

Unveiling the Subtle Art of Politeness: An Analysis of Jordanian Educators' Deployment of Linguistic Strategies in the Official WhatsApp Group

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Received: 06/06/2023

Accepted: 08/17/2023

Published: 09/24/2023

Abstract

The advent of the digital landscape has significantly transformed the communication practices of educators. Within this evolving context, an intriguing aspect that warrants scholarly investigation is their politeness strategies within official institutional WhatsApp groups. It aims to shed light on the complexities of educators' interactions in the digital environment by closely examining their linguistic choices. The application of politeness expressions among teachers themselves and in their interactions with superiors proves to be a beneficial strategy for achieving effective communication. Using an ethnographic method, the careful observation of 163 messages shared by 20 teachers in the official WhatsApp groups was conducted over six months. The comprehensive politeness framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) provided the foundation for the discursive analysis, complemented by the insightful perspective of Holmes and Stubbe (2015). This study unravels Jordanian English language teachers' strategic deployment of all four politeness strategies in the official WhatsApp group. Positive politeness emerges as teachers' predominant strategy to cultivate a sense of closeness and maintain harmonious relationships among colleagues and superiors. Interestingly, teachers display heightened awareness of their linguistic choices when addressing leaders, employing positive politeness to convey deference. In contrast, when communicating with colleagues of equal status, they often opt for a more direct and explicit "bald-on-record" approach. It is noteworthy that superiors also exhibit a discerning awareness of their linguistic choices, employing an "off-record" strategy when addressing faculty members. This study has implications for enhancing a supportive work environment for educators by providing insights into effective communication, professional relationships, and positive teaching settings.

Keywords: Discourse, linguistic strategies, English language teachers, Jordanian Educators, WhatsApp, politeness

Cite as: Hussein, S.F.F., & Rashid, R.A. (2023). Unveiling the Subtle Art of Politeness: An Analysis of Jordanian Educators' Deployment of Linguistic Strategies in the Official WhatsApp Group. *Arab World English Journal*, 14 (3) 231-254. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol14no3.15>

Introduction

Establishing effective and efficient interactions among teachers poses a significant challenge in communication. Adherence to specific rules is crucial to foster successful communication and maintain relationships in the workplace. Particularly in the Arab world, the concept of politeness holds great importance. Politeness encompasses how individuals express themselves linguistically, taking into account social distance, status, and roles (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

Communication goes beyond efficiently conveying interests, arguments, or information; it also involves avoiding hurtful remarks and considering others' feelings (Kingwell, 1993). This implies that during communication, speakers focus on the message's content and the manner and strategies employed to ensure comfort and create solidarity and intimacy among the participants. Kind expressions and the use of politeness strategies are crucial elements in achieving effective communication.

Within the Jordanian context, Souidi and Rashid (2021) argue that impolite behavior within specific societal boundaries does not always lead to negative consequences. It can sometimes demonstrate a polite tendency, particularly in close and intimate relationships, suggesting that disagreement in interactions among speakers in Jordan is not inherently face-threatening.

While studies on politeness have been conducted within online communities, focusing on preserving and maintaining relationships (e.g., Maros & Rosli, 2017; Mulyono et al., 2019; Gervasio & Ireri, 2019; Mahmud, 2019; Santoso & Indriani, 2021; Hafid et al., 2022), the emphasis has primarily been on politeness strategies between students or between teachers and their students. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding the politeness strategies enacted among teachers and their interactions with authority figures online. This research seeks to address this gap, as it can potentially improve working conditions and relationships among teachers within the educational field.

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What politeness strategies do Jordanian teachers employ in the official WhatsApp group?
2. How do Jordanian teachers enact these politeness strategies within the official WhatsApp group?

Accordingly, this study examines the usage of politeness strategies by Jordanian English language teachers through an analysis of the posts in the official WhatsApp groups.

Literature Review

Politeness Theory

Politeness, studied by scholars like Lakoff (1977), Yule (1996), and others, has diverse viewpoints. Lakoff (1977) sees it as behavior reducing social friction, Sifianou (1992) as emotion preservation, Yule (1996) as respecting individuals' face needs, Goffman (1955) as praise or self-esteem, and Leech (1983) as harmonious interaction facilitation. Cultural, gender, and power differences affect its interpretation (Guodong & Jing, 2005). In linguistics, politeness reflects social distance, role relationships, and face-saving efforts (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). Watts (2003) views it as a conflict avoidance strategy or cooperative interaction builder. Murata (2008) adds textual and contextual analysis importance, especially within specific communities of practice.

The theory of politeness focuses on preserving individuals' public self-image (known as "face"). This involves avoiding Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) that could cause offense. Interlocutors use strategies to minimize threats, including four politeness types: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

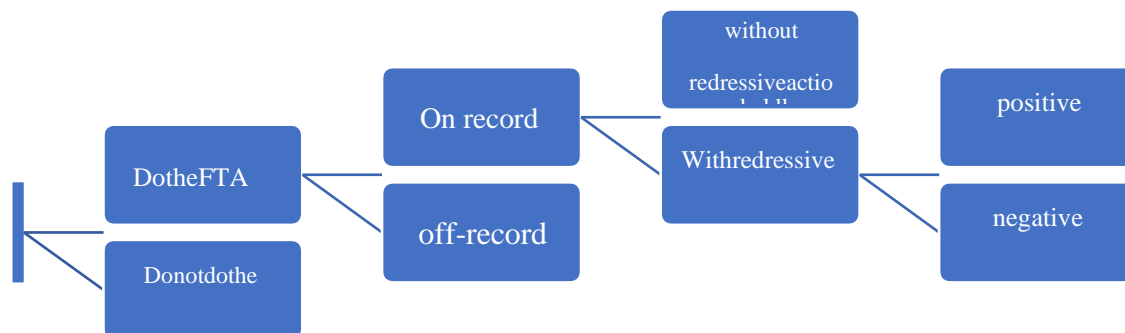


Figure 1. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies(1987) P.60

Bald-on-record communication refers to direct and straightforward expressions of intention without any redressive action, such as saying "Be careful!" or "Come here" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, bald-on-record communication encompasses positive and negative politeness when redressive action is included. Positive politeness aims to save the hearer's positive face by fostering closeness, appealing to friendship, and establishing common ground. It treats the hearer as a group member (Bengsch, 2010). On the other hand, negative politeness emphasizes distance and circumspection, seeking to avoid intruding on others' territory by apologizing and using hedging to avoid imposing on the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

An additional tactic involves the off-the-record method, in which communicators employ insinuations, indications, and vague statements to indirectly express their intended message (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As per Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, people have both a favorable aspect/ positive face (the wish to be appreciated) and an unfavorable aspect/ negative face (the wish for independence). Face concerns play a significant role in communication, and people employ various strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts, influencing the listener's self-image positively or negatively (Katz, 2015).

Politeness practices are influenced by linguistic, religious, and cultural factors (Mahmud, 2019; Zander, 2013). Speakers can choose the level of politeness in their utterances (Coulmas, 2006). Leech (1983) proposed six maxims of politeness: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Choosing the right way to be courteous relies on elements like the speaker's understanding of different cultures, their range of languages, and various social factors (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Demonstrating politeness involves safeguarding both the speaker's and the listener's image through suitable language and proper customs.

Positive politeness strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987) included paying attention to the addressees' interests, needs, and wants, intensifying their interests, seeking

agreement, avoiding disagreement, showing exaggerated interest, and sympathizing with them.

Holmes and Stubbe (2015) researched workplace communication, focusing on the dynamics of power and politeness. They explored how individuals navigate workplace demands while maintaining collegial relationships. Different forms of communication within the workplace, such as offering guidance and directives, conducting meetings, and reaching conclusions, were investigated, alongside the significance of humor and camaraderie in the work environment. The study emphasized balancing social distance and collegiality while meeting task requirements.

In the Arab context, Farrag (2022) noted that social power impacts request and apology strategies among Saudi faculty. Older faculty members use longer sentences to balance their social power and preserve face in requests. Younger members use complex sentences for apologies, showing more respect than older colleagues. Elasar et al. (2022) studied English apologies and requests among Arab postgraduate students, citing cultural and linguistic challenges. Pragmatic competence is vital due to communication issues stemming from language gaps. Apologies and requests have teaching and socio-cultural implications. Abdulateef and Abd Ali (2023) explored Iraqi students' discursive awareness tied to pragmatic competence. Student answers reveal diverse levels of understanding, influenced by regions and society. While they grasp certain aspects, challenges arise in complex situations. Shared experiences lead to similar discourse awareness, adaptable based on context.

In Jordan, Alanazi et al. (2023) examined advice-giving among Jordanian and British speakers, considering strategies, gender, and politeness. Jordanians offer direct advice, while the British use subtler approaches, even more so with instructors. Politeness is crucial across these observations. Abdelhady and Alkinj (2023) studied how American and Jordanian students navigate email interactions, highlighting American students' indirectness due to politeness strategies. Incorporating cross-cultural communication guidance in language courses is important to teach politeness in foreign languages.

Politeness and Pragmatics

As Amilia et al. (2022) noted, pragmatics investigates the relationship between language and its context, with a particular focus on the social context. The social context emerges from the interactions among community members within a specific social and cultural society (Supriadi, 2020). It deals with the rules governing language use in our social contexts and how to make it acceptable to others (Bowen et al., 2020). Pragmatics is also linked to speakers' communicative competence (Traugott & Pratt, 1980), as individuals need to understand the rules that govern a language community to be accepted, including the appropriate use of language functions.

According to Pratiwi and Anindyarini (2021), politeness is closely associated with a person's attitude's correct and incorrect aspects. It can be expressed in various ways, such as using specific pronouns in a conversation. In Jordanian culture, for example, the plural second pronoun is used to address a person of honor or high position.

Pragmatics and the concept of politeness are intricately connected. Brown and Levinson (1978) categorized four levels of politeness strategy. The least polite strategy is used with close friends, while the somewhat polite method is employed with friends who are not yet familiar. The more polite strategy is utilized with individuals who are not yet known, and the most polite strategy is reserved for people of higher social status. Pratiwi and Anindyarini (2021) have recently

expanded the theory by associating the four linguistic strategies with three pragmatic parameters. These factors encompass the extent of interpersonal space, which concerns the degree of familiarity or proximity between the speaker and the listener, the degree of societal standing, which relates to the comparative social positions of the speaker and the listener, and the level of speech act hierarchy, which establishes the significance or severity of the speech act. These pragmatic parameters can explain the variations in the use of politeness strategies across different social contexts. For example, the level of social distance influences the choice of a more or less formal style of speech, the level of social status determines the use of honorifics or titles, and the level of speech act ranking determines the required level of politeness and formality in the speech act.

Another research endeavor conducted by Oraby (2020) delved into the traditional norms governing the dispensation and solicitation of offers and invitations within the milieu of Arab culture, with specific emphasis on the societal framework of Jordan. Employing a discursive methodology, this investigation meticulously scrutinized the sociolinguistic and pragmatic constituents, centering its attention on the intricate nuances of politeness paradigms. Through a comprehensive analysis, this inquiry successfully delineated recurrent behavioral motifs, linguistic strategies, and the developmental trajectory characterizing sequences of invitations. Significantly, a discernible differentiation between authentic and superficial invitations or offers was established.

Recent Studies on Politeness Strategies in WhatsApp Conversation

Various recent studies have focused on examining the utilization of politeness strategies in online communities through the WhatsApp application. For instance, Santoso and Indriani (2021) conducted a survey investigating WhatsApp conversations between students and teachers during English learning activities at the al-Lutfah Islamic school in Indonesia. The study used observation as a data collection method and found that students employed various forms of politeness, such as greetings, gratitude, questions, and expressing opinions when responding to statements in the WhatsApp group.

In the study conducted by Zahra et al. (2023), an investigation was undertaken to analyze the politeness strategies employed by undergraduate students within the context of WhatsApp Groups. The outcomes of the research revealed the presence of four discernible politeness techniques among the cohort of college students. Notably, the application of positive politeness strategies surfaced prominently, underscoring the establishment of robust interpersonal connections among peers through the articulation of complimentary remarks and the conveyance of appreciative sentiments. This approach effectively functions as a mechanism for acknowledging and expressing gratitude towards fellow students.

Hafid et al. (2022) investigated the use of teenagers' politeness strategies in social media conversations within WhatsApp groups of junior high schools, senior high schools, and colleges. The study revealed that participants utilized three types of politeness strategies: 1) bald-on-record, which included questions, commands, and requests; 2) positive strategies, such as jokes, identity expression, and paying attention; and 3) negative strategies, including offering apologies, expressing gratitude, and asking questions. Furthermore, the research discovered that the extent of education had an impact on how adolescents utilized politeness techniques on social media. Teachers exhibited a greater interest in the language politeness strategies of their students to encourage positive and congruous exchanges.

Pasaribu and colleagues (2022) investigated the utilization of politeness strategies within WhatsApp groups for thesis consultations among both instructors and students. The results revealed notable variations in the politeness strategies deployed by instructors and students. The lecturer predominantly used a bald-on-record method (30%) focusing on imperative sentences, while students tended to utilize positive politeness strategies (23%), with greetings being the most frequent. These differences in behavior stemmed from the varying power dynamics and social status between lecturers and students. Additionally, non-verbal signals, like emoticons, contributed to upholding favorable communication between students and instructors through WhatsApp. Algiovan (2022) investigated the use of politeness strategies in the interaction between lecturers and post-graduates at a university in Lampung through virtual communication: WhatsApp and E-mail. The study revealed that the positive politeness strategy was mostly used by Indonesian students, whereas the lecturer mostly utilized the bald-on-record technique. The study also indicated that various elements were thought to impact the utilization of politeness tactics, including factors like authority, organizational role, interpersonal closeness, age, and societal norms. Shalihah and Winarsih (2023) examined the ethical aspects of lecturers' responses to students' text messages using the WhatsApp application in an Indonesian university. They investigated breaches of etiquette norms in brief messages sent from the instructor to the students. Based on the initial investigation of the findings, there remain many brief exchanges between educators and pupils that fall short of meeting expected levels of politeness. The aspect of politeness remains unaddressed due to the utilization of slang, impolite methods of conveying thoughts, or improper linguistic elements.

Halil (2021) discovered that communication between lecturers and students via WhatsApp adhered to the principles of linguistic politeness in interaction discourse. Both students and lecturers demonstrated linguistic politeness principles, including wisdom, generosity, simplicity, compatibility, appreciation, and sympathy. However, Halil noted that there were still instances of politeness principle violations.

Farida and Yuliana (2019) examined the politeness strategies employed by Sundanese students when communicating with their lecturers through WhatsApp chat messages at a university in Bandung. The study revealed that students used all four politeness strategies, with negative politeness being the most frequently used and bald-on-record being the least frequent. The findings also highlighted the students' awareness of status differences and the asymmetrical power relations with their lecturers.

Yulandari (2022) investigated male students' linguistic politeness strategies in WhatsApp group conversations and found that they tended to employ blunt and positive politeness strategies. Conversely, within graduate circles, males exhibited a preference for employing both positive and negative politeness techniques. The research proposed that individuals of advanced age tend to adopt a more careful and courteous approach to their language.

Although the studies mentioned above have shed light on the use of politeness strategies in WhatsApp groups among learners, they did not explore the application of politeness strategies among Jordanian teachers themselves in online contexts. Therefore, this current study aims to investigate how Jordanian teachers utilize politeness strategies in official WhatsApp groups.

Method

An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study based on its ability to observe natural human behavior through personal contact in situ rather than artificially arranging experimental observations (Hammersley, 1990). The participation of teachers in social media as part of their daily routines presents an excellent opportunity to employ an ethnographic approach. Creating an artificial WhatsApp Group and asking teachers to interact with each other would be highly limiting. Instead, the study analyzed conversations occurring naturally in teachers' daily routines.

Participants

Purposive sampling was employed, which involves selecting an official Whatsapp Group of participants with specific characteristics relevant to the research interest, as recommended by Foley (2018). The participants were drawn from a single Jordanian university and deemed suitable to provide insights into the phenomenon being investigated. This sample was selected because they are representative of the population due to their characteristics as Jordanian educators who joined the official WhatsApp groups.

The official WhatsApp group comprises 20 English language teachers, with ages ranging from 26 to 54. Seven participants are male, while 13 are female. The data from the posts and messages exchanged among the teachers were observed.

Research Instruments

The process of observation in this study was vital for delving into the creation of transcripts that faithfully mirrored the interactions within the WhatsApp groups. The first author acknowledged that initially, the participants might alter their behavior and responses in response to the observer's presence. However, as the observation progressed, the observer's impact gradually diminished.

Research Procedures

The data from the posts and messages exchanged in the WhatsApp group among the teachers were observed. Subsequently, the messages were transcribed by copying them into Microsoft Word files to facilitate data analysis. The date and time of these messages were also recorded. Data generation spanned the entire six-month period of participant observation, covering one full academic semester in Jordan.

Of 163 observed postings, 60 were discarded, and 103 were considered relevant to the study's focus on politeness. The selected data were then analyzed to explore the politeness strategies employed. The analysis was conducted using the framework of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and the perspective of Holmes and Stubbe (2015).

Findings

This section will delve into specific excerpts from the messages exchanged among the teachers in the official WhatsApp groups. It is important to note that this group comprises the head of the English department and the English language teachers, and its primary purpose is to address work-related matters.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the politeness strategies employed by the

teachers, we present Table One, which showcases the percentages of each strategy's utilization. Table 1. *Percentages of Politeness Strategies employed by Jordanian teachers in the official WhatsApp*

PolitenessStrategy	Frequency	Percentage%
PositivePolitenessStrategy	45	44
NegativePolitenessStrategy	32	31
Bald-onRecord	16	15
Off-Record	10	9

Of the total 163 postings observed in the official WhatsApp group, a subset of 103 postings was deemed relevant to the examination of politeness strategies and considered applicable for the analysis of techniques related to politeness. Notably, the findings highlight the prevalence of positive politeness as the most commonly employed strategy, accounting for 44% (n=45) of the relevant postings. Following closely, the negative politeness method was employed in 31% (n=32) of the observed data. The bald-on-record strategy ranked third with a utilization rate of 15% (n=16), while the off-record strategy represented the least utilized approach at 9% (n=10).

To illustrate the application of a negative politeness strategy, Extract One provides an example. In this instance, the head of the department employs a negative politeness strategy by requesting the faculty members, asking them to send their schedules as soft copies.

Extract One (WhatsApp posts)

- 1 [1:36 PM,6/9/2019]Rawan: *Respected Members. All of you please send me your schedule as a soft copy. I need it TODAY before 4:00 pm. Hope that you won't be late.*

In her message, Rawan demonstrated her awareness of employing politeness strategies by using the greeting form *Respected members* as an introductory gesture (line one). Furthermore, she utilized the polite expression *please* (line one) when issuing a direct command using the imperative verb *send*. Despite her directness in delivering the command, her use of a negative politeness strategy indicated her acknowledgment of status differences (Holmes, 2013). Rawan appeared to be mindful of her role and position as the head of the department when giving orders to the faculty members.

Although she conveyed a sense of strictness by emphasizing the word *TODAY* in capital letters (line 1) to emphasize the importance of timely schedule submission, she mitigated the force of her command indirectly by employing attenuating devices such as using *Hope* and *need*. This finding aligns with the observations made by Holmes and Stubbe (2015), who noted that power differentials are downplayed, and politeness takes precedence in interactions within white-collar workplaces. They further asserted that imperative directives are commonly employed in such contexts, particularly when issuing routine tasks using declarative forms of explicit directions like *want* or *need*.

Moving on to Extract Two, it exemplifies the utilization of a positive politeness strategy. In this instance, Rawan employed a directive act as an invitation, inviting the faculty members to

attend a workshop.

Extract Two: (WhatsAppposts)

- 1 [6:14 PM, 2/10/2019] Rawan: اسعد الله أوقاتكم بكل الخير
NextMondayALLOfyouarekindlyinvitedtoattendaworkshopaboutArtificialintell
igenceskills anddevelopment
- 2 [6:16 PM,2/10/2019]Summayah: good topic
- 3 [6:17PM,2/10/2019]Remas: Iwouldliketoattendsuchaworkshop
- 3 [6:21 PM,2/10/2019]Ahmad: it seems that it will be beneficial

Rawan initiated her message in Arabic and then switched to English. She began with the phrase "اسعد الله أوقاتكم بكل الخير" (line 1), which translates to "May God bless your times with all goodness." This opening phrase facilitated the transition from non-interaction to interaction among the interlocutors, easing any awkwardness before delivering commands and directives (Laver, 1975). Rawan employed inter-sentential code-switching that occurs outside of the sentence (Poplack, 1980; Wei et al., 2000). By using their mother tongue Arabic, which arguably carries more weight and attracts the faculty members' attention, Rawan employed a relational strategy that served an effective function. She wished her faculty members a happy and blessed time, demonstrating her aim to maintain rapport and solidarity with them. As Tannen (1995) posits, "Through ways of speaking, we signal – and create – the relative status of speakers and their level of rapport" (p. 4). Such discursive behavior fosters solidarity and intimacy while politely inviting the members to the workshop. As noted by Spencer-Oatey (2000), politeness towards subordinates can indicate that the more powerful individual seeks to foster good workplace relations and maintain or develop collegial rapport. Politeness can also be viewed as a means of promoting cooperation, thus aiding in achieving workplace goals (Watts, 2003; Eelen, 2001). Therefore, Rawan's polite invitation can be seen as an indication of fulfilling both the transactional and affective functions. As Holmes and Stubbe (2015) highlighted, workplace interactions are deeply embedded in the business and social context.

Subsequently, Rawan capitalized the determiner *ALL* to emphasize that every faculty member should attend the workshop. However, it was not presented as a command as she used the signaling word or hedge *kindly* (line 1) to indicate a less demanding invitation and maintain politeness. As discussed by Manipuspika et al. (2019), employing linguistic features that are less face-threatening to the recipient through indirectness is a common strategy for making a request. Despite Rawan's authority to issue orders and instructions, she opted for a coordinated approach by encouraging and facilitating combined task completion. Ng and Bradac (1993) distinguish between the expression of collaborative power, "power to," and coercive power, "power over" (p. 4).

The faculty members responded politely to the head of the department, saying their admiration and willingness to attend the workshop. They conveyed their praise and respect through cooperative and polite engagement. For instance, in line two, Summayah promptly responded to Rawan's invitation, expressing her admiration for the workshop's topic. Remas also responded, expressing her desire to attend, while Ahmad recognized the potential benefits of the workshop based on its topic. Summayah, Remas, and Ahmad employed a positive politeness strategy by offering praise and compliments.

Moving on to Extract Three, it presents another example of employing a positive politeness strategy when sharing academic information among faculty members. Laith, a faculty member, shared a guideline form regarding academic regulation and supervision.

Extract Three: (WhatsApp posts)

- 1 [5:19PM,26/8/2019]Laith: *Assalamu'alaikum*
The Model above is academic regulation for our university
It will help you with academic supervision

Laith mentioned that the model would benefit the faculty members in their academic supervision (line one). Laith initiated his message with the polite greeting *Assalamu'alaikum* (line 1), which is a formal and religious greeting that demonstrates respect for others. Greetings and closings adhere to social norms and play a significant role in human interaction. Based on his use of this greeting, it can be inferred that Laith was mindful of avoiding missteps and showed consideration for Islamic greetings. This polite linguistic behavior indicates his adherence to formalities and religious teachings. Additionally, he used the pronoun *our* to convey a strong sense of belonging to the university, reflecting his commitment to being an integral part of the community and fostering closeness with his colleagues through the sharing of academic information.

In essence, Laith made a positive impression on the other members and portrayed himself as a helpful, polite, and religious individual, recognizing the importance of using appropriate language in an official group. This can be seen as applying the 'exemplification' strategy (Jones & Pittman, 1982) to convey a positive image of himself.

Moving on to Extract Four, it presents an example of employing both a negative and a positive politeness strategy when a faculty member offers advice to his colleagues.

Extract Four: (WhatsApp posts)

- 1 [7:19 PM,18/12/2019]Issam: *Dear colleagues*
Thank you for sending your emails.
I sent the recent quality requirements.
- 2 *However, There are a few members haven't sent their emails yet. Please*
send it urgently for work sake.
I understand that some of you are facing technical problems with your UNI.
emails.
- 3 *However, it's better to fix it for your sake.*
If there is a problem you need to report it or inform those who are responsible
- 4 *If you stay still, no one will know about it.*
 [7:21 PM, 18/12/2019] Manar: *Sure ... Having your university email fixed*
will facilitate sending out emails as a group. Last time I tried to create a group
instead of writing each email individually, but I couldn't because Some of you
use personal emails.

In this extract, Issam began his message with the kind and respectful greeting expression *Dear colleague*, demonstrating his benevolence and respect for his colleagues. He also expressed gratitude for their emails, indicating his polite and appreciative attitude towards them. The utilization of negative politeness strategies encompasses various phases or expressions, such as

expressing gratitude, offering apologies, and posing questions (Hafid et al., 2022).

Issam noted that some members had not sent their emails and politely requested them to do so using the word *please*. Furthermore, he provided an explanation or justification for their issue, attributing it to technical problems. It can be observed that he employed expressions such as *I understand, it's better, and you need to* (line three), indicating that he did not directly instruct or command them to resolve the problem. Instead, he employed mitigated linguistic forms and utilized a positive politeness strategy. As emphasized by Holmes and Stubbe (2015), employing epistemic devices to mitigate directives, such as using modeled forms, justifications, explanations, and hesitation, exemplifies the negotiation of directive forms. Additionally, Issam's advice included explanations and suggestions, aiming to guide the members toward the desired goal.

Another member of the group responded to Issam's message and agreed with his advice. She mentioned that using the university email facilitated sending emails to all the members as a group. Additionally, she shared that she faced difficulties creating a group for sending emails due to some faculty members using their personal emails. While she did not explicitly use polite expressions, the overall tone of her message conveyed courtesy and respect. She explained and highlighted the benefits of solving the problem. Furthermore, she mentioned a specific situation she encountered personally, indicating her concern for the university.

Therefore, Issam and Manar were considerate in delivering their advice in a manner that was motivating and encouraging rather than ordering or insulting. It was evident that they were aware of their status, which was not higher than that of their colleagues. As emphasized by Holmes and Stubbe (2015), superiors have the authority to give orders and imperatives. Still, when directives are issued between colleagues, they must be carefully and tactfully formulated to avoid any offensive behavior. Issam and Manar demonstrated their awareness of the linguistic and pragmatic aspects by framing their request as advice. Thus, when requesting a coworker at a similar level in the institutional hierarchy to do something, it is essential to consider politeness factors. Equals or near equals manage interactions carefully to protect the recipient's face and establish agreement on responsibilities or tasks. Most importantly, they aim to foster a harmonious and compatible relationship.

Moving on to Extract Five, it exemplifies how most faculty members used kind and polite words to express their congratulations and best wishes to the head of the department on his new position as a vice dean. The faculty members in the official WhatsApp group were observed to compete in sharing personal wishes for their boss, with most congratulating him within the first hour, indicating their joy and happiness for him. As Brown and Levinson (1987) highlighted, some positive politeness strategies involve showing an exaggerated interest and expressing sympathy towards others.

Manar expressed her heartfelt congratulations and wished for him to achieve even higher positions, using Arabic to convey her best wishes. As noted by Hasanain et al. (2014), using the English equivalent for congratulating or sharing wishes may not consistently carry the same emotional or cultural connotations.

Extract Five (WhatsApp posts)

1 [9:07 PM, 21/8/2019] Manar: الف مبروك دكتور... وعساك ع القوه يارب ومنها للاعلى

- (*Thousand congratulations doctor... I wish you strength and good health and always achieve the highest positions*)
- 2 [9:08 PM, 21/8/2019] Summayah: ما شاء الله بشرونا
(*God wills... tell us the good news*)
[9:08 PM, 21/8/2019] Summayah: ???
- 3 [9:08 PM, 21/8/2019] Manar: Hadi has got a new position
[9:09 PM, 21/8/2019] Manar: Now he is the new vice dean of our college
- 4 [9:09 PM, 21/8/2019] Anhar: منها للاعلى يا ربوووووه ما شا الله
(*ohh God wills... I hope you achieve the highest positions*)
- 5 [9:09 PM, 21/8/2019] Samah: ماشااالله بيارك لك يا رب
(*God wills... God bless you*)
- 6 [9:09 PM, 21/8/2019] Abdullah: مبرووووك الف مبرووووك
(*Congratulations ...A thousand congratulations*)
- 7 [9:10 PM, 21/8/2019] Hadeel: ما شاء الله مبارك د. هادي أعانك الله ووفق على درب
الخير خطاك
(*God wills congratulation Dr.Hadi, may God help you and grant you the path of goodness*)
- 8 [9:10 PM, 21/8/2019] Fadwa: Wow! Masha Allah !! Congratulations
- 9 [9:11 PM, 21/8/2019] Rawan: ما شاء الله بالتوفيق دوما دكتور
(*God wills, May God always grant you success, doctor*)
- 10 [9:12 PM, 21/8/2019] Summayah: Masha Allah .. !! Alf mabrook .. All prayers
for many more to come
- 11 [9:15 PM, 21/8/2019] Remas: Alf Mubarak yarab ... really we are so
happy 🙌😊
- 12 [9:29 PM, 21/8/2019] Ahmad: ما شاء الله الف مبروك وعتقبال أعلى المناصب وبالتوفيق
(*God wills, A thousand congratulations and may you get the highest positions and good luck*)
- 13 [9:34 PM, 21/8/2019] Maha: I am glad to hear the news. Congratulation. you
deserve the high rank.
- 14 [9:46 PM, 21/8/2019] Ali: Congratulations Dr Hadi, we are so happy for you
❤️
- 15 [9:47 PM, 21/8/2019] Yasser: ألف مبروك دكتور
(*A thousand congratulations, doctor*)
- 16 [9:55 PM, 21/8/2019] Nida'a: Alf Alf Mabrook Dr Hadi
- 17 [9:57 PM, 21/8/2019] Aysha: Congratulations Dr.HadiMashAllah!
Alf Alf Mubarak
- 18 [10:08 PM, 21/8/2019] Hadi: a heartfelt thank you goes to you. I really
appreciate it.
- 19 [10:47 PM, 21/8/2019] Kawthar: The speed of the team depends on the pace
of leader. Thanks for being a leader with human touch!
Hearty Congratulations
- 20 [11:03 PM, 21/8/2019] Issam: ماشاء الله لا قوه الا بالله
الف مبروك دكتور عالمنصب الجديد وعساك عالقوه

(God wills, there is no power except by God...A thousand congratulations doctor for the new position and wish you strength and good health)

21 [12:23 AM, 22/8/2019] Laith: Congratulations Dr Hadi ...

Summayah immediately asked Manar about the congratulatory wishes, using three question marks to convey her eagerness and desire to be among the first to congratulate and demonstrate her joy and happiness. After Manar responded, Anhar promptly congratulated Hadi, starting her message with the interjection of *Ohh* to express her astonishment and delight and satisfaction with the good and surprising news. She also wished for him to achieve higher positions. Following Anhar, Samah and Abdullah congratulated Hadi, followed by Hadeel who prayed to Allah for his guidance and success in his new position. Within approximately two minutes, three more members, Fadwa, Rawan, and Summayah, congratulated Hadi and wished him luck in his new role, using the interjection *Masha Allah* to express their joy and admiration. It was evident that most faculty members addressed Hadi with the honorific form *Dr* as a sign of respect and appreciation, demonstrating their awareness of the status difference and employing a negative politeness strategy.

Many members spontaneously code-switched from English to Arabic, naturally and unconsciously using their mother tongue to deeply express their emotions and feelings. In doing so, they sought solidarity and strengthened rapport with their vice-dean. The faculty members displayed high happiness, almost competing to offer the best compliments. For instance, Kawthar thanked Hadi for his leadership and humanity, choosing a proverbial expression as if crafting a poem.

The members' expressions of congratulations aimed to avoid any misbehavior or disrespect. Failing to offer wishes may have been interpreted as jealousy or envy. Therefore, all the members sought to maintain and develop their relationship with the new vice-dean using polite and kind words. The positive politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) were predominantly employed, as the interlocutors aimed to preserve their relationships, particularly with their superiors.

Extract Five also reveals that some faculty members used emojis to convey their emotions. As highlighted by Pasaribu et al. (2022), the use of non-verbal language, such as emoticons, is part of politeness strategies to maintain positive and amicable interactions.

Moving on to Extract Six, it exemplifies the utilization of both negative and positive politeness strategies among the faculty members. Hadi initiated the message to express gratitude for the party arranged by his colleagues. He began interacting with the expression *Dear colleagues* (line one), addressing the members as if writing a formal letter or email. Furthermore, he employed formal and polite language to convey his deep appreciation, using phrases like *great pleasure*, *appreciate*, and *courtesy*. Hadi concluded the message with *Sincerely yours*, a format commonly used in formal letters. He referred to himself with the honorific *Dr* thus preserving his status and high position. Although Hadi sent this message to express his gratitude to the faculty members, it was evident that he employed a negative politeness strategy by maintaining a respectful distance and adopting a formal tone (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Extract Six (WhatsApp posts)

- 1 [5:03 PM,8/29/2019]Hadi: *Dear colleagues
It was a great pleasure and an undescribed feeling at your sharing me the party.
I was ever exceptional experience in my career.
Wordsreallydonotservemetothank you. I sincerely appreciate your courtesy.
HowdidIgetsolucky to have a fantastic staff like you.
Thank you so very much. You had made my day that much brighter than ever.
So proud of you,
Sincerely yours,
Dr.Hadi.*
- 2 [5:07 PM,8/29/2019]Issam: *Your actions inspire others to dream more
Learn more and do more!
We had great time too!*
- 3 [5:13 PM, 8/29/2019]Fadwa: *It was our pleasure, Dr. Hadi.
May Allah bless you with lots of success and happiness.*
- 4 [5:22 PM,8/29/2019]Laith: *Thanks to Allah who provide us with such a nice
Characterlikeyou☺*
- 5 [23:53 PM,8/29/2019]Summayah: *Seriously....hats off to ur courte
syndmagnanimity....May Allah rewarduinabundanceforursophisticated
Demeanor*
- 6 [5:38PM,8/29/2019)Remas:*Dr.Hadi...we are really lucky to know such
a person like you... your wisdom, modesty, and thoughts.*
- 7 [7:10 PM,8/29/2019]Ahmad: *Thank you. Hadi for the great kind, wisdom
And modesty that we have learned from you. We wish you a happy and
amazing life.*

Issam promptly responded to Hadi and complimented him, referring to his actions that inspired all the members to develop and improve themselves. Sharing compliments and using kind words are considered polite attitudes toward others. Holmes (2013) explains that individuals exchange compliments in their daily lives for various reasons, such as praising each other or responding to received compliments as a form of respect and politeness.

Issam expressed that he and his colleagues had a great time, complimenting his vice-dean and using phatic expressions to demonstrate love and respect. Herbert (1986) emphasizes that compliments are phatic expressions that strengthen connections and relationships by exchanging polite words. As depicted in Extract 6, the faculty members focused solely on thanking and complimenting their boss. For instance, Fadwa prayed to Allah to bless Hadi with success and happiness, employing a negative politeness strategy by using the title *Dr* to maintain distance and show respect, thereby avoiding imposition on both interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Furthermore, Laith expressed gratitude to Allah for providing him with a good and admirable manager. Summayah, on the other hand, conveyed her thankfulness by using the expression *hats off* to display deep admiration and utmost respect for Hadi's polite demeanor, courtesy, and generosity. Additionally, Remas praised Hadi's personality and character, highlighting his wisdom, modesty, and thoughts. Ahmad also thanked Hadi for his kindness,

wisdom, and modesty, as they had learned valuable qualities from him.

It was evident that these members complimented their vice-dean using various polite and praising expressions, aiming to maintain and preserve their relationship with their boss. The faculty members sought to develop rapport and solidarity with their boss through kind words and compliments, emphasizing comfort and pleasure. Holmes (2013) asserts that kind words and compliments are expressed to foster solidarity and bridge any gaps that may arise. They also aim to make people feel at ease and satisfied.

In this extract, it was observed that the members communicated with their boss politely, exhibiting high respect in their linguistic behavior. Alqarni (2017) suggests that sharing kind expressions and compliments may be prompted by a desire to maintain a harmonious relationship, uphold face, or adhere to social protocols. As noted by Brown and Levinson (1987), speakers consider the face wants of others and strive to satisfy them.

Moving on to Extract Seven, it illustrates how the head of the department employs an off-record strategy and a negative politeness strategy. Rawan sent a message to the faculty members, instructing them to adhere to the instructions and university rules. She began the message by greeting the faculty members with "Good morning" (line One), employing a respectful, polite, and formal greeting.

Extract Seven (WhatsApp posts)

- 1 [7:56 am, 12/24/2019]Rawan:Good morning
As I notice while I was roaming some of you were busy with their smart phones
sitting nicely in table in the exam hall which is prohibited
- 2 **Please stick to the rules**

After greeting them, Rawan stated that some teachers were busy with their phones during exams. It can be observed that her message was delivered sarcastically when she described the teachers' phones were *sitting nicely* on the table (line 1). She criticizes the teachers' behavior and then proceeds with her message, informing them that such an attitude is prohibited.

Before asking them to adhere to the rules and fulfill their duties properly, Rawan employed an off-record strategy by describing the situation ironically. This politeness strategy involves being indirect and vague to convey the message subtly. Furthermore, despite Rawan's authority and power to give instructions and commands to the faculty members, she utilized a negative politeness strategy and used the expression *please stick to the rules* in bold font to emphasize her directive and ensure compliance within the department.

Moving on to Extract Eight, it presents an example of employing a positive and bald-on politeness strategy. The message sent by Fadwa introduced the topic by offering advice to the faculty members on how to handle filling in the files. The use of the pronoun *we* (line One) can invoke a collective identity or a sense of group membership (Bramley, 2001). Karapetjana (2011) notes that the pronoun *we* is employed to create a sense of collectivity, shared responsibility, and audience inclusion. Consequently, this strategy represents a positive politeness approach aimed at preserving the positive face of the recipients by treating them as group members, ensuring that the face-threatening act (FTA) is not perceived as a negative evaluation of their face (Bensch, 2010). Thus, Fadwa protected her colleagues' positive face by demonstrating closeness, maintaining friendship, and establishing common ground.

Extract Eight (WhatsApp posts)

- 1 [12:50 am, 1/1/2020]Fadwa: *For some sections we can write: yet to receive enlightenment from Quality Unit and finish*
- 2 [12:51 am, 1/1/2020]Fadwa: *Else...it will be incomplete*
- 3 [12:54 am, 1/1/2020]Manar: *Ladies just write what you can write*
- 4 [12:54 am, 1/1/2020]Manar: *Leave the other things empty*
- 5 [12:55 am, 1/1/2020]Manar: *Just try to fill inasmuch data as possible*
- 6 [12:55 am, 1/1/2020]Fadwa: *Okay*

Then, Manar sent a message regarding the same topic and expressed her opinion. She suggested to her colleagues that they write and fill in the files with the information they know, leaving the other parts empty. It is important to note that Manar's advice differed from Fadwa's suggestion, as she did not develop or expand on Fadwa's advice. Despite the difference in their suggestions, Manar did not accuse Fadwa of providing the wrong advice. Instead, she maintained a polite and kind tone by offering her idea and incorporating hedging or softening words such as *Ladies* and *just* (line three) to mitigate and soften the advice.

Furthermore, it can be observed that Manar used a direct verb form when addressing her colleagues. This represents a bald-on-record politeness strategy, where the speaker directly and explicitly addresses the hearer to express their needs. As described by Brown and Levinson (1987), being baldly on record means "doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way possible" (p. 69). In this context, the bald-on record strategy is employed because Manar addresses her colleagues with the same status, allowing for direct communication. Fadwa then engaged with Manar's suggestion and agreed with her message. Seeking agreement and avoiding disputes are sub-strategies of the positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Fadwa and Manar were considerate in delivering their advice in a manner that would not carry disrespectful or insulting connotations, but rather foster involvement and politeness. Hence, it is evident that they were aware of their status, which was not higher than that of their colleagues. According to Holmes and Stubbe (2015), when giving directives or advice from one colleague to another, it is crucial to phrase them carefully to avoid offensive behavior. Therefore, Fadwa and Manar demonstrated their awareness of communication's linguistic and pragmatic aspects. The choice of appropriate linguistic forms is influenced by variables such as the status and the context in which the interaction occurs.

Discussion

This study delved into the fascinating realm of politeness strategies employed by Jordanian English language teachers in their official WhatsApp group. The researchers discovered that these teachers utilized all four politeness strategies identified by Brown and Levinson (1987): positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on record, and off-record strategy. Among these, positive politeness emerged as the most frequently used strategy, indicating a solid emphasis on maintaining closeness and nurturing relationships. This finding suggests that the teachers placed great importance on building and sustaining positive connections with their peers and managers. Positive politeness involves language expressions that convey friendliness, compliments, and

genuine concern for the other person's feelings.

The second most prevalent strategy employed by the teachers was negative politeness, which underscores the notion of distance and acknowledges status differences. Superiors primarily employed negative politeness to preserve their position and status, while faculty members utilized it to respect boundaries and demonstrate deference to their superiors. Bald-on-record strategy, on the other hand, was predominantly used by faculty members of the same rank, indicating a level of comfort in direct communication without the need for excessive politeness. Lastly, the off-record strategy was the least utilized, primarily by superiors who preferred indirect and vague expressions when providing feedback or criticism to their faculty members.

The findings indicate that the teachers were mindful of their linguistic choices when addressing different individuals. They employed positive politeness when interacting with superiors and adopted a bald-on record strategy when communicating with colleagues of equal status. Similarly, superiors were conscious of their language use and employed the off-record strategy when addressing their faculty members. This highlights the teachers' attentiveness to effective communication practices to maintain professional relationships, avoid causing offense, and adhere to social norms and expectations. This perspective aligns with Holmes and Stubbe's (2015) view on upholding an equilibrium between preserving a specific degree of interpersonal space and nurturing professional connections, while also meeting the requirements of the current tasks.

The pedagogues employed a diverse array of politeness strategies and proficient communication methodologies to preserve their professional affiliations, preventing the instigation of displeasure, and upholding societal conventions and anticipations. In contrast, the research conducted by Shalihah and Winarsih in 2023, which delved into the ethical considerations of interactions between lecturers and students via WhatsApp, exposed instances of transgressions against politeness norms attributable to the utilization of colloquialisms and impolitic linguistic expressions

The outcomes of this study have relevance beyond the scope of the research itself. The study aims to contribute to the ongoing academic discourse surrounding politeness strategies, providing valuable insights for teachers, school staff members, departments of education, teacher educators, and policymakers. Understanding the perspectives and experiences shared among teachers and their superiors can enhance dialogue and communication between teachers and their principals and managers in an online context. Moreover, the study seeks to identify the most effective linguistic strategies for teachers in educational institutions. By doing so, it aims to inform decision-making processes related to teacher-staff interactions and foster a better understanding of the complexities of communication within educational settings. This understanding can lead to improvements in teaching practices, student learning outcomes, and the development of more effective training programs for teachers. Furthermore, the study opens avenues for future research exploring gender differences in the utilization of politeness strategies, highlighting the significance of appropriate language use in educational institutions characterized by formal and clear communication.

The findings underscore the importance of adapting linguistic strategies based on the individuals being addressed and the nature of the relationship. This emphasizes the need to comprehend cultural and social communication norms in diverse contexts to facilitate effective

communication and maintain professional relationships. The study sheds light on the appropriate linguistic strategies teachers can employ to navigate workplace dynamics, resolve conflicts, and foster positive relationships with colleagues and superiors.

In essence, this research invites thoughtful reflection on the power dynamics and social norms that shape interactions within the official WhatsApp group. It offers valuable insights into the use of linguistic strategies among teachers in their interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and authority figures within educational institutions. By gaining a deeper understanding of these strategies, teachers can enhance their communication skills, navigate workplace challenges, and foster positive relationships within their professional environments. The hope is that these insights will contribute to creating a more supportive and inclusive work environment, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students. Overall, this study guides teachers on effective workplace communication, building strong professional relationships, and promoting a positive teaching environment.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined the usage of politeness strategies by Jordanian English language teachers in their official WhatsApp group. The results revealed that these teachers employed all four politeness strategies identified by Brown and Levinson (1987). Among these strategies, positive politeness emerged as the most prevalent, indicating a strong emphasis on maintaining close relationships and fostering rapport. The teachers also utilized negative politeness, bald-on record, and off-record strategies to varying degrees. Negative politeness was primarily employed by superiors to uphold their status and establish a sense of distance between themselves and faculty members. Faculty members, on the other hand, employed negative politeness to respect their superiors' territory and demonstrate deference to their higher status. Bald-on record strategy was predominantly used by faculty members of the same rank, reflecting their comfort in engaging in straightforward communication without excessive politeness. In contrast, superiors preferred to employ the off-record strategy, opting for indirect and vague expressions when addressing their faculty members, particularly when offering criticism. In conclusion, our research illuminates the significant utilization of politeness strategies among Jordanian English language instructors within their designated WhatsApp group. These educators demonstrated a sophisticated comprehension of deploying diverse strategies, adeptly tailored to specific recipients and interaction scenarios. These findings enrich our comprehension of apt linguistic approaches within academic settings, offering the prospect of refining professional communication, cultivating favorable associations, and cultivating more all-encompassing pedagogical atmospheres.

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