



LINGUISTIC IMPOLITENESS AND POWER RELATIONS IN *ALRAWABI SCHOOL FOR GIRLS*: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON CULPEPER'S THEORY

Alifa Maisya Ratunisa

Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

Email: alifamaisyartns05@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received 22/04, 2026

Revised 07/07, 2026

Accepted 15/07, 2026

Keywords:

AlRawabi School for Girls

Linguistic Impoliteness Power Relations

Abstract

This study examines linguistic impoliteness strategies in the Netflix series *AlRawabi School for Girls* based on Jonathan Culpeper's impoliteness theory using a descriptive qualitative approach within a pragmatic framework. Data were collected from verbal utterances across all six episodes using official Netflix subtitles and resulted in 27 impolite utterances identified for analysis. Among the identified strategies, *positive impoliteness* was the most dominant strategy with 12 utterances (44%), followed by *bald on record impoliteness* with 10 utterances (37%), *negative impoliteness* with 3 utterances (11%), *sarcasm or mock politeness* and *withhold politeness* with 1 utterance each (4%). These findings demonstrate that linguistic impoliteness functions not only as an emotional expression but also as a social practice in which characters establish dominance, negotiate power relations, and reinforce social hierarchies. By extending beyond the identification of impoliteness strategies, this study contributes to pragmatic studies of impoliteness by providing a contextual understanding of how linguistic impoliteness operates within an Arab adolescent school setting.

تجريد

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استراتيجيات الوقاحة اللغوية في مسلسل "مدرسة الروابي للبنات" على منصة Netflix، بناءً على نظرية جوناثان كولبير حول الوقاحة اللغوية، باستخدام نهج وصفي نوعي في إطار براغماتي. تم جمع البيانات من الحوارات الشفهية في جميع حلقات المسلسل الست باستخدام الترجمة الرسمية لتتفليكس، وأسفر عن تحديد 27 عبارة الوقاحة اللغوية للتحليل. من بين جميع الاستراتيجيات التي تم تحديدها، كانت الوقاحة الإيجابية هي الاستراتيجية الأكثر شيوعًا بواقع 12 عبارة (44٪)، تليها الوقاحة المباشرة بواقع 10 عبارات (37٪)، ثم الوقاحة السلبية بواقع 3 عبارات (11٪)، وأخيرًا السخرية أو الأدب الزائف، وحبب الأدب بواقع عبارة واحدة لكل منهما (4٪). تُظهر هذه النتائج أن الوقاحة اللغوية لا تقتصر على كونها تعبيرًا عاطفيًا فحسب، بل هي أيضًا ممارسة اجتماعية تُرسخ من خلالها الشخصيات هيمنتها، وتُدير علاقات القوة، وتُعزز التسلسل الهرمي الاجتماعي. من خلال تجاوز مجرد تحديد استراتيجيات الوقاحة اللغوية، تساهم هذه الدراسة في الدراسات البراغماتية للوقاحة اللغوية من خلال توفير فهم سياقي لكيفية عمل الوقاحة اللغوية داخل بيئة مدرسية للمراهقين العرب.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

مسلسل مدرسة
الروابي للبنات
الوقاحة اللغوية

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi ketidaksantunan berbahasa dalam serial Netflix *AlRawabi School for Girls* berdasarkan teori impoliteness Jonathan Culpeper dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dalam

علاقات القوة

Kata kunci:

AlRawabi School for Girls
Ketidaksantunan
Berbahasa
Relasi Kuasa

kerangka analisis pragmatik. Data dikumpulkan dari ucapan verbal di enam episode menggunakan subtitle resmi Netflix dan menghasilkan sebanyak 27 tuturan tidak sopan diidentifikasi untuk dianalisis. Dari semua strategi yang diidentifikasi, *positive impoliteness* adalah strategi paling dominan dengan 12 tuturan (44%), diikuti *bald on record impoliteness* dengan 10 tuturan (37%), *negative impoliteness* 3 tuturan (11%), *sarcasm or mock politeness* dan *withhold politeness* masing-masing 1 tuturan (4%). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa ketidaksantunan berbahasa tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ekspresi emosional tetapi juga sebagai praktik sosial di mana tokoh-tokoh membangun dominasi, menegosiasikan hubungan kekuasaan, dan memperkuat hierarki sosial. Dengan melampaui identifikasi strategi ketidaksopanan, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada studi pragmatik tentang ketidaksantunan dengan memberikan pemahaman kontekstual tentang bagaimana ketidaksopanan linguistik beroperasi dalam lingkungan sekolah remaja Arab.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



A. Introduction

Language is humanity's primary tool for interpersonal communication. In a society composed of diverse social strata, variations in language use naturally arise (Firnanda et al., 2025a). Beyond facilitating communication, language also functions symbolically to establish authority, negotiate social positions, and reproduce power relations (Barus & Isra, 2025; Karman, 2017). Recent scholarship similarly shows that discourse choices may encode ideology, symbolic power, and dominant social representations (Fajri, 2025; Mulyadi et al., 2025; Zubaidah & Hasaniyah, 2025). From an impoliteness perspective, face-threatening language may therefore function not merely as emotional expression but as a strategic resource for exercising power, reinforcing group boundaries, and contesting dominant positions (Fan, 2025; Rahma et al., 2025).

In pragmatic studies, impoliteness refers to language use that is evaluated as offensive, face-threatening, or socially inappropriate within a particular interactional context (Culpeper, 2005, 2011). It may arise when a speaker intentionally attacks an addressee's face, when the addressee interprets an utterance as a deliberate attack, or through a combination of intention and interpretation. Contemporary research also emphasizes that judgments of impoliteness are context-sensitive: age, discourse community, social norms, and cultural expectations shape how an utterance is evaluated.

Teenagers, for example, may use conventionally polite forms with confrontational or affiliative functions, while culturally specific etiquette systems can define offence beyond lexical rudeness alone (Núñez Pertejo & Palacios Martínez, 2025; Wijayanto, 2025). This supports a relational understanding in which impoliteness is negotiated through social expectations and ethical positioning rather than being reducible to isolated offensive words (Xie & Fan, 2024). Recent film-based research also demonstrates continued scholarly attention to swear words and offensive lexical choices as socially situated language phenomena (Rinaldi et al., 2025).

Jonathan Culpeper's impoliteness framework was developed within pragmatics as a counterpoint to models that primarily explain the maintenance of social harmony. Culpeper identifies five major strategies: Bald on Record Impoliteness, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, and Withhold Politeness (Culpeper, 1996a). These strategies remain widely used because they allow researchers to connect linguistic form with face attack, conflict, and interactional goals. Recent applications demonstrate that the distribution and function of impoliteness vary across institutional and media contexts, including students' complaints, high-stakes political debates, and digital public communication (Dacalanio et al., 2024; Simanjuntak & Simatupang, 2024; Yusuf & Resha, 2025). Impoliteness-related meaning may also be conveyed indirectly through irony, pragmatic reversal, and context-dependent evaluation rather than through explicit insults alone (del Saz-Rubio, 2023).

One social context in which linguistic impoliteness becomes systematic is bullying. In such interactions, language can move beyond ordinary communication and function as a weapon to belittle, exclude, intimidate, or dominate others. Bullying may take physical, verbal, relational, and digital forms, but verbal aggression is particularly important for pragmatic analysis because social hierarchy is often enacted through naming, ridicule, threats, accusations, and exclusion. Recent audiovisual research confirms the close relationship between impoliteness strategies and bullying representations in film (Azizah et al., 2024). In the specific context of *AlRawabi School for Girls*, Fatimah and Mas'adi (2025) have already examined verbal bullying through Culpeper's framework (Fatimah & Mas'adi, 2025), while Azza et al. (2025) approach bullying in the same series through focalization and narrative perspective (Azza et al., 2025). These studies confirm that the

series provides a productive site for examining how adolescent conflict is linguistically and narratively organized.

Previous studies on linguistic impoliteness in films, television series, and social media have generally identified strategy types and described verbal aggression through insults, sarcasm, threats, and face-threatening acts (Damayanti & Rahardi, 2025; Khoironi & Santosa, 2024; Novera & Amalia, 2025). However, the research gap must be formulated carefully because the same object has already been studied. Fatimah and Mas'adi (2025) specifically analyze verbal bullying and impoliteness in *AlRawabi School for Girls* using Culpeper's theory (Fatimah & Mas'adi, 2025). Therefore, the novelty of the present study does not lie in being the first application of Culpeper's framework to this series. Instead, it lies in integrating a full five-strategy classification with a quantitative distribution of 27 utterances and a systematic interpretation of how each strategy participates in power relations across peer, staff-student, sibling, and family interactions. The linguistic data must also be treated cautiously because Netflix subtitles mediate the Arabic dialogue. Studies of the same series show that Jordanian dialect and culturally specific expressions undergo strategic adaptation in English subtitling, which can affect pragmatic nuance (Al-Harahsheh et al., 2025; Malkawi et al., 2025). More broadly, research on Arabic in the context of globalization highlights pressures on language and cultural identity (Fajri & Zulhelmi, 2023), while analysis of Arab television drama demonstrates how gendered inequality and social positioning can be constructed through discourse (Wardah & Surur, 2025).

Accordingly, this study addresses two questions: (1) What impoliteness strategies are employed in *AlRawabi School for Girls* based on Culpeper's framework? and (2) How do these strategies represent power relations and social hierarchies among characters in an Arab school context? By answering these questions, the study moves beyond strategy identification toward a relational interpretation of impoliteness as a social practice. Its contribution lies in connecting the frequency of linguistic strategies with their contextual functions in constructing inclusion, exclusion, authority, resistance, and hierarchy among female adolescent characters.

B. Research Methods

This research falls under the study of pragmatics, one of the branches of linguistics that examines not only what is said, but also how and in what context something is uttered,

particularly within spoken interactions among specific participants. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine forms of linguistic impoliteness in the Netflix series *AlRawabi School for Girls* series, based on Culpeper's theory of impoliteness. This analysis focuses on verbal utterances containing linguistic impoliteness. While facial expressions, gestures, and nonverbal actions are noted as contextual information to support interpretation, not as primary data. The researcher serves as the primary instrument in this study, playing a role in identifying, classifying, and interpreting data throughout the research process.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained directly from the Netflix series *AlRawabi School for Girls* (2021), directed by Tima Shomali, comprising all six episodes of the first season. Because the series was produced in Arabic while this article is written in English, dialogue was identified using the official English subtitles and then cross-checked against the original Arabic audio. This procedure is important because recent studies of the same series demonstrate that subtitling Jordanian dialect and cultural expressions involves translation choices that may alter pragmatic nuance (Al-Harahsheh et al., 2025; Malkawi et al., 2025). Secondary data include Culpeper's works on impoliteness theory and relevant recent scholarship on bullying, power, media discourse, and sociopragmatics.

The data collection process in this study was conducted through observation and note-taking. The researcher watched all six episodes of the series then identified utterances containing impoliteness based on Culpeper's five strategies. The utterances included in the corpus are verbal utterances that clearly fulfilled the criteria for linguistic impoliteness and occurred in scenes of interpersonal conflict or social tension, as these scenes most visibly manifest face-threatening acts. Through this process, a total of 27 utterances were selected as research data. These utterances were categorized into the five strategies of impoliteness proposed by Culpeper, consisting of 10 utterances for Bald on Record Impoliteness, 12 for Positive Impoliteness, 3 utterances Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, and Withhold Politeness, one example of each. Each selected utterance was then recorded, coded, and grouped according to its strategy.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher repeatedly watched all six episodes to identify verbal utterances containing potential impoliteness. Second, the official English subtitles were compared with the original Arabic audio to

confirm the wording, contextual force, and intended interactional meaning. Third, data reduction was carried out by retaining utterances that met Culpeper's impoliteness criteria. Fourth, the selected data were classified according to the five impoliteness strategies. Fifth, the frequency and percentage of each strategy were calculated to identify dominant patterns. Finally, each utterance was interpreted in relation to the immediate interaction, participant status, power relations, and social hierarchy.

To enhance the credibility finding, the data classification was reviewed repeatedly with reference to Culpeper's theoretical framework. Data validity was maintained through repeated observations of selected scenes, cross-checking the Arabic transcripts and official English translations against the context of the interactions in the series. This process ensured that each utterance was classified consistently and interpreted according to its social function within the interaction.

C. Result and Discussion

This study aims to examine Tima Shomali's series *AlRawabi School for Girls* based on Jonathan Culpeper's theory of impoliteness. The data collected encompasses various forms of linguistic impoliteness strategies; *Bald on Record Impoliteness*, *Positive Impoliteness*, *Negative Impoliteness*, *Sarcasm or Mock Politeness*, and *Withhold Politeness*. The analysis focuses on verbal utterances produced by the characters, with facial expressions, gestures, and the actions of the characters within the series noted as contextual information to support interpretation.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of Impoliteness strategies in *AlRawabi School for Girls*

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Bald on Record Impoliteness	10	37%
Positive Impoliteness	12	44%
Negative Impoliteness	3	11%
Sarcasm or Mock Politeness	1	4%
Withhold Politeness	1	4%
Total	27	100%

Based on the table above, positive impoliteness is the most frequent strategy, appearing 12 times (44%), followed by bald on record impoliteness with 10 occurrences

(37%). Negative impoliteness appears 3 times (11%), while sarcasm or mock politeness and withhold politeness each occur once (4%). This distribution indicates that conflict in the series is primarily organized through attacks on social acceptance, reputation, and belonging, followed by direct unmitigated confrontation. The pattern is broadly consistent with studies showing that bullying and conflict narratives frequently rely on explicit face attack and social exclusion, although the relative dominance of strategies varies according to data selection and analytical scope (Azizah et al., 2024; Fatimah & Mas'adi, 2025). The variation across studies reinforces Dacalanio et al.'s (2024) observation that impoliteness strategies are context-dependent and shaped by interactional triggers (Dacalanio et al., 2024). In the present data, positive impoliteness is used to ridicule, stigmatize, belittle, and exclude; bald on record impoliteness directly humiliates and asserts superiority; negative impoliteness restricts autonomy; sarcasm expresses criticism indirectly; and withhold politeness operates as refusal or passive resistance. Overall, impoliteness functions as a mechanism for constructing social exclusion, maintaining group boundaries, and reinforcing hierarchy rather than merely expressing negative emotion.

1. **Bald on Record Impoliteness**

This first strategy can be described as impoliteness that is explicit, direct, and without any softening. Face-threatening acts are delivered plainly, unambiguously, and concisely in situations where face is neither ignored nor avoided (Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017). Statements like "You're so stupid!" in a conflict situation are the simplest examples of this strategy. In certain situations, the use of such blunt language may occur without the intention of actually causing offense. Nevertheless, its impact on the conversation partner cannot simply be ignored (Kelvin & Rudianto, 2023, p. 478). In the series *AlRawabi School for Girls*, the Bald on Record Impoliteness strategy is found in several scenes, including the following:

The first instance of this strategy appears in Episode 2 at minute 03:50, when an incident occurred in the school corridor where Layan and her friends deliberately knocked over a bucket belonging to a cleaning staff named Sumayya. Layan's reaction was quite surprising when she screamed at her.

ليان: "سمية! شاهدي! ها قد اتسخ حذائي بسببك. يا للقرف."

Layan: "Sumayya! Watch out! You're getting my shoes dirty, disgusting!"

This utterance is categorized as *Bald on Record Impoliteness* because Layan attacks Sumayya directly, without employing any politeness strategies. The word 'disgusting' is an explicit insult that demeans the listener and threatens her positive face. Culpeper defines *Bald on Record Impoliteness* as an act of directly, clearly, and unambiguously threatening a person's dignity (Culpeper, 1996b). More than just an expression of impoliteness, this utterance functions as a mechanism of humiliation and domination that positions Sumayya as an inferior party unworthy of respect. By humiliating her in front of others, Layan reinforces the social hierarchy between students and school staff. In this context, Layan uses language as a tool of domination, not merely as an outlet for anger. Individuals in higher social positions assert their authority over those perceived as socially inferior. At AlRawabi School for Girls, impoliteness becomes a means of reinforcing social boundaries while legitimizing an exclusive attitude toward those of lower status. This findings is in line with (Angelita & Saiful, 2023), who argue that the *bald on record* strategy is employed when a speaker deliberately chooses not to maintain social relationships and opting instead for a direct, uncompromising attack. In this study, this strategy not only serves to express negative emotions but also to assert control and exert pressure on individuals in a weaker position. This interpretation is consistent with recent work that conceptualizes impoliteness as inseparable from power: face attack can authorize dominance, delegitimize the target, and reproduce unequal interactional positions (Fan, 2025). It also parallels discourse-oriented research showing that language can reproduce symbolic power and ideological positioning beyond the literal content of an utterance (Fajri, 2025; Mulyadi et al., 2025).

Another instance of this strategy appears in Episode 4 at minute 08:25, a moment of jealousy and personal threat, Riana felt threatened and couldn't accept it, leading her to confront Noaf directly.

رانيا: "إنك رخيصة حقا."
Riana: "You're just cheap."

The utterance "You're cheap" is categorized as *Bald on Record Impoliteness* because Rania attached a direct insult at Noaf. This insult was not merely an expression of jealousy, by using the word "cheap," Rania attached a negative moral label to Noaf and questioned her social worth. The target is not a specific behavior, but rather a personal reputation that portrays Noaf as someone lacking dignity in the eyes of her peer group. The utterance is a

response to insecurity, as well as an attempt to delegitimize Noaf as a competitor. By belittling Noaf, Rania positions herself as the party entitled to evaluate and judge a person's worth, demonstrating how power can be expressed through language. This process creates a distinction between those considered respectable and those who are not, thereby contributing to the reproduction of social hierarchy within peer relationships. At AlRawabi School for Girls, impoliteness functions not only as an emotional reaction but also as a social strategy to protect social status, assert superiority, and marginalize perceived threats within the social environment. This finding is consistent with (Firnanda et al., 2025b), which found that the bald on record strategy works through direct, unmitigated utterances designed to maximize reputational damage and provoke direct confrontation in the public domains.

This strategy also surfaces in a rather unexpected setting in Episode 2 at minute 25:20, during a bullying education session held in the school auditorium, where students are asked to act out bullying behavior. Noaf and Layan are chosen to participate.

نوف: "متى استحمت آخر مرة؟ في العيد؟ هل سبق أن سمعت بالحمام؟ رائتك نتنة فعلا."

Noaf: "You stink! When was the last time you took a shower? During Eid?"

Have you ever heard of taking a shower?"

This utterance is classified as *Bald on Record Impoliteness* because Noaf attacks Layan directly, without any attempt at politeness. The phrase "You smell" is an explicit insult delivered without ambiguity, while the rhetorical question that follows reinforces this act that threatens Layan's dignity. The utterance functions as a mechanism of humiliation and degradation of self-worth. Although this interaction occurred during a bullying education activity, without a written script, the speakers spontaneously constructed a bullying scenario through language. In this context, power operates discursively through control over how the listener is represented. This utterance also demonstrates that Bald on Record Impoliteness can serve not only as a direct verbal attack but also contribute as a symbolic act of degradation that positions the target as socially undesirable and unworthy of inclusion. Insults regarding hygiene often serve a social function that separates individuals deemed acceptable from those considered inferior. By associating Layan with poor hygiene, Noaf symbolically places her in a lower social position. At *AlRawabi School for Girls*, language is used to categorize individuals, marginalize those deemed different, and reinforce existing social hierarchy.

2. Positive Impoliteness

While Bald on Record works by launching direct attacks, Positive Impoliteness operates in a slightly different yet equally hurtful way. This strategy deliberately undermines a person's need to be valued, acknowledged, and accepted by their social environment (Nasirli, 2021, p. 17). Comments like "No one cares about your opinion" are the most direct, brief examples yet sufficient to make someone feel worthless and socially marginalized. This strategy is quite terrifying because, while it may seem ordinary from the outside, its impact on the victim's self-esteem can be profound. Social rejection is one of the most difficult wounds to ignore. In the series *AlRawabi School for Girls*, Positive Impoliteness strategy is found in several scenes, including the following:

This strategy is first observed in Episode 1 at minute 41:50, during a meeting between students, parents, and school officials held after the bullying incident perpetrated by Layan and her friend against Mariam, Layan did not admit to her actions but instead accused Mariam of behaving inappropriately in the locker room. Ruqayyah also supported Layan's accusation by claiming that Mariam often looked at them strangely while they were changing clothes. These statements were also corroborated by several classmates, though no evidence supported them.

ليان: "كنا في غرفة تبديل الملابس بعد خصة الرياضة خصة الرياضة، ولاحظت أن مريم كانت تراقبني أثناء تبديل ملابسني. فطلبت منها الكفّ عن ذاك، لكن سرعان ما اقتربت مني وامسكت بأعضائي".

رقياً: "لطالما كانت ترمقنا مريم بنظرات غريبة أثناء تبديلنا الملابس".

Layan: "We were in the locker room after gym class, and I noticed that Mariam was watching me undress. I asked her to stop, but then she came closer and she touched me".

Ruqayyah: "to be honest, Mariam always gave us weird looks when we're in the changing rooms".

These utterances are categorized as Positive Impoliteness because they attack Mariam's social identity by creating a negative image, rather than through direct insults. By making these statements in a formal forum attended by students, parents, and school officials, Layan and her friends amplified the impact on Mariam's social standing. These statements encouraged others to view her with suspicion and distrust, making it difficult

for her to defend herself or gain support from those around her. As more students endorse the accusations, Mariam becomes increasingly isolated. This data demonstrates that impoliteness can be realized without a single harsh word, through the manipulation of collective perception, dominant individuals damage others' reputations, protect their own positions, and legitimize their marginalization within the group. This finding is in line with the research by (Aminuddin & Musfiroh, 2025), which shows that positive impoliteness functions as a powerful tool to deliberately undermine the target's positive image by damaging their social reputation, mocking their identity, and imposing social exclusion.

Another instance of this strategy appears in Episode 2 at minute 06:40, a classroom scene when a heavyset student walked in and politely greeted Layan and her friends. Rather than responding with basic courtesy, Layan responded cruelly in front of the entire classmate.

ليان: "كم شخصاً أكلت على الفطور؟"

Layan: "How many people did you eat for breakfast this morning?"

This utterance is categorized as *Positive Impoliteness* because Layan undermines a person's positive face through mockery and ridicule. Culpeper defines positive impoliteness as an attack on a person's desire to be valued and accepted by others, taking various forms such as ignoring a person's presence, excluding them from a group or activity, behaving coldly and indifferently, using taboo words, or even calling someone by a derogatory nickname (Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017). The incident occurred when a student entered the classroom and greeted Layan, a common act of social participation, but Layan responded with mockery, openly rejecting that attempt at inclusion. This utterance is not merely an insult but a signal that the student is not fully accepted within the group. By using the hyperbole of "eating people for breakfast," Layan portrays the student as abnormal and excessive, turning personal characteristics into the subject of a joke in front of classmates. This insult functions as body shaming that reduces a person's identity to their physical appearance, and reflects power relations within the school environment. As a socially influential student, Layan is able to determine how others are perceived within and treated with the group. Positive Impoliteness becomes the mechanism by which social authority is exercised and group boundaries are maintained.

Perhaps the most emotionally striking instance of Positive Impoliteness in the entire series comes not from a peer, but from a mother. In Episode 4 at minute 30:00, the story of Ruqayyah, a hijabi girl who became entangled in a scandal after her photos without hijab were shared and spread around without her consent, causing her mother to be ashamed of her own daughter.

أم رقيّا: "أتعرفين يا رقيّا؟ كنت خائفة عليك طوال عمري. لأنك لا فرصة أمامك أصلاً. إذ لم تُولدي بجمال ربّاني كأختك."

Ruqayyah's Mother: "You know, Ruqayyah, I'm always worried about you. Because you have almost no chance, you're not pretty nor as charismatic as your sisters."

This utterance represents perhaps the most emotionally striking example of Positive Impoliteness in the entire series, because it occurs in the place that should be the safest space of all: the relationship between mother and daughter, which should be filled with care and unconditional support. Rather than offering support during a difficult situation, Ruqayyah's mother directly compares her to her sisters, a comparison that does not favor Ruqayyah in any way. The comparison does not merely insult Ruqayyah. It also created a hierarchy of values within the family, in which her sisters are held up as the standard of femininity and attractiveness, while Ruqayyah is positioned as deficient. The episode also illustrates how gendered expectations and social evaluation become embedded in interpersonal discourse. This broader mechanism resonates with research on gender discrimination in Arab television drama, where discourse and narrative positioning contribute to unequal representations of women (Wardah & Surur, 2025).

This interaction reflects the operation of power relations within the family. The mother's position as a parent lends her evaluation a weight that cannot be ignored. Through comparisons and negative judgments, she defines how Ruqayyah should view herself and how she measures her worth in relations to others. This utterance reveals that power relations symbolically, not through prohibitions or punishments, but through the shaping of self-perception. By portraying Ruqayyah as inferior to her sisters, her mother implicitly establishes a hierarchy among siblings based on socially valued. In this context, *Positive Impoliteness* serves not only as a form of criticism but also as a mechanism that legitimizes unequal perceptions. The utterance illustrates that power operates even within one's own family, through words that position them as individuals of lesser worth.

3. Negative Impoliteness

While previous strategies that target a person's need for acceptance, Negative Impoliteness works by targeting something equally important: a person's need to be free from pressure and coercion by others. In social life, everyone has what is known as a negative face, a fundamental desire not to be disturbed, coerced, or controlled by others (Aminuddin & Musfiroh, 2025). When someone feels that their freedom and autonomy have been violated, the most common response is anger or frustration. This is what makes this strategy feel like more than just ordinary harsh words; it touches on something far more fundamental within a person. In the series *AlRawabi School for Girls*, the Negative Impoliteness strategy is found in several scenes:

This strategy is clearly illustrated in Episode 5 at minute 03:55 during on the way to a school trip, when Layan unexpectedly discovers a gun inside the car belonging to her older brother, Hazem. Layan's question is entirely reasonable, that a gun is a dangerous object whose presence naturally warrants an explanation. However, rather than responding calmly, Hazem reacts with disproportionate aggression.

ليان: "لماذا تحمل مسدساً في السيارة؟"
 حازم: "لا شأن لك بهذا!! وفي المرة القادمة لا تنقبي في أغراضي!"
 Layan: "Why do you have a gun in your car?"

Hazem responded aggressively: "None of your business! Don't touch my thing!"

Hazem's response is categorized as *Negative Impoliteness* because he directly infringes on Layan's freedom of action. According to Culpeper (Culpeper, 1996b), Negative impoliteness deliberately strips away the freedom by intimidating, belittling, or violating personal space, whether physically or verbally, linking the listener to negative things, or openly demonstrating that the listener is powerless and dependent on the speaker. Hazem's response also reflects the power relations at play in sibling relationships. Although Layan initiated the conversation, Hazem still asserted authority by determining what could be known and what actions were permitted. This utterance demonstrates how *Negative Impoliteness* can function as a control mechanism that restricts others' freedom of action and maintains dominance within interpersonal relationships.

The following utterance serves not only as an emotional response but also as a way to maintain distance and set boundaries. This strategy also surfaces in a rather unexpected setting in Episode 3 at minute 28:15, during a school charity event, when Mariam and her

friends began carrying out their plan for revenge against Layan and her friends, with Ruqayyah as their first target. When Ruqayyah was buying drinks for her friends, Dina deliberately bumped into her, causing the drink to spill and soak her clothes. Dina then offered to help, but Ruqayyah refused the physical contact and said:

رقياً: "ابتعدي عني! اتركيني بحالي فحسب!"
Ruqayyah: "Don't touch me! Just back off!"

Ruqayyah's utterance is categorized as negative impoliteness because she explicitly rejected Dina's attempt to approach and assist her. This command establishes a clear boundary, signaling that further involvement is unwanted. Ruqayyah did not respond to Dina's offer of help; she immediately distanced herself from the interaction and prevented any form of interpersonal closeness. The impoliteness here does not manifest through insults or verbal degradation, but rather through the denial of access, both physically and interpersonally. At AlRawabi School for Girls, negative impoliteness is not always rooted in hostility. Sometimes it is a mechanism for managing social relationships, setting boundaries, and maintaining control over interactions. This finding is supported with (Angelita & Saiful, 2023), who state that negative impoliteness is deeply driven by power asymmetry and used by dominant individuals to show a clear superiority over those considered socially inferior.

4. Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

While previous strategies involve direct attacks, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness operates through irony and implicature, when the speaker's true intended meaning is the opposite of what is actually said (Sari et al., 2019, p. 230). Sarcasm or Mock Politeness is an act of impoliteness carried out with the purpose of mocking or attacking the conversation partner (Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017). An example is, "Wow, you're really amazing... always late!" That sentence sounds like a compliment, but everyone knows it isn't. That's precisely where its power: the target is attacked, but the speaker can hide behind words that seem polite. In the series *AlRawabi School for Girls*, the Sarcasm or Mock Politeness strategy is found in several scenes:

This strategy surfaces in Episode 5 at minute 27:10, in the dining hall. After Noaf was saved by Layan from an incident, Noaf forgot about the revenge plan she had made together with Mariam and Dina. Noaf finds herself facing Mariam's sharp displeasure and leading to a dispute at the dining hall.

مريم: "ألهدا ما عدت قادرة على مراقبة محادثات ليان؟ لا أصدق. لا أصدق فعلاً."

Mariam: "Is that the reason I got cut off from Layan's WhatsApp? Incredible, I really can't believe it."

Mariam's utterance is an example of *Sarcasm or Mock Politeness* because she uses a word that is conventionally positive to express her disappointment. The word "incredible" in this context is not meant to express admiration or amazement, but rather serves as an ironic signal to convey her disappointment with Noaf's behavior. The utterance arises when Noaf forgets her plans with Mariam and Dina after Layan rescues her from an incident, making Mariam feel neglected. However, Mariam does not insult her directly, she chooses a sarcastic response to convey her sense of betrayal. Mariam's criticism stems from her perception that she has been sidelined after Noaf reconnected with Layan. This interaction also reflects the subtle negotiation of power relations between the characters. Although not the dominant position in the group, Mariam uses sarcasm as a tool of passively resisting exclusion. By openly questioning Noaf's decision, she refuses her perspective within the interaction. In the context of *AlRawabi School for Girls*, sarcasm or mock politeness functions not only as an indirect expression of frustration but also as a form of passive resistance and a subtle challenge to shifting power dynamics within peer relationships. The example also supports recent pragmatic research showing that impoliteness-related meaning may be produced through a mismatch between surface wording and interactional intention; apparently positive or polite expressions can acquire confrontational force through context and irony (del Saz-Rubio, 2023; Núñez Pertejo & Palacios Martínez, 2025).

5. Withhold Politeness

The final strategy proposed by Culpeper is *Withholding Politeness*. The impoliteness here manifests not in what is said, but in what is deliberately left unsaid. Withhold politeness occurs when someone deliberately withholds a polite response that should be given in a social situation (Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017). Failing to greet someone when passing by, not saying thank you after receiving help, not responding when someone speaks, these may seem trivial, but in a context where such polite actions have become a reasonable social expectation, their absence speaks remarkably loudly (Dunggio et al., 2024, p. 9). This deliberate silence is not a matter of forgetfulness or inattention, but a statement that the person in front of you is not important enough to warrant a response, not worthy

of acknowledgment, or that you choose not to engage. In the series *AlRawabi School for Girls*, the Withhold Politeness strategy is found in several scenes:

This strategy is illustrated in a bedroom during a school trip, where Layan and Noaf are assigned as roommates. Feeling deeply uncomfortable with the arrangement, Layan makes her displeasure known with a cutting remark directed at Noaf in Episode 5 at minute 10:05.

ليان: "كيف صرت معنا في الغرفة؟"

Layan: "Why do you even get to share a room with us?"

In a situation where a direct question normatively demands an answer, Noaf chooses to remain silent. It is Noaf's deliberate silence in response to Layan's utterance that constitutes Withholding Politeness, not Layan's utterance itself. Noaf's silence was not a coincidence; it was a deliberate and conscious choice. It can be interpreted as a refusal to engage, an unwillingness to acknowledge, or even a form of passive resistance. Through her question, Layan symbolically assumes the authority to determine who belongs to the group and who does not. This utterance may reflect a social hierarchy in which certain individuals hold greater influence over inclusion and exclusion. However, Noaf's silence complicates this hierarchy not by openly challenging it, but by refusing to play by the established rules. In the context, the interaction demonstrates that a sense of belonging and power are negotiated not only through words, but also through what is left unsaid and that silence itself can function as a form of passive resistance against dominant social positioning. This finding is in line with (Firnanda et al., 2025b) who define withholding politeness as a deliberate act of refraining from the expected polite response or remaining completely silent, in social situations where normal interaction is expected.

After examining the five strategies, the findings show that linguistic impoliteness in *AlRawabi School for Girls* operates as an instrument for establishing and maintaining social hierarchy. The predominance of positive impoliteness (44%) and bald on record impoliteness (37%) reflects a conflict structure built around exclusion, body shaming, reputational damage, labeling, and direct humiliation. These strategies target the desire to be accepted, valued, and included, making face attack especially consequential in adolescent peer groups. This interpretation is supported by recent work linking

impoliteness to power, identity, and the ability to shape public or interpersonal positioning (Fan, 2025; Rahma et al., 2025; Xie & Fan, 2024). At the same time, the cultural meaning of an impolite act cannot be separated from socially specific expectations concerning status, appropriate conduct, and identity (Wijayanto, 2025). In the series, dominant characters use linguistic aggression not only to express hostility but to define who is respectable, who belongs, and who may speak with authority.

Sarcasm or mock politeness and withhold politeness each appear only once (4%). Their low frequency suggests that the conflict structure of the series privileges visible confrontation over more covert forms of resistance, although indirect meaning remains pragmatically significant. The comparison with prior research also clarifies this study's contribution. Fatimah and Mas'adi (2025) establish the relevance of Culpeper's framework to verbal bullying in the same series (Fatimah & Mas'adi, 2025); the present study extends the discussion by mapping all five strategy categories across 27 selected utterances and relating their distribution to multiple relational domains, including peer, staff-student, sibling, and family interactions. A further methodological implication concerns audiovisual mediation: because English subtitles may adapt Jordanian dialect and cultural expressions, pragmatic interpretation should remain anchored in the original Arabic audio and scene context rather than subtitle wording alone (Al-Harabsheh et al., 2025; Malkawi et al., 2025). Overall, linguistic impoliteness in the series is best understood as a social practice through which characters construct hierarchy, police group boundaries, exercise symbolic power, and sometimes resist dominant positioning.

D. Conclusion

This study identified five linguistic impoliteness strategies in the Netflix series *AlRawabi School for Girls* based on Culpeper's theory: Bald on Record Impoliteness, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, and Withhold Politeness. Positive Impoliteness is the most dominant strategy (44%), followed by Bald on Record Impoliteness (37%). These strategies do not function merely as rude language; they are instruments for establishing and maintaining power relations and social hierarchies, determining who holds authority, who is excluded, and how individuals are positioned within the social order. Positive impoliteness is closely associated with social exclusion, labeling, ridicule, and reputational attack, whereas bald on record impoliteness realizes direct domination through explicit insults and humiliation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to impoliteness research by connecting strategy classification with the social functions of language in the construction of power relations and hierarchy. Its novelty lies not in being the first Culpeper-based study of *AlRawabi School for Girls*, but in combining all five strategy categories, their quantitative distribution across 27 selected utterances, and contextual interpretation across several relationship types. Practically, the findings help explain how language can operate as intimidation, symbolic violence, exclusion, and resistance in adolescent social settings. The study remains limited to one series and one principal theoretical framework; future research may compare seasons, cultures, media genres, or audience reception and may integrate gender, identity, multimodality, and translation perspectives.

Bibliography

- Al-Harabsheh, A., Malkawi, M., & Al-Motlak, R. (2025). Strategies in subtitling Jordanian dialect on Netflix: A case study of *AlRawabi School for Girls*. *SAGE Open*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241304190>
- Aminuddin, M., & Musfiroh, T. (2025). Ketidaksantunan dalam Komentar Publik pada Video Pidato Perdana Presiden Prabowo: Kajian Sosiopragmatik. *Adabiyāt: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 9(1), 25–48. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajbs.2025.090102>
- Angelita, T., & Saiful, M. (2023). Strategi ketidaksantunan berbahasa dalam film Taksi (1990): kajian pragmatik. *Jurnal Genre*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.26555/jg.v5i1.7297>
- Azizah, N., Fi'aunillah, T. K., & Swasono, E. P. (2024). Impoliteness in the issue of bullying in the Wonder movie (2017). *Journal of Research on English and Language Learning (J-REaLL)*, 5(2), 194–204. <https://doi.org/10.33474/j-reall.v5i2.21206>
- Azza, N. N., Solihin, I., & Khomisah, K. (2025). Fokalisasi perundungan dalam film Madrasatur-Rawaby Lil Banat karya Tima Shomali: Kajian naratologi Gerard Genette. *Riwayat: Educational Journal of History and Humanities*, 8(3), 2971–2987. <https://doi.org/10.24815/jr.v8i3.47448>
- Barus, F. A., & Isra, M. (2025). Bahasa Sebagai Cermin Relasi Kuasa dalam Komunikasi Antara Pekerja dan Manajemen di Lingkungan Institut Teknologi Sawit Indonesia: Analisis Wacana Kritis. *Triangulasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Kebahasaan, Kesastraan, Dan Pembelajaran*, 5(2), 129–137. <https://doi.org/10.55215/triangulasi.v5i2.28>
- Culpeper, J. (1996a). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25(3), 349–367. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(95\)00014-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(95)00014-3)
- Culpeper, J. (1996b). Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(95\)00014-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(95)00014-3)
- Culpeper, J. (2005). Impoliteness and Entertainment in the Television Quiz Show: The Weakest Link. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1(1), 35–72. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.35>
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511975752>
- Culpeper, J., & Terkourafi, M. (2017). Pragmatic Approaches (Im)politeness. In: Culpeper, J., Haugh, M., Kádár, D. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)politeness*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-37508-7_2

- Dacalanio, M. A. A., Cani, S. M., Osiba, G. T., & Syting, C. J. O. (2024). Impoliteness triggers and strategies in students' complaints: A socio-pragmatic analysis. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 4(1), 56-74. <https://doi.org/10.54012/jcell.v4i1.308>
- Damayanti, Y., & Rahardi, R. K. (2025). Ketidaksantunan Berbahasa pada Generasi Milenial dalam Platform Media Sosial Instagram dalam Perspektif Jonathan Culpaper. *Imajeri: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*, 08(1), 17-36. <https://doi.org/10.22236/imajeri.v8i1.17478>
- del Saz-Rubio, M. M. (2023). Assessing impoliteness-related language in response to a season's greeting posted by the Spanish and English Prime Ministers on Twitter. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 206, 31-55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.01.010>
- Dunggio, A. S., Bay, I. W., & Ali, S. W. (2024). Impoliteness Strategies Used in The Movie Do Revenge. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya*, 14(3), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.37905/jbsb.v14i3.28894>
- Fajri, A. (2025). Rhetorical study of ideological representation in public discourse: A critical analysis of socio-cultural discourse. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Pusaka Cendekia*, 1(1), 61-71. <https://doi.org/10.65427/puscen.v1i1.6>
- Fajri, A., & Zulhelmi, A. (2023). POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE. *An-Nahdah Al-'Arabiyah*, 3(2), 109-120.
- Fan, W. (2025). Impoliteness, power and ethics. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 21(2), 319-341. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2024-0070>
- Fatimah, E. N., & Mas'adi, M. A. (2025). Verbal bullying and impoliteness strategies in AlRawabi School for Girls: A pragmatic analysis using Culpeper's theory. *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastran, Dan Budaya*, 15(1), 25-51. <https://doi.org/10.26714/lensa.15.1.2025.25-51>
- Firnanda, A., Putikadyanto, A. P. A., Adriana, I., Wardani, M. A. S., Ihsan, Z., Ayu, M., Wardani, S., & Ihsan, Z. (2025a). Ketidaksantunan Interaksi Jual Beli Akun Maz Aruel di TikTok: Analisis Siber Pragmatik Perspektif Jonathan Culpeper. *Ghâncaran: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia, Special Ed*, 1318-1337. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ghancaran.vi.21763>
- Firnanda, A., Putikadyanto, A. P. A., Adriana, I., Wardani, M. A. S., Ihsan, Z., Ayu, M., Wardani, S., & Ihsan, Z. (2025b). Ketidaksantunan Interaksi Jual Beli Akun Maz Aruel di TikTok: Analisis Siber Pragmatik Perspektif Jonathan Culpeper. *Ghâncaran: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia, Special Ed*, 1318-1337. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ghancaran.vi.21763>
- Karman. (2017). Bahasa dan Kekuasaan: Peran Bahasa Sebagai Instrumen Simbolik Peraih Kekuasaan Versi Bourdieu. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi Dan Media*, 21(2), 235-246. <https://doi.org/10.31445/jskm.2017.210208>
- Kelvin, & Rudianto, G. (2023). An Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies in "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" Movie. *IDEAS: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(1), 471-481. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v11i1.3877>
- Khoironi, H., & Santosa, R. (2024). Pola Strategi dan Respons Ketidaksantunan dalam Serial Berbahasa Arab "Omar": Kajian Pragmatik. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Linguistik Dan Sastra (SEMANTIKS)*. <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/prosidingsemantiks/article/view/100298>
- Malkawi, M., Hudaib, S., & Al-Harashsheh, A. (2025). Subtitling Jordanian cultural expressions into English on Netflix: A case study of AlRawabi School for Girls Season 2. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12, Article 1586.

- <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05877-7>
- Mulyadi, M. I., Shaliha, C. A. A., Jafar, A., Azhari, & Fajri, A. (2025). How Arabic Media Construct Armed Conflict: A Corpus-Driven Concordance Analysis. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Pusaka Cendekia*, 1(3), 114–126. <https://doi.org/10.65427/puscen.v1i3.15>
- Nasirli, A. (2021). An Analysis Of Linguistic Impoliteness In The Selected American Movies. *Dünya Dilleri, Edebiyatları ve Çeviri Çalışmaları Dergisi (DEÇ)*, 2(1), 11–31. <https://doi.org/izlik.org/JA48WT59KF>
- Novera, T., & Amalia, Y. S. (2025). An Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies Used by Wednesday Addams in Netflix's Wednesday Season 1. *Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*, 5(2), 282–307. <https://doi.org/10.47766/jetlee.v5i2.6462>
- Núñez Pertejo, P., & Palacios Martínez, I. M. (2025). The use of please in the expression of (im)politeness in the language of London teenagers and adults. *Language Sciences*, 108, 101703. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2024.101703>
- Rahma, A. V, Hutagalung, A. S. B., Nasution, D. B. H., Lhaksmi, M., & Rangkuti, R. (2025). An analysis of impoliteness strategies in Indonesia issue on X. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 10(6), 1009–1020. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1652>
- Rinaldi, R., Mutia, S., & Marsithah, I. (2025). The use of swear word in the movie "Fast and Furious 5." *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Pusaka Cendekia*, 1(3), 143–148. <https://doi.org/10.65427/puscen.v1i3.18>
- Sari, I. P., Emmiyati, N., & Maharani, S. (2019). Impoliteness Strategies in Peter Rabbit Movie. *Elite Journal*, 6(2), 222–238. <https://doi.org/10.24252/elite.v6i2a9>
- Simanjuntak, H. M., & Simatupang, E. C. M. (2024). Impoliteness strategies in the third Indonesia presidential debate 2024: Pragmatics research. *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, Dan Sastra*, 10(3), 3064–3073. <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v10i3.4080>
- Wardah, Y. S., & Surur, M. (2025). Gender Discrimination in The Drama Series The Exchange: A Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis. *An-Nahdah Al-'Arabiyah*, 5(1), 129–153. <https://doi.org/10.22373/nahdah.v5i1.6543>
- Wijayanto, A. (2025). Impoliteness in Javanese: Beyond breaching honorifics. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 29(2), 386–408. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-37907>
- Xie, C., & Fan, W. (2024). Theorizing impoliteness: A Levinasian perspective. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 20(1), 157–181. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2023-0080>
- Yusuf, A. B., & Resha, F. (2025). Cyberpragmatics of politeness in netizens' comments on the Indonesian President's Instagram posts. *Lingue: Jurnal Bahasa, Budaya, Dan Sastra*, 7(1), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.33477/lingue.v7i1.9455>
- Zubaidah, S., & Hasaniyah, N. (2025). Media Power and the Construction of Reality: A Critical Discourse Analysis Using Teun A. Van Dijk's Model on the News of the Exploding Pager on Al Jazeera Net. *An-Nahdah Al-'Arabiyah*, 5(2), 245–258. <https://doi.org/10.22373/nahdah.v5i2.7649>