



Impoliteness in Literary Discourse: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

Brown and Levinson's model of politeness (1987) paved the way for linguists to explore the phenomenon of impoliteness. Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson dealt with politeness as a knotty framework applied to soften face threatening acts, other linguists including, Culpeper, Bousfield and Eelen, headed for the opposite direction of politeness. In other words, they studied the communicative situations where the speaker's purpose is to damage a hearer's face rather than softening face threatening acts. This research paper is intended to examine the opposite direction of politeness 'impoliteness phenomenon' in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913). Furthermore, it highlights the variation of impoliteness strategies used by characters. It is worth mentioning that the present paper is qualitative as it is dedicated to describe a certain pragmatic phenomenon, i.e., impoliteness, depending on Culpeper's (2005) model of impoliteness, as a theoretical framework, to identify impoliteness in an advisedly chosen literary text. Consequently it is hoped to provide a deeper understanding of the fictional characters by applying a pragmatic analysis through which the characters' conversation will be examined thoroughly.

Keywords: Pragmatics, politeness, impoliteness, *Pygmalion*

1. Introduction

Fraser and Nolen (1981, p.96) suggest that politeness is "the result of a conversational contract entered into by the participants in an effort to maintain socio-communicative verbal interactional-free." According to them, politeness is a bunch of constraints on verbal behavior and the nature of these constraints depends on the social setting of interaction, the relationship of participants, and the language used (Watts, Ide, & Ehlich, 2005, p. 46). While Leech (1983) defines politeness as a set of behavioral forms which are performed to create a kind of maintenance or harmony, and the performance of these behavioral forms depends on a participants' ability to engage themselves in a harmonic atmosphere of verbal interaction in a certain socio-communicative situation (Ibid.).

Both Culpeper and Eelen noticed that all the theorists of politeness refer to impoliteness superficially while, in practice, their deep focus was on politeness and thus, their comments on the notion of impoliteness were insufficient and to some extent prejudiced. In a nutshell, the reason behind the recent interest in impoliteness was the inability of politeness approaches to explain amply the confrontational interaction in impolite discourses (Bousfield, 2008, p. 71). Watts (in Lambrou and Stockwell, 2007, p. 211) states that "... (im)politeness is a term that is struggled over at present, has been struggled over in the past and will, in all probability, continue to be struggled over in the future." Watts' definition implies the continuity of disagreement over the notion of impoliteness among scholars.

One of the main challenges that the researchers face when conducting the present paper is choosing a suitable literary work to examine Culpeper's model. The application of such a formidable pragmatic model, which needs a rich text containing a large amount of exchanges, requires them to think of a play rather than a novel or a short story. Among all other plays, they pick *Pygmalion*, by the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, as it has all the qualifications that they seek for in a literary text including:

1. The astounding astuteness of the playwright who is described by Burt as "the greatest English dramatist since Shakespear" (Burt, 2009, p. 164)
2. The fertile text of the play which is full of various impoliteness examples and techniques.
3. Language, in this play, represents a fundamental theme; a transition point in the heroine's character, Eliza Doolittle; and the hero's obsession, Henry Higgins who is specialist in Phonetics.

2. An Overview of Pragmatics

Generally speaking, pragmatics is the study of language in use. It is the study of meaning not as generated by the linguistic system but as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation. The modern concept of pragmatics was first introduced by the philosopher, Charles Morris, in 1938. He gave the following well-known

definition of pragmatics: "The branch of semiotics which studies the origin, the uses, and the effects of signs. As such, it is distinguished from semantics and syntax" (Cherry, 1974, p.1).

According to Stalnaker, "Pragmatics is the study of the purposes for which sentences are used, of the real world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used as an utterance" (cited in Sanchez, 2009, p. 114). Moreover, Carnap (1939) proposed to call pragmatics "the field of all those investigations which take into consideration... the action, state, and environment of a man who speaks or hears a linguistic sign" (cited in Akmajian, et al., 2001, p. 361).

Leech and Thomas (1983) distinguish two components of pragmatics: A sociopragmatic component and a pragmlinguistic component. Pragmlinguistics is concerned with the linguistic side of pragmatics, including the range of resources that the speakers of language use in communication such as pragmatic strategies (e.g directness and indirectness), modification devices and pragmatic routines. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, refers to the interfaces of linguistic action and social structure. In other words, it deals with such constraints as social status, social distance and the degree of imposition on the choice of linguistic realization of a particular illocution (Barron, 2003, p. 8).

Pragmatics includes the study of deixis, presupposition, speech acts, implicature, cooperative principle, politeness and impoliteness. The present paper will examine impoliteness as a pragmatic aspect in Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

3. What is Impoliteness?

Many linguists state that impoliteness is an independent phenomenon, so it is supposed to be tackled in its own terms, not in terms of politeness theory. Unlike those linguists, such as Bousfield (2008), Wieczorek (2013) and Bassis (2014), Leech says "the best way to start theorizing about impoliteness is to build on a theory of politeness, which is clearly a closely related phenomenon, in fact, the polar opposite of politeness" (Leech, 2014, p. 219). This is exactly what Culpeper did. In other words, Culpeper (1996) made a good use of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness to introduce his theory of impoliteness which he considered a "parasite of politeness". Consequently, and in parallel with Brown and Levinson's strategies (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and don't do the FTA), Culpeper set up five super strategies which will be explained in the later sections of this paper (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, p. 238).

Culpeper introduced two of the most well-known definitions of impoliteness. In his first definition (1996) which is more general, Culpeper described impoliteness "as the use of strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (cited in Bousfield and Locher, 2008, p. 131).

Then Culpeper gave a more specific account to impoliteness in his second definition (2005) which reads "impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates a face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)" (cited in Ruhi and Aksan, 2015, p. 41). In his second definition, Culpeper links impoliteness to intentionality and says that impolite behavior can be intentional, on the contrary of Yan Huang who says "If intentions and recognition of intentions are involved, then rudeness rather than impoliteness occurs" (Huang, 2012, p. 150).

Unlike Huang, Bousfield emphasized Culpeper's idea about the association of impoliteness with intentionality. In his book *Impoliteness in Interaction*, Bousfield mentions that "impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face- threatening acts which are purposefully delivered: (i) unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or, (ii) with deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximized in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted" (Bousfield, 2008, p. 72).

Sara Mills excluded, in her description of impoliteness, the idea of inherency of impolite behavior in certain speech acts when she stated (in Morley and Bayley, 2009, p. 213) that "it is essential not to see impoliteness as inherent in certain speech acts but rather as a series of judgements made by interactants on the appropriateness of others' actions"

Locher's definition of impoliteness, on the other hand, emerged from her interest in power and politeness in disagreements "Impoliteness clearly involves the relational aspect of communication in that social actors negotiate their position vis-à-vis each other. In this sense, impolite behavior is *as much* a part of this negotiation as polite versions of behaviour" (cited in Davies, et al., 2011, p. 188).

The variation of impoliteness definitions mentioned previously shows the profoundness of this pragmatic domain which has become a big challenge for linguists and scholars in the recent years.

4. Culpeper's (1996, 2005) Impoliteness Model

The model to be followed in this research in order to expose the impoliteness conveyed from the speaker to the hearer is that of Jonathan Culpeper which is considered as the most notable model of impoliteness proposed up to now. As maintained by Culpeper's spic-and-span model, impoliteness is intended to produce disharmony between interlocutors in social interactions (Walaszewska and Piskorska, 2012, p. 246). Although his model is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Culpeper refutes their view of impoliteness as 'marginal' to everyday conversation. He asserts that understanding the notion of politeness is impossible without comprehending impoliteness phenomenon and, thereby, the analytical framework of impoliteness needs to be improved and receive the due consideration (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 71).

Culpeper, in his book *Language and Characterization*, illustrates the difference between politeness and impoliteness. He says that "It should be noted that the key difference between politeness and impoliteness is a matter of intention: whether it is the speaker's intention to support face (politeness) or to attack it (impoliteness)" (Culpeper, 2001, p. 246).

Culpeper depends on media data in general and television programs in particular to testify how his impoliteness model functions. Films, documentaries and quiz programs, in which there is a continual conflict between interlocutors, are his favorite sources where impoliteness is embodied differently and can be interpreted from various perspectives (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 72). Moreover, Culpeper's model has an advantage over others as it is built on real life data. It tackles with different types of discourses starting with conflictive and impolite illocutions in U.S. army training discourse and ending with impolite interaction within bilingual Spanish/English children's discourse. Therefore, the variety of verbal and written data used by Culpeper empowers his model and makes it more reliable (Bousfield, 2008, p. 90).

In 2005, Culpeper develops his (1996) model to be somehow away from the focus of intentional face-attack and to give more attention to the idea of cultural context. Even after the (2005) manifestation of his model, he still takes into account Brown and Levinson's PT (Ibid., p. 91). Culpeper distinguishes five super strategies by which impoliteness can be created and received. They are:

4.1 Bald on record impoliteness

This strategy is employed when there is much face at risk and when a speaker intends to damage the hearer's face and thus the impolite utterance will be performed directly and clearly (Bousfield, 2008, p. 92). Culpeper uses here the concept of face-attack-act (FAA), in opposition to FTA, in order to identify the face attack where there is a deliberate intention on the part of the speaker (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 71).

Wieczorek (2013, p. 46) elucidates the difference between Brown and Levinson's bald on record politeness and Culpeper's bald on record impoliteness. While the former is applied in particular situations where the risk to face is minimal without any attention to attack the hearer's face, the latter is used when there is much risk to the face and the speaker intends to damage the other's face.

4.2 Positive impoliteness

This strategy is used to damage the hearer's positive face want (his desire to be accepted) (Bousfield and Locher, 2008, 134). In the incarnation of his model (2005), Culpeper adds a range of sub-strategies to positive impoliteness including (cited in Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 72):

- ignoring or snubbing the other
- denying common ground with the hearer
- selecting a sensitive or undesirable topic to talk about
- using inappropriate identity markers
- being disinterested and unsympathetic with the hearer
- looking for disagreements
- using obscure language and inserting secretive words within the discourse
- using taboo words

4.3 Negative impoliteness

This strategy is designed to attack the hearer's negative want (his desire to be free from imposition) (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, p. 239). Negative impoliteness, in accordance with Culpeper's (2005) conceptualization, involves the following sub-strategies (cited in Mullany and Stockwell, 2010, p. 72):

- scorn
- frighten
- ridicule
- and invade the hearer's space literally or metaphorically

4.4 Sarcasm or mock impoliteness

In his strategy, the speaker performs the FTA using politeness strategies which are clearly insincere (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, p. 239). In other words, sarcasm means the use of one or more sub-strategies which are superficially suitable and accepted but deeply they have the opposite meaning (Bousfield, 2008, p. 95).

4.5 Withhold politeness

This strategy occurs when the speaker does not perform politeness where it is expected as in keeping silent when the speaker is supposed to thank the hearer (Thielemann and Kosta, 2013, 239).

4.6 Impoliteness Types

In his up-to-date book, *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence* (2011), Culpeper proposes three types of impoliteness. These types share the function of contradicting interpersonal relationships, identities, and social norms. They are:

4.7 Affective impoliteness

In this kind of impoliteness, the speaker exposes his anger towards the hearer and this consequently generates a negative emotional atmosphere between the speaker and the hearer (Huang, 2014, p. 150). For example:

- You made me crazy!

In the above example, the speaker uses such impolite utterance to express the passive effect of the hearer on him and inform him that he is unwanted anymore.

4.8 Coercive impoliteness

This variant of impoliteness raises realignment between the speaker (the producer) and the hearer (the target) so that the speaker gains profits at the expense of the hearer's face wants. Culpeper believes that this impoliteness type takes place, to a greater extent, in the situations where the producer belongs to a higher and more powerful social level than the hearer's level. To sum up, coercive impoliteness is a means of getting power via language (Culpeper, 2011, p.252). The following is an example of this type of impoliteness:

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

Here, the speaker puts an end to the addressee's behavior by warning him not to speak. Such an utterance is more likely to be produced when the speaker has a command over the hearer.

4.9 Entertaining impoliteness

This kind of impoliteness is generated when the speaker pokes fun at the hearer and utilizes the target's feelings to obtain amusement (Ibid.).

The following example which is taken from Charles Dicken's novel *Great Expectations* shows this type of impoliteness: (in response to Miss Havisham's invitation to play cards with Pip)

- Young Estella: with this boy! Why, he is a common laboring boy (Johanson, 1994, p. 25).

5. Data Analysis

In order to make the analysis process highly organized and directed to achieve comprehensible results, the researchers follow a particular procedure in the light of the research questions they try to answer; the theoretical framework they apply; and the literary text they choose to be anatomized. This procedure, which is meant to make it easy for the reader to understand the analysis and be convinced with the results, consists of certain steps namely: specifying the impolite utterances within the selected extract; examining impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies in the extract; and identifying the extract in terms of Culpeper's impoliteness types. The researchers have selected purposely the following extract from Act One of the play, *Pygmalion*, to apply the steps of the analysis procedure mentioned above.

5.1 The Selected Extract

THE NOTE TAKER. A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live (1). Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language of Shakespear and Milton and The Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon (2).

THE FLOWER GIRL. [quite overwhelmed, looking up at him in mingled wonder and deprecation without daring to raise her head] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow -oo(3)!

THE NOTE TAKER. [whipping out his book] Heavens! What a sound! [He writes; then holds out the book and reads reproducing her vowels exactly] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow- ow-oo (4)!

THE FLOWER GIRL. [tickled by the performance, and laughing in spit of herself] Garn (5)!

THE NOTE TAKER. You see this creature (6) with her kerbstone (7) English: the English that will keep her in the gutter (8) to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an assistant, ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as lady's maid or shop which requires better English.

THE FLOWER GIRL. What's that you say?

THE NOTE TAKER. Yes. You squashed cabbage leaf, you disgrace to

the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language (9): I could pass you off as the queen of Sheba [To the Gentleman] Can you believe that? (Laurence, 1957, p. 27)

5.2 Familiarizing the Extract

This extract is taken from Act One of the play *Pygmalion*. It includes a talk between Eliza, the heroine, and Higgins, the hero, in their first meeting at the portico of St Paul's church to which they resort to protect themselves from rain. It is worth mentioning that Eliza, in this extract, is referred to as a 'flower girl' while Higgins as 'the note taker'.

5.3 Identifying the utterances in the Extract

Depending on Culpeper's account of impoliteness phenomenon, the researchers identify nine impolite utterances in this extract. For the sake of ease of reference, a table will be used to itemize the impolite utterances in this extract as shown below:

Table 1. The impolite utterances in the selected extract

No.	Utterance	Form	Producer
1.	A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live.	sentence	Higgins
2.	a bilious pigeon	Phrase	Higgins
3.	Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!	Expression	Eliza
4.	Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!	Expression	Higgins
5.	Garn	word	Eliza
6.	this creature	Phrase	Higgins
7.	kerbstone	word	Higgins
8.	gutter	word	Higgins
9.	Yes. You squashed cabbage leaf, you disgrace to the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language	Sentence	Higgins

5.4 Impoliteness Strategies and Sub-strategies in the Extract

This extract is full of impolite utterances; therefore, the researchers find different impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies used in it. In the first utterance "*A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live.*", Higgins applies bald on record impoliteness strategy since he intends to attack Eliza's face directly and clearly. Therefore, the impolite act he performs is seen as FAA (face-attack-act) rather than FTA. While in the second utterance, he uses an inappropriate identity marker "*a bilious pigeon*" to refer to Eliza and this is one of positive impoliteness sub-strategies.

As a reaction to the bald on record and positive impoliteness strategies practiced by Higgins against her, Eliza produces an odd expression "*Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!*" as a sign of disapproval. In other words, she employs an obscure language as a sub-strategy of positive impoliteness in the face of Higgins' domination over the situation. After Eliza produces that odd expression, Higgins immediately repeats what she has uttered loudly and in a comic way. Here he adopts one of the negative impoliteness sub-strategies, precisely 'ridicule'.

The fifth impolite utterance "*Garn*" represents the mock impoliteness strategy Eliza practices when she hears Higgins imitating her. "*Garn*" in this play stands for the orthographic approximation to Eliza's pronunciation of the phrase 'go on'. Positive impoliteness sub-strategies are applied in the sixth, seventh, and eighth utterances of this extract. In the sixth utterance, Higgins uses an inappropriate identity mark "*this creature*" with Eliza as an impolite sub-strategy. Moreover, the positive impoliteness sub-strategy 'being unsympathetic with the hearer' is practiced by him twice in the seventh utterance when he uses the word "*kerbstone*" to describe Eliza's language; and in the eighth utterance as he alludes to her social level by using the word "gutter".

Finally, Higgins ends this extract with the ninth impolite utterance in which he employs two different impoliteness sub-strategies. The first is the positive impoliteness sub-strategy, that is, 'using an inappropriate identity marker' against Eliza. 'Scorning' is the second negative impoliteness sub-strategy he employs in the ninth utterance as he makes Eliza a subject of humiliation in front of Pickering. Table (2) clarifies the use of impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies in this extract:

Table 2. Impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies in the extract

No.	Utterance	Producer	Impoliteness strategies	Impoliteness sbu-strategies
1.	A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live.	Higgins	Bald on record impoliteness	
2.	a bilious pigeon	Higgins	Positive impoliteness	Using inappropriate identity markers
3.	Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!	Eliza	Positive impoliteness	Using obscure language
4.	Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!	Higgins	Negative impoliteness	Ridicule
5.	Garn	Eliza	Sarcasm or mock impoliteness	
6.	this creature	Higgins	Positive impoliteness	Using inappropriate identity markers
7.	kerbstone	Higgins	Positive impoliteness	Being unsympathetic with the hearer
8.	gutter	Higgins	Positive impoliteness	Being unsympathetic with the hearer
9.	Yes. You squashed cabbage leaf, you disgrace to the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language	Higgins	*Positive impoliteness	Using inappropriate identity markers.

*In addition to the positive impoliteness sub-strategy, using inappropriate identity markers, the researcher believes that the negative impoliteness sub-strategy, scorning, is also applicable in the ninth impolite utterance.

5.5 Culpeper's Types of Impoliteness in the Selected Extract

In this extract, the three types of Culpeper's impoliteness exist. The first type 'affective impoliteness' is represented once by the third utterance "Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!" produced by Eliza. Her expression, which is similar to a howl, reveals her feelings of anger and shock towards Higgins's attack. Similar to the first type, the second type 'coercive impoliteness' is also adopted once by Higgins in the first impolite utterance "A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live." to show Eliza, from the very beginning, the social and intellectual distance between them.

The remaining impolite utterances in the extract belong to the third type 'entertaining impoliteness' in which the speaker amuses himself at the expense of the hearer. Higgins, on one hand, uses this type six times: in the second utterance when he describes Eliza as "a bilious pigeon" in front of Pickering; in the fourth utterance as he imitates her odd expression "Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!" in a farcical way; also in the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth utterances where he inserts funny and belittling words such as "this creature", "kerbstone", and "gutter" in his description of Eliza and her language. On the other hand, Eliza resorts to entertaining impoliteness type only once in this extract when she sarcastically uses the word "Garn", which represents the fifth impolite utterance, to urge Higgins to continue speaking. This step reveals the significant role of power and social class in the emersion of impoliteness and this is what happens in the opening utterance of this extract. In other words, Higgins, who belongs to a high social level, introduces the first initiative of impoliteness using a coercive type of impoliteness. He uses language to impose his power on Eliza, who belongs to a lower social class. Besides, impoliteness types produced by Eliza in this extract represent a natural impolite reaction to Higgins's impoliteness which is intended to abase her. The following table displays the types of impolite utterances in this extract:

Table 3. Impoliteness types in the extract

No.	Utterance	Producer	Impoliteness type
1.	A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live.	Higgins	coercive
2.	a bilious pigeon	Higgins	entertaining
3.	Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!	Eliza	affective
4.	Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!	Higgins	entertaining
5.	Garn	Eliza	entertaining
6.	this creature	Higgins	entertaining
7.	kerbstone	Higgins	entertaining
8.	gutter	Higgins	entertaining
9.	Yes. You squashed cabbage leaf, you disgrace to the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language	Higgins	entertaining

6. Conclusion

This paper is different from other studies already dealt with impoliteness in many aspects. The first aspect is embodied in the model followed, in other words, the researchers have relied on Jonathan Culpeper's model (2005) in analyzing impoliteness while Derek Bousfield's model is followed in other studies. The second aspect is that impoliteness, in this paper, has been studied as a pragmatic phenomenon whereas in the other studies it is considered as a pragmastylistic phenomenon. For example, Shi Yunxia in his paper *Impoliteness in Power Revelation in G. B. Shaw's Pygmalion* (2012) focuses only on the pragmastylistic function of impoliteness in general and how off-record strategies can be more potent than those on-record ones depending on Bousfield's model. The researchers of the present study have employed Culpeper's model (2005) of impoliteness, as a theoretical framework, so as to test its strategies (bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, withhold politeness, and sarcasm) as well as its types (affective, coercive, and entertaining) on Shaw's *Pygmalion* 1913, as a literary text. Anatomizing the selected extract, the researchers have come up with the conclusion that the choice of impoliteness strategies used differs from one character to another in terms of the social level they belong to. For example, Higgins, who belongs to a higher social level than Eliza, usually uses bald on record and positive impoliteness strategies rather than other impoliteness strategies to exercise his social power over her and create a kind of predominant aura around him at her presence. Furthermore,

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