

# (Im) Politeness and Gender in the Arabic Discourse of Social Media Network Websites: Facebook as a Norm

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## Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the differences and similarities in the ways men and women use (im)politeness strategies in communicating “online” in the Arabic discourse of social media network websites like Facebook as well as the role of the topic the interlocutors talk about in the use of (im)politeness strategies. In addition, the study investigates the differences between the men-men, women-women, women-men communication in the Arabic discourse of social media network website, Facebook. For the purposes of this study, a corpus of online Arabic texts were collected from some public web pages of the most popular TV show programs on some of the most well-liked social media network websites such as Facebook over a period of four months (from September 2012- December 2012). The obtained data were studied quantitatively and qualitatively. Many studies have been conducted on cross-gender differences especially in the computer mediated communication CMC, but none so far has focused on the gender differences and (im)politeness in the Arabic discourse of social media network websites although there is a huge number of Arabic users of such websites. The present study, therefore, attempts to fill in the gap in the literature.

**Keywords:** Gender, (im) politeness, Social media, Facebook

## 1. Introduction

Social media network web sites have become so popular and attracted a huge number of Internet users all over the world. Among many social networking sites, Facebook is considered a rich site for researchers interested in social networks because of its heavy usage patterns that bridge online and offline connections. More research is needed to investigate and analyze the language used in such websites. It is exciting to investigate if the old theories are still valid while the social media is a different innovation.

The topic of (im)politeness is considered as one of the most attractive topics for linguistic researchers. There are many studies conducted to investigate the (im)politeness strategies applied by people in different contexts. Some of them investigate also the gender differences in using (im)politeness strategies. For example, Lakoff (1975) stated that women use more politeness strategies than men because of their subordinate position in a society. Furthermore, Lakoff indicated that women also use different strategies in order to talk in less assertive ways such as with the use of tag questions, indirect statements, and discourse particles. Ali Hassan(2002) illustrates that many studies which have been conducted, based on Lakoff 's claims, showed inconsistent findings. Scholars such as Romaine (1994), Holmes (1995) and others maintain that the use of politeness strategies is dependent on many social factors that are reflected in the use of the language. Meanwhile, studies on gender differences in communication, especially those concerning the use of politeness strategies, have been conducted in different contexts and field.

Although several studies have tackled gender differences in the computer mediated communication (CMC) such as Simmons(1994), Herring(2000), Park (2008) and Harrison & Barlow(2009), none so far has focused on the gender differences in the use of politeness strategies in Arabic online communication. According to the social Bakers site' statistics as mentioned in the article in the Tech-world website regarding the number of Arab users of some social media networks such as Facebook, it has increased by 29 % since the beginning of 2012. Based on these statistics, the number of network users of Facebook in the Middle East and North Africa is 44 million active users almost Arabic. Therefore, it is important to study the language used by those Arab users in such social media network websites.

The present study adopts a qualitative as well as a quantitative design. It aims at investigating the cross-gender differences and similarities of (im) politeness strategies in native Arabic online communication, specifically the social media network websites, mainly Facebook. In particular, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

Q1- What are the similarities and differences in the use of (im)politeness strategies by men and women in the native Arabic discourse of social media network websites ?

a-What are the (im) politeness strategies used by men and women in the native Arabic discourse of social media network websites ?

b - In what contexts are (im)politeness strategies used by men and women in the native Arabic discourse of social media network websites ?

Q2- What is the relationship between these strategies and the discourse topic ?

Q3- What are the differences between the men-men, women-women, women-men communication in the Arabic discourse of social media network websites concerning the use of (im)politeness strategies ?

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

### 2.1 (Im)politeness

Numerous studies have investigated linguistic politeness. The conversational theory by Grice (1989) is used as a base for politeness theories. Grice (1989) states that there are certain rules for a conversation which people use in order to be understood. The main rule of them is called Cooperative Principle: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." (Grice 1989:26). Furthermore, Lakoff (1989:87-88) states that there are three rules of politeness which are formality: keep aloof, deference: give options, and camaraderie: show sympathy. Leech (1983) also states that there are four types of illocutionary functions that are classified "according to how they relate goal of establishing and maintaining comity" (Leech 1989:104); only two of them involve politeness which are competitive and convivial one while the other two types do not involve politeness which are collaborative and conflictive one. According to Leech (1989:104) Competitive is the function in which the illocutionary goal competes with the social goal ; e.g. ordering, asking, and begging ; Convivial is the function in which the illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal ; e.g. offering, inviting, and grating. "Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) has remained the most seminal and influential starting point for studying cross-cultural and interlinguistic politeness." (Leech 2007: 167). Most of the studies of politeness have been based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-saving view of politeness. "This model employs Goffman's (1959) notion of "face" to argue that each person has two types of face: positive (esteemed self-image) and negative (desire for autonomy); any action that threatens positive or negative face is called a "face threatening act" (FTA). According to Brown and Levinson, speakers employ positive and negative politeness strategies to maintain their face and others' during conversations." (Bacha. N, Bahous. R, Diab.R 2012). Brown and Levinson (1987: 61-62) states that everyone has a "Face", "the public image" that they want to maintain and there are two different types of the term "Face": negative and positive face. Negative face is the want to preserve one's own independence, and positive face is the want to be liked by others. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that there are four types of politeness strategies which are: Bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. However, this theory has encountered a lot of critique. Penman (1990: 16) argues that Brown and Levinson's model only focus on politeness, and therefore, impoliteness is left out from the model. In addition, Penman (ibid) states that the model also leaves out self-directed strategies and only focus on interaction between two persons. In addition, Watts (2003:95) argues that the knowledge of the social situation the two speakers have and what is considered to be polite in that certain discourse are not taken into account by Brown and Levinson (1987). On the other hand, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is one of the only theories that tries to explain

how people produce politeness. The research uses this theory since “it considers politeness in a plausible manner and pay attention to the various strategies that are used to create politeness.” (Kunttsi 2012:13)

On the other hand, Mills (2003: 121) states that the number of studies conducted on linguistic impoliteness is much less than those conducted on politeness. Locher and Bousfield (2008:3) define impoliteness as follow “Impoliteness is behavior that is facing-aggravating in a particular context”. In addition, Culpeper (2008:31-32) differentiate between impoliteness and rudeness. He sees that impoliteness is deliberate while rudeness is accidental negative behavior. However, he sees both impoliteness and rudeness both “inappropriate and negatively marked” (Culpeper 2008:31). Terkourafi (2008: 70) states that impoliteness occurs when there is face-threatening acts, but the addressee is not aware of the intention to attack his/her face. Trakourafi (2008: 64-70) classifies the subject into five types: unmarked politeness, unmarked rudeness, marked politeness, marked rudeness or rudeness proper and impoliteness. Trakourafi uses the term “unmarked” to refer to something that is expected while “marked” refers to something that is not expected. Culpeper (1996) presents a framework of impoliteness based on Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (1987). Culpeper’s strategies of impoliteness (1996:8-9) are: Bald on record impoliteness, Positive impoliteness, Negative impoliteness, Sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness. The research uses Culpeper’s theory of impoliteness since it is parallel to Brown and Levinson’s framework of politeness.

## *2.2 Language and Gender*

Gender differences in the use of language have long been the scholarly interest of linguists and even the ordinary people .A huge number of studies on language and gender have been devoted to identifying, and trying to explain differences in the speech styles of men and women. Lakoff (1975) mentions a set of basic assumptions about what marks out the language of women; she assumes that women use more politeness strategies than men because of their inferior position in a society. In addition, Holmes (1995) characterizes women's speech as more polite than men’s. Such a characterization stems from her own and others’ work (e.g. Zimmerman and West 1975: Fishman 1978: Tannen1984) on language and gender. According to those scholars, women are more likely than men to express positive politeness and to use mitigating strategies to avoid or minimize threatening their interlocutors' face. Zimmerman and West (1975) argue that in mixed-sex conversations men are more likely to interrupt than women. In addition, Fishman (1978) argues that conversation between the sexes sometimes does not succeed, not because of anything intrinsic in the way women talk, but because of how men respond, or do not respond. Women ask questions to try to get a response from men, not because of their personality weaknesses. Tannen (1984) claims that women and men differ in ways of speaking. She presents men and women language use in a series of sex contrast (which are: status vs. support, independence vs. intimacy, advice vs. understand, information vs. feelings, orders vs. proposals, and conflict vs. compromise). In each case, the men characteristic comes first.

### *2.3 Computer-Mediated Communication CMC*

Computer-mediated Communication CMC means that the conversation occurs through technology. It looks a lot like face-to-face communication; therefore, “FTAs are unavoidable in CMC no less than in FtF (face-to-face)” (Morand & Ocker, 2002, P.4.). Simmons (1994) carried out a research to investigate politeness and FTAs with regard to the lack of verbal context through studying the postings to an online Bulletin Board System (BBS). Simmons states that CMC discourse will indicate a more use of positive face strategies as people adjust to their “faceless voices”.(Simmons 1994: 45). Furthermore, there is a study about politeness in an online setting conducted by De Oliveira in 2003 to investigate gender and discourse etiquette. De Oliveira (2003) states that gender affects politeness strategies used in departmental webmail chains.

With the rapid popularization of the Internet use, recent years have witnessed numerous studies on the Internet language or Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and gender. Susan Herring conducted an extensive search into gender differences in CMC(Herring, 2000). Her research indicates that Tannen's theory of gendered communication styles (1991) applies to CMC and that women and men have different ethics about communication. Based on her research on various CMC discussion lists such as LINGUIST-L, SWIP-L and POLITICS, she concludes that men use an adversarial style of communication, employing strong assertions, sarcasm, and insults. Men dominate the discussions, even on feminist lists. These findings are in line with Tannen's theory (1991) of contest, in which men vie for air time in a conversation, try to one-up each other and attempt to dominate conversations. Herring postulates that women use a style which is characterized by support and attenuation.

Herring also argues that males and females have different communication principles. Where flaming on the Internet is concerned, males and females use different value systems in rationalizing behavior (Herring, 2000); it is primarily males who flame. Moreover, she argues that men and women agree on several issues – they value expressions of appreciation, are neutral about tentative postings, and dislike flaming. As she states, "this makes male flaming behavior all the more puzzling; should we conclude then that men who flame are deliberately trying to be rude?." In fact, the men are operating with a different value system, under which they assign greater value to freedom from censorship, open expression, and debate. Women feel they must be sensitive to the wishes of all participants for the benefit of the entire community.

Social media network websites are so popular today; most of us have an account on Facebook or Twitter or in both. Despite this popularity, research on the language use in Facebook in particular and social network websites in general is far behind the practice. Particularly, research outside the west countries is very limited. Close observations of some Arabic web pages of social media network websites like Facebook have revealed that men and women are different in using (im) politeness strategies in the Arabic discourse of these websites. As a result, more research is needed in order to investigate and analyze these differences since there is no studies that have tackled gender differences in the use of (im) politeness strategies in online communication of Facebook by Arabic-speaking users.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Database

Online text source is not easy to locate. Two considerations fall into the researcher's concern when the researcher attempts to select an online language resource to collect the data of this study. The first one is that the language resource should be readily available otherwise the online language corpus could be too expensive to obtain. The other one is that the text in the selected resource must represent typical online language. Obtaining online language texts is complicated due largely to data privacy restriction. For the purposes of this study, a corpus of online Arabic texts was collected from some public web pages of the most popular TV shows on some of the most well-liked social media network websites, Facebook, over a period of four months (from September 2012- December 2012). The web pages chosen for the purpose of this study are:

- MBC The Voice, a musical TV show, <http://www.facebook.com/MBCTheVoice>
- Da'a Basmatak, a religious TV show, <http://www.facebook.com/bsmtk>
- Sadaa Almalaa'eb, a sport TV show, <http://www.facebook.com/sadaalmalaeb>
- Sabah Alkheer ya Arab, a social TV show, <http://www.facebook.com/sayashow>.
- Aljazeera channel web page, a political TV show, <https://www.facebook.com/aljazeerachannel>

The reasons of chosen these web pages are that they are popular, public, easily accessible, and a great number of people contribute to them by discussing and commenting on the raised issues. The database of the present study consists of online contributions in various regional dialects of Arabic as well as Standard Arabic. Also, the database was collected from different web pages of different topic orientations, namely, political, social, musical, sport and religious in order to figure out the effect of the topic on using (im) politeness strategies. Social network web page users' names mostly indicate the sex of the users. In the case of confusing names, the profile of the user was checked where the gender is identified; otherwise it was excluded from the data collected. Samples are the comments or posts of the users of those social media websites. The database consisted of 2000 comments and posts divided as follows: 1000 contributions by men and 1000 contributions by women. Each set was divided into five sub-set, each comprising 200 contributions to one webpage of the above mentioned five TV shows. Excluded from the database are comments that fall under any of these categories: photos, emoticons, symbols, abbreviations, acronyms, phrases or sentences in other languages like English, numbers, or sometimes only "hhhhhhhh". Related to the aims of this study, the comments and posts by females were 373 applied to the (im) politeness strategies in the corpus. Conversely, those comments and posts by males applied to the (im) politeness strategies were 640 in the corpus.

Based on the number of nicknames of the commenters or poster studied, the total number of persons in the collected data was 500, of whom 284 presented as males and 216 as females; sometimes there were more than one comment or post by one person. A social media network



website users' gender can be identified by the Pseudo-names which mostly indicate if the commenter or poster is a male or a female. In case the Pseudo-name was unclear if it belonged to a male or a female, the profile's personal information was checked in case the gender was identified there; otherwise the comments were excluded from the corpus. For example, some contributors used such phrases as "The beauty of the soul", "The true friendship", and "The love story" and no gender was identified in their profiles. Since it is not possible to be entirely sure whether the pseudo-name of a commenter or a poster is that of a male or female, contributors were referred to as "commenters or posters as males" (C/P Ms) and "commenters or posters as females" (C/P Fs). In addition, to maintain the privacy of the contributors whose comments or posts were used as examples, their pseudo-names used online were not mentioned here. Only the gender of the contributor will be mentioned. In this study, the transliteration of the examples taken from the corpus appear between angle brackets < > and they are followed by their translation into English which appear into quotation marks. The English alphabet is used to represent letters of Arabic words. As known, there are some Arabic sounds/letters have no equivalents in the English alphabet, so these sounds are represented by using the conventions of English for these sounds (see the appendix).

### *3.2 Data Analysis Procedures*

The obtained data were studied quantitatively and qualitatively. These two different analysis approaches serve this study best by giving a wider perspective than if using just one approach. The analysis was conducted in the following steps. First, the samples collected were printed out. Second, they were classified in sets according to the topic. Third, the (im)politeness strategies were identified and classified based on the theories of Brown and Levinson (1987) and Culpeper (1996). Fourth, the (im) politeness strategies were again classified into two sets: the ones used by male and those used by females. Fifth, for each strategy, the total number of occurrences was counted and then its frequency of occurrence in the male set verses the female set was calculated. A statistical analysis followed. All the figures were then statistically analyzed in order to find out the relative frequencies of each (im) politeness strategy as related to the discourse topic and the gender of the contributors. Finally, the collected data for this study was also qualitatively analyzed in terms of context, topic, and gender.

### *3.3 Framework of Analysis*

#### *3.3.1 Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1987)*

Brown and Levinson (1987) formulated politeness theory that accounts for the redressing of the affronts to face posed by face-threatening acts to addressees. Politeness is the expression of the speakers' intention to mitigate threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another (Mills, 2003, p. 6). Being polite, therefore, consists in attempting to save face for another. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive and negative face exists universally in human culture. In social interactions, face-threatening acts are at times inevitable based on the terms of the conversation. A face threatening act is an act that inherently damages the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the

wants and desires of the other. Most of these acts are verbal; however, they can also be conveyed in the characteristics of speech (such as tone, inflection, etc.) or in non-verbal forms of communication.

Particularly, politeness strategies are used to formulate messages in order to save the hearer's face when face-threatening acts are inevitable or desired. Brown and Levinson outline four main types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record (indirect) (Brown and Levinson 1987).

### 3.3.1.1 Bald on-Record

Bald on-record strategies usually do not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face, although there are ways that bald on-record politeness can be used in trying to minimize face-threatening acts implicitly (Brown and Levinson 1987). Often using such a strategy will shock or embarrass the addressee, and so this strategy is most often utilized in situations where the speaker has a close relationship with the audience, such as family or close friends. Brown and Levinson outline various cases in which one might use the bald on-record strategy. The following is a list of these cases as presented by Brown and Levinson. Each case is followed by transliterated Arabic examples which come from the data collected from the sources mentioned above and they appear in angle brackets, followed by its translation into English which appears in quotation marks.

- Instance in which threat minimizing does not occur

<Ittaqo Allah wa Intabeho la Agwalkom>

"Fear of Allah, and pay attention to your speech"

- Great urgency or desperation

<Shofo El hafleh Al jai a'la Etefzezyoon>

"Watch the next party on TV"

- Speaking as if great efficiency is necessary

<Esmaa'ooni, Sawto la Qusi>

"Hear me, vote for Qusi"

- Task-oriented

<Sawtoli, ragami 15>

"Vote for me, my number is 15"

- Little or no desire to maintain someone's face

<Sotak mesh helo la teghani>

"Your voice is not nice, don't sing"

- Doing the face-threatening act is in the interest of the hearer



<Qusi, enta ahla soot (jana jana jana wallah yawatana ya eraqi ) ana ma'ak Memi men aljaza'aer wa sa asawetlak>

“Qusi, you are the voice “ janajana[his song’s title], I am with you, Memi from Algeria and I will vote for you.”

- Instances in which the threat is minimized implicitly such as:

- Welcomes

<Ta'araf a'la etafaseel men hona>

“Know the details in here”

- Offers

<La daa'ei lel galag, ana rah ana rah awafekom beakhbar>

“Do not worry,I will tell you the news”

- Farewells

< Benshofkom el halga el jay men Ahla soot >

"We will see you in the next episode of the voice"

### 3.3.1.2 Positive Politeness

Positive politeness strategies seek to minimize the threat to the hearer’s positive face. They are used to make the hearer feel good about himself or herself, her / his interests or possessions, and are most usually used in situations where the audience knows each other fairly well. In addition to hedging and attempts to avoid conflict, some strategies of positive politeness include statements of friendship, solidarity, compliments. The positive politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987: 103-128 ) are followed by transliterated Arabic examples from the data collected which appears in angle brackets, followed by their translation into English which appear in quotation marks.

- Attend to Hearer’s interests, needs, wants

<Asawet lak ya Qusi>

“Do you want me to vote for you ?”

- Use solidarity in-group identity markers

<Ya nas golo le hal yestaheg hatha eltefel an yakoon fe elneha'ai>

“Heh, people, could you tell me if this child should be in the finalist ?”

- Be optimistic

<Enshallah rah efooz barshalona elleleh>

" By Allah’s will, Barcelona will win tonight”



nshofkom bel mawsem el thani, entadrona>

“Our kind followers, we know that you will miss us, but time of the program is up. We will see you again next season, wait for us.”

- Assume or assert reciprocity

<Bema enek be maka, eda'elna, ana dayman bada'ye lak>

" Since you are in Maka, pray for us, I always pray for you"

-Give gifts to the hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, and corporation)

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

- Give (or ask for ) reason

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

- Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

### 3.3.1.3 Negative Politeness

Negative politeness strategies are oriented towards the hearer's negative face and emphasize avoidance of imposition on the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1978). These strategies presume that the speaker will be imposing on the listener and there is a higher potential for awkwardness or embarrassment than in bald-on-record strategies and positive politeness strategies. Negative face is the desire to remain autonomous so the speaker is more apt to include an out for the listener, through distancing styles like apologies. The negative politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987:129-151) are followed by transliterated Arabic examples taken from the data collected, which appear in angle brackets, and followed by their translation into English which appears in quotation marks.

- Be conventionally indirect

<Momken had egoli akher el tasfeyat mata>

""Could somebody tell me when the finalist is?

<Youm el joma'aelgadem>

“Next Friday”

- Use hedges or questions

<Atamana men aljamea' beendamo ela safehtee elshakhseh elrasmeh wa etasweet le fe el ragam 45# shokran bezaaf bezaaf>

“I wish everybody would join my formal page and vote for me “my number is 45”. Thank you very much”

- Be pessimistic

< Ana khayef eno Qusi ma yofoz, sawtolo ho ahla soot >

"I am afraid that Qusi will not win, vote for him, he is The Voice"

- Minimize the imposition

<Tawakali a'la Allah, bas Sali esalwat elkhamsah a'la el waget wa shofee keef rah tertahi>

"Depend on Allah, you need only to pray the five prays on time and you will find yourself relaxed"

- Use obviating structures, like nominalizations, passives, or statements of general rules

<Eltahadi sabab elnajah>

"Challenging is the cause of success"

- Apologize

<Ana asef ktheer bas momken teba'theli el vedio mara thaneh>

"I am so sorry, but could you please send me the video again?"

- Impersonalize S and H / Use plural pronouns

<Ehna metakdeen eno rah etfozo be dawree el esbani yaah labarsha, ela'bo ahla ma endkom>

"We are sure you will win in the Spanish Lega, Barca. Do your best "

- Give deference

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

#### 3.3.1.4 Off-Record (Indirect)

The final politeness strategy outlined by Brown and Levinson is the indirect strategy; this strategy uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential to be imposing. For example, a speaker using the indirect strategy might merely say "wow, it's getting cold in here" insinuating that it would be nice if the listener would get up and turn up the thermostat without directly asking the listener to do so. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the speaker may give hints, give association clues, presuppose, understate, overstate, use tautologies, use contradictions, be ironic, use metaphors, use rhetorical questions, be ambiguous, be vague, overgeneralization, displace the hearer, and use ellipsis as ways of applying Off-record strategy. The following transliterated Arabic example taken from the data collected, which appears in angle brackets and is followed by its translation into English which appears in quotation marks.

<Saakoon saeed ethah kont ana ahla soot >

(Literal meaning: I will be happy if I am the voice).

(Speaker meaning: Vote for me). “It is a request”

### 3.3.2 Culpeper’s Impoliteness Theory (1996)

Culpeper (1996) considers the impolite linguistic behavior as speech acts that attack the face of another. Locher and Bousfield (2008: 3) describe impoliteness as “behavior that is face-aggravating in a particular context.” In addition, Culpeper (1996) differentiates between two categories: inherent impoliteness and mock politeness or mockery. Culpeper (1996:2) mentions that there are acts which inherently threaten one’s face regardless of the context of the act, and this is called inherent impoliteness. He defines mock impoliteness as the one which stays on the surface and is not intended to insult anyone. Culpeper relies on Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (1987) to establish the framework of impoliteness. He classifies impoliteness strategies into five strategies which are opposites of Brown and Levinson’s politeness ones; Culpeper considers the impoliteness strategies as a means of attacking face. The following strategies are the ones that Culpeper (1996) defines. Each strategy is followed by the transliterated Arabic examples from the data, which appear in angle brackets and are followed by its translation into English which appears in quotation marks. The impoliteness strategies according to Culpeper are:

#### 3.3.2.1 Bald on Record Impoliteness

The FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized. It is important to distinguish this strategy from Brown and Levinson’s Bald on record. For Brown and Levinson, Bald on record is a *politeness strategy* in fairly specific circumstances. For example, when face concerns are suspended in an emergency, when the threat to the hearer’s face is very small (e.g. “Come in” or “sit down”), or when the speaker is much more powerful than the hearer (e.g. “Stop complaining” said by a parent to a child). In all these cases little face is at stake, and, more importantly, it is not the intention of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer.

<Be kafee mobalaghah,goal Messi a'adi mesh zae ma bet hawel>

“Stop exaggerating, Messi’s goal is not as you exaggeratedly describe.”

#### 3.3.2.2 Positive Impoliteness:

The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face wants. Culpeper (1996) defines strategies for positive impoliteness as shown below:

*Ignore, snub the other* – fail to acknowledge the other’s presence -

<Kol kalamhom belhawa malo wojood>

“All their speech is meaningless and doesn’t make sense”

- *Exclude the other from an activity*

<Rouh shoof khawatak fean>

“Look for your sisters who are bitches”

- *Disassociate from the other* – for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.

<Yallee behkeeli hal haki akeed mesh mena akeed men jama'eat Al-sisi>

“I am sure s\he Who says this speech does not belong to us (our group)I am sure s\he is one of Al-sisi’s fans ”

*Be disinterested, unconcerned, and unsympathetic* -

<Mesh shoghli yedebro halhom el Arab >

” It’s not my business it is Arabs’ business”

-*Use inappropriate identity markers*– for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.

<Habeeb albi bedak yani sadgak, mothea’ fashel>

“Honey, you want me to believe in you, you are unsuccessful presenter ”.

- *Use obscure or secretive language* - for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group. But not the target

<Shoo akhbar el labo’a delwagt, wahad hakalna eno ...akeed elAsad ibn el-labo’a za’alan delwagt. Hhhhhhhhhh>

“What is the lioness’ news, someone tell us, I am sure that the lion, the lioness’ son is angry now hhhhhhhh ( using Lion to refer to Bashar AlAsad, Syria’s president ),

- *Seek disagreement* – select a sensitive topic. Make the other feel uncomfortable – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.

<Moto be ghedkomm mahma tea'malo wa etsawaho Meser ha tefdal lel abad>

“Die in anger whatever you do, Egypt will be forever””

- *Use taboo words* – swear, or use abusive or profane language.

<Allah yel a'nak wa yela'n el nedam sho enak ma betestahi>

“ Allah, God get you and the system out of the mercy ; you are not shame !!!.”

- *Call the other names* – use derogatory nominations.

<Walad elragasa>

“The son of bitch”

### 3.3.2.3 Negative Impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s negative face wants. Culpeper (1996) defines strategies for negative impoliteness as shown below:



- *Frighten*- instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

- *Condescend, scorn or ridicule*– emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

- *Invade the other's space*– literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship ).

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

- *Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* – personalize, use the pronoun “I” and “you”.

<Men sortak wadeh shkon eljahel>

“By looking at your photo, it becomes clear how the ignorant person looks like (meaning you are ignorant )

- *Put the other's indebtedness on record*

<Maghrebee yaakhee enkasef a'la damak>

“Moroccan, Be shame”

#### 3.3.2.4 Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

The FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.[...]

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

#### 3.3.2.5 Withhold Politeness

The absence of politeness work where it would be expected [...] for example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness.

NO EXAMPLE FOUND IN THE DATA COLLECTED

### 4. Results and Findings

The researcher presents the results in form of tables, and also showcases the findings with examples of different occurrences of politeness and impoliteness in the collected data. The study presents the overall results of occurrences of politeness and impoliteness with regard to the effect of the topic on using (im) politeness strategies. Also, it is found that there are cross-gender differences in the type of topics/ websites to which comments and/or posts are made. Table 1 shows the breakdown of female and male samples according to participation in some different types of TV show websites. As shown in the table, the number of comments and posts by females seem to depend on their interest in the topic of websites. The number of

C\p by females is generally more than the number of C\p by males in certain topics such as musical, social, and religious ones whereas it is noticeably less when the topic related to politics or sport. Moreover, comparing the occurrences of politeness strategies by both males and females to the occurrences of impoliteness strategies, the researcher finds that, in general, people tend to use politeness strategies more than impoliteness strategies. Politeness strategies were found in 746 of all the 1013 comments and posts collected which means that 73.6% of the data collected show politeness strategies and only 26.4% represent impoliteness strategies. This finding was unpredictable since in the informal setting of the social media network websites where formal language is not required and the commenters and posters informally communicate, politeness occurs more than impoliteness. Moreover, it was found that even people who used impoliteness in the data collected were affected by the topic. The occurrences of impoliteness strategies in religious and social topics of Facebook web pages by both males and females were much less than those in sport, political, and musical topics.

Table 1. Breakdown of Female and Male Samples of Using (Im)politeness Strategies According to Participation in Some Different Types of TV Show Websites

| Samples classified according to the topic  | The number of \ the percentage of samples studied |                         |                       |                         |                                |                                  | Total samples studies for each topic |
|--|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|  | (C/P Ms)  |                         | (C/P Fs)              |                         | All                            |                                  |                                      |
|  | Politeness strategies                             | Impoliteness strategies | Politeness strategies | Impoliteness strategies | Politeness strategies<br>73.6% | Impoliteness strategies<br>26.4% |                                      |
| MBC The Voice \الحلى صوت A musical TV show website:                                      | 135<br>41.5%                                      | 62<br>19.1%             | 115<br>35.4%          | 13<br>4%                | 250<br>76.9%                   | 75<br>23.1%                      | 325                                  |
| \Da'a Basmatak: وضع بصمتك A religious TV show website                                    | 72<br>46.2%                                       | 4<br>2.6%               | 78<br>50%             | 2<br>1.2%               | 150<br>96.2%                   | 6<br>3.8%                        | 156                                  |
| \Sadaa Almalaa'eb صدى A sport TV show website: الملاعب                                   | 100<br>45.7%                                      | 74<br>33.8%             | 34<br>15.5%           | 11<br>5%                | 134<br>61.2%                   | 85<br>38.8%                      | 219                                  |
| A political TV show website: Aljazeera channel page,                                     | 60<br>41.4%                                       | 50<br>34.5%             | 29<br>20%             | 6<br>4.1%               | 89<br>61.4%                    | 56<br>38.6%                      | 145                                  |
| A social TV show website: "Good Morning, Arabs" \Sabah Alkheer ya Arab صباح الخير يا عرب | 53<br>31.6%                                       | 30<br>17.9%             | 70<br>41.6%           | 15<br>8.9%              | 123<br>73.2%                   | 45<br>26.8%                      | 168                                  |

#### 4.1 Politeness Strategies Used

Both table 2 and table 3 below present the quantities of different politeness strategies found in the data collected. The politeness strategies based upon Brown and Levinson (1987). Table 2 shows the frequencies of the different types of politeness strategies used by males with regard to the different topics while table 3 shows the frequencies of those used by females. Comparing these two tables shows the role of gender and the topic in choosing one strategy rather than another. It is found that males use more negative politeness strategies whereas

females use more positive ones. It is surprising to find this much negative politeness in the data used by males. One would expect that most of the polite language in Facebook would be positive politeness, since this is usually considered to be the informal style of politeness. Therefore, it seems that females tend to use positive politeness to make the atmosphere more relaxed especially if they communicate with males.

As shown in table 2, the largest percentage of politeness strategies used by males is in “Da’a Basmatak”, a religious TV show website; (94.7% of the total number of occurrences of (im)politeness strategies appeared in this website). The second largest percentage is 68.5% in “The Voice”, a musical TV show website, followed by a social TV show website, “Sabah Alkheer ya Arab” with 63.9%. “Sada Almalaa’eb”, a sport TV show website comes fourth with 57.5% of the data collected from this website. Finally the smallest percentage is found in a political TV show website, “Aljazeera channel page” with 54.5% of the data collected from this website.

Table 2. Frequencies of Different Types of Politeness Strategies Used by Males with Regard to the Topic

| Samples classified according to the topic  | (C/P Ms)              |                     |                     |                       |                             |                       |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Politeness strategies |                     |                     |                       | politeness strategies found | Total samples Studied |
|  | Bald on-record        | Positive politeness | Negative politeness | Off-record (indirect) |                             |                       |
| MBC The Voice \أحلى صوت A musical TV show website:                                       | 36<br>18.3%           | 45<br>22.8%         | 34<br>17.3%         | 20<br>10.1 %          | 135<br>68.5%                | 197<br>100%           |
| \Da’a Basmatak وضع بصمتك: A religious TV show website                                    | 6<br>7.9%             | 12<br>15.8%         | 46<br>60.5%         | 8<br>10.5%            | 72<br>94.7%                 | 76<br>100%            |
| \Sadaa Almalaa'eb صدی الملاعب: A sport TV show website                                   | 42<br>24.2%           | 20<br>11.5%         | 17<br>9.8%          | 21<br>12%             | 100<br>57.5%                | 174<br>100%           |
| A political TV show website: Aljazeera channel page                                      | 5<br>4.4%             | 15<br>13.6%         | 17<br>15.6%         | 23<br>20.9%           | 60<br>54.5%                 | 110<br>100%           |
| A social TV show website: “Good Morning, Arabs” \Sabah Alkheer ya Arab صباح الخير يا عرب | 17<br>20.8%           | 14<br>16.6%         | 15<br>18.1%         | 7<br>8.4%             | 53<br>63.9%                 | 83<br>100%            |
| Total of frequencies   | 106                   | 106                 | 129                 | 79                    | 420                         | 601                   |

In general, the largest category of politeness used by males seems to be Negative politeness strategy with 129 occurrences out of 420 ones, the total number of the politeness strategies used by males in the data collected. However, the occurrences of the Bald on record and

positive politeness strategy are equal (with 106 for each strategy). Off record strategy is the smallest category of politeness used by males with only 79 occurrences.

On the other hand, table 2 shows that the topic affects the strategy used by males. It is found that using Bald on record by males is the most in “Sadaa Almalaa'eb”, a sport TV show website, whereas it seems to be the least is in both Aljazeera channel website, a political TV show website and “Da'a Basmatak”, a religious TV show website, with 5 and 6 occurrences respectively. In addition, positive politeness strategies seem to be used by males mostly in “The Voice”, a musical TV show website, with 45 occurrences, whereas it is used the least in “Da'a Basmatak”, a religious TV show website, with only 12 occurrences. However, negative politeness strategies are used by males the most in “Da'a Basmatak”, a religious TV show website, with 46 occurrences while they are used the least in “Sabah Alkheer ya Arabs”, a social TV show website, with only 15 occurrences. Off-record strategies appeared most frequently in the political website “Aljazeera channel page” (n=23), whereas they appeared least frequently in the social TV show website “Sabah Alkheer ya Arab” (n=7).

Table 3. Breakdown of Female Samples Studied According to Topics and Politeness Strategies

| Samples classified according to the topic  | (C/P Fs)              |                     |                     |                       |                             |                         |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | Politeness strategies |                     |                     |                       | politeness strategies found | Total samples Collected |
|  | Bald on-record        | Positive politeness | Negative politeness | Off-record (indirect) |                             |                         |
| MBC The Voice \أعلى صوت A musical TV show:   | 19<br>14.8%           | 34<br>26.6%         | 37<br>28.9%         | 25<br>19.5%           | 115<br>89.4%                | 128<br>100%             |
| \Da'a Basmatak ضع بصمتك: A religious TV show   | 20<br>25%             | 28<br>35%           | 11<br>13.8%         | 19<br>23.8%           | 78<br>97.5%                 | 80<br>100%              |
| \Sadaa Almalaa'eb صدی الملاعب: A sport TV show   | 9<br>20.1%            | 10<br>22.2%         | 11<br>24.4%         | 4<br>8.9%             | 34<br>75.5                  | 45<br>100%              |
| A political TV show website: Aljazeera channel page                                      | 3<br>8.6%             | 6<br>17.1%          | 9<br>25.7%          | 11<br>31.5%           | 29<br>82.9%                 | 35<br>100%              |
| A social TV show website: “Good Morning, Arabs” \Sabah Alkheer ya Arab صباح الخير يا عرب | 25<br>29.4%           | 20<br>23.5          | 12<br>14.1%         | 13<br>15.3%           | 70<br>82.4%                 | 85<br>100%              |
| Total  | 76                    | 98                  | 80                  | 72                    | 326                         | 373                     |

Furthermore, Table 3 shows that the largest category of politeness used by females is to be positive politeness strategies with 98 occurrences out of 363 ones, the total of the politeness strategies used by females in the data collected. This supports Holmes' suggestion that

females are more likely to use positive politeness than men ; she asserts that ‘women’s utterances show evidence of concern for the feelings of the people they are talking to more often and more explicitly than men’s do.’ (Holmes, 1995:6). On the other hand, the smallest category of politeness used by females is the off record strategy with 72 occurrences. Negative politeness strategies were identified in 80 utterances and bald-on-record ones appeared in 76 ones.

As shown in table 3, the topic affects females ‘choice of politeness strategies. Bald-on-record strategies were used the most in the social “Sabah Alkheer ya Arab” webpage with 25 occurrences while they were used the least in the political “Aljazeera channel webpage”, with only 3 occurrences. The positive politeness strategies and the negative ones were used both the most by females in “The Voice”, a musical TV show website, with 34 and 37 occurrences respectively whereas females use positive and negative politeness strategies the least in the political “Aljazeera channel webpage”, with only 6 and 9 occurrences respectively. As for off-record strategies, they were used by females the most in the musical “The Voice” webpage, with 25 occurrences while they were used the least in the sport “SadaaAlmalaaeb” webpage, with only 4 occurrences.

#### 4.2 Impoliteness Strategies Used

Table 4. Breakdown of Male Samples Studied According to Topics and Impoliteness Strategies

| Samples classified according to the topic                    | (C/P Ms)                |                       |                       |                   |                       |                               | Impoliteness strategies found | Total samples Collected |                         |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | Impoliteness strategies |                       |                       |                   |                       | Impoliteness strategies found |                               |                         | Total samples Collected |
|  | Bald on-impoliteness    | Positive impoliteness | Negative impoliteness | Mock impoliteness | Withhold impoliteness |                               |                               |                         |                         |
| MBC The Voice<br>أحلى صوت A<br>musical TV<br>show:           | 10<br>5.2%              | 45<br>22.8%           | 7<br>3.5%             | 0<br>0%           | 0<br>0%               | 62<br>31.5%                   | 197<br>100%                   |                         |                         |
| \Da'a<br>Basmatak ضع<br>بصمتك: A<br>religious TV<br>show     | 1<br>1.4%               | 3<br>3.9%             | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%           | 0<br>0%               | 4<br>5.3%                     | 76<br>100%                    |                         |                         |
| \Sadaa<br>Almalaa'eb صدی<br>الملاعب: A<br>sport TV show      | 32<br>18.3%             | 40<br>23%             | 2<br>1.2%             | 0<br>0%           | 0<br>0%               | 74<br>42.5%                   | 174<br>100%                   |                         |                         |
| A political TV<br>show website:<br>Aljazeera<br>channel page | 21<br>19.1%             | 34<br>30.9%           | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%           | 0<br>0%               | 50<br>45.5%                   | 110<br>100%                   |                         |                         |
| A social TV  | 5                       | 21                    | 4                     | 0                 | 0                     | 30                            | 83                            |                         |                         |

|   |    |      |      |    |    |       |      |
|---|----|------|------|----|----|-------|------|
| show website:<br>“Good<br>Morning,<br>Arabs”<br>\\Sabah Alkheer<br>ya Arab صباح<br>الخير يا عرب | 6% | 25.3 | 4.8% | 0% | 0% | 36.1% | 100% |
| Total   | 69 | 143  | 13   | 0  | 0  | 220   | 640  |

As shown in table 4 and 5, it is clear that using impoliteness strategies by males and females are much less than using politeness strategies; this is unexpected, since the setting of social media in general and Facebook in particular is informal. In addition, it is found that males tend to use impoliteness strategy more than females do. There is a substantial difference between the frequency of impoliteness strategies used by males and those used by females. Impoliteness strategies represent 34.4% of the male comments and posts, whereas they represent 12.6% of the female contributions. This finding is in line with Lakoff's view (1975) that women tend to use more politeness strategies than men because of their inferior position in a society. In addition, it is surprising that both males and females do not use any “withhold impoliteness” strategies at all.

Table 4 shows that the impoliteness strategy used by males the most is positive impoliteness, accounting for 143 occurrences out of 220, the total number of the impoliteness occurrences by males in the data collected. The second most frequent used strategy is bald-on-record impoliteness with 69 occurrences. The third most used strategy is negative impoliteness strategy with only 13 occurrences. No occurrence of using withhold impoliteness strategies either by males or females was found in the data collected. It is clear that the topic also affects the use of impoliteness strategies. Bald on record is used the most in the sport “Sadaa Almalaa'eb” webpage, with 32 occurrences whereas it is used the least in the religious “Da'a Basmatak” webpage, with only 1 occurrence. Positive politeness strategy is used the most in the musical “The Voice” webpage, with 45 occurrences while it is used the least in the religious “Da'a Basmatak” webpage, with only 3 occurrences. The least frequent impoliteness strategy used by males, negative impoliteness is used the most in the musical “The Voice” webpage, with 7 occurrences while it is not used at all in the religious “Da'a Basmatak” webpage, and the political “Aljazeera channel” webpage. It is clear that the religious topic has a great effect on the use of impoliteness. Only 4 occurrences of impoliteness strategies were found in the data collected. One would expect this finding, since the religious topic seems to be more formal and requires polite language to be used.

Table 5. Breakdown of Female Samples Studied According to Topics and Impoliteness Strategies

| Samples classified<br>according to the topic | (C/P Fs)                |                          |                          |                      |                          |                                     |                               |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|  | Impoliteness strategies |                          |                          |                      |                          | Impoliteness<br>strategies<br>found | Total<br>samples<br>Collected |
|  | Bald<br>on-record       | Positive<br>impoliteness | Negative<br>impoliteness | Mock<br>impoliteness | Withhold<br>impoliteness |                                     |                               |
|  |                         |                          |                          |                      |                          |                                     |                               |



|   | Impoliteness |            |            |         |         |              |             |
|---|--------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------|-------------|
| MBC The Voice \أعلى صوت A musical TV show:  | 5<br>3.9%    | 8<br>6.3%  | 0<br>0%    | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 13<br>10.2 % | 128<br>100% |
| \Da'aBasmatak وضع بصمتك: A religious TV show  | 0<br>0%      | 2<br>2.5%  | 0<br>0%    | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 2<br>2.5%    | 80<br>100%  |
| \SadaaAlmalaaeb صدى الملاعب: A sport TV show  | 2<br>4.44%   | 6<br>13.3% | 1<br>2.22% | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 9<br>20%     | 45<br>100%  |
| A political TV show website: Aljazeerachannel page                                      | 3<br>8.6%    | 2<br>5.7%  | 1<br>2.8%  | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 6<br>17.1%   | 35<br>100%  |
| A social TV show website: "Good Morning, Arabs" \Sabah Alkheerya Arab صباح الخير يا عرب | 4<br>4.7%    | 8<br>9.4%  | 3<br>3.5%  | 0<br>0% | 0<br>0% | 15<br>17.6%  | 85<br>100%  |
| Total   | 14           | 26         | 5          | 0       | 0       | 47           | 373         |

As shown in table 5, females use only bald-on-record, positive, and negative politeness with 14, 26, 5 occurrences, respectively. They use bald-on-record on impoliteness the most in the musical "The Voice" webpage, with 5 occurrences while they do not use this strategy at all in the religious "Da'a Basmati" webpage. Furthermore, females use positive impoliteness strategy the most in both the musical "The Voice" webpage and in the social "Sabah Alkheer ya Arab" website with 8 occurrences for each one whereas they use this strategy the least in both the religious "Da'a Basmati" web page and in the political "Aljazeerachannel webpage" with 2 occurrences for each one. Using negative impoliteness strategy by females is the most in the social "Sabah Alkheer ya Arab" webpage with 3 occurrences while no occurrence of this strategy is found in both the religious "Da'a Basmati" webpage and the musical "The Voice" webpage. It is clear that the topic plays a role in females' choice of impoliteness strategies although females, in general, tend to be more polite in communicating.

#### 4.3 Gender in Facebook Discourse

The findings of the present study indicate that there are differences between the male-male, female-female, and female-male communication in the Arabic discourse of the social media network website, Facebook. These differences appeared in the comments that were replies to the other comments. Facebook features enable the users to write a comment and at the same time it enables other users to reply directly to the comment, showing the number of replies beside each comment. This enables the researcher to identify the exact replies for each comment, identify the gender of the replier, and identify the (im)politeness strategies used. Observing these kinds of comments, only the reply ones to a certain comment, it is found that there is a big difference in using the (im)politeness strategies in the mixed sex communication and in the homo- sex communication, taking into consideration the topic

discussed.

#### 4.3.1 The Homo-Sex Communication

In the same sex communication or in homo-sex communication, it is found that using (im)politeness strategies was strongly affected by the topic and gender. In male- male communication, males tend to use impoliteness strategies more than using politeness strategies in the political and sport topics. However, in female- female communication, females tend to use the politeness strategies more than the impoliteness strategies when the topic is related to religion, sport or politics.

#### 4.3.2 The Cross-Gender Communication

In cross- gender communication, it is found that males and females tend to use politeness strategies more than using impoliteness strategies when they are talking to each other in musical, sport, religious and social topics. However, when the topic is related to politics, males tend to use impoliteness strategies more than using politeness strategies. Females seemed uninterested in political topics; thus, their using of impoliteness strategies was much fewer. As a results, one would suggest that both gender and the topic affect using (im)politeness strategies in mixed sex communication and homo-sex communication.

### 5. Conclusion and Suggestion for Further Research

To sum up, in the light of the results of this study, one could argue that both politeness and impoliteness exist in the Arabic discourse of social media network website, Facebook. Furthermore, gender and the topic play significant roles in the user's choice of (im) politeness strategies used. It is found that females tend to use politeness more than males do; however, males use impoliteness more than females do. This finding supports the view of women's language by many scholars such as Coast (1996), Tannen's (1991), and Holmes (1995). For examples, Holms asserts that women are more polite than men, as they are more concerned with the affective rather than the referential aspect of utterances and 'politeness is an expression of concern for the feelings of others' (Holmes, 1995:4).

In addition, it is found that using politeness strategies by males and females in general is more than using impoliteness strategies. This result is unpredictable since the setting of Facebook is mostly informal and the users are free; there is no regulation to control what is written on Facebook except if accounts' users complain and ask officially the Facebook institution to play a certain role according to certain circumstances. Thus, Facebook users are not imposed to use certain strategy. Furthermore, females seem to comment or post more depending on their interest in the topic. The number of the collected samples by females noticeably is less when the topic is related to sport or politics. Conversely, the number of the collected samples by males is more when the topic is related to sport or music.

Not all Impoliteness strategies by Culpeper were found in the data collected; Mock and withhold impoliteness strategies were not used at all either by men or by women. One would suggest that these two strategies are found in face to face everyday language, not in computer mediated communication CMC.

In male – female communication, males show a higher tendency to use politeness strategies towards females except when the topic is a political one ; it is found that males tend to use impoliteness strategies. One can speculate that males tend to gain females' approval and acceptance and to save-face, but they do not take this into consideration in discussing political topics. Moreover, in male-male communication, males use more impoliteness strategies especially when the topic is related to sport or political issues. However, in female-female communication, females tend to use more politeness strategies especially when the topic is related to religion.

In the future, it would be more interesting to conduct research on the other factors that could affect (im) politeness strategies used by men and women. One would predict that factors such as saving time, typing effort, and inefficiency of manually inputting sentences could play roles in choosing (im) politeness strategies used by men and women. Then, it would be more interesting to conduct research on what the social media users actually see as polite or impolite instead of applying a ready set of (im) politeness strategies. In addition, Laura (2010) states that there are social rules that the Facebook users are supposed to follow through their interaction with their friends on Facebook like maintaining a 'face' and taking care of other Facebook users' positive faces, such as noticing updates and share their texts for social interaction; these rules are related to the private interaction with Facebook users 'friends. However, this research only studies the (im)politeness strategies used in public Facebook pages. Therefore, further research is needed to test whether the social rules are also applied on the interaction in the public Facebook pages where many users, who are not necessary Facebook friends, comment and interact with each other. Furthermore, it is so remarkable to investigate the political or the religious discourse separately focusing on gender differences and (im) politeness in social media websites compared to those in the TV or radio programs.

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## Appendix

| Arabic letter<br>(Jarbou& al-Share,2012) | Sound<br>(Jarbou& al-Share,2012) | Phonetic transcription<br>(Jarbou& al-Share,2012) | Symbols used<br>in the<br>transliteration | Examples taken<br>from the corpus |
|--|----------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| ء  | /ʔ/                              | Glottal stop                                      | <aʔa>                                     | <hefaʔa>                          |
| ع  | /ʕ/                              | Voiced pharyngeal fricative                       | <aʕ>                                      | <Aʕli>                            |
| غ  | /ɣ/                              | Voiced velar fricative                            | <gh>                                      | <ghalabetni>                      |
| ح  | /h/                              | Voiceless pharyngeal fricative                    | <h>                                       | <habeebi>                         |
| خ  | /x/                              | Voiceless velar fricative                         | <kh>                                      | <khaser>                          |
| ض  | /ɗ/                              | Emphatic voiced alveolar stop                     | <d>                                       | <dayeaʔ>                          |
| ص  | /ʃ/                              | Emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative             | <s>                                       | <safi>                            |
| ط  | /t̤/                             | Emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative             | <t̤>                                      | <telaʔt̤>                         |
| ظ  | /ɗ̤/                             | Emphatic voiced inter-dental fricative            | <dh>                                      | <nedham>                          |

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