

# *Am I politic?* (Im)politeness in Shakespeare's soliloquies

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## **Abstract**

This paper reports on a study of (im)politeness in soliloquies in Shakespeare's plays. I argue that classic theories of politeness such as Brown and Levinson (1987) cannot fully account for politeness phenomena in soliloquies. There is therefore a need for a model of self-politeness such as that proposed by Chen (2001) which can compensate for some of the deficiencies in the Brown and Levinson model. I apply Chen's model to soliloquies and provide examples of self-politeness output strategies. Shakespeare's characters use a variety of impolite and self-impolite forms in their self-talk, which I discuss using Culpeper's (2011) typology of conventionalised impolite formulae. I conclude that aspects of soliloquies can be described in terms of self-politeness; that the motive for soliloquy may be a threat to self-face as soliloquies often involve internal conflict; and that for Shakespeare impoliteness proved to be a particularly useful device in soliloquy.

**Keywords:** soliloquies, self-politeness, self-face, impoliteness

## **1. Introduction**

Linguistic politeness studies, which are broadly concerned with the linguistic forms that people use to maintain social harmony, or in the case of impoliteness, disrupt it, tend to centre on interaction between two or more participants. This paper considers how pragmatic notions of (im)politeness can inform what happens when there is no interaction between participants<sup>1</sup>, as is the case in Shakespearean soliloquies. The classic model of politeness is that of Brown and Levinson (1987), which is based on the ideas of *face*, acts which threaten *face*, together with general and specific linguistic strategies for redressing such *face-threatening acts*. As this model is probably the most

widely-discussed theory of politeness, and the basis for a model of self-politeness (Chen 2001), I will discuss it in greater detail in Section 2.

Since the 1990s, socio-cultural views of politeness have begun to emerge (e.g. Watts 2003), shifting attention away from abstract notions such as *face*, to emphasise the social context in which participants find themselves, and in particular, the social norms that pertain to the context and how participants construe them. Ide (1989) proposes the notion of *wakimae* (discernment) arguing that politeness involves not only how individuals choose to redress face threats, but how they work out their position in a linguistic community and how they behave according to the social norms. Watts (2003) draws a distinction between unmarked linguistic behaviour, which he refers to as *politic behaviour*, that is, behaviour which is deemed to be appropriate and therefore non-salient, and marked linguistic behaviour, which may be polite or impolite. I will return to the notion of *politic behaviour* in Section 4.

Impoliteness has been defined by Culpeper in the following terms: “Situating 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.” (Culpeper 2011: 23). In his (2011) study of impoliteness among British undergraduates, Culpeper was able to categorise reported types of conventionalised impoliteness formulae: insults, pointed criticisms/complaints, unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions, condescensions, message enforcers, dismissals, silencers, threats, curses and ill-wishes. The most frequent category, insults, fell into four groups:

1. personalised negative vocatives – e.g. you fucking moron
2. personalised negative assertions – e.g. you are so stupid
3. personalized negative references – e.g. your stinking mouth
4. personalized third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target) – e.g. the daft bimbo

(adapted from Culpeper, 2011: 135)

I shall return to these formulae in Section 6 and provide examples of their occurrence in soliloquies.

Of course, all such formulae are context-dependent. If I lock myself out of my house, I might say to myself ‘I’m a stupid idiot’, or if I pull a funny face and a friend says ‘You’re a stupid idiot’, I am unlikely to interpret the utterances as genuinely impolite, but rather as forms of *mock impoliteness*, in which the context negates the effect of the

impolite form. Of course the two examples differ in speaker intention, the former serving as a reprimand for forgetfulness, the latter as a form of *banter* (Leech 1983). As we will see in Section 6, examples of *mock impoliteness* and *banter* may also be found in soliloquies.

## 2 The Brown and Levinson model of politeness

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory arose out of Erving Goffman's notion of *face*, which he defined 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." (Goffman 1967: 5). We should note here Goffman's emphasis on the interdependent nature of face; one can be said to keep face when the image one has of oneself is consistent with the evidence conveyed by others, a point to which I shall return later. Brown and Levinson argue that politeness serves to save face and developed their theory of politeness accordingly. In short, *face* can be "damaged, maintained or enhanced through interaction with others" (Thomas 1995: 169).

Brown and Levinson's version of politeness theory is concerned with the way speakers use language to take account of others' feelings, which involves *positive face*, every person's *want* for her or his wants to be desirable to others and *negative face*, every person's desire to be free from imposition. According to Brown and Levinson, when a speaker performs a speech act that is not polite, it is a **face-threatening act (FTA)**. For example, if I make a request like 'Can I borrow your Complete Works of Shakespeare?', I am performing a **negative FTA**, whereas if I make a criticism like 'You still haven't given me your Complete Works of Shakespeare', I am performing a **positive FTA**. The theory posits 5 basic politeness strategies that a speaker may employ. These are ranked (1) to (5) indicating lesser to greater estimated loss of face; thus, a speaker has the options indicated in Figure 1.

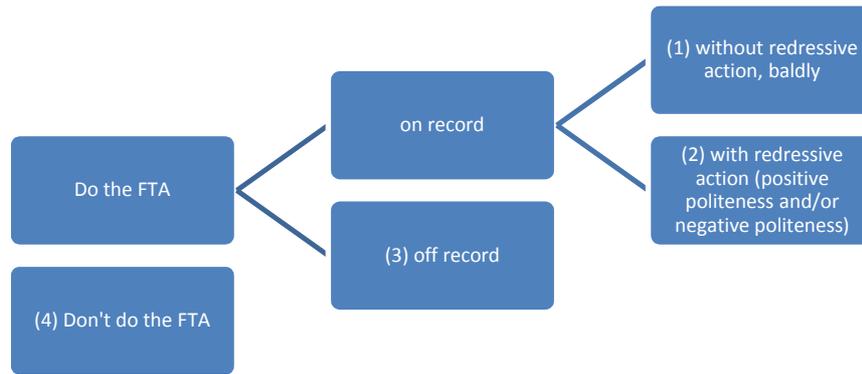


Figure 1 Politeness strategies ordered according to estimated risk to face (Brown and Gilman 1989, after Brown and Levinson 1987).

The strategies they propose and the calculation they offer for determining the weightiness of an FTA is as follows:

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

where:

$W_x$  is the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA  $x$ ,  $D(S,H)$  is the value that measures the social distance between  $S$  and  $H$ ,  $P(H,S)$  is a measure of the power that  $H$  has over  $S$ , and  $R_x$  is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA  $x$  is rated an imposition in that culture.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 76)

### 3 Criticisms of Brown and Levinson

A significant drawback of Brown and Levinson's model has to do with the notion of *face*, which they claim is derived from Goffman and the English folk term (in the sense of losing face), but which in fact they describe as 'basic wants' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). This emphasis on 'wants' has been criticised for being too individualistic, since Goffman stresses that maintenance of face is a two-way process in which there is

an interdependent relationship between a speaker's individual wants and what she can claim for herself on the basis of how she is seen by others.

A further criticism concerns Brown and Levinson's distinction between positive and negative politeness, which may often prove complex and hard to delimit; if you say to me 'Would you mind not whistling?' you damage my negative face by imposition, and simultaneously signal that you do not appreciate my musical efforts, thus damaging my positive face (desire to be approved of). Figure 1 above allows for the mixing of positive and negative politeness, or at least does not make an obvious separation between them, whereas Brown and Levinson insist on greater separation. Most researchers now recognize they can be mixed (e.g. Craig et al 1986). You also risk losing face yourself, should I chose to ignore you, an act which threatens your **self-face**, a concept which I shall discuss in the next paragraph. An additional criticism that is often levelled at Brown and Levinson's theory is that it only describes face-threatening acts and consequent redressive facework, but fails to mention either face-enhancing acts, such as "You look nice today!", or face-attacks in the form of threats, insults or other impolite behaviour, a point to which I shall return in Section 5.

As regards Brown and Levinson's formula for determining the weightiness of a FTA, it is very much other-oriented. It may accurately predict that the greater the social distance and power the hearer has over the speaker, and the greater the imposition made by the speaker, the more redressive action the speaker will take to minimize the FTA. However, being other-oriented, the formula can not predict a corresponding weightiness for threats to self-face. As we have seen in the previous paragraph, Brown and Levinson classify an apology as such a threat, yet according to the formula, if I burp in the presence of the Queen, I might withhold an apology, rather than admit to an embarrassing blunder.

#### **4 Politeness theory and soliloquies**

Brown and Gilman (1989) argue, with regard to Shakespeare's plays, that what they call 'psychological soliloquies' (1989: 159) offer access to innermost thoughts and therefore provide a suitable source of information for testing politeness theory in contrast to dyadic discourse. While strategies (1) to (3) (see Figure 1 above) presuppose the presence of another speaker, the second element of the dyad, soliloquies, can provide

perfect examples of strategy (4), not performing the FTA because the potential risk of loss of face is too great. But how is it possible to know when something is not said? This is where Brown and Gilman turn to the ‘psychological soliloquies’ in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* (1989: 169). These soliloquies, they argue, are expressions of what a character is thinking and so provide excellent examples of speakers who have deliberately decided not to perform a face-threatening act. They give the following example from *Hamlet*: in Act I, Claudius and Gertrude ask Hamlet why he is still brooding over his father’s death. Hamlet’s answers are sullen and ironic, and he even suggests that his outward garb does not express his true feelings:

But I have that within which passeth show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

*Hamlet* I.ii

The true depth of his feeling is expressed in the subsequent soliloquy:

O, most wicked speed, to post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue<sup>2</sup>.

*Hamlet* I.ii

This, Brown and Gilman argue, is an example of strategy (4): not doing the FTA. However, it would be unwise to extrapolate this notion to all soliloquies and asides, as what they fail to account for is the variety of discourse that may occur within soliloquies. While a soliloquy may not represent dyadic discourse in the most evident sense of two speakers speaking to each other, dyadic relationships may occur within soliloquies in which, for example, a speaker berates herself, as does Julia in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when she chastises herself for having torn up a love letter from Proteus:

O hateful hands, to tear such loving words!

*Two Gentlemen of Verona* I.ii

Using an apostrophe, Julia insults her own hands, and through a process of metonymy, herself, because her hands only act under instruction from her brain. This appears to be much closer to a type (1) FTA. Why might this be so? One possible explanation is that

when we talk to ourselves, we converse dyadically with ourselves, or in Julia's case, part of herself, as if we were in conversation with another person.

In an important footnote to Brown and Gilman's article, they note that Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness owes much to Erving Goffman's (1956) ideas on *deference* and *demeanor*. In particular, Hymes (1983) criticises the fact that Goffman's *demeanor* is absent from Brown and Levinson's theory. For an individual, *demeanor* refers to "behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress, and bearing, which serves to express to those in his [sic] immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities.[...] and that he who fails to demean himself properly may be accused of having "no self-respect" or of holding himself too cheaply in his own eyes." (Goffman 1956: 489). The concept of *demeanor*, defined by the *OED* as 'manner of comporting oneself outwardly or towards others; bearing, (outward) behaviour'<sup>3</sup>, may be useful when discussing social norms of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Bax (2010) points out, in the late Middle Ages, there was a 'heavy preoccupation, especially among members of the noble warrior caste, with honour and its protection' (Bax 2010: 72). Quoting the cultural historian Rabb (2006), Bax notes how martial values began to be replaced by values such as 'refinement, courtly skills, fine manners, wit' (2010: 73). This justifies why we need a model of politeness which places greater emphasis on the self. In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus' contrasts himself with his friend Valentine:

He after honour hunts, I after love

*Two Gentlemen of Verona I.i*

Both are Renaissance gentlemen in pursuit of a prey; Valentine's 'honour' is *To see the wonders of the world* (I.i), while Proteus is hunting for love. Both are self-absorbed and very much concerned by how their pursuits enrich or demean them as gentlemen:

He leaves his friends to dignify them more;  
I leave myself, my friends and all, for love.  
Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphosed me,  
Made me neglect my studies, lose my time

*Two Gentlemen of Verona I.i*

Valentine leaves his friends to *dignify* them, in other words to bring honour to them by improving his own reputation, a sort of self-improvement so that his friends can name-drop. Proteus, by contrast, has to *leave*, or neglect himself in pursuit of love.

In this respect, I find it useful to revisit Watts' (2003) important concept of *politic behaviour*, which I mentioned in Section 1. Watts describes *politic behaviour* as:

a conscious choice of linguistic forms which, in accordance with the dictates of the time and fashion, are conventionally understood to be an attempt on the part of the *ego* to enhance her/his standing with respect to *alter* – for whatever reason. [...] its functions may easily be non-altruistic and certainly egocentric.

(2005: 69).

Petruchio's soliloquy beginning:

Thus have I politicly begun my reign

*The Taming of the Shrew* IV.i

would seem to fit in with Watts' definition very neatly. Petruchio asserts that his behaviour is *politic* or appropriate to the norms of the time. The use of the word *reign* is interesting; DusiBerre contends that in Shakespeare's time "the household was the microcosm of the State, and women's subjection a happy paradigm of civil order." (DusiBerre 1975: 79). In his soliloquy, Petruchio considers himself not only 'king', but goes on to liken his methods of taming Katherine to another kingly pursuit, falconry.

In light of this, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness appears very much to be a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an era of romanticism, political and economic liberalism, human and civil rights, the decline of totalitarianism, and so on. Broadly speaking, contemporary societies legislate for and generally promote an increasing concern for respect and consideration of others, behaviour consonant with a theory of Brown and Levinson's other-oriented politeness. As such, it seems an inadequate framework for describing sixteenth and seventeenth century soliloquies.

## **5 A model of self-politeness**

I have shown then how Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is very much concerned with saving the face of others, and although Brown and Levinson include the

notion of speakers' needs to save self-face, they do not fully account for it. Brown and Gilman's application of Brown and Levinson's theory to Shakespearean tragedy provides a useful starting point, but similarly, is largely concerned with an other-oriented view of politeness. What needs to be done is to extend politeness theory to account more precisely for what occurs in the case of soliloquies.

Chen (2001) goes some way towards this in making a proposal for what he calls *self-politeness* (Chen 2001: 88). He argues that the fact that speakers need to save their own face inevitably affects their linguistic behaviour and that a speaker's *self-face* is as vulnerable as a hearer's *other-face* (Chen 2001: 89). In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio has just delivered a ring from Olivia to Viola (disguised as Cesario), which Olivia claims Cesario had given to her. Viola, unsure of what to make of Olivia's gesture, says:

I left no ring with her: what means this lady?  
Fortune forbid my outside have not charmed her!

*Twelfth Night* II.ii

Self-face and other-face are particularly ironic concepts in the context of this play, because as a speaker, Viola's self-face is that of a woman, but as a hearer, her other-face is that of a man. She thus feels that her self-face is under threat, as the delivery of the ring appears to be a FTA, and importunes Fortune to come to her rescue. The issue of self-face, other-face and gender is pertinent to other cases of female characters disguised as men: Julia as Sebastian (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*), Portia as Balthasar, and Nerissa as 'his' clerk (*The Merchant of Venice*), Rosalind as Ganymede (*As You Like It*) and Imogen as Fidele (*Cymbeline*).<sup>4</sup>

In Chen's view, neither Leech's nor Brown and Levinson's theories of politeness pay adequate attention to the notion of self-politeness, for which he proposes a model within Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory.

### **5.1 Self-politeness superstrategies**

Central to Chen's model of self-politeness is the notion of *self-face threatening acts* (SFTAs) and strategies that speakers need to perform to mitigate the threat these SFTAs pose to the speaker's face. His model of self-politeness is very similar to Brown and Levinson's in that he proposes four superstrategies that a speaker may adopt:

1. Baldly
2. With redress
3. Off record
4. Withhold the SFTA

(Chen 2001: 96)

Chen's model differs from Brown and Levinson's, and is similar to Brown and Gilman's, in that it does not include a distinction between positive and negative politeness. He argues that this is so for two reasons: firstly, because speakers have no choice as to whether they employ positive or negative politeness superstrategies, and secondly, the other superstrategies may require positive and negative politeness. Let us take as an example Isabella's situation in *Measure for Measure*. Claudio, her brother, is to be executed for getting his betrothed pregnant. Angelo, the Duke's corrupt deputy, captivated by Isabella's beauty and virtue, has offered to spare Claudio's life, providing that she agrees to sleep with him. Angelo's status and reputation protect him from any attempt by Isabella to publicly accuse him – *my false outweighs your true* (*Measure for Measure* II.iv.). Isabella reflects on her situation in soliloquy:

To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,  
Who would believe me?

*Measure for Measure* II.iv

Her negative face is threatened by two kinds of imposition: her lack of free choice and the threat of rape. Her positive face is threatened on two counts: her chances of saving her brother's life and therefore being a good sister are diminished, and her desire to reveal the truth about Angelo's bribery has no chance of prospering and thus her image as an honest truth-teller is threatened.

In Chen's model, the choice of superstrategy depends on:

1. The degree to which self-face is threatened by other, which depends on
  - A: The confrontationality of the communicative event
  - B: The gravity of threat of the FTA by other, which is the sum of
    - a: The severity of the FTA
    - b: The directness of the FTA
2. The degree to which self-face is threatened by the SFTA, which depends on
  - A: The severity of the SFTA
  - B: The consequence of the SFTA

(Chen 2001: 96)

In broad terms, factor 1 encompasses those situations in which another participant has previously performed an act which threatens the self-face of the speaker. Angelo's directive *Redeem thy brother / By yielding up thy body to my will* (*Measure for Measure*, II.iv) is such an act. Factor 2 makes reference to the act that the speaker has to perform in response. In this case, Isabella could accede to or refuse Angelo's demand, both courses of action which threaten her self-face. It is not surprising then that she withholds the SFTA until after Angelo has exited. However, she quickly comes to the conclusion that it is better to refuse. The nature of the circumstances in which Shakespeare's characters find themselves may require withholding the SFTAs in dialogue, for it to be subsequently expressed in soliloquies. In Isabella's case, the options open to her all involve immense loss of self-face in terms of confrontationality, gravity and degree, yet at this stage in the play, she judges loss of virtue to be more damaging to self-face than loss of a brother:

Then, Isabel, live chaste, and, brother, die.

More than our brother is our chastity.

*Measure for Measure* II.iv

It is important to make a distinction here between *actual* and *potential* loss of self-face, as in the absence of others, what soliloquiesers are often engaged in is not so much linguistically realized SFTAs, but hypothesized potential for SFTAs. Isabella has to deal with both actual and potential loss of self-face. She actually loses self-face by having to plead for a brother whose 'vice' she admits that she abhors. Her self-face is potentially threatened by Angelo because if she sleeps with him, she is no longer virtuous, yet if she does not sleep with him, she fails in her duty as a sister to save her brother's life. Furthermore, she potentially faces loss of self-face if she denounces Angelo, because she will lose her reputation.

## **5.2 Output strategies**

I will now turn my attention to the application of Chen's output strategies in an attempt to highlight particular self-politeness strategies in operation in soliloquies.

### **Baldly**

When the speaker estimates the loss of self-face to be low, a statement may be made baldly, often with an imperative. Consider the above-mentioned example from *Measure for Measure*:

Then, **Isabel, live** chaste, and, **brother, die**

*Measure for Measure* II.iv

In Isabel's mind, the event is non-confrontational and so the threat to her self-face is low. This accounts for her use of imperative forms.

### **With redress**

Alternatively, the speaker may feel that self-face is threatened and therefore redressive action needs to be taken to mitigate this loss. Chen lists nine ways in which this may be achieved:

1. Justify
2. Contradict
3. Hedge
4. Impersonalize
5. Use humour
6. Be confident
7. Be modest
8. Hesitate
9. Attach conditions

(Chen 2001: 99)

Below, I present some representative examples of Chen's redressive actions in soliloquies with the linguistic form used to achieve the redress in bold, and a brief commentary in each case.

**Justify.** Alone with the sleeping Desdemona, Othello mitigates the murder his own wife by presenting it as unavoidable, and necessary to prevent further infidelity:

Yet she must die, **else** she'll betray more men.

*Othello* V.ii

It is interesting to note that this excuse or explanation is forward-looking and precedes the actual SFTA.

**Contradict.** Admit and deny a fault in an attempt to justify oneself. In *Richard III*, on the eve of battle, Richard awakes having been confronted by the ghosts of all those he has murdered in a dream.

I am a villain: **yet** I lie, I am not.

*Richard III* V.iii

Richard has murdered many people, which in anyone's eyes, including his own, makes him a villain, hence the self-accusation. Yet, after a short pause (indicated by the colon), he refutes the accusation but does not attempt to justify himself, except to say that he should speak well of himself. This leads to a realisation that, however his conscience speaks to him, he ends up as a villain. The cumulative effect is to present a picture of a desperate and deranged tyrant.

**Impersonalize.** A well-known example of this occurs as Macbeth soliloquizes prior to murdering Duncan:

If **it were** done when '**tis** done, then '**twere** well  
**It were** done quickly

*Macbeth* I.vii

He uses the third-person singular pronoun *it* and a second conditional form (suggesting remote hypothesis) in the passive voice to distance himself from the crime he is about to commit and perhaps temporarily delude himself into believing that he is not the agent, thus minimizing the SFTA.

**Be confident.** In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio, reads a love letter supposedly from his mistress Olivia (but actually a practical joke composed by Maria, Olivia's gentlewoman, to prick Malvolio's pride, and humour Sir Toby and Sir Andrew). Believing that his mistress is in love with him, Malvolio confidently expresses his resolve in the face of the challenge to his authority posed by Sir Toby and his friends, who have recently insulted and made fun of him:

**I will** be proud, **I will** read politic  
authors, **I will** baffle Sir Toby

*Twelfth Night* II.v

Again, we note the use of the word *politic*, discussed in Section 5.3.2. Malvolio is very much concerned with reading the works of those authors who represent the norms of the time. Watt's (2005: 69) comment on the 'non-altruistic and certainly egocentric' functions of such linguistic behaviour seem particularly apt in Malvolio's case.

**Be modest.** As well as expressing confidence, Malvolio is presented as a character very much concerned with outward appearances. This can lead to a certain kind of modesty:

I have limed her; **but** it is Jove's doing.

*Twelfth Night* III.iv

Malvolio believes, erroneously, that he is responsible for making Olivia supposedly fall in love with him ('limed' refers to the practice of putting lime on trees to catch birds). But in an afterthought, he realises that such immodesty might threaten his gentlemanly self-face and lessens the threat by hastily attributing his good fortune to God.

**Hesitate.** Expressions of hesitation are characteristic of soliloquies, no more so than in *Hamlet* when Claudius attempts to pray for forgiveness for his crimes:

I stand **in pause** where I shall first begin

*Hamlet* III.iii

The potential threat to Claudius' self-face could not be greater: eternal damnation.

## **6 Impoliteness in soliloquies**

There have been a number of studies of impoliteness in Shakespearean drama to date, each describing how the speaker's impoliteness is calculated to have an effect in interaction with other characters. Culpeper (1996) describes how in *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth repeatedly uses an impoliteness strategy to attack her husband's face by suggesting that he is less than a man. Rudanko (2006) focuses on an episode from *Timon of Athens* in which Timon employs a particular kind of extreme impoliteness which Rudanko terms 'aggravated impoliteness' or 'nastiness', as a response to the Athenians' request that he should return to Athens. In a study based on *Henry IV, Part 1*, Bousfield (2007) analyses the way in which Prince Hal uses impoliteness under the guise of *banter* to signal a shift towards a stronger, more independent character than the wayward carousing character he had previously seemed to be. All of these studies focus on impoliteness in interactional contexts. To the best of my knowledge, there are no previous studies which focus on examples of impoliteness purely in relation to soliloquies.

## 6.1 Conventionalised impoliteness formulae

In Section 1, I outlined Culpeper's typology of conventionalised impolite formulae, which is based on a contemporary dataset. It is not difficult to find similar examples in Shakespeare's soliloquies (linguistic markers are highlighted in bold):

### Attack on other-face (human & abstract targets)

#### Personalised negative vocatives

O <b>thou</b> dull god, why liest <b>thou</b> with the vile	<i>Henry IV 2</i>
<b>thou</b> gaudy gold ... <b>thou</b> pale and common drudge	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>
<b>Thou</b> detestable maw, <b>thou</b> womb of death	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<b>Thou</b> disease of a friend	<i>Timon of Athens</i>

#### Personalised negative assertions

Disguise, I see, <b>thou art</b> a wickedness	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
<b>you are</b> a shallow cowardly hind, and <b>you lie</b> .	<i>Henry IV 1</i>
A vengeance on <b>your</b> crafty withered hide!	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>

#### Pointed criticism

<b>What a</b> damned Epicurean rascal <b>is this!</b>	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
<b>What a</b> lack-brain <b>is this!</b>	<i>Henry IV 1</i>
Ha, ha, <b>what a</b> fool Honesty <b>is!</b>	<i>Winter's Tale</i>

#### Negative expressives (curses, ill-wishes)

<b>Hie thee</b> to hell	<i>Richard III</i>
Matrons, <b>turn</b> incontinent!	<i>Timon of Athens</i>

### Attack on self-face

#### Personalised negative vocatives

<b>Fool</b> , of thyself speak well: <b>fool</b> , do not flatter.	<i>Richard III</i>
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#### Personalised negative assertions

<b>I am</b> pigeon-liver'd	
O, <b>what a</b> rogue and peasant slave <b>am I!</b>	
Why, <b>what an</b> ass <b>am I!</b>	
Yet <b>I</b> , / A dull and muddy-mettled rascal	<i>Hamlet</i>

#### Mock self-impoliteness (banter)

Well, I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from my two mistresses: <b>what a beast am I</b> to slack it! <sup>5</sup>	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
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## Swearing and oaths

'**Sblood!** it was time to counterfeit

*Henry IV 1*

'**Sfoot!** I should have been that I am

*King Lear*

**Swounds,** I should take it

*Hamlet*

Insults, especially in the forms of personalized negative vocatives and personalized negative assertions, would seem to be common, particularly the former, probably due to the fact that insulting someone or something is an effective way of heightening dramatic tension. One of the motives for testing Culpeper's (2011) typology on soliloquies is to investigate an area which Culpeper points to as being under-researched, namely the diachronic dimension of impoliteness. It is worth noting, for example, that the following categories in Culpeper's typology do not occur at all: unpalatable questions and/or presupposition (e.g. 'what's gone wrong now'), condescensions (e.g. 'that's being childish'), message enforcers (e.g. 'listen here'), dismissals (e.g. 'go away'), silencers (e.g. 'shut up') and threats (e.g. 'I'm gonna beat you up if you don't...'). Their absence could reflect diachronic variation, though a more valid explanation may be that it stems from the more interactional nature of these typologies, hence making them inappropriate devices for soliloquies.

## Conclusions

In this paper, I have discussed different approaches to linguistic (im)politeness, particularly Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, based on the ideas of *face* and linguistic strategies for redressing *face-threatening acts*. I argued that this model, with its other-oriented emphasis, can not fully account for what happens in soliloquies. What is required is a theory which can account for the vulnerability of a soliloquiser's own *face* and the need to protect it. With this in mind, I applied Chen's (2001) model of self-politeness and explored the notion of *self-face threatening acts* (SFTAs) and the redressive strategies that soliloquisers use to mitigate threats to self-face.

It may be that in soliloquies, dramatic characters are particularly concerned with self-politeness as the motive for the soliloquies may well imply a threat to self-face. Culpeper (2001) discusses how Shakespeare used the soliloquy as a device for adding depth to character by allowing the playwright to distinguish between a character's

public and private personae. He illustrates his point by comparing how Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* experiences a clash between her public self-presentation as a moral and virtuous maid, and her private self-awareness that her lover, Proteus, has sent her a letter:

How angrily I taught my brow to frown,  
When inward joy enforced my heart to smile!

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* I.ii

The conflict between public and private personae in soliloquies not only adds psychological depth, but, as Culpeper shows, helps drive the plot forward as the character tries to reconcile the two. This is important because it is through soliloquies that characters work out who they are, where they stand in relation to the events of the play and how they intend to act on the basis of the current state of knowledge.

It is clear that impoliteness proved to be a useful device for the dramatist. There may be a number of reasons for this. First, an attack on self-face creates a conflict requiring resolution, and hence furthers character and plot. It is also an effective means of communicating both depth of emotion, thus adding verisimilitude, and adding dimension to the character. Thirdly, just as an attack on self-face may signal a sense of impotence, an attack on an abstract ‘target’ may perform the same function.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> While there is no direct interaction between characters in soliloquies, it may be argued that there is interaction of a kind between character and reader/audience, and between playwright and reader/audience (see Murphy, 2014).

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<sup>2</sup> Hamlet says *hold my tongue*, which clearly implies that his soliloquy represented actual speech, in line with theatrical conventions of the time (Hirsh 2003), and not thought, as Brown and Gilman argue.

<sup>3</sup> "demeanour, n." *OED Online*. June 2015. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/49617?redirectedFrom=demeanour> (accessed August 16, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Not forgetting, of course that all female roles were played by boy actors.

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note the similarities and differences between Hamlet's *What an ass am I* and Mistress Quickly's *What a beast am I*. Both are forms of self-impoliteness, and coercive in function, but whereas the latter is a form of banter, the former is more serious in admonition, the speaker perhaps believing the assertion to be at least partially true, not that he believes himself to be an ass, but that he does have a characteristic traditionally ascribed to an ass, namely, stupidity.