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1. Introduction

Although impoliteness, as compared to politeness, was neglected by linguists for decades, there has been an increased interest in conflictive dialogue since the late 1990s and early 2000s. This turn to offensive verbal behaviour is marked by a number of studies on this topic (Culpeper 1995 - 2017, Bousfield 2007 - 2013, Hutchby 2008, Watts 2008) and even a special edition of the Journal of Politeness Research 4 (2) 2008 was devoted to impoliteness.

Derek Bousfield (2008) offers the first monographic account of impoliteness in face-to-face interaction and, together with Miriam A. Locher (2008), investigates the relationship between impoliteness and the language of power. Another linguist, whose work concentrates on confrontational interaction, is Jonathan Culpeper (e.g. 1996; 2011a), who presents a variety of theoretical approaches to the linguistic notion of impoliteness. He builds an impoliteness framework similar to Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) theory of politeness by using their politeness strategies to create opposite impoliteness superstrategies. Drawing on the theoretical approaches and methodological paradigms proposed by the linguists mentioned above (and others), this thesis attempts to contribute to the field of impoliteness in discourse by testing the applicability of well-known theories on this matter to the TV series Scrubs.

The first part of the thesis introduces some of the key theories in the fields of politeness and its opposite phenomenon impoliteness. In addition, impoliteness as a tool to create humour and to further plot and characters in fictional discourse will be discussed. The second part of the thesis, the data analysis, will be mostly qualitative. Its primary focus is on the impoliteness strategies applied by the main characters of the series, Dr Cox, a sarcastic and bitter mentor who is known for his rough treatment of colleagues, students and patients, and Dr Kelso, the insensitive and apathetic Chief of medicine. The analysis is based on Jonathan Culpeper's impoliteness strategies (1996), and also incorporates the reactions of Dr Cox’s and Dr Kelso’s addressees, for
which Derek Bousfield’s (2007; 2008) theory on the anatomy of impoliteness and, in particular, his chart on the various responses to impoliteness are used. In the course of this analysis the following questions will be answered:

- Which **types of impoliteness** and which **superstrategies** are used by Dr Cox and Dr Kelso in conversations with interns?
- How is impoliteness managed in these conversations? – i.e. How do Dr Cox’s and Dr Kelso’s addressees react to the face-threatening acts?

At a second, more interpretative level of the analysis, the relationship between power and impoliteness in the series will be studied in detail. For this interpretation, Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) *formula for assessing the amount of face threat caused*, and French and Raven’s *bases of social power* (1959) will be used. The questions I attempt to answer are:

- What are the character’s intentions for employing impoliteness?
- How do factors like power relations and social distance shape and influence the conversations?

Finally, the functions of impoliteness in *Scrubs* on a broader scale will be examined:

- How is impoliteness in *Scrubs* used to create a humorous effect?
- In how far does impoliteness help create the story and characters in the series?

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the theoretical background of the thesis. As most impoliteness theories build on *politeness*, the first chapter gives an overview of the most prominent politeness theories. Thereafter (chapter 3), impoliteness theories are compared and discussed. This is followed by a detailed presentation of Culpeper’s (1996; 2011a) impoliteness model, which as mentioned is the basis of the analysis of *Scrubs*. Chapter 6 examines the role of power, distance and social ranking in relation to *impoliteness*. The final chapter of the theoretical part explains why impoliteness might be entertaining and how it is used in fiction to develop characters and plot. The second part of the paper is divided into the analysis of
the selected dialogues from the series and the discussion of the results. First important background information on the setting, the main characters and the power relations between the characters is provided. Subsequently, the selected extracts are analysed by applying Culpeper’s (1996) *impoliteness superstrategies* and Bousfield’s (2007) *response options*. Finally, the outcomes of the analysis are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework presented in the first part of the thesis.
2. Politeness theories

According to Oxford Learners’ Dictionaries (www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com 08.07.2013), politeness is defined as “good manners and respect for the feelings of others” or as “the fact of being socially correct but not always sincere”. Theories of politeness in linguistics and pragmatics, however, are much more complex and subject of intensive debate.

Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) were one of the first linguists to study the concept of politeness. They based their theories on the Gricean framework (1989) of the Cooperative Principle (CP) and extended it to include politeness. Theories which followed were either based on those ideas and approaches or tried to question and disprove them.

All theories of politeness, though, have one assumption in common: in order to foster interpersonal harmony and decrease the risk of potential conflicts, people act politely, appropriately and rationally (Leech 1983: 82; Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 1).

The following chapters will review the literature on linguistic politeness and cover some of the most widely known academic approaches to this concept.

2.1. Grice’s Cooperative principle

As mentioned, Grice’s theory of conversation represents the basis of most well-known politeness theories and should thus be explained first. Grice was interested in the difference of ‘saying’ and ‘meaning’, i.e. the difference between linguistic form and the meaning of an utterance. He wanted to find out the mechanism underlying conversation. (Haugh 2015: 41)

In his essay Logic and Conversation (1975) Grice argues that people who are involved in conversation usually cooperate with each other in order the conversation to be effective. We would not usually assume people who are having a conversation to simply withhold information from each other or talk
unconnectedly as this kind of conversation would be inefficient. Effective conversation, according to Grice (1975: 45-46), involves participants who make a “conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange”. Grice (1975: 47) labelled this basic tenet the Cooperative Principle (CP), which is shared by speakers and hearers, and consists of four main maxims and several sub-maxims:

- Maxim of QUANTITY: Give the right amount of information.
  - Make your contribution as informative as is required.
  - Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- Maxim of QUALITY: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
  - Do not say what you believe to be false.
  - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- Maxim of RELATION: Be relevant.
- Maxim of MANNER: Be perspicuous.
  - Avoid obscurity of expression.
  - Avoid ambiguity.
  - Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
  - Be orderly.

This principle is a basic set of assumptions, which states that for achieving maximally efficient communication participants need to talk in conformity with these maxims. However, Grice also points out that in some cases participants may fail to adhere to the principles. Violating the principles and leaving out essential information compels the addressee to make implicatures (i.e. to infer meaning) so that he/she can grasp the speaker's intended meaning and, therefore, observe the CP. (Grice 1975: 30)

In his definition of implied or additional meaning, he divides implicatures into two categories, the conventional and conversational implicatures. With regard to conventional implicatures “the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said” (1975: 44). For conversational implicatures, what is implied varies according to the context of the utterance (1975: 44).

Grice (1989: 47) further argues that the CP might need to be extended by adding more maxims, for instance the maxim “be polite”: 
There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as “Be polite,” that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures. The conversational maxims, however, and the conversational implicatures connected with them, are specially connected (I hope) with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve.

2.2. Lakoff

Lakoff (2004 [1975]: 87) builds on Grice’s admission that there are other aspects, like politeness, which influence conversation and argues that politeness in particular plays a significant role in conversation. Lakoff (2004 [1975]: 87) describes the phenomenon of politeness in terms of conflict avoidance, as she argues that “politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction”. In her article *The logic of politeness; or minding your p’s and q’s* published in 1973, she suggests adding pragmatic rules to Grice’s CP in order to complement the existing syntactic and semantic rules. She argues that Grice’s system of rules works well if the purpose of the conversation is to convey factual meaning, however, if the conversation deals with personal or interpersonal feelings of the hearer/speaker, the CP is rather inefficient (1973: 297).

The two main rules of Pragmatic Competence which Lakoff introduces in her theory are “be clear”, which is one of Grice’s CP maxims, and “be polite” which is made up of three sub-rules namely “Don’t impose”, “Give options”, and “Make A feel good—be friendly” (1973: 297).

Later, in 1975, Lakoff reformulates her Rules of Politeness as follows:

1. Formality: keep aloof.
2. Deference: give options.

(Lakoff 2004 [1975]: 88)
Rule 1, *formality*, is applied in situations when social distance is of high relevance. Means of achieving social distance are linguistic devices such as: legalese and medicalesele, the informal & formal ‘you’, the passive voice in academic writing, the use of titles (such as ‘Mr’, ‘Dr’ etc.) and more. (Lakoff 2004 [1975]: 88)

When applying the second rule *deference*, options are given to the addressee. As a consequence, Rule 2 conveys the superior status of the addressee over the speaker. Examples of deference are: hedges, hesitancy in speech and actions, question intonation and tag questioning and euphemisms. (2004 [1975]: 89)

Rule 3, *camaraderie*, is used in informal conversation in which a sense of camaraderie between speaker and addressee is conveyed and when, in contrast to Rules 1 and 2, equality between the two parties is given. Camaraderie can be achieved by using, for instance, colloquial language, taboo words and nicknames. Thus, the main purpose of the application of this rule is “to make the addressee feel that the speaker likes him and wants to be friendly with him, is interested in him, and so on” (Lakoff 2004 [1975]: 90).

Lakoff (2004 [1975]: 91) also points out that all of the mentioned rules can of course be real or just conventions. Furthermore, although Lakoff’s “Rules of Politeness” were viewed as universally applicable, she also points out that the priority/importance of each of the rules is culture specific as the different beliefs and traditions of the various cultures have an impact on their perceptions of politeness (2004 [1975]: 91):

I am suggesting here that the rules as stated are universal: in no society, it is my preliminary prediction, will there be no reflexes of any of these rules; but one society may apply Rule 1 every chance it gets, to the very advanced stages of intimacy, and another will switch Rule 3 with unimaginable celerity.
2.3. Leech

In his research, Leech (1983: 15) takes a rhetorical approach to pragmatics. With ‘rhetorical’ he means “the effective use of language in its most general sense, applying it primarily to everyday conversation, and only secondarily to more prepared and public uses of language”.

He uses the noun ‘rhetoric’ to refer to a set of conversational principles, which consist of several maxims. The Interpersonal rhetoric includes, not only Grice’s CP with all the respective maxims, but also a Politeness Principle (PP). He explains that the reason for the need of a PP lies in the insufficiency of the CP, as the CP does not explain why people quite frequently do not adhere to the maxims of conversation and why it is sometimes appropriate to withhold information or truth from the hearer. For this reason, just as Lakoff, he argues that the PP can be seen as a necessary complement, which can save the CP from ‘failure’. (1983: 80)

Leech considers both of the principles to have a general social function and argues that there is a ‘trade-off relation’ between them, as the CP “has the function of regulating what we say so that it contributes to some assumed illocutionary or discoursal goal(s)” (Leech 1983: 82). However, he further argues, that the PP has a higher regulative role than the CP as it “maintain[s] the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place” (1983: 82). In other words, with the absence of politeness, communication would break down.

Leech’s politeness principle (PP) consists of a series of maxims, which he proposed to explain how politeness is used and manifested in social interaction, in order to, as mentioned, cooperate and maintain comity. He bases his maxims on two kinds of illocutionary act, the representatives which he calls ‘assertives’, and directives called ‘impositives’. (1983: 104-106)

As can be seen from the list below, each of his proposed maxims is accompanied by two sub-maxims. The sub-maxims are elements of positive
(seeking concord) or negative politeness (avoidance of discord). Thus, he differentiates between negative and positive politeness, in that “negative politeness consists in minimizing the impoliteness of impolite illocutions”, while positive politeness increases “the politeness of polite illocutions” (1983: 83-84).

- TACT MAXIM: a) Minimise cost to other b) (Maximise benefit to other)
- GENEROSITY MAXIM: a) Minimise benefit to self b) (Maximise cost to self)
- APPROBATION MAXIM: a) Minimise dispraise of other b) (Maximise praise of other)
- MODESTY MAXIM: a) Minimise praise of self b) (Maximise dispraise of self)
- AGREEMENT MAXIM: a) Minimise disagreement between self and other b) (Maximise agreement between self and other)
- SYMPATHY MAXIM: a) Minimise antipathy between self and other b) (Maximise sympathy between self and other)

(Leech 1983: 132 ff)

Leech (1983: 133) also notes that not all of the maxims are of equal importance as it can be assumed that politeness is more other-oriented than self-oriented. For instance, tact has a more powerful effect on what we say than generosity, and approbation is more essential than modesty. Also, more than one maxim can be observed by the speaker at a time.

How much politeness and what kind of politeness is needed in conversation depends on the situation and the illocutionary goals that the interlocutors want to achieve. In the first two kinds of speech events from the list below, politeness is more relevant than in the last two (collaborative and conflictive). In competitive situations, negative politeness is required as the speaker does his/her best to bring about reconciliation, while convivial events are intrinsically courteous and, thus, subject to positive politeness. (Leech 1983: 104-106)

- COMPETITIVE: The illocutionary goal competes with the social goal; e.g. ordering, asking, demanding, begging.
- CONVIVIAL: The illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal; e.g. offering, inviting, greeting, thanking, congratulating.
- COLLABORATIVE: The illocutionary goal is indifferent to the social goal; e.g. asserting, reporting, announcing, instructing.
- CONFLICTIVE: The illocutionary goal conflicts with the social goal; e.g. threatening, accusing, cursing, reprimanding.
Summed up, Leech’s theory of politeness is based on the idea that politeness is used in interaction to avoid conflict and seek comity, which is especially evident in his specifications of the maxims.

### 2.4. Levinson and Brown: the concept of face

One of the most influential theories on linguistic politeness was proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, which was first published in the book *Universals in language use: politeness* (1978) and then reissued in 1987 with the title *Politeness: some universals in language use*. Their work on politeness can be considered a face-saving theory, as Brown and Levinson used Erving Goffman’s (1967) concept of face in order to establish a concept of linguistic politeness.

Erving Goffman’s (1967: 5) sees face

> […] as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes - albeit an image that others may share as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself.

In other words, face is the “public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 61).

This self-image is articulated in the

**negative face:** the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” (Brown & Levinson 1987[1978]: 62)

and in the

**positive face:** the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others”. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 62)

Thus, each individual has a face, which consists of a set of goals that he/she wants other people to respect. These goals are ‘not being impeded by others’
and ‘being appreciated and approved’; these desires are called *face wants*. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 61-61)

Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]: 61) start from the basic assumption that there must be some kind of cooperation between speaker (S) and hearer (H) as a mutual maintenance of face is dependent on both parties—in order the speaker to protect his/her own face, he/she needs to save the addressee’s face, due to the simple fact that impeding it could result in defensive behaviour.

Utterances which disrupt the act of face-maintenance or, in other words, pose a threat to the speaker’s or hearer’s face are called face threatening acts (FTAs). In Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]: 65) words:

> [...] certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker.

Brown and Levinson further make a distinction between FTAs which pose a threat to the negative face and those which pose a threat to the positive face. Those threats that affect the negative face cause danger to the hearer’s freedom of action, whereas, threats to the positive face are actions which signal the speaker’s indifference of the hearer’s wants or feelings. Acts, which threaten the negative face are, among many other: orders and requests, suggestions and advice, promises, or expressions of envy. Threats to the positive face can be caused by expressions of disapproval, criticism, contradictions, expressions of violent emotions, bringing of bad news about the hearer, and many more. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 65ff)

According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]: 68) theory, any rational person would try to avoid committing FTAs, or will at least make an effort to minimise the threat with the use of certain strategies. Strategies of committing FTAs are shown in Figure 1.
This model shows the possible options available to a speaker when trying to prevent a face threat to the hearer. If a high risk of face loss is present, the choices at the bottom (Don’t do the FTA) are considered appropriate, while in the event of a low risk to face, the options on the top of the figure (Do the FTA) would be suitable. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 69)

Saying something off-record is a means of uttering something without directly addressing the hearer. Thus, the hearer can decide whether to react to the speaker’s utterance (e.g. ‘Oh, I forgot my purse’ which might imply that the person addressed should pay) or not, but the speaker cannot be held imposing as he/she did not directly ask for anything. Such statements can be referred to as ‘hints’ and are realised in linguistic devices such as metaphor and irony, tautologies, rhetorical questions, etc. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 69)

In contrast to off-record acts, on-record utterances directly address the hearer and clearly express the speaker’s communicative intention. When committing a FTA boldly, without redressive action, the speaker is doing it in conformity with Grice’s (1987 [1978]: 69), maxims in “the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible” by, for example, using imperative forms in requests (e.g. ‘Give me X!’). Thus, on-record acts could potentially pose a threat to the
addressee’s face and consequently lead to face damage. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 69)

Redressive actions can be seen as ‘actions of repair’, as they are efforts to counterbalance the face damage that was caused by the FTA. Redressive actions are accomplished with the use of positive or negative politeness, depending on which aspect of face is relevant. (Brown & Levinson 1987 [1978]: 69-70)

Additionally, Brown and Levinson claim that, although the essence of face may differ in different cultures, every member of a society is aware of the other members’ public self image and approves it in interaction. Hence, what they are implying is that the existence and mutual maintenance of face is universal. (1987 [1978]: 62; 283)

2.5. Fraser and Nolen

In Fraser and Nolen’s (1981) theory, politeness is viewed as a conversational contract, which people enter in interactions. They argue that

> [o]n entering a given conversation, each party brings an understanding of some initial set of rights and obligations that will determine [...] the limits of the interaction. (1981: 93-94)

This contract suggests that participants adhere to certain rules and obligations in order to maintain conflict-free interaction. In other words, if this contract of rules and obligations is upheld, the participants can be referred to as behaving in a ‘polite manner’. Any deviation of the conversational contract, e.g. flouting the rules, is considered impolite. (Fraser & Nolen 1981: 96)

The rights and obligations mentioned above can be renegotiated, as the conversational contract is dependent on the context and/or setting of the interaction. The conversational contract consists of a set of terms, which can be divided into two types. General terms are seldom subject to renegotiation as they are rather fixed elements of successful conversation (e.g. waiting for one’s
turn to speak; speaking the same language), while specific terms differ from contract to contract and are influenced by the speaker/hearer relationship. Factors such as social status and social relationship play a big role in the negotiation of the conversational contract as they determine what type of speech act and what content can be regarded as appropriate or not. (1981: 93-94)

Unlike Leech (1983: 83), Fraser & Nolen (1981: 96) argue that a sentence as such is not inherently polite or impolite, as “it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determines the judgement of politeness.” Also whether an expression is evaluated as polite or impolite lies in the perception of the hearer. In other words, we might intentionally try to act in an impolite or polite manner but the hearer might interpret the behaviour differently. (1981: 96)
3. Defining Impoliteness

After considering some of the key theories of politeness, I will now move on to the theories of *impoliteness*. This section attempts to address some of the theoretical and methodological problems underlying the concept of impoliteness (first order vs. second order approach; impoliteness vs. rudeness; intention). It will also present some of the most prominent work conducted in the field of linguistic impoliteness (Terkourafi 2008; Culpeper 1996-2011; Kienpointner 1997, 2008).

As already mentioned in the introduction, impoliteness is a vastly expanding field. In fact, a number of studies concerning “rude”, “impolite”, “aggressive”, “face threatening or attacking” behaviour have been conducted in the last decade (Culpeper 2005, Bousfield 2007, Hutchby 2008, Watts 2008). However, ever since its beginnings, the study of impoliteness has been biased. Consequently disagreements can be found among a range of definitions, as can be seen from the list below:

1. communicative behaviour intending to cause the ‘face loss’ of a target or perceived by the target to be so (Culpeper 2008: 36)
2. impoliteness occurs when the expression used is not conventionalized relative to the context of occurrence; it threatens the addressee’s face but no face-threatening intention is attributed to the speaker by the hearer (Terkourafi 2008: 70)
3. ‘impoliteness’ should be seen as a first order concept, i.e., a judgement made by a participant in an interaction with respect to the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the social behaviour of co-participants (Locher and Watts 2008: 77)
4. the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive face-threatening acts (FTAs) that are purposefully performed (Bousfield 2008: 132)
5. infringing the norms of appropriate behaviour that prevail in particular contexts and among particular interlocutors (Holmes et al. 2008: 216)
6. rudeness is a kind of prototypically non-cooperative or competitive communicative behaviour (Kienpointner 1997: 259)
The definitions listed above vary in a number of aspects and approaches which theorists prefer in defining impoliteness. Some theorists take a first order approach (e.g. Locher & Watts 2008), while others take a second order approach (e.g. Bousfield 2008; Culpeper 2005; Terkourafi 2008). Bousfield and Locher sum up the differences between the two approaches as follows:

First order concepts are judgements about behaviour, such as *impolite, rude, polite, polished*, made by the social actors themselves. They arrive at these judgements according to the norms of their particular discursive practice. We are, in other words, dealing with a lay-person’s understanding of the concepts italicised above. Second order approaches use the concepts and consider them on a theoretical level. These theories do not disregard first order notions as, in fact, it is argued that the second order theories are necessarily informed by first order notions in the first place. (Bousfield & Locher 2008: 5)

Locher and Watts (2008), for instance, claim that impoliteness should not be treated as a second order approach but a first order approach, as according to them, what is crucial, is the hearer’s interpretation or judgement of the utterance as to whether it is considered impolite or not. Bousfield (2008) and Culpeper (2005) argue that the speaker’s intentions and the hearer’s recognition of these are both crucial determinants to impoliteness, whereas, Terkourafi (2008) points out that an utterance can be impolite even if it was not the speaker’s intention to be impolite, but the hearer understands and recognises it as such.

Intentionality in general is an issue of dispute in the field of impoliteness. Some theorists (e.g. Culpeper; Terkourafi; Bousfield) address the importance of intentionality in defining impoliteness. Culpeper (2008: 36), for instance, argues that impoliteness is deliberately intended by the speaker. Bousfield (2008: 72) argues in line with Culpeper (2008: 36). In his book *Impoliteness in Interaction* he states that

impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully delivered: (i) unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or, (ii) with deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, ‘boosted’, or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted.
Terkourafi (2008: 70), however, claims that an utterance can be perceived as impolite without the speaker wanting to be impolite in the first place and the other way round.

What is also apparent from the definitions listed is that in some definitions impoliteness is viewed as behaviour which aims to damage somebody’s face or identity. Thus, some linguists’ theories (Culpeper; Bousfield; Terkourafi) are rooted in Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness in which, as mentioned, the concept of face plays a crucial role, while other theorists dismiss this concept.

Disagreements can even be found as to how to label the phenomenon under investigation. There is an overlap between the two terms, impoliteness and rudeness, as both refer to offensive behaviour. Many scholars, however, differentiate between impoliteness and rudeness based on the way speakers 'use' the concepts (e.g. frequency and manner). Terkourafi (2008), for instance, distinguishes between impoliteness and rudeness by arguing that the latter is related to intentional face threatening acts while the first happens unwittingly. Culpeper (2008: 36) on the contrary argues that impoliteness can either be intentional or accidental; accidental in the sense that the speaker might not have the intention to attack the hearer’s face, but his/her behaviour might be perceived as face-threatening by the hearer. Furthermore, Culpeper explains his preference for the term impoliteness by stating that the term is “ripe for appropriation“ (2011a: 24) as it is not frequently used in the English language. Watts (2008) on the other hand argues quite the opposite and goes for rudeness precisely because this term is understood and used by any English speaker.

I have decided to use the term impoliteness in this thesis for the simple reason that the major part thereof is based on Culpeper’s theory and research, which, among other prominent theories mentioned will be presented in more detail in the following sections. I have decided to present the theories of Terkourafi (2008), Culpeper (1996-2008) and Kienpointer (2008) as their approaches to this rather complex subject differ. As mentioned, Terkourafi distinguishes
between impoliteness and rudeness and also takes a more hearer based stance in describing impoliteness/rudeness in language, while Kienpointner (2008) takes into consideration the role of emotions in the realisation of impoliteness.

3.1. Terkourafi

Terkourafi (2008: 45-70) proposes a unified theory of politeness, impoliteness and rudeness. Borrowing Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) ideas of face threatening vs. face constituting acts, she argues that these are perlocutionary effects. Contrary to most politeness/impoliteness theories, which focus on the intention of the speaker, she places emphasis on the hearer’s perception thereof. In other words, whether an act is polite/impolite depends on the hearer holding the belief that the speaker was polite/impolite/rude. In the case of impoliteness/rudeness the effect achieved by the speaker, even if not intentionally, is a face-threat.

As is evident in the previous paragraph, Terkourafi (2008) makes a distinction between impoliteness and rudeness. Drawing from etymological evidence, she argues that the difference between the two lies in the speaker’s intention:

[...] in impoliteness the face-threat is taken to be accidental, i.e. attributed to the speaker’s ignorance or incompetence – as may occur, for instance, in cross-cultural communication – whereas in rudeness the face-threat is taken to be intentional. (Terkourafi 2008: 61-62)

Terkourafi (2008: 64-70) further distinguishes between marked/unmarked rudeness and impoliteness. In her theory, unmarked means that certain behaviour in certain contexts is expected and conventionalised. In certain situations and contexts the speaker and hearer have a shared knowledge as to how face will be dealt with, for instance in police interrogations or army training face threats are expected. This implies that unmarked rudeness and impoliteness are both noticed, but the main difference is that rude behaviour is seen as intentional while impolite is not. Consequently, marked rudeness occurs when the face threat is not expected.
3.2. Kienpointner

Kienpointner (2008: 246) points out that so far theories of (im)politeness have understated the role that emotions play in the realisation of impolite behaviour. Brown and Levinson’s model of politeness, for instance, is based on a Model Person (MP) whose basic characteristics are rationality and face. Rationality is referred to by Brown and Levinson as the ability to reason “from ends to means that will achieve those ends” (1087: 58). Kienpointner (2008: 246), however, argues that emotions cannot be excluded from the theory, as they can be plausible in specific situations. For example, fear can help us protect ourselves from dangers.

In this sense he claims that, apart from the three factors (power, distance and rank of imposition as mentioned by B&L) the participants’ emotional state too influences the communicative situation and that there is a systematic link between competitive rudeness and certain emotional arguments. Furthermore, these three factors as such involve certain emotions. Social distance between participants is usually connected to love, awe and respect, while minimal social distance is linked to the emotions of love, sympathy, anger and hate. (Kienpointner 2008: 247)

On the basis of these assumptions Kienpointner (2008: 245) defines impoliteness/rudeness as follows:

\textit{Impoliteness/Rudeness} is a kind of prototypically non-cooperative or competitive communicative behaviour:

- which destabilizes the personal relationships of the interacting individuals and thus makes it more difficult to achieve the mutually accepted goal of the interaction or makes it difficult to agree on a mutually accepted goal in the first place;
- which, more particularly, creates or maintains an emotional atmosphere of mutual irreverence and antipathy, which primarily serves egocentric interests;
- which is partially determined by concepts of power, distance, emotional attitudes and cost-benefit scales which are generally accepted in a speech community. (original emphasis)

In addition, Kienpointner (2008: 247) criticises the fact that, so far, emotional arguments in conversation have only been treated as fallacies, i.e. as non-cooperative moves. He argues that emotional arguments need not always be
fallacious but that they are legitimate and plausible in some situations. In other words, he rejects the idea of impoliteness being simply non-cooperative or irrational behaviour, and suggests the distinction between “plausible and illegitimate uses of emotional arguments” (Kienpointner 2008: 248).

He further argues that there is no necessary link between fallacies and impoliteness, but that some subtypes of fallacious emotional arguments have a tendency towards being both fallacious and impolite. In cases like these, impoliteness strategies are used to increase the impact of the FTA and thus cause offence to the opponent. He labels such arguments “destructive emotional arguments”. (Kienpointner 2008: 249)

With reference to Walton (1998), Kienpointner lists the subtypes of emotional arguments which most likely involve strategies of impoliteness. Among the arguments ad hominem (personal attacks), the following subtypes most probably contain strategies of impoliteness:

1. direct personal attacks questioning the physical and mental abilities of the attacked person, often combined with insults and swearwords (“abusive ad hominem ”);
2. accusations of being inherently and permanently biased (“poisoning the well”);
3. reproaches concerning the membership within a social group, which, according to the speaker, has negative properties (“guilt by association”).

(Kienpointner 2008: 248)

Subtypes of ad populum (appeals to the emotions of the masses) which generally involve impoliteness strategies include:

1. the “rhetoric-of-belonging” where speaker appeals to the desire of the audience to belong to a certain group.
2. If the relevant group is the majority, to which all “normal” persons “naturally” want to belong, this subtype is a “commonfolks” ad populum argument.
3. The “mob-appeal” ad populum argument is the “rhetoric-of-belonging” subtype combined with the appeal to popular sentiments like sympathy, hate and anger, and the “common-folks” subtype.

(Kienpointner 2008: 248)
In his final remarks of the paper, Kienpointner points out that not all emotional arguments are necessarily linked to impoliteness, as for example appeals to pity or sympathy are commonly associated with politeness rather than impoliteness. However, those arguments involving fear, hate or contempt are likely to be uttered in an impolite manner. (Kienpointner 2008: 247-248)

3.3. Culpeper

Culpeper (1996) argues that impoliteness has to do with how offence is communicated and taken in interaction. However, finding the right definition for this phenomenon is quite a challenge as becomes obvious by the fact that between 1996 and 2011 Culpeper has revised his definition(s) of impoliteness several times.

In his paper *Towards an anatomy of impoliteness* published in 1996, Culpeper defined impoliteness as the negative counterpart of politeness. Thus, if politeness minimises conflict potential in interaction and promotes social harmony, then impoliteness can be understood as the employment of impoliteness strategies to achieve the opposite effect, namely social disruption (Culpeper 1996: 350).

In 2003, Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003: 1546) reformulated the original definition of impoliteness into a more concise one, namely as: “communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony”.

Later, in 2005, Culpeper revised this definition by pointing out several deficits. He argued that the definition lacks to explain what the ‘social conflict’ and ‘disharmony’ consists of. What is more, it is not a necessary prerequisite for impoliteness to happen. Also, the definition is speaker centred – it does not consider the role of the hearer in the manifestation of impoliteness. Due to these deficits, Culpeper (2005: 38) developed a new definition:

Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2).
The key element of this definition, as Culpeper argues (2005: 38-40), is that it points out the importance of both interlocutors. Thus, impoliteness evolves during the interaction between speaker and hearer, and there are several possibilities to how this can happen: the speaker intentionally applies an impoliteness strategy and the hearer perceives it as such; the speaker does not intend to communicate a face attack, but the hearer reconstructs the act as such (e.g. joke is perceived as genuine impoliteness); or the speaker wants to offend the hearer, but the latter does not interpret the message as offence.

In order to include all the aspects mentioned, Culpeper’s (2011a: 23) last definition, which he introduced in 2011 and has used since then, is the following:

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 one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have 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.
4. Culpeper’s model of impoliteness

In his research Jonathan Culpeper (1996) reviews Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) politeness strategies and builds a framework for impoliteness in relation to these, whereby the framework is not simply an extension to Brown and Levinson’s theory but rather a parallel structure.

4.1. Impoliteness and face

Culpeper (1996: 354) argues that the mutuality of face is not always equal and that people especially when there is a conflict of interest, do not pay attention to maintaining each others’ face and, thus, do not cooperate. Such a lack of cooperation frequently results in impoliteness, which usually takes the form of offence. Offence, according to Culpeper, can be best explained or understood with the concept of face. For this reason, he incorporates into his model Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) modified framework of Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) concept of negative and positive face, which is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Revising the notion of face: Components of “rapport management” (Spencer- Oatey 2002: 540-542)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face</th>
<th>Quality face: “We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g., our competence, abilities, appearance etc.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social identity face: “We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e. g., as group leader, valued customer, close friend.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociality rights</td>
<td>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”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Culpeper (2005: 39-40) does not fully dismiss Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) concept of face, but argues that Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) model is not only more empirically grounded, but also provides a more elaborated idea of face, which might allow for deeper insights into the relationship between face and impoliteness.

Spencer-Oatey (2002: 540-542) divides the notion of face into two elements: the quality face refers to individual aspects while social identity face is associated with aspects of one’s identity within a group. Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) idea of Quality face is clearly recognisable in Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) concept of positive face and also some components of social identity face are evident. The notion of equity rights primarily corresponds to Brown and Levinson’s notion of negative face, as equity rights are associated with imposition, fairness, and cost/benefit concerns, but also aspects of association rights are present in the notion of negative face. Spencer also differentiates between face and rights and points out that sociality rights are not seen as matters of face, as “an infringement of sociality rights may simply lead to annoyance or irritation, rather than to a sense of face-threat or loss (although it is possible, of course, that both will occur)” (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 541).

4.2. Impoliteness strategies

In line with Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) theory of face, Culpeper (1996: 356) proposes the different types of face attack based on their different orientations to face, which are summarised below:

- **Bald on record impoliteness** – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is relevant […] in […] cases [where] face is at stake, and, more importantly, it is the intention of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer.

- **Positive impoliteness** – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face wants.

- **Negative impoliteness** – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s negative face wants.

- **Sarcasm or mock politeness** – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.
Withhold politeness – the absence of politeness work where it would be expected. For example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness.

In 2005, however, Culpeper revised his model of impoliteness by replacing “sarcasm or mock politeness” with a new category –

*Off-record impoliteness:* the FTA is performed by means of implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly out-weighs any others.

In his model, each of Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]: 129ff) politeness superstrategies has its opposite impoliteness superstrategy. These strategies, as mentioned before, differ in terms of orientation to face. Culpeper (1996: 356) points out that, “instead of enhancing or supporting face, impoliteness superstrategies are a means of attacking face”.

Except for sarcasm or mock impoliteness, each of the superstrategies was initially designed in correspondence with Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) politeness strategies. Sarcasm or mock impoliteness, however, is not clearly the equivalent of off-record politeness. Based on Leech’s (1983) notion of irony, sarcasm differs due to the fact that it is a meta-strategy, which uses politeness for impoliteness.

Similar to Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]: 104-222) list of politeness output strategies, Culpeper provides a list of possible realisations of positive and negative impoliteness strategies (1996: 357-368) that are illustrated in Table 2.
Table 2: Positive and negative impoliteness strategies (Culpeper 1996: 357-368)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive impoliteness output strategies:</th>
<th>Negative impoliteness output strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ignore, snub the other – fail to acknowledge the other’s presence</td>
<td>• Frighten – instil a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exclude the other from an activity</td>
<td>• Condescend, scorn or ridicule – emphasise your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disassociate from the other – for example, deny association or common ground with the other</td>
<td>• Invade the other’s space – literally or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic</td>
<td>• Hinder or block the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use inappropriate identity markers – for example use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.</td>
<td>• Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect – personalize, use the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use obscure or secretive language – for example mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.</td>
<td>• Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seek disagreement – select a sensitive topic.</td>
<td>• Put the other’s indebtedness on record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make the other feel uncomfortable – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.</td>
<td>• ect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use taboo words – swear, or use abusive or profane language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Call the other names – use derogatory nominations..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Culpeper (1996: 357-358; 2005: 41) also argues that the respective output strategies need to be performed within a certain context in order to be considered impolite. In other words, impoliteness consists of three components which interplay and thus need to be taken into account in analysis: the linguistic and non-linguistic signals, and the context. Furthermore, one strategy can have an impact on both positive and negative face, e.g. an interruption might attack the hearer’s negative face as he/she is impeded by someone, at the same time it can pose a threat to the addressee’s positive face as the interruption might imply that his/her opinion is considered unworthy by the speaker. Thus, some
effects of negative impoliteness for instance can be ambiguous, as they could as well apply to positive impoliteness (e.g. “condescend, scorn or ridicule”). (Culpeper 2005: 42)

In their research of extended discourse, Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003: 1559) came across a further strategy which Culpeper (1996) had not previously listed. This was the strategy “challenge the other”, a negative impoliteness strategy, which is frequently applied by means of rhetoric questions. The rhetoric nature of such questions has the aim of ‘instilling impolite beliefs’ about the hearer.

Another conclusion which Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) drew was that superstrategies rarely occur as single realisations, but are frequently combined and called multiple strategies. Thus, one strategy is used together with other strategies, which is quite the contrary to what Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]) claim for politeness. The speaker can for instance use the strategy ‘challenge’ (negative impoliteness) in combination with the strategy ‘use taboo words’ (positive impoliteness), as in “What the fuck were you thinking”. The taboo word in this example intensifies the challenge, i.e. the face attack. In addition, Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) also note that any of the strategies, or combinations of strategies, can be uttered repeatedly to form parallelism. The repetition of impoliteness strategies “increases the imposition upon the target and/or emphasizes the negative attitude of the speaker towards the target. In other words, it can boost impoliteness“ (2003: 1561).

4.3. Typology of impoliteness

Culpeper (1996: 351) divides impoliteness into two notions: inherent and mock impoliteness. He reminds us of Leech’s (1983) and Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) arguments that some statements are inherently impolite and automatically threaten the hearer’s face. These are for instance criticisms or orders. According to Culpeper (1996: 351-352), inherent impoliteness occurs when a person performs an anti-social activity, such as picking the nose. He
argues that by drawing attention to such an activity there is no chance of saving the person’s face not even with the on the surface polite sentence “Do you think you could possibly not pick your nose?” (1996: 351), simply because it would cause embarrassment to the hearer. He further argues that context plays a big role, but that there are a minority of acts, which can be regarded as inherently polite/impolite. However, in his book Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence (2011a) he questions the notion of inherent impoliteness to some extent and takes on a rather dualist position “in the sense that [he] see[s] semantic (im)politeness and pragmatic (im)politeness as inter-dependent opposites on a scale” and argues that “neither the expression nor the context guarantee an interpretation of (im)politeness: it is the interaction between the two that counts” (2011a: 125).

Mock impoliteness, or banter, according to Culpeper (1996: 352; 2011: 207), is the opposite of genuine impoliteness, as it is not intended to cause face-threat but on the contrary to maintain face and enhance social bonds. Leech (1983, as quoted by Culpeper 1996: 352) provides a banter principle, which builds on the assumption that the closer the relationship between two people, the less politeness needs to be applied:

In order to show solidarity with h, say something which is (i) obviously untrue, and (ii) obviously impolite to h” [and this will give rise to an interpretation such that] “what s says is impolite to h and is clearly untrue. Therefore what s says is really means is polite to hand true.

Therefore, it is not surprising that mock impoliteness is very common among intimates. They are likely to show consideration for each other’s face, hence, banter is more likely to be interpreted as such between friends than between interlocutors who are socially distant to each other. This, however, only works in contexts (e.g. informal conversations between friends) in which impoliteness is seen as clearly superficial and untrue, and if equality in terms of solidarity and closeness among the interlocutors is given. (Culpeper 2011: 207)

\[^{1}h = \text{hearer}\]
\[^{2}s = \text{speaker}\]
‘Sounding’, ‘playing the dozens’ or ‘signifying’ are forms of ritualised banter (Culpeper 2011a: 210). One of the most influential works on ritualised banter has been Labov’s (1972) study “Language in the Inner City: Studies on the Black English Vernacular” in which he analysed the nature and structure of these speech events. The utterances are often sexual and involve comments about a third person closely connected to the target. This way of ‘teasing’ is very common among black adolescents and is used to foster solidarity and cohesion among the group members. The main feature of sounding is that the insult must clearly be an untruthful statement. The more absurd the insult, the smaller the possibility of the speech act to be interpreted as a personal insult. (Labov 1942: 340)

There are, however, cases where mock impoliteness is exploited and not primarily used to promote solidarity. Mock impoliteness is sometimes used to address a particular topic which in ‘serious’ conversation could lead to offence or disharmony. In such cases, mock impoliteness is an attempt to ‘disguise’ the unpleasant information in a joke—an act that Culpeper (2011a: 215; with reference to Holmes 2000: 176) refers to as ‘cloaked coercion’.

Another feature of mock impoliteness is ‘exploitative entertainment’. Such acts involve entertainment on the expense of the person targeted. It is often the case that on the side of the teaser no offence was intended, but the target might experience it as such. In other words, “exploitative entertainment involves pain for the target but pleasure for other participants” (Culpeper 2011a: 215). In sum, acts of cloaked coercion or exploitative entertainment occur along the narrow dividing line between mock impoliteness and genuine impoliteness.

Considering all these aspects, Culpeper (2011: 221-245) divides impoliteness into two types: mock and genuine impoliteness, the latter having three main functions: (1) affective, (2) coercive (3) exploitative.

(1) Affective impoliteness: the speaker exhibits feelings (of anger for instance) towards the hearer, which causes tension between them. Usually, this also involves an accusation of the speaker towards the hearer, who blames the latter
of being the cause of his negative feelings.

(2) Coercive: This type involves actions in which impoliteness is used to gain power. Culpeper (2011: 225-226) believes that this type of impoliteness is common in situations where there is an imbalance in power—the producer usually having more power or having a higher social status than the target. It can however also be used in equal relationships, as a means of gaining social power and dominance.

(3) Exploitative: Exploitative impoliteness, as already mentioned, is entertainment at the expense of the target, who might not even be aware of it. What is important though, in order the impoliteness to be effective, i.e. entertaining in this case, the ‘audience’, or the participants being entertained need to be aware and/or understand the intended impolite effect of the action.

4.4. Impoliteness and responses to it

Moving away from the classic approaches to the study of impoliteness where the focus is set on single strategies, Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003) investigated the manifestation of impoliteness in extended discourse. In their research (2003: 1562 ff), attention was devoted to the importance of the recipient’s reactions to the FTAs in analysing impoliteness in conversation. They argued that the participant’s responses could help understand and identify impoliteness in utterances. In 2008, Bousfield extended the research and added to the initial response model options (see Figure 2 below), a list of response strategies used by hearers.
In general, the recipient has two options when confronted with an offending event (FTA) — he/she can either respond or not respond to the utterance (i.e. stay silent). Silence as a strategy can have various functions and meanings (Bousfield 2008: 188). In certain situations, especially when an imbalance in power is involved, individuals may choose to stay silent in order to avoid or reduce conflict. In this case, the hearer accepts the offending event, which consequently aggravates the face damage. In other cases, silence may be perceived as offensive, e.g. when the speaker expects an answer but the hearer decides not to respond and, therefore, flouts the structure of conversation. Sometimes, however, attempts to respond fail because the hearer is constantly interrupted by the speaker. The act of withdrawing from a conversation is another 'silent' response option. (Bousfield 2008: 188-189)

If, however, the recipient’s choice is to respond, he/she has different options for doing so: (a) accept the face threat, or (b) counter attack with an offensive face threatening (OFFENSIVE-OFFENSIVE pair) or a defensive face saving utterance (OFFENSIVE-DEFENSIVE pair) (Bousfield 2008: 193). In the case of a personalised complaint (i.e. an impolite act) the recipient might decide to respond with an apology, and therefore accept the face threat. Another example of ‘accepting the face threat’ is responding to criticism with agreement. These kinds of responses, however, entail increased face damage to the responder. (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003: 1562)
In contrast, the recipient might also try to defend his/her face with counter strategies. In doing so he/she can either take a defensive or offensive stance. Defensive strategies counter face attack by defending one’s own face (e.g. denials as suggested by Labov (1972: 333 ff)). The main goal of defensive strategies is to “deflect, block or otherwise manage the face attack” (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003: 1563), while offensive strategies involve the act of countering face attack with face attack. However, defensive acts may as well be perceived as offensive by the interlocutor.

Defensive strategies, as summed up by Bousfield (2008: 195-203), include the following:

**Abrogation (role-switching as a defence)**
Abrogation is the act of trying to “avoid responsibility for the ‘triggering’ action(s) that have caused the opposing interlocutor to issue a face damaging utterance in the first place” (Bousfield 2008: 195). This can be achieved by switching either social or discoursal roles. If a participant attempts to switch to his social role, for instance, he can use his occupation as an excuse for his actions or behaviour (“I’m sorry, but I’m only doing my job”), whereas discoursal role switching involves the act of emphasising that he/she is just taking up the function of a ‘representative’ or ‘mouthpiece’ (“I’m just the messenger!”).

**Dismiss: make light of face damage, joke**
The defensive action is performed by “dismissing the face attack as inconsequential and/or non-damaging” (Bousfield 2008: 196).

**Offer and account — explain**
One possible countermove to impoliteness is the defensive strategy of explaining one’s actions/behaviour by offering an account. The effect this strategy has is that it can help reduce the face damage by offering an explanation and indicating that the face attack was mistakenly issued and should thus be retracted.
**Opt out on record**
Opting out on record is a defensive manoeuvre to seal off the FTA. The participant tries to reduce the face damage caused to him by withdrawing from the conversation.

**Ignore the face attack**
In ignoring the face attack, whether explicit or implied, the participant tolerates the face attack so that the speaker can give vent to his/her feelings. The use of surface or insincere agreement is one way of performing this strategy. The strategy is also frequently used as a response to sarcasm, when the participant only responds to the surface meaning of the utterance, ignoring the underlying meaning.

It has to be noted that all the mentioned strategies are not mutually exclusive and that context clearly determines the response options available to the participant of a conversation. The reason thereof is simple: offensive strategies have, to a certain extent, the secondary aim of being defensive, whilst defensive strategies can be defensive too. Also, any response to an offending situation can cause frustration or anger and, therefore, lead to a new impolite utterance. (Bousfield 2007: 2195) Thus, whether an impolite situation turns into an actual fight depends on both, the speaker and the addressee.

Bousfield (2007) quite rightly observed that Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann’s (2003) theory does not cover how conflictive arguments are actually resolved. Drawing on Vulchinich’s (1990) set of options for the resolution of conflictive arguments, Bousfield postulates the following strategies (2008: 206-215):

**Submission to opponent**
The resolution of the conflict is achieved by the participant’s submission to the opponent. In other words, he/she ‘gives in’ and accepts the opponent’s position.

**Dominant third party intervention**
The dispute is stopped by the interference of a third person, usually superior to the participants. However, the attempt to resolve the dispute may as well fail and consequently intensify the conflict.

**Compromise**

Compromise is a further form of conflict closing which involves the act of negotiating concession. Usually the compromise starts with one participant ‘offering concession’ and the other accepting it. Thus, both parties need to give in in order the termination to be successful. If, however, one party refuses to accept the concession then this may as well result in an FTA.

**Stand-off**

If the participants realise that a compromise or submission is not going to happen, they might resolve the dispute by simply changing the topic of the discussion to another.

**Withdrawal**

One participant can end the conversational activity by retreating from the interaction. Thus, the participant either walks away or just refuses to talk.

It needs to be mentioned that the resolution of conflictive encounters can also be determined by the power relations between the participants. The strategy *submission to opponent*, for instance, is frequently applied in discourses where a power imbalance between the participants is evident (e.g. military and police training discourses), whereas *compromises* are not very common in such environments. (Bousfield 2008: 215)
5. Prosody and impoliteness

“All speech is said with prosody”, but sadly “how something is said rather than what is said is an intrinsic, but often neglected, dimension of what speakers say and hearers hear” (Wichmann 2004: 1525).

Although it is common knowledge that prosodic patterns are an important part of communication, i.e. in the production and perception of every utterance, the role of prosody has not been examined thoroughly in research on politeness and impoliteness (Culpeper 2011: 57). However, Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003) attempted to rectify that neglect by explaining how impoliteness strategies could be manifested through prosodic patterns. They moved away from solely analysing the words of interactants as recorded in orthographic transcripts but analysed how the utterances were said and in which way they generated impoliteness attitudes and argue that prosodic patterns can function as modification devices, by stating that “it is sometimes the prosody that makes an utterance impolite – giving truth to the common view that the offence lay in how something was said rather than what was said“ (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003: 1576).

Building on these findings Culpeper (2005) continued the research on the role of prosody in impoliteness and published an article for the Journal of Politeness Research in 2005, for which he analysed interactions in The Weakest Link, an exploitative quiz show. His findings showed that some obviously impolite utterances would not be interpretable as such or would be ambiguous if only read as transcripts. In 2011 (2011b) he extended his research by carrying out an instrumental analysis of segments from the exploitative talent show Pop Idol.

One area of linguistic research that investigates the phenomenon of prosody is phonology, which is traditionally defined as the study of sound patterns and phonetic variation in spoken language (O’Grady et al.: 2001). Prosody is a generic term that comprises suprasegmental features which follow natural speech. These features include pitch (intonation), loudness, voice and speed (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003: 1568). In their research Culpeper,
Bousfield & Wichmann. (2003) focused mainly on features of pitch or intonation, and on loudness.

The choice of intonation patterns made by speakers carry linguistic information. These patterns can perform a variety of functions. According to Crystal (1995: 299), at least six functions can be identified:

1. emotional: speaker’s choice of intonation signals his/her attitudinal meaning concerning the subject matter or context of the utterance, e.g. anger, doubt, enthusiasm etc.
2. grammatical: intonation is used to signal grammatical structures of utterances (e.g. tones perform grammatical role to place boundaries as in the distinction between restrictive or non-restrictive relative clauses etc.)
3. informational: intonation used to mark important parts of an utterance, e.g. by the use of higher pitch, or topic shift
4. textual: intonation used to structure chunks of discourse, like paragraphs in written language;
5. psychological: intonation used by speaker to organise speech into units which are easier to perceive and understand
6. indexical: intonation pattern functions as an identity marker and signal speaker’s affiliation with a group (e.g. preachers use a recognizable intonation pattern)

Key to the analysis of impoliteness is the emotional (attitudinal) function of intonation. What Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003: 1569) found out is that the speaker’s individual attitudes transmitted by intonation arise from the pragmatic interpretation by which the underlying meaning of the speaker’s intonation is analysed in relation to the context in which the utterance was produced. They further argue that speakers sometimes exploit the attitudinal function of intonation to achieve impoliteness (2003: 1575). The prosodic impoliteness strategies available to interactants and identified by Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003: 1569-1575) are presented below.

**Negative impoliteness**

*Hinder linguistically:* one way to express impoliteness is to deny the addressee the freedom to speak. This can, for instance, be achieved through interruption. Intonation can intensify or moderate the effects of the
strategy. If the speaker for example wants to end the conversation against the wishes of the dialogue partner, he can intensify the speech act by using a down-stepped contour.

**Frighten:** Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann’s (2003) analysis shows that threats could be achieved through a slight rise of intonation at the end of a sentence. Commands in a specific situation or context could include a veiled threat if they ended in a final rise, as this would suggest that something might happen if the hearer does not act as the speaker wants.

**The invasion of auditory space:** The elevating of one’s tone of voice can be internally and externally motivated. Speakers are externally motivated in situations where they might need to raise their voice because of distance or to drown out background noise. Internal motivation to elevate one’s voice is usually linked to extreme emotions such as anger or excitement. The intentional increase in loudness is likely to be interpreted as an intended attack to the negative face, as shouting does not only invade the hearer’s space but the speaker also makes the hearer aware of his/her anger. Thus, the invasion of auditory space if done on purpose is an example of negative impoliteness.

**Positive impoliteness:**

**Deny common ground or disassociate from the other.**

According to Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003: 1575) the strategic denial of pitch concord can be seen as “a prosodic means of increasing the distance between interlocutors”. If speaker A, for examples, wishes to argue over a specific issue and speaker B does not want to show interest in the discussion or in speaker A’s wants, he/she can do so by not accommodating to the pitch of speaker A. Thus, by maintaining very low pitch during a discussion the speaker is denying common ground or disassociating from the interlocutor.

Another way to disassociate from the interlocutor is through mimicry, which is the act of imitating the intonation or pitch of the interlocutor. According to
Culpeper (2005: 59-60), impolite mimicry involves the following elements:

*The echo.* The production and recognition of a behavior as not only an echo, but also a distortion of the echoed behavior.

*The echoed behavior.* An identification (or attribution to the target) of the behavior which was echoed (typically, an identity characteristic of the person who gave rise to it).

*The echoer.* A recognition that the attitude of the person who produced the echo is one of ridicule towards the person identified as (or attributed with being) the source of the echoed behavior.

Although the role of prosody will not be taken into consideration in the analysis of the TV series *Scrubs*, as it would go beyond the scope of this thesis, its importance in the research of face negotiation activities should not be neglected. For this reason, it has been included in the literature review of this thesis.

6. Impoliteness: the exercise of power

When analysing impoliteness, the aspect of power and how it operates in face-aggravating interactions should not be neglected, simply because there “can be no interaction without power“ (Bousfield & Locher 2008: 8). Consequently, impoliteness as such is an exercise of power “as it has arguably always in some way an effect on one’s addressees in that it alters the future action-environment of one’s interlocutors“ (Bousfield & Locher 2008: 9). In other words, the exercise of power in interaction through the employment of impoliteness, changes the action-environment of the addressee in that her/his response options are consequently limited when her/his face is damaged (2008: 8). This idea stems from Wartenberg’s (1990: 85) definition of power:

A social agent $A$ has power over another social agent $B$ if and only if $A$ strategically constrains $B$’s action-environment. (original emphasis)
6.1. Power, distance and social ranking

Culpeper (2001) draws on Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]: 74) formula for assessing the amount of face threat caused as power, distance and social ranking are sociological variables, which are involved in any interaction. They state that an assessment of face threat involves three sociological variables: (1) the social distance between participants, (2) the relative power of the speaker over the hearer, and (3) the absolute ranking of the imposition involved in the act (1987 [1978]: 74). This formula will be of help in assessing and analysing the social factors in the TV series Scrubs, as those could and probably do influence the dialogues under analysis. In addition, those variables are also relevant aspects when it comes to finding an explanation as to why and how the characters in the TV series use impoliteness as a tool to achieve their goals.

Culpeper (2001: 241) summarises Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]: 74-78) social variables as follows:

1. Distance (D) is a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference between the speaker and the hearer […]
2. Relative power (P) of the hearer over the speaker is an asymmetric social dimension […]
3. Absolute Ranking (R) refers to the ordering of impositions according to the degree to which they impinge upon an interactant’s face wants in a particular culture and situation […].”

Culpeper (1996: 354), argues that, impoliteness is more likely to happen in interaction where there is an imbalance in power between participants, due to the fact that the more powerful participant has more freedom to be impolite towards the addressee, because the person in power can “(a) reduce the ability of the less powerful participant to retaliate with impoliteness (e.g. through the denial of speaking rights), and (b) threaten more severe retaliation should the less powerful participant be impolite”. This assumption has been underpinned by research on the courtroom (e.g. Lakoff 1989), army recruits training (e.g. Culpeper 1996, Bousfield 2008) and exploitative TV shows (e.g. Culpeper 2005). In all three discourses, the powerful participant not only exercises
impoliteness, but also has advantage over the addressee because of his superior position and the imbalance of social structural power which it entails. The less powerful participant’s action environment, on the opposite, is restricted by the social structure, as impolite behaviour could have consequences for her/him. Certainly, the participant may nonetheless decide to counter a face attack and, consequently, challenge the given power relationship.

To sum up (Culpeper 2008: 33-43):

- Social structures (e.g. status, roles, institutions), shape and are shaped by discourses.
- In certain contexts, impoliteness is legitimised.
- It can be argued that impoliteness always involves power as it forces (or at least pressurises) the target to react.
- An act of action-environment restriction can be challenged.
- We need to consider whether power is acceded or challenged (with the possible consequence of a power struggle) or otherwise managed in interaction.

6.2. Types of power

I hypothesise that there is a link between the professional positions of the characters in the TV series Scrubs and the power they make use of. As the hospital as a setting is characterised by an inverted power structure, it can be assumed that power in the offensive interactions in Scrubs is, among others, an important factor in the realisation and interpretation of impoliteness.

Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) formula for calculating the severity of face threat, however, does not say much about the types of power which might be involved in interaction and are crucial in understanding the asymmetry in relationships, and consequently in analysing impoliteness in interaction. For this reason, French and Raven’s theory on power is used in the analysis of Scrubs.

French and Raven’s (1959) theory on power is based on the assumption that the relationship between two individuals and consequently the influence a person has on another are the main source of power. Social influence is defined
as “a change in the belief, attitude, or behavior of a person (the target of influence), which results from the action of another person (an influencing agent)” (Raven 1992: 218), while social power is the “potential for such influence, the ability of the agent or power figure to bring about such change, using resources available to him or her” (1992: 218).

French & Raven (1959) differentiate between six types or resources of power: referent, reward, legitimate, expert and coercive power. Referent power is based on the idea of identification. A person wants to achieve the feeling of belonging to another person or group; in other words, the person wants to be appreciated by the person or group. Consequently, the latter have the power to influence that person, which he/she might not even be aware of. (French & Raven 1959: 266)

As the term itself implies, reward power is the power a person possesses to reward another. Consequently, that person has decisive power too; in other words, the person decides whether or not he will reward the less powerful for fulfilling his desire and/or set objectives. (French & Raven 1959: 263).

Legitimate power stems from the position a person has within a certain setting, e.g. an organisation. This position of authority needs to be recognised and accepted by the less powerful. This also implies that given his authority position, he consequently has the legitimate right to exercise power over the less powerful. (French & Raven 1959: 264)

Expert power is based on the individual’s experience, skills and know-how in a certain field/area. This power can only be realised if the person is considered to have more knowledge, to be more experienced or skilled by others. (French & Raven 1959: 267)

Coercive power is the power a person exercises to manipulate another to do something, which can result in the latter having to face consequences (e.g. to be fired) the set requirements/objectives are not met. (French & Raven 1959: 263)
7. Impoliteness as entertainment

The concept of impoliteness, as already mentioned, involves communicative strategies used by the speaker to cause social conflict and disharmony (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003: 1546). Despite being a rather uncharted field, the entertaining potential of conflictive behaviour, more particularly the link between impoliteness and humour and/or entertainment, have already been the subject matter of research in the field of media discourse, e.g. in television programmes (Culpeper 2005), films, series and serials (Culpeper 2008; Dynel 2012, 2013; Pillière 2013; Jobert 2013) and also in literature (Toddington 2008; Mandon-Hunter 2013).

7.1. Conflictive behaviour as a source of pleasure

The question arises: Why are we entertained or delighted by impoliteness, when impoliteness is usually and generally seen as condemned behaviour? The answer lies in the fact that impoliteness seems to get a new meaning when the hearer is not the target him-herself but only the observer. As Culpeper (2011: 215) points out, “exploitative entertainment involves pain for the target but pleasure for other participants”.

This is not a new phenomenon but can be traced back to the earliest days of civilisation. Research in evolutionary psychology shows that when the basic needs for survival of human beings were satisfied, they consequently sought out for entertainment. The earliest form of such entertainment dates back to the stoneage, when people gathered around a fireplace to tell stories (Zillmann & Bryant 1986: 303):

Entertainment is a ubiquitous phenomenon. No culture of which we have an adequate accounting has been entirely without it. As soon as the struggle for survival left human groups with sufficient time for relaxation, some form of communicative activity in which dangers and threats and their mastery and elimination were represented seems to have come into being.
For those entertaining activities, conflictive behaviour or aggressive behaviour was frequently used as a vehicle, e.g. in gladiator fights in ancient Rome (Vorderer, Klimmt and Ritterfeld 2004: 388).

Culpeper (2011a: 234-235) argues that the reason why we are entertained by aggressive or conflictive behaviour is connected to the pleasure we get from observing it, for which he lists five sources:

1. **Emotional pleasure**: “Observing impoliteness creates a state of arousal in the observer, and that state of arousal can be pleasurable” (Culpeper 2011a: 234). In other words, we enjoy or are thrilled when viewing conflictive behaviour.

2. **Aesthetic pleasure**: “(...) if one is attacked, one responds in kind or with a superior attack. And to achieve a superior attack requires creative skills” (2011a: 234). Culpeper argues that speakers frequently use creative strategies to cause offence.

3. **Voyeuristic pleasure**: “Observing people reacting to impoliteness often involves the public exposure of private selves, particularly aspects that are emotionally sensitive, and this can lead to voyeuristic pleasure” (2011a: 234). Talk shows for instance are based on the idea that viewers enjoy observing the exploitation of human weaknesses (Richardson & Meinhof 1999: 132)

4. **The pleasure of (audience) being superior**: “Superiority theories developed within humour theory, articulate the idea that there is self-reflexive pleasure in observing someone in a worse state than oneself.” (Culpeper 2011a: 235)

5. **The pleasure of (audience) feeling secure**: “Compare, for example, witnessing an actual fight in a pub, in which case you might feel insecure and wish to make hasty exit, with a pub fight represented in a film.” (Culpeper 2011a: 235)
7.2. Impoliteness as a tool to create humour

Along the lines of entertaining impoliteness proposed by Culpeper, Dynel (2013) introduces the concept of *disaffiliative humour*. Compared with affiliative humour, which involves “playful/jocular/pretended aggression, as in friendly teasing” (2013: 112), *disaffiliative humour* involves a genuine form of aggression which aims at antagonising the target and manifesting victory of him/her.

In defining the notion, Dynel (2013) refers to Freud (1960: 100) who argues that tendentious humour calls for three people: in addition to the one who makes the joke, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke’s aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled.

As a logical consequence, disaffiliative humour requires at least three participants: “the speaker, the hearer to be amused, and the butt (who may be another hearer)” (Dynel 2013: 113). The focus in Dynel’s (2013) concept lies on the hearer, who, enjoying his position of not being the target, “takes pleasure in humour by means of which the speaker displays his/her superiority over, and disaffiliates himself/herself from, the butt (target)” (2013: 112).

Thus, disparagement plays a crucial role in the perception of humour in film talk. Disparagement as explained in superiority theories of humour is the derivation of pleasure from the degradation of others (Hobbes 1996 [1951]; La Fave 1972). The humorous effect, however, can only be achieved if the viewer does not sympathise or show affiliation with the butt. Dynel (2013: 118) argues that disposition is a factor contributing to the humorous effect, more precisely, “to appreciate disparagement humour, an individual must at least display the attitude of supreme indifference to the victim and must not sympathise with the latter, at least not to an extent that would block the humorous effects.” In order to achieve this effect and to promote humour, the target is not viewed as being offended or miserable as this would not cause amusement in the viewer —the target is usually either not viewed at all, or responds in the same manner which in turn usually enhances the humorous effect of the interaction (Dynel 2013:}
Dynel (2013: 53) suggests that “the enhancement of one individual over another is the driving force of disparaging humour in film talk, where the focus is on the speaker's wit and intellectual victory over other interactants”.

In his book *Using language to cause offence* (2011a), Culpeper argues that verbal impoliteness “is not simple” but “elaborately creative” (2011a: VIII) and can have a humorous effect. Humour itself, whether in real-life or fictional discourse is created through linguistic creativity. Speakers frequently use colourful and vivid language to display wit, amuse interlocutors but also to be impolite and cause offence. Colourful language is characterised by a wide range of creative linguistic phenomena. Some of them are presented in the list below, which has been slightly adapted from Marta Dynel's list in her article *Beyond a Joke: Types of Conversational Humour* (2009: 1288-1291) and will be considered in the analysis of *Scrubs*:

**simile / comparison** – comparing one element with another using words such as 'like' or 'as' (cf. Norrick 1984):

- She is like a killer who arrives at your doorstep in pigtails holding a bunch of roses. They're kissing as if they were surgically attached.

**metaphor** – expresses the similarity between the semantic vehicle (base or source), i.e. a well-known referent, and the semantic tenor (topic or target), which is thus defined (cf. Mio and Graesser 1991):

- You make a plate of cooked spaghetti tense. (i.e. the hearer heightens tension in others)

**hyperbole** – exaggeration (cf. Norrick 1993)

- Your cardigan is a blemish on the whole male population.

**paradox** – a statement which shows an internal contradiction (Nilsen and Nilsen 1978)

- I don’t believe in astrology. I'm a Sagittarius and I'm sceptical.

**allusions**: reference to already existing material (cf. Nash 1985; Norrick 1987, 1993)

- Did I do a Rip Van Winkle? (the eponymous hero from 'Rip Van Winkle' by Washington Irving)
8. Data analysis

In this research, an analysis of the character's interactions in *Scrubs* is conducted by taking a pragmatic approach, thus the interest lies in how speakers use language, more precisely impoliteness, in communication.

The material used for the analysis is based on written scripts of episodes from season one and season two of the series *Scrubs*. As the copies of the original scripts used by the actors are not open to public, I relied on scripts obtained from the internet (http://scrubs.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Season_1_Transcripts) and/or transcribed the dialogues of the relevant scenes myself.

Instances of impoliteness could be found in conversations between Dr Cox and J.D., and between Dr Kelso and the interns (J.D., Carla, Elliot). After selecting the relevant scenes, they were analysed by applying (im)politeness theories to the selected data. Thus, the analysis is of a qualitative - interpretive nature.

For the analysis, the concept of ‘face’ is important as it forms the basis of Culpeper’s impoliteness theory (1996; 2005). Culpeper’s classification of impoliteness strategies and Bousfield’s hearer responses (2008) are used to answer the following research questions:

- Which *types of impoliteness* and which *superstrategies* are used by Dr Cox and Dr Kelso in conversations with interns?
- How is impoliteness managed in these conversations? –i.e. How do Dr Cox’s and Dr Kelso’s addressees react to the face-threatening acts?

In addition, an interpretive method was used to determine the implied meaning of the utterances issued, for which Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) theory of measuring the amount of face threat caused to the target and French & Raven’s (1959) types of power were used, as the concepts help to show how impoliteness relates to social status, distance and power of the characters. These theories should help to answer the following questions:

- What are the character’s intentions for employing impoliteness?
• How do factors like power relations and social distance shape and influence the conversations?

Finally, I will present examples of dialogues, which show the functions of impoliteness in *Scrubs* on a broader scale, namely how impoliteness is used to develop the plot and characters in the series, and how impoliteness can be used to create humour in a comedy-drama series.

The following sub-chapters provide background information on the analysis conducted.

### 8.1. Impoliteness in fictional discourse

One of the major concerns prior to the analysis of impoliteness in *Scrubs* was that the data which is used is not real life discourse but pre-scripted material written by a screenwriter and performed by actors; in other words, the major concern was whether the scripted material used for the analysis is representative of naturally occurring language. However, it was already Aristotle (in Butcher: 1902 [1895]: 15-16) who identified the significant role of imitation (of reality) in tragedy:

> The objects the imitator represents are actions. Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery. All human happiness or misery takes the form of action. The agents represented must be either above our own level of goodness or beneath it, or just such as we are.

Drawing on Aristotle’s observation, it can be argued that the plot and characters in comedy-drama sitcoms created by the scriptwriter, are representations of the real world—in other words, the writer draws upon reality in creating the story. Accordingly, the language used in *Scrubs* does not necessarily differ in substance from language occurring in the real world. As the language used by the writer is a representation of real world language, it is thus logical to suggest that the impoliteness strategies used by the characters are not invented or fictional, but strategies, which are used by speakers in natural discourse as well.
Interestingly, there has been a strong tradition of choosing data from TV programmes for impoliteness research, whereas politeness studies have focused on naturally occurring language (Dynal 2017: 459). Researchers make use of fictional discourse as it is rich in conflictive behaviour and language is used intentionally to cause offence. In these studies, impoliteness is examined from different angles and for different purposes. Culpeper (1998, 2001), for instance, examines the role of impoliteness in creating fictional reality in drama. Others use fictional discourse to simply test the applicability of their theories (e.g. Pilliere 2013) or they use extracts from series, films, etc. as illustrative examples for their theories (e.g. Dynel 2012, 2016). These are just some examples of contributors to the vastly expanding field of impoliteness, who use fictional discourse as their data. As Dynel (2017: 469) quite rightly observes, “[r]egardless of the focus of investigation, film talk has a methodological advantage over real-life discourse thanks to not only its heterogeneity but also its inherent interpretative availability from the viewer's perspective, and hence also from the researcher's perspective”.

As mentioned, impoliteness or conflictive behaviour has been a source of pleasure and entertainment for a very long time and it is not surprising that it is used as a tool in fictional media discourse. Impoliteness is not used randomly to entertain the viewer, or not in the first place. Impoliteness in fictional discourse is used as a strategic tool to manipulate language and consequently develop characters and the storyline. It is used to bring forth conflict and disharmony between characters and this in return raises the viewer’s interest. In his paper *(Im)politeness in Dramatic Dialogue* (1998) Jonathan Culpeper (2002: 83) argues that (im)politeness in literary texts helps us understand fictional characters and the relationships between them.

A framework that brings together face (an emotionally sensitized concept about the self) and sociological variables (such as power and social distance) and relates them to motivated linguistic strategies is going to be particularly useful in helping us understand (1) how characters position themselves relative to other characters, (2) how they manipulate others in pursuit of their goals and (3) how the plot is pushed forward. Such a framework will allow us to describe systematically, for example, how one character might ingratiate [themselves] with another or how one character might offend another.
It is obvious and viewers of course know, that a character’s behaviour is not his/her spontaneous decision, but the (script) writer’s motivated choice. As Culpeper (2001: 38) suggests, “it is important to remember that dramatic dialogue is constructed by playwrights for audiences to overhear.” Thus, conversations between characters carry messages that the writer wants the viewer to decode. This is crucial for the development of characters. Short (1989: 149) states that, “[t]he important thing to notice is the general embedded nature of drama, because features which, for example, mark social relations between two people at the character level become messages about the characters at the level of discourse which pertains between authors and reader/audience.” Summed up, it is the viewer’s interpretation of the writer’s messages and the conclusions drawn that construct the fictional world. This fictional world is based on many aspects from real life, as a result, the viewer can make judgements and draw conclusions about real life from fictional discourse.
8.2. Brief synopsis of the characters and plot

*Scrubs* is an American medical comedy drama which is set in the fictional Sacred Heart teaching hospital. The series revolves around the lives of the employees trying to cope with life and death at the hospital and is narrated by the main character J.D. All episodes were scripted, but, unlike most other series, the actors were allowed to improvise lines on set.

‘*Scrubs*’ premiered on NBC on October 2nd, 2001 and brought 15.94 million viewers with season 2 in 2002. In addition, in its first three seasons, ‘*Scrubs*’ was nominated for and received Emmy nominations for casting, editing and writing of the show.

8.2.1. Characters relevant for the analysis

Dr Cox is an attending at the hospital. He is often described as being extremely sarcastic and cynical. His main tool for teaching his interns is fear – he misuses his power to push people around and bully them. This is especially apparent in the way he treats J.D. – he constantly gives him female nicknames and belittles him. His long and frequent rants are also a distinctive feature of his role. He can be described as the typical alpha male. Nonetheless, he is the most successful doctor at the hospital and, despite his anti-social behaviour, turns out to be a good mentor.

J.D. (Dr John Dorian) is the narrator and protagonist of the series. He begins his career as an intern and then rises the ranks. He is an intern for one year, a resident for three years, and an attending for four years until he leaves the hospital. He is characterised by his daydreams and at times clumsy behaviour. His self-consciousness results in a constant strive for Dr Cox’s approval, especially at the beginning of his career as a doctor. With the work experience he gains over the years, he eventually becomes more self-confident and a good doctor who is known for his compassion for patients.
Dr Kelso is the Chief of Medicine at the Sacred Heart Hospital. At the end of the series he retires and is replaced by Dr Cox. He is known for being insensitive and apathetic. He rarely empathises with people and cares more about money than the well being of his patients. This is the reason why Dr Cox describes him as “the devil himself”. Just like Dr Cox, he gets joy from exerting his authority and mocking people for their shortcomings and weaknesses.

Elliot (Dr Elliot Reid) also starts her career as an intern and then becomes a resident over the course of season 2. She is very attractive and intelligent, but at the same time insecure and overly competitive. Her lack of self-esteem results in a constant struggle to stand up for herself and find her identity. However, she manages to find her identity and becomes a secure and confident woman in the end.

Carla Espinosa is a competent, strong and very caring nurse. She has a reputation of being sassy and strong-willed. She always says what she thinks and likes to give people advice even if it is not wanted. Karla is one of the few people who Dr Cox respects and also takes advice from. She helps interns when in need by showing them clinical practising, but also sometimes likes to point at people’s faults.

8.2.2. Sacred Heart as the setting – power relations in U.S. hospitals

In order to understand the power-relations between the characters in the series, I will briefly describe the hierarchy of medical staff in U.S. hospitals from bottom to top. The staff at a USA hospital is placed on levels according to their education, qualifications and experience, which is illustrated in Figure 3 below. Each of the positions and/or qualifications is subsequently described. The information has been gained from two internet sites (www.verywell.com; https://patientsafetymovement.org).
Medical student
Medical students are those who are in medical school and have the lowest level position in a hospital. They are not referred to as physicians until they graduate from medical school. Practising in the hospital is part of their medical training. However, they are not yet allowed to practise medicine without the supervision of a physician.

Interns
After graduating from medical school, the student completes his/her first year of practical training. This first year of training is referred to as the intern year. It is the first step towards becoming a physician. Like the medical student, the intern is not yet allowed to practise medicine without being supervised by an attending.

Residents
After completing the intern year, the physician enters a residency programme in which he applies for a medical license. This license allows the physician to practise general medicine. The majority of residents decide to pursue further practical training. This training can last for five or more years. After the completion of the training programme a resident can decide to enter
subspecialty programmes. Those residents are called fellows.

**Attending physician**

In the United States, an attending physician is a physician who has completed residency and practises medicine in the specialty area he/she completed during residency. One of his duties is to supervise fellows, residents, interns and medical students, but he/she is the one in charge of the patient's care and treatment.

**Chief of medicine or chief physician**

The chief of medicine is the one who holds the highest senior management title. In order to become the chief of medicine; it takes many years of supervisory experience and also experience as a medical doctor. This position involves a lot of responsibility, as the chief of medicine is in charge of supervising major medical subdivisions of a hospital, which include physicians and other medical staff giving medical services to patients.

8.2.3. **Types of power possessed by Dr Kelso and Dr Cox**

Based on the types of power proposed by French and Raven (1959) which I outlined in chapter 6, Dr Cox and Dr Kelso possess legitimate power over the interns and nurses by virtue of their statuses and functions – Dr Cox occupying the position of an attending physician and Dr Kelso’s status as the chief of medicine, in addition, both being supervising mentors. By virtue of their expertise, i.e. based on their knowledge, experience and skills acquired during their specialty training programmes, they have expert power over the interns and nurses. Dr Kelso and Dr Cox also possess coercive power and reward power, as their positions cover the functions that those types of power involve. Both can reward interns or impose consequences if the mentioned do not act in accordance with certain requirements.
Consequently, the relationships between the more powerful Dr Cox & Kelso and the less powerful interns and nurses is marked by imbalance. However it has to be mentioned that the power distance between Dr Cox and the interns becomes smaller in season two, as the latter gain knowledge and attain a higher level of profession than they had in season one – they become residents which is only one level lower in the hospital hierarchy than Dr Cox’s position as an attendant.

Among other aims, this thesis examines, whether Dr Kelso and Dr Cox use the different types of power they possess to employ impoliteness and, if so, for which purposes. In addition, the reactions of the less powerful will be taken into account too in the analysis process.
8.3. Impoliteness in Scrubs

In the following extracts, instances of impoliteness will be analysed. For reasons of convenience, the lists of strategies used for the analysis are provided below (for a more comprehensive description see chapter 4 in the first section of the thesis). Each extract under investigation is presented with a short description of the context to familiarise the reader with the situation in which impoliteness takes place. After each extract, a table with the identified impolite utterances, the superstrategies and output strategies, and the type of impoliteness used, is provided. The analysis of the extracts is followed by a presentation and discussion of the results in which the applicability of the theories used for the analysis is examined. Finally, examples will be presented to show how impoliteness is used as a tool to create a humorous effect and to develop the characters.

The superstrategies as proposed by Culpeper (1996: 356-368)

**Bald on record impoliteness** – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is relevant […] in […] cases [where] face is at stake, and, more importantly, it is the intention of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer.

**Positive impoliteness** – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face wants.

**Negative impoliteness** – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s negative face wants.

**Sarcasm or mock politeness** – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.

**Withhold politeness** – the absence of politeness work where it would be expected. For example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness.

**Off-record impoliteness**: the FTA is performed by means of implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly out-weighs any others.
Table 3: Positive and negative impoliteness strategies (Culpeper 1996: 357-368)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive impoliteness output strategies:</th>
<th>Negative impoliteness output strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ignore, snub the other – fail to acknowledge the other's presence</td>
<td>• Frighten – instil a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exclude the other from an activity</td>
<td>• Condescend, scorn or ridicule – emphasise your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disassociate from the other– for example, deny association or common ground with the other</td>
<td>• Invade the other's space – literally or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic</td>
<td>• Hinder or block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use inappropriate identity markers – for example use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.</td>
<td>• Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect – personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use obscure or secretive language – for example mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.</td>
<td>• Put the other's indebtedness on record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seek disagreement – select a sensitive topic.</td>
<td>• Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make the other feel uncomfortable – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.</td>
<td>• etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use taboo words – swear, or use abusive or profane language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Call the other names – use derogatory nominations..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3.1. Dr Cox vs. J.D. – Season 1

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 1

Context: It’s J.D.’s first day at the hospital. Together with Carla, he is in the patient’s room where he meets Dr Cox for the first time. Dr Cox enters, putting on gloves.

1. J.D.: Hi, doctor, I'm-
2. Dr Cox: (interrupting) Place an IV for me.
3. J.D.: We'll talk later.
   (J.D. gets to work on the patient.)
4. Dr Cox: Carla, can I ask you a personal question? Do you spray the perfume on or just fill your bathtub up and splash around in it?
5. Carla: I smell nice.
6. Dr Cox: Time’s up. Carla, would you do it for him, please? I also need an A.B.G.
7. J.D.: Why are you telling her?
8. Dr Cox: Shut up and watch.
9. Carla: Be nice to Bambi!
### Table 4: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 1, Episode 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Interruption) Place an IV for me.</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Negative Positive</td>
<td>Block or hinder Ignore and snub</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Time’s up.</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Positive Negative</td>
<td>Exclude Condescend, scorn or ridicule</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Shut up and watch!</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J.D., who wants to introduce himself to Dr Cox, is interrupted by the latter – an example of positive impoliteness as Dr Cox ignores and snubs J.D. Dr Cox, instead of introducing himself (withhold politeness) – a behaviour which would be expected given the fact that it is the first time they meet – issues an order (“Place an IV for me”) with which he threatens J.D.’s negative face.

J.D. in return, does not counter the face attack, but ignores and/or tolerates it. J.D. is not surprised, which might suggest that Dr Cox’s rude behaviour and position of authority corresponds to J.D.’s perception of a mentor-intern relationship. After J.D. hesitates to insert the IV, Dr Cox tells nurse Carla to do his job and, therefore, attacks J.D.’s positive and negative face – Dr Cox impedes his freedom to act as an intern and excludes him from the medical procedure. Thereby, he undermines and denounces him. When J.D. asks him why he is telling Carla to do it, Dr Cox uses the bald on record imperatives “Shut up and watch”. In other words, he clearly and unambiguously tells him to stop talking and learn from the nurse.

As is apparent from the table, the impoliteness identified is clearly one-sided. J.D. does not counter any face attacks. He takes on a rather defensive stance (line 3: “We will talk later”) by “dismissing the face attack as inconsequential and/or non-damaging” (Bousfield 2008: 196). The imbalance in power is evident, which also explains why all instances of impoliteness are coercive — Dr Cox uses his inferior position to show his dominance.
Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 19

Context: Elliot's and Turk's parents want to attend their essay presentations during an important conference. Before the presentation the parents pay a visit to the hospital. The interns, Elliot and Turk, are showing their parents around.

1. **Dr Cox**: What in the hell is this? Parents weekend?
2. **J.D.**: Well, sort of. Elliot and Turk wrote this paper and then my dad decided, "I want to come, too!"
3. **Dr Cox**: (interrupting) Look, Reba, if I ask you a question that doesn't specifically deal with a medical issue, you can bet your powdered bottom that I don't want you to answer. Do you understand?
4. **J.D.**: Yeah...
5. **Dr Cox**: It's like... working with a monkey! (leaves)

Table 5: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 1, Episode 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What in the hell is this?</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Positive Negative</td>
<td>Use taboo words Seek disagreement Challenge</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(Interruption) Look, Reba</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Negative Positive</td>
<td>Block/hinder Use inappropriate identity markers</td>
<td>Coercive Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>bet your powdered bottom</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Condescend, scorn or ridicule</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I don't want you to answer</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It's like... working with a monkey</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Bald on record (negative)³</td>
<td>(explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect)</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Cox is obviously annoyed by the parents' presence in the hospital. Dr Cox’s questions to J.D., which are obviously just outbursts of his annoyance, induce J.D. to tell him about his father’s plans to visit him. Before J.D. can even finish his sentence, he is interrupted by Dr Cox who tells him that he is not interested in any personal matters about his life. Here a combination of different strategies

³ overlap of superstrategies (see chapter 8.4.1.)
can be identified - instances of bald on record, positive and negative impoliteness.

Dr Cox’s interruption can be interpreted as positive impoliteness as he ignores him, i.e. ignores and does not value his wish to tell him about his father. At the same time, he shows disinterest and obviously seeks disagreement by asking a question to which he does not even want to hear an answer.

Additionally, the interruption is also a negative face issue, as Dr Cox is impeding J.D. Dr Cox’s demand “I don’t want you to answer” is then intensified with a message enforcer (Culpeper 2010: 3243) “Do you understand?” J.D. does not counter the face attack, but ignores and tolerates it. Dr Cox, however, continues to issue face-threatening acts, using bald on record impoliteness in so far as he compares J.D. to a monkey. In this dialogue, Dr Cox uses all three types of impoliteness – affective, to show his annoyance towards the situation; coercive, when he uses impoliteness to show his inferior position and to make clear that J.D. has to ‘obey’; exploitative, when he ridicules J.D. in his rants (‘powdered bottom’, ‘Reba’).

The imbalance of power in Dr Cox and J.D.’s relationship is clearly evident in both dialogues. Dr Cox clearly has control over the discourse. His position as J.D.’s mentor, i.e. boss, gives him the possibility to exert power over J.D. (e.g. he uses bald on record impoliteness; issues orders; he interrupts him; he restricts his action environment by asking a direct question, limiting his response options; he insults him). J.D. never counters the face attacks, but ignores or tolerates them. Although Dr Cox is also impolite towards Carla (season 1, episode 1), the power relation is different than in J.D.’s and Dr Cox’s relationship. Dr Cox is not Carla’s mentor, he is in some way or the other her ‘boss’, as he is the one who gives orders and makes decisions. However, their relationship is a rather cooperative one, as he would not be able to do his job without her help and the other way round. In episode 1 (first extract) Carla does not counter the face attacks with face attacks, but rather defends her face by dismissing Dr Cox’s face threats. In other words, she does not take Dr Cox’s rants personally and accepts his behaviou
8.3.2. Dr Cox vs. J.D. – Season 2

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, Episode 5
Context: J.D. is in his second year practising medicine, and has thus become a resident. He is upset because Dr Cox is ridiculing him and throwing in his face that he made another mistake.

1. **Dr Perry Cox**: Listen closely, tiny dancer! I wouldn't be flapping my mouth if I'd forgotten to get a blood culture on Mr Blair. And, for the love of God, do you at least remember what you were doing the day they were passing out common sense? Oh gosh, maybe you were running late that day cos' you couldn't find the right thong for those low-rider jeans that you love so much; maybe you were busy bopping along to whatever boy band really makes your heart race nowadays and you just drove on by. Of course I don't know, I'm just guessing... But one thing's sure: you wound up at the dumb-dumb store and just went ahead and put about as much of that in the car as you could fit... didn't you?

2. **J.D.**: Look, Doctor! If you flipped the page on that chart you'd see that I pan cultured him yesterday. But that would probably get in the way of the perverse pleasure you take in pointing out people's slip-ups! Well, too bad, Buster Brown, because I'm a resident now, and I'm not gonna be making the same intern mistakes I made last year. I'd appreciate if you wouldn't stand and yell at me in front of my patient!

3. **Dr Perry Cox**: Buster Brown?

4. **J.D.**: Buster Brown.

5. **Dr Perry Cox**: [Growls and goes away]

6. **J.D.**: [narrating to himself] Wow...

Table 6: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 2, Episode 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Listen closely, tiny dancer! I wouldn't be flapping my mouth if I'd forgotten to get a blood culture on Mr Blair. And, for the love of God, do you at least remember what you were doing the day they were passing out common sense? Oh gosh, maybe you were running late that day cos' you couldn't find the right thong for those low-rider jeans that you love so much; maybe you were busy bopping along to whatever boy band really makes your heart race nowadays and you just drove on by. Of course I don't know, I'm just guessing... But one thing's sure: you wound up at the dumb-dumb store and just went ahead and put about as much of that in the car as you could fit... didn't you?</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td>Call the other names</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>tiny dancer</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I wouldn't be flapping my mouth if I'd forgotten to get a blood culture on Mr Blair.</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[...] do you at least remember what you were doing the day they were passing out common sense? [...]you were running late that day cos' you couldn't find the right thong for those low-rider jeans that you love so much; maybe you were busy bopping along to whatever boy band really makes your heart race nowadays and you just drove on by. Of course I don't know, I'm just guessing... But one thing's sure: you wound up at the dumb-dumb store and just went ahead and put about as much of that in the car as you could fit... didn't you?</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This dialogue starts with Dr. Cox employing bald on record impoliteness as he attacks J.D.'s face by using an imperative (“Listen closely, [...]!”). He then continues using negative impoliteness by associating J.D. with negative aspects. First, he accuses J.D. of forgetting to get a blood culture on the patient and, thus, questions his professional competence and his common sense in general. He also uses homosexual references or stereotypes to instil the impolite belief that he is gay (e.g. thong and low rider jeans – low rider: "refers to homosexual men wearing their pants low on the hip to expose colorful underwear in an attempt to attract a mate" [http://www.urbandictionary.com 18.07.2016]). This reference can also be interpreted differently. It does not necessarily have to be a homosexual reference. Given the fact that he, via implicature, constantly indicates that J.D. has female traits (thereby questioning his manliness), one could also argue that he is implying that J.D. was acting like a girl in his teenage years.

In return, J.D. counters the face attack by first taking up a defensive stance. He denies Dr. Cox’s accusation and explains that he already did get the blood culture. In that same turn he changes to an offensive stance, using negative impoliteness to accuse Dr. Cox of having pleasure in ridiculing people and calls him Buster Brown. Buster Brown is a reference to a comic strip character. According to the urban dictionary, Buster Brown is “a really goofy looking person who also has very poor social skills and is usually not wanted by a majority of a group” [http://www.urbandictionary.com 18.07.2016].
J.D. also uses *mock politeness* when he addresses him with “Look, Doctor!” Calling someone who is a doctor, a doctor, would usually make that person feel honoured. However, in this context the title is used insincerely, as J.D. is actually criticising him for not having had a closer look at the chart, which a competent doctor would have had.

**Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, Episode 9**

*Context: J.D. apologises to Dr Cox after he reacted angrily when the latter tried to talk to him about the death of one of J.D’s patients.*

1. J.D.: Hey, Dr Cox. I’m sorry, I was just so frustrated before. So, now, I’m here, why don’t you go ahead and tell me what I forgot?
2. Dr Cox: [grinning excitedly] Can I? Really?
3. J.D.: Sure! Hit me.
4. Dr Cox: How about, go to hell, Shakira.
5. J.D.: What?!
6. Dr Cox: What, now that you’ve decided you’re ready to listen, how does it work, huh? You gonna pull a string on my back? Well, step right up and give it a tug. But, I’m warning you, I bet it keeps coming up “Go to hell, Shakira.”
7. J.D.: Why do you always have to be like that? You know that I try harder than anyone in this place, and you never give me any credit!
8. Dr Cox: Now, you listen to me, Newbie. I’m not doing this because I get my jollies off of being your mentor; and I’m damn-sure not doing it so that years from now I can say, “Boy, I knew him when.” I’m doing it because if I don’t, people would die.
9. J.D.: Thanks for your help. [He leaves]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>why don’t you go ahead and tell me what I forgot?</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Seek disagreement – select a sensitive topic.</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Can I really?</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Go to hell</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shakira</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Use inappropriate identity markers (Condescend, scorn or ridicule)</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Negative)⁴</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ overlap of superstrategies (see chapter 8.4.1.)
J.D. apologises to Dr Cox and tells him that he is now ready to be criticised by him – or in other words, he is now ready to condescend to his criticism. He thereby attacks Dr Cox’s positive face because he does not appreciate or acknowledge his service as a mentor. With his insincere question (Can I? Really?), Dr Cox is indicating that he does not need his confirmation to do so, as being his mentor, he has the power anyway and that J.D. is not in the position to decide when this is going to happen. Dr Cox applies several strategies in this dialogue. He utilises taboo words (Go to hell, Shakira), he scorns J.D., stresses his relative power, thereby clearly showing him who the boss is.

J.D. in return, tries to defend his face. The question “Why do you always have to be like that?” constitutes an objection to the way Dr Cox treats him. J.D. justifies his actions by explaining that he tries harder than all of the other residents and implies that Dr Cox actually has no reason to be that mean to him. This, however, even exacerbates the situation as can be seen from Dr Cox’s response to J.D.’s reproach. He starts with a bald on record order “Now, you listen to me, Newbie”, emphasising that he has the control over this conversation and that he has had enough of J.D. challenging his authority. He further belittles him by calling him “Newbie” and at the same time disassociates from him – he is the expert, and J.D. is not. He goes on by claiming that without him J.D.’s patients would die, and is thus attacking J.D.’s positive face. J.D ends the conversation with sarcasm and/or mock politeness, insincerely thanking him for his support.

**Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, Episode 15**

*Context: J.D. shows up at Dr Cox’s apartment, where Dr Cox has planned to*
throw a home party during his wife’s absence, to tell him that he has had enough of his harassment and that he wants to be transferred to another attending physician.

1. J.D.: I’ve been doing some thinking, about how you’re always blaming me for everything, and how you just send a constant stream of crap my way... and I decided I need a break.

2. Dr Cox: So, what’d you come by to tell me you’re a complete wuss?

3. J.D.: No. I... came over here to tell you that I traded with another resident and switched off your service for a while.

4. Dr Cox: Well, tears and hugs, there, Katie. But, unless you want to come inside, here, and give one of the fellas a lap-dance, I’m afraid I gotta say Sayonara, ’cause I got twenty guys in here and it’s about to get nutty! All the best, baby. [He closes the door]

Table 8: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 2, Episode 15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[...]you are always blaming me [...] you just send a constant stream of crap my way</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>So, what’d you come by to tell me you’re a complete wuss?</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Bald on record&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Call the other names</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Well, tears and hugs, there, Katie</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Sarcasm Positive&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic Use inappropriate identity marker</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I’m afraid I gotta say Sayonara, ’cause I got twenty guys in here and it’s about to get nutty!</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>All the best, Baby.</td>
<td>Dr Cox</td>
<td>Mock politeness Positive</td>
<td>Inappropriate identity marker</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>5</sup> overlap of superstrategies (see chapter 8.4.1.)
<sup>6</sup> overlap of superstrategies (see chapter 8.4.1.)
J.D., who feels unfairly treated, criticises Dr Cox for his attitude towards him, and attacks Dr Cox’s ‘quality face’ when he calls into question his competence as an attending physician. Dr Cox counters the face attack, i.e. responds offensively to J.D.’s reproach by applying the positive impoliteness strategy “call the other names” referring to him as ‘a complete wuss’. This impolite belief, which is expressed clearly enough to be an instance of bald on record impoliteness, is exacerbated by an interrogative, a direct question, which also includes a verbal trap as any answer, yes or no, would be self face damaging as it would confirm the impolite belief that J.D. is ‘a complete wuss’. J.D. in turn accepts the face attack in order not to make the situation worse than it us, explaining that he had come by to inform him about his decision to refrain from his service.

With the sarcastic utterance “Well, tears and hugs there, Katie” ” Dr Cox shows disinterest and is unsympathetic to J.D. and attempts to inform him about his concerns. This instance of impoliteness is intensified when Dr Cox calls J.D. by a girl’s name (‘Katie’), which is clearly used derogatorily, and as an insult. In fact, Dr Cox hardly ever addresses J.D with his real name. He constantly uses this strategy to demean and belittle him. He calls into question his ‘manliness’ and competence as a doctor.

Dr Cox also employs negative impoliteness in this scene, as he condescends him. He attacks J.D.’s negative face by not respecting his concerns and not taking seriously his reproach. He also clearly emphasises his relative power as a mentor and shows his superiority. This is also apparent from the end of the conversation. It is Dr Cox who ends the exchange and just withdraws from the conversation by closing the door in J.D.’s face. ‘All the best’ used in this situation is clearly an instance of Sarcasm or mock politeness, i.e. a politeness strategy used insincerely.

The change in hierarchical order and power between J.D and Dr Cox is evident in the last three extracts. J.D. is no longer just an intern; he is a resident now. His new position allows him to articulate his wishes or concerns and to criticise Dr Cox in return. With his new position, the imbalance in power is smaller as he
gained experience and knowledge over the last year. Even J.D. himself is surprised (“Wow...” season 2, episode 5) that he managed to stand up for himself. Dr Cox and J.D’s turns are almost of the same length and J.D., just as Dr Cox, employs impoliteness strategies on him and counters Cox’s face attacks. One could even argue that it is J.D. who wins the argument in episode 5, as Dr Cox does not counter J.D.’s face attack but just withdraws from the conversation.

8.3.3. Dr Kelso vs. interns/nurses

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 23

Context: Dr Kelso, who is known for his harsh treatment of interns, is quizzing them whilst making rounds in the wards.

1. Dr Kelso: Can you tell me the treatment regiment for organophosphate toxicity, Dr Reid?
2. Elliot: Well, first I would give intramuscular epinephrine, then IV calcium gluconate followed by emergency chemo dialysis.
3. Dr Kelso: Sweetheart, if I wanted you to give me three wrong answers in a row, I’d just ask for the usual. Dr Murphy, care to jump in?
4. Doug: Um, I think it's--
5. Dr Kelso: [interrupting] Do you have a speech impediment, sport?
6. Doug: Excuse me?
7. Dr Kelso: You insist on starting every answer with "Um..." so I figure you've either got a speech impediment or you're a stammering know-nothing who doesn't belong in medicine!
8. Doug: Um--
9. Dr Kelso: Well spoken. Now, get out. All of you. Get out! Get out! Out, out, out! (They all leave quickly.)

Table 9: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 1, Episode 23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sweetheart</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Inappropriate identity marker</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Ridicule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I’d ask for the usual</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you have a speech impediment, sport?</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Bald on record Positive</td>
<td>Use inappropriate identity marker</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or you're a stammering know-nothing who doesn't belong in medicine

Well spoken.

Now, get out. All of you. Get out! Get out! Out, out, out!

Dr Kelso first addresses Elliot with her title (Dr Reid). Doing so, he shows respect and meets on common ground. When, however, she is not able to provide the right answer to his question, he calls her ‘Sweetheart’. The function of this inappropriate identity marker (positive impoliteness) is to belittle her (negative impoliteness); he does not treat her seriously. By calling her sweetheart he indirectly implies that she does not deserve to be called ‘doctor’ anymore, as a doctor would have known the answer. Furthermore, he uses a negative impoliteness strategy, namely associate the other with a negative aspect as he is implying that her lack of knowledge is not unusual but something he expected.

After Doug hesitates to answer the question, Dr Kelso attacks his positive face on record in that he offends him in front of the other interns by suggesting that his failure or hesitation to answer might be due to a speaking disorder. Even if Doug suffered from a speech impediment (which he does not, and Kelso knows that), pointing at such a weakness, also in the presence of others, is already very offensive. However, the fact that Dr Kelso knows that Doug does not suffer from such a disorder exacerbates the face attack. He clearly and intentionally denounces and ridicules him by expressing the impolite belief that he lacks the knowledge he needs to practise medicine.
**Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, episode 11**

*Context:* Elliot is assisting in the free clinic when she discovers that a young woman is pregnant. She informs Dr Kelso of the patient’s medical condition and suggests having her transferred to a family care specialist.

1. **Elliot:** Dr Kelso, I need to present a patient: Nineteen-year-old complaining of abdominal pain -- turns out she's at least eight months pregnant. I'm just gonna let one of the Family Practice people handle it.

2. **Dr Kelso:** Well, that sounds like a wonderful idea, *sweetheart*; except I heard your smart remark a second ago, so why don't you just keep your little pregnant girl. It'll be good practice for you, since you'll probably end up in a female specialty, anyway.

3. **Elliot:** What do you mean by that? I'm Internal Medicine.

4. **Dr Kelso:** Well, of course you are. But numbers don't lie, and most women end up in ON-GYN, Family Practice, or Paediatrics. *It's like a rip-tide, sweetheart -- pulling and pulling,* and you can swim against the current all you want; *but when Mr Stork comes calling,* you're not gonna be thinking, "*I'm Internal Medicine*" -- nope. *It's gonna be, "Ohhhh, look at the baby!"*

5. **Elliot:** Sir. I have to say, I'm offended!

6. **Dr Kelso:** Oh no! Now I have to go buy flowers to make it right.

---

Table 10: *Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 1, Episode 11)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sweetheart</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Inappropriate identity marker</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Ridicule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>since you'll probably end up in a female specialty, anyway. [...]</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Off-record impoliteness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It's like a rip-tide, sweetheart – [...] but when Mr Stork comes calling, you're not gonna be thinking, &quot;I'm Internal Medicine&quot; -- nope. It's gonna be, &quot;Ohhhh, look at the baby!&quot;</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Inappropriate identity marker</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Off-record impoliteness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oh no! Now I have to go buy flowers to make it right.</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Sarcasm/Mock</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elliot is informing Dr Kelso about the medical condition of her patient, who turned out to be pregnant. Dr Kelso, again uses the inappropriate identity marker ‘sweetheart’, but also employs bald on record impoliteness, in that he directly and impolitely states his belief that women sooner or later leave internal medicine for ‘female specialty’ and that he is convinced that Elliot will not be an exception. I suggest this being a case of bald on record impoliteness, as Elliot’s face is relevant and at stake – she is sharing her medical decisions with Dr Kelso whose opinion is very important to her. Apparently, the impoliteness strategies are successful as Elliot herself states that she is offended by what he said (and thus accepts the face threat).

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 12

Context: It is a very hectic day in the hospital. J.D. is helping Dr Cox to reach his goal of not losing a patient for 24 hours. However, a woman slipped in the hospital after which Dr Cox tells J.D. to pay particular attention to her so she will not sue the hospital.

1. **Dr Kelso:** Dr Dorian, I owe you an apology. Obviously I was unclear when I said, "Stay in the M.R.I. room with that patient." It must have sounded like, "Leave, and do other things."
2. **J.D. starts to explain, but is interrupted.**
3. **Dr Kelso:** Let me rephrase it so there'll be no more confusion: Get your ass back down there! [Leaves]

Table 11: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 1, Episode 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr Dorian, I owe you an apology. Obviously I was unclear when I said, &quot;Stay in the M.R.I. room with that patient.&quot; It must have sounded like, &quot;Leave, and do other things.&quot;</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Mock politeness/Sarcasm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Get your ass back down there!</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Bald on record Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dr Kelso employs *mock politeness* to *snub* him after he did not follow his orders. Using *bald on record impoliteness*, Dr Kelso clearly exercises his *legitimate power* over J.D. This is enforced with the interruption, and the taboo word ‘ass’. Denying J.D. to speak, serves the purpose of showing J.D. that he is in control (of the conversation, and the hospital).

**Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, Episode 7**

*Context: Although nurses are legally not allowed to administer medication without a doctor’s order, Carla increased the dosage of a patient’s medication. Dr Kelso approaches Carla to rebuke her.*

1. **Dr Kelso:** So, Mr Brooks is doing peachy, huh?
2. **Carla:** Peachy-keen.
3. **Dr Kelso:** Great. Great! A patient's improvement is always cause for celebration here at Sacred Heart. And yet, for some reason, I'm not wearing a party hat, sitting bare-ass on the hospital's copier machine. *Carla looks at him.*
4. **Dr Kelso:** You know why? It's not because I have the name tattooed on my butt -- he's an old sailor buddy, and if you went through what we did, you'd understand. It's because somebody went ahead and increased Mr Brooks' Lidocaine drip, and by law that could only be a doctor. *Are you a doctor, Nurse Espinosa?***
   *Carla does not answer.*
5. **Dr Kelso:** Well?
6. **Carla:** No, sir.
7. **Dr Kelso:** *You're damn right, you're not.* [Walks off]
Dr Kelso uses bald on record impoliteness to dispute Karla’s decision to disobey legal regulations in the hospital regarding a patient’s treatment. He uses his legitimate power to scorn, snub and disassociate from her, using bald on record impoliteness by directly asking her whether she is a nurse. In using a direct question, he restricts her action environment and limits her response options. ‘No’ would be a lie, ‘yes’ an admission of her mistake and thus self-face damaging. Karla does not answer initially, but is pressured by Kelso (“Well?”).

Karla, as the less powerful participant, does not challenge the given power relationship but gives in and accepts the face threat. In this example it is clearly evident that the imbalance in power is realised in the imbalance of impoliteness in the discourse. This is also apparent in the following extract, in which Kelso reminds Karla of her position and area of competence in the hospital.

---

Table 12: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 2, Episode 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Great. Great!</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Mock politeness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I’m not wearing a party hat, sitting bare-ass on the hospital’s copier machine</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Off-record impoliteness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It’s not because I have the name tattooed on my butt -- he’s an old sailor buddy</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Use obscure language</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Are you a doctor, Nurse Espinosa?</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Bald on record⁷</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Disassociate from the other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Well?</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>You’re damn right, you’re not.</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁷ overlap of superstrategies; combination of strategies (see chapter 8.4.1.)
Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 5, Episode 15

1. J.D.: Carla, can you cover my patients?
2. Dr Kelso: She's already watching someone for me.
3. J.D.: Alright, I'll find somebody else.
4. Carla: Why, because I'm just a nurse I can't look after everybody?
5. Dr Kelso: Precisely.

Table 13: Impoliteness strategies and output strategies in the extract (Season 5, Episode 15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Impoliteness strategy</th>
<th>Output strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Why, because I'm just a nurse, I can't look after everybody?</td>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Precisely</td>
<td>Dr Kelso</td>
<td>Bald on record</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When J.D. asks Carla if she can cover his patients, Dr Kelso answers instead of Karla with which he violates the structure of conversation- he takes her turn. Karla attacks Dr Kelso by generating the implicature that he thinks nurses are incompetent. It is apparent that she herself does not hold the impolite belief she expresses through the implicature, but that she accuses Dr Kelso of this attitude. In order to attack him, she actually takes the risk to self-damage her own face. As it turns out, Carla's accusation of Dr Kelso holding the impolite belief that nurses are not capable of looking after all patients is justified and confirmed by Dr Kelso himself (‘Precisely’).
8.4. Results and discussion

This section of the thesis assesses the applicability of Culpeper’s impoliteness model and will have a closer look at how impoliteness is used by the scriptwriter to create humour and further the plot. It has to be noted that already analysed extracts will be revisited in order to discuss and assess the mentioned functions and aspects of impoliteness.

8.4.1. Culpeper’s theory as basis of the analysis

One of the aims of this thesis was to employ Culpeper’s model of impoliteness (1996; 2005) on confrontational dialogues in the TV series Scrubs in order to test its applicability. Although his theory generally proved its applicability in my case, I have come across some difficulties in applying it. This section will critically look at the aspects that caused those difficulties.

Each of the extracts included at least two or more impoliteness strategies, which were either single realisations or combinations of strategies. As Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann (2003: 1561) had already noted, the combination (especially those of positive and negative impoliteness) and the repetition of strategies are patterns, which are not unusual. This was also an experience I made during the process of analysing, as I will briefly show in an example from my analysis:

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2 episode 9:

1. J.D.: Hey, Dr Cox. I’m sorry, I was just so frustrated before. So, now, I’m here, why don’t you go ahead and tell me what I forgot?
2. Dr Cox: [grinning excitedly] Can I? Really?
3. J.D.: Sure! Hit me.
4. Dr Cox: How about, go to hell, Shakira.

The utterance ‘go to hell, Shakira’ is a combination of Bald on record impoliteness (go to hell), as the attack is expressed baldly and with the attention to aggrevate the hearers face, and positive impoliteness as Dr Cox uses the
inappropriate identity marker/nickname ‘Shakira’. Dr Cox’s use of a girl’s name for J.D. can be interpreted as overtly patronising and derogatory.

However, looking at it from another perspective, one can also argue that it is an instance of negative impoliteness. From this situation and from Dr Cox’s position (mentor) it is obvious that he is not taking J.D. seriously, which would match the output strategy Condescend, scorn or ridicule (Emphasise your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously). This is also the case in the following example, when Dr Kelso calls Elliot ‘sweetheart’:

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 23

1. **Dr Kelso**: Can you tell me the treatment regimen for organophosphate toxicity, Dr Reid?
2. **Elliot**: Well, first I would give intramuscular epinephrine, then IV calcium gluconate followed by emergency chemo dialysis.
3. **Dr Kelso**: Sweetheart, if I wanted you to give me three wrong answers in a row, I’d just ask for the usual. Dr Murphy, care to jump in?

Initially, Dr Kelso addresses Elliot with her title (Dr Reid). However, after she fails to give the right answer, he calls her “Sweetheart”. Apparently, the function of this inappropriate identity marker (positive impoliteness) is to belittle her (negative impoliteness). This would mean or would trigger the conclusion that, depending on the goal the speaker wants to achieve, the output strategy could fall into both categories, positive and negative impoliteness. This, however, suggests, that the positive-negative distinction of strategies might besuperfluous after all.

This insight, of course, called for explanations. After conducting some further research, I found out that other researchers have made the same experience. Culpeper only recently (2016) published the article Impoliteness Strategies in which he reviews his impoliteness strategies (1996) by incorporating and considering critique from other researchers. One of which was Blas Arroyo (2001: 22) who has made the same observation, namely that it is often challenging to distinguish between negative and positive impoliteness, or more precisely to decide which category a particular output strategy falls into. He
argues that "condescend, scorn, or ridicule" rather orients towards positive than towards negative face (2001: 22). Culpeper’s answer to this ‘criticism’ is that the idea behind this strategy actually stems from Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) superstrategy “negative politeness”, which according to him is “an awkward mix of things” (2016: 428) but, as negative politeness involves deference, the opposite thereof would be to treat the hearer as powerless – i.e. “Condescend, scorn or ridicule” him/her. However, he also points out that “it is absolutely the case that one and the same strategy can often be viewed from different perspectives” and that “one and the same strategy can contain parts that orient to different types of face” (2006: 428). In addition, as already argued in 1996 (p. 357), he stresses that “the output strategies are not closed lists” (2016: 425).

A further insight that has been gained during the analysis is that the strategy Bald on record impoliteness can also orient to face, which one of the dialogues that has already been analysed shows:

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 1

1. **J.D.**: Hi, doctor, I'm-
2. **Dr Cox**: (interrupting) Place an IV for me.
3. **J.D.**: We'll talk later.
   *(J.D. gets to work on the patient.)*
4. **Dr Cox**: Carla, can I ask you a personal question? Do you spray the perfume on or just fill your bathtub up and splash around in it?
5. **Carla**: I smell nice.
6. **Dr Cox**: Time's up. Carla, would you do it for him, please? I also need an A.B.G.
7. **J.D.**: Why are you telling her?
8. **Dr Cox**: Shut up and watch.
9. **Carla**: Be nice to Bambi!

It can be argued that Dr Cox’s utterance ‘Shut up and watch.’ is Bald on record impoliteness, as the message is expressed in the most direct and clear way, thereby ignoring the hearer’s face wants. However, denying someone the right to speak (‘impeding speech’) is a face threat, which orients towards the hearer’s negative face as his freedom of action is restricted. Culpeper’s description of Bald on record impoliteness is very brief and, compared to other
superstrategies, the one with the fewest examples provided. Arroyo (2001: 21) postulates that the reason for this is that it simply overlaps with Negative and Positive impoliteness and therefore suggests to get rid of it. Bousfield (2008: 152) is of a similar opinion and argues that the Bald on record superstrategy is a form based one, while Positive and Negative impoliteness are function based as they involve orientation towards face. However, he continues to explain that “Bald, on record-in-form utterances also have a function (as do, arguably, all communicative utterances)” hence, it “seems odd that such utterances would not be captured under the positive or negative im/politeness superstrategies” (2008:152). Culpeper (2016: 442) himself suggests “to add a degree of complexity to those categories” by incorporating aspects like ‘directness’ and ‘context’.

8.4.2. The role of power in Scrubs

This section will have a closer look at the role power plays in the impoliteness events in Scrubs, by incorporating Brown & Levinson’s model of social variables (2001) and French and Raven’s types of power (1959).

As already mentioned in chapter 8.2.3. the relationships between the bosses, Dr Cox and Dr Kelso, and the interns and nurses are of asymmetrical hierarchy. Dr Cox and Dr Kelso possess legitimate (owing to their statuses and roles in the hospital), and expert power (owing to their expertise and long-lasting experience) over them. To quote Culpeper (1996: 354) again, in a relationship that is characterised by imbalance in power, impoliteness is likely to happen, as the more powerful participant can “(a) reduce the ability of the less powerful participant to retaliate with impoliteness (e.g. through the denial of speaking rights), and (b) threaten more severe retaliation should the less powerful participant be impolite.” This conclusion can also be drawn from my research.

Dr Cox and Dr Kelso use language to patronise interns and nurses, who in positions of very low relative power rarely challenge the impoliteness imposed on them. The following example illustrates this quite well.
Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 1

1. **J.D.:** Hi, doctor, I'm-
2. **Dr Cox:** (interrupting) Place an IV for me.
3. **J.D.:** We'll talk later.
   *(J.D. gets to work on the patient.)*
4. **Dr Cox:** Carla, can I ask you a personal question? Do you spray the perfume on or just fill your bathtub up and splash around in it?
5. **Carla:** I smell nice.
6. **Dr Cox:** Time's up. Carla, would you do it for him, please? I also need an A.B.G.
7. **J.D.:** Why are you telling her?
8. **Dr Cox:** Shut up and watch.
9. **Carla:** Be nice to Bambi!

As mentioned in chapter 8.3.1., this situation is especially interesting, as it is the first time that Dr Cox and J.D. meet. Right from the beginning, Dr Cox uses his legitimate power to quite overtly show his inferior position as a mentor. In the first turn, J.D. does not challenge Dr Cox’s impolite act, but with the response ‘We’ll talk later’ accepts it by “dismissing the face attack as inconsequential and/or non-damaging” (Bousfield 2008: 196). However, when he does challenge Dr Cox face threat imposed on him (‘Why are you telling her?’) he faces the consequence of “more severe retaliation” (Culpeper 1996: 354) as he is told to “Shut up and watch”.

The power relations between Carla and Dr Cox are different from those of Dr Cox and J.D. – Dr Cox is not Carla’s mentor. In fact he also is not her boss either, but he can place orders in the area of the patient’s care and one aspect of Carla’s job is to carry out those orders. Although he has legitimate power—he is the one responsible for the patient—he does not ‘overuse’ his power when it comes to nurses. When he issues an order, he does it politely (Carla, would you do it for him, please?). In addition, the remarks he makes about her perfume can be interpreted as *banter* (Culpeper 1996: 352; 2011a: 207), of which the primary function is to enhance social bonds. Carla is not offended—this kind of ‘mocking’ is not unusual between them.

It is also surprising that the most frequently used strategies by Dr Cox and Kelso were *Condescend, scorn or ridicule* and *Challenge*. Both involve the exercise of power—the first one used to emphasise power by belittling the other
and not treating the other seriously (Culpeper 1996: 9); the second, challenge, usually issued in form of a question, either rhetoric or not (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann. 2003: 1559). Thus it is a response seeking or forcing strategy, it not only forces the hearer to answer but also to damage his/her own face if he/she decides to reply. This is evident in the following example:

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2 episode 7

1. Dr Kelso: So, Mr Brooks is doing peachy, huh?
2. Carla: Peachy-keen.
3. Dr Kelso: Great. Great! A patient's improvement is always cause for celebration here at Sacred Heart. And yet, for some reason, I'm not wearing a party hat, sitting bare-ass on the hospital's copier machine. Carla looks at him.
4. Dr Kelso: You know why? It's not because I have the name tattooed on my butt -- he's an old sailor buddy, and if you went through what we did, you'd understand. It's because somebody went ahead and increased Mr Brooks' Lidocaine drip, and by law that could only be a doctor. Are you a doctor, Nurse Espinosa?
   Carla does not answer.
5. Dr Kelso: Well?
6. Carla: No, sir.
7. Dr Kelso: You're damn right, you're not. [Walks off]

Dr Kelso’s challenges Carla’s position as a nurse. The question “Are you a doctor, Nurse Espinosa?” restricts Carla’s action environment — no would be a lie, and yes a self-damaging admission. After Carla does not respond, he enforces an answer (“Well?”).

The results of my analysis also confirm the claim that the more powerful speaker has more freedom to be impolite, i.e. to resort to aggressive strategies to attack the hearer’s face; not only does he have more freedom to do so, he also has the freedom to do it in a direct and overt way, i.e. by using Bald on record impoliteness. My results show that Dr Kelso, whose position in the hospital is based on coercive power, uses Bald on record impoliteness more frequently than Dr Cox. His legitimate, but also institutional power, make room for such behaviour. His power protects him from consequences. However, this does not neutralise the impoliteness imposed. As Culpeper (2011a: 200) argues:
Legitimation conceals the dominance of person/group over another; it licences what otherwise might be construed as impoliteness, and, moreover, impoliteness used for coercive purposes. What people frequently react to and label as impoliteness are abuses of power, that is, cases where a person or group exerts power over another person or group beyond what is considered legitimate.

It has to be mentioned that as social distance and power relations change over the course of the second season, so do the responses to the impoliteness expressed by the more powerful participants. This is especially evident in interactions between Dr Cox and J.D. Although there is still a asymmetrical power distribution, the fact that J.D. has gained in expertise and power (he is a resident and no longer an intern in season 2) gives him more freedom to subvert existing power relations and to challenge the impoliteness imposed on him, as the following example shows.

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, Episode 15

1. J.D.: I've been doing some thinking, about how you're always blaming me for everything, and how you just send a constant stream of crap my way... and I decided I need a break.
2. Dr Cox: So, what'd you come by to tell me you're a complete wuss?
3. J.D.: No. I... came over here to tell you that I traded with another resident and switched off your service for a while.
4. Dr Cox: Well, tears and hugs, there, Katie. But, unless you want to come inside, here, and give one of the fellas a lap-dance, I'm afraid I gotta say Sayonara, 'cause I got twenty guys in here and it's about to get nutty! All the best, baby. [He closes the door]

J.D. expresses his criticism and tells Dr Cox that he wants to be transferred to another physician. This of course is a threat to Dr Cox’s positive face, as J.D. questions his competence as a mentor. This is something we would not see in season 1.
8.4.3. Impoliteness as a tool to develop characters and plot in Scrubs

As already mentioned, impoliteness in fictional discourse is used as a tool to construct characters and develop the plot. As Culpeper (2001: 38) suggests, “it is important to remember that dramatic dialogue is constructed by playwrights for audiences to overhear.” Thus, conversations between characters carry messages that the writer wants the viewer to decode. We do this based on our knowledge of the real world.

Dr Cox’s long rants and witty comments construct his character. When decoding Dr Cox’s behaviour, it is apparent that he frequently uses impoliteness as a shield for self-defence, trying to hide his vulnerability and weaknesses. Consider the following example:

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, Episode 15

1. **J.D.**: I've been doing some thinking, about how you're always blaming me for everything, and how you just send a constant stream of crap my way... and I decided I need a break.

2. **Dr Cox**: So, what'd you come by to tell me you're a complete wuss?

3. **J.D.**: No. I... came over here to tell you that I traded with another resident and switched off your service for a while.

4. **Dr Cox**: Well, tears and hugs, there, Katie. But, unless you want to come inside, here, and give one of the fellas a lap-dance, I'm afraid I gotta say Sayonara, 'cause I got twenty guys in here and it's about to get nutty! All the best, baby. [He closes the door]

After Dr Cox closes the door, the viewer learns that there are no “twenty guys” in there. He is home alone. He lied to J.D. because he wanted him to think that he did not care. It can thus be concluded that, for the viewer, impoliteness is a tool to gain insight in the mind-sets of characters.

In addition, in order for impoliteness to happen it takes at least two people, consequently impoliteness influences the dynamics of social relations between the characters. In the first season J.D. is rather reluctant and cautious; he submits impolite and rude behaviour to his mentors. However, in this example and also in Episode 5 (Season 2) it is obvious that J.D.’s conversational
behaviour is different from what we have learnt in the first season. He challenges the power relations between them with the goal to change the relationship. In other words, we can see that the characters and plot of the sitcom develop

8.4.4. Impoliteness to entertain the viewer

Another interesting question is: Why does the scriptwriter choose impoliteness as the main source of entertainment and why does the audience enjoy watching Scrubs? As I have already outlined in chapter 7.1., impoliteness has been a source of entertainment for a very long time. Things that deviate from the norm or are seen as inappropriate – in most cases conflict and disharmony – trigger interest in the viewer. Given his/her safe position as the observer, he/she can lean back and watch.

As already described in chapter 7.1., there are different kinds of pleasures we get from observing conflictive and/or aggressive behaviour. I would argue that the main pleasure the observer of Scrubs gets, is Aesthetic pleasure (Culpeper, 2011a: 234) – the pleasure we get from viewing the speaker's creative skills to attack the hearer, and these are numerous in Scrubs.

In the very first episode Dr Cox uses several creative lexical items to mock Carla: rhetorical question, implicature and euphemism.

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 1, Episode 1

1. Dr Cox: Carla, can I ask you a personal question? Do you spray the perfume on or just fill your bathtub up and splash around in it?
2. Carla: I smell nice.

His utterance is a mild version of saying “you wear so much perfume, you almost stink, I can’t bear it”. This verbal irony can be interpreted as parody—the mocking and making fun of somebody. As already mentioned in my detailed analysis of this extract in chapter 8.8.3. this example does not fall into the category of genuine impoliteness but mock impoliteness (Culpeper 2011: 207) or Dynel’s category of affiliative humour (2013: 112) because it involves
“playful/jocular/pretended aggression, as in friendly teasing”. Considering that there is a fine line between genuine and mock impoliteness, I have to stress that it is my background knowledge about their relationship and the context that allows for such an interpretation.

In the following two examples, which I have already analysed in chapter 8.3.2., Dr Cox definitely does not use impoliteness to tease the hearer but to attack his face. However, quite to the amusement of the viewer, he uses colourful language in doing so.

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2 episode 9:
1. **J.D.**: Hey, Dr Cox. I'm sorry, I was just so frustrated before. So, now, I'm here, why don't you go ahead and tell me what I forgot?
2. **Dr Cox**: [grinning excitedly] Can I? Really?
3. **J.D.**: Sure! Hit me.
4. **Dr Cox**: How about, go to hell, Shakira.
5. **J.D.**: What?!

Extract taken from Scrubs, Season 2, episode 5:
1. **Dr Perry Cox**: Listen closely, tiny dancer! I wouldn't be flapping my mouth if I'd forgotten to get a blood culture on Mr Blair. And, for the love of God, do you at least remember what you were doing the day they were passing out common sense? Oh gosh, maybe you were running late that day cos' you couldn't find the right thong for those low-rider jeans that you love so much; maybe you were busy bopping along to whatever boy band really makes your heart race nowadays and you just drove on by. Of course I don't know, I'm just guessing... But one thing's sure: you wounded up at the dumb-dumb store and just went ahead and put about as much of that in the car as you could fit... didn't you?
2. **J.D.**: Look, Doctor! If you flipped the page on that chart you'd see that I cultured him yesterday. But that would probably get in the way of the perverse pleasure you take in pointing out people's slip-ups! Well, too bad, Buster Brown, because I'm a resident now, [...] 

In the two examples, both Dr Cox and J.D. use popular culture allusions. As we already know, Dr Cox uses random girls’ names to address J.D. However in this example it is not a random name but a reference to the pop singer “Shakira” who, in her songs, mainly and primarily complains about how men treat her. In the second, example he uses the allusions “low rider jeans”, “boy band”, the
fashion and music style popular in the 1990s. Via implicature he wants to say that J.D. was wasting his time during a time when he should have become mature, and consequently this led to the result that he is ‘dumb’ now. J.D. responds in the same manner by referring to Cox as “Buster Brown” which, as already explained in 8.3.2. is a U.S. comic figure from the 1950s. The humorous effect in this scene is achieved because J.D. counters the face attack and is not viewed as miserable. Thus, the viewer does not pity him which is important because “to appreciate disparagement humour, an individual must at least display the attitude of supreme indifference to the victim and must not sympathise with the latter, at least not to an extent that would block the humorous effects” (Dynal 2013: 118).
9. Conclusion

One of the main aims of this thesis was to investigate the impoliteness strategies (Culpeper 1996) used by Dr Cox and Dr Kelso towards interns and nurses, and the reactions and responses of the latter to impoliteness imposed on them. It can be concluded that the use of impoliteness (whether by addressee or addressee) varies from character to character in terms of type of impoliteness and type of impoliteness strategy and is highly influenced by three main factors: power, social level, and social distance.

The results show that the impoliteness strategies Condescend, scorn or ridicule and Challenge (Culpeper 1996) are predominantly used by Dr Cox and Dr Kelso. This is not surprising, especially in the context of the hospital, which is characterised by unequal structural power relations, as both strategies involve the exercise of power. Impoliteness is used by them to patronise and show their inferior positions to interns and nurses. Hence, the results also confirm Culpeper’s claim (1996: 354) that the more powerful has more freedom to be impolite than the less powerful interlocutor. This is also evident in Dr Kelso’s behaviour, whose position in the hospital is based on coercive power (Culpeper 2011a). His legitimate, but also institutional power allows him to use Bald on record impoliteness—the most direct and clear way of expressing impoliteness (Culpeper 1996: 356).

Nonetheless, a change in the responses to impoliteness by interns is clearly recognisable during the course of the second season, when storyline and relationships progress and the interns, especially J.D., gain in expertise and power. At the beginning of the series, when J.D. just starts to work as an intern, he avoids responding to or ignores the impoliteness imposed on him by Dr Kelso and Dr Cox. However, after some time, i.e. after gaining experience and establishing himself and his role in the team, his behaviour changes. When faced with impoliteness on behalf of his boss(es), J.D. responds by using impoliteness himself; in other words, he uses his ‘newly’ gained expert and legitimate power to gain status. Also, the social proximity between Dr Cox and
J.D. changes, i.e. their relationship becomes closer, which allows J.D. to at least defend himself when ‘attacked’ and at a later stage, to even challenge impoliteness.

One of my research questions addressed the issue of whether impoliteness is purposefully used by the scriptwriter as a source of entertainment. From the insights mentioned, it can be argued that impoliteness in the comedy drama *Scrubs* is used as a tool to build the narrative and the characters (see Culpeper 1998; 2001). Confrontational situations are those in which the viewer learns about the characters’ identities and which are used to cause shifts and twists in the narrative, consequently pushing it forward. In addition, most of these confrontational dialogues are marked by witty, creative and colourful language in order to create comedy and entertain the viewer, in other words offering him/her a source of *aesthetic pleasure* (Culpeper 2001).

In general, it can be concluded that the impoliteness theories used are well suited for the analysis of the fictional discourse in *Scrubs*, even though some minor difficulties were faced. For instance, in some examples it is difficult to differentiate between *negative* and *positive impoliteness*, as some parts of the strategies are oriented towards both faces. Also the definition and explanation of *bald on record* impoliteness seems to be very loose, which is confirmed by the fact that each instance identified in the extracts in this thesis, also orients towards face. It would be helpful if more examples of this strategy in different contexts were added to the existing theory in order to make it more reliable and applicable.

Due to limitations of this study, non-linguistic features such as prosody, gesture and facial expressions could not be taken into account in the analysis. However, these could play a crucial role in the interpretation process, as facial expressions, such as a smile, play and important role in communication and could, thus, be necessary indicators of whether the impoliteness employed by the characters is actually *genuine* and not *mock* (i.e. *surface*) *impoliteness* (Culpeper 2011: 207). Although the exchanges used for the analysis in this thesis are straightforward, i.e. obviously negatively marked, extracts have been
encountered for which a transcript alone and no further knowledge about the series would not have been enough to provide for a valid interpretation of the conflictive conversations. In other words, if a fully valid interpretation of impoliteness in interaction were at all possible, it could hardly be achieved without taking non-linguistic features into consideration.

Nonetheless, I am confident that this thesis is a valuable contribution to impoliteness, especially because little research has been done on the connection between impoliteness and humour/entertainment although impolite behaviour is clearly one of the major sources of entertainment, whether in natural or fictional discourse. Also, this thesis deals with fictional dialogue, which seems to have gained interest in the recent past. As a matter of fact, it was only in 2013 that a whole chapter (“Impoliteness in Television Series and in Drama”) was devoted to fictional dialogue in the book Aspects of Linguistic Impoliteness (Jamet & Jobert 2013). In this book, popular series such as Dr House and Faulty Towers were used to study impoliteness. Hence, Impoliteness in the American TV series Scrubs can be seen as yet another contribution building on and adding to the growing literature on impoliteness.
10. References


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11. Apendix

11.1. Abstract

Although *impoliteness*, as compared to *politeness*, was neglected by linguists for decades, there has been an increased interest in conflictive dialogue since the late 1990s and early 2000s. One of the main aims of this thesis is to investigate the impoliteness strategies used by the characters Dr Cox and Dr Kelso in the TV series Scrubs by testing the applicability of Culpeper's (1996; 2005; 2001; 2011) and Bousfield's (2007; 2008) theories on selected dialogues from season 1 and season 2. For this analysis a qualitative-interpretive approach is used.

The results of the analysis show that the choice of strategies varies from one character to another in terms of type of impoliteness and type of impoliteness strategy and is highly influenced by three main factors: power, social level, and social distance. In other words, the more power and expertise a character has, the more freedom he/she has to be impolite.

The outcomes of this study further indicate that, as the relationships between the characters become closer over time, impoliteness is more often countered and challenged by the less powerful addressees than at the beginning of the series (season 1).

These findings lead to the conclusion that impoliteness was intentionally used by the scriptwriter of the series to develop the characters and consequently the story, while simultaneously providing comedy and entertainment to the audience, i.e. the viewers of the series.

11.2. Zusammenfassung

Im Rahmen der sprachwissenschaftlichen Höflichkeitstheorie lagen höfliche Akte im Fokus, bis allmählich in den späten 90er Jahren *Unhöflichkeit* in den

Die Ergebnisse der Analyse zeigen, dass die Auswahl der Strategien und die Art der *Unhöflichkeit* sehr variieren und von drei Faktoren maßgeblich beeinflusst werden: Macht, sozialer Status und soziale Distanz. Je mehr Macht und Expertise eine Person (in diesem Fall der Charakter in der Serie) besitzt, umso mehr Freiheit hat er/sie unhöflich zu sein. Die Forschungsergebnisse weisen auch darauf hin, dass je näher sich die Charaktere über den Zeitraum der ersten beiden Staffeln kommen, desto häufiger wird Unhöflichkeit seitens der Adressaten abgewehrt und/oder sogar gekontert, eine Entwicklung die sich erst in der zweiten Staffel herauskristallisiert.

Dies wiederum erlaubt die Schlussfolgerung, dass der Drehbuchautor *Unhöflichkeit* bewusst zur Charakterentwicklung einsetzt und die Handlung somit vorantreibt. Zeitgleich erzielt der Einsatz von *Unhöflichkeit* einen übergeordneten Effekt, nämlich Unterhaltung für den Zuseher.