



ELITE: English and Literature Journal
Volume 12 Number 1 June 2025 Page 147-163
Print ISSN: [2355-0821](#), Online ISSN: [2580-5215](#)
Doi: 10.24252/elite.v12i1.56501

EMPOWERING POLITENESS IN MAKING PROTEST: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDY IN YOUNG MOSLEM LITERATURE AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the concept of *empowering politeness* in protest discourse within young Muslim literature, employing a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. It examines how politeness strategies are used not to soften resistance, but to assert agency, uphold moral authority, and engage in constructive dissent. The study employs a qualitative approach, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine a corpus of texts written by young Muslim authors. These texts cover two novel narratives, reflecting a Moslem sociocultural context. Through close textual analysis, the results of the study showcase how the authors empower protest not as an act of aggression, but as a principled stance that aligns with religious and cultural norms. The results of the study also show how linguistic choices and strategies reflect etiquette (*adab*) and wisdom (*Hikmah*) values of respect, empathy, and ethical engagement, even within confrontational contexts. The research results further highlight the pedagogical potential of such texts in educational settings. They offer rich material for teaching critical literacy, intercultural communication, and ethical reasoning. Through the lens of empowering politeness, students can learn to articulate dissent responsibly. This study advocates for the integration of diverse voices and values in both literary appreciation and language education.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse, Empowering, Politeness, Protest, Moslem Literature*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi konsep pemberdayaan kesantunan dalam wacana protes dalam literatur Muslim muda, dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja analisis wacana kritis (CDA). Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana strategi kesantunan digunakan bukan untuk melunakkan perlawanan, tetapi untuk menegaskan agensi, menegaskan otoritas moral, dan terlibat dalam perbedaan pendapat yang konstruktif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis (Critical Discourse Analysis/CDA) untuk meneliti sebuah korpus teks yang ditulis oleh para penulis muda Muslim. Teks-teks ini mencakup dua narasi baru yang mencerminkan konteks sosiokultural Muslim. Melalui analisis tekstual yang mendalam, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan peran penulis dalam memberdayakan protes bukan sebagai tindakan agresi, melainkan sebagai sikap berprinsip yang selaras dengan norma-norma agama dan budaya. Hasil penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana pilihan dan strategi linguistik mencerminkan nilai-nilai *adab* dan kebijaksanaan (*hikmah*) yang menghargai, empati, dan keterlibatan etis, bahkan dalam konteks yang konfrontatif. Hasil penelitian lebih lanjut menyoroti potensi pedagogis dari teks-teks tersebut dalam lingkungan pendidikan. Teks-teks tersebut menawarkan materi yang kaya untuk mengajarkan literasi kritis, komunikasi antar budaya, dan penalaran etis. Melalui lensa kesantunan yang memberdayakan, siswa dapat belajar untuk mengartikulasikan perbedaan pendapat secara bertanggung jawab. Penelitian ini mengadvokasi integrasi beragam suara dan nilai dalam apresiasi Sastra dan Pendidikan Bahasa.

Kata kunci: *Pemberdayaan, Kesantunan, Protes, Wacana Kritis, Sastra Muslim.*

Received: 01 May 2025

Revised: 21 May 2025

Accepted: 27 May 2025



How to cite: Dahlan.(2025). Empowering Politeness in Making Protest: A critical Discourse Study in Young Moslem Literature and Its Pedagogical Values. ELITE: English and Literature Journal,12(1). 147-163.

INTRODUCTION

Protest has long been a tool for marginalized communities to assert their voice, challenge dominant ideologies, and advocate for social justice. Traditionally associated with confrontation and resistance, protest is often perceived as inherently oppositional or disruptive. However, in various cultural contexts—particularly within religious or community-based frameworks—protest can take subtler, more nuanced forms that blend resistance with civility. Among these is what this study refers to as empowering politeness: a discourse strategy that enables individuals to challenge authority or injustice while upholding the values of respect, ethical engagement, and cultural identity. This research focuses on the manifestation of empowering politeness in young Muslim literature, reflecting etiquette and wisdom as its novelty, with a particular emphasis on its critical discourse features and pedagogical implications.

The use of politeness in protest may seem paradoxical at first glance. In conventional discourse analysis, politeness is associated with deference, mitigation, and the maintenance of social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Protest, by contrast, is often interpreted as transgressive or disruptive. However, when examined through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it becomes clear that politeness and protest are not necessarily in opposition. Instead, they can be co-constitutive, with politeness functioning as a deliberate rhetorical strategy that empowers speakers to dissent without alienating or violating shared cultural norms (Locher, 2004).

This dual function is especially significant in the context of young Muslim literature, where authors often navigate complex intersections of faith, identity, and sociopolitical realities. Muslim youth—both within Muslim-majority societies and in diasporic communities—frequently face challenges related to marginalization, misrepresentation, and cultural tension (Abdul Fattah M, 2005:5). In response, young writers have turned to literature not just as a form of expression, but as a vehicle for subtle resistance. Through narrative, poetry, and hybrid genres, they address issues such as Islamophobia, gender norms, political repression, and generational divides. Yet, rather than adopting a purely confrontational tone, many of these texts demonstrate a sophisticated use of empowering politeness, engaging readers in critical thought while maintaining respect for cultural and religious values (Moore K, 2012).

The concept of empowering politeness draws on several theoretical traditions. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, it builds on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, particularly their notion of positive politeness strategies that affirm solidarity and shared values. From the perspective of CDA, it aligns with (Fairclough, 1995) emphasis on the ideological role of language in maintaining or challenging power structures. Moreover, this study incorporates Islamic principles of *adab* (etiquette) and *hikmah* (wisdom), which encourage respectful discourse even in situations of disagreement or protest (Al Wazna, R. Y. (2013: 255-265). This fusion of

Western linguistic theory and Islamic ethics enables a more culturally grounded understanding of how young Muslim writers engage in critical discourse. The research further highlights the pedagogical potential of such texts in educational settings (Norton & Toohey, 2004). They offer rich material for teaching critical literacy, intercultural communication, and ethical reasoning. Through the lens of empowering politeness, students can learn to articulate dissent responsibly, fostering democratic dialogue and cultural sensitivity. This study contributes to the broader understanding of protest as a nuanced, culturally embedded act and advocates for the integration of diverse voices and values in both literary appreciation and language education.

In analyzing selected literary texts, this study pays close attention to the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by young Muslim authors beyond its contribution to scholarly and discourse studies. This research also has important pedagogical implications. In an increasingly polarized world, there is a pressing need to cultivate critical literacy skills that enable students to engage with complex social issues in a reflective and respectful manner. Young Muslim literature, with its blend of protest and politeness, offers a rich resource for such learning. It encourages students to think critically about power, voice, and identity, while also modeling how dissent can be expressed ethically and effectively. Moreover, incorporating these texts into educational curricula can help promote intercultural understanding, challenge monolithic representations of Muslims, and support inclusive pedagogies that honor diverse ways of knowing and communicating (Norton & Toohey, 2004).

This study is situated within an interdisciplinary framework that draws from linguistics, literary studies, education, and Islamic ethics. It employs a qualitative approach, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine a corpus of texts written by young Muslim authors. These texts are taken from narratives, reflecting a range of genres and sociocultural contexts. Through close textual analysis, the research aims to uncover how empowering politeness functions in protest discourse, identify the most commonly used rhetorical and linguistic strategies, and examine how these strategies reflect broader cultural, religious, and pedagogical values (Hanifah et al., 2024) and (Azzah & Mujiyanto, 2023).

Importantly, this study does not treat "Muslim youth" as a monolithic category. It recognizes the diversity within Muslim communities, including variations in ethnicity, gender, geography, and levels of religiosity. The goal is not to essentialize Muslim identity, but to explore how young writers who identify with Islamic values navigate the tensions between critique and civility, voice and silence, individual expression and communal responsibility. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of protest, one that transcends binary frameworks of resistance versus submission and instead highlights the creative and ethical dimensions of dissent.

In sum, this research positions empowering politeness as a powerful discursive tool in the repertoire of young Muslim writers. It challenges conventional assumptions about protest as inherently antagonistic, and instead reveals how respect and resistance can coexist in powerful and transformative ways (Giroux, 2005) By illuminating the linguistic and rhetorical patterns that

underlie this discourse and by considering its pedagogical value, the study aims to open new avenues for both academic inquiry and educational practice (Norton, 2000)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Related Studies

Weninger, C. (2007). *"Am I being polite or politically, correct?" A critical discourse analysis of politeness in protest narratives*: This study examines how youth characters in multicultural literature employ polite language as a strategic means of resistance to dominant discourses. This study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the role of politeness in protest-related narratives. Weninger highlights how youth characters engage in resistance by strategically using polite forms of language. Politeness is presented here as an empowering tool that challenges dominant ideologies without resorting to aggression. This supports the idea that protest in youth literature can be ethically framed through dignified and respectful discourse (Weninger, 2007).

Wolk, S. (2009). *Reading for a Better World: Teaching for Social Responsibility with Young Adult Literature*: this study explores how young adult literature promotes social responsibility and protest through respectful, morally grounded characters. Wolk argues that young adult literature can be a powerful medium for promoting social justice and ethical awareness. Characters in these texts often resist injustice through reasoned and respectful dialogue, rather than violence or rebellion. The study emphasizes how such literature can teach youth to protest with a sense of moral clarity (Wolk, 2009).

Putri (2021): *Being young female Muslims in Islamic fictions: Moral anxiety, faith primacy and ideal image discourses*. This study analyzes Asma Nadia's novels—*Assalamualaikum Beijing*, *Jilbab Traveller*, and *OTW Nikah*—highlighting how young Muslim women navigate moral dilemmas and societal expectations. The protagonists employ polite, faith-driven discourse to assert agency, reflecting a form of protest rooted in Islamic values. Politeness here is a strategic tool for resistance, aligning with the concept of "empowering politeness." (Putri, 2021).

Murni, M. (2020). *The Islamic Ideology of Indonesian Linguistic Politeness* This research examines the impact of Islamic teachings on linguistic politeness among Indonesian Muslims. It identifies strategies like referencing the Qur'an, expressing humility, and offering prayers as means to maintain harmony and express dissent respectfully. Such approaches underscore how politeness serves as a medium for protest and moral discourse within Islamic contexts. (Murni, 2020)

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis offers a valuable framework for understanding how language can be used to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for peace (Builqin & Gursel, 2020); Omar et al., 2020). CDA posits that language is not neutral, but rather a tool that can be used to construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities, including those that lead to and perpetuate war (Mullet, 2018). Consequently, the successful conveyance of anti-war perspectives is contingent

upon a nuanced comprehension of the power structures inherent within language and the strategic application of methods to deconstruct and contest these structures through thoughtful communication practices.

Employing CDA necessitates a critical awareness of the relationship between language, power, and ideology (Naidu, 2023). It involves a rigorous investigation into the ways in which language is deployed to strategically construct understandings of war, frequently masking its devastating human impact and rationalizing military actions (Gregorius & Christina, 2021). In this context, a critical approach demands a detachment from the immediate data, enabling a broader contextualization within societal structures of their role in the research process.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as developed by Norman Fairclough, provides a robust framework for examining how language both reflects and shapes social structures, power relations, and ideologies. At its core, Fairclough's approach conceptualizes discourse not merely as text but as a form of social practice—something individuals do, which in turn influences the social world.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's seminal work, *Language and Power* (1989) and *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), lays out a dialectical relationship between discourse and society: discourse is shaped by social conditions (such as power hierarchies or institutional norms), and at the same time, discourse shapes those very conditions. This two-way process underlines Fairclough's commitment to understanding both how language maintains the status quo and how it creates openings for change. (Fairclough, 1989) and (Fairclough, 1992).

2. The Three-Dimension Model

To operationalize CDA, Fairclough proposes a three-dimensional framework:

- a. Text: The linguistic features of the data—vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, rhetorical devices. This is the level at which one conducts close “micro” analysis of specific word choices or syntactic patterns.
- b. Discursive Practice: The processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. Here, the focus shifts to how texts are produced (e.g., who authors them, for what audience) and how they circulate within society, thereby illuminating which voices are amplified or marginalized.
- c. Social Practice: The broader socio-cultural and institutional context that shapes—and is shaped by—discursive practices. This “macro” level connects language use to societal structures, power relations, and ideological struggles.

By moving systematically between these levels, analysts can trace how particular linguistic choices enact power and ideology, how institutional routines constrain or enable certain discourses, and how social change can emerge through shifts in discourse. Such shifts were implemented in (Tahmasbi, 2020) and (Iswahyudi et al., 2021). Through the lens of CDA to understand the narratives constructed around the event of protest.

3. Key Concepts

- a. Ideology: For Fairclough, ideology is “the representation of aspects of the world which contributes to the establishment, maintenance, and transformation of power relations” (Fairclough, 1992). CDA examines how ideological positions are normalized through routine language use, often without being noticed.
- b. Hegemony: Borrowing from Gramsci, Fairclough views hegemony as the process by which dominant groups secure consent for their rule through cultural and discursive means, rather than through force alone.
- c. Recontextualization: The process by which meanings are transformed when discourse moves between contexts, for example, how a political speech is recast in news reports or social media discussions.

4. Application and Critiques

Fairclough’s CDA has been applied across various fields, including media studies, political discourse, educational research, and more. For example, analyses of right-wing political speeches reveal how modal verbs (“must,” “should”) and passive constructions obscure agency and responsibility. In educational texts, CDA uncovers how curricular materials can implicitly reproduce class or gender biases. Critics, however, sometimes argue that CDA’s broad scope can risk over-interpretation or undervalue linguistic autonomy. Fairclough responds by emphasizing careful, evidence-grounded analysis and reflexivity about the analyst’s own position.

Description of Narrative Novel

These two novels have the element of literature in the comparison between the two novels in terms of the similarities and the differences:

Table 1. Comparison Chart: Love from A-to-Z vs We Are Displaced

Aspect	Love from A to Z (S.K. Ali)	We Are Displaced (Malala Yousafzai)
Genre	Contemporary YA Fiction (novel)	Non-fiction / Memoir / Biography
Narrative Style	Dual POV (Zayneb & Adam) in journal-style entries	First-person stories (Malala + multiple refugee girls)
Tone	Emotional, introspective, romantic, activist	Reflective, informative, empathetic, resilient
Main Themes	Identity, faith, love, justice, illness, protest	Displacement, resilience, education, activism, human rights
Perspective on Protest	Protest as a personal & moral stance against Islamophobia	Protest as peaceful resistance & advocacy for rights and justice
Protagonists	Two teens (Zayneb & Adam), Muslim, dealing with personal and social issues	Real-life girls displaced by conflict, war, or persecution

Setting	Doha, Qatar, and the U.S.	Global (Pakistan, Syria, Colombia, Myanmar, etc.)
Faith Representation	Strong Islamic identity, prayers, and reflection are shown naturally	Shows diversity of faiths, with Malala's Muslim faith as a backbone
Emotional Impact	Heartwarming, coming-of-age, hopeful yet challenging	Eye-opening, deeply moving, inspiring
Use of Language	Poetic, journal-style, filled with emotion, and a youth perspective	Clear, accessible, journalistic yet heartfelt
Call to Action	Encourages self-advocacy and allyship in everyday situations	Urges global empathy, awareness, and support for displaced people

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employs a qualitative approach, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine a corpus of texts written by young Muslim authors. These texts encompass two novel narratives, which reflect a range of genres and sociocultural contexts. Then, selecting texts that are socially significant (e.g., politeness protest), conducting a detailed linguistic analysis of the text itself. Through close textual analysis, the research aims to uncover how empowering politeness functions in protest discourse, what rhetorical and linguistic strategies are used, and how these strategies reflect values. The study aims to find out how linguistic choices reflect the values. The methodology follows A typical Fairclough analysis, which proceeds from the data, including interpretation and explanation of how the text is produced, and linking patterns of text and discourse to broader social practices.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section explores how Muslim authors strategically employ *empowering politeness* in literary texts to express protest, dissent, and social critique without resorting to aggression. Drawing from selected excerpts of two influential works *Love from A to Z* by S.K. Ali and *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai. The analysis reveals how protest can be articulated in morally grounded, respectful, and emotionally resonant ways. These texts demonstrate that politeness, far from being a passive stance, can be a powerful tool for resistance, especially when framed within Islamic values such as *adab* (etiquette) and *hikmah* (wisdom). Through their characters' voices and narrative techniques, both authors construct a discourse of dissent that is rooted in empathy, dignity, and hope. The following findings illustrate various strategies these writers use to express their critique of injustice while maintaining ethical and relational integrity.

a. How Muslim Writers Employ Politeness Strategies in Literacy Texts That Express Protest or Dissent From the Novel *Love From A to Z* by S.K. Ali (S.K., 2019)

Through the character Zayneb, though she is angry at injustice, she often frames her dissent in **morally grounded arguments**, appealing to empathy and shared humanity rather than direct

insult. This can be seen in how SK Ali writes in her quotes in the novel, where protest is refracted through a lens of hope and justice.

"People always tell us to be calm, not to make a fuss. However, sometimes being silent means tacitly agreeing with injustice. Speaking up is a way to show we matter. That we're human."

This excerpt reflects the respectful protest Zayneb often engages in—she challenges Islamophobia and injustice not with violence, but with her voice and truth.

A similar tone is seen in the following quote:

"I'm not angry. I'm just not going to pretend like things are okay anymore."

Zayneb's character consistently protests by refusing to stay quiet in the face of injustice, particularly at her school and in everyday life, always standing up in a principled and firm manner.

Empowering Politeness

Rather than silence herself to be "palatable," Zayneb *reclaims the right to protest*. Still, she does so while showing care for others, which aligns with Sara Ahmed's concept of "feminist killjoy" in a respectful, empowering way. This balances assertiveness with ethical responsibility.

"Never, ever quake in the face of hate, Zayneb."

This empowering advice encourages individuals to stand firm against prejudice and discrimination.

"Your resistance to my existence is futile."

A bold assertion of identity and the refusal to be marginalized.

"I'm not a violent person. I'm not advocating violence. But I am an angry person. I'm advocating for more people to get angry. Get moved."

This quote highlights the importance of channeling anger into constructive action against injustice.

"Human rights. For everyone. Because that was the only way the world made sense. When the arc of care went far and wide, it journeyed and battled to exclude none."

A reflection on the universal nature of human rights and the necessity of inclusive advocacy.

SK Ali, in *Love from A to Z*, masterfully empowers her protest through a subtle and polite discourse, particularly around issues of Islamophobia, identity, and the everyday injustices faced by Muslim youth. Instead of overt confrontation, she utilizes **empowering politeness** a discourse strategy that critiques power structures **without aggression**, while asserting agency, dignity, and hope.

1) Everyday Protest Through Personal Narratives

One of the Buginese women's movements against the rigid practice of patriarchy that still happens is through literary works. Considering Darmawati Majid, a writer from Bone-Buginese who has experienced the subordination of the patriarchal society in her living area, she is lucky because she had the opportunity to get a higher education. Her voice on women's subordination was echoed through the characters in the short story "Ketika Saatnya" (2019).

Ali's characters, especially **Zayneb**, protest against injustice not through slogans, but through **lived experiences**. Zayneb is unapologetically Muslim and vocal about Islamophobia, but her resistance is framed through a **thoughtful, reflective lens**. She uses her journal ("Marvels and Oddities") as a space to analyze injustice while staying grounded in introspection and **moral reasoning**.

"I'm tired of being told to not make things awkward. As if truth is awkward."
— Zayneb, *Love from A to Z*.

This is a protest, but it's polite in form—she doesn't yell, she reflects, questions, and shares, thus inviting dialogue instead of defensiveness.

2) Politeness as a Cultural and Religious Practice

Zayneb's protest is framed within her **Muslim values**, which include patience, justice, and speaking the truth kindly. She often tempers her frustration with efforts to understand, to educate, and to uphold dignity—both hers and others'. This aligns with **positive politeness strategies**, where resistance is expressed with empathy and care.

3) Humanizing the Marginalized

Ali writes with profound humanity. Zayneb and Adam (a biracial Muslim boy with multiple sclerosis) are complex, flawed, and kind. By **humanizing characters who are often stereotyped**, Ali challenges prejudice indirectly. This storytelling-as-protest disarms readers, making it hard to dismiss her critiques of racism and ableism.

4). Dialogic Protest, Not Monologic Rant

Zayneb protests by talking *with* people, not *at* them. She has conversations with teachers, friends, and even strangers about faith and justice. She questions power structures, but she listens, too. This dialogic style of protest embodies empowering politeness—it is relational, not combative.

5). Resilience and Joy as Resistance

Ali shows that joy, love, and faith are themselves acts of protest. Zayneb refuses to be reduced to a stereotype or victim; she falls in love, travels, makes art, and dares to hope. This is a **gentle but radical resistance** to a world that tries to silence or diminish her.

In Summary:

SK Ali empowers her protest in *Love from A to Z* through:

- a) **Reflective, journal-style narrative** that critiques power without aggression
- b) **Cultural and spiritual grounding** in politeness and dignit
- c) **Humanizing Muslim youth** as a counter-narrative to Islamophobia
- d) **Relational dialogue** that opens space for understanding
- e) **Centering joy, love, and faith** as subtle but strong forms of resistance

This makes her work especially valuable in classrooms and youth spaces—her polite protest speaks loud enough to challenge injustice, but kind enough to invite change.

b. How Muslim Writers Employ Politeness Strategies in Literacy Texts That Express Protest or Dissent From the Novel From the Novel *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai (Yousafzai, 2018).

This comes from one of the girls in the collection who, like Malala, shares her story of displacement while emphasizing peaceful resistance and the desire for understanding over pity.

"Even in the camp, we started small protests—just holding signs, telling our stories to anyone who would listen. It was our way of saying, 'We're still here. We matter.'"

This highlights how protest empowered by Malala, even in dire situations, can be an act of dignity and hope.

Here are some additional quotes from *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai that exemplify respectful protest and resilience:

"I think it's time that people update themselves, educate themselves, and inform themselves."

A call to action for awareness and understanding in the face of global displacement issues.

"Either you lose hope completely and you shatter and break into pieces, or you become so resilient that no one can break you anymore."

This quote speaks to the strength found in adversity and the choice to persevere.

"To be displaced, on top of everything else, is to worry about being a burden on others."

An insight into the emotional toll of displacement and the desire for dignity.

"I immediately understood the extent of my privilege: Where I saw so many problems, they saw opportunities."

A reflection on perspective and the resilience of those facing hardship.

Malala Yousafzai's *We Are Displaced* is a powerful example of how protest can be articulated using empowering politeness. Rather than using aggressive or confrontational language, Malala strategically employs politeness to elevate the voices of displaced girls and to protest the injustices they face.

Empowering Politeness

Malala begins by sharing her own story of displacement, but she quickly shifts focus to other girls' narratives. This empathetic framing invites readers to share in the emotional experiences of refugees without alienating them. By doing this, she protests injustice **without accusation** but through **compassion**, fostering understanding rather than defensiveness.

"I am just one girl. But I am not the only one." We are Displaced

This statement reflects humility and solidarity, asserting a collective identity that strengthens the protest while maintaining a polite, inclusive tone.

1) Narrative as Indirect Protest

Malala doesn't attack political systems or governments head-on. Instead, she lets the **stories themselves** expose the systemic injustices—displacement, war, persecution. This form of **indirect protest** through storytelling aligns with **positive politeness** strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as it respects the reader's autonomy while still delivering a powerful critique.

2) Respectful Advocacy

Malala often speaks about leaders, institutions, and policies in a **respectful tone**, even when she's critiquing them. For example, she appeals to the international community to support education and refugee rights without vilifying them. This enhances the **moral authority** of her message, making it harder to dismiss her protest as irrational or emotional.

3) Hopeful and Constructive Language

Even while describing traumatic experiences, Malala maintains a hopeful and constructive tone. Her protest is forward-looking—emphasizing change, opportunity, and resilience—rather than dwelling in despair. This positivity aligns with **the concept of empowering politeness, where the aim is not only to highlight injustice but also to uplift the marginalized** and inspire action.

4) Youthful Voice and Moral Clarity

As a young writer, Malala uses a **clear, sincere voice** that combines innocence with conviction. Her youth adds authenticity to her protest, and her polite, respectful tone ensures that her moral.

In Summary:

- a) Emphatic storytelling
- b) Indirect but incisive critique
- c) Respectful tone toward institutions
- d) Hopeful, forward-looking framing
- e) A youthful voice that emphasizes moral responsibility

Her approach reflects a feminine and ethical style of protest—what some scholars call “empowering politeness” which can be especially effective in pedagogical and intergenerational contexts.

c. The Use of Empowering Politeness reflects Islamic values as Adab (etiquette) and Hikmah (wisdom), which are also seen from the Linguistic Choice and Language Strategy used by the Character in the Novel.

The use of empowering politeness in literary texts functions not only as a communication strategy but also as a reflection of core Islamic values such as *adab* (etiquette) and *hikmah* (wisdom). In *Love from A to Z* by S.K. Ali and *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai, politeness is employed as a means of expressing protest, empathy, and ethical engagement. Both works feature Muslim characters who, in the face of injustice and trauma, choose to respond with dignity, compassion, and reflective inquiry. These linguistic choices do not diminish the strength of their resistance but instead highlight a respectful and morally grounded approach to dissent. The following table presents a comparative overview of the key linguistic strategies used in both texts and the values they embody.

Table 2. Linguistics Choices Reflecting Respects, Empathy, and Ethical Engagement

Feature	Love from A to Z (S.K. Ali)	We Are Displaced (Malala Yousafzai)	Values Reflected
Politeness strategies	Use of softened expressions: “I understand	Use of respectful address, even toward	Respect, dignity in disagreement

	where you're coming from..."	aggressors or authorities	
Empathetic narration	Internal monologue reveals understanding of others' struggles	Personal stories convey deep emotional insight into others' suffering	Empathy, emotional resonance
Ethical questioning	Characters ask moral questions rather than condemn: "Is this the right thing?"	Narrators reflect on choices: "What would I have done in her place?"	Ethical engagement, critical self-awareness
Inclusive language	"We all need space to be who we are."	"Girls like us... who've been through the same."	Solidarity, inclusivity
Reframing confrontation	Instead of direct attack: "That's one way to see it, but have you considered..."	Recounts of resistance focus on dignity, not vengeance	Peaceful resistance, respect in protest
Narrative tone	Calm, reflective, even when confronting Islamophobia or injustice	Somber, sincere tone while recounting trauma or injustice	Moral integrity, resilience
Direct vs. indirect language	Mix of direct advocacy with indirect, respectful critiques	Direct sharing of truths, softened by a reflective and personal tone	Balanced assertiveness and compassion
Use of questions	"Why is being different seen as wrong?"	"How can I explain to people who've never lost everything?"	Invitation to dialogue, mutual understanding
Metaphors and imagery	Use of gentle metaphors to convey strong emotion (e.g., "storm inside me")	Visual imagery of loss, but framed through hope and resilience	Humanization of struggle

Below is a comparative chart of key linguistic strategies both *Love from A to Z* (by S.K. Ali) and *We Are Displaced* (by Malala Yousafzai) employ to frame acts of protest or calls for change in polite, empathetic terms. Examples are paraphrased to illustrate how each strategy is applied in context.

Table 3. The Comparison between two Novels

Linguistic Strategy	Definition	Love from A to Z (paraphrased)	We Are Displaced (paraphrased)
1. Hedging & Indirectness	Soften assertions or demands through words like "maybe," "might," or phrasing as questions.	Zayneb writes, "Maybe we could speak up about the injustice—if you're okay with it?" This creates a collaborative tone rather than a blunt demand.	Malala recounts, "Perhaps if world leaders heard our stories, they might rethink their policies." The indirect appeal invites reflection rather than assigning blame.
2. Positive Politeness	Emphasizing solidarity, shared	Adam tells Zayneb, "We both care about	Malala addresses readers, "As sisters and

	values, or common identity to build rapport with the audience.	fairness—let’s use our voices together.” By highlighting mutual concern, he frames the protest as a joint enterprise.	brothers in humanity, I know you understand fear and hope.” This inclusive address aligns the reader with displaced youth.
3. Narrative Recontextualization	Embedding calls for change within personal, relatable stories rather than abstract polemics.	Zayneb describes her first rally as a learning journey—“I felt my heart pound, but every chant felt like reclaiming my own story.” The personal frame makes the protest vivid.	Each contributor’s refugee story ends with a gentle question—“What would you do in my place?”—transforming raw testimony into a polite invitation to empathize and act.
4. Honorific & Respect Markers	Use of respectful forms of address or deference to authority to maintain politeness.	When drafting an open letter to her university dean, Zayneb opens with “Dear Professor Rahman,” and uses “I respectfully request...”—signaling respect even in critique.	Malala’s appeals to UN officials begin with “Honorable delegates,” followed by “I humbly ask,” which underscores respect while still delivering a strong message.
5. Modal Verbs for Possibility	Employing “could,” “should,” “would” to suggest rather than command, keeping the tone polite.	In a blog post, Zayneb writes, “We could make change by volunteering locally”—the modal “could” suggests an option, not an obligation.	Malala observes, “Governments should remember the faces behind the numbers,” using “should” to express moral responsibility without overt accusation.

How do these strategies work together by combining hedges and modals with positive politeness and respectful address, both novels transform protest from a confrontational act into an invitation to dialogue and solidarity. Narrative frames root demands in personal experience, making them relatable, while honorifics and indirect language ensure the tone remains courteous, helping activists engage a broader audience without alienating potential allies

d. How the Analysis of Empowering Politeness in Young Muslim Literature Informs Pedagogical Practices in Language and Literature Education

(Clifton & Jennifer, 2017) Proposes literature as a platform for respectful protest and civic education. She encourages educators to use Youth literature to support social change learning outcomes.

Politeness exemplified in literature Frames how students can be taught protest and civic responsibility through fiction. (Fecho & Clifton, 2016) and (Ellis, 2010). The following is the chart of the Pedagogic Values taken from both the novel.

1. Pedagogic Values of *Love from A to Z*

Table 4..Pedagogic Values from the Novel 1

Value	Explanation
Critical Thinking & Social Awareness	Encourages students to examine systems of oppression (like Islamophobia) and reflect on how society treats marginalized identities.
Empathy & Emotional Intelligence	Zayneb and Adam's stories open up discussions around illness, grief, and inner struggles, fostering deeper emotional awareness.
Faith and Secular Coexistence	Explores how religious identity can coexist with secular environments, offering insight into respectful multicultural interactions.
Peaceful Protest & Civic Engagement	Zayneb's resistance to injustice promotes the idea that respectful protest and advocacy are vital parts of civic responsibility.
Mental Health Awareness	Both protagonists deal with emotional struggles (grief, illness, anger), offering a platform to discuss mental well-being.
Intersectionality	Through Zayneb's identity as a Muslim woman of color, students can explore how different aspects of identity intersect and shape experiences.

2. Pedagogic Values of *We Are Displaced*

Chart 5. Pedagogic Values from the Novel 2

Value	Explanation
Global Citizenship & Human Rights Education	The book introduces real-world stories from displaced girls worldwide, encouraging responsibility and solidarity.
Understanding Refugee and Migration Issues	Gives students direct insight into the causes and consequences of displacement, making abstract global issues more tangible.
Narrative Empowerment	Shows how storytelling can be a form of activism and healing, especially for marginalized voices.
Gender Equality & Girls' Education	Highlights the importance of education for girls and the barriers many face, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
Empathy through Personal Stories	Encourages students to see the human side of global issues and move beyond statistics to emotional understanding.
Courage and Resilience	Students learn how individuals can persevere through unimaginable hardship and advocate for themselves and others.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that S.K. Ali's *Love from A to Z* and Malala Yousafzai's *We Are Displaced* employ empowering politeness as a central strategy in articulating protest and dissent. Rather than using aggressive or confrontational methods, both authors craft narratives that are reflective, empathetic, and deeply rooted in moral reasoning. Their characters and stories challenge injustice not by attacking their opponents, but by appealing to shared values of humanity, dignity, and justice. This challenges dominant Western paradigms of activism, which often valorize direct

confrontation, suggesting instead a model of resistance that privileges ethical engagement and empathetic communication.

In *Love from A to Z*, Zayneb's protests against Islamophobia are grounded in ethical responsibility. Her journal entries and everyday acts of resistance reflect a careful balance between assertiveness and compassion. She refuses to remain silent but maintains adab (Islamic etiquette), confronting injustice through firm yet respectful dialogue. Similarly, in *We Are Displaced*, Malala foregrounds the voices of displaced girls, using storytelling as a subtle yet powerful form of protest. By focusing on personal narratives and shared human experiences, Malala avoids alienating readers and instead fosters empathy and understanding.

Both texts embody *hikmah* (wisdom) by framing resistance through thoughtful, hopeful language. Instead of dwelling solely on trauma, they emphasize resilience, hope, and collective action. Their polite discourse strategies transform protest into an inclusive and pedagogically prosperous practice, particularly suited for young audiences navigating identity and social justice issues.

Importantly, this form of empowering politeness is not a sign of weakness but a strategic and ethical choice. It preserves the moral high ground, invites dialogue rather than defensiveness, and reclaims agency without resorting to anger or hostility. Through this method, Ali and Yousafzai model a form of ethical resistance that is both culturally rooted and universally accessible, making their works vital contributions to both youth literature and broader discussions on activism, identity, and justice.

Thus, the study not only highlights the literary and pedagogical strengths of these narratives but also underscores the critical necessity of creating educational spaces where diverse modes of resistance are understood, respected, and thoughtfully engaged.

In light of these reflections, it becomes clear that empowering politeness is not merely a linguistic choice but a profound act of cultural and ethical positioning. Recognizing and teaching these modes of resistance is essential for cultivating more inclusive, critically engaged educational practices. The following conclusion synthesizes these insights and highlights their broader implications for discourse studies and pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complex role of employing politeness as a vital rhetorical and linguistic strategy within the protest discourse of young Muslim authors. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis of *Love from A to Z* and *We Are Displaced*; it reveals how respectful dissent is articulated within deeply rooted Muslim sociocultural contexts. The analysis demonstrates that empowering politeness not only challenges injustice but also sustains cultural identity, religious ethics, and educational values.

By weaving protest with respect, these narratives highlight the agency of young Muslim voices, offering a powerful counter-narrative to dominant discourses. The findings illuminate how language serves both as a means of resistance and a medium of cultural affirmation. Ultimately,

this research contributes to a broader understanding of how discourse practices can empower marginalized communities while fostering pedagogical approaches that honor cultural and religious diversity in youth literature and beyond.

These findings enhance our understanding of the intricate interplay between discourse, culture, and agency, making vital contributions to the fields of critical discourse studies, youth literature, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

It encourages educators to integrate such literature into curricula to promote discussions around justice, identity, and respectful resistance in the concept of critical discourse. Ultimately, this study contributes to the development of educational frameworks that not only acknowledge diversity but also enrich teaching essential material of literacy to students to navigate sociopolitical realities with linguistic intelligence and cultural integrity.

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