

Emotional Blackmail in *Breaking Bad* Series: A Pragma-Stylistic Study

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Abstract—Although language research has focused on blackmail in general, less attention has been paid to emotional blackmail. To date, researchers could not locate any literature that examines emotional blackmail from a linguistic standpoint. The current study is intended to fill this gap by scrutinizing emotional blackmail from a pragma-stylistic point of view by examining the style of the characters in selected episodes extracted from the American *Breaking Bad* series. To carry out the study, an eclectic model comprising kinds of emotional blackmailers by Forward and Frazier (1997), Searles' speech acts (1979), Grice's maxims (1975), Brown and Levinson's politeness (1987), Culpeper's impoliteness (1996), and Simpson's stylistic levels (2004) will be used. The study examines how emotional blackmailers reflect themselves through language and how different pragmatic theories contribute to detecting emotional blackmail. The pragma-stylistic analysis reveals that emotional blackmailers use different pragmatic and stylistic elements. Pragmatically, the analysis demonstrates that punishers more frequently utilize commissive speech acts, whereas sufferers more frequently use representative and expressive speech acts. Besides, the punishers' speech is realized by breaching the quantity and manner maxims whereas the sufferer's speech is manifested by breaching the quantity and quality maxims. Concerning (im)politeness, the punishing behavior is accomplished by positive politeness, negative impoliteness, bold on-record impoliteness, and positive impoliteness while the suffering behavior is accomplished through positive politeness. Stylistically, the language used to talk about suffering is associated with discomfort and unhappiness. Concerning grammar, the punishing discourse emphasizes threats through fronting strategies. With suffering, negative auxiliaries are used.

Index Terms—emotional blackmail, (im)politeness, pragma-stylistics, speech acts

I. INTRODUCTION

In the sixteenth century, blackmail and extortion were terms used to describe requesting money to prevent damage to another person. The threat of publishing harmful information was then employed for the first time independently in 1843 under the term 'blackmail' (Dressler, 2002). Consequently, Solan and Tiersma (2005) and Shuy (2005) provide a list of crimes that can be committed with words. These crimes include solicitation to commit murder, solicitation to engage in sex, conspiracy, bribery, threats, blackmail, perjury, fraud, buying or selling stolen property, and submitting misleading statements to government agencies. Consequently, blackmail is viewed as a crime.

The present study is more concerned with emotional blackmail by which a person manipulates other people's emotions for different purposes. Emotional blackmail includes optimistic promises and offers to influence others' behavior other than threats. In this respect, emotional blackmail widens the concept of blackmail to include more manipulative strategies as a means of influence. In the TV works of dramatic criminal contexts, emotional blackmail is too apparent and extensively used to show how criminal and non-criminal acts are sometimes motivated. *Breaking Bad* is an American TV series about a drug dealer who blackmails a chemistry teacher who is a cancer patient into manufacturing drugs. Thus, it is considered adequate to represent how people emotionally blackmail each other for different purposes using different communicative strategies.

The study aims to pragma-stylistically recognize the characters' different styles while practicing emotional blackmail. Nevertheless, this aim can be more specified in the following research questions:

- 1- What are the kinds of emotional blackmailers detected in the selected data?
- 2- How can these kinds be pragmatically manifested?
- 3- How are these kinds stylistically manifested at the lexical and grammatical levels?

This study is expected to benefit linguists in general and pragma-stylisticians in particular. Additionally, it is believed that defining the most critical pragma-stylistic strategies can be advantageous to blackmail crime investigators to enhance their awareness of the language used by blackmailers. Furthermore, exposing the deceptive motives of emotional blackmailers will raise people's consciousness of how to avoid falling victims to blackmail and assist them in resisting and complying with the blackmailers' demands.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Pragma-Stylistics*

Hickey (1993) argues that stylistics recently relocates towards integrating pragmatic theories to account for certain linguistic phenomena and language use that stylistics finds challenging to explain. Therefore, pragma-stylistics is stylistic with a pragmatic component (as cited in Al-Janabi, 2020, p. 3). Pragma-stylistics aims to explain how effective structures are created by applying pragmatic theories to literary works (Davies, 2007). Nevertheless, according to the modern concept of stylistics, non-literary texts can also be analyzed stylistically, so the emphasis is no longer solely on literary texts (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

B. *Emotional Blackmail*

(a). *Definitions of Emotional Blackmail*

Forward and Frazier (1997) introduce emotional blackmail as a type of blackmail that employs specific weapons to dominate and influence others; it occurs in almost every kind of interpersonal relationship between people and a variety of social settings. Emotional blackmail deprives any relationship of its security, i.e., the characteristics of concern and trust that allow one to open up to another without fear of the most profound thoughts and feelings being exposed. FOG is invented as an acronym for the three instruments of the blackmailer's craft: Fear, Obligation, and Guilt. Blackmailers infuse their relationships with an encompassing fog, guaranteeing that their victims are afraid of confronting them, feel forced to show them respect and feel awful if they do not. According to Mu-Tzu (2017), blackmailers can control the victims' emotions by undermining their abilities, inciting remorse, and taking away their sense of security.

(b). *Kinds of Emotional Blackmailers*

Emotional blackmail is similar to conventional blackmail in that someone attempts to extract something from another by leveraging that person's secrets against him or her and manipulating their emotions. According to the explanation provided by Forward and Frazier (1997), emotional blackmail can be defined as a highly effective means of control whereby individuals within our immediate circle of relationships employ direct or indirect threats to penalize us for noncompliance with their desires. The essence of any form of blackmail lies in a fundamental threat, which can be articulated in various ways. Forward and Frazier (1997) identify **four** distinct kinds of emotional blackmailers. These kinds are summarized as follows:

- 1. Punishers** are the most evident blackmailers due to their blatant use of rage and threats. They approach relationships with an attitude of "my way or the highway" and often make threats such as "If you do X, I'll do Y." Punishers may threaten others either directly or indirectly via the use of silence or withholding. If the addressee does not comply with a punisher's demands, they may threaten him/her with desertion, emotional isolation, loss of money or other resources, or physical violence. An example of this type is, "I will not be here when you return if you go out tonight with your friends". (p. 31)
- 2. Self-punishers:** instead of threatening others with negative consequences, self-punishers manipulate others by threatening to harm themselves. A typical threat self-punishers use throughout an acute situation is that they place responsibility on people to account for the consequences of what happens to them. For example, "If you don't do X, I'll get sad, relapse, lose my job, try suicide, etc." They manipulate people's feelings of responsibility by portraying themselves as defenseless and placing the addressee in the rescuer position; for example, "stop hurting me, or I'll end my life so you can get rest". (p. 39)
- 3. Sufferers** believe that if they get what they wish for (such as more daily phone calls, financial support, etc.), any undesirable experience (such as feeling ill, lonely, depressed, or unlucky) can be quickly resolved. Some people express their discontent explicitly, while others may choose to suffer in silence and communicate their discontent through body language and other nonverbal cues. Sufferers think others can read their thoughts and take offense when they cannot. In other words, they are skilled accusers and guilt-pushers who frequently make us understand what they desire and then constantly conclude that it is our responsibility to ensure that they obtain it. An example of this type is, "Being distant gets me lonely. Come back and end my torture". (p. 43)
- 4. Tantalizers:** the tantalizer's blackmail method is far more sophisticated than the others. There are usually restrictions attached to the tantalizer's promises, such as money, job promotion, or the ideal relationship. Once their demands have been fulfilled, tantalizers frequently break their promises, coming up with new excuses as to why what has been done for them does not meet their expectations. An example of this type is, "If you stay in tonight, we will have a lot more fun than if you went out. This is crucial for our friendship". (p. 49)

C. *Pragmatics of Emotional Blackmail*

Pragmatics, according to Baker (2018), in general, "is the study of language in use. It is the study of meaning not as generated by the linguistic system but as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation" (as

cited in Mohammed & Abbas, 2016, p. 76). Many pragmatic theories are utilized to identify emotional blackmail as will be explained in the following sections.

(a). *Speech Acts Theory*

Aldhulaae (2011) states that Austin introduced the speech act theory in 1962, and Searle expanded on it in 1969. According to this theory, utterances are the means through which messages are transferred in communication (as cited in Abbas et al., 2023). Fromkin et al. (2019) define a Speech Act (SA) as the activity or intent that a speaker performs when utilizing language in context, the meaning of which is inferred by listeners.

Qassim et al. (2021) summarize Phuong's (2006) view indicating that if pragmatic competence is insufficient or defective, the SA will not be used properly; it will lead to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Searle (1975) offered his categorization of speech acts, referring to them as illocutionary activities, with the following five categories: representatives, expressives, commissives, directives, and declarations (as cited in Almarsomi & Hussein, 2021, p. 5).

(b). *Grice's Maxims*

Cruse (2000) shows that because interactions are guided by cooperative principles, they are more than just a series of disconnected words generated at random (as cited in Hadi & Mehdi, 2023, p. 25). Abbas (2020) states that cooperation in conversation is often controlled by a turn-taking system in which the interlocutors take turns according to specific norms, the most significant of which is that only one speaker talks at a time. Besides, Grice (1975) emphasizes the value of the cooperative principle (CP) in talks and outlines four fundamental maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner that define a cooperative discourse (as cited in Hussein, 2020, p. 7).

(c). *Politeness Theory*

Reiter (2000) claims that the term "politus," which means "smoothed or accomplished," is the source of the word 'politeness' (as cited in Rasheed & Kalaf, 2022, p. 3). According to Watts (1989; as cited in Abdul-Majeed, 2009, p. 510), politeness is defined as a language use that is thought to go above and beyond what is expected. As far as Leech (1996, p. 108) is concerned, "politeness" should be understood and connected to the speech's surface level. It is unrelated to the utterance when used outside of the intended context (as cited in El-Samir, 2014, p. 6). Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory centers on the concept of "face", which comprises positive and negative aspects. A negative face reflects the desire to avoid imposition, while a positive face involves seeking admiration and approval (as cited in Qassim et al., 2023). Abbas (2013) states that speakers, in conversation, do not haphazardly select their politeness strategies, but their choice is limited by sociocultural factors. Politeness includes four strategies as follows:

1. Bald on-record strategy: it is adopted when S does not take any remedial action to mitigate threats to the hearer's (H's) face and when there is just one clear goal implied by the act (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

2. Positive politeness strategy: it is deployed to reduce the severity of any potential face damage. It reflects typical verbal exchanges between close friends and family (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987) identify 15 positive politeness sub-strategies listed as follows: Notice, attend to H (his interest, wants, needs, goods), Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H), Intensify interest to H, Use in-group identity markers, Seek agreement, Avoid disagreement, Presuppose/raise/assert a common ground, Joke, Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, Offer, promise, Be optimistic, Include both S and H in the activity, Give (or ask for) reasons, Assume or assert reciprocity, and give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)".

1. Negative politeness strategy: it is utilized and directed towards H's negative face. To put it differently, S is conscious of H's preferences and makes an effort not to invade H's territory. Brown and Levinson (1978) provide a list of ten impoliteness sub-strategies: "Be conventionally indirect, Hedges, Be pessimistic, Minimise the imposition, Give deference, Apologies, Impersonalize S and H, State the FTA as a general rule, Nominalize, and Go on record as incurring debt or not indebting H."

2. Off-record politeness strategy: it is used to subtly portray actions when the H's face is not in danger. The S frequently uses indirectness to convey politeness indirectly without stating a request explicitly (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

(d). *Impoliteness Theory*

As per Leech (2014), the most effective approach to theorizing about impoliteness is to start with a theory of politeness, since impoliteness is the exact opposite of politeness and a closely related phenomenon. Thus, Culpeper (1996) uses Brown and Levinson's model of politeness to establish his idea of impoliteness. However, Qassim and Abbas (2022) affirm that Culpeper (1996) excludes the non-verbal manifestations of impoliteness, such as the one-finger gesture, spitting, and similar behaviors, and limits his model to verbal manifestations. Impoliteness includes five main strategies as follows:

1- Bald on record impoliteness

This strategy is used when a speaker means to hurt the hearer's face, and the unpleasant utterance is delivered immediately and plainly (Bousfield, 2008). In this case, Culpeper employs the face-attack act (FAA) instead of the face-threatening act (FTA) to distinguish the face attack when the speaker has a conscious aim (Mullany & Stockwell, 2010).

2-Positive Impoliteness

According to Bousfield and Locher (2008), this strategy undermines the hearer's desire for acceptance and a positive face. According to Mullany and Stockwell (2010), Culpeper (2005) adds several sub-strategies to positive impoliteness in his model's revision. Mohammed and Abbas (2016, p. 199) enlist them in brief as follows:

1. "Ignoring or snubbing the other.
2. Denying common ground with the hearer.
3. Selecting a sensitive or undesirable topic to talk about.
4. Using inappropriate identity markers.
5. Being disinterested and unsympathetic with the hearer.
6. Looking for disagreements.
7. Using obscure language and inserting secretive words within the discourse.
8. Using taboo words".

3-Negative impoliteness

The strategy targets the hearer's need to be free from imposition, which corresponds to his negative face (Thielemann & Kosta, 2013). According to Culpeper's (2005) model, negative impoliteness encompasses the subsequent sub-strategies (as cited in Mohammed & Abbas, 2016, p. 199):

- "scorn
- frighten
- ridicule
- And invade the hearer's space literally or metaphorically".

4- Sarcasm or mock impoliteness

Sarcasm or mock impoliteness alludes that the speaker executes the FTA using insincere politeness strategies (Thielemann & Kosta, 2013). To put it another way, sarcasm refers to the use of one or more politeness sub-strategies that appear appropriate and acceptable on the surface but signify the exact opposite (Bousfield, 2008).

5-Withhold politeness

This strategy is executed when the speaker disobeys the rules of etiquette and politeness, such as by failing to express gratitude to the listener when appropriate (Thielemann & Kosta, 2013).

D. Stylistics of Emotional Blackmail

According to Halliday (1978), stylistics is the study of language elements that directly impact an utterance's meaning, including phonology, lexicology, and syntax. As per Bloomfield's (1976) definition, stylistics involves analyzing and interpreting a language element or unique linguistic feature in a written piece, text, or collection of works while style, according to Lucas (1955), is the skillful use of words, particularly in prose, to convey ideas or arouse feelings.

Stylistic Levels

Stylistic linguists such as Simpson (2004) employ levels when examining texts. In other words, scholars have agreed that several levels of stylistic analysis are used when analyzing texts. The levels are divided into graphology, phonology, morphology syntax (grammar), lexical, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. The stylistic levels for the analysis in this study will be limited to lexical and grammatical levels because they are more comprehensible during the analysis by the researchers.

1. The Lexical Level

Words or sequences are not only phonetic chains, but they also have a role in the language's morphological structure and semantic context, making them lexical items. It would be challenging to locate a series of letters without any semantic coloring (Simpson, 2004, p. 170). A language user may communicate effectively with an audience by selecting the appropriate lexical items and sentence structures (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Simpson, 2004).

2. The Grammatical level

According to Lewis and Short (1879; as cited in Namwandi, 2019), grammar refers to the scientific study of the structure and organization of words, phrases, and sentences. In other words, this level examines the linguistic structure of the emotional blackmail discourse.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is qualitative in nature. The social context is crucial because it influences the significance of social acts; that is why qualitative research is "situationally constrained" (Neuman, 2014, p. 17). Thus, two excerpts from *Breaking Bad* are analyzed qualitatively to examine and interpret how characters emotionally blackmail others and to examine the pragma-stylistic manifestations of emotional blackmail. The researchers watched the series and selected the episodes that served the aims of the study. The scripts of the episodes were obtained from "*Breaking Bad - Transcripts - Forever Dreaming*" (2018).

The study develops an eclectic model for the analysis comprising two layers. The first layer examines the excerpts in terms of Forward and Frazier's (1997) classification of the types of emotional blackmailers. The second layer examines the pragma-stylistic manifestations of the emotional blackmail discourse of the first layer. The second layer of analysis is carried out by adopting the following models:

1. Speech Acts Theory (Searle, 1979).
2. Grice's Maxims (1975).
3. Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987).
4. Impoliteness Theory (Culpeper, 1996).
5. Stylistic (lexical and grammatical) levels (Simpson, 2004).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Excerpt 1:

Hank blackmailing Walter (Season 5/Episode 11)

If you're watching this tape. I'm probably dead, murdered by my brother-in-law, Hank Schrader. Hank has been building a meth empire and using me as his chemist and when I tried to quit, Fring threatened my family. The bomb that he used was built by me. He gave me no option in that I have often contemplated suicide but I was frightened. To keep me in line, he took my children. For three months he kept them. My wife had no idea of my criminal activities and was horrified to learn what I had done. I was in hell. I hated myself for what I had brought upon my family. I can't take this anymore. I live in fear every day that Hank will kill me or worse, hurt my family. All I could think to do was to make this video and hope that the world would finally see this man for what he is. Who do you think he's shown this to? No one. It's a threat. It's what he will do if I don't back off.

(Breaking Bad, Season 5, Episode 11)

Contextualization of Excerpt 1

Walter White is an underpaid, overqualified, and despondent high school chemistry teacher battling a recent stage three lung cancer diagnosis. In this episode, Walter, the main character, makes a video of his confession to resist Hank's blackmail and manipulation, assuring that Hank stimulates his criminal activities.

Analysis of Excerpt 1

1. Emotional Blackmailer

The researchers are not concerned with whether these claims are authentic or fake but with the kind of emotional blackmail given to the character in the context of this confession video. Hank, in this excerpt, is considered a punisher blackmailer because of his direct threats that give a sharp picture of what will happen if Walter does not obey his demands. In this episode, Walter confesses everything in a video found only in case he dies. In some lines within his confession, he retells how Hank has blackmailed him. He reports how Hank emotionally blackmails him with overt threats. Walter states that his brother-in-law, Hank, is a danger to his family. He also adds that Hank will hurt him or his family if he does not continue cooking meth. He has forced Walter to cook the meth for trading it in America, and his work with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) helps him know how drugs are distributed.

Furthermore, Hank took Walter's children for three months to force Walter to continue cooking him meth. Hence, punishers manipulate their victims emotionally to control them by intensifying the emotions of fear and obligation. Fear is an emotion that arises when victims perceive a threat or danger.

2. Pragma-stylistic Realizations of Emotional Blackmail in Excerpt 1

i. Speech Acts

The lines provided are a monologue from a character in a TV show. The analysis reveals that Hank is making several speech acts. The punishing acts reported in this video by Walter are realized in discourse through commissive speech acts showing future actions that could happen if Walter does not obey Hank's instructions. Hank threatens to hurt Walter's family if he does not agree to make and cook the meth for his meth empire, as stated in "*To keep me in line, he took my children. For three months, he kept them*" and "*It's a threat. It's what he will do if I don't back off*".

In this excerpt, it appears that Hank manipulates Walter's feelings and fear of being killed to influence him to continue his job. The blackmailer plays on the grounds of paternal feelings that no one can be satisfied when hurting his family. That is why Walter uses the expressive speech acts to entail his sorrow and dilemma for which Hank is blamed, as in "*I was in hell. I hated myself for what I had brought upon my family*" and "*I can't take this anymore*". Walter also expresses his feelings of fear, hatred, and regret, such as "*I live in fear every day that Hank will kill me or worse, hurt my family*". These are expressive speech acts that reflect the victim's situation. They are taken into consideration as a threshold to analyze the blackmailer's speech since the extract is a monologue, not a dialogue.

The blackmailer intimidated the victim by killing him utilizing a commissive speech act of future threats. Another commissive speech act used by Hank and described by Walter is that Hank has threatened him by ruining his reputation and exposing criminal activities among his family and friends. These future threats are executed by Hank, as shown in "*My wife had no idea of my criminal activities was horrified to learn what I had done*". To conclude, those future fears and threats are commissive speech acts of emotional blackmail. Hank threatens Walter of future harm. Thus, emotional blackmail is not very comforting and can cause anyone to alter his mind and obey commands.

ii. Grice's Maxims

In terms of Grice's maxims, the discourse of emotional blackmail, as reported by Walter, shows a non-observance type of quantity maxim. That is Walter, the victim, is more informative than is needed and employs repetition. A

possible interpretation is that the effect of blackmailers on their victims makes them nervous and frightened, which is reflected eventually in their speech.

iii. Im/politeness

Walter's description of Hank's threats is examined to realize the punisher's style in discourse. As clearly evident, the strategy of negative impoliteness is used by Hank, specifically by being disinterested and unsympathetic to the hearer (Walter). Additionally, bold-on-record impoliteness is expressed via the direct and violent threat, i.e., by frightening the victim. This is clear in the phrases that show Walter's fear of Hank's intimidation and his desire to commit suicide to end his misery, as in "*He gave me no option in that I have often contemplated suicide but I was frightened*" and "*I can't take this anymore. I live in fear every day that Hank will kill me or hurt my family*".

In terms of politeness, no strategies are detected in the extract that might show Hank's concern or even respect for Walter.

iv. Stylistic Levels

Concerning the lexical level, Hank blackmails Walter using aggressive language to refer to Hank's threats with explicit words of negative connotations such as '*death*' and '*fear*'. Examples of lexical choice include: '*fear*', '*bomb*', '*kill*', '*hurt*', '*horrified*', '*frightened*', '*hate*', and '*threat*'.

The grammatical level comprises the use of *if-clause* and *cleft sentences* to emphasize the potential hurt in "*It's a threat. It's what he will do if I don't back off.*". Moreover, the fronting of objects and adverbial clauses highlight the consequences and threats as in "*The bomb that he used were built by me, To keep me in line, he took my children. For three months he kept them*".

This denotes that negative aggressive lexis and fronting strategies are dominant in structuring the emotional blackmail discourse. Not only to manipulate texts but also to manipulate the emotions of blackmailed people.

Excerpt 2:

Jesse blackmailing Walter (Season 5 /Episode 13)

How do you like that, genius? I'll give you a hint, Walt. It involves a couple of five-gallon cans of gasoline and a lighter. No, no, no! Jesse, please, listen to me. No, you listen to me, bitch. You get your ass out here as fast as you can. Yes, I'm coming. Okay! Okay! And don't even think about calling anyone for help, all right? You hang up on me, put me on hold...lose my call for any reason as soon as you do, I'm burning all of it. All right You get the picture? -I get it, I get it. Okay. -All right. You better hurry because I'm burning 10 grand a minute till you get here, starting right now. I said, I'm coming! Don't you touch my money! Fire in the hole, bitch. N There goes 10 G's. -Oh, nice orange flames.

(Breaking Bad, Season 5, Episode 13)

Contextualization of Excerpt 2

In this excerpt, Jesse, the former student of Walter, blackmails the latter by manipulating his feelings. Jesse was a student of Walter in the chemistry class, and then Walter discovered that Jesse was working on distributing drugs. In this scene, Jesse calls Walter and pretends he will burn 10,000 dollars of Walter's money if the latter does not meet Jesse at a specific place. Jesse does so to bring Walter, whom Hank will arrest.

Analysis of Excerpt 2

1. Emotional Blackmailer

Jesse, in this excerpt, is categorized as a punisher. He threatens to burn all of Walter's money unless he comes to him immediately, using the threat of financial loss to manipulate Walter into doing what he wants. Besides, he tells Walter that he has cans of gasoline and a lighter and will burn \$10,000 a minute until Walter arrives. He also threatens to burn the money if Walter hangs up on him or puts him on hold, further emphasizing his control over the situation. Jesse's use of emotionally charged language adds to the situation's intensity and increases the pressure on Walter to comply with Jesse's demands. By burning the money, Jesse is essentially holding Walter's financial security hostage, forcing him to act in a way that he may not want to. Jesse's language is a powerful example of how emotional blackmail can be used to manipulate others. It shows how someone can use threats and emotional manipulation to control another person's behavior, even if it means causing harm or destruction. To sum up, punishers use strong language and threats to assert dominance and convey urgency.

2. Pragma-stylistic Realizations of Emotional Blackmail in Excerpt 2

i. Speech Acts

Jesse blackmails Walter using different types of speech acts. Jesse uses an expressive speech act to express his anger and emotionally blackmail Walter to obey his demands. For instance, "*How do you like that, genius?*" is an example of an expressive speech act conveying Jesse's frustration and anger towards Walter. Jesse uses the commissive speech act of threat to blackmail Walter by denoting future negative actions and promises of harm and damage in "*You hang up on me, put me on hold...lose my call for any reason...as soon as you do, I'm burning all of it.*" Another example of a commissive speech act is when Jesse says, "*You better hurry because I'm burning 10 grand a minute till you get here, starting right now*" because he promises to burn the money unless Walter arrives.

In addition, a representative speech act is also used by Jesse with the implicit purpose of threat in "*Well, I'll give you a hint, Walt. It involves a couple of five-gallon cans of gasoline and a lighter.*" A directive speech act appears to mean a command for doing an action is evident in "*No, you listen to me, bitch. You get your ass out here as fast as you can. A*

declaration speech act is used to change the world through speaking. For example, the phrase *“Fire in the hole, bitch”* is an example of a declaration speech act that changes the world by lighting Walter’s money on fire. Overall, this excerpt contains a variety of speech acts that reflect emotional blackmailing.

ii. Grice’s Maxims

Jesse, the punisher, breaches the quantity maxim since the emotional blackmail is conveyed with over-informative speech. He threatens to burn Walter’s money and implies that he wants Walter to come to him immediately by providing an informative explanation for the sequences if Walter does not come. By breaching the quantity maxim, Jesse creates a sense of urgency and shows his anger to get what he wants. Jesse uses over-informative speech and repetition to create suspense, worry, tension, and a chaotic atmosphere.

The maxim of manner is also breached when Jesse refers to burning the money using the symbols ‘lighter and gas’ unclearly to play with words. Jesse aims at manipulating and puzzling Walter to increase the strength of the threat as it is on the phone. Rather than declaring the threat explicitly, he threatens implicitly.

iii. Politeness

Jesse uses a positive politeness strategy to intensify interest in Walter, as stated in *“I’ll give you a hint”*. His aim here is not truly to account for Walter’s positive or negative face, but rather Jesse wants to manipulate Walter and perplex him to make the threat sound more serious.

iv. Impoliteness

Bald on-record impoliteness is expressed in Jesse’s language without any attempt to mitigate his harsh language as in *“You get your ass out here as fast as you can”*, *“And don’t even think about calling anyone for help, all right?”* and *“No, you listen to me, bitch”*. Besides being direct, these utterances incorporate positive impoliteness represented by using taboo words such as *‘bitch’* and *‘ass’* to call Walter.

Negative impoliteness is also used via the sub-strategy of frightening, for example, *“lose my call for any reason as soon as you do, I’m burning all of it”*. Frightening denotes that Jesse uses language to intimidate or create fear in the recipient. In the given lines, the threat to burn the money can be seen as frightening behavior. Moreover, the word *“genius”* in *“How do you like that, genius?”* can be seen as sarcasm or mock politeness, potentially threatening the positive face of the person being addressed. By using sarcasm and mockery, Jesse emotionally punishes Walter and blackmails him.

v. Stylistic Levels

On the lexical level of style, Jesse includes taboo words like *‘bitch’* and *‘ass’* and words denoting negative aspects of future actions such as *‘burning’*, *‘lighter’*, and *‘gasoline’*

The grammatical level of analysis includes using the negative element ‘no’ before the imperative *‘you listen’* and using the question tag *“all right?”*. Jesse also uses imperative sentences to give commands and make threats, such as *“You get your ass out here as fast as you can”*. Using these stylistic elements helps blackmailers achieve their goals by practicing signs of emotional blackmail, such as manipulation, threats, guilt-tripping, and controlling behavior.

Excerpt 3:

Walter Blackmailing Jesse (Season 5 /Episode 13)

-No, no, no! Jesse-- Jesse, please. I’m dying. My cancer is back. You’re not hurting anyone but my family. Okay? I can’t spend this money. It’s not for me. I won’t be around long enough to use it. It belongs to my children I am sorry about Brock.

(Breaking Bad, Season 5, Episode 13)

Contextualization of Excerpt 3

In this excerpt, Walter is manipulating his former student’s feelings. Walter aims to convince Jesse not to burn the money. To reach his aims, Walter describes his suffering and misery to seek Jesse’s sympathy and states that this money belongs to his children. Walter is trying to evoke the feeling of guilt in Jesse if he burns the money. This speech is intended by Walter to emotionally blackmail Jesse by making him responsible for the suffering of Walter’s family.

Analysis of Excerpt 3

1. Emotional Blackmailer

Sufferer blackmailers manipulate victims' emotions, making them feel guilty for their distress, and using their pain to manipulate them into committing their desired actions. Walter uses his illness, precisely the fact that his cancer has returned, to evoke sympathy and guilt in Jesse. By emphasizing his deteriorating health, he attempts to manipulate Jesse into complying with his wishes. Walter implies that if Jesse does not comply with his demands, it will negatively impact his family. This statement is meant to make Jesse feel responsible for the well-being of Walter’s family. By stating that the money is not for Walter’s benefit and belongs to his children, he is trying to persuade Jesse to fulfill his financial desires. After his death, Walter implies that his children will suffer without this money because it is the only source to maintain their future. He uses his suffering from cancer to affect Jesse. Walter obeys Jesse’s command to indicate his submission to Jesse. Overall, these lines demonstrate a combination of guilt-tripping, emotional manipulation, and using Walter’s illness and impending death to manipulate Jesse into complying with his wishes.

2. Pragma-stylistic Realizations of Emotional Blackmail in Excerpt 3

i. Speech Acts

Sufferer blackmailers use SAs to manipulate their victims by using guilt to control their behavior or persuade them to see things a certain way. In other words, sufferers make their victims feel guilty for not complying with their demands. Walter uses an expressive speech act to convey his emotional state of strong disagreement or refusal, as in “*No, no, no!*”. Walter uses a directive speech act that attempts to get Jesse’s attention and make a request as “*Jesse-- Jesse, please*” while “*I’m dying. My cancer is back.*” are representative speech acts that convey information about the speaker’s health condition, “*You’re not hurting anyone but my family. Okay?*” is a commissive speech act that attempts to persuade Jesse not to take any action that would harm Walter’s family whereas “*I can’t spend this money. It’s not for me. I won’t be around long enough to use it. It belongs to my children.*” is a representative speech act that explains the purpose of the money and who it belongs to. “*I am sorry about Brock.*” is an expressive speech act that conveys the speaker’s remorse or apology.

ii. Grice’s Maxims

To blackmail by showing suffering, Walter breaches the maxim of quantity by being over-informative, telling the story of his disease and his money. This comes to have more influence on Jesse to leave the idea of burning Walter’s money. Quantity maxim is indicated through the repetition of certain words such as “*No, no, no!*” “*Jesse-- Jesse, please*”. This repetition emphasizes the intensity of Walter’s emotions and his insistence on getting what he wants from Jesse. By repeatedly saying “no,” Walter is trying to make Jesse feel guilty for not complying with his demands and to manipulate him into doing what he wants. In addition, when Walter says, “*I am sorry about Brock.*”, he is violating the maxim of quality because he is lying. In brief, sufferer blackmailers may violate quality and quantity maxims to fulfill their desires.

iii. Politeness

Politeness strategies are used to express suffering and influence others. Walter uses a negative politeness strategy when he apologizes as in “*I am sorry about Brock.*” Walter also uses a negative politeness strategy when he minimizes the imposition by saying ‘*please*’. The word ‘*Okay*’ is also used by Walter as a positive politeness strategy to seek Jesse’s agreement not to burn the money. By expressing his suffering and concern for his children, Walter can appeal to Jesse’s emotions and convince him not to take drastic actions. These examples show how politeness strategies can be used to achieve a desired outcome without being aggressive or impolite.

iv. Stylistic Levels

For the lexical choices, Walter uses words of suffering that denote the fear, pain, and suffering of his family and himself to manipulate Jesse’s feelings. These words include ‘*cancer*’, ‘*hurting*’, and ‘*dying*.’ On the grammatical level, Walter tends to use negative sentences. These negative sentences would denote his difficult situation and suffering if the money were burned, as in “*You’re not hurting anyone but my family*” in which Walter explains to Jesse that their actions hurt Walter’s family and prevent them from using the money.

Results of the Analysis

The data analysis displays that the characters are identified as punishers and sufferers. Hank and Jesse are punishers; Hank portrays himself as a punisher by using emotional blackmail to intimidate Walter with severe damage. Similar to Hank, Jesse threatens Walter with serious harm as a form of punishment. Unlike the two previous characters who adopt violent and criminal methods, Walter employs a more moderate, sympathetic, and compassionate form of emotional blackmail; thus, he is a sufferer. These results answer the first question of the research.

Regarding the second question, “How can these kinds be pragmatically manifested?”, the analysis shows that all speech acts—aside from declaratives—are used by punishers and sufferers. In particular, punishers tend to use commissive speech acts more often than sufferers do, who tend to use expressive and representative speech acts more frequently. That is Hank and Jesse, the punishers, use commissive speech acts to threaten Walter, the sufferer, to hurt him if he does not do what they want. To keep Walter in line, Hank states that he will take Walter’s children, and Jesse threatens Walter to burn the money if he cannot come. On the contrary, Walter uses representative and expressive speech acts to express his feelings and to describe his state to instill guilt into others for not helping. Regarding Grice’s maxims, the punishers’ speech is realized through the non-observance of the maxims of quantity and manner. In contrast, the sufferer’s speech is realized through the non-observance of the quantity and quality maxims. Concerning (im)politeness, the punishing behavior is realized using positive politeness, negative impoliteness, bold on record impoliteness, and positive impoliteness, while the suffering one is realized through positive politeness only.

Concerning the third question, “How are these kinds stylistically manifested at the lexical and grammatical levels?”, the stylistic analysis shows that the lexical choices in punishing discourse tend to be aggressive, inappropriate, and of negative connotations such as words of threats like killing, burning, abusing reputation, and taboo words. In contrast, in the suffering discourse, the lexical choices are related to fear, pain, and suffering, as in the use of words that refer to complaining about death and disease. As for the grammatical style, the punishing discourse employs fronting strategies to highlight threats such as ‘cleft sentences’ and ‘if clauses’. With suffering, negative auxiliaries are apparent.

V. CONCLUSION

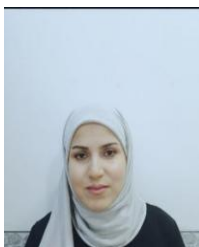
The current study has attempted to investigate the different kinds of emotional blackmail performed by the three main characters in *Breaking Bad*. Hank appears as a punisher to emotionally blackmail Walter by threatening ultimate danger. Jesse, similar to Hank, uses the style of punishment by threatening Walter with severe damage. In contrast to

the two earlier characters, Walter uses the more peaceful style of emotional blackmail, which is suffering, i.e., a sufferer. Hank and Jesse follow aggressive and criminal styles of emotional blackmail, while Walter uses a more peaceful and sympathetic style. The characters' styles of emotional blackmail differ according to their role in the context of the selected texts (whether they are criminals or victims, powerful or powerless). Pragmatically, the analysis reveals that punishers and sufferers use all speech acts except for declaratives. The most common speech acts used by punishers are commissives, whereas the most common speech acts used by sufferers are representatives and expressives. According to Grice's maxims, the non-observance of the quantity and manner maxims results in the realization of the punishers' speech, whereas the non-observance of the quantity and quality maxims results in the realization of the sufferer's speech. When it comes to (im)politeness, the punishers exploit positive politeness, negative impoliteness, bold-on-record impoliteness, and positive impoliteness, whereas the sufferer deploys only positive politeness. Stylistically, the punishers' language incorporates word choices that frequently have an angry and improper tone. In contrast, the word choices in the sufferer's language are connected to discomfort and misery. Regarding grammar, the punishers use fronting strategies to emphasize risks, such as "if clauses" and "cleft sentences." Meanwhile, the sufferer uses negative auxiliaries.

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