

Complaint Strategies Used by Jordanians: A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis of Facebook Hotel Reviews

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating the impoliteness and complaint strategies used by Jordanians in the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) context of Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews. It also aims to analyse how the complaint speech act is influenced by the reviewers' cultural background in general and their perception of impoliteness, directness, power relation and the concept of face in particular. The corpus of the study comprises 52 reviews written in Arabic, which are taken from the Facebook platform. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in analysing the data. Accordingly, the impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies found in previous research establish the taxonomy of this study. The data analysis reveals that the reviewers prefer to use positive impoliteness (44.62%), negative impoliteness (27.50%), bald on record (18.72%), and sarcasm or mock politeness (9.16%), respectively. At the sub-strategies level, seeking disagreement, frightening others, and using inappropriate identity markers are the top three strategies in the reviewers' corpus. Moreover, the reviewers use some strategies that can be perceived as face-threatening acts. Finally, the study concludes with a number of limitations and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: complaint as a speech act, face, Facebook, impoliteness, Jordanians

1. Introduction

Language serves as a regular means of communication and people use it to express their feelings, thoughts, ideas, and to share their opinions. Therefore, people need to possess the linguistic knowledge encompassing phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, orthography, and vocabulary. Yet, this is not enough to communicate effectively. In addition to the linguistic knowledge, individuals must be able to use it appropriately for different communicative functions and in different sociolinguistic contexts (Hymes 1972). Communicative functions refer to the purposes of linguistic communication in our daily interactions by using different speech acts (i.e., request, apology, compliment, advice, complaint) to express

everything that we need to the recipients and to receive feedback from them. Hancock (2004) states that people usually perform these speech acts following different communication models of face-to-face interactions or different forms of CMC.

An excellent example of a social networking service is Facebook which allows its users to rate hotels by leaving online comments and reviews during their stay experience (Travel Media 2018). The interest of these online hotel reviews has attracted the attention of many researchers from different fields including the hospitality/marketing and discourse/linguistic areas (Cenni and Goethals 2020). As hotel guests can leave positive or negative reviews based on the service quality provided by the hotel operators, the researchers of the current study are particularly keen to examine the negative reviews. This interest is primarily ascribed to the fact that these negative reviews are most likely to cause a possible damage to the reputation and to the image of such hotels, and they play an important role in the number of future bookings by tourists. This requires hotels to take serious actions towards enhancing their organization and customer care (Cenni and Goethals 2020; Demir 2021). Regardless of their hospitality/marketing relevance, online hotel reviews are still under research (Cenni and Goethals 2020). More specifically, this type of research is still greatly unstudied in the Arabic context in general and in the Jordan context in particular. The present study tries to bridge this gap in research and contribute to the study of new CMC practices, paying particular attention to impoliteness and complaint strategies found in the negative hotel reviews.

The significance of the current research stems from the fact that unlike other speech acts such as compliment, apology, request, and refusal, the complaint speech act has not been studied adequately (Trosborg 1995; Al-Shboul 2021). Moreover, previous research on complaint speech act has focused on data collected using discourse completion tasks (DCT) or role plays. Collecting naturally occurring data in complaint studies is lesser in number. Accordingly, the present study has focused on impoliteness and complaint strategies found in the negative hotel reviews to enrich the literature on impoliteness and complaint studies focusing on naturally occurring data. As the present study investigates negative Arabic-written reviews posted on the popular social networking site, Facebook, it would be helpful for individuals, disciplines and institutions in different domains (e.g., tourism management, hospitality, business, and travel). Previous research in the CMC focused on the negative reviews written in different languages such as English (Culpeper 1996), Persian (Mirhosseini, Mardanshahi and Dowlatabadi 2017), English as Lingua Franca (ELF) (Demir 2021), and Filipinos (Banguis, Divino, Syting and Maintang 2023). In Arabic language, Al-Sager and Mahzari (2025) investigate the hotel managers' responses to negative reviews and the types of discourse moves used by them on TripAdvisor in Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the present study examines the guests' negative hotel reviews and identifies impoliteness and complaint strategies made by Jordanians in Facebook hotel reviews.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical framework

This section discussed the major concepts in pragmatic research. It started with an exploration of speech act theory, followed Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness strategies, defined the speech act of complaint, and reviewed some studies on the complaint speech act in the CMC context.

2.1.1 Speech Act Theory

The concept of speech act was coined as long ago as 1962 by the British philosopher John Austin in his book *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin (1962) argued that our speech does not only reflect a set of facts and statements; it is more like performing action. Therefore, by uttering something one is doing a thing (i.e., speech act). Austin (1962) classified speech acts into five main categories: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behavitives, and expositives. Later, Searle (1979) proposed a similar classification to Austin (1962) and made five categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. According to Austin's (1962) classification, the speech act of complaint fits under the category of behavitives speech acts, expressing the speaker's attitudes and social behaviours. However, complaint is considered as an expressive speech act based on Searle's (1979) typology, reflecting the speaker's approval or disapproval of the behaviour.

2.1.2 Culpeper's impoliteness strategies

The concept of impoliteness is the opposite of politeness. The most widely used model of impoliteness was proposed by Jonathan Culpeper in (1996). He stated that the impoliteness takes place in interaction when producing disharmony and it causes social friction between the interlocutors. Culpeper (2005) added that impoliteness is most likely to attack the partner's face of conversation and makes him/her feel as the speaker's target. In addition, impoliteness is the recipient's consideration to the speaker act in damaging the recipient's face and making a threatening action. Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. However, he rejected their opinion of impoliteness for being marginal in daily conversations. He insisted that a better comprehension of politeness is impossible without understanding the concept of impoliteness; thus, more attention and an improved model for the framework of impoliteness are needed. Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness is seen as superior to others because it is mainly based on actual data of real-life situations. His model is used to analyse different discourse data including the impolite and conflictive illocutions in U.S. army training, and children's discourse of bilingual Spanish/English speakers. Accordingly, Bousfield (2008) claimed that this diversity of spoken and written data analysed by Culpeper made his model more effective and reliable. Moreover, Culpeper is more concerned with data taken from media in general and television programs in particular to examine how his impoliteness model works. With this in mind, his model is believed to be more convenient and appropriate to analyse the data of the present study which is taken from CMC context of Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews. Culpeper's (1996,

2005) model of impoliteness consisted of five main impoliteness strategies, each of which is explained in some details as follows:

1. Bald on record impoliteness: the Face-Threatening Act (FTA) is made clearly, directly, and briefly in situations in which face is involved.
2. Positive impoliteness: these kinds of strategies tend to damage the recipient's positive face needs. The following are Culpeper's (1996) sub-strategies:
 - Denying other interlocutors: the speaker does not admit the other's presence.
 - Not involving others in activities.
 - Leaving other interlocutors by refuting association or commonalities with them.
 - Showing lack of concern, interest, and sympathy with others.
 - Using inappropriate identity markers like utilizing a nickname when the relationship is distant, and using a surname and title when the relationship is close.
 - Using a secretive or obscure language like addressing others with jargon or using an unknown code to the target, but known to other members in the group.
 - Seeking disagreement by choosing a sensitive topic.
 - Making others feel uncomfortable.
 - Using swear words, taboo words, or rude language.
 - Calling the other names like offensive nominations.
3. Negative impoliteness: such strategy is intended to damage the recipient's negative face needs. The following are sub-strategies:
 - Frightening others by giving a strong impression that an action will be taken against them.
 - Scorn and ridicule by showing the relative power of the speaker.
 - Insulting and not dealing seriously with others.
 - Belittling others such as using diminutive language.
 - Attacking others' space (metaphorically or literally).
 - Connecting others with a negative thing clearly.
 - Putting others' indebtedness on record.
4. Sarcasm or mock politeness: the FTA is made by using politeness strategies that are clearly dishonest (surface realisations).
5. Withholding politeness: this strategy is demonstrated when responding with silence to others.

2.1.3 The speech act of complaint

The complaint speech act has been defined by many scholars in pragmatic research (Olshtain and Weinbach 1987; Trosborg 1995). For example, Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) have defined the concept of complaint as the speaker's (complainer's) expression of dissatisfaction, displeasure, and annoyance about the state of affairs (complainable) which are seen as offensive acts made by the hearer (complainee). Likewise, Trosborg (1995) explained this illocutionary speech act as the complainer's need to express his/her negative feeling, annoyance, and disapproval about something caused by the complainee who is, directly or indirectly, responsible for the occurrence of the damage described in the proposition and has not met the expectations. The author elaborated that when a complaint is expressed, the complainer expects the complainee to avoid the future repetition of the occurrence of the deplorable act. In addition, when the speaker's complaint is issued, the hearer is required to provide a remedial act that involves a compensation for the loss of the speaker (Trosborg 1995).

2.1.4 Face

Brown and Levinson (1987) defined the concept of face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself." Accordingly, people engaged in a real conversation make efforts to keep this public "self-image," by realizing the needs of the interlocutor and understanding their desires. Failure to recognize the needs and desires could lead to the loss of "self-image."

Brown and Levinson (1987) identified two types of face (i.e., positive face and negative face). While positive face is the one's desire to be approved or agreed by others, negative face is believed to be the desire not to be imposed upon. Although the distinction between positive and negative face is seen as a universal phenomenon, it can also be recognised as being culture-specific (Brown and Levinson 1987). They also discussed in their theory how speech acts can threaten and/or protect face. These acts are called as FTAs. They occur intentionally and can threaten both the speaker's (S) or the hearer's (H) positive or negative face. These FTAs threaten the positive face when the speaker shows less concern about the hearer's feelings and desires (e.g., ridicule, disapproval, contempt). On the other hand, they threaten the negative face when the S does not care about the avoidance of impeding the H's freedom of action (e.g., threats, orders, advice, requests).

2.1.5 Power

In any social interaction, there are many factors that should be taken into account such as the social distance and power relation. Power relation is recognized as an important part of interaction and impoliteness is seen as an exercise of power. Moreover, it shapes and reflects the interlocutors' identity in interaction (Bousfield 2008). Culpeper (2005) explained that impoliteness is mainly restricted to the individuals' way of responding to the face-attack, and the use of power is surely controlling these restrictions of one's selections to respond to impoliteness. In addition, impoliteness in most cases took place in interaction where there is an

imbalance in power relation between the interlocutors; accordingly, the more powerful the individual is, the more impolitely he is likely to behave compared to the less powerful one. By doing so, the former performed a greater threat should the latter be impolite (Culpeper 2005). Due to this discernible relationship between power and impoliteness, the researchers examined the causes of using power through impoliteness strategies between a hotel guest (complainer) and administration (compliancee) based on the classification proposed by Bousfield (2008).

2.2 Related studies

Many studies have examined the complaint strategies in CMC context in general (Demir 2021) and the impoliteness strategies in these complaints in particular (Culpeper 1996; Mirhosseini et al. 2017; Banguis et al. 2023). Each of these studies is briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

A major study on impoliteness strategies was conducted by Culpeper (1996) who analysed the concepts of inherent and mock impoliteness and the influence of contextual factors on the use of such impoliteness strategies. He proposed an impoliteness framework that functions in the opposite direction to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Culpeper criticized the focus of how communicative strategies are used to promote or preserve social harmony in interaction. He claimed that little attention is paid to research conducted on communicative strategies attacking one's interlocutor and causing conflict. He used different contexts such as army training and literary drama to demonstrate his impoliteness model. He found that impolite behaviour is not a marginal activity, emphasizing the need for an appropriate model to deal with it.

In the Iranian context, Mirhosseini et al. (2017) investigated the impoliteness strategies in the movie titled "Mother." The researchers aimed to highlight the impoliteness strategies found in eight extracts from the movie between two characters (male and female). Data were analysed following Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness strategies including: (1) Bald on-record Impoliteness, (2) Positive Impoliteness, (3) Negative Impoliteness, (4) Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, and (5) Withhold Politeness. The results revealed that the female character made less impoliteness strategies compared to the male character. Statistically speaking, 58 impoliteness strategies were used by the male character with positive impoliteness as the most frequent strategy. The researchers claimed that some of Culpeper's super-strategies overlap with each other; therefore, one cannot draw a clear-cut border between them. The findings of the study were mainly attributed to the deeply rooted cultural values of Iran as a masculism speech community where men have more social power compared to women. Consequently, power appeared in the language through the males' use of impoliteness strategies.

Demir (2021) highlighted the complaint strategies performed by ELF users who claimed to be in different countries around the world. A total number of 1810 written complaints were gathered from negative hotel reviews posted on a well-known platform called TripAdvisor. Based on the complainers' place of residence, Kachru's (1992) World Englishes model (i.e., outer, inner, and expanding circles)

was used to classify the ELF complainers. The data were then analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, Pearson's chi square test was run in order to find the statistical similarities and differences. Qualitatively, the data were analysed based on the coding schemas found in the literature. The findings showed that the ELF complainers from inner, outer and expanding circles used similar complaint strategies. More specifically, the five most common strategies were precisely the same in all circles. Yet, there were slight differences in the usage frequency in the rest of the strategies.

In a socio-pragmatic study, Banguis et al. (2023) examined the politeness and impoliteness strategies in the complaint speech act. For the purpose of data collection, the researchers collected 100 complaints as made by students on blended learning in the Philippines. Data were analysed based on Culpeper's (2017) Impoliteness Strategies, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, and Searle's (1979) taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Results revealed that the participants employed different impoliteness strategies such as bald on record impoliteness, mock politeness, negative impoliteness, and positive impoliteness. Regarding the politeness strategies, it involved bald on record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record politeness. Finally, the study emphasized the need to thoroughly explore the impoliteness and its influences in online complaints.

In close thematic alignment with the present study, Al-Sager and Mahzari (2025) examine hotel managers' Arabic-language responses to negative reviews on TripAdvisor, offering a discourse-analytic contribution that complements the focus on complaint strategies in the current work. Their study adopts a genre-based move analysis, informed by Rapport Management Theory (Spencer-Oatey 2008), to identify 23 rhetorical moves used by hotel managers, such as greetings, expressions of gratitude, and invitations for future visits. Particularly striking is their observation of the frequent use of the corporate pronoun "we" to signal institutional voice and manage customer rapport—an element that reflects culturally embedded strategies for face preservation. While the current study concentrates on how Arabic-speaking Jordanians express complaints and impoliteness as reviewers, Al-Sager and Mahzari shift the lens to institutional communication and how rapport is negotiated from the hotel's perspective. Their findings significantly contribute to a fuller understanding of Arabic-language interactions in the hospitality context and deserve acknowledgment in any discourse-pragmatic treatment of Arabic CMC in hotel reviews.

To conclude, this part dealt with reviewing some relevant studies on impoliteness and complaint strategies in the CMC context to facilitate the comparison of its findings with those in the present study. It was quite evident that this area of research is still greatly understudied. The present study tried to bridge this gap in research and contributed to the study of new CMC practices, focusing on impoliteness and complaint strategies found in the negative hotel reviews. Additionally, previous research in the CMC focused on those written in different languages such as English (Culpeper 1996), Persian (Mirhosseini et al. 2017), ELF (Demir 2021), Filipinos (Banguis et al. 2023), and Arabic Al-Sager and Mahzari

(2025). Accordingly, this study aimed to identify the impoliteness and complaint strategies made by Jordanians in Facebook hotel reviews written in Arabic, and the respective role of the reviewers' cultural background in general and their perception of impoliteness, directness, power relation and the concept of face in particular in expressing these strategies. Two research questions emerged in the study:

- (1) What kind of impoliteness and complaint strategies are used by Jordanians in the CMC context of Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews?
- (2) What are the factors that contributed to the use of these impoliteness and complaint strategies found in their Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

Many methodologists emphasized the need to integrate both qualitative and quantitative approaches as mixed methods (Al-Shboul 2022). Creswell (2015) describes a mixed-method design as a technique related to collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and integrating them using a different design such as theoretical frameworks and philosophical assumptions. These two common approaches have become interrelated techniques in investigating common hypotheses and research questions. Fetters and Freshwater (2015) highlight the significance of this integration as it allows researchers to recognize the real advantages of mixed methods in making a full combination that is better than the sum of the individual qualitative and quantitative parts. They also state that this integration of the two approaches in one study offers the scholars a better understanding of the research field and gives them the chance to investigate the phenomenon in depth. Hence, combining quantitative and qualitative methods aptly serve the purposes of this study which basically aims to identify the impoliteness and complaint strategies used by Jordanians in the CMC context of Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews and the respective factors to use these impoliteness and complaint strategies.

3.2 The context of the study

3.2.1 Computer-mediated communication CMC:

Unlike face-to-face and other modes of interaction, the CMC is defined as a type of communication that occurs between individuals and groups using the instrumentality of computers (Herring 1996). This type of communication has emerged as a result of the increased usage of computer and internet in the everyday lives of millions of people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Later on, the concept of CMC was expanded and it is no longer restricted to computers; it also includes e-mails, smartphones, instant messaging, videoconferences, social network services, etc (Locher 2010). Baron (1984) states that this new mode of communication (i.e., CMC) has led to a change in language use. Hence, some researchers such as Herring (1996) have begun to apply different analytical instruments of discourse analysis in the CMC. In their study on offering condolences on the death anniversary of Wasfi al-Tal, Hamdan and Sayyed (2022)

argue that computer-mediated communication (CMC) offers a publicly accessible and enduring venue for commemorating the deceased, allowing users to post freely while ensuring that messages—whether in the form of comments, memes, or videos—remain archived over time. Their focus on the pragmatic and ideological dimensions of such messages aligns with the present study's interest in CMC-mediated speech acts.

3.2.2 What is Facebook?

Created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook is a social networking site that allows its users to make their own profiles that include their pictures and other personal information, and then connect with other profiles to build relationships by sharing, chatting, commenting, and posting on public pages and groups (Travel Medi 2018). Other Facebook services include hotel reviews and ratings, the scope of the present study, that help travellers worldwide to leave comments and reviews about their stay experience. To leave a review, Facebook users are required to click on the “Reviews” option of the hotel’s business profile. Next, they are supposed to leave a recommendation by either clicking “yes” or “no” to recommend or not recommend the hotel. After that, they will be asked to write some comments, upload photos, and other information about why they decided to recommend or not recommend it. Finally, the users can include tags with their written reviews (recommendations). Examples of these tags include “clean,” “family-friendly,” or “free breakfast.” Facebook is chosen as the context of the present study because it is recognized as the world’s largest network, with three billion active monthly users around the world (Al Jazeera 2024).

Regarding the location of the reviewed hotels, the present study involves eight well-known hotels in two famous tourist sites in Jordan, namely the Dead Sea and Aqaba. The Dead Sea, located between Jordan and Palestine’s West Bank, and Aqaba situated in southwestern Jordan have good weather conditions and seen as favourite destinations for both Jordanians and foreigners seeking to escape the cold winter weather. They are also preferred destinations for Jordanian holiday makers during holidays (The Jordan times 2015). This also justifies why the researchers have selected hotels in these two particular locations (i.e., the Dead Sea and Aqaba).

3.3 Data

Based on the reviewers’ profiles on Facebook, the researchers examine only reviews written in Arabic by Jordanians who claim to live in different cities of Jordan. The complainers’ claimed nationalities, gender, and locations are considered based on their profiles. Consequently, the monolingual corpus of the study comprises 52 reviews written in Arabic, which are taken from the Facebook platform. The reviews evaluate the services in eight well-known hotels located in Aqaba and the Dead Sea, Jordan. To answer research question one, the researchers restrict their selection to reviews containing explicit negative feedback and direct complaints. Moreover, the researchers pay special attention to these comments in order to identify the possible factors for using them, which directly addresses the main concern of research question two. The chosen reviews are all in their original

form, i.e. Arabic language, and no modifications are made. In other words, any misuse of punctuation, misspelling of words and non-standard grammar are not corrected. With this in mind, the researchers exclude any reviews written by members in languages other than Arabic, nationalities other than Jordanian, or by those who have not added their personal information (i.e., nationality, gender, location).

3.4 Coding method and data analysis

Miles and Huberman's (1994) technique in coding and analysing data is followed in the present study. Their technique is mainly based on reduction, presenting, and drawing a conclusion of data. The procedures also consist of choosing data, taking notes, making summaries and clusters, and writing memos. More specifically, the researchers code the data in four rounds. First, the researchers click on the "Reviews" option of the assigned hotel's business profile. Second, they particularly read all the reviews written in 2023. The researchers choose the reviews written in Arabic in 2023 specifically in order to make the corpus as recent as possible. Third, the researchers create an excel sheet that includes the following information: the hotel's name, the city where the hotel is, complainer's name, date of complaints, and the negative reviews (complaint). The researchers ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the hotel's name and the complainer's name to ensure the samples' research ethics in gathering data. This technique is in accordance with those reported in previous research (e.g., Demir 2021). Fourth, an initial analysis of these negative reviews is run by the researchers of the present study in order to pick out the impoliteness and complaint strategies found in these negative reviews (research question one), and the analysis identified the respective role of the reviewers' cultural background in general and their perception of impoliteness, directness, power relation and the concept of face in particular in expressing these strategies, which is the focus of the second research question. To achieve reliability, two raters are asked to double check the classification of impoliteness and complaint strategies first run by the researchers.

Regarding the data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used simultaneously. Hence, Culpeper's (1996, 2005) model of impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies establishes the classification model of this study. The classification of impoliteness and complaint strategies is categorized under four main categories: (1) bald on record impoliteness, (2) negative impoliteness, (3) positive impoliteness, and (4) sarcasm or mock politeness strategies. Furthermore, a number of sub-strategies (i.e., four codes for negative impoliteness and four codes for positive impoliteness) are identified under these main categories. It is important to indicate that some strategies used in Culpeper's (1996) model were not found in the data of the present study and were, therefore, excluded. For example, withhold politeness which is featured when responding with silence to others. Hence, the use of this strategy occurs in face-to-face interaction. Such kind of data would not appear in the CMC data, as is the case with the data collected for the present study (Banguis et al. 2023).

Qualitatively, the researchers read the reviewers' comments (i.e., 52 reviews written in Arabic, around 251 impoliteness and complaint strategies) to identify the type of impoliteness and complaint strategies expressed by them (research question one). The fact that the number of impoliteness strategies is more than the data collected is due to the reviewers' frequent use of more than one strategy in the same review. Quantitatively, a descriptive statistical analysis is run as illustrated in the following section.

4. Results

The researchers observed 52 reviews written in Arabic. A total of 251 impoliteness and complaint strategies based on Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies are identified. The researchers use quantitative descriptive analysis by counting the frequency (F) and the percentage (P) for each strategy. Table 1 lists the impoliteness strategies made by Jordanians in the Facebook hotel reviews written in Arabic. Generally speaking, positive impoliteness (44.62%) and negative impoliteness (27.50%) were the most frequent strategies found. Bald on record (18.72%) and sarcasm or mock politeness (9.16%) were the least frequent strategies used.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies

Strategy	F	P
1. Bald on record impoliteness	47	18.72
2. Negative impoliteness	69	27.50
Frightening others	31	12.35
Scorning others	17	6.77
Belittling others	15	5.98
Connecting others with a negative thing clearly	6	2.40
3. Positive impoliteness	112	44.62
Showing lack of concern, interest, and sympathy towards others.	10	3.98
Using inappropriate identity markers	29	11.55
Seeking disagreement	52	20.72
Using swear words, taboo words, or rude language	21	8.37
4. Sarcasm or mock politeness	23	9.16
Total	251	100

Qualitatively, some examples of each impoliteness strategy and sub-strategy used by the reviewers of the present study are presented in table 2. These examples are used in order to identify the respective factors that contribute to the use of these impoliteness strategies by the reviewers, paying attention to their cultural background and their perception of impoliteness, directness, power relation and the concept of face when writing these strategies, which perform the main concern of research question two.

Table 2. Examples of impoliteness strategies used by the reviewers

Strategy	Arabic Expression	English Translation
Bald on record impoliteness	الفندق وسخ جدا	The hotel is extremely dirty
Negative impoliteness		
Frightening others	رح اقدم شكوى لوزارة السياحة	I will file a complaint with the ministry of tourism
Scorning others	الموظفين جهلة و ما يعرفوا مع مين يحكو	The employees are ignorant, and they do not know to whom they are talking
Belittling others	انا ما بعطي هذا الاوتيل ولا حتى نجمة وحدة كيف اربع نجوم ما بعرف	I would never rate this as a one-star hotel. How come it is rated a four-star one!
Connecting others with a negative thing clearly	حسيت حالي بسجن مش بفندق	I felt like I was in a prison, not a hotel
Positive impoliteness		
Showing lack of concern, interest, and sympathy to others.	الفندق و جميع الموظفين بحاجة اعادة تأهيل	The hotel and all the staff need rehabilitation
Using inappropriate identity markers	عمو سافرت و نزلت في كثير فنادق	Uncle, I have travelled and stayed in many hotels
Seeking disagreement	في بلد مسلم الثلاثة في غرفة الفندق مليانة مشروبات روحية!	In a Muslim country, the refrigerator in the hotel room is filled with alcoholic beverages!
Using swear words, taboo words, or rude language.	شخص حقير و متعجرف	A mean and arrogant person
Sarcasm or mock politeness	اطلالة الغرفة كاني حاجز في برج خليف	The room's view is as if I had booked in Burj Khalifa

In the following section, the researchers discuss in some detail the impoliteness strategies made by the reviewers.

5. Discussion

5.1 Impoliteness strategies used by Jordanians in the CMC context of Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews

Research question number one is carefully formulated to highlight the impoliteness strategies used by Jordanians in the CMC context of Facebook hotel reviews. As presented in table 1, the Jordanian Facebook hotel reviewers use different impoliteness strategies to realize the speech act of complaints in their negative reviews. Based on Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness strategies and sub-strategies, the most frequent main strategy across all reviews is *positive impoliteness*, registering 44.62 percent (n = 112). *Negative impoliteness* mentioned in 27.50 percent (n = 69) as the second most frequent main strategy. The reviewers tend to use *bald on record* (e.g., "The hotel is extremely dirty", (الفندق وسخ جدا) as the third most mentioned main strategy in 18.72 percent (n = 47). Finally, the reviewers rank *sarcasm or mock politeness* (e.g., "The room's view is as if I had booked in Burj Khalifa", (اطلالة الغرفة كاني حاجز في برج خليفة) as the fourth most frequent main strategy in 9.16 percent (n = 23).

It is important to indicate that both positive and negative impoliteness strategies have sub-strategies. Therefore, at the sub-strategies level, the reviewers use *seeking disagreement* positive impoliteness sub-strategy (e.g., "In a Muslim country, the refrigerator in the hotel room is filled with alcoholic beverages!", (في بلد مسلم الثلاجة في غرفة الفندق مليانة مشروبات روحية!) as the most frequent sub-strategy found in around 20.72 percent of the strategies (n = 52). Then, the reviewers opt for *frightening* negative impoliteness sub-strategy as the second most frequent sub-strategy used in around 12.35 percent (n = 31) of the strategies (e.g., "I will file a complaint with the ministry of tourism", (رح اقدم شكوى لوزارة السياحة). As the third most frequent negative impoliteness sub-strategy, the reviewers use *inappropriate identity markers* positive impoliteness sub-strategy (e.g., "Uncle, I have travelled and stayed in many hotels", (عمو سافرت و نزلت في كثير فنادق) in around 11.55 percent of the strategies (n = 29). The reviewers tend to use *swear and taboo words* positive impoliteness sub-strategy (e.g., "A mean and arrogant person", (شخص حقير و متعجرف) as the fourth frequent sub-strategy stated in approximately 8.37 percent (n = 21) of the strategies. As the fifth frequent negative impoliteness sub-strategy, the reviewers rank *scorning others* in their reviews (e.g., "The employees are ignorant, and they do not know to whom they are talking", (الموظفين جهلة و ما يعرفوا مع مين يحكو) in around 6.77 percent (n = 17) of the strategies.

The reviewers mention *belittling others* as the sixth most frequent negative impoliteness sub-strategy (e.g., "I would never rate this as a one-star hotel. How come it is rated a four-star one!", (انا ما بعطي هذا الاوتيل ولا حتى نجمة وحدة كيف اربع نجوم ما) in around 5.97 percent of the strategies (n = 15). The reviewers show *lack of concern, interest, and sympathy towards others* (e.g., "The hotel and all the staff need rehabilitation", (الفندق و جميع الموظفين بحاجة اعادة تأهيل) in their complaints in approximately 3.98 percent of the strategies (n = 10). Finally, the reviewers tackle *connecting others with a negative thing clearly* negative impoliteness sub-strategy (e.g., "I felt like I was in a prison, not a hotel", (حسيت حالي بسجن مش بفندق) as the least

negative impoliteness sub-strategy registered in around 2.40 percent of the strategies (n = 6).

It is quite obvious that the reviewers prefer to use positive impoliteness strategies. This observation is in line with previous studies (Mirhosseini et al. 2017; Banguis et al. 2023; Demir 2021) on impoliteness and negative hotel reviews, which also reported that positive impoliteness category is frequently preferred by the respondents of these studies. In their study, Mirhosseini et al. (2017) find that positive impoliteness is used in 34 out of the total numbers of 58 strategies. The topics where the respondents tend to complain about have focused on the rooms, services and amenities. Similar results are reported by Demir (2021) who finds that the TripAdvisor respondents tend to complain about topics related to rooms, price, service, design, amenities, and location.

In the following section, the researchers present and discuss the factors that contribute to the use of these impoliteness strategies in their Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews.

5.2 The factors that contribute to the use of these impoliteness strategies found in their Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews

The second research question is set to explore the factors contributing to the use of impoliteness strategies. As said earlier, the researchers discuss the possible factors for the reviewers' choice of impoliteness strategies in terms of previous research, the cultural background of the reviewers and their perception of impoliteness, directness, power relation and the concept of face. Hence, the reviewers rank positive impoliteness strategies as the most frequent strategy stated by them. Culpeper (2005) indicates that positive impoliteness reflects the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face needs. The reviewers employ several sub-strategies to realize the speech act of complaints such as showing lack of concern, using inappropriate identity markers, seeking disagreement, and using swear words. For example, the reviewers attempt to show disagreement through talking about sensitive topics (e.g., "In a Muslim country, the refrigerator in the hotel room is filled with alcoholic beverages!", *في بلد مسلم التلاجة في غرفة الفندق مليانة مشروبات روحية!*). In this example, the reviewer seems to be deeply influenced by his cultural background and religious orientations because alcohol is a substance that is prohibited in Islam. Accordingly, the reviewer believes that following the orders of Islam and avoiding its prohibitions is an obligation upon every legally commissioned person, and such situation gives him the right to talk about this sensitive topic.

Linguistically, complainers use different linguistic styles referring to the agentive involvement of complaine. Thus, they tend to use second person singular/plural pronouns, third person singular/plural pronouns, and the title of hotel's staff. The reviewers also use another linguistic style of complaining using reported speech trying to express the complainables literally instead of just describing them. The reviewers also make statements of stating and swearing to show positive impoliteness. These statements describe the complaine as if they are disliked or to highlight negative aspects about them. These conclusions are in

accordance with those found in previous studies such as Banguis et al. (2023) and Demir (2021). For instance, Banguis et al. (2023) indicates that Filipino students tend to express their complaints by stating and swearing at the complainees.

Regarding the negative impoliteness strategies, it is found to be the second most frequent strategy used by the reviewers. Culpeper (1996) states that negative impoliteness includes making strategies that threaten the hearer's negative face using contemptuous and scornful remarks. The reviewers express their opinions about the hotel's rooms, price, services, design, amenities, location and staff through commenting on the hotel's business profile; therefore, the negative face needs of these hotels are attacked. The reviews are coded under four different negative impoliteness sub-strategies, namely frightening others, scorning others, belittling others, and connecting others with a clearly negative thing. For example, the sub-strategy of frightening others allows the reviewers to threaten the hotel's staff by doing something terrible like lodging a formal complaint with the government (e.g., "I will file a complaint with the ministry of tourism", رح اقدم شكوى (لوزارة السياحة). In this review, the reviewer tends to attack the hotel's negative face by threatening them of filing a complaint; he shows off by taking an exaggerated action to frighten the hotel's staff.

The use of this strategy is not restricted to a particular text position. However, it commonly appears at the end of the complaints, after identifying the complainable. The reviewers write long premedical actions in their reviews in which they contribute in the length of the complaints made by them. Moreover, the use of negative impoliteness takes different linguistic forms of deploring, asserting, and criticizing. For example, the reviewers employ assertion statements to reflect their negative attitude. One of the reviewers ends his complaint with the direct phrase (e.g., "I would never rate this as a one-star hotel!", انا ما بعطي هذا الاوتيل ولا (حتى نجمة وحدة). This statement obviously reflects the individual's anger toward the hotel. Afterwards, the reviewer expresses his dissatisfaction by criticising their negative attitude.

Bald on record impoliteness strategy is among the top three impoliteness strategies stated by the participants in most studies using different data collection instruments like DCT and CMC (Mirhosseini et al. 2017; Al-Shboul 2021; Banguis et al. 2023). For example, Culpeper (1996) asserts that the use of this strategy is realised by using impoliteness language in clear and unambiguous utterances. Moreover, Banguis et al. (2023) emphasize that this style causes a direct threat to the reputation of the institution and leads to an intentional harm. One of the reviews in the present study reads ("The hotel is extremely dirty", (الفندق وسخ جدا) and it exemplifies the use of bald-on-record impoliteness since it directly attacks the institution's face by bluntly criticizing its unhygienic conditions. Based on Culpeper's (1996) framework of impoliteness, the reviewer directly addresses the recipients without using any mitigating language. In this matter, Banguis et al. (2023) claim that CMC platforms such as Facebook provide complainers with an easy way to express their thoughts publicly about institutions or companies. This direct mode of expression which spares the speaker the least effort to mitigate the

message or lessen the criticism represents a bald-on record strategy where bluntness is favoured over politeness markers.

The fact that bald on record impoliteness is among the top three impoliteness strategies in the present study could be attributed to the rapid emerging of social media such as Facebook allowing the users to express their complaints using offensive and direct language (Banguis et al. 2023). This strategy takes different text positions. While some reviewers start their complaints using this strategy, others end the complaints with it. They also write their complaints in a sequential order. Linguistically, the reviewers write declarative review forms to express their complaints. Other linguistic styles include interrogatives and imperatives in their bald-on-record impoliteness. These different linguistic forms feature impoliteness clearly and directly. Similar results are reported by Banguis et al. 2023 who find that Filipino students use declarative forms in their comments when they had to complain about blended learning.

Sarcasm or mock politeness strategy is used by the reviewers through employing jokes and sarcasm to attack the hotel's face. Culpeper (1996) classified it as FTA making insincere politeness strategies. He emphasizes that mock impoliteness occurs when impolite and polite approaches coexist inconsistently within the same complaint, statement, or utterance. The reviewers make fun of the hotel's service quality using polite expressions. They employ an expression that seems to be using a politeness strategy on the surface level, but in fact this expression is used insincerely. In ("The room's view is as if I had booked in Burj Khalifa," اطلالة الغرفة كاني حاجز في برج خليفة), the reviewer attacks the hotel's face by showing bitter sarcasm. The reviewer mockingly compares the hotel she is staying in with Burj Khalifa which is one of the most well-known skyscrapers in Dubai and the globe. This implicit complaint reflects her dissatisfaction with the unattractive view of the hotel compared to the amazing view from Burj Khalifa.

The use of this strategy is not restricted to a particular text position. However, it commonly appears in the middle or at the end of the complaints, after identifying the complainable. When they had to complain using mock politeness, the reviewers use different linguistic forms of describing, commanding, and comparison. For example, they tend to compare their stay experience with other hotels in Jordan and other parts of the world. This comparison in this context is believed to be ironic impoliteness. These findings align with those reported in previous research such as Banguis et al. (2023) and Demir (2021). For example, Demir (2021) states that the EFL tend to compare their stay with other hotels around the world or with those belonging to the same hotel's chain to give negative judgements about hotels.

When the concept of face is concerned, the reviewers tend to complain employing strategies that attack both the hearer's positive and negative face wants. Bald on-record impoliteness and sarcasm or mock politeness strategies cause FTAs where people sometimes aim to attack their hearer's face need in general. While the positive impoliteness strategies attack the hearer's positive face, the negative impoliteness strategies damage the hearer's negative face wants. Complaints that involve positive impoliteness strategies imply that the speaker does not care about the hearer's feelings. These directly threaten the hearer's positive face. On the other

hand, complaints that involve negative impoliteness strategies threaten the negative face when the speaker does not care about the avoidance of impeding the hearer's freedom of action.

The reviewers make their reviews using different directness level. Thus, most of the classifications of complaint strategies found in previous studies are primarily based on their level of directness which is determined by the explicitness or implicitness of complaints (e.g., Trosborg, 1995; Al-Shboul 2021). Moreover, research conducted on direct and indirect complaint responses has paid more attention to face-to-face conversations. Yet, the data of the present study were taken from a CMC context (Facebook) where the hotel's staff and managers (i.e., complainers) can see, read, and reply to these reviews. Accordingly, the complaints' data of the present study can be recognized as both direct and indirect complaints. Banguis et al. (2023) claim that the majority of complaints on Facebook are realized directly, expressing clear dissatisfaction. These complaints are usually simple and the speaker's sentiment is easily understood. For example, bald-on-record strategy is expressed directly in a situation where the reviewer had to address the hotel without employing any softening or mitigating language (e.g., "bad hotel.", (فندق سيء). They also use indirect bald-on-record strategy (e.g., "I am shocked by the condition of the hotel room.", (أنا مصدوم من حالة غرفة الفندق), by indirectly criticizing the dirty and the poor condition of the hotel room. This strategy is used to reflect the shock and the disappointment of the reviewer.

The level of directness and the use of impoliteness strategies that cause a damage to the hearer's face needs could also be discussed in terms of the power relation between hotel guest (complainer) and administration (addressee). The reviewers as hotel guests use some impoliteness strategies that reflect their desire of showing their social power. Based on the classification proposed by Bousfield (2008), the reviewers tend to show themselves as superior, to get authority over actions, and to emphasize the power hierarchy. Accordingly, the reviewers' desire of being superior tempts them to employ insult and to put the hotel's staff down (e.g., "A mean and arrogant person", (شخص حقير و متعجرف). They also use their power to reflect their wants to get authority over actions through sarcasm and insincere politeness by asking someone to do or to avoid doing something (e.g., "You should send someone to clean the room.", (لازم تبعث حدا ينظف الغرفة). The action taken by the guest is using power to reflect his wants to get authority over actions by asking the hotel's staff to do their job. The reviewers try to underscore this hierarchy of power by showing who has power over whom (e.g., "It is your job to clean the room, not mine", (شغلناك تنظف الغرفة مش شغلي). In this example, the reviewer emphasises the hierarchy of power by reminding the room attendant of his responsibilities which include cleaning and making the bed.

The indirectness of impoliteness and complaint strategies used by the reviewers could be explained based on high and low-context communication styles proposed by Hall (1976). The notion of context plays an important role in this cultural dimension. People of high context culture (e.g., Jordan) prefer to communicate with implicit messages in which what is not being said can carry more meaning than what is said. Therefore, interactions tend to be more indirect, implicit,

and less verbal. On the other hand, people who belong to low context culture (e.g., United States of America) tend to communicate with abundant information in the message in which what is said is more important than what is not being said. Accordingly, low context cultures have a more direct and explicit communicative style.

Furthermore, these findings can be addressed in light of Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism. This cultural dimension is one of the six cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2011) in the final version of his model, and it is widely used in intercultural communication research. The interactional style of people in collectivistic cultures (e.g., Jordan) tends to emphasise the face-supportive behaviours such as avoiding offence of other's feelings and minimizing impositions. By contrast, people of individualistic cultures (e.g., United States of America) show clarity in conversations. In other words, the communication style in the individualistic culture realises its goals of conversation by focusing on the clarity and the preciseness of illocutionary force of utterances, whereas collectivistic culture is obviously face-supporting and interpersonally sensitive. Finally, people of collectivistic culture are more concerned about status differences rather than distance compared to those who belong to individualistic cultures.

5. Conclusion

This study makes a valuable contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the complaint speech act used by Jordanians in the CMC context of Facebook hotel Arabic-written reviews. It expands our knowledge of how the reviewers' cultural background in general and their perception of impoliteness, directness, power relation and the concept of face in particular influence their realization of impoliteness and the complaint speech act. It is quite evident that their cultural background and their perception of impoliteness feature a preference in different complaint strategies which reflect the Jordanian culture. Accordingly, the reviewers use some complaint strategies that can be perceived as face-threatening in terms of their nature.

Although the researchers believe that this study contributes to the research field, it has some limitations that need to be taken into consideration in future research. For example, the data are retrieved from a single CMC context (Facebook). Using one platform for retrieving data is insufficient to shed light on every aspect of the reviewers' complaint strategies. Accordingly, researchers are encouraged to integrate different sources of data such as TripAdvisor, eBay and X. Moreover, the data of the present study are collected from people with different age, gender, and educational backgrounds. They also come from different regions in Jordan. However, none of these social factors is studied in the present research. Thus, future researchers of the topic are highly encouraged to examine how the speech act of complaint is made by members with different educational backgrounds, gender, and age categories. The present study comprises a small corpus of complaint strategies (52 reviews written in Arabic, around 251 impoliteness and complaint strategies). Conversely, collecting a bigger number of

complaint strategies could lead to a more reliable argument and more authentic results regarding Jordanian users' complaint performance on Facebook. Finally, it is also recommended to investigate the Jordanian EFL speakers' perception of pragmatic transfer when making a complaint in English language.

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