

Language as A Tool of Restriction in Arabic: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract—This study explores the strategies of negative impoliteness in the Arabic-language series *Omar* (episodes 1–10). Grounded in Culpeper's (1996) theory of impoliteness strategies. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study design. Data were purposively selected from transcripts of the series and analyzed inductively using Miles and Huberman's (1994) model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Negative impoliteness, which targets the interlocutor's negative face or their right to autonomy and freedom from imposition, is identified as a dominant strategy within the series. This strategy manifests in various verbal behaviors such as intimidation, belittlement, invasion of personal space, direct association with negative traits, explicit reminders of indebtedness, and obstruction of freedom of action. By focusing specifically on negative impoliteness, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how this strategy operates in verbal interactions, how it affects communication dynamics, and how interlocutors respond to such face-threatening acts. The findings contribute to enriching sociopragmatic knowledge on negative impoliteness, particularly in historical drama contexts, and can serve as a reference for further research on impoliteness and communication strategies in media.

Keywords—impoliteness strategies; negative impoliteness; Arabic serial; pragmatics

I. INTRODUCTION

Culpeper (1996) developed the theory of rudeness strategies by referring to Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1987). If politeness is able to protect the face (Face), conversely, rudeness is the opposite, which is a communication strategy deliberately designed to attack the face. This strategy aims to create social conflict and disharmony in interactions. Culpeper identifies five main strategies of rudeness: outright rudeness, positive rudeness, negative rudeness, sarcasm or pseudo-politeness, and withholding politeness.

One example of how immodesty in movies can reflect the use of language in real life is seen in the series "Omar," which not only presents the history of Islamic civilization but also depicts social dynamics through the use of language that suggests immodesty. In the Omar series, there are many negative impoliteness. Negative impoliteness is impoliteness directed at a negative face, namely a person's right to be free from coercion or harassment.

These rude strategies typically include bullying, threats, or behaviors that force someone to go beyond their comfort limits. For example, a speaker might force the interlocutor to reveal a secret or make a comment that invades their privacy. In addition, actions such as making others feel guilty excessively or restricting their movement space can also be considered a form of negative disrespect.

The Omar series has been the object of study in various previous studies. For example, Fathurrohman (2024) researched the series with a sociolinguistic approach that focused on curse speech, while Bydi (2022) analyzed it through a semiotic approach. As for Andini (2020) examine the aspect of translation by highlighting verb

sentences. Although it has been extensively researched, Omar's study still leaves room for exploration, especially in the analysis of strategies and responses to impoliteness with a sociopragmatic approach. The series was chosen because it showcased various forms of impoliteness in verbal interactions, both in the context of conflict between individuals and broader social tensions. In addition, as a historical drama, Omar presents a dialogue that represents the dynamics of communication in the early days of Islam, including how impoliteness was used as a strategy in disputes and how the characters responded to it in various situations.

Research on impoliteness in movies or series generally centers on impoliteness strategies (Khoironi et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2024; Angelita & Mukminin, 2023; Kelvin & Rudianto, 2023; Simanjuntak & Ambalegin, 2022; Putri, 2021). However, these studies have not specifically focused on one particular type of impoliteness strategy, especially negative impoliteness strategies. Focusing specifically on negative impoliteness is important because this strategy directly threatens the speech partner's negative face—their desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. By examining this type of impoliteness in detail, the research can provide deeper insights into how language is used to coerce, pressure, or control others in social interactions, and it highlights the subtle ways in which power and resistance manifest in communication. This focus can also offer practical benefits for understanding conflict, negotiation, and persuasion in real-life and media contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Impoliteness*

Impoliteness is an important aspect of pragmatics that focuses on communicative acts designed to attack a person's face. This concept was popularized by Culpeper (1996), who defined impoliteness as a communicative strategy that deliberately attacks the face and has the potential to trigger social conflict and disharmony. Culpeper et al. (2003) further developed this concept in response to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, which was considered to pay insufficient attention to the aspect of impoliteness. Two main weaknesses of the politeness theory are its ambiguous definition and its limitations in contexts where face threats are not significant. In subsequent research, Culpeper et al. (2003) emphasized that impoliteness occurs when a speaker deliberately attacks the interlocutor's face or when the hearer interprets the act as a face-threatening move. Impoliteness can lead to tension or conflict in interaction.

Bousfield and Locher (2008) support this view by emphasizing that impoliteness is behavior that aggravates face conditions in certain contexts. They relate this concept to Brown and Levinson's (1987) face theory, which distinguishes between two types of face:

1. Positive face, which refers to an individual's need to be accepted, respected, and liked by others.
2. Negative face, which refers to an individual's desire to be free from coercion, pressure, or intrusion.

Culpeper (2005) also identifies when impoliteness occurs. He explains that impoliteness arises when the speaker deliberately attacks the hearer's face or when the hearer perceives the speaker's behavior as a face-threatening act. Additionally, impoliteness may also occur as a combination of both situations. In social interactions, these face attacks are often associated with power dynamics, social distance, or the intensity of the relationship between speaker and hearer.

From the various perspectives put forward by scholars, impoliteness can be understood as a communicative act that attacks the interlocutor's face, has the potential to cause conflict, and deteriorates social relationships. This concept was developed as a critique of politeness theory, which is considered to have insufficiently addressed the aspect of impoliteness.

B. *Impoliteness Strategies*

Culpeper (1996) developed the theory of impoliteness strategies by referring to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. While politeness aims to protect the interlocutor's face, impoliteness is the opposite—a communicative strategy deliberately designed to attack face. This strategy seeks to create social conflict and disharmony in interaction. According to Culpeper (1996), impoliteness strategies are categorized into five main types:

1. Bald on Record Impoliteness

This strategy delivers a face-threatening act (FTA) directly and bluntly, without any attempt to mitigate the impact on the hearer's face. It is unsoftened and typically used in situations of open conflict, where the speaker shows no concern for the hearer's feelings or reactions.

2. Positive Impoliteness

This strategy aims to damage the hearer's positive face—the desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted in a social group. Forms of positive impoliteness include:

- a) Ignoring or snubbing the other
- b) Excluding the other from an activity

- c) Disassociating from the other
 - d) Showing disinterest, indifference, or lack of sympathy
 - e) Using inappropriate identity markers
 - f) Using language the hearer cannot understand
 - g) Seeking disagreement
 - h) Making the other feel uncomfortable
 - i) Using taboo words
 - j) Calling the other names or using derogatory nominations
3. Negative Impoliteness

This strategy targets the hearer's negative face—the desire to be free from imposition or interference. Forms of negative impoliteness include:

- a) Frightening the hearer
 - b) Condescending, scorning, or ridiculing
 - c) Invading the other's personal space
 - d) Explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect
 - e) Openly putting the other's indebtedness on record
 - f) Hindering or blocking the other's freedom of action
4. Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

This strategy appears to be polite on the surface but is actually intended to insult or belittle the hearer. It is indirect in nature, presenting itself as courteous while conveying the opposite meaning. Sarcasm involves utterances that seem neutral or even complimentary, but in context, are understood as mocking. Mock politeness refers to the speaker's use of conventional politeness forms with the hidden intention of criticizing, mocking, or embarrassing the hearer.

5. Withhold Politeness

This strategy occurs when the speaker fails to express politeness in situations where social norms expect it. Although passive, this form of impoliteness can still be face-threatening. For example, not saying "thank you" after receiving a gift can be interpreted as impolite behavior..

III. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study design. The focus of the research was on the negative impoliteness in the Arabic-language series *Omar* (episodes 1–10). The analysis was carried out using the theory of the discourtesy strategy from Culpeper (1996). Data in the form of speech containing strategies and responses of impoliteness were taken from the transcript of *Omar* series episodes 1–10 accessed through YouTube. Data selection was carried out purposively with pragmatic experts. Data analysis was conducted inductively using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The impoliteness strategy aimed at disrupting the freedom of action of others is called negative impoliteness. This strategy is manifested through various forms of verbal behavior that deliberately pressure the freedom and privacy of the interlocutor. Some forms of negative impoliteness include intimidating, belittling, violating personal space, directly associating the interlocutor with negative things, openly showing indebtedness, and obstructing the interlocutor's freedom of action.

A. Intimidating the Interlocutor

This strategy belongs to negative impoliteness because the speaker delivers threats to suppress the interlocutor's freedom. This strategy attacks the interlocutor's negative face, i.e., the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the research conducted, there are 14 utterances containing the strategy of intimidating the interlocutor. Below is an example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: The speech event happened when Abu Jahal kept provoking Abu Hudzaifah with insults about his faith and Salim's origins, making the conflict more heated. Abu Walid finally intervened and asserted that Abu Hudzaifah was his son, but Abu Jahal still blamed Abu Walid for letting his son follow Prophet Muhammad.

أبو جهل: بل ذكره أنك أبوه، فجنبك هذا. أما والله لقد كنت تعلم أنه آمن بمحمد منذ وقت وكنت تخفي. فإن كنت تعجز عن رده، فنحن نكفيناك.

Abu Jahal: He remembers that you are his father, so he cannot avoid you. By God, you have known for a long time that he believed in Muhammad, but you hid it. If you cannot stop him, we will do it for you.

أبو وليد: لا يمسه أحد بسوء إلا عفرت أنفه في التراب

Abu Walid: If anyone touches him with harm, I will strike until he regrets it.

Abu Jahal's utterance to Abu Walid, فإن كنت تخفي. (He remembers that you are his father, so he cannot avoid you. By God, you have known for a long time that he believed in Muhammad, but you hid it. If you cannot stop him, we will do it for you) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance shows that Abu Jahal does not give Abu Walid the freedom to take his own stance. He seems to force Abu Walid to act and accuses him of hiding something. This attacks Abu Walid's negative face because his desire to act according to his own choice is not respected. The strategy used is to intimidate the interlocutor. Abu Jahal warns that if Abu Walid does not act, he and his group will intervene. This pressure puts Abu Walid in a difficult position. This utterance also cornered Abu Walid because it contains an accusation that he is incapable of controlling his son.

B. Belittling the Interlocutor

This strategy is done by placing the interlocutor in a lower position, for example, by mentioning weaknesses or inability. This utterance threatens the interlocutor's freedom to maintain opinions or take actions normally. This strategy attacks the interlocutor's negative face, i.e., the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the research conducted, there are 6 utterances containing the strategy of belittling. Below is an example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: This speech event occurred when Khattab talked about their family's social position, which was considered unequal to other Quraysh clans. He emphasized the importance of wealth and trade as determinants of status.

عمر: ذكرت المال والتجارة. ألا أترج؟

Umar: You mentioned wealth and trade. May I trade too?

خطاب: تترج؟ وأين المال الذي تترج به؟

Khattab: You want to trade? But where is the money you will trade with?

عمر: عند أبي، الخطاب

Umar: With my father, Khattab.

Khattab's utterance to Umar, وأين المال الذي تترج به؟ (Trading? Where is the money you will trade with?) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance attacks Umar's negative face, his desire to be free to make decisions without disturbance. The strategy used is belittling. Khattab's question contains a condescending tone implying that Umar is not yet capable or worthy to trade, thus limiting Umar's freedom to act on his own.

C. Insulting the Interlocutor

This strategy is done by using expressions that directly lower the value or dignity of the interlocutor. The effect is that the interlocutor is not free to control the direction of conversation or keep a distance from the speaker. This strategy attacks the interlocutor's negative face, i.e., the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the research conducted, there are 2 utterances containing the strategy of insulting. Below is an example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: This speech event occurred when Ammar came home wounded after fighting with Abu Sufyan's group. His mother anxiously asked about the perpetrators, and Ammar finally admitted it was Abu Sufyan and others. His father was angry because Ammar disagreed with a Quraysh leader.

يسير: أبو سفيان؟ سيد عبد شمس؟ وما أنت بسيد من سادات قريش حتى تقارعه، فينال منك، وتنال منه كما تقول؟ هل جنت؟ ألا تتذكر من نحن؟

Yassir: Abu Sufyan? A leader from Bani Abd Syams? Who are you to dare fight him, one of Quraysh's leaders? You say you give and take? Are you crazy? Don't you remember who we are?

عمار: بلى. لسنا من قريش، إنما نحن من عنس، ونحن موالي بني مخزوم. وأمي كانت أمة لأبي حذيفة المخزومي. أعرف هذا كله يا أبتى، وإن نسيت، فقد ذكرني به سادات قريش وقتيائها

Ammar: Yes. We are not from Quraysh, but from Bani Ans, and we are allies of Bani Makzum. My mother was a slave of Abu Hudzaifah of Bani Makzum. I know all this, Father, and if I forget, Quraysh's leaders and youth remind me.

Yassir's utterance to Ammar, هل جنت؟ ألا تتذكر من نحن؟ (Are you crazy? Don't you remember who we are?) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance attacks Ammar's negative face by belittling his right to choose a particular stance or action based on his own thoughts and beliefs. The strategy used is insulting the interlocutor. Yassir states that Ammar's actions are unreasonable and inappropriate according to their social status. Utterances like "Are you crazy?" directly attack Ammar's integrity and sanity. This puts Ammar in a personally and socially

questionable position, as if his actions are not only wrong but also inappropriate for someone with their background.

D. Violating Personal Space

This strategy appears when the speaker crosses boundaries considered private by the interlocutor. This strategy attacks the interlocutor's negative face, i.e., the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the research conducted, there is 1 utterance containing the strategy of violating personal space. Below is an example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: This speech event occurred when Yassir felt anxious and questioned Ammar's habit of often leaving without a clear explanation, while Ammar seemed hesitant to answer openly.

يسير: إلى أين يا عمار؟

Yassir: Where are you going, Ammar?

عمار: إلى بعض الشأن يا أبتى

Ammar: I have some business to attend to, Father.

يسير: ما جئت منذ زمن تفارقتي، ثم تغيب وقتاً لا أدري ما تفعل. فإذا سألتك قلت، إلى بعض شأني، أي شأن هذا؟

Yassir: You've been leaving me for a long time, then disappearing for a while and I don't know what you're doing. When I ask you, you say, "Some business." What business?

عمار: (لا يرد)

Ammar: (No response)

Yassir's utterance to Ammar, (You've been leaving me for a long time, then disappearing for a while and I don't know what you're doing. When I ask, you just say: some business. What business is this?) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance shows that Yassir demands that Ammar explain things that Ammar wants to keep to himself. This attacks Ammar's negative face because he is pressured to share personal information that he actually wants to keep private. The strategy used violates personal space. He does not respect Ammar's desire not to explain in detail. This puts Ammar in a corner and he chooses not to answer.

E. Directly Associating the Interlocutor with Something Bad

This strategy is done by accusing or linking the interlocutor with things considered negative. This puts the interlocutor in an uncomfortable position and forces them to take responsibility for something. This strategy attacks the interlocutor's negative face, i.e., the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the research conducted, there are 9 utterances containing the strategy of directly associating the interlocutor with something bad. Below is an example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: This event happened when Walid reprimanded Abu Thalib because his nephew continued spreading teachings that offended Quraysh's beliefs. Walid warned that their patience had run out, and if Abu Thalib didn't stop him, they would fight back, including against Abu Thalib himself.

وليد: يا أبا طالب، هأنت تلقى وفدنا مرة أخرى وقد آنذاك في ذلك الحين وخاطبتك بكلام لين، فقلت لنا قولاً جميلاً ورددتنا رداً رقيقاً، حتى ظننا أنك فاعل ثم لم نجد إلا أن ابن أخيك قد مضى لما هو عليه، وكثر حوله الصباة، واتهمنا جهالنا بقلة الحيلة وتراخي العزيمة، حتى لا يكاد قائلهم يقول: إن لم تبادروا إليه، بادرنا ولم نسمع رأيكم. وها نحن اليوم قد مشينا إليكم مرة أخرى لنقول لك: وإنا والله لنصبر على هذا من شتم آلهتنا وأبائنا وتسفيه أحلامنا حتى تكفه عنا أو ننزله وإياك في ذلك حتى يهلك أحد الفريقين

Walid: Abu Thalib, you meet our delegation again. Previously, we warned you and spoke gently. You gave beautiful promises, and we thought you would act. But your nephew persisted, and many followed him. Some foolish people accused us of weakness and slackness, almost saying: if you don't act, we will, and we don't listen to you. We come again today to say: we will no longer tolerate those who insult our gods and ancestors and ridicule our dreams until you stop him or we will fight him and you until one side perishes.

أبو طالب: (لا يرد)

Abu Thalib: (No response)

Walid's utterance to Abu Thalib, (Now we come to you again to say we will no longer tolerate those who insult our gods and ancestors and ridicule our dreams until you stop him or we will fight him and you until one side is destroyed) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance directly associates Abu Thalib with the consequences of the Prophet Muhammad's preaching, which is seen as insulting Quraysh's beliefs. This attacks Abu Thalib's negative face because he is pressured to accept demands for his nephew's actions. The strategy used is directly associating the interlocutor with something bad. Walid explicitly holds Abu Thalib responsible for insults to Quraysh's beliefs and ancestors. The goal is to pressure Abu Thalib to stop his nephew

or face resistance from Quraysh's group. This way, Walid wants to create pressure so that Abu Thalib acts according to their wishes.

F. *Openly Showing That the Speech Partner Owes a Debt of Gratitude*

This strategy is carried out by reminding the speech partner of past help or services to make them feel obliged to repay it. This strategy attacks the negative face of the speech partner, namely, the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the conducted research, there are 4 utterance data containing the strategy of openly showing that the speech partner owes a debt of gratitude. The following is one example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: This event occurred when Abu Jahal confronted Ammar who had embraced Islam. Abu Jahal reminded Ammar of all the help and protection given in the past, then threatened to kill him if he did not return to the old religion. Ammar remained silent, showing his firmness of heart.

أبو جهل: أجريناكم وحفظناكم وأطعمناكم بل وزوجناكم ثم تذرون رأينا وتتبعون محمداً؟ أهذا خير ما تردون به الجميل أيها الجاحدون؟
إفما رجعت وإما أهلكناكم فاختاروا

Abu Jahal: We gave you protection and help. We fed you and even helped you marry. And now you leave our religion and follow Muhammad? Is this how you repay our kindness, you ungrateful ones? Either you return or we will kill you. Choose!

عمار: (لا يرد)

Ammar: (does not respond)

Abu Jahal's utterance to Ammar, "أجريناكم وحفظناكم وأطعمناكم بل وزوجناكم ثم تذرون رأينا وتتبعون محمداً؟ أهذا خير ما تردون به الجميل أيها الجاحدون؟" (We have given you protection and help, fed you, even helped you marry. But now you leave our religion and follow Muhammad? Is this how you repay our kindness, you ungrateful ones?) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance openly brings up the services given to Ammar as a form of pressure. It damages Ammar's negative face because he is forced to acknowledge the debt openly and is directed to repay it, even though it contradicts his own choice. Thus, Ammar is forced to accept demands that limit his freedom in determining his beliefs. The strategy used openly shows that the speech partner owes a debt of gratitude. Abu Jahal reminds Ammar about the help and protection that had been given. The goal is to pressure Ammar to return or face threats, causing guilt and a moral obligation on Ammar to obey Abu Jahal's wishes.

G. *Blocking the Freedom of Action of the Speech Partner*

This strategy occurs when the speaker tries to limit or forbid actions that the speech partner intends to do. This utterance interferes with the speech partner's right to act according to their own wishes. This strategy threatens to attack the negative face of the speech partner, namely the desire not to be disturbed and to have freedom of action. Based on the conducted research, there are 38 utterance data containing the strategy of blocking the freedom of action of the speech partner. The following is one example of data showing the use of this strategy:

Context: This conversation occurred when Umar bin Khattab began to be uneasy seeing more and more Quraysh people embracing Islam. He blamed Muhammad for all the chaos and even intended to kill him so that things could return to the way they were.

فاطمة: ما أنت بالذي يفعل هذا يا أخي. تصيب دماً زكياً بغير نفس. لم يرمك بحصاة ولا رفع عليك عصا ولا قهر بكلمة

Fatimah: You are not the one who does this, my brother. You will spill the blood of an innocent person. He did not throw a stone at you, nor raise a stick against you, nor oppress you with a word.

عمر: دم رجلين أهون من دماء الجماعة أجعلها فداء قومي

Umar: The blood of two men is less serious than the blood of the whole group. I make it a sacrifice for my people.

Fatimah's utterance to Umar, "ما أنت بالذي يفعل هذا يا أخي تصيب دماً زكياً بغير نفس" (You are not the one who does this, my brother. You will spill the blood of an innocent person without reason.) is a form of negative impoliteness. This utterance limits Umar's freedom to carry out the violent plan he wants to do. This utterance damages Umar's negative face, who wants to be free to decide his own actions. Although aimed at preventing violence, Fatimah has blocked Umar's freedom to make decisions. The strategy used is blocking the freedom of action of the speech partner. Fatimah prevents Umar from carrying out his plan by showing the consequences of his action of spilling innocent blood. The goal is to stop Umar's violent act, but this way still limits Umar's room to determine his choice.

V. CONCLUSION

. This study reveals that the negative impoliteness strategy focuses on efforts to disrupt the interlocutor's freedom of action, which is a direct attack on the negative face—the desire of an individual to be free from imposition and disturbance. This strategy is manifested through various forms of verbal behavior that deliberately pressure the

interlocutor's freedom and privacy, including intimidation, belittling, insulting, violating personal space, directly associating the interlocutor with something negative, openly reminding them of debts of gratitude, and blocking their freedom of action.

Each form of these substrategies exerts different pressures on the interlocutor, limiting their room to maneuver and freedom to make decisions as well as to maintain their dignity. The case examples analyzed in the Omar series demonstrate how negative impoliteness is employed in social and interpersonal conflict contexts, and how these strategies influence communication dynamics and the characters' responses.

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