A Discoursal Analysis of Politeness Strategies

In Facebook Comments[*]

Dr. Nashwan M. Al-Sa'ati

Asst. Prof., College of Art, University of Mosul

Abstract

This study focuses on the politeness strategies used by Arab users for redressing the effect of face threatening acts in (133) asynchronous Facebook comments.

It is hypothesized that Arabs are less polite than they would be in face-to-face interaction. In addition, on-record has the maximum realization. However, variations of forms are realized through the use of each politeness strategy. Finally, Facebook comments involve hostile and abusive message content.

The study has shown that positive strategy is the most frequently used one. Besides, negative politeness strategy is the least used strategy whereas on-record and off-record strategies have the same frequency. Moreover, variations among the realizations of each strategy are emerged. Finally, Facebook comments have somehow hostile and abusive tones.

تحليل خطابي للأساليب المهذبة
في تعليقات الفيسبوك

د. نشوان مصطفى الساعاتي

أستاذ مساعد، كلية الآداب، جامعة الموصل

المستخلص

تركز الدراسة على الاساليب المهذبة (Politeness Strategies) التي يستعملها العرب لحفظ ماء الوجه في مائة وثلاثة وثلاثين تعليقاً من تعليقات الفيس بوك غير الآنية.

تفترض الدراسة أن العرب هم أقل تهذيباً في تعليقاتهم في الفيس بوك عما يكونون عليه في حديثهم وجهاً لوجه، فضلاً عن ذلك، فإن الوسيلة المباشرة (on-record) هي أكثر الوسائل المستعملة.

كما تفترض الدراسة أيضاً أن هناك اختلافات في الاشكال المتعددة لكل وسيلة من وسائل التهذيب. وأخيراً، تفترض الدراسة احتواء تعليقات الفيس بوك على مضمون مسيء.

لقد بينت الدراسة أن الوسيلة الإيجابية هي الأكثر استخداماً. علاوة على ذلك، فإن الوسيلة السلبية هي أقل الوسائل المستعملة في حين تشترك الوسائل المباشرة وغير المباشرة بالنسبة نفسها من الاستعمال. وتبين من خلال الدراسة أن هناك اختلافات بين الاشكال المتعددة لكل وسيلة من وسائل التهذيب. وأخيراً فقد أظهرت الدراسة أن تعليقات الفيس احتوت على مضمون مسيء.

1) Introduction:

Over the course of history, modes of communication have changed greatly. At previous time, people depended on oral history. With the emergence of new technologies such as the telegraph, the printing press, the radio and the newspapers, the distribution of information spread up considerably. In the last few decades, a rapid diffusion of electronic media has led to a significant field of study, viz. Computer- Mediated Communication (henceforth, CMC) or Internet language. Therefore, it is possible for people to communicate visually, orally and in written form by using personal computer and Internet (Sa'diyah, 2010, 18-20).

Moreover, online comments in Facebook, as an area of CMC, have become a popular environment for meeting new people and for general conversation. In addition, face needs are assumed to operate in all cultures and influence speakers and listeners in an interaction. Then, since these comments are comparable to real-life situations where participants interact at the same time (or in other times) and often in the same spatial environment (Sandberg, 2010: 342-343), it is expected, therefore, that these face needs would be also in realization, in CMC in particular, in Facebook comments. This is due to the fact that people in all cultures, Brown and Levinson (1987, 12) argue, have an awareness of self-image or "face" as they communicate. Thus, protecting face is important for communicating and behaving successfully with

others, even though it may not be accomplished consciously by participants.

2) The Problem:

The increasing popularity of CMC has attracted the interest of various scholars, of various specializations, around the world. However, the effect of politeness among Arab users on Facebook is not known. So, Politeness in relation to Facebook is tackled, in this research, since, to the best of our knowledge, there is no study available about politeness strategies used by Arab users for redressing the effect of face threatening acts. This is coupled by the fact that little is known about the effect of politeness in CMC, in general (Burk et al, 2010, 233).

3) Aims of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to find out the politeness strategies used by Arab users in their online group discourse specifically in Facebook comment, i.e. deciding what type of politeness strategies are manipulated by Arab users in their Facebook comments to redress the effects of face threatening acts. In addition, the study aims at showing how Arab persons use and is influenced by the politeness strategies used in Facebook comments and how polite the users consider the comments to be.

As a result, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, this study examines the politeness strategies used in (133) random asynchronous comments on Facebook that might be looked at differently in face-to-face interaction as far as politeness phenomenon is concerned.

4) Hypotheses:
1. In writing their text-based comments on Facebook, Arabs are less polite than they would be in face-to-face Interaction.
2. On– record politeness strategy has the maximum realization among other politeness strategies, viz. positive, negative and off- record.
3. Variations of forms are realized through the use of each politeness strategy.
4. Facebook comments involve hostile and abusive message content.

5) Data Collection:
    This research analyzes (133) asynchronous comments posted on Facebook. The comments cover a wide variety of topics. The comments that are taken as data are only the ones containing the Face Threatening Acts and the focus is on the kind of politeness strategies manipulated by the users to redress the effect of these acts. The data is analyzed using Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness strategy (1987).

6) Facebook: Preliminary Remarks
    Facebook is the world's largest social network. It is one of the internet free facilities which can be accessed by many internet users (Sandberg, 2010, 342-343).
    Facebook was founded by Mark Zucherberg in his Harvard dorm room in February 2004, initially as an exclusive network for Harvard University students. Zuckerberg hacked into the protected areas of

Harvard's computer network and copied the house's private dormitory ID image. Harvard at that time did not have a student directory with photos and basic information. Thus, the initial site, which showed persons' physical community with their real identities, represented the key aspects of what later became "Facebook".

The site, then, was quickly forwarded to several campus group list servers but was shut down a few days later by the Harvard administration. Zuckerberg was charged by the administration with breach of security, violation of copyright, violating individual privacy, and face expulsion; but ultimately the charges were dropped. (ibid)

In fact, the original idea for the term "Facebook" came from Zuckerberg's high school "Phillips Exeter Academy". For decades, this school published and distributed at the start of the academic year a printed manual of all the students and teachers. It was unofficially called the "Facebook". It was passed around to every student as a way for students to know their classmates for the following year. It was a physical paper book until Zuckerberg brought it into the Internet (ibid, 353).

7) Face and Politeness Theory:

Face or politeness theory was first formulated in 1987 by Brown and Levinson. They identified two types of face needs to which individuals are assumed to attend: positive face and negative face. The former refers to one's desire for acceptance and approval from
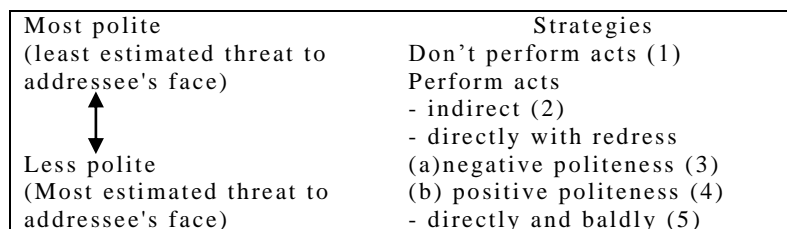
others. It is the desire to be liked and admired. As for negative face, it refers to one's desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition or constraint that his/her action unimpeded by others (Sa'diyah, 2010, 16).

However, a "Face-Threatening-Act" (FTA, for short) is one that would make someone possibly loses face or damages it in some way (Erbert & Floyd, 2004, 325-327). Face threatening acts include acts of criticizing, disagreement, interrupting, imposing, asking favor, requesting information or goods, etc. (Sandberg, 2010, 345). For instance, insults or criticisms can threaten the receiver's positive face by conveying disapproval, while requests for favors can threaten receivers' negative face by constraining receivers' behavior and imposing on their autonomy (Erbert and Floyd, 2004, 325-327).

Thus, a fundamental assumption of politeness theory is that all individuals have, and are concerned with maintaining face (Morand & Ocker, 2010, 136). They should, thereby, use certain strategies to redress the effect of FTAs, and to establish and maintain harmony in social interaction (Sa'diyah, 2010, 10).

8) Politeness Strategies:
Brown and Levinson (1987) presented a set of five levels of politeness or possibilities of decisions that individuals make for minimizing the face threat of a speech act. These levels range from performing the act baldly and without redressing face (DO the FTA baldly with no redressing action) to omitting the act (don't do the FTA) as shown in the following figure:

Most polite	Strategies
(least estimated threat to addressee's face)	Don't perform acts (1) Perform acts - indirect (2) - directly with redress
Less polite (Most estimated threat to addressee's face)	(a)negative politeness (3) (b) positive politeness (4) - directly and baldly (5)

Figure (1)
Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies (adapted from their original diagram)

According to Grundy (1995, 135) and Erbert and Floyd (2004, 329-330), the decision whether and how to use the various strategies in real-life situation depends on three factors:

1. The social distance between speakers, i.e. the degree of familiarity and solidarity towards the addressee. It includes distinguishing a kin or a friend from a stranger. Thus, different FTAs are used depending on the social distance between interlocutors. For example, we may use positive rather than negative politeness when speaking with family.

2. Power relation between speakers, i.e. the position in society and age (social status). It includes speaking to our social equals differently than those whose status is higher or lower than our own in a given situation.

3. The degree of imposition of the speech act to be performed. So, some impositions are greater than

others. Highly imposing acts like requests or orders demand more redress to mitigate their increased threat level of the addressee's autonomy and freedom of action.

The following sub-sections show a detailed presentation of each strategy:

8.1 Bald on – Record:

Bald on-record strategy usually does not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face, although there are ways that bald on-record strategy can be used in trying to minimize FTAs implicitly. Using such a strategy will often shock or embarrass the addressee. This strategy is mostly found in situations where speakers know each other very well and have a close relationship, such as family or close friends. This strategy is used where face involves mutual orientation so that each participant attempts to foresee what the other participant is attempting to foresee (Brown & Levinson 1987, 1-10).

To use "on – record" strategy entails performing the FTA directly. This is often seen in the imperative form, **e.g.** "Go away". It may also include aggravation threat escalating clauses **e.g.** "Don't just stand here, I won't that report now" (ibid).

8.1.1 Forms of Bald on- Record Strategy:

Brown and Levinson present various cases (forms) in which one might use the bald on-record strategy. They are:
1. Great urgency or desperation
   e.g. Watch out / help

or, sometimes, it is achieved by using attention-getters:

e.g. Listen, I've got an idea….

e.g. Look, the point is….

2. Great efficiency: In case of channel noise, or where communication difficulties exploit pressure to speak with maximum efficiency such as in calling across a distance.

   e.g. Hear me out

3. Task-oriented. In this kind of interaction, face redress will be irrelevant. That is, the speaker does not care about maintaining face. The hearer's face is small either because the speaker is powerful and does not fear punishment or there is no cooperation form the hearer.

   e.g. Pass me the hammer/ give me that/ Don't forget to clean the car.

4. Sympathetic advice or warnings (doing the FTA in the interest of the hearer; thus the speaker does care about the hearer).

   e.g. your headlights are on!

   e.g. Take care of yourself (an advice delivered to persons departing on a trip).

5. Granting permission for something that the hearer has requested.

   e.g. Yes, you may go.

6. Offers.

   e.g. Leave it, I'll clean it later.

7. Welcomes.
8. Farewells (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 94- 101 & Erbert & Floyd, 2004: 315-316).

8.2 Positive Politeness Strategy:

Positive politeness strategies aim at supporting positive face wants (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 15). They minimize the threat to the hearer's positive face. They are used to make the hearer feel good about him-/herself, his/her interests or possessions. They are used among group of friends or used in situations where people know each other fairly well. They usually try to minimize the distance between them by expressing friendliness and interests or appreciation in the hearer's need to be respected. Besides, they are accompanied with markers and expression of kinship and solidarity (Burke et al, 2010: 214).

8.2.1 Forms of Positive Strategy:

The forms of positive strategy include:
1. Notice of admiration to hearers or to new qualities or possessions. That is, exaggerate interest in the hearer, approval, and sympathy with the hearer. The exaggeration is, sometimes, done with intensifying modifiers and exaggerated intonation.
    e.g. Hey love you
    e.g. That's a nice haircut you got, where did you get it?

2. Use in-group identity markers such as colloquialism or slang, or use first name to convey familiarity, solidarity or in-group membership or

even use inclusive forms to include both the speaker and the hearer in the activity, **e.g.** <u>we</u> (not <u>you</u> or <u>me)</u>

 e.g. Most are damn hard.
 e.g. Hey Bad, have you slept well?
 e.g. Give **us** a break (i.e. **me**)
 e.g. **We**'re not feeling well, are **we**?
 e.g. **Let's** stop (i.e. **I**)
 e.g. **Let's** get on with dinner (i.e. **you**)

3. Claim common view or ground with the hearer or give something desired or gifts (not necessarily concrete but human-relation wants for example, the wants to be liked, admired, cared about, listened to, etc.) to the hearer such as goods, sympathy, understanding or cooperation.
e.g. you look sad. Can I do anything?

4. Seek agreement (for example, repeating part or all of what is said)
e.g. Yes, it's rather long, not short certainly.

5. Give reasons by the hearer (or ask for) reasons by the speaker by making an activity seems reasonable to the hearer
e.g. I'm really late for appointment so....
 Sometimes, the speaker gives reasons as to why he/she wants what he/she wants. For example, giving indirect
Suggestions which demands:
e.g. <u>Why not</u> lend me your car?

6. Assert reciprocal exchange or tit for tat i.e. offer or promise by giving reciprocal rights or obligations between the speaker and the hearer. So, the speaker may say:
   e.g. If you wash the dishes. I'll vacuum the floor.

7. Be optimistic
   e.g. I'll just come a long, if you don't mind
   e.g. I hope/ imagine
   e.g. I'm sure
   e.g. Won't you?

8. Joke based on mutual shared background knowledge and values. The joke will put the hearer at ease:
   e.g. Wow, that's a whopper.

9. Hedge of opinion to avoid disagreement
   e.g. You really should, sort of, try harder
   e.g. A: You hate your Mom and Dad
        B: Oh, sometimes (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 101-129, Morand & Ocker, 2010, 133-134).

8.3 Negative Politeness Strategy:

The main reason for using this strategy is to assume that one may be imposing on the hearers and intruding on their space. Therefore, it communicates social distance or impersonality in the situation [1].

---

[1] Negative politeness strategy has common similarity with the following features used in CMC research: impersonality, formality, bureaucratic and cold distant situation (Burke et al, 2010, 214).

Negative politeness strategy is defined as a regressive action directed towards the hearer's negative face, i.e. his/her want to have freedom of action unobstructed and attention unrestricted, or it emphasizes the avoidance of imposition on the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987, 11).

8.3.1 Forms of Negative Strategy:

There are various forms of negative strategy:
1. Use hedges or Questions (be conventionally indirect)
   e.g. Perhaps, he might have taken it, maybe.
   e.g. Would you know where Oxford street is?
   e.g. Could you please pass the rice?
   The syntactic form used to express doubt minimizes the imposition. These phrases indicate that the seriousness of the imposition is not great. Thus, by using hedges, speakers avoid committing themselves to the intent of their own speech act (I wonder if I could / Perhaps / maybe / possibly ask you) (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 145).

2. Be pessimistic by doing indirect request
   e.g. You couldn't find your way to lending me a thousand dollars, could you?

3. Give deference or respect by assuming that you may be intruding on the hearer in return of FTA or pluralize the person responsible (i.e. use plural pronouns **e.g.** "we" or "us" when the speaker really means "I" and "you"). That is, the speaker humbles himself/herself (lowering oneself) or he/she raises

the hearer (pays him/ her positive face as superior, i.e. raising others).
e.g. We regret to inform you, Dr. (Sir) (This implies that the matter is important enough for the speaker to disturb the hearer).

4. Apologize for doing FTA
   e.g. "I'm sorry to bother you, but….".

5. Nominalize the subject, i.e. change the verbs and adverbs into nouns or adjectives. This removes speakers form a sense of feeling or doing things, and gives their speech acts a less active force. Compare:
   e.g. "I want you" to "you are wanted"
   e.g. "I expect that…" to "It is expected that…."
   e.g. "You performed well on the examination" to "Your good performance on the examination"

   Or use past tense or passive
   e.g. Spitting will not be tolerated

   Or replace the pronouns "I" and "You" by indefinites
   e.g. One shouldn't do things like that (*not* you shouldn't do things like that).

6. State the FTA as a general rule, i.e. as an instance of a general rule, regulation, or obligation
   e.g. Passengers will refrain from flushing toilets on the train (*not* **You** will refrain from….)
   e.g. International regulation require that the (…) be sprayed with DDT (*not* I'm going to spray you with

DDT to follow international regulation) (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 145-211 & Erbert & Floyd, 2004, 316-317).

8.4 Off – Record Strategy:

This strategy uses indirect language and removes the speaker from any imposition. For example, a speaker might merely say "It's getting cold in here" indirectly, and it would be nice if the listener would get up and turn up the heater without asking the listener to do so directly.

Thus, if a speaker wants to do a FTA but he/ she wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he/ she can do it off– record and say something in general or different from what he/she means leaving it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it (Brown and Levinson 1987, 211). As a result, this strategy is so ambiguous in that more than one intention is expressed and none of which makes a threat. This strategy, then, shows that the speaker has the opportunity to evade responsibility by claiming that the hearer's interpretation of the utterance as a FTA is wrong (Erbert & Floyd, 2004, 324).

8.4.1 Forms of Off- Record Strategy:

1. **Give hints or association clues** (by stating motives for doing an act or by mentioning something associated with the act required of the hearer due to the speaker- hearer experience or mutual knowledge).

   If the speaker wants the hearer to close the window, he/she may say "It's cold in here"; if the hearer answers "I'll go and close the window", then

he/she is responding to this threatening act by giving a "gift" to the speaker and avoids the threat of being ordered and the hearer gets credit for being generous or cooperative (Erbert & Floyd, 2004: 315-316).

2. Presuppose

If the speaker says: "I washed the car again today", he/ she presuppose that he/she has done it before (last week) and thus may implicate a criticism.

3. Overstate or over – generalize (saying more than necessary by exaggerating)

e.g. There were a *million* persons in the street (said as an excuse for being late).

e.g. I called a *hundred* times, but there were no answer (conveys an apology for not getting in touch).

e.g. You *never* do the washing up (conveys a criticism).

4. Understate (saying less than required)

It is achieved by:

a. choosing a point on a scalar predicate (**e.g.** tall, good, nice) which is below the point that describes the state of affairs

b. Hedging a higher point which implicates the (lower) actual state of affairs.

So, one might say "He's all right" as an understated criticism implicating "I think he's awful" or as an understated compliment

implicating "I think he's fabulous". That is, in the case of criticism, the speaker avoids the lower points of the scale and the upper points in the case of compliment or admission.

5. Contradiction

Contradiction is achieved by stating two things that contradict each other; the speaker makes it appear that he/ she **cannot** be telling the truth:

e.g. A: Are you upset about that?
B: Well, {yes and no}
{I am and I am not} (Convey either a complaint or a criticism).

e.g. Well, John is here and he isn't here (one may say about a drunken friend to a telephone caller).

6. Be ironic (Be sarcastic or joking)

e.g. John is a real genius (said after he has just done twenty stupid things in a row).
So the statement is said ironically, i.e. the **opposite** of what the speaker means.

7. Use metaphors [1]

e.g. Mike is a real fish {said metaphorically, i.e. he (drinks/ swims/is slimy/ is cold- blooded) like a fish}.

---

(1) Metaphors are literally false. They may be marked with hedging particles, such as 'real, regular, sort of, and as it were' which make their metaphorical status explicit (Brown and Levinson, 1987, 223).

8. Use rhetorical questions [1]
e.g. How was I to know (asking with no intention to get an answer, i.e. I wasn't)

e.g. How many times do I have to tell you (criticism, i.e. too many).

9. Be ambiguous/vague
e.g. Perhaps someone should have been more responsible.

10. Use tautologies
The speaker, in using this form, encourages the hearer to look for an informative interpretation of the non- informative utterance. It may be an excuse:

e.g. Boys will be boys

e.g. War is war

or a criticism:

e.g. **Your** clothes belong where **your** clothes belong, **my** clothes belong where **my** clothes belong. Look upstairs.

11. Displace the hearer as to whom the target for the speaker's
FTA is, or the speaker may pretend to address the FTA to someone whom it wouldn't threaten, and hope that the **real** target will see

---

(1) Words help to force the rhetorical interpretation of questions include: 'just, even, and ever':
  e.g. did he {even} come to visit me once while I was in hospital? (ibid)
         {ever}

that the FTA is aimed at him/her. In other words, the speaker talks to someone and another person beside him/her carries on what is required as a free gift, and his/her face is not threatened as a result.

12. Be incomplete, use ellipsis (Brown & Levinson, 1987, 211- 227).

9) Data Analysis:
In what follows, each strategy together with its various realizations is going to be presented:

9.1 ON-RECORD:
This strategy is realized as:

1- Sympathetic advice or warning
Some instances from the comments in Facebook are seen to have this feature. This is presented through:

/ʔæ:ni ʔaʃu:fha maħilwa. Walla ttaʕbi:r ʕan ilfarħa mu: bhal ṭari:qa/
(I guess it is not good. I swear that expressing happiness is not in this way)
Which is a sympathetic advice noticed in reaction to a picture in which a football team wins a game, so some people carry their guns and shoot in the air in order to express their happiness.

However, a warning is realized through:
/ d3ajjid bukra mæ:xalli wiħda bilkullijja ʔilla watħæ:raʃ bi:ha/

(O.K., tomorrow I will tease every girl in the college)

Which is seen as a reaction to a picture of bad clothes worn by some girls?

2- Great urgency or desperation

Sometimes, there may appear some comments which express great urgency. This is clearly presented in the following excerpt which is a comment on "masqouf":[1]

/ *walla miʃtahi lmasgu:f ʂæ:jir sante:n mæ:mæ:kil*/

(I badly want to eat masqouf. I haven't eaten for two years)

Sometimes, an addressee may express desperation. Let us look at the following comment in which the addressee reacts to a picture of an old recorder about which the speaker asks the addressee's opinion:

/ *tʃæ:n ʕidna minna- walla ʔajjæ:m*/

(We had such a thing, allas)

3- Welcome

This strategy is manifested through some words and phrases as:

/ *halɔ:*/ (hi)

/ *hai*/   (hi)

/ *marħaba*/ (hi)

/*we:nak ʔaʃu ma:ku*/   (hi, how are you?)

/*mnawwwwwwwra ilmawqiʕ* / (you are lighting the site)

---

(1) A famous Iraqi food.

9.2 <u>POSITIVE STRATEGY:</u>

According to our analysis, this strategy is realized as:

1) Give [or ask for] reasons

In reaction to asking for the addressees' opinion about a lady who declares, directly, her loves to a man, as to whether she is rude or brave, a comment is seen in the form of giving a reason:

/d3ari:?a wha∫∫i: mannu ħaræ:m li?an ilħub min ħaq ?aj ?insæ:n/

(Brave. This is not a taboo since love is anyone's right).

2) Claim common view or ground with the hearer or give something desired or gifts

This form shows some consideration and it claims common ground between the speaker and the hearer. Thus, in response to a comment raised about success, depicted through a picture of a ladder, one person says:

/?alla:humma nas?aluka innad3æ:ħ fi ddunjæ: wal ?æ:xira/

(Allah, we ask you to grant us success in our life and in doomsday as well).

3) Notice of admiration to hearers or to new qualities or possessions

Sometimes, a person may indicate a notice of admiration with whom he/she is talking. Thus, in the following comment, one girl, exchanging the same interest, shows admiration to her friend telling her that she is the light of Facebook page:

/mnawra iṣṣafħa bwd3u: dik jæ:? ammu:ra/
(You have lit the page, princess)

In another comment, a person intensifies and exaggerates his interest with the speaker who shows a picture on which the word "Allah" is written:
/?alla:h ?ad3mal kalima fi: ħajæ:ti/
(Allah is the most beautiful word in my life)

4) Seek agreement

In response to a picture about beans, one person agrees with the speaker in that the beans are very delicious especially in winter and the comment is:
/ṣaħ walla ṭajba biʃʃita?alif ʕæ:fja/
(Right, it is very delicious in winter. Enjoy it)

5) Hedge of opinion to avoid disagreement

A person may present his opinion through hedging. This is clearly shown in the following excerpt in relation to how the body of female or male changes after marriage:
/bas tara ilħilu jibqa ħilu jaʕni mħæ:fið ʕla nafsa/
(But a nice person still is, i.e. he/ she care about his/ her body)

6) Use in-group identity markers to convey solidarity

This is expressed through using words such as:
/<u>jæ: ?ixti jæ: ʕe:ni</u> walla ?inti ʕasal/
(**My dear**, I swear you are honey)
/ læ:tizʕali <u>su:ma</u> walla ṣaħi:ħ 100%/
(Don't get vexed **Sooma**, it is right 100%)
/ <u>ʕæ:ʃat il?ajæ:di:</u> ṣudug ħulwa/

(**May Allah save you**, it is right it is beautiful)

7) Be optimistic

In reaction to a picture about the Iraqi team winning a football game, a person says:

/ʔinʃæ:lla jitħarrar ilʕræ:q ʕala lka?s/

(May Iraq has its own freedom at the cup time)

8) Joke

A person may express his attitude towards something through using jokes. This is clearly presented in the following instance where a person comments on a picture about an old recorder in a funny way:

/ʔalla jriħma tʃæ:n xɔ:ʃ musad3d3al/

(May Allah grant it his mercy; it was a good recorder)

9.3 NEGATIVE STRATEGY:

This strategy has so many realizations:

1) Use hedges or questions

In expressing intimate relationship, one girl threatens her friend ambiguously that she will do something to her when she meets her (as to whether the action is positive or negative):

/haha matd3u:zi:n min swæ:lfitʃ nit ʃæ:waf wabasi:ṭa/

(haha, you are always kidding; when we meet, I will do something to you)

Sometimes, there may appear a question. Let us look at the following excerpt where two girls talk about "masqouf" and one of them raises a question about what this food is:

/hæ:j(,) ʔæ:sfa ʕla ssu?æ:l bas ?i:h ilmasgu:f (?)/

(Hi; I'm sorry for asking but what does "masqouf" mean?)

2) **Apologize for doing FTA**

This is expressed as:

/læ:tiz ʕali su:ma walla saħi:ħ 100%/
(**Don't get vexed** Sooma, I swear it is right 100%)

*/haha ʔɔːʃ jalla dæːrmijjæːt **ʔæːni ʔatraxxas ræːħ ʔaṭlaʕ/***
(haha. Oh darmiyyat **I'm sorry I will leave**)

3) Be pessimistic

In response to a picture about beans, one person comments:

/ba:ba hæ:ða jsawi ɣæ:zæ:t wjd3u:z jsawi tafli:ʃ mæ:ʔ/
(My darling, this makes gases and it may oblige someone to hurry to toilet)

9.4 Off-record:

This strategy is represented differently as follows:

1) **Give hints or association clues**

This form is expressed in an example about a girl who has the intention of speaking with anyone on facebook but suddenly she discovers that no one answers her. Thus, as an indication to everyone to speak with her, she says:

/ʃinu ʔæ:ni: ʔilli sahræ:na mæ:ku ʔaħħad/
(Am I the only one sleepless!).

2) Presuppose

This is expressed through:

/haha ʔi: mu: xaṭ ṭijja ʔiða majilgu:n bnajja itxa:f ʕale:hum witħubhum ʃi:sawwu:n/
(haha; if they didn't find a girl that loves and takes care of them, what should they do!!!)

3) Overstate or over-generalize

In reaction to a picture of offal, a type of Iraqi food, one person over-generalizes his dissatisfaction with this food through commenting:

/haha læ: walla bas mæ: ?aħibha ?ei ʃi: jxiş illuħu:m ilħamræ:? ?amu:t minha mæ: ?atqabbalha/
(haha; No, I swear, but I don't like it. Anything related to meat, I don't taste it)

4) Contradiction

As stated earlier, in expressing this form, one should state two things that contradict each other. This is shown in the following excerpt which explains a picture of ladder as a reference to success, so one person comments:

/?annad3æ:ħ sullam læ: tastaţi:ʕ tasalluqahu wajadæ:k fi: d3eibik wa?innama fi: d3eib ɣeirak haha/
(Success is a ladder you can't climb while your hands in your pocket but in the pocket of others, haha)

5) be ironic, be sarcastic or joking

In order to have fun and to criticise a situation, some persons present some ironies. This is clearly shown in the following excerpt where a person is criticizing his situation as being unemployed though he is a doctor
/ ?æ:ni ham ilħamdilla hassa ţabi:b maʕa waqf ittanfi:ð /
(Me too, thanks Allah, now a doctor but unemployed)

6) Be vague (ambiguous)

In manipulating this form, it is clear that one should be ambiguous. This is represented as:

/fi: maθal jqu:l(:) ?iðæ: mæ:t ħumæ:r ilˤumda xalli:k ?awwal ilmuˤazzi:n wa?iðæ: mæ:t ilˤumda xalli:k fi: be:tak liħad matʃu:f ilħumæ:r illi dӡæ:j mi:n/

(A proverb says: if the mayor's donkey dies, be the first of consolers, but if the mayor dies, stay at home till you see which the coming donkey is)

10) Conclusions:

The results of the analysis have shown that politeness is found in the verbal communication of the real world as well as in the cyber world or CMC, i.e. Facebook comments. When performing FTAs, participants on Facebook commonly make use of the politeness strategies so as to redress the face threatening aspect.

Moreover, it should be mentioned that the maximum realization of on-record strategy is "great urgency or desperation" that has (thirteen) out of (twenty-seven) comments, i.e. (48.14%) and the minimum realization is "welcome" which has (four) out of (twenty- seven) comments, i.e. 14.81%. As for "sympathetic advice or warning", it has (nine) out of (twenty-seven) comments, i.e. (33.33%),. However, some realizations have not been found, namely offer, great efficiency, task-oriented, granting permission for something that the hearer has requested and farewells.

As for positive strategy, the maximum realization is "notice of admiration to hearers or to new qualities or possessions" which reaches up to (eighteen) out of (sixty-one), i.e. (29.5%).

The minimum realization which, reaches to (two) out of (sixty-one) comments, i.e. (3.27%), is "give (or ask for) reasons".

As for the other forms, they range as follows: "use in-group identity markers to convey solidarity" 18%, claim common view or ground with the hearer 13.11%, be optimistic 11.47%, seek agreement 8.2%, jokes 5.34%, hedge of opinion 4.91%".

The analysis for the third strategy, viz. negative politeness strategy shows that the maximum realization is "use hedges or questions" where we have (nine) out of (eighteen) comments, i.e. (50%). The minimum realization is "be pessimistic 22.22 %". The other form of this strategy has different percentage, viz. apologize 27.77%. It should be noticed, however, that "nominalization", "giving deference or respect" and "state the FTA as a general rule, regulation or obligation" have not been found in our analysis.

In fact, the last strategy, off-record has been maximumally realized through "Contradiction" which reaches (twelve) out of (twenty-seven) comments, i.e. (44.44%) whereas the minimum realization is "Presuppose" that reaches (one) comment out of (twenty-seven) comments, i.e. (3.7%). The other forms, in turn, range as follows: be ironic or sarcastic 44.44%, give hints or association clues 18.51%, overstate or over-generalize 14.81, and be vague 14.81. Some forms, however, haven't been realized, viz. understate, use metaphors, use rhetorical

questions, use tautologies, displace the hearer and be incomplete, use ellipsis.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that with On-record strategy, we have got (twenty-seven) comments, as a whole, out of (133) comments, i.e. (20.3%). As for the positive strategy, we have got (sixty-one) out of (133) comments, i.e. (45.87%). With the negative strategy, we have got (eighteen) out of the (133) comments, i.e. (13.53%). Finally, off-record has reached (twenty-seven) out of the (133) comments, i.e. (20.3%).

The findings, then, show that positive strategy is the most frequently used strategy by Arab users in Facebook comments in order to show their respect and regard towards the other users. Generally, the users manipulate the positive politeness strategy when they agree with other users' opinion, or when they are willing to cooperate and minimize the distance between them or intensify interest or appreciation to the hearers' needs. Thus, we believe that the maintenance of harmonious social relations in Facebook depends on the exchange of positive massages, for example conveyance of friendship or social attraction, noticing others' qualities, mentioning common interests, joking, emotions, and so on.

As for the negative politeness strategy, it is the least strategy manipulated by Arab users when they want to ask their participants to do something. It shows that the interlocutor recognizes the addressee's want to have his freedom of action unobstructed.

Moreover, a rather different phenomenon from what happen in the real world is that sometimes Arab users minimize the imposition of the FTA by writing expressions, such as /haha/; it happens since the users cannot see each other's' face.

It should be noticed that off-record strategy of politeness is manipulated by Arab users in line with bald on-record strategy.

Thus, the study has come up with the fact that "negative strategy" is the least strategy used on Facebook, while "positive strategy" is the greatest strategy, yet "on- record" and "off- record" strategies have the same frequency.

Moreover, the contents of the comments have, somehow, hostile and abusive tones. Yet, according to their comments, although we deal with anonymous participants, we can almost guess that males are somehow rude, they tend to use long messages, to challenge, and to give hints about sex. Whereas females tend to use short messages, advise, show sympathy, support, and avoid being rude.

11) Suggestions for Further Studies:

1. Researchers can investigate the politeness strategies in other fields such as e-mails. They can also compare the politeness strategies used by men and women when they write e-mail and analyze the effect of the strategies used.

2. Researchers can tackle the kinds of politeness strategies that chatters select when they talk

publicly or privately or whether or not public computer- mediated communication is less polite than private one.

3. Researchers may even compare the politeness strategies used by Arab and English chatters in public or private CMC. Since in each culture people have different values in communicating, thus it will influence the politeness strategies employed within the same form of communication.

References

1. Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Burke, M., E. Kim, T. Anand, and R. Kraut (2010). Introductions and requests: Rhetorical strategies that elicit response in online communities. *Proc. Communities & Technologies*,2(4): 211- 245
3. <www> http//jcmc.indiana.edu/voll/issue2/bechar.html/
4. Erbert, L. and, K. Floyd (2004). "Affectionate expressions as face-threatening acts : Receiver assessments, *Communication Studies*, 29(4): 315-345
5. <www>http//www2.hawaii.edu/~cchou/ppdla99/index.htm/
6. Grundy, P. (1995). *Doing Pragmatics*. London: Edward Arnold.
7. Morand, D. & J. Ocker (2010). "Politeness theory and computer-mediated communication: A sociolinguistic approach to analyzing relational messages". *Proceedings of the 36th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-36),* 129- 158.
8. <www>http//www.cios.org/www/ejc/v6n396.htm/

9. Sa'diyah, K. (2010). "Politeness Strategy Used by Indonesian Chatters in Internet Relay Chat (IRC)", *Artikel Skripsi*, 12(1).

10. < www> http//jcmc.indiana.edu/voll2/issue1/heisler.html/

11. Sandberg, S. (2010). "The Role Of Advertising on Facebook. *Sheryl facebook's Chief operating officer",* 338- 376.

12. < www> http//www.cios.org/www/ejc/v6n396.htm/

<u>Key to Phonemic Symbols</u>

A. Consonants

/ʔ/	**as in**	/ʔanæ:/	(I)
/b/	**as in**	/barmi:l/	(barrel)
/t/	as in	/tamæ:m/	(right)
/θ /	as in	/ θalæ:θa/	(three)
/d3/	as in	/d3abæ:n/	(coward)
/ ħ /	as in	/ ħali:b/	(milk)
/x/	as in	/xibiz/	(bread)
/d/	as in	/daktɔ:r/	(doctor)
/ð/	as in	/ðahab/	(gold)
/r/	as in	/rabb/	(God)
/z/	as in	/zi:na/	(a girl's name)
/s/	as in	/sin/	(tooth)
/ʃ/	as in	/baʃʃa:r/	(a boy's name)
/ ş /	as in	/ şaħin/	(dish)
/ḍ/	as in	/wuḍu:ʔ/	(ablution)
/ ṭ/	as in	/ ṭabil/	(drum)
/ð/	as in	/ðuhur/	(noon)
/ʕ/	as in	/ ʕe:n /	(eye)
/ɣ/	as in	/ ɣæ:ʔib/	(absent)
/f/	as in	/filim/	(film)
/q/	as in	/qurʔæ:n/	(Qur'an)
/k/	as in	/ku:b/	(cup)
/g/	as in	/jgu:l/	(he says)

/l/	as in	/ ʕilik /	(gum)
/ḷ /	as in	/ʔaḷḷa:h/	(God)
/m/	as in	/ʔumm/	(mother)
/n/	as in	/næ:m/	(he slept)
/h/	as in	/huwa/	(he)
/w/	as in	/walad/	(boy)
/j/	as in	/jaʔkul/	(he eats)

B. Vowels
i. Short Vowels

/a/	as in	/ ḍarab/	(he beats)
/i/	as in	/kitæ:b/	(book)
/u/	as in	/qum/	(stand up)

ii. Long Vowels

/æ:/	as in	/bæ:b/	(door)
/a:/	as in	/na:r/	(fire)
/i:/	as in	/ saʕi:d/	(happy)
/u:/	as in	/banu:n/	(boys)
/ɔ:/	as in	/sɔ:m/	(fast)
/e:/	as in	ḷ/de:n/	(debt)

iii. Diphthongs

/aj/	as in	/ajḍan/	(too)
/aw/	as in	/hawl/	(year)
/ai/	as in	/hai/	(hi)