

Impoliteness Strategies in ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’: A Gender-based Study

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Abstract: *This study aims at finding out gender differences in impoliteness strategies made by African American characters in the TV series ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’ to enact humor. The researchers analyzed 151 impolite utterances from Season 1 from ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’, which consisted of 25 episodes. The findings support previous research that males use impoliteness more than females. It was also found out that male characters utilized impoliteness strategies more than female characters in both evoking impoliteness and responding to face attacks. Regardless of gender, attacking the hearer’s negative face was more preferred by African American characters than attacking the hearer’s positive face. Males and females differed significantly in initiating negative impoliteness and sarcasm or mock impoliteness. However, the differences between the two genders in responding to impoliteness were insignificant.*

Keywords: face attacks, gender, humor, impoliteness, politeness

1. Introduction

Politeness has received focal attention in research because of its importance in our lives since it reinforces self-respect. Studies have been conducted about impoliteness in correspondence to politeness to explore how people react differently to it, depending on the context and the interlocutors. But is impoliteness the exact opposite of politeness?

Politeness is when people practice their good manners with others verbally and/or non-verbally. People tend to be polite in order to establish and maintain social relationships with others. However, such behaviors vary according to certain factors such as cultural diversity, the hearer’s interpretation of the behavior and the context in which the behavior occurs. Below is an example of the acts of politeness that we use on a daily basis:

A: “Your house is absolutely amazing!”

B: “Thank you.”

In the example above, Speaker A shows interest in Speaker B’s taste by complimenting him/her on his/her house in order to establish common ground. Impoliteness, however, occurs when the speaker practices rudeness with others without considering their feelings. Unlike politeness, the aim of being impolite could be achieving a certain need such as emphasizing power or social distance. According to Culpeper (1996: 350), impoliteness is the opposite of politeness since it has the opposite effect, which is social disruption.

In "What's up, dude?", the speaker used the word "dude" to address the hearer. If the speaker is addressing one of his friends, this utterance will not be considered impolite at all. Yet, if the addressee is his father or his teacher, it will most probably be considered impolite. This highlights the fact that the way impoliteness is interpreted largely depends on the context and the interlocutors.

As a linguistic phenomenon, politeness aims to save the hearer's face, while impoliteness aims to damage it. Brown and Levinson (1987) presented the theory of politeness to account for the speaker's and/or the hearer's face redress, which means that the speaker intends to mitigate the face threatening act towards the hearer.

Face is "the public self-image" that each individual has and attempts to protect (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). Brown and Levinson (1987) classified the concept of "face" into two categories: positive face and negative face. Positive face is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" while negative face is "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62). This model received great attention in the academic research. Positive politeness is addressed to the hearer's positive face by satisfying his wants, expressing admiration, and reducing social distance. Negative politeness is addressed to the hearer's negative face since it is restricted to the imposition; however, the hearer has the freedom of action towards it.

Later, Culpeper (1996) proposed a new model of impoliteness based on Brown and Levinson's model of politeness in which he presented four major strategies: bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and sarcasm and mock impoliteness. According to Culpeper (2013), impoliteness is a complex behavior which can be easily misunderstood. If the hearer misunderstands the speaker's intention, he/she will probably consider the speaker's behavior as impolite. Culpeper (2011a) argued that impoliteness is creative; the behavior of impoliteness is not necessarily restricted to the strategies in the models introduced on impoliteness. There are non-verbal behaviors which are also considered impolite, such as burping, farting, some gestures like the middle finger.

African American TV series were the focus of many psychological and sociological studies (e.g., Inniss and Feagin 1995; Corrizzato 2000; Coleman and McIlwain 2005), while none was concerned with analyzing them from either a linguistic or discourse analysis perspective.

It has also been observed that previous studies which investigated the relationship between impoliteness and gender indicated that males usually tend to use impoliteness more than females (e.g., Mills 2002; Sung, 2012; Aydınoğlu 2013; Yating 2014). However, such studies did not investigate the relationship between impoliteness and gender in African American Vernacular context. There is a stereotyped convention among people in different societies that impoliteness is associated with men and politeness is associated with women.

Impoliteness deserves great attention in the field of pragmatics research since it is a universal phenomenon. It can be studied in many aspects not only as a

negative behavior that attacks the hearer's face, but also as a positive behavior which develops social relationships or as an instrument to enact humor in TV shows. Accordingly, the present research aims to fill this research gap and to investigate this stereotype further by analyzing gender's role in expressing impoliteness and responding to this behavior offensively to enact humor, and make the audience laugh and applaud in one of the well-known African American comedy TV series called 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air', where most of the characters are African Americans.

Humor in television is considered a communicative act whose context is very essential since viewers cannot find something funny unless they are aware of certain aspects that are absent in the actual humorous utterance itself (Mills, 2009). TV sitcoms are considered as a vital depiction of humor. A TV sitcom is a situational comedy series where characters act in a setting which is usually a domestic or a professional environment (Brett 2009). It is usually filmed in front of live audience who use laughter, applause, or any other sound to signal what is funny and what is not as a motive to the actors' performance (Neale and Krutnik 1990). In this regard, the success of TV sitcoms is not necessarily achieved by the assumption that everything must be funny but through "the eligibility of characters, setting, and the narrative" (Mills 2009: 16). Impoliteness is one of the fundamental sources of humor on TV. Previous research found that TV sitcoms rely heavily on verbal abuse because laughter is usually evoked by impoliteness (Jobert 2013). Generally, comedy is a male-dominant genre since TV sitcoms do not usually have women in the leading roles (Mills 2009). Female humor in television tends to build solidarity and intimacy, while male humor aims to emphasize status and competition (Crawford 1995; Crawford 2003). Therefore, female humor can be classified as "supportive humor", while male humor can be classified as "argumentative humor" (Holmes 2006: 33). In the present study, the researchers aim to explore how African American characters in 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' utilized impoliteness strategies to enact humor.

2. Review of related literature

2.1 Theoretical background

2.1.1 Politeness

Before introducing the various models of impoliteness presented by scholars, it is worth mentioning the most eminent models of politeness. Lakoff (1975) argued that cultural diversity might affect the rules of interpreting something as polite or impolite. Leech (1983) presented his theory of politeness based on the functions of illocutionary acts which indicate the intention of the speaker, such as orders and promises. In 1987, Brown and Levinson presented their model of politeness based on the concept of "face". Brown and Levinson (1987) presented a number of politeness strategies to save the hearer's face. They classified them as positive politeness and negative politeness, and these two major categories were subcategorized into several politeness strategies.

2.1.2 Impoliteness

1. Models of impoliteness

Several researchers tried to present various models of impoliteness. For example, Austin (1990) introduced "face attack" strategies which are used depending on the addresser's power or solidarity with the addressee. The context is a major factor that affects the interpretation of a behavior as polite or impolite.

Culpeper (1996) classified the types of impoliteness in parallel with Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness in the sense of having strategies for positive impoliteness and negative impoliteness. In addition to these strategies, Culpeper presented another two strategies. The four main impoliteness strategies are (Culpeper 1996: 356-358):

1. *Bald-on-record impoliteness* – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant, for example, giving orders like "shut up" and "sit down".
2. *Positive impoliteness* – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face.
3. *Negative impoliteness* – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face.
4. *Sarcasm or mock impoliteness* – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere.

Culpeper (1996: 357-358) introduced a number of sub-strategies for both positive and negative impoliteness.

Positive impoliteness output strategies include:

- *Ignore, snub the other* – fail to acknowledge the other's presence.
- *Exclude the other from an activity.*
- *Disassociate from the other*– for example, deny association or common ground with the other.
- *Be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic.*
- *Use inappropriate identity markers* – for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.
- *Use obscure or secretive language* – for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group but not the target.
- *Seek disagreement* – select a sensitive topic.
- *Make the other feel uncomfortable* – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.
- *Use taboo words* – swear or use abusive or profane language.
- *Call the other names* – use derogatory nominations.

Negative impoliteness output strategies include:

- *Frighten* – instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.
- *Condescend, scorn, or ridicule* – emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other.
- *Invade the other's space* – literally or metaphorically (e.g., ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).

- *Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* – personalize, use the pronouns “I” and “you”.
- *Put the other’s indebtedness on record.*

Culpeper (2011b) investigated the relation between prosody and politeness and impoliteness. Sound effects, such as pitch, tone, and loudness might affect the way an utterance is delivered and interpreted as polite or impolite. Culpeper classified prosody into five different groups, viz., timing, loudness, pitch (measurable in hertz), nucleus and voice quality (Culpeper 2011b: 3). He argued that an utterance can be considered impolite not only from what the speaker says, but also how he/she says it. Prosody is useful in conveying off-record impoliteness. High pitched utterances are considered impolite in some contexts.

Culpeper’s (1996) model of impoliteness is used in the present study to investigate the use of impoliteness in ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’.

2. Response to impoliteness

Drawing on Labov’s (1972) and Harris, Gergen, and Lanaman’s (1986) frameworks of responses to impoliteness, Culpeper, et al. (2003: 1562-1568) classified the strategies of responding to a strategic impolite act into two pairs, OFFENSIVE-OFFENSIVE and OFFENSIVE-DEFENSIVE. OFFENSIVE-OFFENSIVE pairs are the responses that the recipients use to respond to a face attack with a face attack (Harris, et al., 1986). Such responses are the impoliteness strategies introduced by Culpeper (1996). The example below illustrates an OFFENSIVE-OFFENSIVE pair.

7. A: Shut up! (Bald on-record impoliteness)
B: No, you shut up! (Bald on-record impoliteness response)

OFFENSIVE-DEFENSIVE pairs are the responses that recipients use to respond to a face attack by defending their faces after being damaged (Labov, 1972). Defensive strategies are: *direct contradiction, abrogation, opt out on record, insincere agreement, and ignore the implied face attack*. In examining the addressees’ offensive responses to impoliteness, the researchers of the present study adopted Culpeper’s, et al. (2003) model of response to impoliteness. In offensive responses, the characters use Culpeper’s (1996) impoliteness strategies to respond to the face attack.

2.2 Empirical studies

A number of previous empirical studies investigated impoliteness in different contexts. Some of them focused on gender differences, while others analyzed the use of impoliteness strategies in television.

Some researchers investigated impoliteness in communication where it is used to reinforce social bonding. Kotthoff (1996), for example, studied the use of politeness and impoliteness in humorous communication. The researchers tape-recorded 20 informal gatherings of friends and students who have known each other for years. These informal gatherings were in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. The findings revealed that most of the humorous utterances were

impolite. However, they did not threaten the hearer's face. In fact, most of them affirmed the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Furthermore, the humorous acts were initiated mostly by persons with a higher status than the hearer. Finally, impolite humorous acts differed according to the social relationships.

Kecskes (2015) analyzed impoliteness in an intercultural context where he argued that it might not work similarly in intercultural interactions as in first language communication. He analyzed a number of exchanges in English between interlocutors from different cultures. The study showed that the literal meaning had the primacy for non-native speakers of English in meaning interpretation. Consequently, politeness or impoliteness might be lost or evaluated incorrectly. For instance, when impoliteness is communicated implicitly, it would probably be missed by the recipient interlocutor.

Numerous empirical studies in the field of discourse analysis have paid a great attention to discourse in television. Some of them investigated impoliteness in TV. Based on his model, Culpeper (2005) analyzed how and why impoliteness can be entertaining in the TV quiz show "The Weakest Link". The researchers analyzed an extract from a standard episode of the quiz show. The results revealed that without prosody, impoliteness like sarcasm and mimicry would likely be ambiguous or missed. Furthermore, he found that impoliteness can be entertaining when it is creative and genuine, especially when the host of the show has a sarcastic personality.

Unlike Culpeper, Kantara (2010) investigated the use of impoliteness strategies in the TV series "House M.D" as a source of power. The researchers focused on the main character's use of impoliteness strategies and their responses. The researchers analyzed the first 20 episodes from Season 1 of "House M.D.". The findings revealed that the strategy "sarcasm" was used extensively by Dr. House to be interesting and memorable to the hearer. Some interlocutors responded to Dr. House's impoliteness because they perceived it as impolite. The findings of Culpeper's (2005) and Kantara's (2010) studies highlighted the importance of sarcasm in TV shows.

One of the main issues that has been investigated extensively in language studies is gender. Lakoff (1973: 45) stated that "the marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak". Thus, women are expected to be more polite than men. Researchers explored gender differences in different linguistic aspects, such as impoliteness. Generally, these studies found that males use impoliteness more than females. To mention some of them, Mills (2002) argued the assumption that there is a relationship between masculinity and impoliteness and femininity and politeness. The researchers studied an incident in a departmental party at the university where the interaction occurred between different genders. She concluded that even if we attempt to find individual differences in impoliteness, the stereotypical convention imposed by the community and society about gender and impoliteness will affect both genders' discourse. Following Mills, Sung (2012) investigated the relationship between gender and impoliteness in the reality TV show "The

Apprentice” by analyzing the discourse of one male and one female project managing leaders. Both leaders used masculine and feminine verbal behaviors. Sung studied the gender stereotyping that women are expected to be more polite than men. He concluded that women’s masculine verbal behavior is considered inappropriate and impolite although the male leader’s mixed behavior is considered acceptable.

Aydinoğlu (2013) and Yating (2014) studied impoliteness and gender made by fictional characters. Aydinoğlu (2013) examined the differences in impolite acts regarding gender in GERALYN HORTON’S plays. The researchers adopted Culpeper’s classification of impoliteness strategies and Bousfield’s framework of responses to impoliteness. She found that impoliteness was rarely used in the plays. The researchers concluded that women are more careful than men when they speak and they avoid being impolite. Yating (2014) studied gender differences in conversational humor by analyzing the American comedy show “Friends”. The researchers adopted Brown and Levinson’s model of politeness and Culpeper’s model of impoliteness”. The findings revealed that the use of politeness and impoliteness for humor differs regarding gender. Generally, male characters tend to use impolite strategies and challenging humor in arguments and negotiations. However, female characters prefer to be polite rather than impolite and use humor for supporting and bonding with the others’ values.

The present study investigates gender and impoliteness further in order to confirm or invalidate the findings of previous literature by investigating gender differences in the use of impoliteness made by African American characters in ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’. The use of impoliteness by characters is analyzed according to Culpeper’s (1996) taxonomy of impoliteness, and Culpeper’s, et al. (2003) model of responses is adopted to analyze offensive responses only.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

The sample of the present study included Season 1 of the African-American TV sitcom ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’. Season 1 consisted of 25 episodes. Each episode is about 25 minutes. The episodes were collected from <http://putlocker.is/>, a website that provides a database of movies and TV series. Season 1 from ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’ was watched to find out the impoliteness strategies and their offensive responses made by African American male and female characters. The researchers analyzed 151 impolite utterances that aimed at enacting humor. The audience reacted to such utterances by laughing, applauding, or making other sounds. The TV series’ script was found on <http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/>. The excerpts used in the data analysis were taken from this website in order to avoid misperception of the conversations.

Season 1 was chosen specifically because it is the first season of the sitcom that presents the beginning of the story. The writers would have probably highlighted each character’s personality since they were newly introduced to the audience. Therefore, the writers would have been very careful in choosing the impoliteness strategies and offensive responses to them. The humorous aspect of

this show appears mainly in the difference between Will's lifestyle which is childish and reckless and his uncle's family's lifestyle which is sophisticated and ambitious. In the following seasons, Will's personality and interactions with his aunt's family members gradually changed because he actually began to acclimate himself with them. Therefore, Season 1 would be a better choice since the creators of the sitcom introduced the original personality of each character.

'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' TV comedy series was chosen because most of its characters are African American. Therefore, this further helped the researchers to investigate their use of impoliteness. The following is a description of the characters:

- Will "The Fresh Prince" Smith (played by Will Smith) is a young man who has a reckless and childish personality who moved to his uncle's mansion in Bel-Air. He is the main character in this show.
- Carlton Banks (played by Alfonso Ribeiro) is the eldest son of Philip Banks. He is conservative and cares very much about studying.
- Philip Banks (played by James Avery) is Will's uncle (Will's aunt Vivian's husband). He is a sophisticated, well-educated, and wealthy man. He is a lawyer.
- Hilary Banks (played by Karyn Parsons) is the eldest daughter of Philip Banks. She is demanding and materialistic.
- Vivian Banks (played by Janet Hubert) is Will's aunt from his mother's side. She portrays the ideal mother for her children. She is a college professor.
- Ashley Banks (played by Tatyana Ali) is the youngest daughter of Philip Banks. She is a nice and polite child. She is one of the characters who enjoyed having Will in their house.
- Jazz (played by DJ Jazzy Jeff) is Will's best friend. He is also a childish and reckless teenager. Since Jazz is Will's best friend, he also represents the African American stereotype.

3.2 Data analysis

In the present study, frequencies and means of impoliteness strategies and their offensive responses, which were made by male and female African American characters, are tabulated. In addition, gender differences in the use of impoliteness strategies and offensive responses are presented. Impoliteness strategies were classified according to Culpeper's (1996) four main strategies and sub-strategies subsumed under them explained in the literature review (see section 2.1.2.1).

The responses to impoliteness were classified according to Culpeper's, et al. (2003) model where characters choose to respond or not. Since the present study is only concerned with offensive responses, the researchers adopted Culpeper's, et al. (2003) framework of offensive responses which happen to be the same impoliteness strategies presented by Culpeper (1996). Figure (1) below from Culpeper, et al. (2003) represents the recipient's choices of responding to impoliteness (for more details see section 2.1.2.2, Chapter Two).

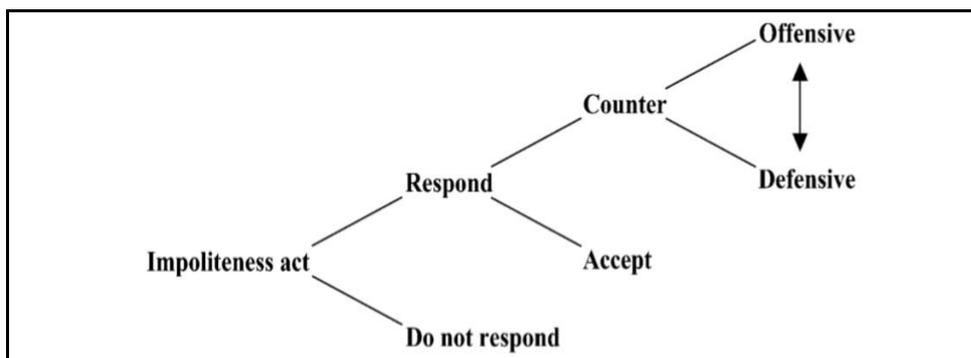


Figure 1. Recipient's choices of responding to an impolite act

3.2.1 Validity of data analysis

Because of the researchers' lack of extensive knowledge about the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background of African Americans and their vernacular, and in order to maximize the reliability of their classification of impolite utterances, they asked a group of native African Americans to assert the accuracy and integrity of their classification. The researchers presented their classification of impoliteness strategies and offensive responses in context to three African American native speakers whom she met in the University of Jordan campus and online. The first rater studies Arabic as a foreign language. The second and the third raters were found on a Facebook group dedicated to African Americans called Vintage African American Photography. The raters were first introduced to Culpeper's framework of impoliteness (1996) and Culpeper's, et al. framework of offensive responses (2003) with examples in order to guide them to make accurate decisions regarding the researchers' classification. Their comments and feedback were taken into consideration; some modifications were made according to the raters' suggestions. The analysis was revised when two out of three raters did not consider one of the classifications as an impolite strategy. In addition, some classifications were alternated by other strategies and some utterances, which the researchers did not consider impolite but were classified as impolite by the raters.

4. Results and discussion

This section discusses the results of data analysis for the present study. Gender differences are provided with statistical analysis to either confirm or invalidate the findings of previous research about impoliteness and gender, in which most of them concluded that males are more impolite than females.

Table 1 below presents the impoliteness strategies used by both male and female characters in 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' to enact humor. As can be seen, male characters used impoliteness strategies 95 times, while female characters used them only 17 times. Both male and female characters used negative impoliteness more than the other strategies; males used it 42 times and females used it 8 times. This finding implies that, regardless of gender, attacking the hearer's negative face is more preferred by African American characters than

attacking the positive face. This contradicts with Yating (2014) who found that both genders in "Friends" prefer to use mockery.

Female characters used the rest of the strategies evenly. However, male characters used bald-on-record impoliteness less than the other strategies, implying that males have more preference to the other strategies than females do.

Table 1. Impoliteness strategies used by male and female characters

Impoliteness strategies	Male		Female		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
<i>Bald-on-record impoliteness</i>	14	14.8	3	17.70	17
<i>Positive impoliteness</i>	18	19.00	3	17.70	21
<i>Negative impoliteness</i>	42	44.2	8	46.9	50
<i>Sarcasm or mock impoliteness</i>	21	22.00	3	17.70	24
Total	95	100%	17	100%	112

Table 2. Mean and std. deviation of males and females' use of impoliteness strategies

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	95	4.13	1.32
Female	17	2.83	0.75
Total	112	6.96	2.07

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of males and females' use of the major strategies of impoliteness. It shows that the mean for males is 4.13 and for females is 2.83. This finding highlights the contrast between how frequently males used impoliteness throughout Season 1, while females did not use them that much. Table 3 provides a one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of the major strategies of impoliteness.

To figure out if there are any statistically significant differences between the means related to gender a one-way ANOVA test was conducted. Table 3 indicates that the differences between male and female characters in using the major strategies of impoliteness is statistically significant (Sig. = 0.000). The significance of F is less than 0.05, implying that male characters used impoliteness to a very large degree to enact humor compared to female characters. This finding supports previous research (e.g., Mills, 2002; Sung, 2012; Aydinoglu 2013; Yating 2014), which concluded that males use impoliteness more than females. Table 4 provides a one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of bald-on-record impoliteness.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using impoliteness strategies due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	24.369	1	24.369	15.514	0.000
Within Groups	172.786	110	1.571		
Total	197.155	111			

Table 4. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using bald-on-record impoliteness due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.175	1	4.175	2.726	0.120
Within Groups	22.978	15	1.532		
Total	27.153	16			

As can be noticed, although male characters used bald-on-record impoliteness more than female characters did, the difference between the two genders is not statistically significant (Sig. = 0.120). Excerpt (1) below illustrates how this strategy was initiated by a male character towards a female character who responded to him offensively. The impolite utterances are underlined.

Excerpt 1

WILL: Yo, Janet! Peep this here, baby. We're going out tonight. Imma choose the place. Imma eyeball any honey that I darn well please, all right. Then I'm gonna order a steak with a big bucket of blue-cheese dressing. Do I make myself clear? **(Bald-on-record impoliteness)**

JANET: The only thing clear about you is the space between your ears.

(Negative impoliteness: Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect)

Earlier in the episode, Janet, who is Will's bossy and jealous girlfriend, used bald-on-record strategy to control him. Consequently, Will thought he could control her using the same technique. The audience laughed because during the whole episode Will was very submissive to Janet, but then he unexpectedly became in control. Then, he used the bald-on-record strategy to list what he was going to do regardless of what she wanted or preferred. The rejection of this technique could be seen in Janet's offensive response to Will's utterance when she used a negative impoliteness strategy of *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* to indicate that he was stupid by saying that the space between his ears was clear, which means that he did not have a brain.

As shown in Table 5 below, males used positive impoliteness more than females. Male characters used these strategies 18 times, while female characters used them 3 times. Both males and females used the *be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic* strategy more than the other strategies. This finding implies that showing disinterest and lack of sympathy is an effective method to enact humor by both genders.

Table 5. Positive impoliteness strategies used by male and female characters

	Male		Female		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Positive impoliteness strategies					
<i>Ignore, snub the other</i>	1	5.6	1	33.3	2
<i>Exclude the other from an activity</i>	2	11.1	0	00.00	2
<i>Disassociate from the other</i>	2	11.1	0	00.00	2
<i>Be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic</i>	5	27.7	2	66.7	7
<i>Use inappropriate identity markers</i>	1	5.6	0	00.00	1
<i>Use obscure or secretive language</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Seek disagreement</i>	4	22.2	0	00.00	4
<i>Make the other feel uncomfortable</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Use taboo words</i>	2	11.1	0	00.00	2
<i>Call the other names</i>	1	5.6	0	00.00	1
Total	18	100%	3	100%	21

Excerpt (2) below shows how this strategy was utilized.

Excerpt 2

WILL: I don't know, Jazz. I just feel bad for Carlton, man. What does he know about living in the 'hood'? I just spent half the ride over here trying to convince him not to say, "Dyn-o-mite." I just feel like I'm tossing him to the lions or something. You know what I mean?

JAZZ: The Detroit Lions still got those cheerleaders?

(Positive impoliteness: *Be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic*)

WILL: Open the door, man.

(Bald-on-record impoliteness)

The audience laughed because Will was feeling bad about what he did to Carlton while Jazz was thinking of cheerleaders. Will's positive face was damaged because Jazz was not interested in what he was saying and did not sympathize with him. Consequently, Will responded to Jazz's utterance by not answering his question. Instead, Will used bald-on-record impoliteness to order Jazz to open the door.

The least frequently used strategy by males and females is *ignore, snub the other*; both of them used it once. This implies that both genders do not tend to

ignore the hearer's presence. Excerpt (3) demonstrates how this strategy was used as an offensive response by a male character.

Excerpt 3

CARLTON: So you're also a disadvantaged inner-city youth, I hear.

(Negative impoliteness: Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect)

ICE TRAY: (to Will) Yo, man, what's with him?

(Positive impoliteness: Ignore, snub the other)/(Negative impoliteness: Condescend, scorn, or ridicule)

The audience laughed because Carlton used the adverb "also" to include Will in the face attack. Ice Tray responded by ignoring Carlton's presence and asking Will "Yo, man. What's with him?" In addition, Ice Tray's question "What's with him?" indicates the use of a negative impoliteness strategy of condescend, scorn, or ridicule saying that there was something wrong with Carlton.

There are other strategies that males used only once, such as *use inappropriate identity markers*, for instance, Will's best friend, Ice Tray, addressed Will's uncle as "dude", and *call the other names*, for example, Carlton called Ashley's boyfriend's mother "a bimbo". Female characters only used the two strategies mentioned above.

Table 6 below provides a one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of positive impoliteness.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using positive impoliteness strategies due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.340	1	11.340	3.282	0.086
Within Groups	65.651	19	3.455		
Total	76.991	20			

Table 6 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in using positive impoliteness strategies (Sig. = 0.086). In addition, both of them used *be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic* strategy more than the other strategies.

As can be seen in Table 7 below, male characters used negative impoliteness strategies 42 times, while female characters used them only 8 times. While *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* is the most frequently used strategy by males, it is the least frequently used by females. This means that male characters prefer to personalize the others with unfavorable aspects, while female characters do not.

Table 7. Negative impoliteness strategies used by male and female characters

	Male		Female		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Negative impoliteness strategies					
<i>Frighten</i>	7	16.5	4	50	11
<i>Condescend, scorn, or ridicule</i>	8	19	3	38	11
<i>Invade the other's space</i>	7	16.5	0	00.00	7
<i>Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect</i>	15	36	1	12	16
<i>Put the other's indebtedness on record</i>	5	12	0	00.00	5
Total	42	100%	8	100%	50

Excerpt (4) below illustrates how a male character used this strategy and another male character responded to it.

Excerpt 4

WILL: Carlton, what is it? recess at the clown convention?

(**Negative impoliteness: *Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect*)/(Mock impoliteness)**)

CARLTON: That's right. And by the way, Will, who cut your hair? Ray Charles?
(**Sarcasm or mock impoliteness**)

While Will was pretending to show interest in Carlton's outfit, he used a negative impoliteness strategy of *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* by assuming that Carlton was dressed like that because he was having a break at the clown convention. Since Will attacked Carlton's face through mocking his appearance, Carlton countered the face attack with the same strategy by sarcastically asking Will "By the way, Will, who cut your hair? Ray Charles?" This utterance was offensive because Ray Charles was a blind African-American singer. Thus, this indicates that Carlton thought Will's hairstyle was terrible as if a blind person did it for him.

Females, as shown in Table 7, prefer to *frighten* the others or *ridicule* them to show power. For instance, Vivian threatened the police officers who refused to release Will and Carlton from jail assuming that they were busy. She screamed "honey, we're about to get very busy!" indicating that they would be busy fighting each other physically. Furthermore, males used *invade the other's space* 7 times, while females did not use it at all. This indicates that men are usually the ones who ask for intimate information and flirt with women. *Put the other's indebtedness on record* is the least used strategy by males and it is not used by females at all since they did not do favors for others regularly.

Table 8 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females in using negative impoliteness strategies (Sig. = .010), implying that males excessively damage the hearer's negative face compared to females, especially that the most frequently used strategy by males is the least frequently used strategy by females.

Table 8. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using negative impoliteness strategies due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.734	1	11.734	7.195	.010
Within Groups	78.286	48	1.631		
Total	90.020	49			

Table 9 provides the mean and standard deviation of both genders' use of sarcasm or mock impoliteness.

Table 9. Mean and std. deviation of males and females' use of sarcasm or mock impoliteness

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	21	4.2	1.30
Female	3	1.5	0.71
Total	24	5.7	2.01

Table 9 above shows the difference between male and female characters in using sarcasm or mock impoliteness. Clearly, male characters used this strategy more than female characters; they used this strategy 21 times and 3 times, respectively.

Table 10 below provides a one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of sarcasm or mock impoliteness.

Table 10 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females in using sarcasm or mock impoliteness (Sig. = .0002), indicating that male characters were much more sarcastic and jocular than female characters. Excerpt (5) demonstrates how sarcasm was used by a male character towards another male character.

Table 10. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using sarcasm or mock impoliteness due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.136	1	19.136	12.095	0.002
Within Groups	34.808	22	1.582		
Total	53.944	23			

Excerpt 5

WILL: Hey, granny!

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, sugar! Oh Will, as handsome as ever.

CARLTON: Oh Grandma, as generous as ever!

(Sarcasm or mock impoliteness)

WILL: Granny. Did you notice how Carlton's grown? He's almost into adult sizes.
(Negative impoliteness: *Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect*)

Carlton uttered his statement with emphasis on the adjective “generous” to sarcastically provoke Will. The audience laughed because Carlton’s utterance was similar to his grandmother’s, but he meant to damage Will’s face. Although the face attack was indirect, Will managed to respond to Carlton in the same manner by telling his grandmother “Granny. Did you notice how Carlton's grown? He's almost into adult sizes.”

4.1 Gender differences in using impoliteness strategies to respond to impoliteness

This section continues to show the similarities and differences between genders in the use of impoliteness strategies to respond to face attacks. Table 11 below presents the impoliteness strategies used by both male and female characters in ‘The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’ to respond to face attacks.

Table 11. Impoliteness strategies used by male and female characters to respond to impoliteness

Impoliteness Strategies	Male		Female		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Bald-on-record impoliteness	4	13.8	2	20	6
Positive impoliteness	4	13.8	0	00.00	4
Negative impoliteness	16	55.2	5	50	21
Sarcasm or mock impoliteness	5	17.2	3	30	8
Total	29	100%	10	100%	39

Table 11 above shows that male characters used impoliteness strategies 29 times to respond to face attacks, while female characters used them only 10 times. This means that males tend to respond offensively to impoliteness more than females. This finding validates Aydinoglu’s (2013) conclusion that females are usually expected to be more polite and careful in their speech than males. However, both males and females used negative impoliteness more to respond to impoliteness; males used it 16 times and females used it 5 times. Furthermore, sarcasm or mock impoliteness is the second most frequently used strategy by males. This implies that male characters have the same preference of strategies over the others in initiating impoliteness and responding to face attacks. On the other hand, female characters used sarcasm or mock impoliteness to respond to impoliteness more than bald-on-record impoliteness and positive impoliteness although in initiating impoliteness they used them evenly, indicating that females vary in the way they respond from the way they initiate impoliteness.

Table 12 below provides a one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders’ use of the major strategies of impoliteness to respond to face attacks. Despite the fact that there are some differences in frequencies and means, Table (12) indicates that there are no statistically significant differences due to gender in using the major

categories of impoliteness strategies to offensively respond to impoliteness (Sig. = 0.703), implying that the difference between male and female characters in using the major strategies to respond to impoliteness is statistically insignificant.

Table 12. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using impoliteness strategies to respond to impoliteness due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.133	1	.133	.148	.703
Within Groups	34.267	37	.902		
Total	34.400	38			

Table 13 provides a one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of bald-on-record impoliteness to respond to face attacks.

Table 13. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using bald-on-record impoliteness to respond to impoliteness due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.145	1	0.145	0.576	0.490
Within Groups	1.009	4	0.252		
Total	1.154	5			

As can be noticed, although male characters used bald-on-record impoliteness more than female characters did in responding to impoliteness, the differences were insignificant. Example (6) clarifies how this strategy was used as a response to impoliteness.

Excerpt 6

JAZZ: Hey, beautiful. (Hilary hits him with the magazine) I love a woman with good reflexes. Makes me crazy. (**Negative impoliteness: *Invade the other's space***)

HILARY: Get out. (**Bald-on-record impoliteness**)

JAZZ: Your mouth is saying "get out", but your eyes are saying "get busy." (**Negative impoliteness: *Invade the other's space***)

Hilary baldy responded to Jazz to get out of the house. Still, Jazz insisted on flirting with her by using *invade the other's space* again to tell her that her mouth was saying "get out" but her eyes were saying "get busy", which means to get intimate.

Table 14 below shows that male characters used positive impoliteness to respond to face attacks 4 times only, while female characters did not use any of them, suggesting that females resort to other strategies to respond to impoliteness. Male characters used 4 strategies to respond only once. The strategies are *ignore*,

snub the other; be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic; seek disagreement; and call the other names. This also suggests that males prefer to respond to face attacks with other strategies rather than attacking the hearer's positive face.

Table 14. Positive impoliteness strategies used by male and female characters to respond to impoliteness

Positive impoliteness strategies	Male		Female		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<i>Ignore, snub the other</i>	1	25	0	00.00	1
<i>Exclude the other from an activity</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Disassociate from the other</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Be disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic</i>	1	25	0	00.00	1
<i>Use inappropriate identity markers</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Use obscure or secretive language</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Seek disagreement</i>	1	25	0	00.00	1
<i>Make the other feel uncomfortable</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Use taboo words</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
<i>Call the other names</i>	1	25	0	00.00	1
Total	4	100%	0	00.00	4

Table 15. Negative impoliteness strategies used by male and female characters to respond to impoliteness

Negative impoliteness strategies	Male		Female		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<i>Frighten</i>	1	6.25	0	00.00	1
<i>Condescend, scorn, or ridicule</i>	6	37.5	0	00.00	6
<i>Invade the other's space</i>	2	12.5	0	00.00	2
<i>Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect</i>	7	43.75	5	100	12
<i>Put the other's indebtedness on record</i>	0	00.00	0	00.00	0
Total	16	100%	5	100%	21

Negative impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy by both genders to respond to impoliteness. However, male characters used it more than female

characters. Table (15) shows that males used it 16 times, while females used it 5 times. It is noticed that male characters used all the strategies except *put the other's indebtedness on record*. On the other hand, females only used *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect*, which is the most frequently used strategy by males. This indicates that both genders prefer to personalize the face damager with something negative rather than using the other strategies from this category, for instance, frightening the face damager, which is the least used strategy by males. Example (7) shows how *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* was used to initiate impoliteness by a male character and to respond to impoliteness by a female character.

Excerpt 7

WILL: I just have one question. I hope it's not too personal or anything.

KAYLA: What is it?

WILL: Well ... Have you always been this stuck-up or did it take like years of practice?

(Negative impoliteness: *Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect*)

KAYLA: You calling me stuck-up? You the one that's stuck-up.

(Negative impoliteness: *Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect*)

Will used a negative impoliteness strategy of *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* by calling Kayla stuck-up, which means an arrogant person who thinks he/she is superior to others. She responded to him using the same strategy by calling him stuck-up.

Table (16) below presents the one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of negative impoliteness to respond to face attacks.

Table 16. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using negative impoliteness strategies to respond to impoliteness due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.864	1	3.864	4.293	.051
Within Groups	18.000	19	.900		
Total	21.864	20			

Table (16) shows that although there are differences between males and females in using the negative impoliteness strategies to offensively respond to impoliteness, such differences are statistically insignificant (Sig. = 0.051). This suggests that the difference between males and females in using negative impoliteness as an offensive response is statistically insignificant. For instance, both genders used *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* more than the other strategies to respond.

Table (17) below provides the one-way ANOVA analysis of both genders' use of sarcasm or mock impoliteness to respond to face attacks.

Table 17. One-way ANOVA test to figure the differences in using sarcasm or mock impoliteness to respond to impoliteness due to gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.587	1	1.587	1.629	0.249
Within Groups	5.846	6	0.974		
Total	7.433	7			

Table (17) implies that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in using sarcasm or mock impoliteness in responding to face attacks (Sig. = .249). Example (3) above illustrates how this strategy was used as an offensive response to impoliteness.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The main aim of the present study was to find out gender differences in using impoliteness strategies to enact humor. In general, the differences between male and female characters in initiating impoliteness were significant. Male characters used impoliteness to trigger humor more than female characters. This finding lends support to Mills (2002), Sung (2012), Aydinoglu (2013), and Yating (2014). Although male characters responded offensively to face attacks more than female characters did, the differences between the two genders were insignificant. These findings could be justified by the fact that the main characters in Season 1 from 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' were males. The findings of the present study can be summarized as follows:

1. Negative impoliteness and sarcasm or mock impoliteness were the most frequently used major strategies by the characters. To enact humor, African American characters in 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' preferred to attack the hearer's negative face rather than his positive face. Furthermore, sarcasm and mockery were effective methods to trigger humor since they usually involved joking at someone's expense.
2. Primarily, the characters were disinterested, unconcerned, or unsympathetic to attack other characters' positive faces by showing lack of sympathy and care. However, they rarely used positive impoliteness to respond to face attacks since the impact of the strategy on the audience as a response might be different from its effect in other way round.
3. In negative impoliteness, African American characters preferred to undermine the others by personalizing them with negative characteristics, whether in initiating impoliteness or responding to it.
4. Regardless of gender, attacking the hearer's negative face was more preferred by African American characters than attacking the positive face. However, male characters had more preference to the other strategies than female characters did.

5. Both male and female characters tended to damage the hearer's positive face by showing disinterest and lack of sympathy as an effective method to enact humor.
6. Males and females differed significantly in initiating negative impoliteness and sarcasm or mock impoliteness. Male characters preferred to personalize the others with unfavorable aspects when damaging the hearer's negative face, while female characters did not. Female characters preferred to frighten the others or ridicule them to show power. In addition, men were usually the ones who invaded women's personal space literally or metaphorically. Furthermore, males were much more sarcastic and jocular than females, especially the main character, Will Smith, who was well-known for his jokes.
7. Male characters responded offensively to impoliteness more than female characters since they are usually expected to be polite. However, the differences between the two genders in using the major strategies and the sub-strategies to respond were insignificant. Both genders attacked the negative face more when responding to impoliteness. Male characters had the same preference of strategies in initiating impoliteness and responding to face attacks while female characters varied in the way they responded from the way they initiated impoliteness.
8. Female characters resorted to other strategies than positive impoliteness to respond to face attacks.
9. Both genders preferred to personalize the face damager with something negative rather than using other strategies from negative impoliteness. However, male characters used this strategy the most when initiating impoliteness while it was the least one used by female characters.
10. Some of the strategies were used similarly by both genders in initiating impoliteness. However, when female characters responded by explicitly associating the face damager with a negative aspect, the negative aspect was usually stupidity. On the other hand, male characters associated the face damager with other negative aspects, including stupidity.

The present study investigated the use of impoliteness in the African American TV series 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air'. In this regard, it would be interesting for future research to investigate impoliteness in other African American TV sitcoms since the findings of the present study cannot be generalized due to limited data. Other researchers in the field of discourse analysis can conduct comparative studies on black sitcoms and white sitcoms to further explore the role that race plays in using impoliteness strategies. Moreover, the researchers recommend studying the impact of prosody on impoliteness since it can affect the interpretation of the utterance.

Further research can also investigate impoliteness as a method to trigger humor in black sitcoms by analyzing the use of impoliteness and reactions to it, whether the hearer chooses to accept the face attack, respond offensively, respond defensively, or not respond at all. Finally, it would be interesting to study impoliteness in BEV in real life not just as an instrument for humor in TV

sitcoms. Since the findings of this study support previous research on impoliteness and gender, that males use impoliteness more than females, it would be interesting to study this issue further in different cultural contexts to find if this phenomenon is universal. Future researchers can also investigate this issue in the Jordanian society, especially among young individuals, such as university students.

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