Impoliteness Strategies in Munro's Selected Short Story "Face": Based on Culpeper's Theory

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Abstract

The present study investigates Culpeper's (1996, 2005) impoliteness strategies in English. It aims at describing the types of impoliteness strategies used in literature. In view of that, it is based on one of Alice Munro's short stories, namely "*Face*". The unnamed narrator of this story is born with a birthmark covering almost the entirety of one side of his face. There are four strategies found in the selected story: *bald on record impoliteness*, *positive impoliteness*, *negative impoliteness*, and *off record impoliteness*. Bald on record and negative impoliteness are the most frequent types, whereas, sarcasm/mock politeness do not exist in the story. The findings show that impoliteness is used very much in literature, particularly short stories.

Keywords: Impoliteness, Strategies, Short Story, Culpeper's Theory

استراتيجيات قلة الأدب في القصة القصيرة المختارة لمونرو"الوجه": بناءً على نظرية كولبيبر

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في استراتيجيات عدم التأدب لكولبيبر (١٩٩٦، ٢٠٠٥) في اللغة الإنكليزية. وتهدف إلى وصف أنواع من استراتيجيات عدم التأدب المستخدمة في الأدب. في ضوء ذلك، فهي تستند إلى إحدى قصص أليس مونرو القصيرة، وهي "الوجه". ولد الراوي الذي لم يُذكر اسمه لهذه القصة مع وحمة تغطي جانب واحد من وجهه بالكامل تقريبًا. توجد أربع استراتيجيات في القصة المختارة: قلة الأدب الصريحة، و قلة الأدب الإيجابية، و قلة الأدب السلبية، و قلة الأدب الغير صريحة. يعتبر الجفاء الصريح وقلة الأدب السلبية أكثر الأنواع شيوعًا، في حين أن تهذيب التهكم / السخرية غير موجود في القصة. تظهر النتائج أن اللامبالاة تستخدم بشكل كبير في الأدب، وخاصة القصص القصيرة.

1. Introduction

At the outset, it is important to know what the phenomenon of politeness exactly means before explaining the notion of impoliteness. Crystal (2008, p. 373) describes 'politeness' as a term used in sociolinguistics and pragmatics to describe linguistic elements that mediate social behaviour standards such as civility, rapport, deference, and distance. The use of particular discourse markers (e.g. please), proper tones of voice, and acceptable modes of address (e.g., the choice of intimate vs. distant pronouns, or first vs. last names) are examples of such characteristics. According to Bussman (1996, p. 916) the concept of 'face', which is essential to individuals in both good and negative ways, is central to politeness theory. One protects an interactant's negative face by obstructing or interfering with his/her actions and values as little as possible; one responds to an interactant's positive face

by endorsing and supporting the interactant's presumed positive self-image as much as feasible. Behaviours involving the speaker in breaking away from either of these face-maintaining inclinations are referred to as 'face-threatening behaviours'. Accordingly, the violation of one's face leads to 'impoliteness'.

The opposite phenomenon 'impoliteness' is as important as 'politeness'. However, there is no commonly accepted definition of 'impoliteness'. Accordingly, there is no solid agreement to what 'impoliteness' actually is. The normal phenomenon in the social interaction is politeness, which means to keep harmony and communication, besides showing respect to others. It is the salient and the abnormal behaviour in the interaction which causes the disharmony. In this respect, impoliteness is described as:

1. Communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony, (Culpeper, 2011, p. 19).

2. Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2).

3. Impoliteness is claimed to be 'negative', and generally 'marked' and 'inappropriate' behaviour. (Bousfield and Locher, 2008, p. 17).

4. Impoliteness is the broad opposite of politeness, in that it constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered unmitigated, in context where mitigation is required, and with deliberate aggression, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted' or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted, (Bousfield, 2008, pp. 71-72).

2. Impoliteness Framework

Impoliteness framework of the study is based on Culpeper's (1996, 2005) model which follows Brown and Levinson's model of politeness. He formulates a parallel frame for impoliteness. It is regarded as a complementary work for politeness theory, because politeness is better understood with reference to impoliteness phenomenon. What makes Culpeper's model more prominent is that it is tested across different discourses, and it is more practical for the data of real-life. Culpeper formulates five super strategies. In (2005) Culpeper substitutes his fourth strategy of impoliteness "sarcasm/mock politeness" with "off-record impoliteness". These strategies are the opposite of politeness strategies; they are formed to attack one's face.

3. Procedures

The first step taken is selecting data from literature, in particular, one of Munro's short stories, entitled "Face", by finding out certain talks within the story considered as impolite according to the adopted pragmatic model by Culpeper (1996, 2005). Then, to analyze and identify those talks which supposed to be consistent with Culpeper's five strategies: **bald on record impoliteness**, **positive impoliteness**, **negative impoliteness**, **sarcasm/mock politeness** (off record impoliteness in Culpeper's 2005 taxonomy), and **withholding politeness**. Finally, results of the data are given quantitatively, i.e. in a statistical way.

4. Culpeper's Framework of Impoliteness

According to Bousfield (2008, pp. 92-93) the model proposed and developed by Culpeper (1996, 2005) is based on Brown and Levinson's 5-point model of offensive superstrategies (*Bald on Recond*; *Positive Impoliteness*; *Negative Impoliteness*; *Sarcasm*; *Withhold Politeness*). The 5-point model identifies a number of separate ways (known as *superstrategies*) in which impoliteness can be generated and conveyed. A paraphrased explanation of the model in its recent (2005) manifestation:

1) Bald on record impoliteness

According to the developments of the model (Culpeper 1995, 2005), *bald*, *on record impoliteness* is seen as typically being deployed where there is much face at stake, and where is an intention on the part of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer and where the speaker does not have the power to utter an impolite utterance. That is, the utterance is deployed in a direct, clear and unambiguous manner.

2) Positive impoliteness

Attacking your want to be approved of, which Culpeper (2005) explicitly links with Spencer-Oatey's (2002) 'QUALITY FACE' and elements of 'SOCIALITY FACE'. Positive impoliteness, according to the latest instantiation of the model (Culpeper 2005) involves "the use of strategiens deployed to damage the recipient's positive face wants." Instances of such strategies from Culpeper (1996) include 'ignore, snub the other', 'exclude the other from the activity', 'disassociate from the other', 'be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic', 'use inappropriate identity markers', 'use obscure or secretive language', 'seek disagreement', 'make the other feel uncomfortable (e.g. do not avoid silence, joke, etc.)', 'use taboo words', 'call the other names', etc.

3) Negative impoliteness

Attacking your freedom of action, which Culpeper (2005) explicitly links with Spencer-Oatey's (2002) 'EQUITY RIGHTS'. This negative face also overlaps with 'ASSOCIATION RIGHTS', to some extent. Negative impoliteness, according to the latest instantioation of the model (Culpeper 2005) involves "the use of strategies deployed to damage the recipient's negative face wants." Examples of such strategies from Culpeper (1996) include 'frighten', 'condescend, scorn, or ridicule', 'invade the other's space', 'explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect', 'put the other's indebtedness on record', etc.

4) Off-record impoliteness

This superstrategy was introduced by Culpeper (2005) as a replacement to the 'meta-strategic' nature of sarcasm (or mock politeness). 'Off-record impoliteness' is one where the offence is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature and could be cancelled. Archer et al. (2012, p. 91) explain that *sarcasm or mock politeness* outlines the use of superficial politeness for impoliteness purposes, e.g. 'You're so kind', said by someone expecting a door to be held open shortly after it closed on them.

5) **Withhold politeness**

Keep silent or fail to act where politeness work is expected. Culpeper (1996, p. 357) notes that impoliteness may be realized through "the absence of politeness work where it would be expected." Culpeper (2005, p. 42) gives the example that "failing to thank someone for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness." Culpeper further notes that Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 5) would appear to agree with face-threatening aspects and impoliteness surrounding the withholding of politeness when they claim: "politeness has to be communicated, and the absence of communicated politeness may, ceteris paribus, be taken as the absence of a polite attitude."

5. **The Data**

The items of data are taken from the short story "Face" by Alice Munro, 2008. It is about a horrifying tale, told in a conversational style. The unnamed narrator of this story is born with a birthmark covering almost the entirety of one side of his face. According to the narrator, who in turn is relying a great deal on his mother's account of these matters, this causes his father to reject him. His father takes one look at him in the hospital nursery and tells his mother "What a chunk of chopped liver" and

threatens "You don't need to think you're going to bring that into the house," (Munro, 2009, pp. 138-163).

This story is a strange and heartbreaking one. It is most remarkable for its form. Although it is a horrifying tale, it is expressed in a conversational style. This style is full of impolite forms used by the main communicators of the story. The selected sayings that are regarded as impolite are as follows:

(1) **"What a chunk of chopped liver. You don't need to think you're going to bring that into the house."**

His father takes one look at him in the hospital nursery and tells his mother and threatens not to bring him to his house. This is because one side of his face was normal and the other was not. A strapping male infant, fair-skinned, though probably still red from his unremarkable recent journey.

There are two strategies used: **off record impoliteness** and **negative impoliteness**.

(2) **"Calls a spade a spade."**

The father makes an insult to his little son because he wishes to get an intact fair son instead of physically distorted one.

It is **negative impoliteness**.

(3) **"Sneaky Pete under my breath."**

The little boy directly expresses his dislike towards the gardener, Pete, calling him a 'Sneaky'.

The strategy used is **negative impoliteness**.

(4) **"You dumb twerps."**

The speaker is Mrs. Suttles directly attacks the family (the mother, the husband and the son), calling them 'dumb twerps'.

It is **bald on record impoliteness**.

(5) **"Get out of here and let me have some peace, you dumb twerps."**

Mrs. Suttles belittles the family and again attacks them in a concise way.

Three strategies of impoliteness are used: **bald on record impoliteness**, **off record impoliteness**, and **negative impoliteness**.

(6) **"What am I supposed to do with these?"**

This is said by Sharon Suttles (ridiculously). When whatever she was sent over with presents of raspberries or new potatoes or shelled peas, fresh from their garden by the maid. The peas particularly. Suttles—lying on the couch—flipping them into the air with her forefinger.

She expresses her scorning and disinteresting of taking such presents, without even thanking the family for the presents.

Three strategies used: **positive impoliteness**, **off record impoliteness** and **withhold politeness**.

(7) **"Nancy is a little girl. She is a little girl, and you should treat her like a little sister."**

His mother blames her son (screamed at him) for pulling Nancy under an incoming wave and sitting on her head.

It is **negative impoliteness** and **off record impoliteness**.

(8) **"Nazi was in this SELLEAR."**

The boy writes this sentence, ridiculing his friend Nancy. He indirectly uses a taboo word 'Nazi' to refer to her smashing her own brush around in a can of red paint.

It is **off record impoliteness**.

(9) **"Now do I look like you?"** (repeated) **"Now do I look like you?"**

Nancy replies to the son and cries, drawing the brush down her cheek. Since the half of her face was coloured with the usual mulberry birthmark colour. Nancy paints such an insult, a leering joke.

Two strategies of impoliteness are used: **negative impoliteness** and **off record impoliteness**.

(10) **"You nasty little beast."**

His mother screams at Nancy with a frightening language, in a voice that she has never heard; a loud, wild and shaking voice.

Two strategies of impoliteness are used: **bald on record impoliteness** and **negative impoliteness**.

(11) **"Don't you come near us. Don't you dare. You are a bad, bad girl. You have no decent human kindness in you, do you? You never have been taught."**

His mother (continues) screaming at Nancy with a frightening language because she has made his son fell in tears and sad, and has told him the concealed truth about his face.

Again, two strategies of impoliteness are used: **bald on record impoliteness** and **negative impoliteness**.

(12) **"Jeez, can't I even wash my hair around here."**

The speaker is Nancy's mother when she comes out of the cottage, with streaming wet hair in her eyes. She is holding a towel. She invades the other's space.

There are two strategies of impoliteness used here: **negative impoliteness** and **off record impoliteness**.

(13) **"Don't you dare use that language in front of my son and me."**

This talk is a reply for saying no. (12). The son's mother warns Nancy's mother not to speak in such a bad language in front of her son.

It is **negative impoliteness.**

(14) **"Oh, blah-blah. Just listen to you yelling your head off."**

It is a reply for (13). Nancy's mother scorns the son's mother immediately.

There are two strategies of impoliteness used: **bald on record impoliteness** and **negative impoliteness**.

(15) **"I am—not—yelling—my—head off. I just want to tell your cruel child she will never be welcome in our house again. She is a cruel, spiteful, cruel child to mock my little boy for an accident of nature that he cannot help. You have never taught her anything, any manners. She did not even know enough to thank me when I took her with us to the beach—doesn't even know how to say**

please and thank you. No wonder, with a mother flaunting around in her wrapper."

His mother takes a deep breath and continues talking in scolding language.

There are three strategies of impoliteness used: **bald on record impoliteness**, **negative impoliteness**, and **off record impoliteness**.

(16) **"You carry on like this and they're going to take you to the loony bin. Can I help it if your husband hates you and you got a kid with a messed-up face?"**

Nancy's mother says that after she has pushed the wet hair out of her eyes and stands there observing. Then she ridicules her and her son directly.

There are two strategies of impoliteness used here: **bald on record impoliteness**, **negative impoliteness**.

(17) **"You go on. You go in your house. You scat."**

Nancy's mother talks to Velma – the woman who works for them at the time being – when she has come out on the veranda and raised her voice and calls to her "Missus. Come on, Missus." She explicitly frightens her and dismisses her.

It is **a bald on record impoliteness** and **negative impoliteness**.

(18) **"Oh, I will. Don't worry, I will. Who do you think you are, telling me what to do?"**

Velma replies to Mrs. Suttles when she has come out on the veranda and raises her voice seeking disagreement with her.

It is **positive impoliteness**.

(19) **"You're not ever going to play with him again."**

Velma talks to Nancy warning her from playing with the son.

It is **bald on record impoliteness**.

(20) **"Don't be silly."**

The mother talks to her son when he asks her whether or not his father was his real one. She does not treat her son seriously.

It is **negative impoliteness**.

(21) **"A crazy kid like you."**

Nancy's mother berates Nancy and asks if she is right in the head after using a razor blade to slice into her cheek!

It is **bald on record impoliteness**.

6. The Analysis of the Data

The analysis is a strong evidence of the usability and applicability of the model adopted (Culpeper's (1996, 2005)

strategies). The model has been tackled to the selected short story "Face" (by Munro 2008). The analysis shows that amount of impoliteness used in the story is somehow big.

The statistics survey of the strategies of the impoliteness used in the story show that 'negative impoliteness' and 'bald on record impoliteness' are the most used strategies; 41.666 % percent and 27.777 % percent respectively. 'Off record impoliteness' scores number three in the percentage of the study with 22.222 % percent while 'positive impoliteness' and 'withholding politeness' are slightly used; 2 and 1, with percentage 5.555 % and 2.777 %, respectively. The statistical study shows also that 'sarcasm (mock) politeness' does not exist, i.e. 0% percent.

Moreover, the study also shows that Suttles Sharon (Nancy's mother) and the son's mother are the main characters that use impoliteness in their talks with big numbers of uses than the others; 16 and 11 with percentages 44.444 % and 30.555 % respectively. Less than them is the amount of impoliteness used by the father; three times with percentage 8.333 %. Additionally, the survey shows that the three characters; the son, Nancy and Velma are equally in using impoliteness; 2 times with percentage about 5.555 % for each.

Table (1) *The frequency and percentage of Culpeper's (1996, 2005) impoliteness strategies used in the short story "Face".*

Strategy of impoliteness	The name of characters in the story & impoliteness percentage						Total frequency	Total percentage
	The son's father	The son	The son's mother	Sharon Suttles	Nancy	Velma		
Bald on record impoliteness			3	6		1	10	27.777 %
Positive impoliteness				1		1	2	5.555 %
Negative impoliteness	2	1	6	5	1		15	41.666 %
Sarcasm or mock politeness							0	0 %
Off record impoliteness	1	1	2	3	1		8	22.222 %
Withholding politeness				1			1	2.777 %
Total number of strategies	3	2	11	16	2	2	36	100 %
Total percentage	8.333 %	5.555 %	30.555 %	44.444 %	5.555 %	5.555 %	100 %	100 %

7. Conclusion

The present study comes up with the following conclusions:

- The adopted model (Culpeper's 1996, 2005) is applicable in literature, particularly 'short stories' through studying and analyzing a specific short story "Face" written by Munro 2008.

- A wide use of impoliteness strategies is revealed in the story.

- Negative impoliteness and bald on record impoliteness strategies are the most used ones.

- No using of sarcasm (mock) politeness in the story, "Face".

- Positive impoliteness and withholding politeness strategies are very limited in use.

- The findings show that a great amount of impoliteness is considerably used by female characters (Suttles Sharon, the son's mother, and Nancy) rather than the male ones (the father and his unfortunate son).

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