

# Impoliteness Strategies in "Belharf Alwahid" Iraqi T.V. Talk Show: A Sociolinguistic Study

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## Abstract

This paper studies the various forms of impolite exchanges in T.V. talk show. Taking *Belharf Alwahid* Iraqi T.V. talk show recordings of political discourses; arguments are analyzed depending on Culpeper (1996) model of impoliteness strategies and Culpeper (2011) of impoliteness formulae. The variable of gender is taken into consideration in analyzing data. It hypothesizes that politicians with opposite political ideologies show more impolite forms than others. Men show more impolite forms and are more direct than women. It concludes that men are more impolite and direct than women. Impolite forms are context-sensitive and intentional.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Impoliteness, Impoliteness Strategies, Politics, Iraqi T.V. Shows.

## ستراتيجيات اللاتأدب في البرنامج الحوارى العراقي "بالحرف الواحد": دراسة لغوية-اجتماعية المستخلص

هذه الدراسة تتطرق للأشكال المختلفة للمحادثات اللاتأدبية في البرامج الحوارية التلفزيونية. تم أخذ حوارات سياسية متلفزة ومسجلة من البرامج الحوارية العراقية "بالحرف الواحد". و تم تحليل النقاشات اعتماداً على نموذج كلبير (١٩٩٦) لاستراتيجيات اللاتأدب و كلبير (٢٠١١) لصيغ اللاتأدب. حيث أخذ يؤخذ متغير الجنس في الاعتبار عند تحليل البيانات. اذ من المفترض أن السياسيين ذوو الأيديولوجيات السياسية المتعارضة يظهرهم صيغاً لا مهذبة أكثر من غيرهم. و يظهر الرجال صيغاً غير مهذبة ومباشرة أكثر من النساء. ومما تم استنتاجه أن الرجال أكثر لاتأدباً ومباشرة من النساء. إضافة لذلك فإن الصيغ غير المهذبة متعمدة و تعتمد على السياق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللسانيات الاجتماعية ، اللاتأدب ، استراتيجيات اللاتأدب ، السياسة ، البرامج التلفزيونية العراقية.

## I- Introduction

The concept of impoliteness is the focus of several scholars. It is a complex and diverse human behavior needed in interaction. People in general and politicians in specific use impolite strategies to attack the face of others in communication. We posit the following questions in this study;

What kind of political strategies do politicians use? When? Are there gender differences in the use of these strategies? These questions are tackled and answered in this study.

## II- Literature Review

Impoliteness studies are considered within interactional sociolinguistics. It involves negative behaviors in a particular context as they violate certain expectations and result in offense (Culpeper 2015, 1).

The two notions of politeness and impoliteness have been struggled upon. Impoliteness is known in contrast to politeness as they are defined differently (Inoğlu 2013, 473). Any behavior that attacks the face of a person is impolite or hostile (Methias 2011, 11). For Culpeper et al. (2003, 1546), impoliteness is "communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony". The two dimensions of intentionality (Marlangeon and Alba-Juez 2012, 76) and social norms are added to impoliteness to achieve its purpose (Inoğlu 2013, 474).

Impoliteness can be strategic, systematic, sophisticated, and not uncommon (Culpeper 2015, 2). It is constructed within interaction, context (ibid:3) and subject to power as noted by Culpeper (ibid) and Azakb and Tutas (2014, 372). Equally important, it is approached in different contexts e.g. the family, school, workplace, literary works, reality TV shows, courtroom and emergency phone calls as agreed upon by Culpeper (2015, 2) and Culpeper et al. (2003, 1545). In the same vein, Culpeper (2015, 4) says that certain discourse patterns distinguish impoliteness such as; Of course, here's the revised text with the examples: Repetition happens when someone repeats what the other person said, like in this exchange: A: 'You shit.' B: 'You shit.' Escalation occurs when the response intensifies, for example: A: 'You shit.' B: 'You fucking shit.' Inversion or contradiction involves directly opposing the statement, as in: A: 'You shit.' B: 'No, I'm not.'"

Impolite interaction is exchangeable and if someone's face (Sifianou 2019, 58) is threatened, s/he will react accordingly (Carolus et al. 2018, 10). These impolite exchanges are confined to social network. Correspondingly, impoliteness is best understood in its final product (Bousfield 2014, 2) in which it causes offence to others (Bousfield 2007, 2187). It is performed in an intentional (Mills 2009, 1048) and mitigating manner.

Terkourafi (2008, 61-62) contradicts the previous viewpoint admitting that impoliteness is unintentional. Bousfield (2007, 2186) poses certain question concerning impoliteness; how is impoliteness communicated and triggered? How interlocutors respond and communicate impolite exchanges?

### III- Impoliteness Types

In his book *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence* (2011), Culpeper identifies three types of impoliteness:

#### Affective impoliteness

This form occurs when the speaker conveys their anger towards the listener who has provoked them. For example: "You made me crazy!"

The speaker announces to the hearer about his passive effect using this impolite utterance (Mohammed and Abbas 2015, 199) .

#### Coercive impoliteness

In this type, the speaker gains profit at the expense of the hearer's face wants. It happens when there is an inequality in power between the speaker and the hearer; the speaker belongs to a higher social level than the hearer.

-Shut up or I'll smash your head! (Huang 2014, 150).

Here, the speaker, in the above utterance, uses impoliteness to assert dominance and threaten the hearer (Mohammed and Abbas 2016, 78-79).

#### Entertaining impoliteness

This type of impoliteness occurs when the speaker mocks the listener to target their emotions for amusement (Ibrahim 2020, 67). The following example demonstrates this type of impoliteness:

Hey idiot, come in!

### IV- Impoliteness Strategies

Politeness and impoliteness are not opposites as they work differently and they have different context needs. Jonathan Culpeper develops impoliteness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. Citing the works of Culpeper (1996), Kuntsi (2012:22), Alrikabi (2014, 423-424), Lucky (2015, 15-19), Mohammed and Abbas (2015, 199), Ibrahim (2020, 67-68), the following five proposed strategies by Culpeper (1996, 356-357) revisited by Culpeper (2003) are followed in analyzing any impolite behavior;

**1. Bald on record impoliteness:** is a direct ,obvious and carried out in an unambiguous clear way to threaten the face of a person.

2. **Positive impoliteness** involves strategies specifically designed to damage an individual's positive face wants—their desire to be liked, appreciated, or approved. These strategies can manifest in various ways, including:

- **Ignoring or snubbing the other:** Deliberately failing to acknowledge the presence of the person, thereby signaling their insignificance.
- **Excluding the other from an activity:** Intentionally leaving the person out of social or professional activities to alienate them.
- **Disassociating from the other:** Explicitly denying any association or common ground with the individual, such as refusing to sit near them or publicly distancing oneself from them.
- **Displaying disinterest, unconcern, or lack of sympathy:** Showing a blatant disregard for the person's feelings, interests, or well-being.
- **Using inappropriate identity markers:** Addressing someone with formal titles in informal settings or using nicknames inappropriately, thus undermining the social relationship. For example, calling someone "Mr. Smith" in a casual conversation among friends or using a nickname like "Johnny" in a professional meeting.
- **Employing obscure or secretive language:** Using jargon, technical terms, or codes that the target does not understand, effectively excluding them from the conversation and making them feel out of place.
- **Seeking disagreement:** Deliberately bringing up controversial or sensitive topics to provoke conflict or discomfort.
- **Making the other feel uncomfortable:** Engaging in behaviors that create awkwardness, such as maintaining prolonged silence, making inappropriate jokes, or forcing small talk in a tense situation.
- **Using taboo words:** Swearing, or using abusive or profane language to shock or offend the person.
- **Calling the other names:** Using derogatory or insulting terms to belittle and demean the individual (Tutas and Azak 2014, 371).

### 3. Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness involves strategies aimed at harming the addressee's negative face wants, which include their desire to be unimpeded and left alone. One such strategy is to frighten the addressee by instilling a belief that actions detrimental to them will occur. Some strategies for negative impoliteness include:



Condescending, scorning, or ridiculing: Emphasize your relative power by showing contempt, not taking the other seriously, and belittling them (e.g., using diminutives).

Invading the other's space: This can be done literally, such as positioning yourself closer than the relationship permits, or metaphorically, by asking for or discussing information that is too intimate given the relationship.

Explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect: Personalize the attack by using pronouns like 'I' and 'you'.

Putting the other's indebtedness on record: Explicitly highlighting the other's obligations to you.

#### 4. Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Sarcasm or mock politeness involves performing face-threatening acts (FTAs) through implicature. These indirect impoliteness strategies can be denied if necessary. An FTA is performed indirectly using politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, thus remaining as surface-level realizations.

#### 5. Withholding Politeness

Withholding politeness refers to the absence of expected politeness, which can be interpreted as deliberate impoliteness. For example, failing to thank someone for a gift can be seen as intentional rudeness. When the speaker holds a higher position, they can use impoliteness more freely since they have the means to:

(a) Reduce the ability of the less powerful participant to retaliate with impoliteness.

(b) Threaten more severe retaliation should the less powerful participant be impolite (ibid).

In his *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*, Culpeper (2011, 135-136) revisits his model of impoliteness and adds the following formulae. In Culpeper terms, these are "Insults" used by interlocutors:

**Customized derogatory addresses,** like "[you] [unpleasant/unfavorable/disreputable/undesirable/etc.] [person/soul/individual/etc.]"

**Personalized negative assertions,** for example, "[you] [are] [so/very] [unpleasant/offensive/displeasing/disappointing/etc.]" – "[you] [cannot] [accomplish/achieve] [anything/very simple tasks/etc.]" – "[you] [cause me] [discomfort/revulsion/etc.]"

**Customized negative references,** such as "[your] [unpleasant/little] [mouth/behavior/rear/body/corpse/hands/guts/trap/breath/etc.]"

**Customized third-person negative references,** like (heard by the target) – "[the] [foolish/silly] [person]" – "[she] [is] [unstable/crazy/etc.]"

Moreover, Culpeper (2011, 135-136) introduces other strategies which are as follows;

**Pointed criticisms/complaints:** "[That/this/it] [is/was] [extremely/incredibly/remarkably/etc.] [bad/poor/unacceptable/terrible/etc.]".

**Unpleasant questions or presuppositions:** "Why do you make things difficult for me? – Which untruth are you telling me? – What has gone wrong now? – Do you want to argue with me or face consequences? – I am not going to exploit my opponent's youth and inexperience for political purposes".

**Condescensions:** "[That] [is/was] [immature/childish/etc.]".

**Message enforcers:** "Listen here (preface) – Do you understand [me/that]? (tag) – You got [it/that]? (tag)".

**Dismissals:** "[Go] [away] – [Leave] [immediately] – [Get] [out] of here".

**Silencers:** "[Quiet] [down] – [Silence] your [mouth/face/etc.] – Be quiet".

**Threats:** "[I'll/I'm/we're] [going to] [address this issue/handle this matter appropriately/etc.]".

**Negative expressives** (e.g., curses, ill-wishes): "[Go] [away/leave] – [Forget] [you/it]."

### **Impoliteness; TV Talk Shows and Politics**

Institutional impoliteness is a very specific, changes someone's identity, and replaces it with another one (Baratta 2014, 19-20) and it comes to characterize and shape the role of threats in political discourse as proposed by Blitvich (2014, 2). Moreover, less attention is paid to impoliteness than politeness in Arab Television (Abdelkawy ٢٠١٩, 40). Although, these (Abdelkawy ٢٠١٩: 42- 47) T.V. programs contain impolite exchanges, they have not been studied extensively.

Some studies have explored impoliteness on Arab TV. Hamed (2014) investigates the use of politeness and impoliteness strategies by British and Egyptian participants in sports talk shows. Abdel-Hafiz (2015) analyzes impoliteness strategies in naturally occurring Arabic interactions, focusing on selected episodes from the well-known debate TV show "The Opposite Direction" (Abdelkawy 2019, p. 43). Migdadi, Badarneh, and Abbas (2013) examine conflict strategies used in "The Opposite Direction" (ibid, p. 45). Hamrita (2016) studies how political debates between prominent Tunisian politicians in TV talk shows devolve into violent discourse (ibid, p. 46).

Talk shows are significantly present and have impact as they discuss matters by politicians, journalists, etc. concerning political opinions (Harmer 2015, 1). These shows are topical and moderated by a host who manages the discussion. An interaction takes place between the host, guests (and/or audience). In political discourse, any unconventional and gratuitous face threat is impolite. A politician uses impolite language when:

(1) they want to project an image of toughness and determination and

(2) when their interlocutor is "tough" (Ardila 2019, 162).

## V- Methodology

Real-life situations are chosen as they are spontaneous. Hence, these data are taken from an Iraqi well-known TV talk show -namely "*Belharf Alwahid*", hosted by Ahmed Mula Talal, and broadcasted on Al Sharqiya, an Iraqi satellite channel. The idea of choosing *Belharf Alwahid* T.V. talk show is that it depicts impolite exchanges between politicians who have opposite points of view. Consequently, the rationale for selecting this program, in particular, is due to the guests' opposing political views, which often lead to conflict. The host amplifies key points of disagreement to engage and captivate the audience.

Al Sharqiya Tube channel on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) provides recorded, downloadable episodes of "*Belharf Alwahid*". Eight episodes of this T.V. talk show are chosen randomly for both (men and women) for analysis. The interlocutors in the selected data are categorized by gender as male and female.

## VI- Data Analysis

### Extract (1)

- ١: ما الذي دفعك للوشاية بالنقيب سطم الجبوري ورفاقه.....  
٢: يعني استحي اجاب على هذا السؤال. هذا السؤال مدفوع الثمن من قبل الكاؤليه حتى يخلوكم توجهولي هذا السؤال, لان هذا الي انطاك اياه او الي اعده هو على صلة مع محور الكاؤليه ومع محور الحرامية ومع الساقطين المنحرفين

### Translation:

- S1: Why did you tell on Captain Sattam al-Jabouri and his companies....?  
S2: I am reluctant to answer this question, this question is staged by gypsies, and because those who can let you ask this question, has to do with gypsies and thugs.

### Analysis

In the above extract, the host asks his guest a question which irritates him. Here, speaker 2 (the guest) uses bald on record strategy as he calls those who ask such a question as gypsies. Furthermore, he repeats and keeps saying gypsies and thugs directly and clearly.

### Extract (2)

- ١: اعتذر من المشاهدين انه بيها كلام بذّي (الرساله) يمكن مراح اكدر اقراه كله بس مضطر انه اشوفكم وين وصل التهديد.....  
٢: طالما تجاوزت على اسيادك سيكون حسابك عسيراً, قانونيا و عشائريا و اعلم ان الدايحين و المنحطين امثالكم لا يقيم امراء و شيوخ و من ضحى بحياته والاخرين يسمسون على اعراضهم....

### Translation:

S1: I apologize for the audience , about the message , I'm about to read. Which perhaps, I'm going to skip few parts of it , due to the graphic language. Just to show you how far the threats went.

S2: -As long as you have ill-talked your masters, your punishment will be severe in terms of law and tribal regulations. And bear in your mind, that the thugs and pimps like you, will not judge who has given his life of the tribal leaders.

### Analysis

In this Extract, speaker 2 (sender of the message) who is a parliament member sent a message to the host of the talk show. First, he uses bald on record strategy as he talks directly and unambiguously. Second, the expression (your masters ,your punishment) is a personalized negative reference by which he tries to underestimate his opponents. Personalized third-person negative references are used such as thugs and pimps to refer to the host.

### Extract (3)

- ١: انت خيلني اكمل الفكرة أستاذ احمد لأنه الي يمك معروف بهذا بهاي بالشغله مالتة , مهرج  
٢: اول شي احترم نفسك , جاي اخاطبك بالاسم , بس باو علي بس باو علي , خلي خطابك يكون مؤدب , جاي اقول للرجل اليك , لا تستخدم هاي أساليب الاستقزاز الي تعودت عليها يعني , أتمنى تنتظف من هاي العقليه المريضة الموبوه الي ما تريد تغادرها , أتمنى ان تترقى بالخطاب , انت مستواك هذا المستوى

### Translation:

S1: Mr. Ahmed , let me finish my talk , please . Because , The one who sits next you is fake.

S2: Firstly, behave your self. I'm being specific. Just look at me in the eyes ( Twice )  
Let your talk be respectful, I'm talking to the man who sits next to you. Do not be provocative as usual. Which means , I hope you get rid of this sick and polluted mentality, that refuses to abandon us. And , perhaps, this is the only level of talk you may reach !!

### Analysis

In this Extract, on the one hand, speaker 1 uses negative impoliteness strategy. Also, he uses personalized negative assertions such as (fake) to attack speaker 2 and irritates him. On the other hand, speaker 2 uses personalized negative reference as in behave your self . Again, the same speaker uses pointed criticisms in this sick and polluted mentality and this is the only level of talk you may reach.



#### Extract (4)

- ١: سبب تهكمك على البرنامج الحكومي للسيد عادل عبدالمهدي في احدى تغريداتك؟  
٢: زين وينه هو يلا هسه شنفذ من عنده؟ من البرنامج. برنامج طوله منا للصين. لبكين

#### Translation

S1: Why did ridicule Adul AbdulMehdi governmental program in your tweet?

S2: Where is he now? What did he do? Of his program. Such a program is from Iraq to China? To Beijing.

#### Analysis

Speaker 2 in this case uses negative impoliteness strategy in which he ridicules and jokes on AbdulMehdi governmental program. Moreover, the Unpalatable questions formulae are apparent in such a case Where is he now? What did he do?

#### Extract (5)

- ١: ارجو ان تكون الجمل التي تستخدمها جملا حقيقية لا ينزع منها الشارع الكردستاني , على الأقل الشارع الكردستاني و يفرح به الشارع العراقي  
٢: (مقاطعاً) و الله ينزع الشارع الكردستاني, هذا شارع انت و رئيسج و حزبج الي دمرتوا كردستان و دمرتوا العراق دمرتوا كل الكائنات ما تعرفون تتعاملون لا مع قضايا وطنية و لا مع أي قضية

#### Translation:

S1: I hope , you utter some real and non-provocative phrases. Not to irritate the Kurdish street. And let the Iraqi Arabs , gloat on us.

S2: I swear by Allah that the Kurdistan audience would be bothered and your audience ,president and party destroyed Kurdistan and Iraq ! You destroyed everything and don't know how to deal with national issues.

#### Analysis

In this Extract, S1 uses negative impoliteness strategy to get the S2 to utter real phrases as in real and non-provocative phrases. Moreover, S1 calls S1 to speak authentically and use personalized negative assertions

On the other hand, S2 uses negative impoliteness strategy and personalized negative references as in your audience ,president and party and personalized negative vocatives You destroyed everything. Both speakers in this case are exchanging impolite forms.

#### Extract (٦)

- ١: مو وصف دقيق؟, لا وصف دقيق, وزير حرب في زمن الحرب  
٢: لا مو دقيق لان بدليل على ذلك احنا وصلت انتصار اتنا حتخلص تحرير الموصل ان شاء الله و هو ماكو هو أصلا جان قنبله صوتيه

### Translation:

S1: Isn't it a precise description? Isn't it a precise description? Yes, it is? A minister of war in a war.

S2: No, it is not. Evidently speaking, our liberation of Mosul comes to an end and he is not there. He is just a sound bomb (metaphorically).

### Analysis

S2 uses a negative impoliteness strategy as in 'he is not there' to disassociate ex-minister of defense from an activity which is liberating Mosul. In another case, the same speaker uses bald on record strategy to describe the same person as a sound bomb. However, Condensations are used to show how arrogant S2 is.

### Extract (7)

١: هل تستحق بغداد ان يحاصص عليها الأحزاب؟

٢: ماكو أي معيار للنجاح في الأداء السياسي العراقي في عموم العراق, نجاح شعوبي , هذا ما اعترف بيه لانه خارج معايير النجاح

### Translation:

S1: Does Baghdad deserve to be allotted by parties like this ?

S2: There's no sign for the success of the political endeavors all across Iraq. That's what I don't admit , it's out of success ranges.

### Analysis

Negative impoliteness strategy is used by S2 to describe opponents and their success as in There's no sign for the success and That's what I don't admit. The same impolite exchanges are considered as pointed criticisms.

### Extract (8)

١: الجماعة دا بينون دولتهم بعد ٢٠٠٣ بطريقة مليئة بالمشاكل, مليئة بالمشاكل.

٢: هم نرجع لنفس النقطة, خلي يعلن دولته منو منعه؟, خلي يصفى مشاكله الداخليه مع شعبه, خلي يركز اقتصاده, مو شهرين ما عنده ينطي راتب.

### Translation:

S1: They are trying to rebuild their state after 2003 and which was still fraught of problems.

S2: Here we go back again to the same spot, why doesn't he announces his own government? Let him clear up all his local issues with his people. And , improve his country's economy, and not to be standing still like before , when he hasn't had enough budget for two months to pay his people's paychecks !

### Analysis

S2 uses positive impoliteness strategy to be unsympathetic and disinterested. Also, unpalatable question is used as in why doesn't he announces his own government? Pointed criticisms are also employed by S2 in Let him clear up all his local issues and he hasn't had enough budget as impolite formulae.

## VII- Conclusions

The following conclusions have been arrived at during this study:

1. Impoliteness is intentional, gender-based and context-sensitive.
2. Politicians are impolite when they are addressed personally and they tend to react accordingly.
3. Women are more polite than men in using less direct and negative impoliteness strategies.
4. They use pointed criticism more than personalized formulae.
5. Men are more direct and use bald on strategy rather than other strategies. They use personalized formulae more often.
6. They tend to use more taboo words than women do.

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