-E turned faggot

Ice Cube applies one of kinds negative impoliteness in the lyric of rap song above, namely associating someone by using pronoun “**you**” and some negative aspects, it can be seen in the sentence “**you little maggot**”. The rapper uses the word “**little maggot**” as the negative aspect, according to *Cambridge Dictionary*, **maggot** refers to a little worm-like insect found in decomposing meat and other foods that eventually grows into a

²⁰ Fogle, C., D. *The Etymology, Evolution and Social Acceptability of 'Nigger', 'Negro', and 'Nigga'*. (Western Governors University, 2013), p.3.

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fly. In addition, people use that word as the derogatory name to demean someone, it designates **“maggot person”** which means a worthless person. Furthermore, Ice Cube tries to make a joke about someone who hated by him. Therefore, in this lyric Ice Cube applied entertaining impoliteness to taunting other people. Through the line in the stanza, Ice Cube comparing a human with an animal which known as something gross.

4) Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness

There are 10 data that found in the lyric of Ice Cube’s rap songs. This type usually follows by sarcastic sentences or mocking words.

Data 4

Used to be my homie

now you act like you don't know me

It's a case of divide-and-conquer

'Cause you let a Jew break up my crew

House nigga gotta run and hide

The bold sentence that presented above, Ice Cube tries to mock his former group members by the using of subject **“you”**, it refers to the group members of

N.W.A or most known as his former group. In the sentence **“used to be my homie”**, he tries to talk about his relationship between members of group. The word **“homie”** can indicate their good relation because it used for most trusted friend. Meanwhile, after the group is disbanded, they act like do not know each other, it can see in the sarcastic sentence **“now you act like you don't know me”**. The data above can be categorized as sarcasm or mock politeness since the using of sarcastic sentence found on the lyric of rap song and it also used to mock his former group members. It addressed for his partner in his former group. By the sentences **“used to be my homie”** and **“now you act like you don't know me”** that relates with sarcastic sentences. On the other side, Ice Cube makes that sarcastic sentence since that is interpersonal relationship among Ice Cube and N.W.A members or known as his former group. It indicates the using of affective impoliteness. It shows by the word **“homie”** or the term of close friend. But after the group disband, their relation also does not in a good condition, that is

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the reason why Ice Cube feels anger about their personal relationship by showing the sarcastic sentence.

B. Social Background of African-American People in the Ice Cube's Rap song

In several rap songs, Ice Cube tries to represents his race, African-American, that is mainly talks about how African-American discriminated by white people in America and lack of justice in human rights of his race. As a racial minority, they usually get inappropriate identities name, and it often sounds rude. It can be seen in the stanza of lyric rap song by Ice Cube on below.

Data 5

When we die, we won't make Jet
Ebony can't see to the light side
The term they apply to us is a
nigga

Call it what you want,
cause I'm comin' from the corner
Same applies to a Ph.D

Data 6

You don't associate with ***the***
Negroes
You wanna be just like Jack

But Jack, is calling you a nigga
behind your back

Ice Cube use the words "***nigga***" and "***the negroes***" to present his race. In this data of study, it seeks to support a pragmatics theory of impoliteness as well as establish the using of improper identity between **nigga** and **negroes**. Ice Cube tries to mention the social background of African-American people which relate to the sociological phenomena associated with the term **nigga** and **negroes**. The term **nigga** occurs in a specialized field that contains a variety of terminology that allow African-Americans to address or refer to fellow African-Americans directly. Because these terms are commonly used to signify African-American identity and solidarity with the community.

The rappers often use this term in their lyric of rap songs, like what Ice Cube to present about the race, comedians make the topic about African-American with use this term to point their race, and artists utilize this word, although there is no connotation meaning since it is used to generate unity and connection with their

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African-American audiences. Ice Cube as the rapper uses this term to tell others if he is part of an African-American with the phrase "**I'm a nigga**", he tries to swagger himself as the representation of African-American which known also as the famous rapper. It can be seen in the data below.

Data 7

I'm a Nigga, gotta live by the trigga
How the fuck do you figure
That I can say "Peace" and the
gunshots will cease?
Every cop killer goes ignored

As we can see in the data above, the use of "**nigga**" can be connected to the positive self and racial esteem or identity, and can therefore be a language tool utilized to increase personal and racial esteem for those who have sociological and historical been at the same struggle in society by the point of race, social power, social status, social right and social economic. It means that when that term used by white people to addressing African-American, it usually offensive and disparaging. Meanwhile, when it used by African-American people to addressing

themselves, it means to show their good will reflecting and warmth as the solidarity which is relate to the awareness of their history.

In addition, Ice Cube represent about African-American as the victim of the American police, it is showed the social background in 2017 through his lyric of rap song. In addition, Ice Cube also describe another discrimination aimed at his race, African-American. It can be seen in the line of lyrics below.

Data 8

They rather catch us with guns and
white powder.
If I was old, they'd probably be a
friend of me
**Since I'm young, they consider
me the enemy**
**They kill ten of me to get the job
correct**
**To serve, protect, and break a
nigga's neck**

Ice Cube presents three sarcastic statements in the data above, the words "**they**" referring to police and "**me**" referring to Ice Cube, who is representing

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African- Americans. He claims that the penalties make the police believe that African-Americans are nasty individuals in social situations. After that in the bold sentence lyric, it is almost similar to the first sentence lyric in that **"they"** and **"me"** have similar meanings, but the word **"me"** in this line is followed by a number of individuals, which suggests that he is African-American. In this line, Ice Cube asks if the police should kill African-Americans to gain a complement on their job as cops, but this is only sarcasm on Ice Cube's part because it is not what the police are intended to do. In addition, Ice Cube attempts another sarcasm with the words **"to serve, protect, and break a niggas neck"** which has the same meaning that the cops should eventually murder the African-Americans.

Furthermore, the line **"to serve, to protect"** in this verse refers to the police loyalty to white people, which might be seen as sarcasm by Ice Cube. It is further corroborated by the following line in the verse, which mentions that the cops also torture African-Americans, as Ice Cube

states in the words **"break niggas neck"**. It indicates that, while they have a good commitment to white people, they also have a horrible treatment towards African-Americans as a policy to be excellent police officer.

D. CONCLUSION

As a result, the golden age of hip-hop became the era that can be categorized as the most used impoliteness strategy by Culpeper with 32 data. The most frequently used strategy in golden age hip-hop is positive impoliteness, with 24 data that found in the rap songs on that era. In addition, the golden age of hip-hop, there are 32 data that indicates the most use of impoliteness function. The most frequently used strategy in golden age hip-hop is affective impoliteness with the total is 21 data. The representation of African-American also found in the stanza lyric of rap song by Ice Cube found several things, such as the use of terms that refer to a race that is derogatory.

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