

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses five sub-chapters. First, the background of the study explains the reasons for conducting the research. Second, the research questions address the issues of the study. Third, the objectives of the study contain the purpose of the study. Fourth, the significance of the study focuses on its theoretical and practical aspects. Lastly, the scope and limitations define the research focus and mention any limits of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Human beings are social creatures. As social beings, humans live their lives alongside others (Puspitorini & Hamdani, 2023). Thus, it is natural to interact and form connections with others. Communication is a central part of this process. It can be performed through the use of language. By using language, people can express their feelings and views, and without it, connecting and communicating with others would be nearly impossible (Susana et al., 2022).

Language is often used to foster understanding and keep interactions positive. However, not all interactions are harmonious. People may also use impolite language to express dislike or negative feelings toward the person they are speaking with (Sinaga et al., 2024). Such language use may arise from emotions like frustration, anger, or even an intention to challenge someone else's views. For this reason, impoliteness often appears in the way people communicate with each other.

Impoliteness refers to behavior that violates social expectations and causes offense through negative actions (Culpeper, 2011). It is often expressed through the use of impoliteness strategies that are intended to damage or attack a person's face rather than to save it. Performing impoliteness can cause emotional hurt or discomfort. It can ruin relationships, destroy self-esteem, and create long-term conflict. Because of the negative impact, impoliteness is not preferred in social

interactions (Suhartono et al., 2018). Therefore, when people try to build positive interactions, they avoid impoliteness, as it can damage the positive connection.

For example, impoliteness can be clearly seen in an expression such as “You bastard” (Culpeper, 2016). An utterance like this is highly offensive, as it directly conveys hostility and may function to assert dominance or express anger toward the listener. Such language not only damages the relationship between the speaker and the hearer but can also quickly escalate into conflict. When someone uses impolite language, it is often not without reason. This kind of behavior typically serves particular functions in communication, depending on the speaker’s intention and the social context.

According to Culpeper (2011), impoliteness serves several functions in communication. First, affective impoliteness is used to openly express strong emotions like anger, often making the listener feel responsible for those emotions. Second, coercive impoliteness aims to change the target’s behavior or views for the benefit of the speaker, sometimes by limiting what the other person can do. Third, entertaining impoliteness occurs when impolite language is used to amuse others, often at the expense of the target. These functions show that impoliteness can have different roles in interaction, depending on the speaker’s intentions and the social context.

Based on the explanation above, impoliteness is a form of communication that people may use in daily life. It plays an important role in managing interpersonal relationships and shaping social identities, especially in situations involving conflict or disagreement. Analyzing impoliteness strategies is essential for understanding the dynamics of communication, as they reveal how interactions can lead to tension, challenge social norms, or disrupt harmony. Studying impoliteness also provides insight into how individuals express negative emotions, assert power, or resist authority in various social settings. In addition, impoliteness can be found in literary works that often reflect real-life interactions, particularly in the novel..

Novels are lengthy narratives that reflect real-life social situations, including how characters communicate, form relationships, and respond to different

settings. According to Permadi (2018), novels portray how characters use language to express their thoughts and convey meaning during interactions. The interactions represented in novels allow readers to observe how characters develop and behave in specific contexts. For example, in *The Poppy War* novel by R.F. Kuang. The main character, Rin, shows impoliteness when she exclaims, “What the *fuck*?”, an expression of frustration and anger. This example illustrates how impoliteness is portrayed in a novel and how it can be used to create tension or highlight conflict between characters. Thus, analyzing a novel offers valuable contextual insights into the use and function of impoliteness strategies within narrative texts.

In line with the explanation above, the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang offers an insightful literary work for examining the concepts of impoliteness. The novel explores themes of power differences, colonialism, and the identity struggles, which are reflected in the protagonist’s use of language. Since language is often used to express disagreement or create tension between characters, it provides insight into the main character’s communication style. By focusing on the main character, the analysis becomes more concentrated. It allows a deeper exploration of how his language reflects his responses to conflict and difficult situations in the story. Therefore, this research will examine the main character in the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang.

Previous studies have explored impoliteness across various contexts: films (Meylana et al., 2024; Theresia & Nisa, 2024), video games (Sambada & Ariatmi, 2024), and political debates (Simanjuntak & Simatupang, 2024), using Culpeper’s (1996) framework to identify types of impoliteness. These studies also analyzed the functions of impoliteness based on Culpeper’s (2011) theory. Meanwhile, Santoso & Tedjaatmadja (2022) in television and Erlinda (2022) in academic settings adopted Culpeper’s (2005) model. This suggests that Culpeper’s 1996 framework remains the dominant choice among researchers. Therefore, this study addresses that gap by applying both Culpeper’s (2005) and (2011) frameworks to a literary novel, *Babel* by R.F. Kuang, shifting the focus to written discourse and offering a new perspective on impoliteness in literature.

Building on the previous discussion, the research aims to analyze the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang, focusing on impoliteness strategies of the main character. This research is conducted to also fill a gap in existing studies, as the use of impoliteness in literary works, such as novels, has not been widely explored. By analyzing impoliteness strategies in *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang, this research aims to provide a better understanding of impoliteness, especially within novels. Therefore, this research is titled “An Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies of the Main Character in R.F. Kuang’s *Babel: An Arcane History* Novel.”

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background provided above, this study addresses two research questions. They are formulated as follows:

1. What are the impoliteness strategies of the main character in the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang?
2. What are the functions of impoliteness strategies of the main character in the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions formulated above, this study aims to achieve two objectives. They are outlined as follows:

1. To identify impoliteness strategies of the main character in the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang.
2. To explain the functions of impoliteness strategies of the main character in the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to our understanding of impoliteness strategies by analyzing how they are used in communication. It describes the character’s choices in employing the strategies and explores the function of their use. By doing so, the study shows that impoliteness strategies can be applied in various situations, enriching our knowledge of their role in communication.

Practically, this study provides helpful insights into how impoliteness work in communication. The findings can help writers explore how characters use impoliteness in their interactions. The findings can also help researchers in their studies about impoliteness. Additionally, these insights can be useful for anyone wanting to apply ideas of impoliteness in daily conversations.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on analyzing the impoliteness strategies using Culpeper's (2005) theory of impoliteness. Additionally, it examines the functions of impoliteness in different situations using Culpeper's (2011) theory. This study is limited to analyzing only a main character in the novel *Babel: An Arcane History* by R.F. Kuang.