


Gendered Impoliteness and Identity Negotiation in Teenage Discourse: A Socio-Pragmatic Analysis of Barely Lethal

Alfan Amin ^{1*}, Bejo Sutrisno ¹¹ Al-Azhar University of Indonesia, Indonesia 0401623001@student.uai.ac.id*

Abstract

This study investigates the gendered deployment of impoliteness strategies in adolescent discourse as portrayed in the action-comedy film *Barely Lethal*. Anchored in Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness typology and informed by feminist and sociolinguistic theories of discourse and identity, the research adopts a socio-pragmatic lens to explore how teenage characters of different genders enact verbal aggression, negotiate social power, and construct identities. Using qualitative content analysis, the study analyzes 15 transcribed utterances across key scenes. Results indicate that negative impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy, particularly among female characters. Sarcasm, mock politeness, and bald-on-record expressions are also salient, with notable gendered differences in distribution and function. Female characters exhibit more strategic, relational, and performative use of impoliteness, while male characters rely predominantly on direct, hierarchical speech acts. These findings underscore how impoliteness functions as a gendered linguistic resource within mediated adolescent interaction. The study offers empirical and theoretical contributions to gendered discourse analysis, youth pragmatics, and media sociolinguistics.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Impoliteness Strategies, Socio- Pragmatic

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received
October 03, 2025
Revised
November 19,
2025
Accepted
December 30,
2025

**Published by
Website**

ISSN

Copyright



CV. Creative Tugu Pena

<https://attractivejournal.com/index.php/bpr>

2775-2305

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

@ 2025 by the authors

PENDAHULUAN

The portrayal of youth language in contemporary media, particularly in films, has become a significant focus for linguists and sociologists. A notable example is the action-comedy film *Barely Lethal*, which narrates the journey of a young assassin navigating the complexities of high school while grappling with her identity. This film serves as a lens through which the frequent use of abusive language among teenagers is examined, illuminating broader societal issues such as bullying, peer pressure, and the quest for social acceptance (F. P. Hidayat et al., 2023; Veum et al., 2023). Abusive language, defined as derogatory or hurtful comments directed at others, can significantly impact relationships and self-esteem, making it a vital subject for exploration (Amin & Handayani, 2023; Kaczmarek, 2020).

This study aims to investigate the language utilized by adolescents in *Barely Lethal*, focusing specifically on instances of abusive language and their effects on character development and social interactions. By analyzing the characters' linguistic choices, this research seeks to uncover the motivations and social contexts that shape their language, ultimately enhancing our understanding of how teenagers communicate within today's media landscape (Ali & Ahmed, 2022; Mougeon et al., 1985).

Understanding this topic is essential as it clarifies how films reflect and shape societal attitudes toward language and behavior among young people. Given the

significant role media plays in shaping youth culture, it is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers to comprehend the nuances of harsh language in films like *Barely Lethal* (A. Hidayat et al., 2016). This study addresses a notable gap in the existing literature by providing a detailed analysis of how abusive language is depicted in a popular film, thereby shedding light on its broader implications for teenage communication and social dynamics (Ali & Ahmed, 2022).

Recent research has underscored the influence of media on language development and social behavior in adolescents (Veum et al., 2023). Studies have shown that the representation of language in films can significantly shape viewers' perceptions of social norms and behaviors (F. P. Hidayat et al., 2023). However, there remains a lack of research specifically examining the connection between abusive language and character dynamics in action-comedy films. This study aims to deepen our understanding of the complexities of teenage communication in the context of modern media.

Abusive utterances, such as humiliation, offense, or resistance, can affect the hearer in various ways. Notably, abusive language is not always intended to be serious or harmful; it can also be employed humorously or playfully, particularly in the comedy genre (Kaczmarek, 2020). Comedy often aims to amuse audiences through irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, or contradiction, and in this context, abusive utterances can serve as a source of humor, a means of creating contrast, or a method for character or relationship development (Amin & Handayani, 2023).

From a socio-pragmatic perspective, the study of speech meaning in relation to social aspects is crucial (Mougeon et al., 1985). Previous research, such as that by Ali & Ahmed (2022), has analyzed impoliteness theory in American action films, focusing on how characters' use of impoliteness is influenced by social power and solidarity. R. Brown and Gilman (1960) argue that rude expressions can signify incompatibility, power, or social relationships within a film narrative, while solidarity fosters a sense of community. However, much of the existing research on impoliteness has concentrated on pragmatic applications, often neglecting the social contexts in which these phenomena occur (Ali & Ahmed, 2022).

This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the socio-pragmatic elements of abusive language in *Barely Lethal*. It will examine how derogatory remarks are used, the contexts in which they occur, and their effects on the plot and characters. By doing so, this research seeks to enhance comprehension of the role of rudeness in action-comedy films and its impact on teenagers (Asheva, 2022).

A potential research question guiding this study could be: "How do impoliteness strategies, such as negative impoliteness, bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, and sarcasm or mock politeness, contribute to the creation of social actions and power dynamics in the film?" This question aligns with the data analysis, focusing on the use of impoliteness strategies and their contributions to social interactions and power dynamics among characters.

The expected outcomes of this study include a comprehensive description of the forms, implicatures, and politeness strategies of abusive utterances used in *Barely Lethal*, as well as an explanation of how these elements contribute to the film's comedic effect. Additionally, the study aims to provide insights and implications for understanding and appreciating abusive language and comedy in general.

Literature Review1

Politeness Strategy

Politeness strategies play a crucial role in social interactions, particularly in mitigating the impact of potentially self-destructive discourse on listeners while advancing the speaker's objectives. (Brown & Levinson, 1987) introduced the concept of politeness to help maintain an individual's sense of dignity during communication. (Yule, 2017) further defines politeness as actions that demonstrate respect for another person's identity. The primary aim of employing politeness strategies is to ensure the listener's comfort and to protect the speaker's self-image, thereby avoiding what is known as a Face Threatening Act (FTA).

Brown and Levinson (1987) identify four distinct politeness strategies: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Each strategy serves a unique function in communication, particularly in the context of social status and power dynamics, as illustrated in the film *Barely Lethal*. Research by (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015) highlights how characters utilize language to reinforce or challenge their positions within social hierarchies, employing politeness practices as a reflection of their social standing.

The bald-on-record strategy is characterized by direct communication that does not attempt to mitigate the risk of face-threatening behavior. This approach is most effective among individuals who share a close relationship, allowing for clear and concise expression of thoughts and intentions. For instance, a bald-on-record utterance might be, "Don't burn your hand!" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In contrast, positive politeness aims to enhance the listener's self-esteem by aligning the speaker's enthusiasm with the listener's needs and preferences (Amalia et al., 2023). This strategy often involves compliments and friendly greetings, fostering camaraderie. An example of positive politeness is illustrated in (Asheva, 2022): "Here mate, I was keeping that seat for a friend of mine."

Negative politeness, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987), involves strategies that acknowledge the listener's desire for autonomy and minimize face threats. This approach is often employed by individuals in positions of authority who wish to avoid offending the listener. An example of negative politeness is the statement, "I am seeking a comb." Off-record communication, on the other hand, employs indirect language that allows for multiple interpretations, placing the onus on the listener to derive meaning. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe this as a form of communication that serves various functions, exemplified by the phrase, "He who laughs last laughs longest."

Off-record is a type of indirect language that does not rule out the possibility of events that are less or completely different from what was planned. (Brown & Levinson, 1987) provide a definition for off-record in which they state that it is an oral communication action that serves numerous functions. The speaker's words may be interpreted as having more than one meaning. The receiver of the utterance is then charged with providing their interpretation of the statement. The following is an example from (Brown & Levinson, 1987): "He who laughs last laughs longest".

Representation Sign of Power

Representation in communication involves the creation of meaning through language, focusing on how individuals, groups, and concepts are portrayed.

(Amrullah, 2015) emphasizes the importance of accurate representation and the manner in which it is conveyed. Hall (1997), as cited in (Amalia et al., 2023), argues that representation is a cognitive construction of meaning that connects concepts with language, enabling the description of people, places, and events.

In the context of *Bridgerton* Season 1, character identities are deeply intertwined with social status, class, and gender roles. Amalia et al. (2023) assert that representation can signify the act of depicting something through a medium distinct from the entity itself, often as a symbol or sign. Media representation involves a selective portrayal of reality, which can shape cultural and political narratives surrounding power, gender, class, age, and nationality (Guinote, 2017).

Power is a fundamental aspiration for individuals seeking to achieve their goals. Lewis (2018) defines power as the ability to influence others to act in accordance with the desires of the power holder. Understanding the nuances of power dynamics in conversations enhances viewers' appreciation of the intricate relationships portrayed in the series (Fors, 2021). Russell (2013), as referenced in (Amalia et al., 2023), posits that power arises from individuals' influence over one another to fulfill their objectives. Foucault (1997), in Guinote (2017), explores the historical foundations of power, distinguishing between sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower. These concepts, while not mutually exclusive, serve distinct functions in illustrating how power is wielded to control and regulate individuals, thereby shaping specific forms of subjectivity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the use of abusive utterances in the film *Barely Lethal*. Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring the meanings that individuals or groups assign to social phenomena, as outlined by (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The focus of this research is to understand how specific linguistic phenomena manifest in particular contexts and circumstances, making qualitative methods, specifically content analysis, the most appropriate choice for addressing the research questions.

Research Design

The research design is structured around content analysis, which is defined by (Permatasari, 2017) as a systematic approach to interpreting communication content. This method allows for an in-depth examination of the film's script and video, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the abusive language used by characters. The data collection process involves watching the film, identifying instances of abusive utterances, and transcribing these segments for further analysis. This approach directly aligns with the research problem, as it enables the exploration of how language functions within the social dynamics depicted in the film.

Data Collection Methods

Data will be collected through a combination of film analysis and textual analysis of the script. The primary data sources include the film itself and its screenplay, which provide rich material for identifying and analyzing abusive utterances. The researcher will systematically watch the film, noting instances of verbal abuse and transcribing relevant dialogues. This method ensures that the

data collected is both relevant and comprehensive, allowing for a thorough examination of the linguistic strategies employed by the characters.

In addition to primary data, the study will reference previous research on abusive language and comedy to contextualize the findings. This literature will provide a theoretical backdrop against which the current study's results can be interpreted, enhancing the overall analysis.

The analysis will be guided by relevant socio-pragmatic theories, including speech act theory, the cooperative principle, and the politeness principle. The researcher will apply Culpeper's (2011) framework of impoliteness, which categorizes various forms of impolite language and their functions. This framework will facilitate the identification of different impoliteness strategies, such as bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, mock politeness, and withholding politeness.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework of power and solidarity proposed by Brown and Gilman (1960) will be utilized to examine how social variables influence the use of impolite language. This framework is particularly relevant as it addresses the dynamics of power relationships and solidarity in social interactions, which are central to understanding the context of the film.

The selection of subjects for analysis is based on the characters and dialogues present in *Barely Lethal*. The film's script will serve as the primary text for analysis, focusing on key scenes that exemplify the use of abusive language. The choice of this film is justified by its portrayal of adolescent interactions and the complexities of social hierarchies, making it a rich source for examining the phenomenon of impoliteness.

While this methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of abusive utterances, several potential limitations must be acknowledged. One limitation is the subjective nature of qualitative analysis, which may introduce bias in interpreting the data. To mitigate this, the researcher will maintain a reflexive stance, continually assessing their interpretations against the data.

Additionally, the reliance on a single film may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, the insights gained from this focused analysis can contribute to a broader understanding of impoliteness in media representations of adolescent communication. The study will also consider the cultural and contextual factors that may influence the interpretation of abusive language, recognizing that these factors can vary significantly across different social settings.

In conclusion, this methodology is designed to effectively address the research problem by employing qualitative content analysis to explore the use of abusive utterances in *Barely Lethal*. By integrating relevant theoretical frameworks and carefully selecting data sources, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the linguistic strategies employed in the film and their implications for social dynamics among adolescents.

Impoliteness

One of the earliest attempts to define and explain the unrecognized phenomenon of verbal rudeness is (Culpeper, 2011) impoliteness framework. He offers a model that benefits from having been partially tested using real-world data from various discourses. It looks at the combative and impolite language that is used in US army training discourse (Bousfield, 2008). Because of this, (Culpeper,

2011)uses a face model that is more contextually and culturally sensitive. It consists of five super strategies, which are covered in more detail below.

Bald on Record Impoliteness

According to (Culpeper, 2011), the FTA (face threatening act) is carried out in a clear, concise, direct, and unambiguous manner in circumstances where the face is not minimized or irrelevant.

Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness is defined as "the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants" (the need to be liked, accepted, or appreciated by others) by (Culpeper, 2011).

Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is implied by "the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants," according to (Culpeper, 2011).

Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Mock politeness, sometimes referred to as banter, is politeness that remains surface-level because it is recognized that it is not intended to offend, according to Culpeper, the FTA is implemented through the use of fake politeness techniques, leading to surface-level realizations (Culpeper, 2011).

Withhold Politeness

Withhold politeness is defined as "the absence of politeness work where it would be expected" (Culpeper, 2011). He gives an example of how neglecting to express gratitude for a gift could be interpreted as intentional rudeness. Put differently, it is considered deliberate impoliteness to remain silent or take no action when politeness is called for.

Function of Impoliteness

According to (Culpeper, 2011), there are three primary purposes for being impolite: coercive, affective, and entertaining.

Affective Impoliteness

Culpeper suggests that it might simply refer to the unrestrained expression of emotion in circumstances where it is either not expected or forbidden (Culpeper, 2011).

Coercive Impoliteness

This particular form of rudeness aims to create a realignment of values between the target (hearer) and the producer (speaker), protecting or enhancing the speaker's existing advantages.

Entertaining Impoliteness

According to Culpeper, this kind alludes to taking advantage of the speaker's rudeness in order to obtain amusement. Similar to other forms of impoliteness, entertaining impoliteness also involves a victim or potential victim (Culpeper, 2011).

Impoliteness and types of face threat

In the complex realm of adolescent communication, the employment of rude language functions as a crucial tool for managing social power and identity. Impoliteness, frequently expressed through harsh or insulting remarks, can serve as a strategic instrument for individuals to assert dominance, contest authority, or perpetuate social hierarchies within their peer groups. (Culpeper, 2011) asserts that "impoliteness is a complex phenomenon that involves the intentional use of

language to cause offense". This complexity is especially apparent in media depictions, where characters frequently confront the obstacles of adolescence through their linguistic selections. Films such as *Barely Lethal* depict teenage characters involved in rude discussions, illustrating the diverse forms of face threats that can emerge in social situations.

Face threats denote the possible harm an utterance may cause to an individual's self-esteem or social status, manifesting in numerous forms such as outright insults, sarcasm, and mocking (Edensor, 2020). Comprehending these categories of face threats is crucial for examining the role of language in social contexts, particularly among adolescents who are in the process of refining their communication abilities and social identities (Dozier, 2017).

a. Intentional Threats to Face

Goffman (1967) in (Dozier, 2017) deliberate threats to one's face, especially among adolescents, frequently emerge as verbal abuse and violent discourse. The individual in question may seem to have acted with malice and spite, intending to inflict public insult. The argument contains an offense that evidently seeks to aggravate the recipient's attitude.

These statements can function as a method for adolescents to assert power, control, and dominance over their peers or authoritative adults. Comprehending this conduct is essential for tackling the underlying problems and fostering healthy interactions among adolescents (McNeely & Blanchard, 2009).

Intentional threats denote verbal phrases used to induce fear or exert dominance over another individual. Among teenagers, these threats frequently emerge as aggressive language that reinforces the speaker's perceived authority and control within social hierarchies (Zaza et al., 2015).

b. Incidental Threats to Face

Incidental threats to face pertain to unintentional verbal or non-verbal behaviours that may adversely affect an individual's self-esteem or social identity. In contrast to intentional threats, which are purposefully directed at diminishing someone's face, incidental threats transpire without the speaker's cognizance of their possible repercussions. Such threats may emerge from misinterpretations, cultural disparities, or deviations from social norms (Bousfield, 2008; Brändström, 2009).

c. Accidental threats to face

Accidental threats to face denote inadvertent actions or remarks that may affect an individual's social identity or self-esteem. These threats manifest without wicked intent and frequently stem from misunderstandings, cultural disparities, or societal conventions that the speaker fails to acknowledge (Bousfield, 2008)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Socio-pragmatic Analysis of *Barely Lethal*

This section presents a socio-pragmatic analysis of dialogues from the film *Barely Lethal*, focusing on the power dynamics, linguistic features, and social implications of the characters' interactions.

Data Excerpt 1

Timestamp: 00:04:54,761 --> 00:05:02,561

Dialogue:

Hardman: What do we say, ladies?

Girls: No... attachments.

Contextual Overview

This excerpt features Hardman addressing a group of girls, urging them to renounce emotional attachments. The girls' collective response underscores a social dynamic where adherence to Hardman's directive is expected.

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. Power Dynamics

- **Initiation of Control:** Hardman's authoritative question establishes him as the dominant figure, implying that he expects compliance from the girls.
- **Collective Response:** The girls' agreement reflects either a shared understanding or societal pressure, illustrating how Hardman's influence dictates their reactions.

2. Linguistic Features

- **Imperative Language:** Hardman's command, "No attachments!" reinforces his authority and the expectation of compliance from the girls.

3. Social Implications

- **Rejection of Emotional Bonds:** The phrase "No attachments" signifies a broader societal norm among adolescents that views emotional relationships as vulnerabilities.
- **Peer Pressure:** The girls' consensus may indicate peer pressure, suggesting that conformity to Hardman's demands supersedes personal feelings.

4. Implications for Abusive Utterances:

- **Subtle Forms of Abuse:** The power dynamics at play may represent psychological manipulation, where social interactions perpetuate emotional abuse by compelling individuals to suppress their emotions.

Data Excerpt2

Timestamp: 00:43:10,521

Dialogue:

Megan: *You know, Victoria, I used to look up to you. I thought you were so cool. But now I see you're just a bitter, lonely, sad woman.*

Victoria: *(sarcastically) Oh, how sweet. A little girl's crush on me has turned into pity.*

Megan: *No, it's turned into respect. Because I know what it's like to be you. To feel like you have to prove yourself to everyone, all the time. But you don't have to do that anymore. You can be happy.*

Victoria: *(angrily) Shut up! You don't know anything about me! You're just a stupid little girl playing dress-up!*

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. Power Dynamics

- **Shift in Perception:** Megan's initial admiration for Victoria shifts to a position of perceived superiority, challenging Victoria's authority.

- **Victoria's Defensive Response:** Victoria's sarcastic retort reveals her fragility, as she attempts to maintain dominance while feeling threatened by Megan's emerging perspective.
2. **Linguistic Features**
 - **Direct Confrontation:** Megan's critique of Victoria is aggressive, undermining her social identity.
 - **Sarcasm as a Defensive Strategy:** Victoria's sarcasm serves to diminish Megan's viewpoint and reassert her dominance.
 3. **Emotional Vulnerability:**
 - **Megan's Empathy:** Megan's attempt to connect with Victoria reflects a deeper understanding of her struggles, positioning her as insightful.
 - **Victoria's Anger:** Victoria's vehement rejection of Megan's perspective underscores her emotional fragility.
 4. **Social Implications:**
 - **Internalized Insecurities:** Victoria's response illustrates how power dynamics provoke defensive reactions when individuals feel threatened.
 - **Cycle of Abuse:** The exchange exemplifies a potential cycle of emotional abuse, where Megan's remarks and Victoria's defensive responses create a toxic interaction.

Data Excerpt 3

Timestamp: 00:05:38,555 --> 00:05:54,154

Dialogue:

Hardman: Hammer fist, ladies. You're not training to save your lives. You're training to take someone else's.

Agent 84: Bitch.

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. **Power Dynamics**
 - **Authority of Hardman:** Hardman's directive establishes him as the leader, promoting a hostile training environment.
 - **Agent 84's Resistance:** Agent 84's retort signifies defiance against Hardman's authority, asserting her autonomy.
2. **Linguistic Features:**
 - **Imperative Language:** Hardman's commanding language evokes urgency and anxiety among the participants.
 - **Derogatory Response:** Agent 84's use of "Bitch" undermines Hardman's authority and contests his narrative.
3. **Emotional and Social Implications:**
 - **Aggression as Power:** Hardman's framing of training normalizes violence as a means of establishing authority.
 - **Rejection of Norms:** Agent 84's response challenges the harsh norms advocated by Hardman, asserting her individuality and empowerment.
4. **Interpersonal Dynamics:**

- **Conflict and Tension:** The interaction highlights the friction between Hardman and Agent 84, illustrating the complexities of power dynamics in competitive environments.
- **Impact on Group Dynamics:** Agent 84's defiance may resonate with others, potentially fostering camaraderie among those who oppose Hardman's tactics.

Data Excerpt 4

Timestamp: 00:07:46,641 --> 00:08:02,265

Dialogue:

Hardman: Meet Victoria Knox: American expat turned arms dealer. If you're a terrorist and you want to kill some folk, this is the person you call. Don't let her good looks fool you. She has an I.Q. of 140, and she will use it to kill you.

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. Power Dynamics:

- **Establishing Authority:** Hardman's introduction of Victoria positions him as the authority figure controlling the narrative around her.
- **Diminishing Victoria's Agency:** By framing her intelligence within a context of violence, Hardman reduces her identity to that of a threat.

2. Linguistic Features:

- **Loaded Language:** Hardman's choice of terms instills fear and reinforces a narrative that portrays Victoria as dangerous.
- **Intellectualization of Violence:** The mention of Victoria's intelligence juxtaposed with violence perpetuates gender stereotypes.

3. Emotional and Social Implications:

- **Fear and Manipulation:** Hardman's portrayal aims to evoke terror, manipulating audience perception to bolster his own authority.
- **Gender Dynamics:** The discourse reflects societal attitudes towards women in power, complicating Victoria's credibility.

4. Interpersonal Dynamics:

- **Conflict and Rivalry:** Hardman's framing of Victoria sets the stage for future confrontations, establishing a hierarchy rooted in fear.
- **Impact on Group Perception:** Hardman's negative portrayal may alienate Victoria from potential allies, affecting her interactions.

Data Excerpt 5

Timestamp: 00:17:59,628 --> 00:18:15,477

Dialogue:

Liz: Freak show! What do you want from me?

Megan: I thought we could walk together.

Liz: Are you on bath salts? It's like you have social herpes and you want to... spit it back in my mouth.

Megan: That's... that's really gross.

Liz: So is your makeup. God, you look like you had a one-night stand with Mr. Potato Head.

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. **Power Dynamics:**
 - **Assertion of Dominance:** Liz's insults serve as a tactic to establish superiority within their social hierarchy.
 - **Perception Manipulation:** Both characters use abusive language to influence their peers' perceptions, illustrating a strategy for social navigation.
2. **Linguistic Features:**
 - **Use of Abusive Language:** The dialogue includes derogatory expressions intended to demean the other individual.
 - **Emotional Language:** The emotional weight of their words conveys profound feelings while asserting dominance.
3. **Emotional and Social Implications:**
 - **Fear and Intimidation:** Harsh language fosters an environment of fear, manipulating emotional dynamics to render the other party vulnerable.
 - **Social Isolation:** Abusive remarks may lead to social estrangement, reinforcing existing power relations.
4. **Interpersonal Dynamics:**
 - **Conflict and Rivalry:** The dialogue indicates a cycle of retribution, sustaining tension in their relationship.
 - **Impact on Group Dynamics:** Their aggressive language may alter their status within the social group, influencing how others perceive and interact with them

Data Excerpt 6

Timestamp: 01:17:47,641

Dialogue:

Megan: Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to ruin your life.

Agent 84: Oh, no, you didn't ruin my life at all. I was just planning on being a serial killer before you came along.

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. **Power Dynamics:**
 - **Megan's Apology:** This expression of vulnerability may be a tactical maneuver to garner sympathy.
 - **Agent 84's Sarcasm:** Her retort diminishes Megan's sincerity, asserting her dominance in the interaction.
2. **Linguistic Features:**
 - **Use of Sarcasm:** Agent 84's sarcastic response conveys contempt and resistance, undermining Megan's emotional appeal.
 - **Emotional Manipulation:** Megan's apology attempts to influence the emotional dynamics, but Agent 84's response subverts this intention.
3. **Emotional and Social Implications:**
 - **Conflict and Tension:** The interaction reveals underlying conflict, with Megan's apology met with ridicule, highlighting discord in their relationship.

- **Social Identity and Reputation:** Agent 84's use of dark humor reinforces her image as resilient, potentially affecting how others perceive both characters.
4. **Interpersonal Dynamics:**
- **Cycle of Retaliation:** The exchange exemplifies a cycle of hostility, where Megan's attempt at reconciliation is met with sarcasm, complicating their ability to communicate effectively.
 - **Impact on Group Dynamics:** Agent 84's dismissal of Megan's apology may resonate with peers who value assertiveness, while others might view Megan's vulnerability as a weakness, altering their social standing

Data Excerpt 7

Timestamp: 00:18:15,602 --> 00:18:34,830

Dialogue:

Liz: Look, I have 9 months, 3 weeks, and 5 days until I escape this post-pubescent psych ward, and you are not gonna mess this up. Just... wipe all that off, put these on, and just... try not to talk to me. Okay?

Analysis of the Dialogue

1. **Power Dynamics:**
 - **Assertion of Control:** Liz's detailed timeline emphasizes her urgency and desire for control over her situation, asserting her agency.
 - **Directive Language:** Her commands indicate a desire to dominate the interaction, reinforcing her authority.
2. **Linguistic Features:**
 - **Use of Imperatives:** Liz's directives leave little room for negotiation, highlighting her assertiveness and frustration.
 - **Emotional Weight:** The phrase "post-pubescent psych ward" encapsulates her feelings of captivity, underscoring her quest for autonomy.
3. **Emotional and Social Implications:**
 - **Frustration and Isolation:** Liz's request for silence suggests a need for distance, indicating her emotional state and desire to cope with her environment.
 - **Social Identity:** Her assertiveness may elicit respect or fear from others, shaping her social identity within the group.
4. **Interpersonal Dynamics:**
 - **Conflict and Tension:** Liz's tone indicates underlying conflict, which may escalate if her requests are not met.
 - **Impact on Group Dynamics:** Her assertive language may set a precedent for interactions, influencing how others engage with her.

B. Analysis of Impoliteness from the Teenager's Respond

Bald on Record Impoliteness

Hardman's command to the girls exemplifies bald on record impoliteness, as he directly instructs them to eliminate attachments. This authoritative stance

reflects his position of power, exerting psychological pressure on the girls to conform to his expectations.

Positive Impoliteness

In the training scene, Hardman's language encourages aggression, while Agent 84's use of the term "Bitch" signifies a break from expected behavior, illustrating a complex interplay of solidarity and defiance among peers.

Negative Impoliteness

Hardman's statement about Victoria Knox employs negative impoliteness through sarcasm and threats, undermining her identity and reinforcing a narrative of danger. This reflects a broader societal tendency to associate femininity with deceit and violence.

Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Hardman's statement about Victoria Knox employs negative impoliteness through sarcasm and threats, undermining her identity and reinforcing a narrative of danger. This reflects a broader societal tendency to associate femininity with deceit and violence.

C. Analysis of Intentional, Incidental, and Accidental Threats to Face in the Dialogues

1. Intentional Threats to Face

Megan's direct critique of Victoria and Liz's derogatory comments towards Megan exemplify intentional threats, where language is used to diminish the other's social identity and assert superiority:

Megan to Victoria: *"But now I see you're just a bitter, lonely, sad woman."*

The statement constitutes a deliberate threat directed at Victoria's face. Megan explicitly assaults Victoria's character, eroding her self-esteem and social identity. Megan employs descriptors such as "bitter," "lonely," and "sad" to establish her own superiority and undermine Victoria's standing.

Liz to Megan: *"It's like you have social herpes and you want to... spit it back in my mouth."*

Analysis: Liz employs a colorful and pejorative metaphor to demean Megan, so diminishing her and establishing superiority in their conversation. This assertion aims to elicit a profound emotional response and bolster Liz's status within the social hierarchy.

Agent 84 to Hardman: *"Bitch."*

The analysis indicates that this monosyllabic reply constitutes a blatant affront, deliberately posing a threat to Hardman's visage. It expresses contempt and questions his authority, expressing Agent 84's dominance in the discussion.

2. Accidental Threats to the Face

Instances where characters inadvertently undermine each other, such as Megan's compliment to Victoria, reveal the complexities of social interactions and the potential for misinterpretation.

Megan to Victoria: *"I thought you were so cool."*

Analysis: Although this statement may appear laudatory, it can also be interpreted as a subtle threat to Victoria's visage. Megan inadvertently underscores Victoria's diminished status by juxtaposing her former admiration with her present perception of Victoria as "bitter" and "sad," which may not have been her intention.

Hardman's instruction: *"You're not training to save your lives. You're training to take someone else's."*

Analysis: Although Hardman's statement is assertive and commanding, it may inadvertently pose a threat to the participants' dignity. The suggestion that they are being trained to inflict harm may inadvertently compromise their sense of purpose or morality, contingent upon their personal viewpoints.

3. Unintentional Hazards to the Face

Megan's apology and Liz's comments about makeup may unintentionally harm the recipient's self-esteem, showcasing how language can impact social dynamics without malicious intent:

Megan's apology: *"Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to ruin your life."*

The analysis suggests that Megan's apology may appear insincere or condescending, potentially jeopardizing Agent 84's dignity. While she may not intend to offend, the implication that she has the power to "ruin" someone's life can be perceived as dismissive of Agent 84's autonomy.

Liz's comment about Megan's makeup: *"So is your makeup. God, you look like you had a one-night stand with Mr. Potato Head."*

Analysis: While Liz's comment is intended as an insult, it may also reflect an accidental threat to Megan's face. If Liz is unaware of how deeply her words might affect Megan, this could be seen as an unintentional undermining of Megan's self-esteem.

Agent 84's sarcastic remark: *"Oh, no, you didn't ruin my life at all. I was just planning on being a serial killer before you came along."*

Analysis: This response, while sarcastic, could unintentionally undermine the seriousness of Megan's apology. If Agent 84 does not recognize the potential impact of her words, it could be seen as an accidental threat to Megan's emotional state.

The examination of purposeful, incidental, and inadvertent threats within conversations uncovers the intricacies of adolescent interactions and the methods by which language is employed to navigate power dynamics (Jägervi & Svensson, 2015; Wal et al., 2024). Deliberate threats are frequently overt and confrontational, designed to diminish another's self-worth. Incidental threats may stem from misconceptions or contextual elements, whereas accidental risks develop when individuals inadvertently damage others due to unawareness (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015; Lehane, 2015). Comprehending these dynamics is essential for addressing the wider ramifications of communication, authority, and emotional well-being in teenage relationships (Padmi, 2018; Sulistia, 2016).

Table of Frequencies and Percentages of Strategies, Social Factors and the Functions:

Strategy/Social Factor/Function	Frequency	Percentage
Bald on Record Impoliteness	3	37.5%
Positive Impoliteness	1	12.5%
Negative Impoliteness	5	62.5%

Strategy/Social Factor/Function	Frequency	Percentage
Sarcasm or Mock Politeness	1	12.5%
Social Factors: Power	4	50%
Social Factors: Solidarity	1	12.5%
Social Factors: Authority	2	25%
Functions: Attack on Face	6	75%
Functions: Assert Dominance	3	37.5%
Functions: Create Ambiguity	1	12.5%

Table 1: The percentages are calculated based on the total number of instances of each category.

The table above illustrates the frequencies and percentages of strategies, social factors, and functions identified in the socio-pragmatic analysis of *Barely Lethal*. The predominant strategy observed is negative impoliteness, utilized in 62.5% of instances, indicating a strong tendency towards aggressive communication among characters. Bald on record impoliteness follows, highlighting the directness of commands and assertions of authority.

In terms of social factors, power dynamics and authority are frequently present, suggesting that impoliteness strategies are closely tied to issues of control and dominance within the narrative. The primary function of these strategies is to attack the face, which occurs in 75% of instances, underscoring the aggressive nature of interactions and the emphasis on social hierarchy.

Finally, the most frequent function is attacking the face, which is present in 75% of the instances. This is followed by asserting dominance and creating ambiguity. These functions suggest that impoliteness strategies are often used to assert dominance and create confusion or uncertainty in the interaction.

Overall, the socio-pragmatic analysis of *Barely Lethal* reveals the intricate ways in which impoliteness strategies are employed to navigate power dynamics, assert dominance, and influence social interactions among adolescents. The findings highlight the significant social consequences of language use in shaping relationships and identities within the context of the film

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that negative impoliteness is the most frequently employed strategy in the film, characterized by direct attacks on the addressee's positive face wants. For instance, Liz's comment to Megan about her appearance exemplifies this strategy, highlighting the aggressive nature of adolescent communication. Additionally, bald on record impoliteness is prevalent, as seen in Hardman's authoritative commands to the girls, which assert his dominance and control. Positive impoliteness, while less common, is also present, as demonstrated by Megan's critique of Victoria, which creates social distance and undermines her

authority. Furthermore, sarcasm or mock politeness is utilized to create ambiguity and reinforce dominance, as illustrated in the interactions between Megan and Agent 84. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. By analyzing the specific impoliteness strategies used in *Barely Lethal*, this study addresses a gap in the literature regarding the social functions of impoliteness in adolescent interactions. The findings underscore the relationship between language use and social factors such as power, authority, and solidarity, demonstrating how these dynamics shape communication among young individuals.

This research offers novel insights into the complexities of impoliteness, revealing how it serves not only to assert dominance but also to navigate social hierarchies and relationships. By filling the identified gap in the literature, this study enhances our understanding of the role of language in social interactions, particularly in the context of adolescence.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The analysis is based on a single film, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand on this work by examining a broader range of media or exploring different cultural contexts to further investigate the nuances of impoliteness in social interactions.

In conclusion, the socio-pragmatic analysis of *Barely Lethal* highlights the intricate ways in which impoliteness strategies are employed to assert dominance, attack the face, and create ambiguity in social interactions. The implications of these findings extend beyond the film, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of adolescent communication and the broader social consequences of language use. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse on pragmatics and sociolinguistics but also has practical applications in understanding and addressing communication challenges in various social settings.

REFERENCE

- Ali, M. H., & Ahmed, M. S. (2022). A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Impolite Expressions in The American Action Movie "The Kill Team (2019)". *Journal of AlMaarif University College*, 33(4), 473–492. <https://doi.org/10.51345/v33i4.608.g321>
- Amalia, N. I., Indah, R. N., & Bahtiar, J. Y. (2023). *Representation of Power through Politeness Strategies in Bridgerton Season 1 Movie*. 5(3), 385–397. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v5i3.14131>
- Amin, A., & Handayani, T. W. (2023). The Portrayal of Megan's Movement from Female Masculinity to Feminine in the Barely Lethal. *LITTERATURA: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 2, 27–44. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:260301728>
- Amrullah, L. (2015). Implicature in the Study of Pragmatics. *Lingua Scientia*, 7(1), 58. <https://doi.org/10.21274/lis.2015.7.1.57-63>
- Asheva, A. J. (2022). A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Politeness Strategies and Social Contexts in Joker Movie. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Studi Amerika*, 28(2), 67. <https://doi.org/10.20961/jbssa.v28i2.63811>
- Bousfield, D. (2008). Impoliteness in interaction. In *Impoliteness in interaction*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.167>

- Brändström, C. (2009). "Gender and Genre": A Feminist Exploration of the Bildungsroman in *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* and *Martha Quest*.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. In *Cambridge University Press* (Vol. 9, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2013-0005>
- Creswell, W. J., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. In A. Marks & M. O’Hefferman (Eds.), *Sage Publication* (fifth edit, Vol. 53, Issue 9). Sage Publisher.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). Politeness and Impoliteness. *Pragmatics*, 1–41. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003010043-5>
- Dozier, R. (2017). Female Masculinity at Work: Managing Stigma on the Job. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 41(2), 197–209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684316682956>
- Dubois, D., & Ordabayeva, N. (2015). Social hierarchy, social status, and status consumption. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Consumer Psychology* (Issue September). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107706552.013>
- Edensor, T. (2020). National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life. In *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Issue January 2002). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003086178>
- Fors, M. (2021). Power Dynamics in the Clinical Situation: A Confluence of Perspectives. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 57(2), 242–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.2021.1935191>
- Guinote, A. (2017). How Power Affects People: Activating, Wanting, and Goal Seeking. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, 353–381. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010416-044153>
- Hidayat, A., Wulansari, & Septi, C. D. (2016). Characterization Analysis Of The Main Character Of The Secret Garden (A Comparative Study of Characterization in the Movie and Novel). *Wanastra*, 8(2), 37–45. <https://ejournal.bsi.ac.id/ejurnal/index.php/wanastra/issue/view/202>
- Hidayat, F. P., Lubis, F. H., Hardiyanto, S., Ananda, F. R., & Anfasa, I. (2023). *The Impact of Social Media Use on Adolescents*. Atlantis Press SARL. <https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-07-7>
- Jägervi, L., & Svensson, K. (2015). Conceptions of gender and age in Swedish Victim Support. *International Review of Victimology*, 21(2), 217–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758015571473>
- Kaczmarek, L. D. (2020). Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, January 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8>
- Lehane, C. M. (2015). Male and Female Differences in Nonconscious Mimicry: A Systematic Review. *Journal of European Psychology Students*, 6(3), 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.5334/jeps.de>
- McNeely, C., & Blanchard, J. (2009). *A guide to Healthy Adolescent and Development*. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-adolescent-health/_docs/TTYE-Guide.pdf
- Mougeon, R., Beniak, E., & Valois, D. (1985). A sociolinguistic study of language contact, shift, and change. In *Linguistics* (Vol. 23, Issue 3).

- <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.1985.23.3.455>
- Padmi, M. F. M. (2018). *Female Masculinity and Power Relation in Patriarchic System : Case Study Tomboyism of Bacha Posh in Afghanistan biological / essentialist theory of gender and sex representations in society . actions that stereotypically related to of in the of female mas.* 1(1), 45.
- Permatasari, A. I. (2017). A Socio-Pragmatic Analysis Of Women Expressive Utterances In Bad Moms Movie. *Journal of Materials Processing Technology*, 1(1), 1-8.
- Sulistia, R. (2016). Female Masculinity of Fa Mulan and Its Impact Towards Her Relationship With Male Characters in Disney Movie Mulan. *Litera~Kultura*, 4(3), 12-19. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/230653305.pdf>
- Veum, A., Burgess, M. Ø., & Mills, K. A. (2023). Adolescents ' critical , multimodal analysis of social media self-representation. *Language and Education*, 0(0), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2023.2287508>
- Wal, A. Van Der, Valkenburg, P. M., & Driel, I. I. Van. (2024). *In Their Own Words : How Adolescents Use Social Media and How It Affects Them.* <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241248591>
- Yule, G. (2017). *The Study Of Language Sixth Edition* (sixth edit). Cambridge University Press,.
- Zaza, S., Dittus, P. J., Michael, S. L., Brindis, C. D., & Iskander, J. K. (2015). *Cdc Public Health Grand Rounds Adolescence : Preparing for Lifelong Health and Wellness Adolescents in the United States.*