

Bullying in “Wonder” Movie: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

Bullying still occurs in the surroundings of teenagers. Those who have experienced bullying firsthand are often aware of its damaging effects. Bullying is the most common form of hostility that takes place in schools (Anderson, 2002:53). By applying Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness, in bullying passages from the movie "Wonder," which is directed by Stephen Chbosky, the study intends to explain the most prevalent pragmatic strategies of impoliteness, the functions of impoliteness act, and responses towards impolite act. The purpose of this study is to examine the forms of bullying. The current study adopts a qualitative and quantitative method for analyzing five extracts by applying Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness strategies. They are analyzed into two levels; First, according to bullying behavior by Olweus' definition of bullying behavior (1994), and second what are the pragmatic realizations of Impoliteness? Finding out that, according to the first level, there are three types of bullying behavior used in the movie, they are intention to harm, harmful outcome, and direct or indirect act. The second level includes: (1) Three types of impoliteness strategies (bald on record strategy, negative impoliteness, and off record politeness). (2) Limited functions as coercive function and entertaining function. (3) Specific responses are found in the movie. This study concludes that, according to Olweus (1994), bullying behavior can be defined into five essential components (*Intention to harm, Harmful outcome, Direct or indirect acts, Repetition, and Unequal Power*).

Keywords: Bullying, Olweus' Bullying behavior (1994), Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory



التنمر في فلم "Wonder": دراسة تداولية

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المستخلص

لا يزال التنمر يحدث في محيط المراهقين وغالبًا ما يدرك أولئك الذين تعرضوا للتنمر بشكل مباشر آثاره الضارة. التنمر هو الشكل الأكثر شيوعًا للعداء الذي يحدث في المدارس. إذ يعد التنمر مشكلة رئيسية في المدارس والمجتمع لأنه يؤثر على عدد كبير من الطلاب من جميع الأجناس والحالات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية (أندرسون، 2002). ومن خلال تطبيق وقاحة كولبير (2011)، في فقرات التنمر من فيلم "العجائب" للمخرج ستيفن تشوسكي، تهدف الدراسة إلى: شرح الاستراتيجيات التداولية الأكثر انتشارًا للوقاحة، ووظائفها من التصرفات غير المؤدية، والردود على التصرفات غير المؤدية. وكان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو دراسة أشكال سلوك التنمر في الفيلم. أما مصادر البيانات المستخدمة، هي البيانات المأخوذة من الفيلم ومصادر البيانات من أحد المواقع الإلكترونية. تعتمد الدراسة الحالية المنهج النوعي الكمي لتحليل خمس مستخلصات من خلال تطبيق طريقة وقاحة كولبير (2011). ويتم تحليلها إلى مستويين؛ أولاً، وفقاً لسلوك التنمر حسب تعريف أوليوس لسلوك التنمر (1994)، وثانياً ما هو الإدراك العملي باستخدام مفهوم كولبير (2011) لقلّة الأدب. توصلت الدراسة إلى ما يلي: وفقاً للمستوى الأول: هناك ثلاثة أنواع من سلوك التنمر المستخدم، نية الإيذاء، والنتيجة الضارة، والفعل المباشر أو غير المباشر. المستوى الثاني: (1) ثلاث أنواع من ستراتيجيات قلّة الأدب (الوقاحة) موجودة في الفيلم وهي الوقاحة المطلقة والوقاحة السلبية وغير الرسمية. (2) بعض الوظائف موجودة في الفيلم، الوظائف الموجودة هي الوظيفة القسرية والوظيفة الترفيهية. (3) هناك ردود معينة موجودة في الفلم. تستنتج الدراسة وفقاً لنظرية أوليوس ان التنمر ممكن ان يعرف الى خمس مكونات اساسية (نية الأذى، السيطرة الضارة، العمل المباشر او غير المباشر، التكرار، القوة غير المتكافئة).

الكلمات المفتاحية: التنمر، سلوك التنمر لاوليوس (1994)، نظرية قلّة الأدب عند كولبير

1. Introduction

Olweus (1993) states that since bullying has a negative effect on its targets, it continues to draw media and public attention. Bullying, on the other hand, is distinct from other hostile actions in that it is repeated and the bully or bullies have more access to power than the victim(s). In this briefing, the term "bullying" refers to peer-to-peer abuse that takes place in a school setting.

Bullying is a really intriguing topic in "Wonder" movie. The protagonist is August Pullman, also known as Auggie, a young child with a facial birth deformity. In social interactions, there are unwritten rules called social norms that are understood and followed by a society (Geertz, 1973). These norms are the rules used by society to define what are appropriate and inappropriate. As language is a means of communication in the society, the use of language is bounded by social norms. People use language in the society in order to maintain good social interactions with others. In doing so, people must be able to obey the social norms by performing good attitude or being polite. However, even though politeness is an important aspect of social interaction, violating politeness, or in other words being impolite, is inevitable (Durkheim, 1982).

The researcher chooses a movie entitled "Wonder" as the data source of this research. Wonder is a popular movie with unique characters who create remarkable dialogues. It is an interesting object to be analyzed in term of impoliteness strategies to reflect bullying. The phenomena of impoliteness in Wonder leave several problems that can be identified. The first problem is related to the types of bullying behavior. The second problem is related to the types of impoliteness strategies used in Wonder. The third problem is on the function of impoliteness strategies used by the speakers. The fourth problem is related to how the characters respond to impoliteness strategies.

There are some benefits offered by this research. First, this research is expected to enrich the research in linguistics field, especially in pragmatics study, and particularly in term of impoliteness strategies to reflect the bullying behavior. Second, this research may be useful as a reference for other researchers to conduct other researches in pragmatics. Moreover, the concept of impoliteness asserted in this analysis can give some information about impoliteness in daily communication.

Hence, the present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of bullying behavior used by the characters in the movie "Wonder"?
2. What are the pragmatic realization of impoliteness strategies used by the actors, the functions of these strategies, and identifying the characters' responses to the impoliteness strategies in such film?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Key Words

2.1.1 Bullying

There is no universally agreed definition of bullying. Some authorities have viewed bullying as essentially the desire to hurt or put someone under pressure (Rigby, 1997). However, increasingly researchers have come to agree that

bullying involves negative or hurtful behavior (Olweus, 1993); and the majority add that, as distinct from wider definitions of aggression or violence, bullying must also involve an imbalance of power with the less-powerful person or group being repeatedly and unfairly attacked (Rigby, 2002; Ross, 2003). This could be summarized as 'the systematic abuse of power' (Smith and Sharp, 1994). It is common to distinguish between physical, verbal, and indirect forms of bullying.

2.1.2 Essential Components of Bullying Behavior

Dan Olweus who is known as pioneer of bullying has defined bullying and his definition is widely used. Bullying is a frequent performing of negative behavior by a person or group of persons to a person or group of persons with the intention of hurting them (Olweus, 1994). He states five common components of general aggressive behavior as follows:

1. Intention to harm: bullying is deliberate, with the intention to cause harm. For example, friends are teasing each other in a good-natured way is not bullying, but a person is teasing another to upset him/her is bullying.
2. Harmful outcome: one or more persons are hurt physically or emotionally.
3. Direct or indirect acts: bullying can involve direct aggression, such as hitting someone, as well as indirect acts, such as spreading rumors.
4. Repetition: bullying involves repeated acts of aggression: an isolated aggressive act, like a fight, is not bullying.
5. Unequal Power: bullying involves the abuse of power by one or several persons who are more powerful, often due to their age, physical strength, or psychological resilience.

2.2 The Story of the Movie

An aspect of the challenges faced by August Pullman, who was born with Treacher Collins syndrome, is addressed in the film, which is based on a true story. Ten-year-old August Pullman plays the character Auggie in the film. He resides with his parents, sister Via, and mother. He differs from other kids since he was born with a facial and head malformation caused by Treacher Collins syndrome. Despite undergoing numerous surgical procedures, the malformation has not healed. Because of this, Auggie was raised by his mother, never attended school, and only interacted with the outside world via an astronaut helmet. By enrolling Auggie at the same school as other kids, his mother hopes to demonstrate that her son is just like the other kids (Alfred, 2012). On the other hand, because of his dissimilar appearance, Auggie has experienced stigmatization from his peers at the school where he has been enrolled, exclusion, and even bullying. However, because he has been different from his colleagues during this process, he compares himself to the others. He believes that other students at the school do not want him among them and that he is worthless. This circumstance completely upended his emotional universe. "We live in a weird world where the good people should go to psychologist in

order to learn coping with things which the evil ones do," Auggie said, summarizing the circumstances surrounding him. With the help of his family, instructors, and other classmates, Auggie succeeds in the subsequent procedure, winning the title of best student of the year at the conclusion of the academic year. (Altay and Erbas, 2021)

2.3 Impoliteness Theory

Culpeper (2011:36) defines impoliteness as a communicative behavior which intends to cause the target's "face loss" or what the target identifies to be so. There are numerous researches on politeness. Those researches have focused on how communicative strategies are used to maintain harmony in social interaction. On the contrary, the opposite phenomenon, impoliteness, has not gained nearly as much attention. In this way, this research is conducted under the field of linguistic research to give additional contribution to impoliteness phenomenon. One of the branches under linguistic approach is pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by the speaker and interpreted by a listener. It enables people to understand that through this approach, it is possible to know about the speaker's implied meanings, their assumptions, purposes, and the types of actions that they are doing when they speak. This approach is suitable for analyzing impoliteness which sometimes is applied by using sarcastic utterances.

Culpeper (2010) builds a framework for impoliteness in relation to the politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987). He proposed a model of five impoliteness strategies with one revision developed in 2005. Those strategies are:

1. bald on record impoliteness,
2. negative impoliteness,
3. positive impoliteness,
4. off record impoliteness, it is practiced to perform unconventionally indirect speech acts such as hints, metaphors, and ironies (Cheng and Kong, 2009, p. 95).
5. withhold politeness.

In addition, Culpeper (2011) proposes three functions of impoliteness they are:

1. affective impoliteness,
2. coercive impoliteness, and
3. entertaining impoliteness.

Furthermore, Culpeper et al (2003: 1562) point out that it is crucial to know the response to an utterance since it is capable of revealing how that utterance is perceived. There are three choices open to a recipient of a face threatening act (FTA) or impoliteness acts:

1. accepting the face attack,
2. countering the face attack, and
3. choosing not to respond.

2.4 Previous Studies

Bullying is a common form of animosity in schools, causing physical, emotional, or both harms. It is repeated, with bullies having more power than victims. Bullying refers to peer maltreatment in a school environment. Bullying in schools has only been the subject of public and academic inquiry since the 1970s. Because this area of research is still in its infancy, there is still much to learn about the reasons why bullying occurs, the traits of those who harass others, and what makes an anti-bullying intervention effective (Burger, 2022). There is still a lot of variation in the prevalence rates of bullying reported in research, even though factors at the individual and social levels appear to be important. However, whether they are the bullies, the targets, or the witnesses, bullying will eventually have an impact on the majority of students. Children who bully others, children who are bullied, and children who bully and are bullied all have some characteristics in common and are probably going to have negative long-term impacts. Family and peer relationships appear to be essential components (Graham, 2014). In social interactions, there are unwritten rules called social norms that are understood and followed by a society (Geertz, 1973). These norms are the rules used by society to define what are appropriate and inappropriate.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Data Analysis

Unit (1)

Auggie entered into the classroom for the first time, he pulls out/grabs a chair upon that the teacher, who is present at that time in the classroom, says “please, everyone, find a place for oneself”. But, one student, who is sitting at the back side, says “it is mine” by putting the chair. Auggie finds another chair for himself and sits on it (Palacio, 2017).

Level 1: Bullying Behavior

- ❖ Direct or indirect act: Directly or indirectly, putting his hand on the chair, the boy who already has a chair, reflects his bullying behavior against Auggie.

Level 2: The Pragmatic Realization

- ❖ Impoliteness Strategy: The student performs negative impoliteness strategy when he prevents Auggie getting a seat near him. He does not want someone like Auggie to sit near him in order not to make him as a friend.
- ❖ The Function: He uses such impoliteness strategy as a coercive impoliteness because he doesn't like his appearance.
- ❖ The Response: Auggie gives no response to the face attack and chooses to stay silent, finding another chair for himself and sits on it.

Unit (2)

Children eat in the canteen at the minute 00:19:39 of the movie. Auggie

chews his meal in a different way from the others at another table due to deformity in table, stare at him. One of his classmates, coming near to him, says “May I sit down here?” and that classmate moves away from there by saying “You are eating just as Monster Saylak”. (Palacio, 2017).

Level 1: Bullying Behavior

- ❖ Intention to harm: Auggie’s classmate uses aggressive behavior as intention to harm Auggie by comparing him with the Monster Saylak.

Level 2: The Pragmatic Realization of Impoliteness Theory

- ❖ Impoliteness Strategy: Here his classmate uses off record impoliteness strategy when he metaphorically says that Auggie is like a monster.
- ❖ The Function: An affective impoliteness is used by Auggie’s classmate to reflect his disgusting.
- ❖ The Response: Auggie gives no response to this speech attack and chooses to stay silent.

Unit (3)

Auggie sits at his desk in the classroom at the minute 01:26:25 of the movie. His classmate leaves a paper in front of Auggie while passing by him. When Auggie opens the paper, there is a picture and Freddy Krueger is written beside the picture on the paper. (Palacio, 2017).

Level 1: Bullying Behavior

- ❖ Intention to harm: Auggie’s classmate uses aggressive behavior as intention to harm Auggie by drawing such picture.

Level 2: The Pragmatic Realization of Impoliteness Theory

- ❖ Impoliteness Strategy: One student employs off record impoliteness strategy as he teases Auggie. He finds it annoying yet amusing.
- ❖ The Function: the student uses entertaining impoliteness by making Auggie his object of entertainment.
- ❖ The Response: In response to the student’s impoliteness, Auggie does nothing and chooses to stay silent.

Unit (4)

Children laugh together along school corridor at the minute 01:26:55 of the movie. They move away from the locker around which they gather when they see Auggie walking toward there. Class photograph is hanged on the locker, but Auggie has been removed from that photograph. (Palacio, 2017).

Level 1: Bullying Behavior

- ❖ Harmful Outcome: The students Intentionally remove Auggie’s picture from the class picture to give him a message that he is unwanted person in the class.

Level 2: The Pragmatic Realization of Impoliteness Theory

- ❖ Impoliteness Strategy: The students perform bald on record impoliteness strategy when they omit Auggie’s picture as a message that he is unwanted to be one of them.
- ❖ The Function: They use such impoliteness strategy as a coercive impoliteness because they do not like him.
- ❖ The Response: In response to the student’s impoliteness, Auggie does nothing and chooses to stay silent.

Unit (5)

Joining in school trip, Auggie walks around forest together with his friend Jack at the minute 01.35.00 of the movie. In the meantime, three children, who are elder, come to them. These three children shudder when they see Auggie. Such conversation happens among them:

- “Wow, look at that face!”

- “He is a freak.”

- “I have never seen something uglier in my life before.”

- “Maybe, he is an orc”.

(Palacio, 2017).

Level 1: Bullying Behavior

- ❖ Harmful Outcome: The fact that other children gibe to Auggie and that they exclude him on each one of these scenes is a type of harmful outcome of bullying behavior.

Level 2: The Pragmatic Realization of Impoliteness Theory

- ❖ Impoliteness Strategy: The three boys perform bald on record impoliteness strategy when they mock on Auggie’s face as a message that he is unwanted to be one of them.
- ❖ The Function: The coercive impoliteness is used by those three boys as a function of bullying.
- ❖ The Response: Auggie and his friend Jack Will challenge them and a fighting comes to blows as a countering the face attack.

3.2 Results and Discussion

The result and discussion of the bullying behavior and impoliteness strategies in the movie “Wonder” are going to be presented. The following tables present the frequencies and percentages of using the types of bullying behavior and the pragmatic realization of impoliteness.

Table (1)

Types of Bullying Behavior, Frequencies and Percentages in “Wonder” Movie

Bullying Behavior	Freq.	Per. %
Intention to harm	2	40
Harmful outcome	2	40

Direct or indirect acts	1	20
Repetition	0	0
Unequal Power	0	0
Total	5	100

According to the results that are presented in table (1), it is found that Intention to harm and Harmful outcome behavior are equal in use, they get 40 %. Direct or indirect acts get 20 %. While Repetition and Unequal Power aren't mentioned. This means that bullying behavior in such movie can be expressed in three types: Intention to harm, Harmful outcome, and Direct or indirect acts.

Table (2)*Types of Impoliteness Strategies, Frequencies and Percentages*

Impoliteness Strategies	Freq.	Per. %
bald on record impoliteness	2	40
negative impoliteness	1	20
positive impoliteness	0	0
off record impoliteness	2	40
withhold politeness	0	0
Total	5	100

According to the results that are presented in table (2), it is found that bald on record impoliteness and off record impoliteness are equal in use, each gets 40 %, while negative impoliteness gets 20 %.

Table (3)*Types of Impoliteness Function, Frequencies and Percentages*

Impoliteness Function	Freq.	Per. %
affective impoliteness	1	20
coercive impoliteness	3	60
entertaining impoliteness	1	20
Total	5	100

According to the results that are presented in Table (3), it is found that affective impoliteness and entertaining impoliteness are equal in use, each gets 20%, while coercive impoliteness gets 60 %.

Table (4)*Types of Impoliteness Response, Frequencies and Percentages*

Impoliteness Response	Freq.	Per. %
accepting the face attack	0	0
countering the face attack	1	20
choosing not to respond	4	80
Total	5	100

According to the results that are presented in table (4), it is found that

countering the face attack gets 20%, while gets choosing not to respond 80 %.

4. Conclusions

It is concluded that:

1. Though, bullying is differently perceived by different individual, school bullying is seemingly a global problem. Millions of school children have been the victims of bullying every year. Basically, no one will just spontaneously turn out to be a bully. It must have some rooted causes.
2. According to Olweus (1994), bullying behavior can be defined into five essential components. They are *Intention to harm, Harmful outcome, Direct or indirect acts, Repetition, and Unequal Power*. It is found that Intention to harm and Harmful outcome behavior are highly employed in such film. They have the same frequency.
3. It is found that the strategies of bald on record impoliteness and off record impoliteness are equal in use.
4. Concerning the function of impoliteness, it is shown through the speeches of the actors that the *coercive impoliteness* is highly frequent in this movie.
5. Concerning the responses by Auggie, he chooses not to respond to the bullying that he faces. This expresses his weak personality and he can be defeated easily.

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