

## **User-to-User Impoliteness in Facebook Comments Related to Football Matches: A Critical Analysis of Impoliteness Frameworks**

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### **Abstract**

Previous research on impoliteness has typically relied on a single framework to analyze the phenomenon, which may lead to an incomplete understanding of the strategies used. This study sought to investigate impoliteness strategies that are used by Jordanian Facebookers when commenting on football matches. Additionally, it aimed to determine whether Lachenicht's (1980) aggravating language or Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework was better suited for analyzing impoliteness in Facebook comments related to football matches. The researchers analyzed 100 comments using both frameworks to identify different impoliteness strategies. The findings showed that Jordanians' comments on football matches contained different types of impoliteness such as bald on record, positive impoliteness/aggravation, negative impoliteness/aggravation, and off-record. Additionally, negative impoliteness was the most frequently used strategy. It was found that Culpeper's framework was more effective in identifying and managing taboo language and direct insults than Lachenicht's. This study enhances our understanding of impoliteness strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users when commenting on football matches and highlights the importance of using appropriate frameworks for data analysis. Future studies may examine impoliteness strategies in different contexts and combining multiple frameworks to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Impoliteness strategies, Jordanian Facebook users, Lachenicht's (1980) aggravating language, Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness frameworks, Taboo language

### **1. Introduction**

In today's age of widespread internet usage, social media platforms like Facebook provide an avenue for people to communicate and interact digitally. This form of interaction is known as digital or computer-mediated interaction, enabling users to express their beliefs, feelings, and attitudes towards events both politely and impolitely (Sindoni 2013, 5). Impoliteness is a linguistic phenomenon that involves the use of insulting language to verbally attack others, as noted by (Lachenicht 1980, 1). In terms of Culpeper's (1996) framework, impoliteness is a set of communicative strategies used to attack the addressee's face, which negatively impacts the hearer's social identity. The concept of impoliteness is

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motivated by language users who deliberately and intentionally attack the addressee's face, or when the hearer interprets what is said as face-attacking (Culpeper 2005, 38).

Bousfield (2008, 3) describes impoliteness as "a behavior that is face-aggravating in a particular context," and speakers tend to maximize such behaviors to increase verbal aggression and cause harm to hearers. This is often seen in the language used by football fans during matches where the competitive sportsmanship can generate hostility between opposing fans. Facebook users who watch football matches interact by expressing their feelings in their comments on posts related to the game. These comments may contain verbal attacks that show the impolite behavior of fans through language.

Previous studies have examined impoliteness strategies using only one linguistic framework, but this may not provide a complete understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, this study aims to examine the strategies of two frameworks, Lachenicht's (1980) aggravating language and Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness, to determine which is better-equipped to analyze impoliteness in Facebook comments related to football matches made by Jordanians. This study will contribute to the existing literature on linguistics, pragmatics, impoliteness, and digital interaction. The study's main questions are the following:

- 1) What pragmatic impoliteness strategies are used by Jordanians when commenting on football matches and interacting with each other on Facebook?
- 2) How do Lachenicht's and Culpeper's frameworks perform when analyzing Facebook comments related to football matches made by Jordanians?

## **2. Setting the scene**

Football is the most popular sport in Jordan. It is a well-known sport people can play and watch all over the country from South to North. In Jordan, there are football teams represent a city, a certain place, and/or a group of people. We have national teams like Al-Faisaly, Al-Wehdat, Ar-Ramtha, among others. Internationally, there are also some popular teams like Real Madrid and Barcelona. Either nationally or internationally, football is more than a sport. It could represent identity and lead to racism sometimes (Back et al. 2001). When there is a match between rival teams, in Jordan fans are likely to watch it either on T.V channels inside cafes or on social media platforms such as Facebook. In both cases, there is a kind of division between fans' opinions concerning this sport. Some prefer X team to win while others prefer Y team which may lead to conflicts between fans.

Before, during, or after a football match, some fans start writing their comments to express their opinions. These comments are different. Whether praising or criticizing, some could be about the match itself or the teams while others could be about specific players, fans or the coach. These comments, which are seen by many people, may contain verbal attacks that show the impolite behavior of fans through language. This could be evidenced in the aftermath of a match where the fans of the winning team or losing team express their opinions, power, attitudes, and animosity against each other (Lewandowski 2008, 29). Indeed, such comments matter to (im)politeness research as they reflect views, perceptions, and naturalistic communication, which could pave the way for linguistic impoliteness theories to be applied to the comments of fans.

### 3. Literature review

#### 3.1 The frameworks

Two noteworthy frameworks on impoliteness are Lachenicht's (1980) model of aggravating language and Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness. These models operate under the assumption that language can be used to cause harm to an addressee's face, with a focus on impolite and verbally aggressive behavior in communication.

Lachenicht's (1980) work "A Study of Abusive and Insulting Language" outlines a model for aggravating language in interactions, which emphasizes that the use of abusive language can damage the recipient's face. This model of aggravating/impoliteness offers a thorough examination of linguistic strategies that can cause face damage, with these strategies varying in terms of the degree of threat posed.

In his work "Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness," Culpeper (1996) introduces a model for impoliteness, which highlights the potential for impoliteness to cause social disharmony in interactions. Similar to Lachenicht's model, Culpeper views impoliteness as detrimental to the needs of the addressee. Both Lachenicht and Culpeper propose various strategies designed to verbally attack others.

In his model, Lachenicht (1980, 619) proposes four main strategies:

- 1- **Off-record** which is expressed by using ambiguous insults.
- 2- **Bald on Record** produces FTAs directly with impositions in an imperative form (e.g. Don't talk).
- 3- **Positive aggravation** shows aggravation to a certain addressee in a way that shows he/she is "disapproved of, is not esteemed, does not belong, and will not receive cooperation".
- 4- **Negative aggravation** that is designed to impose on the addressee, to interfere with his/her freedom of action, and to attack his/her social position.

Culpeper (1996, 356) suggests five impoliteness (super) strategies that can be used to attack an addressee's face:

- 1- **Bald on record impoliteness** produces FTAs clearly, concisely and unambiguously in imperative or declarative forms.
- 2- **Positive impoliteness** is directed to damage only the interlocutor's positive face.
- 3- **Negative impoliteness** is expressed in the use of strategies designed to damage the wants of the addressee's negative face.
- 4- **Sarcasm or mock politeness/off-record** where the insult is expressed indirectly.
- 5- **Withhold politeness** which concerns the absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

Although both Lachenicht (1980) and Culpeper (1996) have some strategies in common, the framing of strategies and sub-strategies might be different. Both theorists consider a number of sub-strategies under positive and negative impoliteness/aggravation; Table 1 presents some of them.

**Table 1:** Lachenicht's (1980) and Culpeper's (1996) sub-strategies of face damaging behavior.

No	(Lachenicht1980)	(Culpeper 1996)
1	<b>Positive aggravation</b>	<b>Positive impoliteness</b>
	- Convey that h is not liked - Dislike for h and h's things	- Exclude the other from activity - Ignore, snub, fail to attend to H's interests, wants, needs, goods
2	<b>Negative aggravation</b>	<b>Negative impoliteness</b>
	- Stress and increase speaker's power - Tease and bait	- Frighten - Scorn or ridicule

Table 1 shows the sub-strategies suggested by Lachenicht (1980) and Culpeper (1996) for face damaging. These sub-strategies are concerned with the positive and negative needs of face. To illustrate, the existence of such sub-strategies is to damage the addressee's positive and negative face needs.

### 3.2 Empirical studies

Generally speaking, studies about football matches are prevailing in linguistics. In associating football with identity, Awad (2012) analyzed the nicknames of football teams participated in FIFA World Cup 2010. The study examined the way nations prove their identity through the nicknames given to their teams, following Critical Discourse Analysis. The results showed that, including metaphorical expressions, some nicknames related to war, animals, colors are used to represent the teams and their country's identity and/or to add humor to the football matches.

Additionally, the field of linguistics has seen a surge of interest in pragmatics, particularly in impoliteness, both in online and face-to-face interactions. Several studies have been conducted to explore the phenomenon of impoliteness, using Culpeper's model. For instance, Wibowo and Kuntjara (2013) analyzed online comments on an Indonesian football website. Data were collected through studying online comments from a football website named Okezone. The findings revealed that commentators utilized impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper, except for withholding politeness.

Halim (2015) provided an analysis of the types of impoliteness strategies manifested in online interaction following Culpeper's (2011) framework. The data comprised one hundred and fifty-one comments that appeared on posts of high-profile politicians on Facebook. The study revealed that the strategy of insult was used extensively.

Amir and Jakob (2018) analyzed impoliteness strategies used by Facebook users when commenting on Cristiano Ronaldo's Facebook account. They chose five comments based on two statuses shared by the footballer in question. In order to find out the impoliteness strategies, they built their analysis on the framework of Culpeper (1996, 2011). The results showed that Facebook users used different impoliteness strategies, and the most common was *insult* strategy.

Peterlicean and Berariu (2020) conducted a study to reveal the features of online sports news. The researchers provided macro and micro analyses to unmask the structure of such genre. The results found

that online sports news often contains a number of linguistic features, metaphorical expressions, and impoliteness in the form of provocation.

A recent study by White (2021) highlighted the language of football fans in the United Kingdom. He examined the words written by football fans when discussing football matters concerning Chelsea Football Club. It was revealed that fans teased each other and expressed face-threatening acts. Further, their expressions contained conflict and impoliteness. These studies suggest that social media users may employ impoliteness strategies to damage the addressee's face, resulting in social disharmony and conflict. Although most studies have used Culpeper's model, this study seeks to employ both Culpeper and Lachenicht's framework to examine impoliteness in football matches thoroughly and determine which framework is more suitable and applicable in this context.

Salman et al. (2022) delved into the impoliteness strategies employed by Hamlet as he interacted with other characters throughout the play. Their research encompassed two main objectives. Firstly, they examined how Hamlet used impoliteness, employing models by Culpeper (1996/2011/2017) and Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann (2003) for this analysis. Secondly, they scrutinized the verbal responses of other characters when confronted with Hamlet's impolite expressions, utilizing Bousfield's (2008) model. The study revealed that the play prominently features the recurrence of three impoliteness strategies: mock impoliteness, bald on-record impoliteness, and positive impoliteness, with mock impoliteness being the most frequently employed. Additionally, the study highlighted that the characters in Hamlet utilized two response strategies respectively: the defensive and defensive-offensive. The researchers found that the utilization of these impoliteness strategies and their corresponding responses has detrimentally impacted the relationship between the characters.

## **4. Methodology**

### *4.1 Sample and data collection*

The researchers selected Facebook as the social media platform for data collection due to its prevalence as a platform for streaming football matches in Jordan. Three Facebook pages, namely Ma'an Sports Group, Al-Russaifa Union Café for Football, and Al-Clásico, were selected for comment collection during football matches between rival teams featuring famous football stars, such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe, Karim Benzema, and Mohamed Salah. These three pages were selected due to the large number of their participants which in turn increased the interaction and the number of the comments. Matches from several football championships, including the Spanish Super Cup, the Spanish League, the English Premier League, and the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) Champions League, were chosen for data collection as these competitions feature the top footballers and are of high interest to football fans. The researchers have access to the selected pages. When there was a match between rival teams, we kept watching and collecting comments.

The researchers focused on comments posted by Jordanians in colloquial Jordanian Arabic in the aftermath of COVID-19 between the dates of 9/8/2020 and 28/5/2022. It is worth noting that the data in this period were abundant and easily accessed because people were likely to be heavily engaged in the

virtual world particularly the Facebook which was the most frequently used website by people. The researchers checked users' profiles of the selected comments and found that all were Jordanians. By colloquial Arabic we mean any dialect spoken in the Arab world, like Jordanian Arabic, Syrian Arabic and so on. Only comments from user to user were selected for analysis, irrelevant comments were excluded, and the researchers hide users' names for ethical consideration. 50 comments featuring impoliteness were selected as a sample for this study, repeated expressions were not counted during the analysis.

#### *4.2 Data analysis*

Data were analyzed following content analysis technique, which is a technique used to analyze written data. This includes, for instance, data written on documents and websites (Cohen et al. 2007). Content analysis is grounded by a set of steps one should consider when doing this type of research. It starts from a simple point by reviewing words, phrases, and sentences in a certain text and then classifying and categorizing them. This technique is suitable to the present study as it considers written data on social media. Additionally, it helps in having a solid analysis after following the steps mentioned above.

The researchers followed a four-step process to address the first question, which included carefully reading and comprehending the comments, identifying impolite comments, categorizing the comments by impoliteness strategies, and associating each comment/reply with its specific impoliteness strategy and sub-strategy based on the works of Lachenicht (1980) and Culpeper (1996). For the second question, a comparison was made between the two frameworks in terms of their applicability to sports discourse. The comparison was based on the occurrence of strategies and the relevant literature.

#### *4.3 Validity of data analysis*

In order to maintain the internal validity of the study, the researchers ensured that only comments and responses made by Jordanians were included. Additionally, comments made in languages other than Arabic (e.g. English) were excluded as there might be some Facebook users who could not understand English, and this in turn may not contribute to the intended interaction.

The researchers sought the assistance of two language specialists with expertise in this field (i.e. pragmatics and impoliteness) to ensure the classification of the collected data and analysis. They helped in assuring the classification of the types of impoliteness found in the comments. They totally agreed on the suggested classification with slight differences on some labels. The comments of those experts were taken into account. It is worth noting that more than one impoliteness strategy can be applied to some comments, but we select only one.

#### 4.4 Limitation of the study

The scope of this research is restricted to examining impoliteness exhibited by Jordanians, specifically in their Facebook comments pertaining to football matches. It is worth mentioning that the 50 samples used in this study may not be representative of a more comprehensive analysis. Moreover, since females in Jordan pay less attention to football matches, the outcomes of this study may not be applicable to females as the language employed in football matches might be predominantly linked with males. Despite the fact that some Facebook users could use virtual names, all the comments were written by male names. It is worth mentioning that we did not take the users' consent to use their comments. We just hid their names to avoid embarrassing since having their consent is a difficult task.

### 5. Impoliteness strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users

The focus of this section is to examine the outcomes of the present investigation. It presents the impoliteness techniques employed by Jordanian Facebook users when commenting on football matches.

In technical terms, Jordanian Facebook users exhibit varying degrees of impoliteness when communicating about football matches and engaging with one another relatively. As mentioned above, there are several impoliteness strategies, including "bald on record," "positive impoliteness/aggravation," "negative impoliteness/aggravation," "off-record," and "withhold politeness." Jordanian football enthusiasts employ all of these strategies except for the last one in their comments and responses.

#### 5.1 Data analysis in light of Lachenicht's (1980) model

As previously stated, Lachenicht (1980) proposed a language aggravation model that involves four main strategies aimed at attacking the addressee's face. The utilization of impoliteness strategies by Jordanian Facebook users, based on Lachenicht's (1980) framework, is presented in Table 2, which displays the frequencies and percentages of these strategies.

**Table 2:** Frequencies and percentages of the used impoliteness strategies by Jordanian Facebook users according to Lachenicht's (1980) framework

No	Types of impoliteness strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bald on record	7	14%
2	Positive aggravation	14	28%
3	Negative aggravation	20	40%
4	Off-record	9	18%
Total		50	100%

Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages of impoliteness strategies employed by Jordanian Facebook users, based on Lachenicht's (1980) framework, specifically in the context of commenting on football matches. The results indicate that Jordanian Facebook users predominantly employed negative aggravation, accounting for 40% of the data, followed by positive aggravation at 28%, while off-record was the third most commonly used strategy, representing 18%. Bald on record was the least frequently used strategy, comprising only 14% of the data. These strategies and their respective forms are further discussed below.

### 5.1.1 Bald on record

The term "bald on record" is used to describe a confrontational approach that directly attacks someone's face. According to Lachenicht (1980), this strategy involves a direct and explicit face attack. Lachenicht states that this strategy involves using imperatives and results in face-threatening acts without any attempt to mitigate the impact on the recipient.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (The Spanish League)**

**User1:** احكي كويس

fhkr: kwajjis

‘Speak respectfully.’

The language used in this comment was characterized by a sense of aggravation, which was conveyed through a bald on record strategy. The speaker utilized imperatives to demand that the addressee speak properly, without any attempt to soften the blow or maintain face. This direct approach could potentially result in a confrontation. This type of impoliteness, exemplified by imperative forms in interaction, has been previously noted by Lachenicht (1980). Jordanian football fans on Facebook were found to use similar bald on record impoliteness in their comments, which could create social disharmony.

### 5.1.2 Positive aggravation

Based on Lachenicht's (1980, 635) definition, positive aggravation is a method of showing disapproval towards the recipient, indicating that they do not belong and will not receive cooperation. This is demonstrated by disregarding the addressee's desires and needs. The use of positive aggravation involves various sub-strategies. This study identified two specific output strategies, which are detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Output strategies of positive aggravation used by Jordanian Facebook users according to Lachenicht's (1980) framework

No	Positive aggravation sub-strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Sarcasm	8	57%
2	Dislike for H and H's things	6	43%
Total		14	100%

In Table 3, the output tactics of positive aggravation are displayed according to Lachenicht's (1980) framework. As demonstrated in the table, Jordanian users employed particular sub-strategies of positive aggravation, such as sarcasm and expressions of dislike. Among these, the most prevalent form of positive aggravation was sarcasm, accounting for 57% of instances. In comparison, dislike was less frequent, comprising only 43% of instances.

#### 5.1.2.1 Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a type of impoliteness that is meant to mock and insult. It is typically expressed through direct comments or statements. It's important to note that when the insulting intent of sarcasm is obvious,



it falls under the category of positive aggravation. However, when it can be denied, it is classified as off-record. Given Lachenicht's (1980) classification, this strategy accounted for 57% of negative aggravation.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish League)**

**User2:** حارس مزهريّة

ha:ris mazharijja

'The goalkeeper is guarding a vase.'

The commenter utilized sarcasm to convey their frustration with the language used. They did so by comparing the goalkeeper's lack of effort to that of a vase, implying that the goalkeeper was not fulfilling their expected duties of actively preventing scoring. Referring to a goalkeeper in this manner is typically considered derogatory in the context of sports in the Jordanian culture, as it is seen as a form of ridicule and insult. It is clear from the comment that the insult was intentional and meant to convey the commenter's dissatisfaction.

#### 5.1.2.2 Dislike for the hearer and his/her things

Jordanian Facebook users use this strategy to express their disliking towards the hearers and their belongings. This strategy encompasses various forms, including ignoring the hearer's desires and possessions, as well as criticizing their behavior, traits, language, and viewpoints. A sample of expressing disdain is provided below.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Liverpool CF (The UEFA Champions League)**

**User3:** وش جاب طز لمرحبا

wʃdʒa:b tʰuz lamarhaba

'What makes good things related to bad ones.'

The commentator demonstrated their displeasure towards the recipient by criticizing their statement. Specifically, a Barcelona fan's comment about the upcoming season was addressed, despite of being unrelated to a recent match. This can be interpreted as asking the hearer to 'stop linking unrelated things.' From cultural perspective, one may say that the use of such statement in interaction might show disrespect.

#### 5.1.3 Negative aggravation

As maintained by Lachenicht's (1980, 657) description, negative aggravation is a tactic that aims to constrain the receiver, impede their ability to act freely, and undermine their social status. In line with this, this study found that Jordanian Facebook users also employed negative aggravation as a strategy (40%). Negative aggravation involves various behaviors such as making comments that annoy the receiver and demonstrating the receiver's weakness while presenting oneself as more dominant. The study identified specific sub-strategies of negative aggravation, which are listed below.

**Table 4:** Output strategies of negative aggravation used by Jordanian Facebook users relative to Lachenicht's (1980) framework

No	Negative aggravation sub-strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tease and bait	8	40%
2	Stress and increase speaker's power	6	30%
3	Minimize hearer's power	4	20%
4	Challenge	2	10%
Total		20	100%

As per Lachenicht's (1980) research, Table 4 illustrates the various output strategies of negative aggravation employed by Jordanian Facebook users, which includes stressing power, minimizing power, and other tactics. Among these, the most prevalent sub-strategy was tease and bait recording, accounting for 40% of the cases. Stressing power came in second, with a frequency of 30%. Additionally, the study observed that Jordanians also employed the output strategy of minimizing the hearer's power, which was seen in 20% of cases. The least frequently used sub-strategy was challenge, which only accounted for 10% of the negative aggravation comments.

#### 5.1.3.1 Tease and bait

Among Jordanian Facebook users, 40% of negative interactions involved teasing and baiting others, which is a sub-strategy aimed at intentionally annoying and provoking individuals. The primary objective of this behavior is to cause the recipient to lose their temper and become angry.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish Super Cup)**

**User4:** شكلك فشلوني قصدي برشلوني فاشل

ʃɪklak faʃalo:nɪ gasˈdi: barʃalo:nɪfa:ʃil

‘You look a FAILURE-Ionian, I mean a failure Barcelonian fan

The example above showed aggravation as the speaker teased the hearer intentionally. Using such words in interaction guaranteed making interlocutors annoyed. As a result, social conflict will arise in interaction.

#### 5.1.3.2 Stress and increase speaker's power

Jordanians also resorted to power to express impoliteness. This takes different forms such as stressing power and minimizing power. In both forms, power could be understood as the ability to do something. Having said that, impoliteness is manifested in power in which the speaker could increase his power or restrict the hearer's power.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish Super Cup)**

**User5:** زعيم كتالونيا.. زعيم اوروبا.. خاوة بنفوز

zaʃi:m kata:lo:nja:, zaʃi:m ʔuro:ba, xa:wa bɪnfu:z

‘The leader of Catalonia and Europe. We will win against your will.’

This comment was written by one of the fans of Barcelona football club. In this comment, the speaker stressed and emphasized power by describing his team as the leader of Catalonia and Europe.

Further, using [xa:wa] ‘Against your will’ in his comment contributed to impoliteness and could create social conflict with others. From cultural point of view, this word causes tension between interlocutors. Using it in interaction goes against the societal norms of the speech community of Jordan.

#### 5.1.3.3 Minimize hearer's power

Jordanian Facebook users not only intended to refer to their power when interacting but also they intended to minimize the hearer's power.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish Super Cup)**

**User6:** ولا بتقلو بيضة

wala: ʔibtglu: bidʕa

‘You cannot even fry an egg.’

In this comment/reply, the speaker did not agree with a certain football fan after praising his team. The author of this comment minimized the other fan's power by saying [wala: ʔibtglu: bidʕa] ‘You cannot even fry an egg.’ Such forms are used in some Jordanian contexts to denote the inability to achieve something.

#### 5.1.3.4 Challenge

Jordanians also expressed impoliteness via the strategy of challenge. As a strategy of aggravating, it could refer to different instances like asking challenging questions, questioning the hearer's position, ability, and action.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish Super Cup)**

**User7:** استنى شوي راح نشقكم شق

ʔistanna ʃwaj rah nʃʊkum ʃaɣ

‘Wait a bit, we will rip you apart.’

In this comment, the speaker challenged the addressee explicitly. This happened by writing [rahnʃʊkumʃaɣ] ‘We will rip you apart’, which could mean that they will be beaten by his team. One may note that mentioning this would not maintain social harmony between Facebook users. This sub-strategy is known as ‘challenge explicitly’ (Lachenicht 1980, 668).

#### 5.1.4 Off-record

If interlocutors wish to express impoliteness/aggravation and evade responsibility simultaneously, they could resort to off-record strategy of aggravation (Brown and Levinson 1987). Lachenicht (1980) describes off-record as a real ambiguous strategy which could be used to avoid responsibility when being direct is risky. Off-record contains a sort of deception as the speaker's words could include more than one interpretation. The speaker leaves the meaning up to the hearer to decide how to interpret it. What distinguishes off-record from other strategies is that it could be deniable if challenged.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Manchester City CF (The UEFA Champions League)**

**User8:** فريق مبدع ولعبة مبدعين

fari:q mubdiŝ walaŝi:beh mubdiŝi:n

‘What a professional team and professional players!’

The writer of this comment resorted to off-record strategy when describing Real Madrid CF and its players. At first glance, the comment looks like praising that team and describing the players as marvelous. Indeed, it is not, based on the context in which it is used. The writer used this strategy indirectly to mock their performance as he means the opposite. The second intended interpretation could be denied if challenged.

Like bald on record, Jordanian Facebook users also resorted to off-record strategy. As shown above, Jordanian social media users performed language aggravation indirectly. This indirect insult was preferred by football fans Facebook users when being direct could be risky and/or to avoid responsibility of their actions/words.

### 5.2 Data analysis in light of Culpeper's (1996) model

Culpeper (1996, 356) proposes several tactics to correspond with or intensify the comprehension of his interpretation of impoliteness. Although the terminology used to designate these tactics is alike in both frameworks, their explanations and outcomes occasionally diverge. Culpeper (1996) outlines five key strategies linked to this linguistic occurrence, as presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Frequencies and percentages of impoliteness strategies relative to Culpeper's (1996) framework

No	Types of impoliteness	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bald on record	10	20%
2	Positive impoliteness	14	28%
3	Negative impoliteness	17	34%
4	Off-record	9	18%
5	Withhold politeness	-	-
Total		50	100%

Table 5 presents the utilization of impoliteness strategies among Jordanian football fans during matches, as per Culpeper's (1996) framework. Four primary strategies were used. The results indicate that negative impoliteness (34%) was the most commonly employed strategy, followed by positive impoliteness (28%), and bald on record (20%). The least utilized strategy was sarcasm/off-record, accounting for only 18% of the data. It is worth noting that withhold politeness was not used by Jordanian Facebook users in the study. The subsequent sections illustrate how these strategies were implemented in relation to Culpeper's (1996) framework.

#### 5.2.1 Bald on record

Culpeper (1996, 356) explains that the "bald on record" strategy of impoliteness is employed when the speaker explicitly intends to attack the addressee's face, meaning that the face-threatening act (FTA) is performed directly. This strategy encompasses various instances of direct expression of opinions with the clear intention to attack the hearer. In contrast to Lachenicht's (1980) argument (i.e. bald on record is restricted to imperative forms only), Culpeper (1996) asserts that this strategy could manifest in both declarative and imperative forms.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish Super Cup)**

**User9:** انتو اصلا ما بتعرفوا تلعبوا

ʔmtu:ʔasʕlan ma: btiʕrifu: tɪʕabu:

‘You, definitely, do not know how to play.’

In the comment above, the insult was produced in an explicit way. The writer did not consider the needs of the addressee. As seen, Jordanians utilized the strategy of bald on record impoliteness. This kind of impoliteness was expressed by direct verbal attacks that maximize the face damage.

### 5.2.2 Positive impoliteness

The second used strategy was positive impoliteness which accounted for (28%) of the used strategies. As per Culpeper (1996, 356), it is the use of strategies designed to damage the needs of the addressee’s positive face. Table 6 presents the output strategies of positive impoliteness found in the study reported here.

**Table 6:** The output strategies of positive impoliteness used by Jordanian Facebook users in relation to Culpeper’s (1996) framework

No	Positive impoliteness sub-strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ignore H’s interests	6	43%
2	Use taboo language	5	36%
3	Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic	3	21%
Total		14	100%

Table 6 demonstrates the sub-strategies of positive impoliteness based on Culpeper’s (1996) framework. As seen in the table, Jordanian Facebook users used a number of output strategies when writing their comments on football matches such as ignoring and using taboo language. The most frequent one was ignoring hearer’s interests forming (43%), followed by using taboo words (36%). Being disinterested was the least frequent sub-strategy used (21%).

#### 5.2.2.1 Ignore H’s interests

**Topic: Atletico Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish Super Cup)**

Using synecdoche, one fan wrote [qaðr:fiħkatalunrahzalzatmadr:d] ‘A Catalan mortar shell rocked Madrid’ because one player of his team scored a marvelous goal.

Another person replied to him by saying the following:

**User10:** ولا قذيفة ولا شي, اجى هيك مع الهبل دبل

wala: qaðr:fiħ wala: ʕi: idʒa: hr:k maʕ ilhubul dubul

‘It was not a shell at all. It was scored by beginner’s luck.’

Writing this was an indicator for not considering the hearers’ positive wants and needs through ignoring the achievement of their team. Further, the phrase [maʕ ilhubul dubul] ‘By luck’ could be used in the Jordanian society to describe situations in which no efforts are made, just a matter of luck, and might show disrespect.

### 5.2.2.2 Use taboo language

Facebook users also tended to be impolite by using taboo language in their comments.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish League)**

**User11:** كل\*را

kul\*ara:

‘Eat \*hit.’

The reply above shows impoliteness and unacceptable in interaction. Some Facebook users use such taboo words when they feel angry with others. This reply was written after one fan ridiculed User 11’s team by saying ‘Barcelona is like a herd of sheep’, which User 11 considered an explicit insult. Therefore, he/she was hostile and used taboo language. One may note that this statement presents a severe insult since it goes against the societal norms in the speech community of Jordan.

### 5.2.2.3 Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic

**Topic: Chelsea CF versus Liverpool CF (English Premier League)**

**User12:** جووول مزع خاوة

go:l maziʕ xa:wa

‘A penetrative goal against your will.’

After his team scored a goal, one Facebook user wrote the statement above. It constitutes a verbal attack to the opponent team and its fans. Clearly, the writer of the comment was unconcerned and disinterested in their feelings. As has been seen, Jordanian Facebook users were inclined to use positive impoliteness when interacting with each other. This was expressed by using certain sub-strategies of positive impoliteness such as ignoring and using taboo language, among others.

### 5.2.3 Negative impoliteness

Culpeper (1996, 356) refers to negative impoliteness as a set of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s wants concerning his/her negative face. Jordanian Facebook users applied this strategy by ridiculing and frightening when interacting and commenting on football matches. This strategy represented (34%) out of the data. Table 7 reveals the output strategies of negative impoliteness observed in this study.

**Table 7:** Output strategies of negative impoliteness used by Jordanian Facebook users in relation to Culpeper’s (1996) framework

No	Negative impoliteness sub-strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Scorn or ridicule	8	47%
2	Frighten	6	35%
3	Explicitly associate H with negative aspect	3	18%
Total		17	%

Table 7 introduces the sub-strategies of negative impoliteness corresponding to Culpeper’s (1996) framework. It indicated that Jordanian Facebook users resorted to certain types of negative impoliteness when commenting on football matches such as frighten, ridicule, and so on. The most used output

strategy was scorn or ridicule, scoring (47%). According to Table 7, Jordanian Facebook users were also inclined to express impoliteness by frightening; it accounted for (35%). Associating the hearer with negative aspect presented (18%). This output strategy appeared to be the least frequent strategy of negative impoliteness.

#### 5.2.3.1 Scorn or ridicule

Jordanian football fans also ridiculed and belittled each other in their comments. This sub-strategy formed (47%) of negative impoliteness. The writer of the following comment employed this output strategy.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Barcelona CF (Spanish League)**

**User13:** تقول برشلونة قطيع خرفان

rtgu:l barʃalo:na gatʕi:ʃ xirfa:n

‘Barcelona is like a herd of sheep.’

Some Facebook users tended to scorn and ridicule others by using certain words and phrases such as [gatʕi:ʃxirfa:n] ‘a herd of sheep’ in User 13’s comment. When a team is described this way, it denoted that the players played randomly without organization/planning. Following this, the writer explicitly belittled them through his/her impolite words.

#### 5.2.3.2 Frighten – instill a belief that action detrimental to other will occur

The second sub-strategy of negative impoliteness used by Jordanian Facebook users was frightening. It constituted (35%) of negative impoliteness sub-strategies. The example below represented this type.

**Topic: Chelsea CF versus Liverpool CF (English Premier League)**

**User14:** الماكينة الألمانية بتطحن الفراعنة

ʔɪlmakɪ:nah ʔɪlʔalmanjjah ʔɪbtɪtʕhan ɪlfara:ʃnah

‘The German machine will crush the Egyptian Pharos.’

The above comment, representing metonymy, was published during a match between two English clubs, namely Chelsea and Liverpool. The writer of the comment used the expression/phrase [ʔɪlmakɪ:nah ʔɪlʔalmanjjah] ‘The German machine’ to refer to Chelsea club (as this club has Germanic football stars). Further, the term ‘Pharos’ was used in this context to refer to the famous Egyptian football star Mohammad Salah who plays for Liverpool club. The above comment showed impoliteness where the writer frightened and instilled a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur, to say Liverpool would be crushed by Chelsea. In other words, the writer tried to frighten the hearer by writing such words.

#### 5.2.3.3 Explicitly associate H with negative aspect

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus PSG CF (TheUEFA Champions League)**

**User15:** الرابعة عشر بالطريق ... زي ما عملنا فيكم قبل سنتين

ʔarrabiʃah ʃaʃar bitʕarɪ:q , zai ma: ʃmɪlna: fi:kum gabɪl santjn

‘The fourteenth cup is coming. Like what we did two years ago.’

Again, the writer of this comment employed impoliteness by mentioning something negative on the part of the hearer. That is, something bad/negative happened to the hearer in past. In this context, the writer referred to the loss of the hearer’s team two years ago. As if he/she said ‘you will not win, we will do what we did two years ago’.

#### 5.2.4 Off-record

This type of impoliteness could be knotty to identify. Notwithstanding bald on record, off-record is indirect. Both Lachenicht (1980) and Culpeper (1996) agree that ambiguous and indirect insults are cases of off-record impoliteness strategy. It is highly expressed by means of implicature. Further, the implicated offense could be cancelled and denied if challenged (Culpeper 1996). This strategy formed (18%) of the data analyzed using Culpeper’s approach.

**Topic: Real Madrid CF versus Chelsea CF (The UEFA Champions League)**

**User16:** عفية مدريد نشامي

ʕafi:a madri:d naʕa:ma:

‘Good job Madrid, champions.’

In this comment, one fan used the off-record impoliteness strategy to mock the performance of Real Madrid CF, by writing [ʕafi:a’ and ‘naʕa:ma:] ‘good job and champions.’ Both expressions could be used to appreciate the work of others. However, they have a cultural interpretation denoting indirect verbal attack in this context.

#### 5.2.5 Withhold politeness

Withhold politeness was not employed by Jordanian football fans in the context of this study. It could be found in face-to-face interaction as facial expressions and other means (e.g. keeping silent instead of responding) concerning this type of impoliteness appear clearly. It could be rarely performed in computer-mediated interaction. This goes in line with Hammod and Abdul-Rassul (2017) and Ningsih (2018) in which this strategy was not observed in their studies.

### 6. Results related to the second research question

This section answers the second research question: “*How do the two frameworks perform when analyzing Facebook comments related to football matches made by Jordanians?*” Answering this research question is presented through comparing and contrasting the two frameworks used in this study (Lachenicht 1980 and Culpeper 1996). The performance of these two frameworks is judged in relation to a number of factors such as their affectedness, their contribution, their implementation, and their limitations. Additionally, they are also judged in terms of the reviewed literature.

Both Lachenicht (1980) and Culpeper (1996) agree that bald on record strategy represents direct insult or face damage. However, the difference between them is evident in terms of the application and description of this strategy. For instance, while saying [ʔintafa:ʃil] ‘you are a failure’ to someone is



classified as bald on record based on Culpeper (1996), it is not applicable under Lachenicht's (1980) bald on record. This is attributed to the fact that the latter restricts bald on record to imperative forms only while the former associates it either with imperatives or declaratives. Restricting bald on record to imperative forms only is a weakness of Lachenicht's (1980) framework since there are different impoliteness acts that could be expressed by bald on record though they are not imperatives. This explains why the percentage of bald on record in Lachenicht (1980) is less than the percentage of this strategy in Culpeper (1996).

Some examples are labeled differently in each framework. For example, [kul\*ara:] 'eat \*hit' is classified as using taboo language in Culpeper (1996) but as bald on record in Lachenicht (1980). This could be explained by the fact that the use of taboo has not taken place in Lachenicht's (1980) framework. Therefore, [kul \*ara:] 'eat \*hit' is best classified as bald on record based on Lachenicht's (1980) framework. The absence of such acts could weaken a framework as they present severe insults and are not acceptable in interaction. Having said that, Culpeper's (1996) framework outperforms Lachenicht's (1980) framework in this regard as it presents more details for the classification and highlights taboo language.

Some judgments made by Lachenicht (1980) concerning the implementation of strategies appeared to be falsified. He claimed that off-record strategy is used when communicating with powerful addressees. As the researchers noted, this was not always the case (at least in the context of this study). For instance, some Jordanian Facebook users used this strategy in their comments and replies. Indeed, their informal language (the way they talk to each other) tells that they are of equal status and could be friends. Further, the same writers used other strategies such as taboo words.

The number of output strategies of positive impoliteness/aggravation used by Jordanian Facebook users is five. Two are listed in Lachenicht's (1980) framework, but three are listed in Culpeper's (1996) framework. This way, Culpeper's classification has served the present study better in terms of the number of the used strategies. One could say the opposite concerning negative impoliteness/aggravation. The number of sub-strategies attacking the addressee's negative face is seven combined for both frameworks. Jordanian Facebook users used seven output strategies (4 from Lachenicht 1980 and 3 from Culpeper 1996). In this regard, one may consider Lachenicht's (1980) categorization of negative impoliteness more applicable than Culpeper's (1996) work.

Technically speaking, Culpeper's (1996) work affects this more than Lachenicht's (1980) work relatively. This is manifested in the contribution each one made concerning the phenomenon of impoliteness. For example, Culpeper suggested five main strategies while Lachenicht suggested four. To clarify, Lachenicht (1980) pays no attention to the effects of being silent in interaction when a situation requires the opposite. However, the fifth strategy 'withhold politeness' was not employed in our study. Although Lachenicht's (1980) framework was generated first, it did not receive as much attention as Culpeper (1996). In terms of the reviewed literature, the majority of studies on linguistic impoliteness applied Culpeper's (1996) framework in their analysis. Unlike Lachenicht (1980), Culpeper (1996) developed his framework to address this phenomenon appropriately (Culpeper 2005; Culpeper 2011).

There might be a kind of overlap between the two frameworks since they agree on the signature strategies. In other words, they agree on the main strategies that define impoliteness. However, the difference can be seen in the details of each framework. For instance, Culpeper (1996) adds a strategy which is not found in Lachenicht's (1980) framework. Further, they both have bald on record strategy but they differ in its description. Whereas Lachenicht (1980) restricts it to imperative forms only, Culpeper (1996) expands it to imperative and/or declarative forms.

The social and cultural context plays a basic role when deciding what is (im)polite. As noted by Tracy (2008), there are some expressions might always be impolite (e.g. taboo language and ignoring), with a varying degree of impoliteness, depending on the context. They could be labeled as impolite in many cultures and societies according to the societal norms. However, there are some others considered impolite in one culture and society but not in another. Not in line with Culpeper (1996), for instance, 'calling H names' might not be always impolite in all cultures and contexts; it sometimes could be used for intimacy. The same applies to Lachenicht (1980). For example, 'minimize hearer's power' might be used in some contexts of the Jordanian culture for humor (especially between friends) rather than impoliteness.

## 7. Discussion

After conducting an extensive examination of impoliteness, several discoveries were made. Table 9 illustrates the tactics utilized by Jordanian Facebook users concerning the two frameworks under discussion. The results demonstrate that Jordanian Facebook users implemented various impoliteness techniques, including (1) bald on record, (2) positive impoliteness/aggravation, (3) negative impoliteness/aggravation, and (4) off-record.

**Table 8:** Frequencies and percentages of the used impoliteness strategies by Jordanian Facebook users according to Lachenicht (1980) and Culpeper's (1996) frameworks

No.	(Lachenicht1980)	F	P	(Culpeper 1996)	F	P
1	Bald on record	7	14%	Bald on record	10	20%
2	Positive aggravation	14	28%	Positive impoliteness	14	28%
3	Negative aggravation	20	40%	Negative impoliteness	17	34%
4	Off-record	9	18%	Off-record	9	18%
	Total	50		Total	50	

The occurrences of different impoliteness strategies sometimes coincide, while other times they conflict. For instance, the off-record strategy exhibits the same frequency in both frameworks, whereas the bald on record strategy does not. This can be attributed to the way each category is described in the respective frameworks. In Jordanian culture, the bald on record strategy is the least commonly used impoliteness strategy, according to Lachenicht's (1980) framework, which is consistent with Hameed's (2020) findings in which bald on record was found to be the least frequent one. On Facebook, Jordanian users express impoliteness by attacking both positive and negative face needs, as evidenced by the occurrence of positive impoliteness sub-strategies in studies by Wibowo and Kuntjara (2013), Zhong (2018), and Bader and Obeidat (2020). Negative impoliteness, on the other hand, is the most commonly used strategy by Jordanian Facebook users, consistent with the literature reviewed (Ningsih 2018;

Obeidat 2020). The different frequencies of positive and negative impoliteness in the two frameworks can be explained by Lachenicht's (1980) restriction of bald on record to imperative forms, which forces some items to be classified under positive and negative aggravation instead.

Off-record strategies, which are indirect insults used to avoid direct confrontation, were also observed in the study, comprising 18% of the data. This type of strategy has been reported in other studies, including Abdul Ghani (2018) and Al-Yasin and Rababa'h (2018).

The present study suggests that both frameworks have advantages and disadvantages when it comes to the analysis of impoliteness. However, Culpeper's (1996) framework is found to be superior to Lachenicht's (1980) framework, as demonstrated by its contribution to this study and the phenomenon of impoliteness more generally. Therefore, Culpeper's (1996) framework is deemed more suitable for this study compared to Lachenicht's (1980) framework, primarily because the latter restricts bald on record to imperatives and does not address taboo language.

The present study's findings regarding the superiority of Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework are supported by previous research. For instance, Zhong's (2018) study on impoliteness strategies in Sina Weibo comments also found Culpeper's framework to be more effective in identifying and analyzing impoliteness, especially regarding the use of taboo language. Similarly, Bousfield and Locher (2008) argue that Culpeper's framework provides a more comprehensive and flexible approach to impoliteness analysis than other frameworks. On the other hand, there are studies that have reported different results.

Overall, while the present study and some previous research suggest that Culpeper's framework is more appropriate for analyzing impoliteness, the choice of framework may depend on the specific context and research objectives. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of different frameworks in different contexts and for different types of impoliteness strategies.

## 8. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the comments, it was evident that Jordanian football fans used various impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies while interacting with each other. Negative impoliteness was the most frequently used strategy whereas bald on record was the least frequently used. This is attributed to the fact that negative impoliteness is not affiliated by ethnicity and culture. To say, the comments address football matters, and such comments do not address racism or tribalism for instance, which gives the fans more space of expressing their opinions. Regarding bald on record, this strategy was the least common one as it deals with the direct insults. From social and cultural perspectives, causing direct insults goes against the societal norms and causes social disharmony. One could conclude that the majority of Jordanian Facebook users avoid using this strategy to avoid social confrontation. The findings revealed that Culpeper's (1996) framework was better equipped to handle direct insults and taboo language compared to Lachenicht's (1980) framework. The study concludes that future research on impoliteness strategies may consider the setting (e.g. the type of communication and the type of data) and determine whether Lachenicht's or Culpeper's framework, or a combination of both, is more appropriate for the research needs.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of considering the cultural background and social norms of the community under investigation when analyzing impoliteness strategies. To say, what might be impolite in one community might not be in another, based on the social and cultural interpretations. As has been seen, there were some tokens affected by the Jordanian culture, which might not be interpreted that way in another culture. This study provides insights into the linguistic behavior and communication patterns of Jordanian football fans. The findings suggest that impoliteness is prevalent in online interactions among Jordanian football fans, and that negative impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to take into account the cultural and social factors that may influence impoliteness behavior and understand the implications of impoliteness in online communication contexts.

### عدم التأدب بين المستخدمين في تعليقات فيسبوك المتعلقة بمباريات كرة القدم: تحليل نقدي لأطر عدم التأدب

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#### الملخص

تعتمد الأبحاث السابقة على إطار واحد عادةً لتحليل ظاهرة عدم التأدب، مما قد يؤدي إلى فهم غير كامل للإستراتيجيات المستخدمة. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة استراتيجيات عدم التأدب التي يستخدمها مستخدمو فيسبوك الأردنيون عند التعليق على مباريات كرة القدم. وهدفت أيضاً إلى تحديد ما إذا كان إطار لاختنيشت (1980) المعروف بلغة العدائية أو إطار عدم التأدب لكليبير (1996) أكثر ملاءمة لتحليل عدم التأدب في تعليقات فيسبوك المتعلقة بمباريات كرة القدم. قام الباحثون بتحليل 100 تعليق باستخدام كل من الإطارين لتحديد الإستراتيجيات المختلفة لعدم التأدب، وأظهرت النتائج أن تعليقات الأردنيين على المباريات تضمنت أنواع مختلفة من استراتيجيات عدم التأدب مثل الفظاظ المباشرة، الفظاظ الإيجابية، الفظاظ السلبية، والفظاظ غير المباشرة. كما بينت أيضاً أن الفظاظ السلبية هي الاستراتيجية الأكثر استخداماً، علاوة على ذلك، تفوق إطار كليبير على إطار لاختنيشت، إذ إنه كان أكثر فعالية في تحديد اللغة المحرمة والإهانات المباشرة وإدارتها، وتعزز هذه الدراسة فهمنا لإستراتيجيات عدم التأدب التي يستخدمها مستخدمو فيسبوك الأردنيون عند التعليق على مباريات كرة القدم وتسلط الضوء على أهمية استخدام أطر مناسبة لتحليل البيانات، ويمكن للدراسات المستقبلية أن تدرس إستراتيجيات عدم التأدب في سياقات مختلفة وتدمج أطر متعددة لفهم هذه الظاهرة اللغوية فهماً أفضل.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إستراتيجيات عدم التأدب، مستخدمو فيسبوك الأردنيون، إطار لاختنيشت (1980) المعروف بلغة العدائية، إطار عدم التأدب لكليبير (1996).

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