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# LINGUISTIC IMPOLITENESS IN THE ONLINE GAME FREE FIRE: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF UPPER-GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital menjadikan game online sebagai salah satu media interaksi sosial yang banyak digunakan oleh anak-anak, termasuk siswa sekolah dasar. Salah satu game yang populer di kalangan siswa adalah Free Fire yang menyediakan fitur komunikasi melalui voice chat dan chat teks. Interaksi tersebut berpotensi memunculkan penggunaan bahasa yang tidak santun dalam komunikasi antarpemain. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk-bentuk ketidaksantunan berbahasa serta faktor-faktor yang memengaruhinya pada siswa kelas tinggi SDN Kurisa dalam permainan Free Fire. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan kajian pragmatik. Data penelitian berupa tuturan siswa yang diperoleh melalui rekaman voice chat, tangkapan layar percakapan teks, observasi, dan wawancara dengan siswa, guru, serta orang tua. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan teori ketidaksantunan berbahasa Jonathan Culpeper. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketidaksantunan berbahasa siswa muncul dalam bentuk umpatan, ejekan, perintah langsung tanpa mitigasi, penggunaan slang kasar, serta sarkasme. Bentuk tersebut meliputi strategi bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/irony, dan withhold politeness. Ketidaksantunan berbahasa dipengaruhi oleh faktor internal, seperti rendahnya kontrol emosi dan terbatasnya pemahaman norma kesantunan, serta faktor eksternal berupa situasi kompetitif permainan, pengaruh teman sebaya, dan lemahnya kontrol sosial di ruang digital. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya pergeseran praktik berbahasa dari lingkungan permainan daring ke interaksi sehari-hari siswa di sekolah. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi teoretis dalam kajian pragmatik dan menjadi rujukan praktis bagi guru serta orang tua dalam membina kesantunan berbahasa siswa di era digital.

**Kata Kunci:** ketidaksantunan berbahasa, pragmatik, game online, free fire

## Abstract

The development of digital technology has made online games one of the social interaction media widely used by children, including elementary school students. One of the most popular games among students is *Free Fire*, which provides communication features through voice chat and text chat. These interactions have the potential to give rise to the use of impolite language in communication among players. This study aims to describe the forms of linguistic impoliteness and the factors influencing them among upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa while playing *Free Fire*. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a pragmatic perspective. The research data consisted of students' utterances obtained through voice chat recordings, screenshots of text conversations, observations, and interviews with students, teachers, and parents. Data analysis was conducted using Jonathan Culpeper's theory of linguistic impoliteness. The findings revealed that students' linguistic impoliteness appeared in the forms of swearing, mocking, direct commands without mitigation, the use of harsh slang, and sarcasm. These forms included the strategies of bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/irony, and withhold politeness. Linguistic impoliteness was influenced by internal factors, such as low emotional control and limited understanding of politeness norms, as well as external factors, including competitive gaming situations, peer influence, and weak social control in digital spaces. The findings also indicated a shift in language practices from online gaming

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environments to students' daily interactions at school. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to pragmatic studies and practically serve as a reference for teachers and parents in fostering students' language politeness in the digital era.

**Keyword:** Linguistic Impoliteness, Pragmatics, Online Games, Free Fire

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in today's digital era has brought significant impacts on various aspects of human life, including education and socio-cultural fields. One manifestation of this technological development is the widespread use of online games among children and adolescents. Online games have become an inseparable part of daily life due to their interactive, competitive, and easily accessible nature through smartphones (Duja dkk., 2026).

One of the most popular online games in Indonesia is *Free Fire*. This game is widely played by elementary school students as well as university students because it offers fast-paced gameplay, competition between individuals or groups, and direct communication features through voice chat and chat boxes (K.N. Widyatnyana dkk., 2023). These features make *Free Fire* not merely an entertainment game, but also a virtual social interaction space where players communicate using their own language styles. However, the presence of this game has also raised concerns. The use of impolite language in online games has become an increasingly important issue in elementary education because digital communication practices are now closely related to students' daily social interactions (Wanda Sri Wahyuni dkk., 2025). Online games such as *Free Fire* not only function as entertainment media but also create intensive communication spaces that potentially influence children's language behavior and character development (Husni & Imam Safi'i, 2025; Wanda Sri Wahyuni dkk., 2025). Several recent studies have shown that students often adopt aggressive, sarcastic, and

impolite expressions from online gaming interactions into real-life communication contexts, including school environments.

This phenomenon raises concerns about the weakening of language politeness values and the challenges of character education in the digital era. Therefore, investigating linguistic impoliteness in online gaming is essential to understand how digital interactions shape students' communication patterns and pragmatic awareness (Chamdar Nur & Baso Pallawagau, 2025). In addition, this study is strengthened by theoretical perspectives on language politeness and character education, particularly Culpeper's impoliteness theory and the concept of character building through social interaction. By integrating recent empirical findings and pragmatic perspectives, this study seeks to provide a more contextual understanding of the relationship between digital communication practices and students' language politeness in elementary school environments.

Based on a report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association, internet penetration in Indonesia has reached 79.5% of the total population, with children and adolescents showing the highest growth in internet use. The data revealed that 63.5% of children aged 10–14 years and 87.3% of adolescents aged 15–19 years actively access the internet every day, with online gaming being one of their primary activities (Gunawan dkk., 2021). This condition indicates that games such as *Free Fire* are no longer merely a form of entertainment but have become part of children's daily routines (Mardiana, 2021, 2021; Wahidah & Rahman, 2025). Specifically, in Central Sulawesi Province, data from the Department of Communication and Information showed that the use of online games among

elementary school students increased by 28% over the last three years. This increase has been accompanied by growing reports from teachers regarding changes in students' communication behavior, including tendencies to speak more directly, use foreign terms (game jargon), and reduce the use of respectful greetings in formal conversations (Alfarizi & Rozaq, 2025).

Children's language politeness cannot be separated from the roles of teachers and parents in providing guidance. However, in the post-pandemic situation where online learning has become common, control over children's digital interactions has become more limited. Teachers may not fully know the language students use outside the classroom, while parents often do not understand the meanings of terms or expressions adopted from online games. This condition creates a gap in fostering language politeness (Nareswara & Isnaini, 2023). Language is the primary means of human communication. In pragmatic studies, language is not only understood as a system of signs but also as an action that has particular purposes.

Pragmatic studies view language as a form of social action that is highly dependent on context, communicative intentions, and interpersonal relationships among speakers. In the Indonesian context, language politeness is strongly embedded in social and cultural interactions, particularly in educational settings that highly value respectful communication. Therefore, the emergence of impolite language among elementary school students in online gaming environments has become an important issue that needs to be examined from a pragmatic perspective.

(Dedy Arif Norwahyudi & Ade Hanafi Al Fatih, 2024) emphasized that pragmatics involves the principles of cooperation and politeness that must be observed to maintain harmonious communication. However, when children play online games, these principles are often neglected. The language used tends to prioritize

speed, spontaneous expression, and emotional outbursts, resulting in rude or impolite utterances. Based on the findings of (Izzulhaq dkk., 2024), elementary school students who actively play *Free Fire* tend to use brief, expressive, and even harsh language in their daily gaming conversations. These findings indicate the transfer of language practices from virtual environments to real-life contexts. Children imitate communication styles used in games and bring them into school and family environments.

The phenomenon of impolite language use in online games does not only occur in large cities but has also spread to rural areas, including SDN Kurisa in Bahodopi District, particularly among upper-grade students in grades IV, V, and VI who have distinct characteristics. Most upper-grade students at this school already own personal smartphones and actively play *Free Fire* outside school hours. This condition potentially influences the way they communicate, both at school and at home. Teachers and parents frequently complain about changes in students' language behavior, as students often use rude and impolite expressions such as "fuck you", "bodok", "tai", "anjir," and other harsh utterances, show less respect toward older people, and speak without considering politeness norms. These changes pose serious challenges to character education because language reflects an individual's personality.

Children are highly attracted to *Free Fire* because the game offers challenging and enjoyable competition, can easily be played on low-specification devices, and serves as a medium for social interaction with friends. Research shows that children aged 11–12 years play *Free Fire* more than ten times a week and even make in-game purchases due to their desire to win (Duja dkk., 2026). In addition, playing *Free Fire* has been proven to improve verbal communication among students through teamwork (Subagyo dkk., 2025). However, excessive gaming intensity can reduce students'

2 interest in learning and trigger aggressive behavior (Doda & Djou, 2023), as well as make children more easily frustrated or angry (Yunidar dkk., 2025). Thus, children's interest in *Free Fire* arises from a combination of entertainment, challenge, and social interaction factors, although it also has the potential to generate negative impacts if played excessively.

20 Several previous studies have shown that interactions in online games tend to produce harsh and expressive language use. (Izzulhaq dkk., 2024) found that *Free Fire* affects elementary school students' language skills, while (Doda & Djou, 2023) highlighted language politeness among children aged 11–12 years in online gaming interactions. Nevertheless, these studies mainly discussed the general impacts of online gaming and did not specifically examine linguistic impoliteness strategies based on Culpeper's theory in the context of elementary school students' communication. Therefore, this study is important to provide a deeper understanding of the forms and strategies of linguistic impoliteness used by students in digital interactions within the *Free Fire* game.

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2 An in-depth study on students' linguistic impoliteness in the online game *Free Fire* among upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa using a pragmatic approach is therefore necessary. This study is expected to reveal the extent to which interactions in *Free Fire* influence children's communication patterns and to provide insights for schools and parents in guiding students to maintain language politeness amid the rapid development of digital technology. Although several studies have discussed the influence of online games on children's behavior, studies specifically linking *Free Fire* with language politeness at the elementary school level remain limited. Most previous studies have focused more on gaming addiction, academic achievement, or children's social behavior in general. A pragmatic perspective will provide a deeper understanding of the forms of impoliteness that emerge in

students' utterances, both during gameplay and in daily interactions.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a pragmatic perspective. The participants of this study consisted of 15 upper-grade students of SDN Kurisa, including students from grades IV, V, and VI who actively played the online game *Free Fire*. In addition, several teachers and parents were involved as supporting informants to provide additional information regarding students' language behavior. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because this study was not directed toward hypothesis testing or statistical measurement, but rather toward revealing linguistic phenomena as they naturally occur, particularly regarding language use in naturally occurring digital interactions.

This approach views language as a social practice that cannot be separated from its context of use. Therefore, this study focused on interpreting utterances based on the context of speech situations, relationships among communication participants, and communicative purposes underlying the emergence of utterances. In online games such as *Free Fire*, communication occurs rapidly, spontaneously, and competitively, often resulting in utterances that disregard language politeness norms. Such phenomena require contextual and interpretative analysis, which are the main characteristics of the pragmatic approach. The primary focus of this study was students' utterances that emerged during gameplay interactions, both in oral communication through voice chat and written communication through in-game chat. These utterances were analyzed by emphasizing the meaning of the utterances, the context of the speech situation, and the linguistic impoliteness strategies employed by speakers when interacting with their interlocutors. Thus, the approach used in this study is in line with the objectives of

pragmatic studies, which view language as communicative action that is rich in intentions, strategies, and particular social functions.

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According to (Mutohir, 2025), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically through descriptions in the form of words and language within natural contexts. This approach enables researchers to interpret the meanings behind the utterances used, rather than merely inventorying language forms structurally. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative approach is highly relevant for examining linguistic impoliteness because the research data consist of utterances that need to be analyzed in terms of pragmatic functions, social contexts, and speakers' communicative purposes. The selection of this approach was also supported by the study (Mahas & Verlin, 2025), which employed a descriptive qualitative method to examine children's language behavior in the context of online games. The findings of that study showed that qualitative methods are effective for describing children's language use contextually and naturally. Similarly, the study conducted by (Fauziyah & Dwi Aprila, 2023), which used a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate elementary school students' language politeness in online communication, demonstrated that this approach was capable of revealing forms of impoliteness appearing in digital interactions comprehensively and systematically.

The research design of this study was developed based on a pragmatic framework using Jonathan Culpeper's theory of linguistic impoliteness as the primary analytical foundation (Pramono & Kurniawan, 2020). From Culpeper's perspective, impoliteness is understood as a communicative action that intentionally or unintentionally attacks the interlocutor's face (self-esteem) through various linguistic strategies. Impoliteness is not merely viewed as a violation of politeness norms but also as a communication strategy that serves certain

functions in social interaction, such as expressing emotions, showing dominance, or responding to competitive situations. Based on this framework, the data analysis in this study focused on identifying and classifying the linguistic impoliteness strategies found in students' utterances, including bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/irony, and withhold politeness. Each utterance was analyzed by considering the context of the speech situation, the relationships among participants, and the interactional conditions surrounding it.

Data analysis was conducted inductively, beginning with the collection of utterance data, transcription processes, data classification based on forms and strategies of impoliteness, and interpretation of the contextual factors underlying the emergence of such utterances. Factors such as competitive gaming situations, peer influence, digital anonymity, and limited awareness of language politeness norms were analyzed as pragmatic contexts rather than as objects of psychological study. Therefore, these factors functioned to explain the conditions of language use rather than to assess the speakers' personalities or emotional conditions clinically.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Characteristics of Upper-Grade Students

The subjects of this study were upper-grade students, namely students in grades IV, V, and VI at SDN Kurisa. In general, students at this level are between 10 and 12 years old, which is considered an important stage of cognitive and social development in the formation of communication patterns and language awareness. At this developmental stage, students begin to demonstrate more complex language abilities in terms of sentence structure, vocabulary selection, and the use of language according to context. However, at the same time, upper-grade students are also in a phase of strong social exploration, characterized by increasing intensity of peer

interaction and a tendency to imitate the language used in social environments and digital media. In their daily interactions, upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa actively communicate both orally and in writing, both inside and outside school. Communication patterns among students are generally egalitarian, informal, and spontaneous, thereby allowing the emergence of various utterances that reflect both politeness and impoliteness. These characteristics make upper-grade students appropriate subjects for examining the phenomenon of linguistic impoliteness from a pragmatic perspective.

### **Intensity of Playing the Online Game *Free Fire***

The results of preliminary observations and initial interviews indicated that most upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa actively played the online game *Free Fire*. The game was generally played using personal or family-owned smartphones after school, in the afternoon, or during weekends. *Free Fire* was preferred by students because of its competitive nature, easy accessibility, and the opportunity for direct interaction among players through voice chat and text chat features. The intensity of gameplay varied among students; however, in general, students spent approximately 30 minutes to several hours per day playing the game, depending on their free time and parental supervision. Language interaction in *Free Fire* occurs rapidly, spontaneously, and with minimal formal social control. This situation encourages students to use language freely, including the use of gaming jargon, emotional expressions, and utterances that potentially violate politeness norms. Therefore, the intensity of playing *Free Fire* becomes an important factor in shaping students' language habits in digital environments.

### **Students' Communication Patterns**

The communication patterns of upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa show quite clear differences between formal and nonformal

contexts. In formal classroom learning situations, students tend to use more controlled language by paying attention to forms of address, intonation, and word choice when interacting with teachers. Language politeness is relatively more apparent, although minor violations are still occasionally found, particularly in interactions among students. In contrast, in nonformal contexts, especially while playing the online game *Free Fire*, students' communication patterns tend to be freer, more direct, and more expressive. The utterances used often contain direct commands, mockery, swearing, and emotional expressions that emerge as responses to game situations. These contextual differences indicate a shift in language use according to the communication domain. These preliminary findings suggest that students' language practices are not static, but are influenced by context, communicative purposes, and the social norms that apply within them. Therefore, analyzing students' communication patterns in these two domains is important for understanding the pragmatic mechanisms underlying the emergence of linguistic impoliteness.

### **Language Patterns in the Online Game *Free Fire***

Based on the results of observations, interaction recordings, and text chat documentation, the language patterns of upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa in the game *Free Fire* demonstrate distinctive characteristics that differ from communication in formal settings. The language used in online gaming tends to be spontaneous, direct, and minimally mitigated, especially in situations requiring quick responses, such as during gunfights, strategy coordination, or when facing defeat. Verbal interactions in *Free Fire* occur through voice chat and text chat, both of which are synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication. In voice chats, students frequently use direct command sentences, emotional expressions, and vocabulary

containing evaluative meanings toward the performance of teammates. The language choices are generally informal, use simple sentence structures, and incorporate gaming terms such as *loot*, *cover*, *rush*, and *noob*. The use of these terms functions not only as coordination tools but also as markers of group identity among players.

In competitive situations, the language used by students tends to show increased emotional intensity. This can be seen in the use of high intonation, repetition of command words, and the emergence of utterances containing mockery or swearing. Under such conditions, language politeness norms tend to receive less attention because the students' primary focus is achieving success in the game. This phenomenon is in line with the characteristics of digital communication in online games, which provide broad opportunities for expression with relatively loose social control.

In addition, communication in *Free Fire* is influenced by the nature of the game, which places players in relatively equal positions. Relationships among players are egalitarian, and there is no formal hierarchy regulating language use. This condition enables students to express dissatisfaction or criticism directly without deeply considering aspects of politeness.

### Language Patterns in the School Environment

In contrast to language patterns in online gaming, students' language practices in the school environment tend to be more controlled and contextual. In formal interactions, especially between students and teachers, students generally use more polite language by paying attention to word choice, intonation, and appropriate forms of address in accordance with institutional school norms. During classroom learning situations, students tend to use more complete sentences and are more careful in expressing opinions or requests. The use of respectful forms of address, such as mentioning teachers' names appropriately or using polite expressions when asking

permission, is still evident in most interactions. This indicates that students possess awareness of language politeness norms within formal educational contexts.

However, in interactions among students at school, particularly during break times or group discussions, the language patterns used tend to be more informal. In these contexts, students begin to use more casual everyday language, including joking expressions, mild sarcasm, and direct commands. Nevertheless, the intensity of impoliteness occurring in the school environment is relatively lower than that found in interactions within the game *Free Fire*. This is due to the presence of stronger social control, both from teachers and from existing school norms.

Interestingly, several utterances and terms commonly used in online games have started to appear in school interactions, although with lower intensity and milder forms. This phenomenon indicates the influence of digital environments on students' language practices in face-to-face communication settings.

### Forms of Linguistic Impoliteness

Based on the results of data analysis on the utterances of upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa in the online game *Free Fire* and in interactions within the school environment, various forms of linguistic impoliteness were identified and realized through particular linguistic strategies. The analysis of these forms of impoliteness refers to Jonathan Culpeper's theory of linguistic impoliteness which views impoliteness as a communication strategy that intentionally or unintentionally attacks the interlocutor's face (Mufidah dkk., 2025). The findings of this study indicate that impoliteness strategies predominantly emerged within the domain of online gaming, which is characterized by competitiveness and spontaneity, although to a certain extent they were also found in face-to-face interactions within the school environment. The

following sections describe the forms of linguistic impoliteness identified in this study.

### Bald on Record Impoliteness

Bald on record impoliteness is the most direct impoliteness strategy, characterized by harsh utterances delivered openly without any attempt at mitigation or softening. According to (Lailiyah dkk., 2025) this strategy is used when speakers have no interest in maintaining social relationships or when the primary purpose of communication is to express anger, criticism, or dominance explicitly.

Data 1:

“You’re so stupid, I already told you to wait! Now we’re dead because of you!”  
 “Don’t play like such a noob!”

Data 2:

“Our team is so stupid.”

The utterances in Data 1 demonstrate the direct use of insults (“stupid,” “noob”) addressed toward the interlocutors. There are no mitigating elements, such as apologies, indirect explanations, or other forms of softening. Pragmatically, these utterances clearly attack the interlocutors’ positive face, namely their need to be appreciated and recognized for their competence. Similarly, in Data 2, the utterance “our team is so stupid” represents a generalized insult directed at all team members. This form reflects the speaker’s verbal emotional outburst without considering its social impact on the interlocutors.

In the context of the *Free Fire* game, competitive situations and the pressure to win encourage students to use aggressive communication strategies. The relative anonymity and minimal social sanctions in digital spaces make students feel free to express negative emotions directly. The *bald on record impoliteness* strategy becomes a means of venting frustration as well as a tool for demonstrating dominance within the gaming group.

### Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness is an impoliteness strategy that attacks the interlocutor’s need to be accepted, appreciated, and considered competent. This strategy is realized through mockery, belittling someone’s abilities, or ignoring the interlocutor’s contributions (Lailiyah dkk., 2025).

Data 1:

“Don’t play like such a noob!”

Data 2:

“No wonder you play like shit, you sleepy bastard.”

The utterances “noob,” “kek,” “dog,” and “shit” function as negative labels that demean the interlocutor’s abilities. Pragmatically, these utterances not only criticize actions but also construct a negative image of the interlocutor’s identity as a player or an individual. This strategy rejects solidarity and creates social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor.

The strategy of *positive impoliteness* frequently appears in egalitarian interactions among students. In online games, gaming ability becomes a measure of informal social status. Therefore, belittling the interlocutor’s abilities functions as a mechanism for asserting unofficial hierarchy within the gaming group. Interestingly, this form is also carried over into face-to-face interactions at school, although with lower intensity and often framed as a joke.

### Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness is a strategy that attacks the interlocutor’s need for freedom of action and autonomy. This strategy is realized through harsh commands, threats, or verbal pressure that restrict the interlocutor’s freedom of action.

Data 1:

“Hurry up! You’re taking so long!”

Data 2:

“That’s why you should listen to orders!”

These utterances use direct imperative forms without mitigation. The speaker positions themselves as having authority, while the interlocutor is placed in a subordinate position. Pragmatically, these utterances violate the interlocutor’s negative face because they restrict freedom of action and impose verbal pressure.

In team-based games such as *Free Fire*, rapid coordination is often considered more important than politeness. This condition leads students to justify the use of harsh commands as an effective strategy. However, this pattern has the potential to develop into impolite language habits if it is not recognized and controlled.

### Sarcasm/Irony

Sarcasm or *irony* is an indirect impoliteness strategy in which the speaker conveys a meaning that is contrary to the literal utterance. This strategy is often used to mock or belittle the interlocutor implicitly.

Data 1:

“Wow, you’re so great, you died like shit right after landing.”

Data 2:

“Yeah, yeah, you’re really so skilled.”

Literally, these utterances appear to be compliments. However, in the context of the team’s defeat, the utterances carry sharp sarcastic meanings. The pragmatic meaning can only be understood by considering the situational context and the speaker’s intonation.

Sarcasm is used as a subtler strategy compared to direct swearing, yet it remains effective in attacking the interlocutor’s face. In students’ interactions, sarcasm is often considered normal or humorous, so its impolite nature frequently goes unnoticed.

### Withhold Politeness

Withhold politeness occurs when speakers fail to provide forms of politeness that are

socially expected, such as expressions of gratitude, apologies, or polite responses.

Data 1:

“Cover me, damn it!”

(without any expression of request or gratitude)

Data 2:

“That’s enough, stop talking too much.”

The absence of politeness elements in these utterances creates the impression of one-sided commands and a lack of respect toward the interlocutor. Pragmatically, the absence of expected polite forms can function as an impoliteness strategy.

In rapid communication contexts such as online gaming, politeness is often considered a low priority. However, the habit of omitting polite expressions has the potential to carry over into formal domains, such as classroom discussions, thereby affecting the quality of students’ social interactions.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the linguistic impoliteness of upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa is realized through various pragmatic strategies as proposed by Culpeper. The strategies of bald on record impoliteness and positive impoliteness were found to be the most dominant forms, particularly in the domain of the online game *Free Fire*. These findings confirm that competitive digital communication contexts with minimal social control play a significant role in shaping students’ linguistic impoliteness practices.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the linguistic impoliteness of upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa in the online game *Free Fire* emerged through various pragmatic strategies as proposed by Culpeper, namely *bald on record impoliteness*, *positive impoliteness*, *negative impoliteness*, *sarcasm/irony*, and *withhold politeness*. These findings suggest that communication interactions within online

gaming not only function as a means of game coordination but also serve as spaces for emotional expression that often disregard language politeness norms.

4 The most dominant impoliteness strategies identified in this study were *bold on record impoliteness* and *positive impoliteness*. These strategies appeared through the use of direct swearing, mockery of gaming abilities, and the use of negative labels such as “stupid,” “noob,” or other insulting expressions. The dominance of these strategies indicates that, within competitive gaming contexts, students tend to express frustration or disappointment directly without considering the social impact on their interlocutors. This finding is consistent with Culpeper’s view that impoliteness is often used as a communication strategy to attack the interlocutor’s face or self-esteem, particularly in situations of conflict or emotional pressure.

14  
14 This study also demonstrates that online gaming contexts possess communication characteristics that differ from face-to-face interactions in school environments. In *Free Fire*, communication occurs rapidly, spontaneously, and is oriented toward achieving game objectives. Such conditions encourage the use of more direct language with minimal mitigation. In situations such as team coordination or in-game battles, students frequently use imperative expressions such as “hurry up!”, “cover!”, or “listen to orders!”, which pragmatically can be categorized as forms of *negative impoliteness* because they restrict the interlocutor’s freedom of action. Nevertheless, within the gaming context, such forms of communication are often perceived as strategies for communication efficiency rather than conscious violations of politeness norms.

In addition, this study also identified the use of sarcasm or irony as indirect impoliteness strategies. Utterances such as “you’re so great” or “you’re really skilled” in situations of team defeat demonstrate meanings that are opposite to their literal interpretations. Pragmatically, this strategy

allows speakers to convey criticism or mockery implicitly. Sarcasm is often used as a form of humor or satire in interactions among students, so its impolite nature frequently goes unnoticed by both speakers and interlocutors. This indicates that students’ understanding of the pragmatic implications of utterances remains limited, particularly in distinguishing between jokes and forms of insult.

The strategy of *withhold politeness* was also identified in this study, occurring when students did not use socially expected forms of politeness such as expressions of gratitude, apologies, or polite requests. In online gaming communication, students tended to deliver commands or requests directly without using politeness markers. This phenomenon illustrates that, within rapid and competitive digital communication contexts, politeness is often considered irrelevant to the communicative purpose.

Compared to students’ language practices within the school environment, the intensity of impoliteness in online gaming was found to be significantly higher. In schools, the presence of teachers, institutional norms, and stronger social control encourage students to use more polite language, especially in interactions with teachers. However, this study found indications of language practice transfer from digital domains into real social environments. Several terms and communication styles originating from online gaming have begun to appear in interactions among students at school, although in milder forms. This phenomenon demonstrates that communication experiences in digital media can influence students’ language habits in everyday life.

This study is consistent with previous research stating that interactions in online games frequently generate aggressive, expressive, and emotionally charged language. Relatively anonymous communication environments, minimal social control, and competitive situations encourage players to employ more

15 confrontational language strategies. In addition, peer influence also plays an important role in shaping students' communication patterns. Within gaming groups, the use of harsh language is often considered part of group solidarity or a natural form of emotional expression.

19 The findings of this study are also in line with the research conducted by (Doda & Djou, 2023), which found that interactions in online games give rise to the use of harsh and expressive language among school-age children. The similarity lies in the emergence of direct speech strategies and the use of harsh slang in digital communication. However, this study differs because it applies Culpeper's impoliteness theory more specifically to identify forms of impoliteness among elementary school students, whereas the study by (Doda & Djou, 2023).  
 28 focused more generally on language politeness.

15 From an educational perspective, these findings have important implications for fostering students' language politeness in the digital era. Digital interactions through online games have become part of children's social lives; therefore, language guidance can no longer be limited solely to classroom learning contexts. Teachers and parents need to understand that students' communication experiences in digital spaces may influence their communication patterns in the real world. Consequently, language education should focus not only on mastery of language structures but also on pragmatic awareness, namely the ability to understand the context of language use and the social impact of utterances.

5 Thus, this study confirms that the phenomenon of linguistic impoliteness in online gaming cannot be understood merely as negative student behavior, but rather as the result of interactions among linguistic, social, and digital technological factors. Online games such as *Free Fire* create new communication spaces with interaction norms that differ from formal communication. Therefore, approaches to fostering language politeness need to consider the

dynamics of digital communication that have become part of the lives of today's younger generation.

This study offers novelty compared to previous studies because it not only identifies forms of linguistic impoliteness in online gaming interactions but also demonstrates the transfer of language practices from digital spaces into students' interactions within school environments. In addition, this study specifically examines impoliteness strategies based on Culpeper's theory among elementary school students, which remains rarely discussed in pragmatic and elementary education studies. These findings indicate that digital communication in online games not only influences students' virtual communication patterns but also has the potential to shape their language behavior in everyday social life.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the interactions of upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa while playing the online game *Free Fire* contain various forms of linguistic impoliteness as described in Culpeper's impoliteness theory, namely *bald on record impoliteness*, *positive impoliteness*, *negative impoliteness*, *sarcasm/irony*, and *withhold politeness*. Among these, *bald on record impoliteness* and *positive impoliteness* are the most dominant strategies, appearing through direct swearing, ridicule of other players' abilities, and harsh commands delivered without mitigation. The competitive nature of the game, combined with the spontaneous and less regulated environment of online communication, encourages students to use language that is more direct, aggressive, and emotionally expressive.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that linguistic practices developed in digital gaming environments may influence students' everyday communication, although with lower intensity outside the gaming context. This suggests that

experiences in online interactions can shape language behavior in real-life social settings. The study contributes to pragmatic research by providing insights into linguistic impoliteness among children in digital communication contexts. It also highlights the importance of the roles of teachers and parents in developing students' pragmatic awareness and encouraging the use of more polite and appropriate language across both educational and digital environments.

### Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered in interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted in only one location, namely upper-grade students at SDN Kurisa; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to describe elementary school students' language behavior more broadly in other regions. Social and cultural characteristics, as well as patterns of technology use, may vary across regions, potentially resulting in different linguistic practices.

Second, the data were obtained from students' interactions in the context of the Free Fire online game and some school-based interactions. Thus, this study does not cover all forms of digital communication that students may use, such as social media or other online communication platforms that may also influence their language practices.

Third, this study employed a descriptive qualitative approach focusing on pragmatic analysis of students' utterances. While this approach allows for an in-depth understanding of language use in context, it does not provide a quantitative overview of the frequency or percentage of each form of linguistic impoliteness.

Fourth, data collection through voice chat recordings, screenshots of conversations, and observation was highly dependent on spontaneous gaming situations. Therefore, not all utterances that occurred during gameplay could

be fully documented. Nevertheless, these limitations do not reduce the contribution of this study in providing an overview of the phenomenon of linguistic impoliteness among students in online gaming contexts and its relation to students' communication practices in school environments.

### Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several practical recommendations can be made for various stakeholders in fostering students' language politeness in the digital communication era.

First, for teachers, the cultivation of language politeness should be more systematically integrated into the learning process, particularly in Indonesian language instruction. Teachers can reinforce the importance of polite language not only in face-to-face classroom interactions but also in digital communication frequently used by students. In addition, teachers can utilize real examples from students' digital interactions as material for reflection and classroom discussion to enhance students' pragmatic awareness of the social impact of utterances.

Second, for parents, more active supervision and accompaniment of children's digital activities, including online gaming, are needed. Parents should not only limit screen time but also provide understanding of communication ethics in digital spaces. This guidance is important so that children can distinguish between language used in gaming situations and language used in everyday social interactions.

Third, for schools, it is important to develop digital literacy programs that focus not only on technological skills but also on digital communication ethics. Such programs can be implemented through socialization activities, workshops, or integration into character education programs in schools so that students develop awareness of the importance of

maintaining language politeness across communication contexts.

Fourth, for future researchers, it is recommended to conduct broader studies involving more diverse participants and research locations. Future research may also adopt a mixed-methods approach to combine qualitative analysis with quantitative data on the frequency of impoliteness forms. Furthermore, studies on the impact of digital communication on students' language politeness development can be expanded to other digital platforms such as social media, messaging applications, and other online games.

In conclusion, these recommendations are expected to ensure that the development of students' language politeness is not limited to formal learning contexts but also extends to digital communication spaces, which are increasingly becoming an integral part of the social lives of the younger generation.

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