



A Pragmatic Study of Bullying in some Schools in Baghdad: A Comprehensive Analysis of Language Use and Power Dynamics

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Abstract

Bullying in educational environments is a widespread problem that is typified by aggressive actions and power disparities between people. This study explores a topic that has not gotten enough attention in the literature: the practical implications of bullying among Baghdadi students. Through the examination of data from many educational settings, the study seeks to address the following queries: Which kinds of bullying do students experience? What practical methods do students use to bully their classmates? An eclectic model was used to address these issues, and a survey of 100 randomly chosen students from seven hundred ones in various schools was administered. Of these, thirty students reported having been bullied. This investigation sheds light on the various tactics bullies use to intimidate and cause harm to their peers in educational settings. The results help create intervention tactics that are more successful in stopping bullying and fostering a more secure and encouraging learning environment in schools.

Keywords: Pragmatics, bullying, Speech Acts, context, school



تحليل تداولي للتنمر في بعض المدارس في بغداد: تحليل شامل لاستخدام اللغة وديناميكيات التسلط

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المستخلص :

التنمر في البيئات التعليمية هو مشكلة منتشرة تتميز بالأعمال العدوانية والفوارق في القوة بين الأفراد. تستكشف هذه الدراسة موضوعاً لم ينل ما يكفي من الاهتمام في الأدبيات: الآثار العملية للتنمر بين الطلاب البغداديين. من خلال فحص البيانات من العديد من البيئات التعليمية، تسعى الدراسة إلى معالجة الأسئلة التالية: ما هي الآثار التي يحدثها التنمر عندما يحدث في بيئة مدرسية؟ ما هي أنواع التنمر التي يواجهها الطلاب؟ ما هو البنية العملية للتنمر كما هو موضح في بيانات المدرسة؟ ما هي الأساليب العملية التي يستخدمها الطلاب للتنمر على زملائهم؟ تم استخدام نموذج انتقائي لمعالجة هذه القضايا، وتم إجراء مسح لـ ١٠٠ طالب تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من بين سبعمائة طالب في مدارس مختلفة. من هؤلاء، أبلغ ثلاثون طالباً عن تعرضهم للتنمر. تسلط هذه التحقيقات الضوء على التكتيكات المختلفة التي يستخدمها المتنمرون لتهديد وإلحاق الأذى بزملائهم في البيئات التعليمية. تساعد النتائج في إنشاء استراتيجيات تدخل أكثر نجاحاً في وقف التنمر وتعزيز بيئة تعليمية أكثر أماناً وتشجيعاً في المدارس.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية، التنمر، أفعال الكلام، السياق، المدرسة

1. Introduction

Due to an imbalance of power where the victim is typically the target of hostile behavior, bullying occurs regularly in school settings. These actions can also take the form of verbal name-calling, taunting, teasing, and threats. Pushing, beatings, and restraints are examples of physical expressions (Olweus, 1993, p. 14). Although bullying can occur in many contexts, it is most prevalent in schools, where children regularly use a range of tactics to minimize the abilities of their peers. As per the study's criteria, bullying is characterized by an unequal power dynamic between the participants and frequent verbal abuse of the victim by the perpetrator for various interpersonal purposes.

The study attempts to address the growing concern of bullying at Baghdad's schools by examining the specific forms, frequency, and pragmatic features of bullying behavior among high school students. The problem statement highlights the detrimental effects bullying has on both the victims and the overall learning environment while examining the increasing frequency of bullying in certain educational settings. In order to completely comprehend the extent and nature of the bullying issue in Iraqi schools, research on bullying patterns is necessary, as this section makes clear.

The aim of this study is to investigate the many forms of bullying that happen in schools in Baghdad, determine the frequency of these actions, and examine them using a pragmatic framework. The study also aims to address these research questions: Which kinds of bullying do students experience? What practical methods do students use to bully their classmates?

To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods approach was used for the data analysis. Students from several Baghdadi schools were surveyed to provide a complete picture of bullying behaviors. Then, in order to identify patterns and the root causes of bullying in the study circumstances, the data was assessed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

This study is important because it may provide insight on the different forms of bullying that take place in Baghdad's schools. Understanding the many forms and frequency of bullying as well as the pragmatic reasons behind these behaviors can help build effective intervention initiatives. The ultimate objective of the study is to contribute to the creation of safer, more supportive learning environments where students can thrive without fear of bullying.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 What is Pragmatics?

The term pragmatics, which first appeared in the 1980s, referred to one of the fields of study included in philosopher Charles Morris's 1938 classification of the theory of signs into three categories: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Semantics defines the relationship between signs and their denotation, pragmatics describes the interaction between signs and their interpreters, and syntax explains the relationship among signs (Huang, 2007, p. 3). "The study of language usage" is the most basic definition of pragmatics (Levinson, 1983, p. 5). The differences between the two practices of continental Europe and Anglo-America with regard to the field of pragmatics are explained by this term. On the one hand, the Anglo-American effort is characterized by limiting the fields of pragmatics, best shown by the works of Levinson (1983) and Leech (1985). Conversely, the Journal of Pragmatics, which considers a wide range of language domains to be pragmatic, best captures the characteristics of the continental European. The definitions of the two disciplines sometimes intersect with other realms of linguistic investigations such as semantics, sociolinguistics, psychology, and ethnomethodology.

Pragmatics is "the study of the relations between speech and context insofar as they are encoded in the language," according to the condensed version of the Anglo-American field (Levinson: 1983, p. 9). Deixis, presupposition, speaker meaning, and meaning less truth condition are all included. The activities of this discipline include Grice's Cooperative Principle and its maxims, which state that when people attempt to interact with one other, they frequently cooperate and obey the four maxims of quantity, quality, method, and relation. Moreover, Grice's conversational implicature attracts attention since it is effective in elucidating what people try to communicate without expressing. Since Brown and Levinson (1987) showed that politeness and impoliteness are expressed differently in different societies through language use, and that politeness is generally a negative trait (request only that one individual allow another a certain amount of freedom and some psychological or physical liberty) or enthusiastic (requiring people to show regard for or involvement in what others are, desire, have, or stand for), politeness has become a central focus of pragmatic investigation.

2.2 Social Behavior

A child's sense of right and wrong is formed as a result of cognitive development, attachment, and bonding. Experiments have shown that morality even exists in neonates. Humans need each other to survive, which

gives rise to this morality (Dunning, 2011,p.198).

Consequently, our body produces chemicals—most notably, oxytocin—that promote moral behaviour, love, and trust. The aforementioned moral proclivities are reinforced by cognitive development during early childhood and heightened social interaction. Youngsters learn empathy, or the capacity to comprehend the thoughts, feelings, and worries of others. They also grow hostile, feeling disgusted, hateful, or aversion (Berger, 2019, pp. 680-681). The following is a further explanation of empathy and antipathy:

2.2.1 Empathy

“The ability to understand the emotions and concerns of another person, especially when they differ from one’s own” (Berger, 2019, p. 681). She goes on to say that empathy promotes "prosocial behaviour," such as lending a helping hand to others without asking for anything in return. The term "prosocial behaviour" refers to acts of kindness and assistance that do not directly benefit the individual performing them (Berger, 2019, p. 681).

2.2.2 Antipathy

According to (Berger, 2019, p. 681), “Feelings of dislike or even hatred for another person” Antisocial conduct stems from animosity and is characterized by intentional harm or destruction inflicted onto another individual. According to Calkins and Keane (2009), antipathy breeds antisocial behaviors like physical assaults, verbal abuse, and social rejection. This kind of behavior may be acquired or innate. "Behavior that violates the basic rights of others" is how they characterize antisocial behavior (p.1). They continue, saying that antisocial behavior at any age shows a lack of empathy (p. 3).

A model of self-regulatory mechanisms is offered by Calkins and Keane (2009) to assess behavioral problems in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood and help those who are experiencing them recover and modify. This model explains antisocial behavior. They incorporate mechanisms like emotional management, cognitive control, and physiological arousal control in their paradigm. They discover that kids who engage with disruptive behaviors have been associated with less harmonious mother-child interactions, which are generally characterized by a lack of warmth, positive involvement, and love. Peers, like parents, help children develop self-control skills by the time they enter school. Peers determine if certain emotional responses are appropriate (pp. 4, 5, 7).

2.3 The Concept of Bullying

Since the publication of Olweus's book "Aggression in the Schools" in 1978, there has been a growing interest in the topic of school bullying (Smith et al., 2002, p. 1119). Empirical research on bullying shows that it requires special attention due to its wide-ranging effects and relationship to other problems that young people face (Brank et al., 2012, p.2).

Researchers are becoming interested in studying bullying, according to Berger (2007, p.1). The cause of this is the conflicting findings that researchers get at about public perceptions of bullying. Furthermore, numerous research on kids' motivation to bully other kids at school have found that bullying can take many different forms and has variable causes depending on factors including age, gender, setting, and social standing (Archer, 2004, p. 4). The notion of bullying is elaborated in the section that follows, covering a variety of topics including its history, definitions, models, types, purposes, justifications, and scenarios in which it occurs.

2.4 Aggression and Bullying

According to Berger (2019, pp. 683-687), aggressiveness is a form of violent conduct that typifies children who are antipathetic and, as a result, antisocial. In real-world situations, violence is the result of combining human emotions like fear, fury, and excitement in ways that go against accepted morality. (Aitken and Colley, 2011, p.89).

According to Harris (2009), aggressiveness encompasses a wide range of concepts, including peer victimization, bullying, interpersonal rejection, and direct and indirect violence. "Any behavior, Harris describes aggression as "verbal or nonverbal, that is intended to harm another being who is motivated to avoid such treatment"(p. 4).

2.4.1 Instrumental Aggression

Taking something that someone else already has (a toy, a place in line, or a swing turn, for example) is the aim of uncivil behavior. Children between the ages of two and six exhibit traits associated with this personality type. It is characterized by a preference for things above people, is more narcissistic than antisocial, and is very common. It is an instrument or tool to accomplish a desired result, which is why it is termed instrumental.

2.4.2 Reactive Aggression

It describes an impetuous response to a verbal or physical (intentional or not) offence. It suggests an inability to regulate one's emotions, which is typical of kids younger than two. A five-year-old can usually wait and consider their options before acting.

2.4.3 Relational Aggression

Non-physical acts intended to break the victim's social connections, such taunts or social rejection. As it entails a personal attack, it is obviously antisocial; additionally, it could be quite cruel. As kids are more socially aware, it is becoming increasingly common.

2.4.4 Bullying Aggression

Bullying differs from other forms of hostility in that it involves a power imbalance where the victim is consistently placed at a lower position than the bully.

2.5 Incivility and Bullying

According to Coe and Rains (2014), who examine incivility as it appears in public discourse, characterising incivility is a difficult process because what one person deems uncivil behaviour may be appropriate for another. On the other hand, it could be interpreted as a conversation feature that displays a disrespectful attitude towards the forum, its members, or its subjects.

In terms of the connection between bullying and incivility, it is thought that bullying is different from incivility in that bullying entails hurtful remarks or deeds that accumulate over time in an effort to socially eradicate a particular individual or group. Furthermore, the latter requires a clear intention to harm another person together with a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. (Chen, 2017, p.6)

2.6. Context, and Intention

The present study examines bullying via a pragmatic lens, hence it is imperative to concentrate on the concepts of context and intention.

According to Mey (2001, p. 6), pragmatics believes that language is heavily influenced by the environment in which it is used. In other words, it examines the meaning hidden behind the words and looks at the underlying systematic patterns that language users adopt. Regarding the part intent plays in bullying, Einarsen et al. (2003, p. 12) opine that this relies on the likelihood that the action will be damaging as well as whether the perceived negative deed was intended in the first place.

2.7 Related Works

This is a narrative synthesis, organized topically, of five research on bullying in schools, and this is followed by a statement regarding the research gap for the current work.

In his groundbreaking book "Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do," published in 1993, Dan Olweus noted that school bullying was a serious problem that neither educators nor legislators had given enough attention to. Olweus sought to create solutions that would drastically lower the incidence of bullying in schools as well as to comprehend the extent, causes, and effects of bullying in educational settings. He collected information from students in Sweden and Norway through survey-based research in order to map the patterns of both victimization and perpetration. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), a comprehensive strategy that includes parents, teachers, and students in anti-bullying initiatives, was developed as a result of his research. Olweus came to the conclusion that schools using OBPP saw a significant decrease in bullying incidents—a decrease that in certain schools may reach 70%—which highlights the significance of taking a comprehensive and coordinated approach to dealing with the issue.

Following up, Peter K. Smith and Sonia Sharp published "School Bullying: Insights and Perspectives," a research that offered a more thorough examination of the factors that contribute to bullying in school settings. The social and psychological aspects of bullying, such as peer group dynamics, school atmosphere, and the unique psychological profiles of bullies and victims, were the main subjects of this study. Smith and Sharp used a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys with parent, teacher, and student interviews conducted in a number of UK schools. The authors examined how bullying actions are picked up and repeated in social contexts using the framework provided by social learning theory. Their findings highlighted the fact that bullying is a social issue that is supported by larger societal systems rather than being a personal problem. They promoted therapies that focus on the social contexts that foster bullying as well as specific bullies.

In their 2006 book "Bullying in American Schools: A Social-Ecological Perspective on Prevention and Intervention," Espelage and Swearer built on previous studies by emphasizing the part played by the larger community in bullying practices. Their study used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to solve the shortcomings of concentrating only on the educational environment. This model takes into account the intricate interactions that occur between peer, family, school, and community influences as well as the individual in the emergence and maintenance of bullying. By utilizing longitudinal data gathered from middle schools in the United States, the authors investigated the ways in which interactions within these systems either worsened or lessened bullying tendencies. According to their findings, in order to give kids a more supportive environment, multi-level interventions that involve families, communities, and schools are necessary. They came to the conclusion that, in order to be as effective as

possible, interventions should be maintained over time and that community involvement is essential to minimizing bullying.

The research "Cyberbullying: A Review of the Legal Issues Facing Educators" by Hinduja and Patchin (2011) moved the emphasis to cyberbullying, a phenomenon that is becoming more and more common. The writers tried to figure out how bullying had transitioned from the playground to the internet and how teachers could deal with this new issue. The influence of cyberbullying on students' mental health and academic performance was examined by the authors through a review of court cases and surveys given to American students and teachers. The study investigated how bullying is amplified on digital platforms and its effects were examined through the perspective of communication theory. Hinduja and Patchin came to the conclusion that schools need to incorporate cyberbullying into their anti-bullying programs and emphasized the necessity of legislative frameworks that shield pupils from cyberbullying.

The study "Bullying in Schools: A Cross-Cultural Perspective" by Falla et al. (2019) looked at bullying practices in several cultural situations. Their research sought to compare the incidence of bullying and the ways in which schools in Europe, Asia, and South America responded to bullying. In order to investigate how cultural norms affect bullying behaviors and the efficacy of solutions, the researchers employed a cross-sectional survey methodology to gather data from schools across 12 nations. They then applied the notion of cultural relativism to their findings. According to their research, there are notable cultural variations in the frequency and types of bullying; certain nations have greater rates of physical bullying, while others have more relational or verbal forms. The authors came to the conclusion that, in order for anti-bullying initiatives to be successful, they must be culturally appropriate, as treatments that are successful in one nation might not be in another.

The current research, in contrast to previous studies, focuses on bullying that occurs among adolescent pupils in Baghdad and aims to address the eclectic model of bullying scenarios that are unique to the educational and cultural setting of Iraq. While earlier research has examined a number of aspects of bullying, including community involvement, cross-cultural viewpoints, and bullying that occurs in schools, it has mainly ignored the unique sociocultural dynamics of bullying in Middle Eastern nations like Iraq. The current study also looks at the role of socio-political elements that may contribute to bullying in Baghdad's schools and uses a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative surveys and qualitative analysis of bullying occurrences. The present work will be centered around this gap in the literature, namely the paucity of context-specific research in post-conflict settings.

2.8 Model of Analysis

A pragmatic model will be developed for analyzing the data of the present paper.

2.8.1 Incivility in Schools

Andersson and Pearson (1999, p. 454) utilise the concept of conflict escalation processes in their investigation of workplace incivility. They portray rudeness as a type of social interaction, showing how rudeness can spiral out of control and most likely intensify into hostile actions. Similar to this, incivility in schools can start off as small acts of disdain and progress into more serious kinds of bullying.

2.8.2 Types of Bullying in

Gladden et al. (2014, p. 7) identified four types of bullying: relational, physical, verbal, and property damage bullying. Every kind takes on distinct forms and performs a range of roles in the educational setting.

2.8.3 Functions of Bullying

Bullying is defined by Swearer and Hymel (2015, p. 344) as a complex type of interactive hostility serving a variety of purposes. One of bullying's most significant effects in a school setting are the drive to dominate and control classmates. By making the bully seem better than their victims, bullying also helps to boost the status of the bully. Inciting the target or onlookers to feel something serves another purpose, since it might serve to reinforce the bully's actions. Bullies occasionally utilise their acts as a way to divert attention and escape taking accountability for their actions (Oade, 2009, p. 32).

2.8.3.1 Macro Strategies in School Bullying

According to Gordon (2019, p. 2), tactics like reputation-bashing, rumor-mongering, and blame-shifting are frequently used in school bullying.

2.8.3.2 Micro Strategies in School Bullying

The macro strategies above can be enacted through various micro strategies.

2.8.3.3 Speech Act Strategies

In a school context, speech acts used by bullies can include:

- **Accusation:** Blaming the victim for various issues.
- **Insulting:** Using *derogatory language*.

- **Teasing:** Making fun of the victim to belittle them.
- **Criticizing:** Pointing out perceived flaws or failures.
- **Stating:** Making declarations that put the victim in a negative light.
- **Requesting:** Demanding actions that the victim must comply with under duress.

2.8.3.4 Impoliteness Strategies

- Coercive impoliteness is defined by Culpeper (2011: 257) as an attempt to realign values in favor of the bully. The five impoliteness strategies identified by Culpeper (1996: 355-7) might be used to analyze this in schools:
- **Bold on record impoliteness:** Directly offensive statements.
- **Positive impoliteness:** Attacking the victim's self-esteem.
- **Negative impoliteness:** Threatening the victim's autonomy.
- **Sarcasm or mock impoliteness:** Using irony to mock the victim.
- **Withhold politeness:** Deliberately ignoring social niceties.

2.8.4 Conversational Maxims Breaches

Grice (1975, p. 49) asserts that language users generally adhere to conversational maxims. Bullies in schools, however, could purposefully violate these rules in order to hurt the victim in a discourse.

2.8.4.1 Termination Stage

Bullies may employ isolated structural elements like threats, warnings, prohibitions, and categorical declarations to end bullying interactions. These speech acts can be used in a classroom setting to assert authority and decisively stop an interaction (Olweus, 1993).

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Methodology of the Study

This study examines bullying practices among teenage students in Baghdad using a mixed-methods research methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative component, which makes use of organized questionnaires, yields quantifiable information about the frequency of bullying. Of the 700 children who took the survey, 100 were chosen at random, and 30 of them said they had been bullied. The qualitative component uses a case study approach in which ten bullying scenarios are thoroughly examined through the application of an eclectic model that

integrates many theoretical viewpoints in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of bullying dynamics. The study's conclusions may not be broadly applicable because it is restricted in three ways: thematically to bullying, geographically to Baghdad, and chronologically to a particular time frame.

Table (1)
Bullying occurrences in Schools in Baghdad

Speech Act Strategy	Number of occurrences
Accusation	8
Insulting	8
Negative Impoliteness	6
Teasing	1
Criticizing	3
Sarcasm	4
Total	30

3.2 Data Analysis

The practical examination of bullying is the focus of this section. The first step will be a pragmatic analysis of schoolchildren's talks using the created model.

3.2.1 Accusation

-Phrase: السمين (The fat one)

-Analysis: This statement exploits the victim's physical appearance as a point of scorn and blame, accusing them of being overweight.

3.2.2 Insulting

-Phrase: راسك اشبه بالميكروفون (Your head looks like a microphone)

-Analysis: This slur makes fun of the victim's physical attributes by disparaging them by equating their head with a microphone.

3.2.3 Teasing

-Phrase: ابو اربع عيون (Four-eyed)

-Analysis: This taunt refers to the victim's visual handicap and makes fun of them for wearing spectacles.

3.2.4 Criticizing

-Phrase: القزم (Dwarf)

-Analysis: This uses a pejorative phrase to draw attention to the victim's diminutive physical size and criticizes their height.

3.2.5 Stating

-Phrase: ابو الاحول -ابو الاسنان الطالعة (The one with protruding teeth)

-Analysis: This comment minimizes the victim by drawing attention to a perceived physical defect—protruding teeth—in a negative way.

3.2.6 Impoliteness Strategies

1.Positive Impoliteness

-Phrase: بلا رقبة (No neck)

-Analysis: This rudeness tactic targets the victim's neck in particular to degrade their self-esteem by attacking their physical looks.

2.Negative Impoliteness

-Phrase: متملق للمعلمين (Sycophant to the teachers)

-Analysis: This expression belittles the victim by accusing them of being unduly praising or deferential to the teachers, endangering their freedom and self-determination.

3.Sarcasm or Mock Impoliteness

-Phrase: المتعرق (The sweaty one)

-Analysis: This makes fun of the victim's physical state—which is sweating—by employing sarcasm and a pejorative phrase.

4.Withhold Politeness

-Phrase: ذو الاذان الكبيرة (The one with big ears)

-Analysis: This tactic withholds courtesy by disparagingly pointing out the victim's physical characteristic—big ears—directly.

3.2.7 Conversational Maxims Breaches

1.Breach of Quality Maxim

Since each sentence purposefully provides disparaging and offensive descriptions of the victim's physical characteristics or behaviours, it violates the Quality Maxim.

2.Termination Stage

When disparaging words and insults are used to dominate over the victim, these phrases can be interpreted as attempts to impose control and terminate contacts in a bullying manner.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Which kinds of bullying do students experience?

According to the survey, students at schools Baghdad's face a variety of bullying tactics, such as derogatory remarks, accusations, rude language, criticism, mocking, and sarcasm. These different forms show the complex nature of bullying behavior and its reliance on verbal aggressiveness, underlining the necessity for focused interventions to address these specific strategies effectively.

4.2 What practical methods do students use to bully their classmates?

According to the survey, students at schools in Baghdad face a variety of bullying tactics, such as derogatory remarks, accusations, rude language, criticism, mocking, and sarcasm. These many manifestations demonstrate the complexity of bullying behavior and its reliance on verbal aggressiveness, underscoring the necessity of focused treatments to successfully address these particular strategies.

5. Recommendations of the Study

The following recommendations are put out to address and lessen bullying behaviors in light of the study's findings regarding bullying events in Baghdad schools:

1. Clear anti-bullying policies that clearly describe bullying behaviors, specify repercussions for offenders, and offer victim support systems should be developed and implemented by schools.
2. Educate parents, teachers, and students on the various types of bullying, its effects, and preventative and intervention techniques through frequent awareness campaigns and programs.
3. Encourage an environment at school that is welcoming and inclusive and that values kindness, empathy, and respect. Students should be urged to speak out against bullying and to stand by their peers who could be victims.
4. Teachers and other staff members should receive training on how to spot bullying behaviours, use successful intervention techniques, and foster a supportive learning environment for students.
5. Establish peer assistance programs where senior students guide junior students, establishing a good rapport and offering a network of support.

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