

RESEARCH ARTICLE**NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND POWER THROUGH ANGER: A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF JAVANESE MINORITY VOICES IN DIGITAL INTERACTION****R. Kunjana Rahardi¹, Wahyudi Rahmat²**¹Universitas Sanata Dharma, Sleman Regency, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia²Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, Padang, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia**Article History**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how anger functions as a communicative strategy for negotiating identity, power, and social hierarchy within the context of Javanese interaction, particularly among speakers who represent a cultural minority within Indonesia's broader linguistic landscape. Moving beyond universalist interpretations of anger as purely an emotional outburst, this study conceptualizes anger as a culturally situated and socially meaningful act. Using a socio-pragmatic framework grounded in Goffman's face theory and Brown and Levinson's politeness model, the study qualitatively analyzes naturally occurring expressions of anger collected from Javanese digital discourse. The analysis reveals that anger is not merely an antisocial or impolite act but a pragmatic performance that affirms self-worth, challenges authority, and restores disrupted social balance. Five dominant identity functions of anger emerge: self-assertion, defense of dignity, moral correction, contestation of disrespect, and negotiation of masculinity. These functions highlight how anger, while face-threatening, becomes a resource for identity positioning and community solidarity within Javanese cultural logic. Furthermore, digital environments allow speakers to reframe traditional norms of emotional restraint, reflecting a generational shift in how minority identities express moral and social legitimacy. The study contributes to understanding the intersection between culture, emotion, and discourse by revealing how anger articulates both vulnerability and empowerment within culturally embedded communicative systems.

Introduction

In any speech community, the expression and management of emotions are deeply embedded in cultural norms and communicative practices. Among these emotions, anger occupies a unique position due to its potential to disrupt social harmony and challenge established power relations. While overt expressions of anger may be accepted or even encouraged in some cultures as a form of assertiveness or honesty, other cultural systems place a premium on restraint, indirectness, and maintaining interpersonal harmony (Irawanto et al., 2011; Sukarno, 2015). The Javanese culture, rooted in a long history of hierarchical social structures and collectivist values, exemplifies the latter. This paper aims to examine how anger is culturally embedded and pragmatically managed in Javanese interactions, focusing on the ways it is expressed, mitigated, or concealed in everyday communication. The socio-pragmatic perspective offers a particularly suitable framework for examining the expression of anger in Javanese interaction. Socio-pragmatics, a branch of pragmatics, examines how social norms, cultural values, and contextual factors influence language use (Amuzu, 2012; Compernelle, 2018). It allows for an analysis of speech acts not merely as linguistic forms but as socially situated actions. Through this lens, expressions of anger are not merely emotional outbursts but strategic acts governed by socio-cultural expectations and interpersonal considerations. In the Javanese context, speech serves not only as a vehicle for conveying emotion but also as a tool for maintaining social harmony and relational balance.

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Key to understanding the Javanese communicative ethos are indigenous cultural concepts such as *rukun* (social harmony), *tepo seliro* (empathy or putting oneself in another's position), and *ewuh pakewuh* (a sense of social unease or reluctance to impose). These values encourage indirectness and self-restraint, particularly in potentially face-threatening situations, such as expressing anger. Instead of confrontation, Javanese speakers may opt for strategies such as silence, ambiguous expressions, sarcasm, or euphemisms (Herliana, 2015; Pinem & Nasution, 2019; Sukarno, 2015). These communicative choices serve not only to manage the speaker's emotional state but also to maintain social equilibrium and avoid disharmony.

Further complicating this dynamic is the Javanese speech level system, which includes *ngoko* (informal), *krama* (polite), and *krama inggil* (highly refined). These levels are not only linguistic forms but also carry social meanings, reflecting the speaker's assessment of power relations, age, and social status. In situations involving anger, the choice of speech level becomes a strategic act: downgrading to *ngoko* can signal discontent or challenge hierarchy, while maintaining *krama* may indicate an effort to uphold decorum despite internal agitation. Thus, anger expression is often modulated through these socio-linguistic channels (Bryan et al., 2023; Larsson et al., 2024). The need to manage anger delicately is especially pronounced in hierarchical relationships, such as those between subordinates and superiors, younger and older individuals, or lower and higher social ranks. In such contexts, the overt expression of anger risks being perceived as insubordinate or disrespectful. This often results in suppressed or disguised anger, which is communicated through nonverbal cues, indirect complaints, or stylized language. Gender also plays a role, as societal expectations often discourage women from openly expressing anger, pushing them toward even more indirect strategies (Contreras et al., 2021; Yun & Jung, 2022).

Despite the rich cultural and linguistic mechanisms for managing anger in Javanese society, relatively few studies have focused specifically on this emotion within a socio-pragmatic framework. Previous research has largely emphasized politeness strategies, speech level use, or conflict avoidance, without isolating anger as a focal point of analysis. This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring how anger is linguistically encoded and pragmatically navigated in Javanese interactions (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2021; Izadi, 2016). It examines how cultural imperatives interact with linguistic choices to produce context-sensitive, socially acceptable expressions of negative affect. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative methodology, drawing from naturally occurring conversations, semi-structured interviews, and contextual discourse analysis. The data encompass a range of social situations and participant roles, facilitating a nuanced understanding of how anger is expressed across various social contexts. Special attention is given to the role of power asymmetry, social norms, and cultural scripts in shaping the pragmatics of anger. Through this approach, the research contributes to both the theoretical development of socio-pragmatics and the empirical understanding of emotional discourse in non-Western contexts.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of culturally grounded perspectives in pragmatics and discourse analysis. By examining how anger, an often stigmatized emotion in Javanese culture, is embedded, mitigated, and expressed, the research highlights the intricate interplay between language, emotion, and culture. It reveals that far from being a mere emotional reaction, anger in Javanese interaction is a socially and pragmatically regulated phenomenon, one that reflects broader cultural values and communicative ideologies. The expression of emotion, particularly anger, is not a universal act but one that is mediated through socio-cultural and linguistic norms. The socio-pragmatic approach offers a robust analytical lens for understanding how such expressions are shaped by both context and culture. As a subfield of pragmatics, socio-pragmatics examines how social variables such as status, power, gender, and cultural values influence language use. It goes beyond structural or semantic analysis to investigate how speech acts are performed, interpreted, and negotiated in social interaction. In the context of Javanese communication, where interpersonal harmony and social hierarchy are highly valued, socio-pragmatics provides an apt framework for uncovering subtle and culturally embedded strategies used to express or suppress anger (Ulrikayanti, 2022; Zahnitko & Krasnobayeva-Chorna, 2020).

One of the foundational theories within socio-pragmatics is Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), which posits that speakers design their utterances in ways that manage the "face" of both themselves and their interlocutors. Face, in this context, refers to an individual's self-image or desire for respect and autonomy within interaction. Brown and Levinson distinguish between positive face (the desire to be liked

and approved of) and negative face (the desire to be unimpeded or autonomous). Anger, by its very nature, is a face-threatening act (FTA), particularly when directed at another individual (Gregersen et al., 2023; Zahnitko & Krasnobayeva-Chorna, 2020; Zhang et al., 2024). In cultures like the Javanese, where maintaining harmony and minimizing confrontation are core values, the expression of anger is often heavily mitigated through various politeness strategies to reduce its potential threat to face.

Closely tied to politeness theory is Goffman's (1967) concept of face and interaction order, which underlines the ritualistic nature of everyday communication. According to Goffman, social interaction is governed by norms that regulate the presentation of self, the management of impressions, and the maintenance of social order. In Javanese interaction, these rituals are reflected in the strategic use of language, gesture, and silence to manage emotional displays. Anger, when expressed, must align with these ritual expectations or risk causing *malu* (shame) or social disruption. Thus, from a Goffmanian perspective, expressions of anger in Javanese communication can be understood as performances that are delicately staged to navigate interpersonal relationships and social hierarchies (Goffman, 2016).

These cultural scripts function as socio-pragmatic filters through which anger is modulated. Speakers may employ strategies such as indirectness, metaphorical language, or even silence to express displeasure without violating the cultural norm of harmony (Marchiori & Latora, 2000; Wenjuan, 2017). These strategies reflect a culturally specific form of emotional pragmatics, in which emotion is not only experienced but also performed in socially acceptable ways. The use of speech levels in Javanese, including *ngoko*, *krama*, and *krama inggil*, adds another layer of complexity to the expression of anger. These levels are not merely stylistic variations but serve as markers of respect, intimacy, and hierarchy. A shift from *krama* to *ngoko* can signal emotional intensity or assertiveness, often interpreted as impoliteness or disrespect when used in inappropriate contexts. Conversely, maintaining *krama* even in moments of frustration may reflect a deliberate effort to contain anger and preserve social order (Nikšić Rebihić & Smajović, 2021; Rahardi, 2023; Wuryandari & Rahardi, 2020). Thus, the manipulation of speech levels constitutes a socio-pragmatic strategy that allows speakers to encode anger while still conforming to culturally prescribed norms of interaction.

Beyond politeness and face management, recent developments in the pragmatics of emotion offer additional insights into how feelings like anger are linguistically constructed and socially regulated. Scholars such as Pavlenko (2005) and Goddard & Wierzbicka (2014) argue that emotions are not universal entities but are conceptualized, expressed, and experienced differently across languages and cultures (Kellogg, 2022; Langlotz & Locher, 2013). In this view, anger in Javanese is not just an internal state but a socially constructed act mediated by culturally specific norms of expression. The socio-pragmatic analysis of emotion thus foregrounds the role of language in shaping how anger is perceived, performed, and interpreted within a given cultural community.

Moreover, the notion of emotional restraint is deeply ingrained in high-context cultures, such as those in Java, where communication often relies on shared background knowledge, implicit meanings, and indirect cues. Hall's (1976) theory of high-context versus low-context communication is instructive in this context (Abdulrahman Almurashi, 2016; Bloor, 2004). In high-context settings, emotional expression is rarely direct, and understanding often hinges on contextual knowledge. Consequently, anger in Javanese is frequently conveyed through subtle semiotic resources, such as intonation, silence, gesture, or contextually marked expressions—rather than overt verbal aggression. This contrasts sharply with low-context cultures, where directness is often valued, and anger may be explicitly verbalized.

Importantly, power dynamics also play a crucial role in shaping the pragmatic expression of anger. As observed by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), power and solidarity interact in complex ways in discourse, influencing the extent to which individuals feel entitled or constrained in expressing negative affect (Holmes & Marra, 2002; Science et al., 2017). In Javanese society, where respect for hierarchy is deeply institutionalized, expressions of anger must be calibrated according to the relative status of interlocutors. A subordinate, for instance, may resort to indirect complaints or coded language to express dissatisfaction to a superior. In contrast, superiors may exhibit anger more freely, though still within the bounds of politeness and decorum. Thus, expressions of anger are mediated by both vertical (power) and horizontal (solidarity) dimensions of social interaction (Helmon & Rahardi, 2020).

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives—socio-pragmatics, politeness theory, face theory, emotional pragmatics, speech level dynamics, and cultural scripts—provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the expression of anger in Javanese interaction. They highlight how anger is not simply a psychological phenomenon but a culturally regulated communicative act, shaped by social norms, linguistic resources, and interactional goals (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2021; Izadi, 2016; Johansson, 2016). This study, by situating anger within this multifaceted theoretical landscape, seeks to illuminate the culturally embedded pragmatics of emotion in Javanese discourse and to contribute to broader cross-cultural understandings of emotional expression.

Materials and Methods

This research meticulously investigates the expression and management of anger within Javanese digital communication, leveraging a qualitative discourse analysis approach situated firmly within a socio-pragmatic framework. The inherent choice of a qualitative paradigm was strategic, aimed at "capturing the depth and contextual richness of emotional discourse," thereby highlighting the often-implicit cultural norms that govern language use, as supported by Chenail (2012). This methodology prioritizes naturalistic data, allowing the study to observe how pragmatic strategies, such as politeness and indirectness, develop organically in real-life, often volatile, online interactions where traditional social norms are constantly negotiated or even contested.

The data for this study were primarily sourced from public social media platforms, specifically Twitter and YouTube comment sections, as these spaces frequently host "emotionally charged exchanges in the Javanese language" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Smith et al., 2011). These platforms were selected for their accessibility, the high volume of spontaneous user interaction, and their rich display of Javanese usage in contexts involving disagreement, sarcasm, and critique. A total of 50 discourse samples were purposively selected to ensure relevance to anger expression, representativeness of both regional and linguistic variations, and clarity in their pragmatic features. Each sample was annotated with crucial metadata, including the user's anonymity status, the interactional context, and the structural dynamics of the exchange. The analytical process applied a robust set of pragmatic tools to the collected data. The analysis focused on classic elements like speech act theory, politeness strategies, and markers of indirectness. A particularly sensitive aspect of the analysis was the close attention paid to shifts in Javanese speech levels (*ngoko*, *krama*), which serve as crucial linguistic indicators of the user's affective stance. The coding process was designed to be thorough, incorporating both deductive (guided by established theory) and inductive (patterns emerging directly from the data) coding, which was further supported by detailed manual annotation and contextual interpretation. To guarantee the reliability and consistency of the findings, triangulation was implemented through three distinct methods: "cross-checking findings with existing literature, consulting native speakers for interpretation validation, and comparing expressions across different social media platforms" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Results and Discussion

Anger as a Socio-Pragmatic Mechanism for Face Threat and Social Control in Javanese Interaction

To comprehensively understand anger as a socio-pragmatic mechanism within Javanese interaction, it is crucial to analyze specific linguistic instances that reveal how face-threatening acts function as tools for social regulation and emotional expression. The following data excerpts, collected from natural conversations and social media exchanges, illustrate how anger is pragmatically encoded and strategically employed to enforce social norms, maintain hierarchies, and negotiate interpersonal boundaries. These utterances reflect a complex balancing act between cultural values such as *rukun* (social harmony) and *tepo seliro* (empathetic awareness), while simultaneously deploying indirectness, metaphor, and speech level shifts to modulate face threat.

The first data set exemplifies a salient mode of anger expression characterized by a fusion of direct verbal insults and culturally nuanced reproach. The deployment of the term "bajingan," alongside other embedded cultural expressions, illustrates how speakers navigate the tension between the need for emotional release and the imperative to maintain social respect. This interplay highlights the dynamic socio-pragmatic

mechanisms at work in Javanese communication, where anger is carefully calibrated in relation to the social context, the relative status of the interlocutors, and the potential consequences of face damage. Through a detailed pragmatic analysis, this section elucidates how these expressions operate as instruments of social control and face negotiation within Javanese discourse.

Data 1:

“Bajingan”

[*Bastard / Scumbag / You piece of shit*]

(This is a highly offensive insult targeting the hearer’s character, often used in extreme anger.)

“Tuman”

[*You never learn / Serves you right / That’s what you always do*]

(This expression conveys frustration over repeated behavior, implying the target habitually causes trouble.)

“Retine nyekek”

[*Your eyes are choking me / That glare is suffocating / You’re giving me a killer look*]

(Used to criticize someone’s hostile or condescending gaze; metaphorical and emotionally charged.)

“Wong keset ngono”

[*You’re like a doormat / Worthless person / You let people walk all over you*]

(A degrading comparison, implying submissiveness or lack of dignity.)

“Picek matamu”

[*Are you blind? / Can’t you see? / Open your damn eyes*]

(This is a face-threatening expression, challenging the hearer’s perception or awareness, often in frustration or disbelief.)

“Cok njaran”

[*Damn you, horse! / Son of a bitch / You animal!*]

(“Cok” is a vulgar interjection, while “njaran” [horse] dehumanizes the target; the combined phrase is highly derogatory and emotionally intense.)

The Javanese anger expressions analyzed here reflect a complex interplay between socio-pragmatic norms and culturally ingrained values that regulate emotional display. Each utterance carries not only semantic content but also pragmatic functions shaped by the cultural imperative of maintaining *rukun* (social harmony). For instance, the term “bajingan” functions as a strong face-threatening act (FTA), directly attacking the addressee’s social identity. In a culture where overt confrontation is discouraged, the use of such a term is highly marked and situationally bound, signaling a moment when social harmony is severely disrupted. Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory explains that the speaker risks significant face loss for both themselves and their interlocutor, suggesting that this expression emerges in contexts where the speaker prioritizes emotional venting over politeness or where social hierarchy permits such bluntness. In contrast, the expression “tuman” exemplifies indirect criticism embedded within cultural norms of empathy (*tepo seliro*) and social restraint (*ewuh pakewuh*). Although it conveys reproach, “you never learn,” its pragmatic force is softened by its idiomatic and somewhat metaphorical nature, allowing the speaker to express anger without outright aggression. This strategic indirectness functions as a negative politeness strategy, mitigating potential face threats while still addressing the interlocutor’s perceived misbehavior. The use of such expressions aligns with Goffman’s notion of face-work, where speakers perform a delicate balancing act between expressing negative emotions and preserving the interlocutor’s positive and negative face.

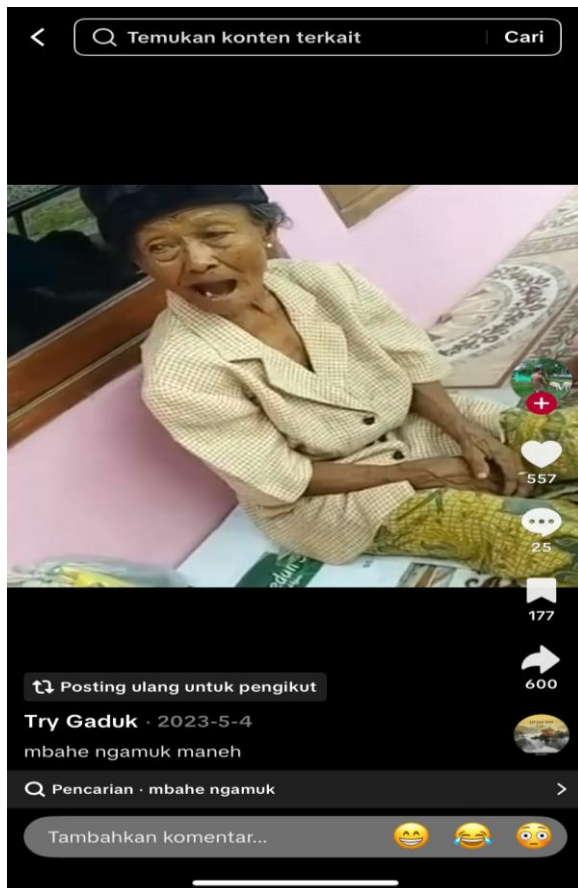


Figure 1. *Mbahe ngamuk maneh*. Source: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSAjbYrmP/>

The metaphorical phrase “retine nyekek” (literally “your eyes are choking”) vividly illustrates how anger in Javanese discourse is frequently communicated through figurative language that encodes hostility without explicit verbal aggression. This reflects a high-context communication style characteristic of Javanese culture, where implicit cues and non-verbal elements carry significant pragmatic weight. The metaphor encapsulates the speaker’s emotional discomfort caused by the interlocutor’s hostile gaze, simultaneously expressing anger and social disapproval. By embedding anger within metaphor, the speaker adheres to cultural expectations of emotional restraint while still conveying the severity of their affective stance.

Expressions like “wong keset ngono” reveal an important sociolinguistic dimension: the interplay between language, social evaluation, and hierarchy. Calling someone “like a doormat” is a derogatory metaphor that implicitly critiques the interlocutor’s submissiveness or failure to assert themselves. In Javanese social relations, where respect and status govern interaction, such an expression simultaneously serves as a reprimand and a commentary on social agency. Here, the speaker negotiates social power by publicly questioning the interlocutor’s position and demeanor, which is consistent with Brown and Levinson’s framework on FTAs modulated by relative power and social distance.

The phrase “picek matamu” (literally “blind your eyes”) functions as a direct challenge to the interlocutor’s awareness and perceptiveness. From a socio-pragmatic perspective, it is a face-threatening expression that risks damaging the interlocutor’s positive face by implying ignorance or negligence. However, in Javanese interaction, where indirectness is the norm, such a direct expression indicates heightened emotional tension or frustration. The use of this utterance may also signal shifts in speech level or context that temporarily relax conventional politeness constraints, aligning with Holmes and Stubbe’s observations on the interaction between power, solidarity, and emotional expression.

Finally, the highly vulgar and dehumanizing expression “cok njaran” exemplifies an extreme form of anger expression that violates core Javanese cultural norms of indirectness and emotional control. The phrase’s raw intensity underscores moments of severe social rupture, where the speaker relinquishes the usual politeness strategies to convey contempt and aggression. This utterance’s pragmatic force is amplified by its

dehumanizing metaphor (“horse”), which strips the interlocutor of social identity and dignity, thus performing a maximal face attack. Its occurrence highlights the tension between culturally prescribed emotional restraint and the spontaneous eruption of affect, offering a powerful illustration of how socio-pragmatic norms can be bent or breached under certain emotional or social pressures.

Together, these expressions exemplify the dynamic and culturally embedded nature of anger in Javanese interaction. They demonstrate how anger is not merely a psychological state but a socially regulated communicative act shaped by politeness principles, face management, and cultural values such as *rukun* and *tepo seliro*. Through indirectness, metaphor, speech level variation, and strategic face-threatening acts, speakers navigate the complex social terrain of expressing negative emotions without entirely jeopardizing interpersonal harmony. This analysis thus contributes to a deeper understanding of emotional pragmatics in high-context, collectivist cultures, where language serves as a critical tool for managing the delicate balance between individual affect and social cohesion.

Anger as a Socio-Pragmatic Mechanism for Negotiating Face Threat and Social Harmony in Javanese Interaction

In Javanese interaction, expressions of anger are rarely unmediated outbursts; rather, they are intricately shaped by socio-cultural norms that prioritize harmony and respect. The following data illustrates how speakers navigate the delicate boundary between issuing warnings, expressing frustration, and deploying verbal aggression, all while managing face concerns. This balancing act highlights the pragmatic sophistication of Javanese anger expressions, which simultaneously fulfill the communicative goals of emotional venting and social regulation. The initial utterances serve as polite warnings aimed at preventing conflict, embodying the cultural imperative of *rukun* (social harmony) and *tepo seliro* (empathetic understanding).

However, as the interaction escalates, the pragmatic strategies shift, revealing a calculated use of face-threatening acts to assert social control and signal disapproval. The contrast between respectful address terms and sarcastic or metaphorical insults exemplifies the tension between politeness conventions and the speaker’s need to convey emotional intensity. This dynamic underscores anger’s role as a socio-pragmatic mechanism that is not only an expression of individual affect but also a tool for maintaining social order and reinforcing communal values. The analysis that follows dissects these linguistic maneuvers, providing insight into how anger functions within the broader cultural framework of Javanese communication.

Data 2

“Kilo kilo ono wong teko”

[*Watch out, someone is coming*]

(An urgent warning, signaling attentiveness and social awareness in public space.)

“Awes was minggir mas ono wong”

[*Be careful, step aside, sir, someone’s coming*]

(Polite yet firm directive; “mas” adds respectful address, balancing warning with social courtesy.)

“Wes tabrak mawon pak niku”

[*Go ahead and hit him, sir*]

(A sarcastic or confrontational statement indicating frustration or impatience; “pak” is a respectful form of address, which here contrasts with the aggressive content, signaling pragmatic tension.)

“Asu parkir yo ora pas blas”

[*The dog’s parking is completely wrong*]

(A highly colloquial, metaphorical insult: “asu” (dog) here is a pejorative intensifier; the phrase criticizes improper or inconsiderate parking, reflecting social disapproval through indirect verbal aggression.)

The utterances “Kilo kilo ono wong teko” and “Awes was minggir mas ono wong” demonstrate a pragmatic balancing act between warning and politeness that is deeply embedded in Javanese communicative norms. While these phrases function primarily as directives to avoid collision or disturbance, their formulation incorporates markers of respect and social awareness, such as the honorific “mas.” This illustrates how even in situations charged with urgency or potential conflict, Javanese speakers adhere to the cultural imperative of *rukun*, prioritizing social harmony over confrontation. From a Brown and Levinson politeness perspective, these utterances can be seen as negative politeness strategies that mitigate face threats by softening commands with respect, thereby maintaining the interlocutor’s negative face (i.e., their desire for autonomy) despite the urgency of the situation.

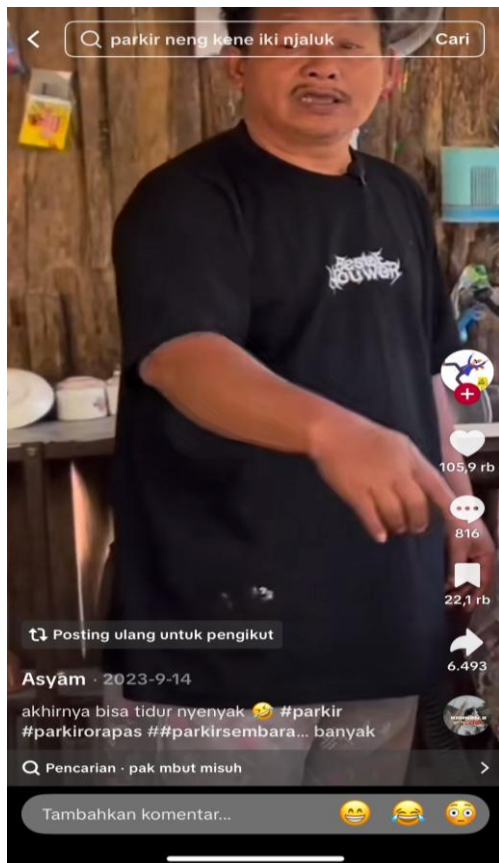


Figure 2. Akhirnya bisa tidur nyenyak. Source: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSAjbt9hh/>

In contrast, the phrase “Wes tabrak mawon pak niku” starkly departs from this politeness norm, exhibiting sarcasm and heightened frustration that verge on a face-threatening act. The paradoxical combination of the respectful address “pak” with a seemingly aggressive invitation to collide signals a pragmatic tension. This tension reflects the sociolinguistic reality where politeness forms coexist with emotional venting, especially in contexts where social norms momentarily relax due to heightened affect. The sarcastic tone serves as a face-threatening act toward the interlocutor’s positive face (the desire to be appreciated), illustrating how emotional expressions in Javanese interaction are carefully calibrated to balance individual affect and social constraints. The insult embedded in “Asu parkir yo ora pas blas” further exemplifies the socio-pragmatic complexity of anger expression in Javanese culture. Although “asu” literally means “dog,” its pragmatic function here is to dehumanize or express strong social disapproval in a culturally intelligible way. This metaphorical usage serves to indirectly criticize the interlocutor’s behavior rather than their person outright, which aligns with Javanese norms that favor indirectness in negative expressions. Simultaneously, the phrase’s bluntness marks a departure from conventional *tepo seliro* (empathetic understanding), signaling the speaker’s decision to prioritize social control over interpersonal harmony when norms are perceived to be violated egregiously.

This dynamic reflects Goffman's concept of face-work, where speakers negotiate the delicate balance between threatening and maintaining face in social interaction. The sequence of utterances progresses from a polite warning to a sarcastic confrontation and ultimately to an insult, illustrating an escalation of emotional intensity mediated by pragmatic strategies. Such a progression showcases how Javanese speakers employ varying degrees of politeness and face-threatening acts depending on contextual factors, including the severity of the offense, the social relationship between interlocutors, and the speaker's communicative intent.

Moreover, these expressions illustrate the culturally embedded role of anger as a socio-pragmatic mechanism for enforcing social norms and maintaining order. The initial warnings function to prevent disruption and preserve *rukun*, while the sarcastic and insulting remarks act as corrective mechanisms, signaling social disapproval and encouraging conformity. This underscores the idea that anger in Javanese interaction is not merely an individual emotional outburst but a socially regulated communicative act serving broader communal functions, including social control and moral regulation. In summary, the analyzed data highlight how anger and frustration in Javanese communication are articulated through a nuanced interplay of indirectness, politeness strategies, metaphorical language, and face management, all of which are deeply informed by cultural values. These findings contribute to cross-cultural pragmatics by demonstrating that in high-context, collectivist societies such as the Javanese, emotional expression is carefully managed to balance personal affect with social harmony, making anger both a linguistic and cultural phenomenon that reflects and reinforces community norms.

Anger as a Socio-Pragmatic Device for Challenging and Enforcing Social Order in Javanese Interaction

Expressions of anger in Javanese communication are embedded within a rich socio-cultural framework that delicately balances emotional expression with the maintenance of social harmony. Unlike overt, unfiltered outbursts commonly found in low-context cultures, Javanese anger often manifests through layered pragmatic strategies that simultaneously manage face concerns and convey strong affect. The data presented here exemplifies this complexity, illustrating a sequence of escalating utterances that range from self-deprecating remarks to direct accusations and finally to the deployment of taboo language. This progression reflects a nuanced socio-pragmatic mechanism wherein speakers negotiate the tension between individual emotional venting and collective norms such as *rukun* (social harmony) and *tepo seliro* (empathetic understanding).

At the outset, self-directed expressions like “*Aku gendeng*” [I'm crazy] serve to frame the speaker's emotional state in a manner that deflects potential blame and mitigates face threat. However, as the interaction intensifies, the pragmatic strategies shift toward direct face-threatening acts targeting the interlocutor, marked by provocative questions and repeated challenges. The use of highly offensive profanity further signals a deliberate breach of politeness norms, emphasizing the speaker's heightened emotional state and desire to assert social control. Through these linguistic maneuvers, anger emerges not merely as an individual emotional response but as a culturally mediated communicative act that reinforces social boundaries and power relations within the Javanese community.

Data 3

“*Aku gendeng*”

[I'm crazy]

(A self-deprecating expression indicating emotional agitation or irrationality; signals heightened affect.)

“*Koe gendeng*”

[You're crazy]

(An accusatory or provocative statement targeting the interlocutor, escalating the emotional tension.)

“Kenek opo?”

[*What did you get hit by?*]

(A colloquial rhetorical question implying disbelief or challenge; serves to provoke or question the interlocutor’s behavior.)

“Ayo!”

[*Come on!*]

(A challenge or invitation to escalate confrontation; functions as an intensifier of hostility.)

“Jancok”

[*(Profane expletive)*]

(A strong swear word used to express extreme anger or frustration; culturally marked as highly offensive but pragmatically serving as emotional release.)

“Ayo !!” / “Ayo!!!”

[*Come on!! / Come on!!!*]

(Repetition and punctuation intensify the challenge, signaling readiness for confrontation or urging immediate reaction.)



Figure 3. *Seng waras ngalah*. Source: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSAjg2e1b/>

The sequence of utterances, beginning with “Aku gendeng” [I’m crazy] and escalating through repeated challenges, culminates in the profane “Jancok,” revealing a highly charged emotional interaction that reflects a complex socio-pragmatic balancing act. The initial self-labeling as “crazy” serves as an affective marker signaling loss of emotional control, which paradoxically functions as a face-saving strategy by externalizing irrationality onto the self rather than the interlocutor. This aligns with Goffman’s face theory, where the

speaker attempts to manage their own face by controlling how their emotional state is perceived, softening potential blame or social censure.

Following this, the direct accusation “Koe gendeng” [You’re crazy] shifts the face-threatening act toward the interlocutor, challenging their rationality and escalating interpersonal tension. This attack on the interlocutor’s positive face, a desire to be appreciated and respected, intensifies the interaction’s confrontational nature. According to Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, such direct insults constitute clear face-threatening acts (FTAs) with low mitigation, indicating that the speaker temporarily prioritizes emotional expression or social dominance over politeness.

The rhetorical question “Kenek opo?” [What did you get hit by?] functions pragmatically as a confrontational speech act that questions the interlocutor’s behavior or sanity, serving to destabilize their positive face further. Its colloquial and somewhat indirect form exemplifies Javanese indirectness even in aggressive contexts, maintaining a thin veneer of conversational politeness while conveying sharp reproach. This suggests that, despite the high emotional intensity, Javanese speakers still retain culturally ingrained communicative restraint, reflective of *tepo seliro*, or empathetic awareness of others’ feelings.

The repeated utterances of “Ayo!” [Come on!] escalate the interaction into an explicit challenge, inviting confrontation or physical altercation. This exemplifies a shift from verbal sparring to a readiness for direct conflict, illustrating the pragmatic role of anger as a mechanism to enforce social boundaries and assert personal or group honor. In this phase, the speaker adopts a confrontational posture that deliberately threatens the interlocutor’s negative face (freedom from imposition) and social standing, evidencing the dynamic nature of face-work in Javanese interaction.

The insertion of “Jancok,” a highly taboo and offensive expletive, marks the peak of face threat in this sequence. This profanity functions as an intensifier of anger and social sanction, symbolically degrading the interlocutor and expressing deep disrespect. From a socio-pragmatic standpoint, the use of such strong language in Javanese culture, which typically values indirectness and social harmony, signifies a breach of *rukun* (social harmony) norms, justified pragmatically by the speaker’s perceived provocation or need for social control. It reflects a moment where individual affect overrides communal politeness conventions.

Finally, the repeated and punctuated “Ayo!! Ayo!!!” reinforces the speaker’s determination and readiness to confront, serving both as a challenge and a ritualistic escalation signaling that the interaction has entered a liminal space between verbal conflict and potential physical altercation. This progression reveals the embeddedness of anger expressions within the socio-cultural framework of Javanese communication, where emotional outbursts are not mere spontaneous reactions but culturally modulated performances that negotiate identity, social roles, and power relations. Collectively, these utterances illustrate the intricate interplay between emotion, language, and culture in shaping pragmatic strategies for expressing anger in high-context, collectivist societies.

Anger as a Socio-Pragmatic Strategy for Face Threat and Power Assertion in Javanese Interaction

Anger in Javanese interaction manifests not only as an emotional response but also as a carefully mediated socio-pragmatic act that negotiates complex social dynamics. Rooted in a high-context, collectivist culture, Javanese communication traditionally prioritizes *rukun* (social harmony) and *tepo seliro* (empathetic understanding), which encourage indirectness and face-saving strategies. However, when these cultural norms are perceived to be violated or threatened, anger becomes a powerful communicative resource to reassert social order and personal authority. This transformation involves a strategic deployment of face-threatening acts (FTAs) that, while potentially disruptive, serve to manage and enforce social boundaries within the community.

The utterances analyzed in this section exemplify how Javanese speakers escalate from initial emotional venting to explicit challenges that assert dominance and threaten the interlocutor’s face. Employing direct imperatives, taboo language, and confrontational challenges, the speaker strategically intensifies the interaction to achieve social control and renegotiate power relations. Through this lens, anger transcends mere affective expression. It emerges as a culturally embedded linguistic mechanism that balances individual agency with collective norms, illustrating the dynamic interplay of language, emotion, and culture in Javanese socio-pragmatic behavior.

Following this, “Kon metu” [You get out] is a straightforward imperative commanding the interlocutor to leave the physical or social space. Such a directive constitutes a direct threat to the interlocutor’s negative face, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the desire for freedom of action and autonomy. In Javanese culture, where indirectness and face-saving are paramount, issuing a blunt command exemplifies an escalation in conflict intensity, reflecting the speaker’s prioritization of emotional venting or social control over harmony.

The final utterance “Metu lek wani” [Come out if you dare] functions as a provocative challenge, inviting the interlocutor to escalate the confrontation, potentially to physical aggression. Pragmatically, this statement serves multiple functions: it tests the interlocutor’s willingness to respond, asserts the speaker’s dominance, and heightens the emotional tension. This aligns with Goffman’s (1967) concept of face-work, which involves the management of social identity through interaction; here, the speaker actively threatens the interlocutor’s positive face, which encompasses the desire to be liked and appreciated.

The sequence reveals a pragmatic shift from an initial emotional outburst to an explicit challenge, marking a breakdown of the conventional politeness norms typically observed in Javanese communication. Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory helps explain this shift as a calculated choice where the speaker temporarily suspends politeness to achieve other social goals, such as asserting power or enforcing social norms. This deliberate face-threatening behavior highlights the dual role of anger as both an individual emotional state and a socio-pragmatic tool for negotiating power dynamics.

Culturally, the use of “dancok” and direct imperatives contradicts the Javanese value of *rukun* (social harmony) and *tepo seliro* (empathetic understanding). The severity of the language suggests that the speaker perceives a significant social or moral violation that warrants strong social sanction. This supports the idea that anger in Javanese interaction, while generally restrained, becomes explicit and confrontational when social norms or personal boundaries are severely challenged. From a socio-pragmatic perspective, these utterances serve as mechanisms for social control, publicly marking deviance and compelling compliance or withdrawal. The speaker’s linguistic aggression imposes a face threat that pressures the interlocutor to respond, withdraw, or face social repercussions. This dynamic interaction reflects how anger serves to regulate community standards and maintain social order through language, rather than merely releasing emotions.

Anger as a Pragmatic Strategy of Confrontation and Face Defense in Javanese Speech

In Javanese interaction, expressions of anger rarely occur in isolation from broader socio-cultural functions. Rather than merely reflecting internal emotional states, such expressions are often embedded in pragmatic strategies that serve to confront, correct, or reposition interpersonal dynamics. Within a communicative culture that generally values *rukun* (social harmony) and *tepo seliro* (empathetic consideration), moments of verbal confrontation may appear transgressive at first glance. However, when analyzed through a socio-pragmatic lens, they reveal a culturally embedded logic whereby anger operates as a regulated tool to defend one’s face, reassert identity, and address perceived social violations. These acts are particularly salient in interactions where power asymmetries are contested or where one’s moral standing is publicly challenged.

The data examined in this section illustrate a shift from emotional provocation to strategic face-work and social positioning. The use of intense swear words and rhetorical challenges, such as in “Dancok delak delok” and “Mbok kiro rawani po pie aku,” reflects a calculated abandonment of politeness norms in favor of assertive self-defense and confrontation. While such expressions threaten the interlocutor’s face, they simultaneously serve to restore or protect the speaker’s own positive and negative face under threat. Drawing from Goffman’s concept of face and Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, these utterances demonstrate how anger functions as both a linguistic and social corrective mechanism. Far from being chaotic or irrational, Javanese verbal aggression operates within a structured framework of cultural expectations, allowing speakers to manage relational tensions and uphold their agency in conflict-laden encounters.

Data 5

“Dancok delak delok”

[*Damn it, just keep staring*]

(The profanity “dancok” acts as a strong emotional intensifier expressing anger or disdain. The phrase “delak delok” (keep staring) is accusatory, implying that the interlocutor’s gaze is provocative or disrespectful. Together, the expression functions as a face-threatening act meant to confront perceived insolence or challenge.)

“Mbok kiro rawani po pie aku”

[*Do you think I’m not brave or what?*]

(A rhetorical question challenging the interlocutor’s assumption or disrespect. It asserts the speaker’s readiness to confront or fight, positioning the speaker as bold and unafraid. Pragmatically, this functions to reassert power and defend positive face in a perceived face-threatening situation.)

The phrase “Dancok delak delok” (literally “*Damn it, just keep staring*”) is a potent example of how anger is pragmatically articulated through emotive language and confrontation. The intensifier “dancok” is a highly taboo expletive that functions as an emotional catalyst, abruptly breaching the cultural norms of indirectness and politeness. This explosion of affect signals a momentary override of *rukun* (social harmony), serving as an expression of frustration or perceived disrespect. Strategically, the speaker uses this profanity to assert emotional control and dislodge the interlocutor’s positive face, that is, the desire to be accepted and valued, by framing their silent gaze as provocative and intolerable.



Figure 4. kabeh dipisuh I. Source: <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSAjsXjko/>

In response to this confrontational initiation, the speaker proceeds with “delak delok” (“just keep staring”), which shifts the dynamic from emotional outburst to challenge. This imperative, while still aggressive, carries

a mocking tone, questioning the interlocutor's boldness. It signals that the speaker not only resents the scrutiny but also positions themselves as a target of unnecessary provocation. According to Brown & Levinson, such statements constitute face-threatening acts (FTAs) with minimal mitigation. Here, the speaker intentionally refuses to soften the impact, thereby increasing tension while drawing attention to their own resilience.

The second phrase, "Mbok kiro rawani po pie aku" ("Do you think I'm not brave or what?"), reframes the interaction through a rhetorical challenge. This question serves as a defensive move, reasserting the speaker's willingness to confront or retaliate. From a socio-pragmatic lens, it is a proactive stance that protects the speaker's positive face, affirming their dignity and courage in the face of confrontation. This aligns with Goffman's theory of face-work, where identity and self-image are continually negotiated within interaction; here, the speaker stakes their social standing by denying any sign of intimidation.

Moreover, this rhetorical strategy reflects the culturally embedded concept of *tepo seliro*. Even in conflict, Javanese speakers implicitly assess others' actions within a moral and relational frame. By challenging the interlocutor's presumptive inaction, the speaker re-emphasizes mutual accountability and relational reciprocity. This interaction demonstrates how anger, while disruptive, can be harnessed to reinforce community norms centered on mutual respect and the strength of character, rather than merely serving as an emotional release.

This interplay between direct insult, provocation, and rhetorical defense also underscores the role of power dynamics and social distance. The use of an expletive insult suggests a relationship where hierarchical deferential norms are suspended, perhaps between peers or in a moment of heightened intimacy or hostility. Meanwhile, the rhetorical question asserts dominance by refusing to concede moral or emotional superiority. It showcases how anger becomes a strategic tool for regulating social distance, reconfiguring relational boundaries toward equality or confrontation. Culturally, these expressions indicate that Javanese anger is not suppressed in all contexts but is deployed tactically in moments of perceived disrespect or challenge to authority. The speaker's willingness to use taboo language and confrontational syntax reflects a cultural release valve, where usual norms give way to assertiveness when the underlying social equilibrium is threatened. Although this breaches *rukun*, the pragmatic function is corrective: to recalibrate relational respect and reaffirm the speaker's position within the social interaction.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the deeply embedded role of anger in Javanese verbal interaction as a multi-functional and culturally mediated communicative act. Contrary to conventional views of Javanese communication as predominantly harmonious and indirect, the data reveal that anger, when it emerges, is not only linguistically complex but also socially purposeful. Across the five categories of analysis, anger expressions are shown to serve various socio-pragmatic goals: they threaten face, negotiate power asymmetries, assert personal or communal boundaries, and restore social equilibrium. Importantly, these expressions do not signal a breakdown of communication norms but rather reveal the flexibility and responsiveness of those norms under specific relational and affective pressures.

The first category, "Anger as a Socio-Pragmatic Mechanism for Face Threat and Social Control," highlighted how Javanese speakers employ verbal aggression, such as "*Bajingan*" or "*Asu parkir yo ora pas blas*," to mark behavioral deviance and publicly assert social sanctions. These utterances function as indirect moral corrections, expressing disapproval while retaining culturally recognizable forms. They exemplify how anger can be weaponized as a tool of social regulation, aligning with Goffman's concept of face-work and Brown and Levinson's theory of face-threatening acts (FTAs). The combination of direct insult and culturally embedded euphemism allows the speaker to maintain a degree of politeness even in moments of open criticism.

In the second analytical category, Anger as a Pragmatic Strategy of Urgency and Territorial Assertion, we observed how expressions like "*Awat was minggir mas ono wong*" and "*Wes tabrak mawon pak niku*" operate at the intersection of urgency, sarcasm, and social critique. These utterances often index spatial and behavioral violations, particularly in public settings such as traffic or crowded areas, where norms of courtesy and order are expected. The shift from polite warnings to sarcastic provocations reflects not only emotional

escalation but also a pragmatic recalibration of politeness based on perceived irresponsibility or disorder. Thus, anger in this context becomes a discursive instrument for reclaiming space and reaffirming shared expectations of conduct.

The third theme, Anger as an Assertion of Honor and Masculine Identity, emerged strongly in data involving repeated challenges and expletives, such as "*Aku gendeng / Koe gendeng / Ayo!*" and "*Jancok*." Here, anger is less about correction and more about preserving one's self-image and social dignity, especially in front of peers. The repetitive intensifiers and taboo language serve as both an affective release and a performative assertion of courage or readiness for conflict. From a socio-pragmatic perspective, this represents a reassertion of positive face in contexts where honor, masculinity, or personal strength are at stake. These findings align with theories of identity construction in verbal conflict, suggesting that in Javanese culture, emotional intensity can be socially sanctioned under specific relational or situational conditions.

The fourth category, Anger as a Confrontational Response to Perceived Disrespect, particularly through utterances like "*Kon metu / Metu lek wani*," showcases how anger escalates from expressions of annoyance to open confrontation. The pragmatics of these utterances reveal the speaker's intent to challenge authority or provoke physical confrontation as a response to perceived threats to autonomy or dignity. While face-threatening, these expressions also operate within a culturally sanctioned frame where explicit confrontation, although rare, is pragmatically justified when others have breached politeness norms. This finding complicates stereotypes about Javanese passivity by foregrounding agency and resistance within communicative practices. Lastly, Anger as a Defense Mechanism Against Social Scrutiny, as exemplified in the phrase "*Dancok delak delok / Mbok kiro rawani po pie aku*," underscores the defensive nature of verbal aggression. Rather than initiating conflict, these utterances reflect a response to silent provocation (e.g., staring), transforming social surveillance into a platform for asserting emotional and moral boundaries. The rhetorical challenge serves not merely to provoke but also to reframe the speaker's identity as someone unwilling to be subordinated. These findings suggest that even in aggressive acts, Javanese speakers remain attuned to social positioning, using language to re-negotiate their role within the interactional order.

Conclusions

This study conclusively demonstrates that expressions of anger within Javanese digital interaction transcend simple "emotional outbursts" and function instead as culturally sanctioned communicative acts. Through a detailed analysis, the research identified five key analytic categories: social control, urgency, identity, confrontation, and self-defense, which illustrate how verbal aggression is not random but strategically employed. This strategic use reflects the intricate balance among emotion, the Javanese concept of politeness (like *unggah-ungguh*), and the dynamics of power. Essentially, anger is instrumentalized to perform various social functions: carrying out face-threatening acts, enforcing community norms, asserting status or authority, and preserving one's dignity (*wibawa*). Critically, these aggressive acts are performed while users simultaneously attempt to navigate core Javanese cultural values, particularly the emphasis on harmony and empathy. These findings provide significant insight into how high-context, collectivist cultures navigate and manage strong emotions within their everyday discourse.

However, the study acknowledges an inherent limitation tied to its reliance on social media data. While digital platforms provide a wealth of spontaneous language, they potentially "amplify conflict" and definitively omit non-verbal cues that are central to interpreting face-to-face interaction, such as intonation, gestures, and the full performative context of Javanese speech levels (*ngoko* and *krama*). The digital environment, therefore, provides a valuable but incomplete picture, particularly regarding the nuanced management of social hierarchy.

To build upon these insights and address the limitations, the study proposes clear directions for future research. It is essential to transition toward ethnographically grounded, naturalistic data collected from a wider variety of contexts, including familial, institutional, and traditional public settings. Such an approach would enable the capture of vital paralinguistic features and gestures that are absent in text-based data. Furthermore, a comparative approach, perhaps across different generations (to study digital vs. analog norms) or distinct Javanese regions, could provide deeper insights into "shifting norms" in the cultural expression of anger, offering a more complete and dynamic understanding of Javanese socio-pragmatics.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

There are no conflicts of interest concerning the publication of this paper.

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