



## Impoliteness and Gender: An Analysis Of Animation Series Family Guy Season 20<sup>th</sup>

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**Abstract.** *This study examines the use of impoliteness strategies and their relationship with gender in the animated series "Family Guy," with a specific focus on the 20th season. The objective is to determine whether the creators differentiate the use of impolite language between male and female characters and which gender employs these strategies more frequently. Using Jonathan Culpeper's 1996 frameworks, impoliteness strategies were categorized into five types: bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm, and withhold politeness. A qualitative descriptive method was employed to analyse dialogues transcribed from the animations. The findings reveal six instances of impoliteness from Lois Griffin, including three bald on record utterances, two positive incivility utterances, and one withhold politeness utterance. In contrast, Peter Griffin exhibited 11 instances of impoliteness, consisting of one bald on record utterance, six positive impoliteness utterances, one negative impoliteness utterance, and three sarcastic utterances, with no examples of withhold politeness. The analysis indicates that female characters' impoliteness utterances are fewer than male characters, potentially due to limited screen time. However, the nature of Lois Griffin's impoliteness was similar to Peter's, suggesting that the creators did not design female characters to be more polite. This challenges traditional gender stereotypes regarding language use.*

**Keywords:** *Impoliteness, Gender, Animation, Family Guy*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has made it easier to access various types of information, such as news, general knowledge, health resources, and entertainment. Social media platforms, for example, enable users to exchange information efficiently, while numerous apps allow them to consume visual content. These conveniences enable us to watch content that may be banned on television, such as certain animations, but is still accessible online.

One such animation is "Family Guy," which serves as the research data for this article. "Family Guy," created by Seth MacFarlane, is an original American cartoon for Fox Broadcasting Company that revolves around the Griffin family: the father, Peter Griffin, and his wife, Lois Griffin. They have three children: their eldest daughter, Meg Griffin; their second child, Chris Griffin; and their youngest, Stewie Griffin, who is still a toddler, along with a talking family dog named Brian Griffin. These characters are the central figures in the animated series, set in the fictional town of Quahog, Rhode Island.

The first episode of "Family Guy," titled "Death Has a Shadow," aired after Fox's Super Bowl broadcast in 1999, as noted by (Sienkiewicz & Marx, 2014). The show quickly sparked controversy due to its mature content. With fluctuating ratings and controversial humour, Fox cancelled "Family Guy" in 2002. However, strong DVD sales led to the show's revival within three years, indicating sustained interest through syndication ratings and online viewership from a dedicated fanbase, allowing the series to continue airing.

The researcher aims to explore the intersection of impoliteness and gender in this article, particularly in the context of an animation with adult themes that touches on race, religion, and other sensitive topics. The focus is on whether the creators of "Family Guy" differentiate the use of impolite language between male and female characters. Speech patterns vary between individuals, especially between men and women, although fundamentally, we are all raised primarily by women during childhood.

When girls use coarse language similar to boys, they are often ostracized, ridiculed, and reprimanded. This societal response aims to maintain traditional gender roles (Lakoff, 1975). Similarly, (Mills, 2003) argues that the notion that 'women are more polite' than men is based more on stereotypical views of 'women's language' rather than on actual linguistic behaviour. This study also seeks to identify the types of impoliteness strategies employed by male and female characters and to determine which gender more frequently uses impolite utterances. Additionally, it investigates whether the creators of "Family Guy" make any effort to moderate the language of female characters.

Impoliteness is communicative behaviour intended to attack the face of the target (the interlocutor) or to make the target feel attacked stated by (Culpeper, 2008). Furthermore, (Culpeper, 2013) explains that verbal abuse is triggered through impolite interactions. Thus, disrespectful speech is used with the intent to attack the interlocutor and can result in or provoke verbal abuse. (Bousfield & Locher, 2008) describe a situation where a person is ignored or provoked as incivility. Consequently, individuals who employ impoliteness as a communication tactic have the potential to create discord and disrupt social interactions.

While the series includes a significant amount of incivility, racism, and jokes about various religions, which can have negative effects, (Culpeper, 2013) states that incivility is considered detrimental at the fringes of language and society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several articles that examine impoliteness and gender in use in films, TV shows and animations.

The first study, "Impoliteness Strategies Based on Culpeper's Model: An Analysis of Gender Differences between Two Characters in the Movie *Mother* (Mirhosseini et al., 2017), aims to analyse the impoliteness strategies employed by male and female characters in Ali Hatami's film "*Mother*." Utilizing a qualitative method and Culpeper's (1996) framework, the study reveals that the male character uses more impoliteness strategies than the female character during their interactions.

The second study, "Impoliteness Strategies and Gender Differences among Disney Modern Protagonists" (Benabdellah, 2018), seeks to uncover how prominent Disney characters, both male and female, employ impoliteness and whether Disney intentionally creates impolite characters. By applying quantitative methods and observing and coding the Disney films "*Moana*" (2013) and "*Frozen*" (2016), the study finds that Disney's female characters are generally more polite than their male counterparts, conveyed subtly to avoid feminist backlash.

The third study, "Impoliteness Addressed to Different Genders and Their Responses in *The Kitchen Nightmares*, a TV Reality Show" (Milal & Pramono, 2021), aims to identify the impoliteness strategies directed at different genders. Using data from the TV reality show "*The Kitchen Nightmares*," season six, episode two, and employing a descriptive qualitative method, the study concludes that gender does not influence the reception of impoliteness but can affect the responses given. This study aligns with the first research in exploring the link between impoliteness and gender.

The next study, "Impoliteness and Gender Differences in *The Edge of Seventeen* Movie" (Suhandoko et al., 2021), employs qualitative methods with theories from Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann (2003) as well as Culpeper (1996). The study aims to analyse the impoliteness strategies used by the main female character, Nadine, and her male interlocutors in "*The Edge of Seventeen*" movie. The findings reveal that women, often stereotyped as "powerless" language users, also use impoliteness strategies to negotiate and construct their identity.

Then in this study written by (Hafisa & Sharifah, 2020) This article investigates the impoliteness strategies employed and explains the purpose of the most frequently used strategies in Trevor Noah's solo comedy show "*Afraid of the Dark*." The study also analyses

Trevor Noah's utterances using the impoliteness strategies outlined by Jonathan Culpeper (1996). The findings indicate that Trevor Noah employs 105 instances of impoliteness strategies, encompassing all five types proposed by Culpeper: bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness. The study reveals that negative impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy, occurring 42 times and comprising 40% of the total data. Trevor Noah utilizes this strategy primarily as a comedic device to entertain the audience. He predominantly employs the 'demean, ridicule, or mock' sub-strategy of negative impoliteness to provoke laughter and provide the audience with the amusement of hearing someone being mocked or demeaned.

This article by (Arlivia et al., 2024) provides an analytical study of comedy, offering significant insights into the complexities of comedy as a medium that permeates everyday life. It examines the use of incivility strategies in John Mulaney's stand-up comedy and how these strategies are employed to entertain audiences through five sources of amusement. The data consists of utterances containing incivility strategies from Mulaney's stand-up specials: "New in Town" (2012), "The Comeback Kid" (2015), "Kid Gorgeous" (2018), and "Baby J" (2023). These utterances were categorized using Culpeper's (1996) theory of impoliteness strategies. The most frequently used strategies were further classified according to Culpeper's (2011) theory of the five sources of fun functions of entertaining impoliteness. The study identified 344 instances of impoliteness strategies, with positive impoliteness being the most prevalent, occurring 163 times (47.4%). Of these, 105 instances (64%) entertained the audience through emotional pleasure, followed by 33 instances (20.1%) that provided the pleasure of feeling superior, 14 instances (8.5%) that evoked the pleasure of feeling safe, ten instances (6.1%) that offered voyeuristic pleasure, and two instances (1.2%) that delivered aesthetic pleasure. These results suggest that John Mulaney utilizes a variety of incivility strategies, particularly positive incivility, to entertain his audience, primarily by eliciting emotional pleasure.

While the data in the above studies use animated films, reality TV series and stand-up comedy, this study aims to fill the gap by examining an all-encompassing subject, namely the incivility strategies spoken in an animated series themed on everyday life full of adult comedy and satire. This study seeks to examine the incivility strategies uttered by Peter Griffin and Lois Griffin in Culpeper's (1996) incivility strategies. In addition, this study also investigates how the most frequently used impoliteness strategies between male and female characters. Therefore, it can be concluded that this study is different from previous studies.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Pragmatics**

Pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and their associated meanings. According to (Stalnaker, 1970), pragmatics characterizes those features of utterance meaning that help determine which proposition is expressed by a given sentence. (Yule, 1996) defines pragmatics as the study of speaker intent and contextual meaning, pragmatics is a branch of linguistics concerned with how meaning is communicated. From (Mohammed & Abbas, 2016) extensive research and observation that pragmatics encompasses seven areas: deixis, presupposition, speech acts, implicature, the cooperative principle, politeness, and impoliteness.

#### **b. Impoliteness**

Impoliteness as unkind behaviours and attitudes that manifest in specific contexts. These impolite actions are driven by expectations, desires, and beliefs about certain values and disrupt social harmony. Such behaviours are perceived negatively or as "impolite" when one asserts or demands others follow their own opinions or principles (Culpeper, 2011). The primary theory the researcher will use to identify impoliteness strategies is Culpeper's (1996) model, which is widely recognized for its analysis of real-life impoliteness aimed at attacking or threatening actions from the speaker to the listener, causing disharmony.

In journal "Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness," (Culpeper, 1996) categorizes impoliteness strategies into five types:

- 1) Bald on Record Impoliteness: This strategy is expressed directly, clearly, unambiguously, and concisely to the listener (Johnson et al., 1988).
- 2) Positive Impoliteness: This strategy attacks one's positive image, such as using insulting nicknames, making others uncomfortable, creating codes or jargon known to the group but unknown to the target, using taboo language, swearing, or profanity.
- 3) Negative Impoliteness: This strategy attacks the listener's negative face by using words that mock, demean, ridicule, insult, and are intended to frighten and invade personal space.
- 4) Sarcasm or Mock Politeness: This strategy involves delivering impoliteness in an insincere manner, often veiling the satire to contrast sharply with principles of genuine politeness.

- 5) Withhold Politeness: According to (Culpeper, 2016), this occurs when expected politeness is not conveyed, or no politeness is exhibited at all.

Research in (Mills, 2003) research how many women have begun using masculine language (characterized by swearing and bluntness) in public to challenge the notion that 'women's language' is overly polite and powerless. This study also aims to identify the types of impoliteness strategies used by both female and male characters and to determine which gender more frequently delivers impolite utterances in this animation.

#### 4. METHOD

The researcher opted for a qualitative descriptive method, which is a pragmatic approach to understanding meaning and focuses on observing speech impoliteness. According to (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009), knowledge from a qualitative perspective is constructed through communication and interpretation. The data consists of dialogues and sentences transcribed from the animation. Studying language phenomena using qualitative methods produces descriptive narratives, offering more detailed explanations.

#### 5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher found out total 17 data belonging to two characters in the animated series "Family Guy" Character Impoliteness Strategies

**Table 1 Tabulation of Total Data**

Characters	Impoliteness Strategies				
	BOR	PI	NI	SC	WP
Peter Griffin	1	6	1	3	-
Lois Griffin	3	2	-	-	1

The following is a more detailed explanation and data presentation regarding the impoliteness strategies used by the characters:

##### a. Bald on Record

##### Data (1)

Meg: I do. ICU was an idea I could really believe in, and you're ruining it.

Lois: I'm not ruining it, I'm expanding it. You know, I'm the one who went blind, Meg. I'm the one who's suffering. Now the least I can do is make some money from it. *Now stand back. It's time to make another video.*

After going blind, Lois felt useless and hopeless, so her daughter Meg helped her create a YouTube video where Lois could express her feelings. However, after the video went viral

and generated significant revenue, Lois' priorities shifted, and she became more focused on money. Meg, who wanted the YouTube channel to centre on emotions and people's feelings, was unhappy with this change, leading to a minor argument.

During this argument, Lois issued a clear and unambiguous command to Meg to "stand back" and not interfere with the video channel anymore, disregarding Meg's desires and feelings.

This interaction exemplifies the bald on record impoliteness strategy, where Lois' command was direct and unambiguous, aimed at asserting control over the YouTube channel without considering Meg's perspective.

#### **Data (2)**

Lois: Nobody's gonna be inspired by a middle-aged, cisgendered, able-bodied white woman. *Now, you keep your mouth shut, or I will...*

Lois' rise to fame continued until she was invited to a TV show, where Meg once again expressed her disapproval, arguing that Lois' intentions were no longer sincere towards those who felt useless and hopeless. Lois dismissed Meg's concerns and ordered her to shut her mouth, nearly issuing a threat before being interrupted by others entering the room.

This instance exemplifies the bald on record impoliteness strategy, as Lois delivers a clear and direct command to Meg, demanding silence and allowing Lois to proceed without regard for Meg's feelings.

#### **Data (3)**

Elton (Stewie): Wh-Wh-What are you doin', Pop?

Peter: *No son of mine is gonna be a heterosexual paper pusher. You need to be a loud-and-proud performer like your gay old dad!*

In another scene, Stewie takes on the role of Elton, a future singer. Initially, Stewie was a smart child who loved to study, but his passion was not supported by his parents, Peter and Lois. When Peter caught Stewie studying, he scolded him and issued a demanding statement.

This scenario illustrates bald on record impoliteness due to Peter's clear and explicit demand for Stewie to become a popular gay musician like himself, rather than an office worker handling paperwork. Peter disregards Stewie's wishes and even hits him.

#### **Data (4)**

Lois: Oh, you are so damned exhausting, Peter! Just 'cause you stop being crazy about one decade doesn't mean you have to be crazy about another! How about you just be *a normal*

*human being for once?! Huh? Just be a... Be a husband to your wife! Be a father to your children!*

Peter is often silly and playful, failing to fulfill his role as the head of the family. His days are spent parodying old films he loves, which frustrates Lois. Peter's lack of seriousness in his role further fuels Lois' anger.

Lois' statements are blunt and unmitigated, as she does not soften her criticism or attempt to lessen the impact of her words. Her disappointment and criticism are delivered clearly and directly, fitting the definition of bald on record impoliteness.

## **b. Positive Impoliteness**

### **Data (5)**

Lois: (gasps) Oh, my God... I'm blind.

Peter: What do you mean you're blind? Y-You can't see me right now?

Lois: No!

Peter: But you *can still see, like, the stove and laundry, right?*

In this film scene, Lois has just undergone Lasik surgery, which results in her losing her sight. While Lois is still in shock about her situation, Peter seems unconcerned about her condition and asks about other matters.

This data positive impoliteness because Peter's question directly undermines Lois's positive face, trivializing her blindness and reducing her role to merely performing household chores, while ignoring her immediate emotional and physical needs.

### **Data (6)**

Peter: Who-Who's that? Is that Lois?

Lois: Peter, I'm the one who's blind.

Peter: Sorry, I-I'm still getting used to things.

In the ensuing dialogue, Lois is unable to do anything but rest in bed after becoming blind. Peter, who typically does not engage in household tasks, mocks his wife by pretending to be blind and making light of her condition.

This data positive impoliteness because Peter's words are a form of impoliteness as they make Lois uncomfortable and ignore her blindness. He also undermines Lois's positive face by suggesting that, as a housewife, she is now incapable of performing any household chores, disregarding her emotional and physical needs.



### **c. Negative Impoliteness**

#### **Data (7)**

Muddy: I could help you if you want.

Peter (Vinny): Yeah? *Could you make it sound so she thinks me, a white guy, is the one who actually wrote it?*

In episode 2, the storyline shifts to a singer named Muddy, portrayed by a black man. During a concert tour, Muddy is assigned a driver by his agency, Peter or "Vinny." While Peter wants to write a letter to his wife back home, he struggles with articulating his thoughts, so Muddy offers to help, and Peter accepts.

This scenario exemplifies negative impoliteness, as Peter (Vinny) makes a racially insensitive request. He coerces Muddy into helping and assumes that Muddy must adapt his writing to fit Peter's racial identity, implying that Muddy's identity and abilities need to change.

Top of Form Bottom of Form

### **d. Sarcasm**

#### **Data (8)**

Peter: Who-Who's that? Is that Lois?

Lois: Peter, I'm the one who's blind.

Peter: *Sorry, I-I'm still getting used to things.*

In this dialogue, after losing her sight, Lois is unable to do anything and can only rest in bed. Peter, who typically avoids housework, deliberately mocks his wife by pretending to be blind.

This instance includes sarcasm. After mimicking Lois's blindness, Peter said "sorry," but his tone and facial expression lacked sincerity. Peter's apology was merely a formality without any genuine remorse.

### **e. Withhold Politeness**

#### **Data (9)**

Meg: Okay, here's the microphone.

Lois: Yeah, *I see it.*

After the viral video, Lois was invited to an event where she had to speak on stage using a microphone. Meg helped her mother get on stage and showed her where the microphone was but did not receive any acknowledgment for her assistance.

This instance exemplifies withhold politeness because Lois did not thank Meg for her help. By failing to convey the expected politeness, Lois demonstrated impoliteness in this dialogue.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The research clearly shows that impoliteness is an utterance intended to attack and offend the listener. The delivery and use of such utterances vary according to the impoliteness strategies outlined in Jonathan Culpeper's 1996 theory, which categorizes them into five types: bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm, and withhold politeness. The data revealed six impoliteness utterances from Lois Griffin in the animation "Family Guy," including three instances of bald on record, two of positive impoliteness, and one of withhold politeness. In contrast, Peter Griffin exhibited 11 impoliteness utterances, consisting of one instance of bald on record, six of positive impoliteness, one of negative impoliteness, and three of sarcasm, with no instances of withhold politeness.

The count indicates that the impoliteness utterances of the female character are fewer than those of the male character. This discrepancy is attributed to the limited screen time of the female character selected for the study. The analysis of the results shows that the impoliteness utterances of Lois Griffin are not significantly different from those of Peter Griffin. The creators of the animation did not design female characters to appear more subtle or polite than male characters. This demonstrates that the "Family Guy" animation does not conform to the stereotype that women cannot use strong or impolite language like men.

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