Politeness in Arabic Culture

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Abstract—As soon as we want to speak, we must constantly make choices of many different kinds of e.g. what we want to say, how we want to say it. Specifically, we must choose what sentence types, words, and even sounds best unite the *what* with the *how*. How we say something is at least as important as what we say. In fact, the content and form are quite inseparable, being but two facets of the same object. According to Thomas (1995), the past twenty years within pragmatics there has been a great deal of interest in 'politeness', to such an extent that politeness theory could almost be seen as a sub-discipline of pragmatics. Then Thomas claims that, much has been written (comparatively little based on empirical research) and different theories and paradigms have emerged. Thomas adds, that we find people are using the same terms in very different ways, are operating with different definitions of 'politeness' and are talking at cross-purposes. Thomas (1970) argues, that within the vast literature on politeness which has built up since the late 1970s we find tremendous confusion. The confusion begins with the very term politeness, which has caused much misunderstanding. (Thomas, 1970, p. 149).

Index Terms—politeness, successful communication, impoliteness, addresses, forms and meaning

I. Introduction

I will try in the present paper to discuss '**politeness**' in Arabic and to show the importance of its influence in Arabic spoken language. The only article (as far as I found) which discussed politeness in Arabic was written by Ali El-Sayed in linguistic journal 89-90, however, his analyse was focused on the Egyptian dialect only and he made a few comparisons with English.

I , in the present study, will try to make this study wider and more analytical work, that I will not focus the present study on one dialect but on spoken Arabic in general which would be understandable from the majority of Arabs who spread in all over the world.

I would like to write about this topic to show how much Arabs involve this linguistic phenomena in their conversations, and what type of expressions that they use the most. The structure that I have made in the present study will be as follows:

In the background, I discuss the main function of politeness in Arabic culture, a list of politeness expressions have been chosen from Arabic, and give a view of the linguistic background.

The main section will be 'observation and analysis' (section 3) were I will present the main politeness forms in Arabic and their functions, and also present an analytical study of these expressions in Arabic which includes a comparison with English were semantic similarities and differences will be pointed out, as well as the pragmatic properties of politeness expressions

II. Background

The two main topics which will be discussed in this section are:

• The cultural background of Arabs regarding 'politeness'. I will try to give a brief picture represented in table to make it explicit, and a list of politeness forms have been selected as an entrance to the reader for this study,

• The second topic will provide theoretical linguistic background of politeness. As well as some theories.

A. The Cultural Background

The Islamic religion interferes with most aspects of Arabic society. But, at least in theory we can talk about:

a) *The Social Side*, and b) *The Religious Side*

Since this study of politeness will be concerned with the expression of interpersonal relations, we must point out that the individual has to keep a balance between two very different attitudes. On the one hand, religion says, that you should show humility in your interaction with other people. On the other hand society recommends strongly that the individual shows dignity. The tension between these two opposing attitudes very often puts the individual into a difficult situation.

How do you show humility without losing your dignity?

As an example, let us consider the following situation:

A person is asking for a favour to borrow some money, this request could be expressed in three different ways:

1. the humble way, example: [mumkin law samaht itsallifni flws]'would you please lend me some money'

2. the dignified way, example: [sallifni flws] 'lend me some money'!

3. the polite (best) way, example: [billahi ʕalik itsallifni flws] 'I swear you God to lend me some money'

The third example, typically contains a reference to God.

I would like to point out, that many politeness expressions includes God's name.

In the third expression, we see that the idea of politeness constitutes a compromise between the humble way and dignified way.

The humble way is shown by starting the request form with the name of God, and the dignified way is shown by using verb [sallifni !] 'lend!' in the imperative form (the undignified way would be to use the verb in the present tense form and inflected for modality e.g. 'would you lend me...'). This expression's structure is very acceptable and common between Arabs.

It is also important to point out, that it is a strongly recommended by **Islam** to express and show *humility*. This human behaviour must not be misinterpreted by other cultures (Arabic behaviour is sometimes misinterpreted as devious by Westerns).

For instance, losing one's dignity or face when showing humility.

As well as, this behaviour may be misunderstood and the interpreter may think that this behaviour is used to serve X's benefits.

These two concepts are very important and central in Arabic culture when they involve politeness in speech.

The individual has two main demands from two different directions: from religion and from society. This is represented in figure 1.

Religion ----------> Individual <----------- Society.

Figure (1)

Figure (1) shows the two main powers that a person must be aware of in relation to politeness. This pressure (sometimes) confuses the speakers in communication and might cause him/her some troubles if he/she cannot keep the balance between these opposing pressures. Society has its requirements on the one hand, and religion gives its recommendation on the other hand.

Abdul Qader Yassine in his book entitled 'Understanding the Arab mind' (1997) has aimed to provide a cross-cultural guide for foreigners who are living in an Arab country, who encounter Arabs frequently, or who are interested in the behaviour of Arabs, whether encountered in the media or personally.

Furthermore, most of Yassine's material in this book comes from his own personal experience and observations.

Politeness phenomenon was focused in Yassine's study on the behaviour on to be polite in specific occasions e.g. receiving guests at home and the interact between guest and host for both males and females.

In my point of view, if someone intends to discuss politeness, there are many other concepts are involved in this phenomenon, (as it shown in the present study), but not one side only, e.g. to distinguish between religion and social factors, and what roles both sides have played in Arab culture, then we might also compare this phenomenon with some other cultures e.g. European.

Yassine's study was just showing politeness and exemplified alot of cases which focused only on 'generosity'.

However, politeness still involved in many other expressions in several occasions e.g.

a) expressed in different ways either by using spoken, body, or both in language,

b) and used in different times which related to different occasions.

To conclude Yassine's study which related to 'politeness', I think that his work in this area was focused on one side only is, generosity and hospitality among the Arabs.

1. Some important situations when to be polite in Arabic

Below, I would suggest that, there are at least 'nine' situations where it is especially important to be polite in Arabic. These nine situations can be classified as follows:

• when you want to express sociability
• when you want to express gratitude
• when you want to express benevolence and felicitation
• when you want to express guilt
• when you want to ask for permission
• when you want to express your appreciation of the others actions, positions, relatives and friends, even the other person's culture and language, and everything related to the interlocutor
• when you want to express hospitality and generosity
• when you want to express your respect for the other
• and when you want to start a conversation.

I would like to observe also, that in some cultures (like Arabic) the naming of God may amplify the expression for politeness. As well as, non-verbal behaviour and prosody may be used systematically.

Such reference has the function of reminding people (and always) of their 'faith' who represents a central part of their life and communication, then Islam was recommended and strongly to use those expressions who involve God's name, religious expressions for different occasions, etc.

2. How to be successful in communication with Arabs

As soon as the present study is dealing with the Arab culture I have found that it might be useful to give an introduction of the most important points that Philip R. Harris, and Robert T. Morn (1979) have discussed in chapter '13'. Regarding to the above writers, I have formulated the main three points they have discussed are, linguistic factors, physical factors, and successful relations. Moreover, I will end up this abbreviation by drawing a conclusion regarding to their study as well.

1) Some linguistic factors to be aware of when working with Arab,

a) Arabs love the spoken word, they don't get to the point quickly, it is wise to show appreciating for that, but not impatience.

b) They are masters at flattery and appreciate compliments.

c) The answer 'yes', or 'no' is not a crucial promise, however, you should repeat and emphasise several times and to show that in your face value.

d) Arabs find bluntness very disrespectful, which make them usually respond on the same way.

e) Any effort the foreigner makes to use Arabic will be received and appreciated from the Arabs and create much more positive results. e.g. their language occasions.

2) Some physical factors to be aware of when working with Arabs,

a) Use strong eye contact, eyes are the windows to the soul.

b) Avoid gesturing or eating by left hand.

c) Don't lay your leg/s points towards someone's (an Arab) face.

d) Arabs like to have short distance during face-to-face conversation.

e) Yes; is expressed by nodding head. No; is expressed by titling one's head and clicking one's tongue.

3) For successful intercultural relations with Arabs,

a) Don't refuse a gift, or this will be considered as an insult as it is refusing the person himself.

b) Arabs are very emotional people, and its easy to provoke them. They expect periodic displays of emotion from others including foreigners.

c) Criticisms of an Arab should be done tactfully, and do any serious criticising in private on a one-to-one basis.

d) Don't criticise somebody in the front of them, otherwise they will sympathise with him/her against you.

e) Don't try to break the ice by making a polite inquiries with an Arab's wife or daughter, or even to discuss your own wife or daughter with them.

The following points are an abbreviation of the above three points:

1. Arabs are emotional, their dignity is important to them.
2. The loyalties of an Arab are: family, community, country, friends, and outsiders.
3. Arabs are hospitable, and their offers must not be refused.
4. Arabs are honest, however, they love driving hard bargain.
5. Showing respect is very important.
6. A Saudi shakes hands frequently, but it is not a firm handshake. (partly true)

Note,

In chapter 19 (working in the Middle East), the above writers have mentioned several stories related to 'Intercultural' interaction between Americans, Canadians, etc from one side and with Saudi's from the other side. The results of the above stories differ for different situations.

For example:

A Saudi who emphasized to pay the bill in the restaurant without an agreement with the foreigner (American).

A foreigner who eat with his left hand, and lay his leg in the front of a Saudi's face.

B. Linguistic Views of Politeness

Politeness phenomena as a part of speech acts have been discussed by many writers. Some have divided these phenomena into several concepts. Some have discussed the negative and positive sides of politeness, and some have tried to define politeness. All the aforementioned items will be discussed in the present section.

Thomas (1995) has argued that, the term *politeness* since the late 1970s caused tremendous confusion. Thomas has separated four concepts that people have discussed under the heading of *politeness* (p.150)

Below, I will demonstrate each concept separately.

1. Politeness as a real-world goal

Thomas (op.cit) has interpreted politeness as a genuine desire to be pleasant to others, or as the underlying motivation for an individual's linguistic behaviour. The writer claims, that politeness as a real-goal has no place within pragmatics.

2. Deference versus politeness

Thomas makes a distinction between deference and politeness which is quite difficult to understand. The writer understands deference as the respect we show to other people by virtue of their higher status, greater age, etc. Then, the writer continued that, both deference and politeness can be manifested through general social behaviour, and she exemplified that, we can show deference by standing up when a person of superior status enters a room, or to show politeness by holding the door open to allow someone else to pass through. (first example refers to the hole body movement, and the second one refers to a part of the body)

3. Register

Thomas, in reference to Lyons (1977), refers the term 'register' to 'systematic variation' ... in relation to social context. Thomas also makes reference to Halliday (1978, p. 32), the way in which 'the language we speak or write varies according to the type of situation' (Halliday, 1978, p. 584)

Thomas argues, that choice of register has little to do with the strategic use of language and it only becomes of interest to the pragmatist if a speaker deliberately uses unexpected forms in order to change the situation (in the same way that we may switch from a polite pronoun to an informal pronoun, in order to change the social attitudes) or to challenge the status quo.

4. Politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon

Walters (1979a and b) defines the concept 'Politeness as an utterance level phenomenon' as being "to investigate how much politeness could be squeezed out of speech act strategies alone", and to investigate the perception of politeness by native and non-native speakers of English and Spanish, using a 'standard lexical context' in order to establish a 'hierarchy of politeness', instructing his informants to ignore context as much as possible.

Thomas, however, has a hypothesis regarding the above concept which says, that the more grammatically complex or elaborate the strategy, the more highly it is rated for politeness.

Example,

A: I wonder if I might ask you to X?

Would be counted (all things being equal) as 'more polite' than:

Please X!

Which in turn was ranked as more polite than the unmodified imperative form:

Do X!

Politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon is the last concept that Thomas mentions and discusses in her book.(relying on work by Leech (1980 [1977] and 1983a and Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978]). These writers have done some work in politeness theory, and there work is focused on politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon, and they have interpreted politeness as a strategy (or series of strategies) employed by a speaker to achieve a variety of goals, such as promoting or maintaining harmonious relations.

Moreover, writers like Fraser (1990) have classified the pragmatic approaches to politeness under three headings:

1. the conversational maxim view was taken from Grice,
2. the face management view expressed by Brown and Levinson, and
3. the conversational - contract (Fraser's own view)
4. Thomas has added a fourth view: the pragmatic scales view taken from Spencer-Oatey (1992)

These approaches have brought together many of the strengths of and avoids some of the weaknesses of these approaches.

I would like to point out that, Thomas (1995) has involved deference and register in his analyses of 'main concepts of politeness', and said that these two concepts are not primarily pragmatic concepts, however, for two reasons he interfered them:

a) politeness is frequently confused with deference / register, and

b) the politeness/deference distinction is a useful illustration in one of her central chapters which discussed the distinction between pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

C. Politeness versus Impoliteness

Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) have discussed politeness and tried to identify this terms from two perspectives, the positive and the negative sides (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 101-29). Moreover, I will try myself to give an example for each one of them They said:

A) politeness. Is some kind of behaviour which has the purpose of evoking positive feelings in your listener.

The above writers have been accounted round fifteen positive politeness giving from many different languages.

The example below for instance will discuss this matter,

when a student leaves with a smiling face to his/her teacher during the conversation. This is received positively by the hearer.

B) impoliteness. Is the absence of politeness.

It has been accounted about ten negative politeness strategies by those writers also.

Example:

when someone interrupts the conversation repeatedly by saying for example, excuse me, pardon me, etc. This cause irritation and interruption.

D. Politeness Routines, and Address Terms

A) Politeness routines

Giles, Robinson, and Smith (1980) have discussed politeness under the label 'the acquisition of social speech'. Their studies have focused on children and they have shown how politeness is taught to these children by parents, school, etc. They have shown that differences of sex and age are important in this matter.

Giles et.al. earlier hypothesis which says, that parents may be more insistent that girls produce polite phrases, was disconfirmed.

Giles et.al. have focused their investigation on the American society, the main expressions they focused on are: *Hi*, *thank you*, *good bye*, *please*, and *I am sorry*.

They have argued, that children produce politeness routines without any discussion of their meaning or any evidence that they knew that *thanks* were suppose to mean; they never varied the forms or expressed their appreciation in any other words. The writers end up this argument by saying that, it was also clear that *thank you* was the most obligatory of these routines.

The writers have regarded expressions like *thank you*, as not understandable expression for the children at a certain age. However, they are obligatory terms to hear first, then to repeat, because adults by large and have to force them into producing them.

Giles et.al. have discussed an interesting Sociolinguistic discovery; that adult's responses are so strong that no matter how many times you say *Hi* to them, they will say *Hi* right back. Somewhat older children play games with one another in which on parting the object is to see who will say the last *Good bye*.

Moreover, Giles et.al. have promised to make another similar study which will be focused on '*please*' expression, and entitled as 'what is the magic word?'

Finally, Giles et.al's study is based on tape recordings for free conversations to American families (Giles et. al, 1980, p. 25-27).

B) Address terms
Pronouns.

The French term *Tu* is a solidarity 'singular you' (T), and *Vous* is a politeness 'plural you' (V), but usage requires that you use *Vous* which individuates on certain occasions. Then, Wardhaugh (1991) gives interesting interpretation and said, that the T form is sometimes described as the 'familiar' form and the V form as the 'polite' one. The writer has presented T/V distinction. e.g. Latin (*tu/vos*), Russian (*ty/vy*), Italian (*tu/lei*), German (*du/sie*), Swedish (*du/ni*), Greek (*esi/esis*), and English itself once had such a distinction the thou/you distinction. (p. 258)

I have involved the above discussion into the present study to show some connections between the word 'polite' itself and how much this expression has spread in the world. Wardhaugh has continued, that this polite usage spread downwards in society, but not all the way down, so that in certain classes, but never the lowest, it became expected between husband and wife, parents and children, and lovers.

Wardhaugh (1991) and under 'Solidarity and Politeness' has discussed and exemplified the following topics: *Tu* and *Vous* (French terms) abbreviated as 'TV', and he discussed the terms of address also (p. 258),

Another topic which Wardhaugh has discussed is related to the 'politeness' phenomenon in one important area; Address terms. To address people who are from different cultures and levels of society requires you to follow certain rules of addressing people as e.g. doctors, workers, students, strangers, etc. The writer argued, that we can see some of the possible dangers in cross-cultural communication when different relationships are expressed through what appears, superficially at least, to be the same address system. Then the writer explained the problems which might arise for persons who do not follow these rules of address, and said that the problems are even greater if you learn the terms in a new address system but fail to appreciate how they are related to one another. (Erwin-Tripp, 1972, p. 231)

Consider the following example. The Arabic expression [law samaht ya ʔχi] 'excuse me/pardon me brother' is very common and important to use to address someone that you don't know.

The Swedish expression [du] 'you' is used (more or less) for the same purpose.

However, if a Swede uses the Arabic equivalent of 'du' this might lead to misunderstanding and it will be unacceptable for the Arab person who consider this addressee form as an insult or showing disrespect to people according to his/her culture. Whereas, the expression [du] in Swedish and among Swedes doesn't mean the same thing at all.

The same situation we will find if an Arab person uses the form 'excuse me brother/sister' to a Swede person in Sweden, but the main different, regarding to the above example, that Swedes will not consider the Arabic expression as an insult, however, they might laugh, take it in different consideration/s, intentions, etc because they are not familiar with those expressions anymore.

Moreover, the addressing terms that Wardhaugh described, that "it seems that a variety of social factors usually govern our choice of terms: the particular occasion; the social status or rank of the other; sex, age, family relationship, occupational hierarchy, transactional status, i.e. (service encounter, or doctor - patient relationship, or one of priest - patient), race, or degree of intimacy."

Wardhaugh has exemplified, that on Chinese show still prefer the use of a title to the use of e.g. director, or 'chief'. We can draw up some formula which reflect how the inferior addresses a superior in China:

La#o + LN + title (LN= last name)., with practice varying according to location. (Fang and Heng, 1983, p. 499), in (Wardhaugh p. 272).

I would like to point out, that the term 'face' which was used by Goffman (1967) and said, that it seems the first used in English in 1976 as a translation of the Chinese term '*diu# lia%n'* in the phrase 'Arrangements by which China has lost face'. Since then, it has been used widely in phrases such as 'losing face', 'saving face'.

Regarding the above example, I have the following comment, that the addressing terms are **universal**, however, the only reason which make them appear and been used very much, is that the **society customs**, and the opposite is right.

We may consider this example. People from Middle Eastern cultures use address terms very frequently, whereas, Swedes use them very little.

In Arab society, they use 'professional titles', even to people whose first names are unknown they still can address them by their professions, e.g. engineer, doctor, teacher, scientist, etc + his/her first name. This we find very seldom among Swedes when they address each other (in the hospital, people sometimes will address a nurse as [sister] or the doctor as [doktor]).

E. Concluding the Discussion of Politeness

Below, I will mention some other characteristics of 'politeness' and according to several writers,

A) Wardhaugh (1992): "politeness itself is socially prescribed". Then the writer explained, this does not mean, of course, that we must always be polite, for we may be quite impolite, to others on occasion. However, we could not be so if there were no rules of politeness to be broken.

Impoliteness def. "Impoliteness depends on the existence of standards, or norms, of politeness". (p. 275).

I think that Wardhaugh tried to characterise 'politeness' and its opposite meaning 'impoliteness' in order to recognise the connotation of the term 'politeness' itself.

In addition, Wardahugh seems to don't give a specific and clear def. of politeness.

B) Leech (1980 [1977]): "sees politeness as crucial in explaining 'why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean, and (1983a) as rescuing the co-operative principle 'in the sense that politeness can satisfactorily explain exceptions to and apparent deviations from the CP" (p. 80)

CP = co-operative principle.

C) Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]): "politeness is interpreted as a strategy employed (or series of strategies) employed by a speaker to achieve a variety of goals, such as promoting harmonious relations".

D) Goffman (1967): "politeness is a concept of *face*"

Note, Goffman used the term 'face' in the sense of 'reputation' or 'good name'.

E) Corresponding to the above characterisations of politeness, I will try to deduct a new concept of politeness:

Politeness is a kind of conventional behaviour dictated by the culture in question, especially directed at creating harmony between people and taking the other into ethical consideration (cf. Allwood 1976). An act of politeness is successful or not successful, and is not true or false, but is subject to felicity conditions of the kind formulated by Austin.

In this respect, it might be argued that acts of politeness should be compared with 'speech acts' in Austin's sense.

III. Forms and Meaning of Arabic Expressions for Politeness

In the present section the work will be presented in the following order, the most important sub-concepts expressed in politeness, some of these concepts are of such a general nature that it may be unnecessary to define them. I would like to add that some of these concepts may 'overlap'.

A. Sociability

The main function of sociability expressions is to express and maintain a social relation.
Examples:
The expressions [ahlan wa sahlan] 'hello' precedes, [marhaba] 'welcome': are uttered by the host when a visitor enters his home to express pleasure at seeing him/her.

I would like to point out, that excess in the use of welcoming phrases can be discovered very easily in greetings among Arabs. The same applies to the use of endearments that emphasise friendliness and solidarity among Arab friends. (In the Arab world friends are treated as brothers).

I would like to add, that Ferguson (1976), noted that elaborate greetings are often needed in Arabic. Moreover, he noted also that extended conversation openings used by Arabs when speaking to native speakers of English seem to result from a transfer of Arabic discourse politeness strategies into English.

[ɑllaʰ yikun fi ʕunak] 'may God help you' 'Good luck'

Success:

Said to someone about to take his examinations, or perform some difficult task, etc. As well as it could be said to a person who is not going to do an important task.

In English also could be used for the same purpose.

[masal χir] 'good afternoon' 'evening of goodness'

Greeting for part of day:

In the politeness expression is restricted in use to a part of the day

The expression almost is used for the same situation. Moreover, Arabic expression in 'greeting in the part of the day, covers a wider time span (that includes both, evening + afternoon).

[maʕ issalamaʰ] 'with safety' 'Goodbye'

Wide range of situation:

In the last example, we have seen that the English expression 'Goodbye' used wider than Arabic. It includes, weather the speaker is: leaving the addressee,
weather the parting is temporary or permanent, long or short.

In Arabic This expression is used to people who are: leaving permanent or temporarily, for a long or short time.

Honorifics and names

This category is very important in Arabic communication of politeness. In connection with names the final name has a special function in the expression of politeness. Generally, the final name is used in communication with persons you do not know very well. Moreover, this phenomenon exists in many other places in the world e.g. Europe, USA, etc.

It should pointed out, however, that it is possible to use the first name combined with a title of some kind, for example, 'brother Mohammed' or 'Mohammed brother' and so on. If you know a person's title or profession you will always use it if you want to be polite.

Another interesting observation, is that in Arabic it is very common for people (younger males, old, and married) to be addressed as [aʔbu X] 'father of X' or [iʔm X] 'mother of X', and the old prefer to be addressed with these titles than by their proper names. However, women ,in general, don't like to be addressed by the above titles but by thier first names instead, because they think that these types make them appear older!!.

This type of politeness expression appears in section 3.8 as well.

B. Gratitude

When you are grateful to someone for his/her favour, present, etc.

Examples:

[baraka llahu fik] 'God bless you': is said to perform the act of thanking

[ilbarakaʰ fik] 'blessing in yourself': used as an expression of condolence upon the death of someone (addressing the family members and the relative of the deceased)

[la tuðkurha] 'don't mention it', [bilmarraʰ] 'not at all': both expressions are used in response to an act of thanking.

It is important to point out, that something related to these examples has been discussed by Verschueren (1981), who calls them: 'the forgotten routines' (p. 89-90).

The examples below, we will see certain expressions that contain a reference to God. This is typical for this class of expressions.

[baraka llahu fik] 'God bless you': said when you thank someone for presenting a gift.

[ɑllaʰ yisamhak] 'may God forgive you': said when someone offends you.

[ɑllaʰ ikbiir] 'God is great', [ɑllaʰ maʕak] 'God be with you': said when you sympathise with a someone who has been suffering from e.g. injustice, humiliations, etc.

[ɑllaʰ yirḍa ʕalik] 'may God pleased with you': said when you beg someone in order to prevail on him to do something for you.

[tisbah ʕala χir] 'may I see you tomorrow morning in good health'

The purpose of this expression which could be used from both speaker and the listener as response, that said when someone is about to go to bed.

[ilhamdu lillaʰ] 'praise to God'

Gratitude:

This expression used in general to thank God, in both Arabic and English.

This expression conventionally used in ways in which English expression is not,

For example:

a) it can function as a response to an enquiry after one's health,

b) it can function as to indicate that everything is fine,

c) it can function as to indicate that one has finished eating, and

d) it can function as to indicate that one does not want any more food offered by hosts.

Apology and Gratitude

There is a special kind of politeness expression, combining an apology with an expression for gratitude. This expression is used when you have every reason to believe that your apology will be accepted.

Example:

[ʕafwan ʃukran] 'excuse me thank you', this expression is used by, e.g. someone passing very closely in front of another person.

The last example above represents differentiated for different situation, such examples are used in Arabic and we can consider this example under section 3.4 as well.

C. Benevolence and Felicitation

First of all, I have notised that there is a similar relation between benevolence and felicitation, however, below I will try to discuss and exemplified each one of them in separate as much as possible.

• Benevolence occurs when you wish luck to someone concerning a future action, happening, etc.

• Felicitation expressions refer to a specific actual situation like, birthdays, graduating, travelling, etc.

1. Benevolence examples:

The expressions [la baˤs ʕalik] 'no harm on you', [ma tʃuf ʃar in ʃaaˤ ɑllaʰ] 'you don't face harm God willing': are used when you wish someone recovery from illness.

Perhaps in English there is a synonymous expression which says: 'get well soon' said to someone that hope to recover from illness. However, in English, this expression is used only in written/running texts and can be seen on the get well cards named after this expression.

Examples:

[ɑllaʰ yʕinak] 'may God help you': said when you wish someone good luck.

[naʕiman] 'may God bless you'

This expression is said to someone who has just taken a bath, or who has just had his hair cut.

[bissihhaʰ wilʕafyaʰ] 'with health'

This expression is said by the host who finds pleasure in commenting on belching.

[hamdillaʰ ʕassalamaʰ] 'thanks to God for your health'

This expression is said to someone on his/her arrival home, or to a woman after giving birth.

Special cases of benevolence

A: [ʃufitum] 'I wish you a recovery'

This expression is recommended from religion as well, and said to one after being at his toilet.

B: [ʕufitum] 'I wish the same to you'

The response from the listener as a comment on his comment

2. Felicitation examples:

The expression [mabruk] 'blesses': is used to congratulate someone upon his/her success, e.g. in examination, marriage or engagement.

The examples below show some expressions that can be used in certain occasion,

[hadʒ mabruk waðanb maʁfur] 'may God make it for you an accepted pilgrimage and a forgiven sin'

Occasions:

This said to a person when he/she goes or comes back from visiting ŋekkaʰ.

I think that these two expressions might be a parallel used in connection with a certain culture - specific occasions.

[hamdilla ʕassalamaʰ] 'Thanks God for your safety' 'thanks to God for your safety'

Safety:

Said to one who just arrived from his/her travel, or to a woman who just had a baby.

[rabna yisamʕak χir] 'may God let you hear something good'

Such expression is used e.g. when a student is about to hear something nice related to his examination results.

[mabruk ittuhur] 'blessed circumcision'

This is to be said to the family of the child who has been circumcised.

[rabna itammim bilχir] 'may God bring this to a happy end'

The use of this expression is said to one who engaged, or has just marriage.

[ṣyam maqbul] 'acceptable fasting'

This expression is connected with certain religious occasion, Ramadan, and said to Muslims who are about to start fasting.

[mabruk] 'Congratulations' 'blessed'

Deeming of success:

Both expressions are used to acknowledge that an addressee has achieved what is deemed to be success. e.g. getting marriage, having a child, pass an examination, finding job, getting engaged, buying something new, etc.

D. Guilt

Expressions for guilt are used when you want to express the guilt for having done harm to someone.

Example:

[ana fi ʁayat innadam] 'I am terrible sorry'

Apology

In apologizing, the Arabs usually use many expressions. While in English the expression e.g. 'sorry' is used almost in all situations that require apologizing, the Arabs use different expressions for apology in different situations

To illustrate this, I will give a number of examples below:

[samihni] 'forgive me', and [haqqak ʕalayya] 'your right on me': are said to apologize when you hit someone's car by mistake in the street.

[maʕliʃ] 'take it easy': said to apologize when you can not manage to finish certain work given to you.

[wala yihimmak] 'never mind': said to apologize when your advice for someone was disappointing and did not bring any results.

I would like to point out, that there is certain apology forms are used under section 3.5 when you ask for permission.

E. Permission

When you want to ask someone for permission to do something.

Examples:

[ʕafwan mumkin tismah li...] 'pardon me would you excuse me...'

[ɑllaʰ yiχallik] 'please' 'may God preserve you'

Request marking:

These two expressions may used in the beginning of a request marking it as polite.

This expression which refer to 'please' roughly, is freely usable to any kind of illocutor.

Request

There are several expressions in Arabic used to express request in a polite way;

[ardʒuk] 'please': used to constitute request or invitation.

The meaning of 'please' has been discussed by Davies (1987, p. 89-90) when he discusses the example 'please sit down', Davies said, that 'please' itself here would does not constitute a separate illocutionary act.

In addition, this type of expression used in section 3.7 as well.

F. Appreciation

When you want to express your appreciation of the other's e.g. actions, position or status, the other person's culture, language, etc and everything related to the interlocutor.

Example:

[luʁatak dʒamilaʰ] 'you have nice language'

G. Hospitality and Generosity

When the host wants to express his/her hospitality to the others, and the response from the guest/s.

Example:

[hayyakum allaʰ] 'God bless your coming'

In a comparison with English, we find that expresses the speaker's pleasure at seeing the visitor would be considered appropriate. However, the word 'welcome' to a British person sounds rather quaint or stilted when used to greet a neighbour or close relative. On the other hand, an Arab would not hesitate, in welcoming a visitor to add another welcoming phrase like:

[ilbit bitak] 'will you make my home as your home', and

[iʕtibir innak fi bitak] 'feel that you are in your home'

[sufra dayma] 'a permanent food table'(may God keep your house always open for visitors)

This expression is used by guests to express his/her grateful thanks for the host's hospitality.

Prosody (intonation and strength)
Prosody has special functions in relation to politeness, and this is something we find in almost every human language.
Example:
High intonation= [itfaddaluʔ] 'you come in!', this imperative form said to a group in order to welcome them inside the house. If the host did not use this high sound then people will hesitate to come enter his house, and the host will be considered as impolite person.
Low intonation= in the Arab world, when male talk with female usually use the low sound as an expression of politeness.

H. Respect

When you would like to express your respect for the other.
Example:
[hadritak ṭalabt minni..] 'you (special title of respect) asked me to ...'

Non-verbal behaviour
The kind of behaviour described below is shown very much among Arabs and in Arabic culture. We see this clearly, e.g.
   a) the kissing of cheeks can be used as an expression for politeness.
   b) bowing and lowering of gaze, to express respects for a person of high position.
   c) handshaking, amplified by the use of both hands, followed by placing your right hand on your heart, this is to express politeness, harmony and love.
These are some examples I have chosen to show how much non-verbal actions are used in Arabic culture and between people in communication.
It is important to point out that this type of non-verbal behaviour exists in section 3.6 also.

I. Introduction of Conversation

When you want to start conversation with a stranger, or a person you are not much aquanted with etc, Arabs very often use a polite expressions to open the conversation.
Examples:
[law sama t ʔ mumkin ʔ ya aiχ...] 'excuse me / would you my brother...'
[χir inʃaˁ llaʰ] 'goodness if God wills'
Receiving news, goodness or badness:
This is very special expression, which is said as a response to someone who is about to tell a story or some news.
In English we may find similar expression, as the above one, but in some extents.
The above example is used (in Arabic) in section 3.1. as well.
As a last word of the above concepts explanation, I would like to add, that perhaps all expressions can be used in a polite or impolite way, but there is a class of expressions whose primary use can be characterized in terms of politeness.

J. The Recognition of Social Status (Pronouns)

In discussing pronouns, I will focus on the use of the second person pronoun in Arabic only. Swedish and English will be involved as well. This comparison work will be shown in table.

TABLE. 1:
PRONOUN IN PLOITENESS

Languages	Singular			Plural		
	neutral	intimate	respect	neutral	intimate	respect
Arabic:	inta	inta	Intu(m)	Intu(m)	Intu(m)	Intu(m)
Swedish	du	du	du/ni	ni	ni	ni
English:	you	you	you	you	you	you

As we see above, Arabic and Swedish have the same function of pronouns to refer to the singular and plural forms. However, the English have one pronoun only who refers to both forms.
Regarding to the singular pronoun of respect, I would like to point out that the only different between Arabic and Swedish by the amount of giving this pronoun in communication e.g. in Arabic society, when they address the old people, boss, rich, leader, etc the pronoun of respect must combine with the person's name like, [taht amirkum] 'under your service'. However, this is not used in Swedish very often.
I would like to mention that pronouns are involved in section 3.8 as well.

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude the main points which have been discussed in the present study, I have divided them into the following points:

1. Arabic politeness is structured and controlled by two main influences: religious faith, and social convention.

2. The power of religious faith expressions related to politeness in Arabic, are stronger than social covention. The most usual expressions in the present study contains a reference to God. Indeed, we rarely find politeness expressions which don't mention God's name.

3. Titles e.g. 'sir' for individual persons is a universal in all cultures and languages. However, cultures differ in the degree of using such expressions.

4. Politeness in Arabic can be analysed in at least ten semantic categories are: sociability, gratitude, benevolence and felicitation, guilt, permission, appreciation, hospitality and generosity, respect, introduction of conversation, and the recognition of social status (pronouns) all were discussed in section '3'.

5. *Humility* in Arabic is not equal to loss of dignity or loss of face, but to show high degree of respect based on religious and social recommendations. However, this may be a cause of misunderstanding, misinterpreting, misjudging from other cultures if they have interacted with Arabs e.g. Sweeds.

6. In the Arabic society the social hierarchy was and is still noticable. However, when Islam spread in the Peninsula (Saudi Arabia nowadays), religion has recommended Arabs to use many politeness expressions, this recommendation has enriched the Arabic language.

Moreover, the high-class people of the Arab society are between two main pressures, religion which orders them to show much humility as possible, and the social convension ,sometimes in opposition to religion. When in doubt, people usually follow religious recommendation.

7. The present study supports the ideas expressed by Philip R. Harris, and Robert T. Morn (1979) regarding interaction with Arabs. Which included three main points are: linguistic and physical factors when working with Arabs, as well as how you should act to reach to successful relations with Arabs.

Finally, Politeness actions in Arabic in the Arab society, are very much dependent on situations e.g. verbal, non-verbal, or both actions together.

I would like to comment, that if was the function of politeness expressions (especially thanking forms) coincidence with the social goal of establishing and maintaining a polite and friendly social atmosphere, then I think, that those expressions are of utmost importance to Arab learners who do not like to appear awkward, eccentric, impolite, or even ridiculous.

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3. http://ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/011115211530 "Ibn Khaldun and Some Classic Views in 20th Century Linguistics" Abdullah Yaqub Samarah.