



1. Afrah S. Najem  
2. Nawal F. Abbas  
College of Education  
for Women, University  
of Baghdad, Baghdad,  
Iraq

\* **Corresponding Author**

**Email:**

[1.afrah.najm2203m@coedu](mailto:1.afrah.najm2203m@coedu)

[w.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:w.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

[2.nawal.fadhil@coeduw.uob](mailto:2.nawal.fadhil@coeduw.uob)  
[aghdad.edu.iq](mailto:aghdad.edu.iq)

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## A Pragmatic Analysis of Emotional Blackmail in the American Movie No One Would Tell (2018)

### A B S T R A C T

Emotional blackmail is generally defined as manipulating others' emotions for personal gain. It is a type of manipulation that damages healthy relationships among people and turns them into toxic relations leaving the victim in a state of depression and under stress of losing something s/he holds dear. This study aims to identify the pragmatic techniques of emotional blackmail used by both blackmailers and victims in "No One Would Tell" (2018). To do so, the researchers developed an eclectic model comprising Forward and Frazier's (1997) emotional blackmail, Searle's speech acts (1979), Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (1987), Culpeper's impoliteness strategies (1996, 2005), and Mayfield's taxonomy of fallacy (2007). A qualitative approach is followed in the analysis of the data by focusing on the pragmatic strategies used in the discourse of emotional blackmailers. The findings of the study show that the type of blackmailer identified is the punisher and the type of victim is the anger-avoider. The analysis also shows that punisher blackmailers tend to be impolite, use directive speech acts, and rely on fallacy strategies to justify their position in their arguments. On the other hand, the victims' speech reflects a high degree of politeness strategies to avoid confrontations with blackmailers. The victims tend to use representative speech acts more commonly without employing impoliteness strategies.

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## تحليل تداولي للابتزاز العاطفي في الفيلم الأمريكي "لا أحد سيعرف" (2018)

الباحثة افراح سهيل نجم/ جامعة بغداد / كلية التربية بنات

ا.د. نوال فاضل عباس/ جامعة بغداد / كلية التربية بنات

### المستخلص

الابتزاز العاطفي يُعرف عموماً بأنه استغلال مشاعر الآخرين للتلاعب بهم من أجل تحقيق مكاسب شخصية. إنه نوع من التلاعب الذي يضر بالعلاقات الصحية بين الناس، ويحولها إلى علاقات سامة؛ مما يترك الضحية في حالة من الاكتئاب وتحت ضغط فقدان شيء عزيز عليه. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اكتشاف التقنيات التداولية للابتزاز العاطفي المستخدمة من قبل كل من المبتزين والضحايا في فيلم "لا أحد سيعرف" (2018). لتحقيق ذلك، طور الباحثون نموذجاً انتقائياً يتضمن نظرية الابتزاز العاطفي لفورود وفريزر (1997)، وأفعال الكلام لسيرل (1979)، واستراتيجيات اللطف لبراون وليفينسون (1987)، واستراتيجيات عدم اللطف لكولبير (1996، 2005)، وتصنيف الأخطاء لمايفيلد (2007). تم اتباع نهج نوعي في تحليل البيانات من خلال التركيز على الاستراتيجيات البراغمية المستخدمة في خطاب المبتزين عاطفياً. تم أخذ نص البيانات من الموقع الإلكتروني\*. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن نوع المبتز هو "المعاقب" ونوع الضحية هو "متجنب الغضب". كما أظهر التحليل أن المبتزين المعاقبين يميلون إلى أن يكونوا غير مهذبين، ويستخدمون أفعال كلام توجيهية، ويعتمدون على استراتيجيات الأخطاء لإثبات أن مطالبهم مشروعة في حججهم. من ناحية أخرى، يعكس خطاب الضحايا درجات عالية من استراتيجيات اللطف لتجنب المواجهات مع المبتزين. يميل الضحايا إلى استخدام أفعال الكلام التمثيلية بشكل أكبر دون استخدام أي استراتيجية عدم لياقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الابتزاز العاطفي , أفعال الكلام , التأذب ( اللباقة ) , عدم التأذب , تصنيف الأخطاء

\* www.subslikescript.com.

## Introduction

In the 16th century, asking for money to protect someone from harm was called 'blackmail' or extortion. In 1843, the threat of revealing negative information came to be known as "blackmail" (Dressler, 2002). There are different types of blackmail: cyber blackmail, business blackmail, moral blackmail, and emotional blackmail.

This study mainly focuses on emotional blackmail which means the manipulation of others' emotions for personal gain. In contrast to threats, positive promises and proposals aimed at influencing others' behavior are also forms of emotional blackmail. In this sense, emotional blackmail expands the definition of blackmail to include more deception methods. Emotional blackmail is a prevalent theme and often appears in TV dramas with dramatic crime scenes to depict both criminal and non-criminal motivations. In the American movie "*No One Would Tell*" (2018), the couple Robbie and Sara have a toxic relationship that is characterized by emotional blackmail. In this study, the movie is analyzed as a case study to expose how emotional blackmail is practiced from a pragmatic point of view.

The purpose of this study is to identify the pragmatic strategies used by blackmailers and victims. In other words, this study is intended to answer the following questions:

- 1- What types of blackmailers and victims are found in the selected data?
- 2- What pragmatic strategies are used by blackmailers and victims?

The researchers hope to fill the research gap by examining emotional blackmail from a pragmatic perspective since, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are no such studies examining the movie from a pragmatic perspective. Most previous studies have focused on blackmail in the psychology field or on blackmail in general rather than on the subtle language employed in emotional blackmail in close relationships. For example, Al-Asfer and Bairmani (2021) employed a pragmatic approach to investigate cyber blackmail, although they only looked at emails sent between strangers. Likewise, Igaab (2021) examined the linguistic features of blackmail in Arabic and English contexts without focusing on depictions of emotional

blackmail in movies. The psychology researchers Al-Kreimeen *et al.* (2022) looked into the connection between female students' college adjustment and emotional blackmail.

Therefore, this study is expected to benefit linguists in general and pragmatists in particular. In addition, uncovering the malicious motives of blackmailers can allow victims to avoid such situations and build healthy relationships with their loved ones.

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1.1 Pragmatics**

The area of linguistics that studies meaning in context is called pragmatics. The ability to infer meanings from specific speech patterns to understand what a speaker is referring to and the connection between the new information and previous events is the primary emphasis of pragmatics. Using prior knowledge about the subject and the speaker aids in understanding the speech even more (Charles, 1998 as cited in Majeed, 2021, p. 19).

Yule (1996, as cited in Muhsen & Smeer 2022, p.22) explains that pragmatics is the study of the "invisible" sense, or how we understand what is said even when it is not spoken or written explicitly. The relationship between the sign and its user is represented by this science. In general, pragmatics aims to focus on inferred meanings and examine how meaning is produced, going beyond an utterance's literal meaning. Therefore, it will be employed to shed light on hidden meanings and expose the malicious goals of blackmailers.

### ***1.2 Strategies of Emotional Blackmail***

Emotional blackmailers typically use three tactics to control their "victims: fear, obligation, and guilt. It is the increasing presence of these tactics in a relationship that allows therapists to refer to it as FOG (Forward & Frazier, 1997). Forward and Frazier (1997) elaborate on how these tactics are used by emotional blackmailers in pressuring their victims.

First, fear is a protective mechanism to keep us safe. The same way people feel that fear when they think something bad might happen is the same way they feel when

they are going to lose their loved one. An emotional blackmailer uses his victims' fears as leverage so he can get what he wants from them. A person can be held emotionally hostage by emotional blackmailers using different varieties of fears such as the dread of the unknown, fear of abandonment, fear of offending someone, fear of confrontation, fear of difficult situations and conditions, and anxiety about physical safety. Blackmailers provide victims with expressions such as "Do it my way or I won't leave you/ disapprove of you/ stop loving you/ yell at you/ make you miserable/ confront you/ fire you." (Forward & Frazier, 1997, p. 53).

Secondly, blackmailers exploit the sense of obligation. This makes their victims feel obligated to meet the terms laid down by blackmailers. Moreover, the blackmailer employs different ways to push the victim into seeing himself negatively if he does not comply with the terms set by the blackmailer, just to drive home how much their targets should consider themselves in debt to them; they may even utilize societal and religious norms as well. Examples are: "A good daughter would spend time with her mother, at least be here when I get home — I work for this family so hard" (Forward & Frazier, 1997, p. 59).

Thirdly, guilt about not doing something comes after being asked. The victims are convinced by blackmailers that they deserve punishment because of their inactivity. One of the fastest methods in which blackmailers can create guilt that is not justified is by employing blame and pinning, consciously attributing any pain or difficulties they are going through to their victims. The catchphrase of the blame peddler is "It is all your fault," even though the specifics might differ (Forward & Frazier, 1997, p.65).

### ***1.3 Processes of Emotional Blackmail***

According to Forward and Frazier (1997, pp. 19-20), emotional blackmail typically involves six processes: demands, resistance, threats, pressure, compliance, and repetition.

1. Demand: Blackmailers initially make indirect suggestions, but these quickly become so explicit and unavoidable.

2. **Resistance:** The victim's response reflects an unwillingness to comply with the blackmailers' demands or refuse or abide by them (Doll, 2019).
3. **Pressure:** Blackmailers, in noticing the defiance of their victims to their pleas, may go on to the pressure process and try to convince them yet again to change their minds. Those trying to emotionally blackmail others may have a clear ability to discern those who genuinely care about other people from them (i.e., the victims) based on their responses to victims' resistance.
4. **Threats:** Paler (2023) notes that blackmailers often issue direct threats. They may threaten their victims after their refusal to comply with them by showcasing what will happen in case they do not comply, like ending the relationship or causing pain or sadness.
5. **Compliance:** This process concerns the victims. At first, they do not want to compromise, but they also do not want the conveyed threats to come to pass. Over time, the victims comply, and the stress is replaced with peace and comfort.
6. **Repetition:** If blackmailers succeed in their goal, they often believe the method is effective and then may repeat the threat, demand, or act of pressure (Raypole, 2020).

It is worth noting that these processes do not necessarily occur in order. Moreover, blackmailers may achieve their goals by demand and pressure without threat processes or demand and threat at the same time without pressure.

#### *1.4 Kinds of Emotional Blackmailers*

Regarding potential emotional blackmail threats, four specific types of emotional blackmailers are outlined by Forward and Frazier (1997, pp. 31-49):

1. **Punishers:** They are typical blackmailers in the sense they explicitly use threats and anger. They often employ threats such as "If you do X, I'll do Y" and take up a "my way or the highway" kind of approach to relationships.
2. **Self-punishers:** They are individuals who try to control others by threatening to harm themselves as an alternative to making life difficult for others through negative consequences. In a life-threatening situation, a self-punisher would

typically apply pressure on someone else by blaming this person for the outcome of his actions. E.g., "If you won't do X, I'll get depressed or drink again or lose my job or make another suicide attempt, etc." "Stop hurting me, or I'll kill myself so that you can get some rest".

3. Sufferers: They feel that any negative thing, such as feeling unwell, lonely, dejected, or unfortunate can be easily remedied if people provide them with what they demand (more phone calls, money, etc). One example of such a statement is "Being distant gets me lonely. Come back and end my torture" (p. 43).
4. Tantalizers: The blackmail tactic used by the tantalizer is much more insidious than the others. The promises tantalizers make, such as those of money, a job promotion, or finding romance, are usually conditional. When the demands of tantalizers are met, they often break their promises and come up with new reasons why what they receive is inadequate. One example of this type is "If you stay in tonight, we will have a lot more fun than if you went out — this is important for our friendship" (p. 49).

### ***1.5 Pragmatics of Emotional Blackmail***

Pragmatics, 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" (Mohammed & Abbas, 2016, p. 76). Stalnaker said, "Pragmatics is the study of the purposes for which sentences are used, of the real-world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used as an utterance" (as cited in Sanchez 2009, p.114). Therefore, pragmatic theories can be recommended to be instruments for finding emotional manipulation, among which are the following:

#### ***1.5.1 Speech Acts Theory***

A speech act (SA) is, according to Fromkin et al. (2019), the activity or intention that a speaker performs when using language in context, where meaning is inferred by listeners. Speech acts include performing various actions such as requesting, asking, greeting, advising, complaining, threatening, and so on. Speech acts are the actions

or intent that a speaker accomplishes when using language in a context where the meaning of which is inferred by hearers. (Hadi & Mehdi, 2023, p.25). Qassim and Abbas (2021) summarize Phuong (2006) as suggesting that inappropriate pragmatic competence leads to the mismanagement of a SA, hence misconceptions and breakdowns in communication.

The present study is an inquiry into the SAs that realize the discourse of emotional blackmailers. Searle (1979) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories, namely, Representatives, Directives, Declaratives, Commissive, and Expressives.

### ***1.5.2 Politeness Theory***

The core of politeness theory formulated by Brown and Levinson (1987) is the notion of face. In their terms, 'face' is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 66). Therefore, to minimize threats to the hearer's face, the interlocutor should follow some recommended strategies. According to Abbas (2013), speaking with polite words in a conversation does not occur haphazardly; rather it is because speakers are consciously aware when using them. However, it is only various contextual variables or socio-cultural factors that include the social distance existing between the participants in a conversation and their relative power plus what they are talking about that limit such a choice of which method to use. The major macro strategies of politeness are five but this study will be confined to only three:

- Bald on-record politeness, as per Brown and Levinson (1987), is used when there is only one clear purpose conveyed by the act (i.e., speaking by Grice's maxims) and when S does not take any action to reduce the threats to the hearer's (H's) face.
- Positive politeness indicates that there is no serious face threat intended and is relevant to the hearer's positive face. By indicating that S is acting on H's preferences or maintaining them, it protects H's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The fifteen positive politeness sub-strategies are cited by Sudjirman (2016, p. 44) as follows: offer, exaggerate (interest, approval or sympathy for



H), give praise, give in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, assume or assert common ground between S and H cheerfully, be optimistic, encourage, provide or seek reasons, assume reciprocity.

- Negative politeness is applied and aimed in the direction of H's negative face; that is, S tries to respect H's domain. Be that as it may, let us consider Brown and Levinson (1987), there are eleven sub-strategies of politeness: Hedge. Be generally indirect, be negative—reduce the imposition—Rx. Show respect, apologize, and dehumanize S or H! Declare the FTA generally. Declare debt or lack thereof to H. Presume/raise/claim common ground. Make a joke; assert S knows about & is considerate of H's desires. Make an offer; make a promise! Embrace positivity. Involve both S&H in a task; provide/receive justification. Presume/reciprocate! Provide H gifts (i.e., goods) —sympathy, understanding, and cooperation.

### ***1.5.3 Impoliteness Theory***

Tracy (1998, p.227 as cited in Al-Utbi, & Almuslehi, 2021, p. 15) defines impoliteness as “communicative acts perceived by members of a social community to be purposefully offensive behavior”. A lot of linguists feel that impoliteness can be addressed in terms of politeness theory. Leech (2014) demonstrates that "the best way to begin theorizing about impoliteness is to build on a theory of politeness, which is a closely related phenomenon, in fact, the polar opposite of politeness" (p. 219). Therefore, Culpeper (1996) bases his concept of impoliteness on Brown and Levinson's model of politeness. Qassim and Abbas (2022) argue that, however, Culpeper (1996) restricts his model to verbal manifestations and ignores non-verbal forms of impoliteness such as spitting or one-finger gestures and similar actions. In this study three major strategies of impoliteness are needed:

- **Bald on-record impoliteness:** This is done when the speaker intends to make the hearer feel uncomfortable, and the offensive statement is delivered openly and quickly (Bousfield, 2008). To distinguish a face assault when the speaker has a

deliberate goal, Culpeper uses the face-attack act (FAA) in this instance rather than the face-threatening act (FTA) (Mullany & Stockwell, 2010).

- Positive impoliteness: Bousfield and Locher (2008) argue that this tactic damages the hearer's desire to be viewed as positive or likable. Mullany and Stockwell (2010) affirm that Culpeper (2005) revised his model by adding other sub-strategies alongside positive impoliteness.
- Sarcasm or mock impoliteness: It suggests that the speaker uses fake politeness techniques to carry out the FTA. In other words, sarcasm is the application of one or more sub-strategies of politeness that, although seeming appropriate and acceptable at first glance, actually mean the exact opposite (Bousfield, 2008).

#### ***1.5.4 Taxonomy of fallacies***

To emotionally blackmail people for specific purposes, emotional blackmailers may employ fallacious discourse to manipulate their victims, creating promises or threats. Mayfield (2007) presents a fallacy classification that divides common fallacies into four main categories: emotional-based fallacy, distraction-based fallacy, inductive fallacy, and language-based fallacy. However, the researchers only use three types of fallacies for this study, which deal with the fallacious discourse of emotional blackmail meant to control the victims. The fallacy taxonomy is as follows:

##### **A. Manipulating via emotions**

This fallacy occurs when reasoning is not used to support an argument, but rather an appeal to feelings.

##### **B. Manipulating via distraction**

This fallacy occurs when reasoning is not used to support an argument, but rather an appeal to distraction.

##### **C. Inductive fallacy**

This fallacy occurs when reasoning is not used to support an argument, but rather an appeal to inductive fallacy.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The present study is qualitative. The social context is important because it impacts the meaning of social acts, making qualitative research “contextually constrained” (Neuman, 2014, p.17). Therefore, the paper analyzes three extracts from "*No One Would Tell*" qualitatively to understand how characters emotionally blackmail others and explore pragmatic manifestations of emotional blackmail.

The researchers watched the movie and selected the cases of emotional blackmail to be analyzed. The script was taken from “www.subslikescript.com.” The researchers developed an eclectic model for the analysis comprising two layers. The first layer looks at the extracts based on Forward and Frazier's (1997) classification of the types of emotional blackmailers. The second layer looks at the pragmatic manifestations of emotional blackmail by adopting:

1. Speech Acts Theory (Searle, 1979)
  2. Impoliteness Theory (Culpeper, 1996, 2005)
  3. Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987).
  4. Mayfield taxonomy of fallacy (2007)
3. Data Analysis

This section is specified for analyzing the selected data by drawing on the framework that has been discussed in the previous sections.

Extract One:

Rob: *Studying going well? You think I am a stupid bitch? I know you are with Nikki.*

Sara: *babe, you know what? It wasn't planned, and she was upset.*

Rob: *About what?*

Sara: *I can't say. Um, do you wanna just give me some privacy I'm just. Give me two seconds just to go to the bathroom.*

Kittie: *Okay yeah.*

Sara: *my mom's a drunk she's she just needed a place to get away for a*

Rob: *well, why didn't you tell me?*

Sara: *I promised I wouldn't tell people.*

Rob: I'm not people I'm your boyfriend you say you say you love me, but how am I supposed to feel when you would lie like that?

Sara: Sorry that's not what I meant.

Rob: Listen Sara. If you really care about us about me or tell anyone, I will never get back to you.

### Contextualizing Extract One

This extract is a conversation between Rob and Sara over the phone, where Rob is inquiring about her leaving without telling him. After confronting her, she justifies her action to maintain their relationship, but he continues to blame and threaten her. The transformation of his initial romance into controlling behavior demonstrates his use of manipulative tactics.

### Analysis of Extract One

#### 1. Psychological Aspects of Emotional Blackmail

In this extract, the following processes are exchanged between Rob, the punisher emotional blackmailer, and Sara, the anger-avoider victim. Rob uses his rage and threatens directly to leave her if she tells anyone about their fight. Avoiding conflict, Sara finds it difficult to communicate her rage to Rob, who controls her by using fear. The processes are identified as follows.

#### Demand

Rob initiates his demand process with a confrontational question, implying blame for Sara's leaving to set the environment for emotional blackmail. Through this question, Rob employs the *blame tool of emotional blackmail* to quickly manipulate Sara into disclosing information, saying "*Well, why didn't you tell me?*"

#### Resistance

After Rob's demand with implied blame, Sara resists many times indirectly by giving justifications for her actions. As evident in the statement "*Babe, you know what? It wasn't planned and she was upset*", she attempts to discuss the situation to convince Rob that she does not intend to go to her friend without telling him on purpose, justifying that her friend was upset. Then, she resists his demand by saying that she

cannot tell him why she withholds information, saying “*I can't say*”. However, in “*My mom's drunk, she's just needed a place to get away*”, she describes the situation's complexity by telling him that her mother needs her because she is drunk. Finally, she reinforces her resistance by emphasizing her commitment to not revealing personal information, saying “*I promised I wouldn't tell people*”.

#### Pressure

To pressure Sara, Rob employs the *guilt strategy of emotional blackmail*. Firstly, Rob undermines her confidence by questioning her and provoking guilt because he is sure that she is not studying, asking, “*Studying going well?*” Secondly, he says “*You think I am a stupid bitch?*” in an aggressive manner to manipulate and distort reality to make Sara question her view, employing the *spin tool* by the use of the adjective “stupid”. Thirdly, he increases the pressure by questioning her loyalty, creating insecurity in Sara to comply with the use of the *guilt strategy*, saying “*I know you are with Nikki*”. Fourthly, using the *blame tool of emotional blackmail*, he blames her by telling her that he is not a stranger, but he is her boyfriend to whom she should reveal everything “*I'm not people I'm your boyfriend*”. Fifthly, he accuses her of holding information due to her lack of love and asks about how he is supposed to feel by using the *deadly whys and hows tool of emotional blackmail*, saying “*Say you love me, but how am I supposed to feel when you would lie like that?*”

#### Threat

In the statement “*Listen, Sara. If you really care about us about me or tell anyone, I will never get back to you*”, Rob threatens Sara directly to leave her if she does not comply, using the *fear strategy* of emotional blackmail. Besides, he uses a *catastrophic prediction and threat tool of emotional blackmail* to threaten her with negative consequences if she does not obey him. This reflects fear of loss.

#### Compliance

Sara complies by trying to clarify her intentions by apologizing to him, saying “*Sorry that's not what I meant*”. This highlights Rob’s use of emotional blackmail strategies to lead her to comply.

## 2. The Pragmatic Aspects of Emotional Blackmail

The pragmatic aspects of emotional blackmail are realized through the use of speech acts, politeness, impoliteness, and fallacy theory in the emotional blackmail processes. These processes are listed below.

### Pragmatics of Demand

By asking a direct inquiry and implying that Sara's departure was her fault, Rob sets an atmosphere for the emotional blackmail demand process. By asking "*Well, why didn't you tell me?*", Rob uses the form of a *directive speech act (asking)* to accomplish an *expressive indirect speech act (blaming)* in order to employ the *blame tool* of emotional blackmail to coerce Sara into disclosing information. Besides, he employs *negative impoliteness (invading others' space)* to threaten Sara's negative face by questioning her trustworthiness.

### Pragmatics of Resistance

Sara frequently engages in indirect resistance by rationalizing her behavior. She tries to explain the circumstances to Rob with a *representative direct speech act of describing*, arguing that her friend was unhappy, to justify that she did not intend to go to her without notifying him in advance, as is clear from her utterance, "*Babe, you know what it wasn't planned and she was upset.*" This utterance also reflects Sara's response with *positive politeness* by the use of the familiar address form "*Babe*". Besides, in defiance of his insistence, she says, "*I can't say,*" unable to reveal to him why she withholds certain information, employing a *commissive direct speech act of planning*. Here, she resists directly, employing a *bald-on-record politeness*.

However, in "*My mom's drunk. She's just needed a place to get away,*" she uses a *representative direct speech act* to tell him that her mother needs her since she is intoxicated, which highlights the complexity of the scenario with the help of a *positive Pol strategy* (giving reasons). Lastly, she reaffirms her reluctance directly by reiterating her vow to keep personal information private by employing a *commissive direct speech act* and *bald-on-record politeness*, saying, "*I promised I wouldn't tell people*"

## Pragmatics of Pressure

Rob uses the emotional blackmail *guilt strategy* to put pressure on Sara with the use of indirect speech acts. First, in the utterance "*Studying going well?*", Rob appears to inquire about Sara's studies, but he intends to make a sarcastic remark by implying the opposite of what is stated. Thus, he uses the form of a *directive direct speech act (inquiry)* to accomplish an *expressive indirect speech act (criticizing)* and *sarcasm impoliteness* to insincerely inquire about her studying sarcastically.

Second, in an aggressive way and in an attempt to make Sara feel bad about herself, he uses the form of a *representative SA of describing* to accomplish an *expressive indirect speech act of blaming* in the utterance "*You think I am a stupid bitch?*" He is calling himself bitch so he is impolite to himself by the use of *the taboo word "stupid bitch"*. This statement reveals Rob's goal to use *the manipulation of emotions fallacy; that is, the appeal to pity* to place himself in a weaker position to influence her opinion. Thirdly, using the form of a *representative SA of stating (using "I know")* that functions as an *expressive indirect speech act of accusing* to make his complain about Sara's conduct, he increases the pressure on her, saying "*I know you are with Nikki.*" Besides, to make her feel insecure, he communicates his dissatisfaction with her relationship with Nikki in a clear way to attack her face, employing *positive impoliteness (Making the other uncomfortable)*. This highlights his accusations and seriousness to reflect his intention of pressing her to comply with his requests. Fourth, he employs the form of a *representative SA of stating* to accomplish an *expressive indirect speech act of blaming*, stating that he is her boyfriend, not anyone but intentionally blaming her for not telling him where she is by saying "*I'm not people. I am your boyfriend*". Besides, he uses *positive impoliteness* to make her uncomfortable with her actions and to make her feel blamed for excluding him from her family, and this is realized by the employment of *the appeal to pity fallacy* to invoke sympathy. Fifth, in the utterance, "*You say you love me,*" asserts what Sara has said. It means Rob is aware of Sara's expression of love by employing the form of a *representative speech act*, but it serves as an *expressive direct speech act of*

*blaming*. However, regarding her honesty and the consequences of her actions, his inquiry, "But how am I supposed to feel when you would lie like that," conveys annoyance or uncertainty using the form of a *directive speech act* to accomplish an *expressive indirect speech act of accusing of lying*. This utterance also highlights his use of *bald-on politeness (Rhetorical question)* by accusing her of lying indirectly by rhetorical question. Besides, it reflects the *appeal to pity fallacy* by expressing his blame for her actions to make her sympathize with him.

### **Pragmatics of Threat**

Rob threatens Sara by using the form of a *directive direct speech act of requesting*, indicated by the employment of an imperative utterance, starting with the verb "listen". This also indicates the use of *bald-on-record impoliteness*, where no attempt to save her face is made as in the utterance "Listen, Sara". However, in the utterance "If you really care about us about me or tell anyone, I will never get back to you", he starts by employing the form of a *representative speech act of hypothesizing*, indicated by the use of "if conditional", to accomplish a *directive indirect speech act of requesting* by saying "If you really care about us about me or tell anyone" and to accomplish a *commissive indirect speech act of threatening*, indicated by the modal adverb "will" in the utterance, "I will never get back to you". He threatens her clearly with an imperative verb and negative consequences if she does not obey him using *negative impoliteness (frighten)*. In these utterances, he wants to instill fear in Sara, so he employs *manipulation via emotions fallacy*, namely *appeal to fear*.

### **Pragmatics of Compliance**

Sara complies by apologizing to Rob, saying "Sorry that's not what I meant". This highlights Sara's use of an *expressive direct speech act* to express her compliance and negative politeness (apologizing).

### **Extract Two**

S: Hi so I was thinking

R: What you're wearing is unacceptable; cover-up now

S: I thought it was cute



R: Are you re-branding and trying to get some attention by flashing legging ass? You look like a cheaper delete it. And you know nobody else wants you, Sarah. It's just me sometimes I'm not sure why...great now that I have your stamp of approval what are you doing here?

S: Um I came to apologize about what I was wearing

R: Hmm she didn't come here to force away into meeting my mother

S: You said your parents were away.

R: I don't remember saying that

S: Yes you do.

### Contextualizing Extract Two

The above extract takes place at school where Rob and Sara are discussing Sara's outfit. He asserts his disapproval regarding her clothing choice by criticizing her. He purposefully inflames the situation to shame her. She resists by expressing her opinion about her belief that her outfit is cute, but with no use because he keeps attacking her character and threatening her with abandonment.

### Analysis of Extract Two

#### 1. Psychological Aspects of Emotional Blackmail

The speech event represented between Rob and Sara serves as a good example of the elements of emotional blackmail. In this speech event, Rob is the punisher-type emotional blackmailer while Sara is the anger-avoider type of victim. Throughout the speech event, processes of emotional blackmail are repeated. Sara, acting as the victim, engages in the processes of compliance and resistance while Rob engages in the processes of demand, pressure, and threat. The processes are explained as follows.

#### Demand

Criticizing Sara's outfit selection and asking her to change her clothes, Rob implies that Sara's appearance needs to be corrected rather than merely a matter of personal preference, saying "*What you're wearing is unacceptable; cover-up now*". Here, Rob uses the *obligation strategy* of emotional blackmail to make her feel obliged to do what he wants by the adjective "*unacceptable*" which indicates that what she is

wearing is not acceptable as a societal norm. This also reflects his dissatisfaction and frustration, employing *a blame tool of emotional blackmail*.

### Resistance

Sara's resistance is indicated indirectly by expressing her opinion with a response that suggests her confidence in her choice, saying "I thought it was cute". She justifies her choice as a resistance to his objection and blames it by describing her belief that she thinks it is cute.

### Pressure

Rob inflames the situation by attacking Sara's character and self-worth. He makes her feel ashamed of her appearance by using disparaging comments. By criticizing her for wearing sexy clothes to attract attention, he manipulates her with the *guilt strategy* of emotional blackmail to make her feel guilty for her outfit choice, saying "Are you re-branding and trying to get some attention by flashing legging ass you look like a cheaper delete it". This statement evokes guilt by describing her clothing choices as cheap and unacceptable and making her think she is the source of his dissatisfaction and discomfort. By minimizing Sara to her outward appearance and insinuating that she is exploiting her body to draw attention, the term "*flashing legging ass*" objectifies her and reflects his use of the *spin tool* of emotional blackmail. The negative comment about her fashion choices is reinforced when he labels her as a cheap girl.

### Threat

In the statement "And you know, nobody else wants you, Sarah", Rob states that no one wants Sara. He adds that he is the only one who values her and wants to stay with her "It's just me". This is an implicit threat to use *obligation and fear strategies* of emotional blackmail to make her comply with his demand by instilling a sense of obligation and fear, suggesting that her value is degraded without his approval. Using *the deadly whys and hows form of emotional blackmail*, Rob implies that he is not sure why he values Sara by saying, "Sometimes I'm not sure why." This reflects that Rob is questioning Sara's worthiness, leaving her wondering about her value and the

reasons behind his interest in her. Then, sarcastically, Rob comments on Sara's agreement with his demand to change her outfit, saying "*Great now that I have your stamp of approval*". Finally, he asserts his control over her by questioning her presence, saying "*What are you doing here?*" This reflects his attempt to make her feel unwelcome.

### **Compliance**

Sara suggests that her understanding of the circumstances has changed. She shows cooperation with Rob's expectations, probably to defuse the situation and win Rob's approval. This reaction demonstrates how successful his emotional blackmail is since she feels forced to apologize instead of standing up for her right to wear whatever makes her feel cute. Thus, Sara complies with Rob's demand directly by stating "Um I came to apologize about what I was wearing".

### **2. Pragmatic Aspects of Emotional Blackmail**

The pragmatic aspects of emotional blackmail are realized through the use of SAs, politeness, impoliteness, and fallacy theory in the following processes.

#### **Pragmatics of Demand**

By criticizing Sara's choice of clothing, Rob employs the form of a *representative SA of stating* to accomplish an *expressive indirect speech act of disapproval with negative impoliteness (explicitly associating her with a negative aspect)* to oblige her to comply with forcing a social norm when he says, "*What you're wearing is unacceptable*". In the utterance "*cover-up now*", Rob employs a *directive direct speech act of requesting* with the use of *bald-on-record impoliteness* to threaten her face directly with the imperative "*cover-up*". Rob places himself as an authority to judge Sara's outfit in an unjustified way, he employs *manipulation via emotions fallacy*, namely *appeal to false authority*.

#### **Pragmatics of Resistance**

The way Sara responds to a question indicating her outfit choice implies that she is resisting by employing a *representative speech act* to assert her belief that her outfit

is cute, saying "*I thought it was cute*". Rob uses *positive politeness* through her hedging opinion using "*I thought*".

#### Pragmatics of Pressure

Rob uses the form of a *directive SA of asking for clarification*, but he intends to accomplish *an expressive indirect speech act of blaming* to instill guilt strategy of emotional blackmail to make her feel bad about her choice of clothing by criticizing her for dressing sexily to draw attention, asking "*Are you rebranding and trying to get some attention by flashing legging ass*". In the utterance "*You look like a cheaper delete it*", he uses the form of a *representative speech act* that functions as *an expressive indirect speech act of criticizing* to communicate his negative evaluation of her outfit to force her to reconsider her actions. Additionally, he employs aggressive language, including the taboo words "*flashing legging ass*" and "*cheaper*" to insult and threaten her without minimizing her face damage, employing *positive impoliteness (taboo words)*. Besides, he disparages and attacks her character by employing *manipulation via emotion fallacy*, namely *personal attack*.

#### Pragmatics of Threat

In "*And you know, nobody else wants you, Sarah,*" Rob claims that nobody is interested in Sarah, employing the form of a *representative speech act of stating* to accomplish *an expressive indirect speech act of threatening* to threaten her. With the suggestion that her value is diminished without his consent, there is an implicit threat to utilize emotional blackmail's obligation and fear strategies by the use of *positive politeness* to make her feel undesirable in the utterance "*Nobody wants you, Sara. it is just me*".

In the utterance "*Sometimes I'm not sure why*", he explains that Rob is not sure why he values Sara to make her fear of abandonment, employing a *representative speech act* that serves as *an expressive indirect speech act of feelings of rejection*. Additionally, he shifts the main subject of her outfit to an irrelevant one about her need to get others' attention, employing *manipulation via emotions fallacy*, namely *red herring*. In the utterance "*What are you doing here?*", he attempts to exert

authority over her, using a *directive direct speech act of questioning*. Finally, in the utterance "*Great now that I have your stamp of approval*", he uses *sarcasm impoliteness* to show his doubt about her honesty, and this utterance is an *expressive SA of praising* but functions as an *expressive indirect speech act of criticizing* sarcastically.

#### Pragmatics of Compliance

In the utterance "*Um, I came to apologize about what I was wearing.*" Sara implies that she now perceives things differently. Perhaps in an attempt to diffuse the tension and gain Rob's acceptance, she complies with his demands, employing an *expressive direct speech act of apologizing*. Besides, she uses negative politeness (apologizing).

#### Extract Three

Rob: you think because English is easy for you it should be easy for everyone

Sara: Not true

Rob: this is important to me okay good grades are important to me and if you're going to be a distraction then this is a hazard and it has no point yeah

Sara: I'm not getting pissed at my best friend because she asked for help and were you not the one who started talking about the weekend

Rob: But, Hey don't turn this around on me I don't like to be manipulated

Sara: Ok

#### Contextualization Extract Three

Rob, in the aforementioned extract, blames Sara for being a distraction to him, demanding her not to be a distraction to him by helping her friend in front of him. He wants to control her actions and isolate her from her friends by pressuring her to comply with his demands.

#### Analysis of Extract Three

##### 1. Psychological Aspects of Emotional Blackmail

###### Processes:

Through their processes, Rob acts as a punisher emotional blackmailer, and Sara as the blame-taker victim. He uses aggressive language to dominate her behavior, and

she accepts passively his controlling behavior when she apologizes. Thus, she is a blame taker.

#### Demand

Rob clarifies what is important to him from the beginning with an effort to manipulate Sara's actions and feelings and to make his demand implicitly, saying "*This is important to me, okay? Good grades are important to me*". He puts his academic achievement above Sara's needs and feelings, and he implies that Sara's actions might undermine his success. This demand makes her feel obligated to live up to his expectations through Rob's employment of the *obligation strategy* of Emotional Blackmail.

#### Resistance

Sara rejects Rob's demand at the beginning, saying "*Not true*". She tells him that she is not going to be angry with her friend who asked her for help, and she continues saying that Rob is the one who started the distraction, not her friend, saying "*I'm not getting pissed off my best friend because she asked for help and were you, not the one who started talking about the weekend*".

#### Pressure

Rob suggests that Sara is unreasonable and insensitive to put pressure on her, implying that his difficulties with English are ignored, saying "*You think because English is easy for you that it should be easy for everyone*". He uses the *obligation strategy of emotional blackmail* to make her feel obligated to obey his demand, and he reflects his blame on her carelessness for his difficulties with studying by employing the *blame tool of emotional blackmail*.

#### Threat

Rob issues a warning to Sara not to turn the blame on him, and the word "*hey*" implies a direct threat by pointing directly at her. Rob states that if Sara tries to defend herself by manipulating him, he will take offense and respond viciously, saying "*But, hey, don't turn this around on me I don't like to be manipulated*". This highlights Rob's use of the *fear strategy of emotional blackmail*. Additionally, he causes her to

question her views and makes her believe she is causing the problem, using *the spin tool* of emotional blackmail. Besides, in the statement “*and if you're going to be a distraction, then this is a hazard and it has no point, yeah*”, Rob's comments that Sara could be a “*distraction*” and a “*hazard*” indicate that their relationship is in trouble, and this causes Sara to feel scared about actions and to reconsider their weekend plans by Rob's employment of the *fear strategy* of emotional blackmail. This implies that she could end up in his displeasure if she does not comply with his demand. Finally, this also causes her to think of the fear of the consequences of her behavior that might be destructive to his career by Rob's use of *catastrophic predictions form of emotional blackmail*.

#### Compliance

Sara responds with “*OK*” to imply that she has given up on Rob's threat, pressure, and demand. This compliance is a result of emotional blackmail strategies.

#### 2. Pragmatic Aspects of Emotional Blackmail

The pragmatic aspects of emotional blackmail are realized through SAs, politeness, impoliteness, and fallacy theory. These processes are analyzed below.

##### Processes:

Through their processes, Rob acts as a punisher emotional blackmailer, and Sara as the blame-taker victim. He uses aggressive language to dominate her behavior, and she accepts passively his controlling behavior when she apologizes. Thus, she is a blame taker.

##### Pragmatics of Demand

From the outset, Rob claims what matters to him in an attempt to control Sara's behavior and emotions in the utterance “*This is important to me, okay? Good grades are important to me*”. This utterance in the form of a *representative speech act* serves as a *directive indirect speech act of requesting* because Rob apparently describes his priorities for Sara but his real intention is to direct her to not distract his studies. His speech directly harms her face without any mitigation by the use of *off-record politeness (give hint)*.

### Pragmatics of Resistance

At first, Sara says, "Not true," to Rob's demand through the use of a *representative direct speech act*. She continues to assure him that she won't be upset with her friend for asking for help, employing a *representative direct speech act* in the utterance "I'm not getting pissed off my best friend because she asked for help and weren't you the one who started talking about the weekend?" This utterance also highlights Sara's use of *positive politeness* by giving reasons for her help to her friend.

### Pragmatics of Pressure

Saying, "You think because English is easy for you that it should be easy for everyone," Rob pressures Sara by describing indirectly the situation of her belief about learning English to pressure her to reconsider her decision of helping her friend, employing the form of a *representative SA* to accomplish a *directive indirect speech act of commanding*. He states his description indirectly to pressure her with the attempt to damage her face by employing *negative politeness (Hedge)*.

### Pragmatics of Threat

The utterance "And if you're going to be a distraction then this is a hazard and it has no point yeah" serves as the form of a *representative SA* of hypothesizing, indicated by "if-clause", to accomplish a *directive indirect speech act of commanding* in "And if you're going to be a distraction" and to accomplish a *commissive indirect speech act of threatening* in "Then this is a hazard and it has no point yeah". Rob conveys his priorities for Sara by implying that she might negatively affect his success. His speech makes her feel uncomfortable and harms her face without any mitigation by the use of *positive impoliteness* (making others uncomfortable). This utterance highlights his use of the *appeal to fear fallacy* because he manipulates her by appealing to fear of the negative consequences if she distracts him.

The word "hey" is used to indicate a direct threat, as Rob threatens Sara not to place the responsibility on him. Rob threatens to take offense and react angrily, stating, "But, hey, don't turn this around on me I don't like to be manipulated," if Sara tries to defend herself by manipulating him. This demonstrates Rob's employment of the



form of a *directive SA* (ordering) to accomplish a *directive indirect speech act* (prohibiting). The use of the inappropriate identity marker “*Hey*” indicates the use of *positive impoliteness (Use inappropriate identity markers)*. This utterance reflects Rob’s use of the *manipulation via distraction fallacy (Red herring)* because he shifts the main focus on Sara’s distraction to accusing her of being manipulative.

#### Pragmatics of Compliance

By responding "OK," Sara seems to be giving up to Rob's demands and it is the perlocutionary SA as a result of Rob’s pressure and threat processes.

#### 4. Discussion of Results, recommendations, and suggestions

The psychological aspects of emotional blackmail and the pragmatic aspects that make emotional blackmail processes visible are covered in the next section.

#### Overall Analysis of Emotional Blackmail Aspects

1. . The three extracts that depict the emotional blackmail events in the movie contain the same types of blackmailer (punisher) and victim (anger-avoider).

#### 2. Demand

From the early beginning of Rob’s speech, the demand process conveys his emotional needs and is repeated three times. The demand process employs the obligation strategy two times, and the blame tool is also performed two times. However, no form of emotional blackmail is used in the demand process. This result is logical because Rob, the punisher type of emotional blackmail, begins his demand either to frequently make use of Sara’s sense of duty to coerce her into complying with his requests or to assign blame to her for any unfavorable consequences to evade accountability and to strengthen compliance by instilling shame.

#### 2. Resistance

The resistance process is related to the victim who has no manipulative strategies or tools; the victim is a responder to the strategies and tools used by the blackmailer.

#### 3. Pressure

The pressure processes are repeated seven times by Rob, using different emotional blackmail tactics to lead Sara to her compliance. The primary strategy used in the

pressure process is "guilt," which is employed as a tactic to make Sara believe she is to blame for her feelings or situations Rob creates guilt to manipulate her. This strategy is used three times, and the secondary strategy is "obligation" which is employed once. This indicates that the guilt strategy is used throughout the movie to create pressure on the victim to feel guilty and so comply with the blackmailer's demand; the obligation is used to make the victim comply. Concerning tools of emotional blackmail, the "Spin" tool is used to accomplish the pressure process, with frequencies of two times while the "Blame" tool is used to pressure her by pointing to her for undesired situations. Each of these two tools is employed two times. By shifting the responsibility onto Sara and blaming her, Rob employs the spin and blame tool more frequently to put pressure on her. Finally, Rob employs the "Deadly whys and hows" form of emotional blackmail to frame the situation of making Sara feel responsible and inadequate when he accuses her of holding information due to her lack of love and asks about how he is supposed to feel by using "Deadly whys and hows" form of emotional blackmail.

#### 4. Threat

The strategy used to perform the threat process is "Fear" with a frequency of three times, and the "Spin" tool is used once. Approximately, fear is used to make Sara afraid and comply with Rob's emotional demands. By subjecting her to feelings of fear, he uses the fear strategy to show her the possible sequences if the demand would not be made. Using the spin tool, he distorts the facts for his good. Last but not least, Rob's use of the "Catastrophic prediction form of emotional blackmail to devastate prophecies makes her fear that the results of her actions could harm his profession.

#### 5. Compliance

The victim's compliance with the blackmailer's request is the focus of the compliance process. As a result, compliance just requires agreeing to carry out the blackmailer's requests rather than using a plan or instrument. When doing a compliance process, this explains the zero occurrences of any strategy, tool, or form. Thus, Sara in the movie complies with Rob's demands by agreeing and apologizing.

## Overall Analysis of Pragmatic Aspects of Emotional Blackmail

The results will be discussed according to the processes as follows:

### 1. Demand

In the demand process, Rob employs an expressive indirect speech act twice throughout the film, alongside a directive indirect speech act and a directive direct speech act, each used once. This pattern reflects his strategy of manipulating his victim, Sara. He expresses his anger through direct demands while utilizing indirect requests to convey his needs. Additionally, he uses expressive indirect speech acts to communicate his disapproval. In terms of impoliteness strategies, Rob demonstrates negative impoliteness twice, utilizes bald on-record once, and bald off-record once. This behavior indicates his approach to undermining Sara's negative face by encroaching on her personal space or linking her to unfavorable aspects. The manipulation through emotional fallacy illustrates how a negative punisher-type emotional blackmailer exploits the emotions of their victims to achieve their objectives.

### 2. Resistance

Resistance is simply accepting the demands of the emotional blackmailer Sara. Only speech acts and politeness are used. Representative speech acts are used five times to affirm her beliefs about Rob's situation not to exceed her limits. Commissives are used two times to show her commitment to her plans without following others' demands. Regarding politeness, positive politeness is more frequently used in this process, five times in particular, followed by bald on-record used two times. This is due to her polite way of resisting his demands.

### 3. Pressure

The primary speech acts used in this process are directive direct speech acts which are used three times by Rob to justify that the demand is necessary and clear. Similarly, commissive indirect speech acts are also used three times to express his feelings as a way to pressure Sara. Concerning politeness and impoliteness, positive impoliteness is more frequently used to reflect Rob's intention to make her

uncomfortable or frightened. Besides, sarcasm impoliteness is used once to mock Sara, and each bald off-record politeness and negative politeness are used once to manipulate her into complying with his demands. Sarcasm impoliteness is used one time to undermine confidence in the victim and lead to their compliance. Finally, manipulation via emotion fallacy is employed in the pressure process to manipulate the victim through guilt and obligation feelings.

#### 4. Threat

Across the threat process, directive direct speech acts are employed by Rob three times to instruct his victim, Sara directly. However, commissive indirect speech acts are used three times to get the victim to think of the bad sequence indirectly that might happen to them if they do not comply with the blackmailers' demands. Then, representative indirect speech acts are employed two times to assert facts that threaten the victim to comply while directive indirect speech acts are employed to manipulate indirectly. Regarding impoliteness, positive, bald-on-record, negative, and sarcasm impoliteness are employed with frequencies of 2, 1, 1, and 1, respectively. Positive impoliteness is used to make the victim uncomfortable, bald-on-record is used to directly threaten, negative to belittle and frighten, the victim, and sarcasm to belittle the victim. Finally, in terms of fallacy taxonomy, manipulation via emotion fallacy is employed two times, and manipulation via distraction is also used two times.

#### 5. Compliance

The compliance process is related to victims who either express their approval or their apology for resisting the blackmailers' demands through the use of expressive speech acts which occur two times. Thus, their approval or apology is conveyed in either positive or negative politeness. The frequencies are one time of positive politeness and two times of negative politeness.

To sum up, the analysis of the emotional blackmail processes in the movie reveals a cyclical pattern characterized by different processes: demand, resistance, pressure, threat, and compliance. Each process employs specific communication strategies that exploit the victim's emotions and vulnerabilities. In the demand process, Rob utilizes

a combination of indirect and indirect speech acts to manipulate Sara. By employing negative impoliteness and emotional fallacies, Rob undermines Sara by illustrating how emotional blackmail begins with clear and aggressive demands that exploit the victim's vulnerabilities. In the resistance process, Sara neither employs impoliteness strategies nor fallacy types. Additionally, she does not employ any emotional blackmail tactics, but she only employs positive politeness and representative speech acts to affirm her beliefs and maintain her boundaries.

In the pressure and threat processes, Rob escalates his manipulation through direct alongside indirect speech acts to intimidate Sara into compliance with various forms of impoliteness, including bald-on-record threats and sarcasm, illustrating a blatant attempt to instill fear. This represents the culmination of emotional blackmail tactics, where threats serve as a powerful tool for coercion, reinforcing the manipulator's control over the victim.

In the compliance process, Sara expresses approval or apology as a response to Rob's manipulation by the use of expressive speech acts revealing how emotional blackmail can lead victims to feel guilt or obligation, ultimately reinforcing the manipulator's control. By understanding these processes, individuals can better navigate their interactions and protect themselves from manipulative behaviors.

Given the aforementioned findings, the following recommendations can be considered. First, teachers and students of English need to be aware of the emotional blackmail tactics to help them identify such tactics and avoid falling to them. Thus, educational programs should be developed to increase awareness of emotional blackmail tactics, particularly focusing on the strategies employed by manipulators such as guilt, fear, and obligation. This could empower potential victims to recognize these behaviors early. Second, teachers need to use instructional sessions or workshops to get parents talking about emotional manipulation and to give them techniques to promote candid communication at home and instruments to spot emotional blackmail in their kids' interactions. Third, teachers of linguistics need to let their students be aware of the importance of tackling the pragmatics of each

process of emotional blackmail in their studies, showing the intended meaning of each process since emotional blackmail is a two-party process between emotional blackmailers and their victims.

The current study has highlighted the pragmatic analysis of emotional blackmail. Accordingly, several suggestions can be presented for further studies:

- 1- A discursive pragmatic study of emotional blackmail in American series.
- 2- A discourse analysis study of emotional blackmail in fiction movies.
- 3- A discursive pragmatic study of emotional blackmail in literature

### Conclusions

In light of the data analysis and results discussed, some conclusions have been drawn to answer the research questions. Throughout the movie, there are three extracts representing emotional blackmail events in which the type of emotional blackmailer is that of a punisher. The resistance and compliance processes show no signs of using emotional blackmail strategies, forms, or tools, while the demand, pressure, and threat processes are dominated by the use of guilt, fear, and obligation strategies and the blame and spin tools with “deadly whys & hows” and “catastrophic prediction” forms to manipulate the victim. The analysis sheds light on the pragmatic manifestations of emotional blackmail situations in the movie and has reached several conclusions. In all the cases found, the emotional blackmailer is the punisher while the victim is the anger-avoider. The analysis has shown that the punisher blackmailers tend to be impolite more often with only two politeness strategies spotted in the pressure process to put pressure on his victim. They also employ fallacy strategies, appeal to pity, and appeal to fear, when they argue and show their righteous cause. On the other hand, the anger-avoider victim is more vulnerable and her speech reflects high degrees of politeness strategies to avoid confrontations with the blackmailer. The victim tries to keep a harmonious flow of conversation while maintaining the blackmailer’s self-face.

Moreover, although emotional blackmail has detrimental psychological repercussions on both emotional blackmailers and victims, and it is a common subject in TV shows, interviews, and publications, there are no studies that examine how it is portrayed and comprehended in movies. Thus, some pragmatic theories such as speech acts, politeness, impoliteness, and fallacy theory are employed. Emotional blackmailers convey speech acts of threats, requests, and promises by uttering the exact words and the underlying force of these words while victims may experience the effect of these words by their compliance. Besides, although the goals of politeness and emotional blackmail are distinct, emotional blackmailers purposefully employ courteous words and actions to cover up their devious intentions to obtain what they desire from others. Furthermore, because emotional blackmail is used to evoke feelings of fear, guilt, and obligation to threaten directly or indirectly to coerce their victims, it is not surprising to find emotional blackmail discussed within a realm that studies manners that cause face-aggravation in specific situations, that is, impoliteness. Finally, since fallacy theory and emotional blackmail deal with the manipulation of emotions to achieve specific aims depending on emotions rather than reasoning, emotional blackmail can successfully be manifested via fallacy theory.

Thus, the researchers have observed that movie portrayals have the power to influence society's attitudes and views of emotional manipulation in interpersonal interactions. Consequently, the study undertaken bridges this gap by studying emotional blackmail discourse in the American movie *No One Would Tell* (2018) which imitates real-life situations because it is based on a true story by examining how emotional blackmailers manipulate their victims and the effects of controlling their relationships.

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