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Linguistic politeness across Arabic, French, and English languages

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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative linguistic politeness study that investigates the range of linguistic choices employed by three communities of speakers in order to maintain sound interaction. The study proposes that there are language variations inherent to languages and that make expressing politeness easier and simpler in certain languages as compared to others. The problem that multilingual speakers encounter when shifting from a language to another is finding equivalents in conversational exchanges. Hence, the objective of this study is to compare/contrast the linguistic politeness markers and formulaic expressions of three languages: Arabic, French, and English. The study is useful for trilingual speakers who usually code-switch according to the situational context. It probes into a comparison of the linguistic and the pragmatic features that reflect the different levels of politeness. In this analysis, there is reliance on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness and on the language parallels. The results show that several linguistic variations exist among the three languages and the proof is that English lacks a grammar system that codes social ranking. Also, French and English speakers usually recur to negative politeness strategies because they highly respect the intimacy of the interlocutors. Hence, they select linguistic devices that increase the distance between participants and use a wide range of stylistic and syntactic devices to express politeness. On the other hand, Arabic is superfluous with fixed politeness formulas and Arab speakers manipulate the rhythm, rhyme of words and other phonological features to distance themselves from the bad denotations of face-threatening expressions.

1.   Introduction

In a world full of incivility and discourtesy, we proclaim respect and whatever the professional medium we communicate through (verbally and non-verbally in different oral and written forms, letters, e-mails, etc.), the use of polite expressions is a sign of courtesy and professionalism. All cultures

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have developed their own politeness norms, practices, strategies and formats and the differences among cultures and cultural values entail sometimes contradictory lexicons for the expression of politeness. This study is a contrastive linguistic pragmatic research that investigates differences in the linguistic politeness markers of three languages since very few studies compared/contrasted the lingua-pragmatic variations among three linguistic repertoires of cultures at a time. The paper explores the linguistic devices used by Arab, French, and English speakers when addressing each other in different contexts.

This research study is motivated by the need to expound the languages variability that makes expressing politeness easier in certain languages when compared to others because of the linguistic richness of these languages and the availability of a multitude of expressions that serve one unique politeness purpose. The triggers of the intrinsic motivation of the researcher to conduct the study are the depth of the researcher's knowledge of the three languages, her awareness of their discrepancies and the absence of empirical comparative linguistic studies of the above three languages in the context of politeness strategies. The discrepancies among these languages are discussed in accordance to the context of expressing politeness principles. Meanwhile, the phonological, syntactic, and metaphorical features of the languages under scrutiny are highlighted.

1.1 Background of the study

Politeness in English refers to showing consideration for others, and demonstrating a polished self-presentation. It is a technical term used in the pragmatic and sociolinguistic study of socio-communicative verbal interaction. In this research, this concept is used as a standard normative linguistic behavior.

In the daily use of politeness expressions, language users need linguistic tools at their disposal to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of situations. Hence, the study is useful for multilingual speakers in general, and trilingual speakers in particular because this type of speakers usually code-switches depending on the situational context. Accordingly, the study is motivated by the need to familiarize speakers with polite expressions, patterns of address usage, and fixed formulas. Another major contribution of this study is that it investigates the linguistic tools used by three communities of speakers in order to reach a deeper understanding of the nature of these three languages and to either prove/disprove whether certain languages are richer in terms of politeness linguistic repertoire, metaphorical use of the language, and special fixed formulas.

The uniqueness and importance of this contrastive cross-linguistic research study mainly lie in the comparison of the units of discourse among three languages. This is the first time these three languages are compared at a time since the review of the literature reveals that linguistic politeness is usually conducted between two languages only. Since the researcher speaks the three languages with a high degree of fluency, she aims at analyzing the interpersonal rhetoric and the verbalized actions in the course of interaction among speakers of the three communities in order to highlight the linguistic markers that makes the interaction polite, useful, and efficient.

The problem that the study addresses is the difficulty that trilingual speakers encounter in situations where they need to change the language of communication when they communicate in the various interactive communities, and especially in a multilingual setting.

1.2 Status of the discipline

The review of the discipline shows an abundance of contrastive linguistic politeness studies.

The main linguists who established the principles of linguistic politeness are Gu (1990), Fraser (1990), Ide (1989), Brown and Levinson (1987), Leech (1983), Grice (1975), and Lakoff (1972).

Several studies compared/contrasted the linguistic politeness strategies in a number of languages, but almost all the contrastive linguistic politeness studies compare two languages only. Some of these studies conduct the comparison between two European languages (e.g. Sinkevicute, V. (2010)), between one European and one Arabic language (e.g. Linde, A. (2009)), or between one European and one American language (e.g. Markez Reiter, R. (2000)). These three studies compared linguistic politeness between British and Spanish films, between Spanish and Moroccan speakers, and between British and Uruguayan speakers respectively. Arab sociolinguists such as Boubendir, F. (2012),

Hassan, N. (2014), Noori, B.F. (2013), Grainger et al. (2015), Hamza, A.A. (2007), and Al-Adaileh (2007) conducted pragmatic and politeness linguistic analysis of English and Arabic.

As revealed in the research studies dealing with the linguistic and socio-pragmatic analysis of politeness, the contrast is made between two cultures in the English-speaking world, two cultures in the French-speaking world, or between one of these two types of cultures and one of the cultures from the Arabic-speaking world. The current study is the first in the discipline to compare the linguistic politeness strategies among a European, an American, and an Arabic language at a time.

The research methodology used is a purely comparative/contrastive study of the linguistic markers that is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of Politeness. This comparison/contrast is conducted on the phonological, lexical, syntactical, and semantic level.

The main findings of the study reveal that the linguistic markers and the patterns of interaction are the same for most of the Arabic-speaking communities because they are quite varied in terms of lexicon and diction. However, in French and English, polite linguistic markers are individualistic and instead of adapting the lexicon to the specific context or occasion, they change the syntactical structures and adjust them to minimize the degree of imposition.

The main contribution of the study is the in-depth analysis of the linguistic tools and politeness markers that facilitate the language shift of a multilingual speaker because it studies all the options available to the speakers in each of the three languages in different patterns of address usage and in a range of contextual situations. The study is important for linguistics students, instructors, researchers, and multilingual speakers of these languages because it stimulates their thoughts about the power, supremacy, and richness of certain languages in terms of linguistic politeness tools.

The paper is structured as follows: first it discusses the reasons for the verbal and the non-verbal communication breakdowns, then it introduces the main linguistic and stylistic devices used to express politeness, it also highlights the research objectives, states the research questions, reviews the literature of the topic, and pinpoints the gap in the existing literature of the discipline of linguistic politeness. In the methodology section, there is a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences of the various ways of expressing politeness in the three languages in various fields and in the different patterns of address usage. The comparison/contrast sheds light on the variations in the phonological features of Arabic, French, and English, their colloquialisms, euphemisms, connotative meanings, and metaphors. Finally, the researcher concludes the study and suggests implications and recommendations for further research.

2. Communication, culture, and politeness linguistic devices

2.1 Communication and cultural differences

Failing to understand how to be polite when working across cultures can lead to verbal and non-verbal communication breakdowns, damaged relationships and a loss of credibility. In Korean society, the requirement for formal politeness signals is very strong, both in body language and in fixed linguistic markers (such as verb endings). However, the pragmatic meaning of these signals is calibrated in ways that are difficult for foreigners to decode. Also, when doing business in Japan, one's counterparts consider the use of direct questions to be challenging and therefore impolite. Conversely, when doing business in Germany, German counterparts sometimes consider indirectness to be impolite, as the speaker's intentions are unclear. One theory of politeness states that in the process of communication, people should consider the socio-cultural norms of people from other countries, develop tolerance and sensitivity towards these norms and work out strategies to make people feel comfortable in each other's company.

2.2 Communication and Linguistic/stylistic devices

Different linguistic and stylistic devices are used to express politeness, and a speaker's communication competence is correlated to the degree of politeness. Does this mean that the abundance of stylistic devices (phonological features, direct/indirect syntactical constructions, tag questions, hesitation marks etc.) used in politeness strategies reflects a language with a highly rich linguistic repertoire?

To answer this question, it is of primordial importance to examine the nature of language used in expressing polite speech acts, to study the range of lexis available to the speakers of a certain language and the connotations associated to a word or expression in the three languages under investigation: Arabic, French, and English.

For instance, English is considered as democratic or somehow rude because it is neutral vis a vis addressees and uses one form of pronoun with all addressees (Patenttranslator, 2011) and because of the absence of a grammar system that codes social rankings. Whether it is a strange or an intimate person, an average person or a leader, a student or a professor, the pronoun is you. However, it is "tu" for an intimate person and "vous" for a strange one in French. In Arabic, it is انت\انتم respectively.

English does not have an expression that is equivalent to the French "bon appetit" or to the Arabic طعاماً شهياً, or to the German "Gesundheit", etc., it has instead full sentences like "Enjoy your meal."

Hence, it seems that these three languages have varying degrees of expressing respect and intimacy. In this research study, these languages are evaluated according to their position in the hierarchy and to their degree of social encoding.

In this analysis, the study relies on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness and mainly, there is a study of the ways in which speech acts threatening a person's sense of face are alleviated. The way the imposition is minimized is a typical example of the application of this theory.

3.   Research objective

The objective of this cross cultural and cross linguistic politeness research is to study the moral code of ethics and values, the ethos and the polite linguistic markers in three different languages, namely Arabic, French, and English to show how the differences in these languages are reflected in the variations in the levels of politeness and consequently, the cultures. In this context, it is deemed essential to distinguish between first-order politeness and second-order politeness. The first one refers to the daily understanding of politeness and its variation among communities and cultures; for example, when we apologize for being late or when we thank someone for offering help. The second one refers to the linguistic conception of politeness and the basis on which people classify behaviors as polite or non-polite.

Even though first-order politeness is common to all languages and is a cross-cultural aspect, there are language variations and linguistic characteristics that are inherent to languages. The type of politeness that is studied here is the second-order politeness because of the researcher's interest in the variations of the ways people express their politeness (in apology, thanking, etc.) at different times and different geographical areas (Arab, French, and English-speaking countries). The study focuses on how we behave linguistically politely in order to have a successful communication with other speakers of the language.

The objective of this research is to prove as well the ease with which one expresses politeness in a linguistically-rich environment. The study also aims at comparing the linguistic features (syntactic devices, stylistic choices, and connotations) that reflect different levels of politeness in different languages.

4.   Research questions

This research study aims at addressing the following questions:
1.   What types of stylistic devices, lexical choices, metaphors, euphemisms, colloquialisms, pronouns, and word endings are used to express politeness in Arabic, French, and English?
2.   Which politeness strategies do the speakers in the three communities use to avoid Face Threatening Acts and to minimize the imposition on the hearer?
3. What type of politeness expressions are used in different contexts and situations (thanks, congratulations, apologies, greetings, compliments, condolences, requests, e-mails, etc.)?

5.   Review of the related literature

Several researchers contributed to the study of the linguistic and cultural significance of politeness markers. Interestingly, Toolan (1996) remarked that "while language is never a code, it is

apparent that individuals become habituated to a code-like predictability of usage, forms and meaning" (cited in Mills, 2003, p.21). Thus, it is of great importance to start the review of literature of this study from the beginning of the development of the politeness theory with Grice's (1975) theory to finally approach Brown and Levinson's (1987) model. Some theorists support the claim that speech acts operate by universal principles of pragmatics (Searle, 1969), while others such as Yu (2003) suggest that speech acts vary in the conceptualization and realization across languages and cultures. In this research, the focus is on the different linguistic realizations of a number of speech acts in Arabic, French, and English.

Many definitions have been given to politeness in the literature. For Yu (2003), politeness indicates the choices that are made in language use during interaction. On the other hand, Leech (1983) contends that politeness shows a relationship between two participants that can be called self and other and argues that "politeness is manifested not only in the content of conversation, but also in the way conversation is managed and structured by its participants" (p.139).

Vanderveken (2002) argues that these social interactions are complex activities that require the participants' ability to apply an amazing amount of diverse knowledge, world knowledge, rules of etiquette and politeness conversational practices. In this context, the researcher conducts a contrastive analysis because she believes the people's attitudes and expressions in speech acts are influenced by their linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds.

Additionally, the literature has introduced many models of linguistic politeness. For instance, Brown & Levinson (1987) propose two features of politeness: negative and positive face. Their model is considered as the most productive and influential one (Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003) and it is typically applicable in the present research because it does not only apply to three languages but also to all languages of the world due to its universal viable approach. In the light of the above statements, this study focuses on Brown &Levinson's (1987) model.

Brown & Levinson define politeness as "a redressive action taken to 'counterbalance' the disruptive effect of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) and to show concern for people's face" (p.38). In the Arabian culture, the notion of face has its value and importance while communicating with people (Al-Issa, 1998). Al- Issa mentioned some factors that may cause Arabs to consider face in their interaction. Honor, pride, religious beliefs, power and emotional attachment to the images of self and others are among these factors. Elarbi's (1997) research was conducted to test the applicability of Brown & Levinson's (1987) model in Tunisian Arabic. He analyzed data from fifty-four Tunisians of different social backgrounds and finally, he came up with the notion supporting the universality of Brown & Levinson's model particularly regarding notions of face and politeness in Tunisian Arabic. In this view, El-Shafey (1990) analyzed politeness strategies in Spoken Egyptian Arabic and Spoken British English. His study yielded results which show that the British as well as the Egyptian speakers use indirect expressions in similar situations. However, the British speakers use less direct forms than the Egyptians. Such studies need to be extended to include other languages that have different linguistic characteristics. Thus, the current study adds to Arabic and English a third language, i.e. French, that has different features on the syntactical level.

Regarding speech acts, connotations in politeness markers are the ones that are rarely discussed in the literature, and here lies the linguistic significance of the study of the three cultures. The present study focuses on filling a gap in the field of linguistic politeness strategies that are used by the Arab, French, and English communities of speakers through comparing the linguistic markers of politeness especially the forms of address, connotations, and euphemisms.

Mills (2003) claims that several researchers such as Ide (1989), Gu (1990), and Matsumoto (1988) have revealed that the idea behind the negative face concerns which are related to preserving one's independence and autonomy depends on the high value placed on individualism in the European and American cultures. This accounts for language and cultural diversities in having different ways of expressing considerations for others. Migdadi (2003) mentions that offers in Arabic literature can be seen in relation to the common generosity of Arab people. Therefore, offering is considered as a sociolinguistic behavior that shows an important role in determining the Arabian character due to social, religious and historical motives. Atawneh (1991), and Atawneh and Sridhar's (1993) research aims to test the politeness theory of Brown & Levinson (1987) with Arabic-English bilinguals and Arabic

monolinguals and their analysis of the results shows that native speakers of Arabic use the sub-strategies of politeness in a way that is different from the one used by English speakers.

Ogierman (2009) considers that the culture-specific meanings in addition to politeness functions that are related to certain grammatical expressions in one language are clearly distinguished when comparing them with other languages. It is obvious in Ogierman's (2009) comparison that empirical research has proved that the pragmatic force of utterances which are syntactically and semantically equivalent differs from language to another, in spite of Brown & Levinson's description of the social implications of speech acts as universal ones.

The focus of this study is mainly on the linguistic background and choices because the main gap in the literature of the linguistic politeness is the linguistic repertoire that is available to the speakers of a language. Hence, the researcher hypothesizes that the richer the language repertoire is, the more it becomes easy to express linguistic politeness in a language. In other words, speakers in a certain community do not hesitate because they have at their disposal a wide array of choices that enable them to express their politeness straightforwardly, without complications, and sometimes even with a certain degree of creativity for speakers who have a relative expertise in the linguistic constructions. Hence, the analysis mainly focuses on the linguistic options, and the syntactic and stylistic devices available to the three communities of speakers in the different formulaic expressions and the different patterns of address usage.

6.   Study method

This study is a comparative study based on Brown and Levinson's (1987, p.2) theory which argues that "certain precise parallels in language usage in many different languages can be shown to derive from certain assumptions about "Face" which is defined as the "individual self-esteem." They consider that this theory is applicable universally and this will be proven in the current research.

This study is also based on Wierzbicka's (2003) belief that speakers in different speech communities "speak in different ways – not only because they use different linguistic codes, involving different lexicons and grammars, but also because their ways of using the codes are different."

7.   Comparative study: Discussion, Results and Analysis

Various ways of expressing linguistic politeness:

There are several areas to express linguistic politeness in forms that are culture-specific in their communicative value and language-specific in their use. To be noted that every translation that is opted for does not reflect in exactitude the original expression aimed by the speaker.

Arabs usually exaggerate the glorification of religious leaders, and people in authoritative positions. French and English-speaking countries have different expressions to glorify their leaders and with a lesser degree and a more moderate repertoire of glorification terms.

1. The field of magnification and glorification of a particular person and the use of the nickname or the family name instead of using the first name. For instance, addressing men and women with the name of their eldest child (Samer's father/Samer's mother: أم سامر-أبو سامر) is an alternative to using their personal names or their family names. In Arabic, the use of the name of the father is a kind of praise and glorification. For Arabic-speaking communities, praise and reverence are some of the most important motivations for politeness expressions use. Examples include: the word "father" as a reference to the uncle, or the word "mother" to refer to the aunt. The lack of expressions of glorification in French can be explained with reference to Lepere, Geraldine who asserted the French people's reputation of being rude, cold, and arrogant.

We can add to this pattern the use of titles when addressing a high-ranking person or when talking about him, like when we say:

A. His majesty the king: جلالة الملك

B. His Excellency the patriarch: غبطة البطريرك

C. The Cheikh: فضيلة أو سماحة الشيخ

D. His excellency: صاحب المعالي، صاحب السيادة

E. Mr. President: فخامة الرئيس، دولة الرئيس

F. His Excellency the deputy: سعادة النائب

G. Beik, Pasha البيك، الباشا:

H. Mr. X: عطوفة السيد

In English we have only few terms for these eight Arabic forms of address (mainly Excellency and majesty). In other words, the equivalences for the terms majesty and excellency are numerous: جلالة، غبطة، فضيلة، سماحة، عطوفة، صاحب المعالي، فخامة الرئيس، دولة الرئيس، صاحب السيادة، سعادة، البيك، الباشا،

In French, there are few terms as well: "Éminence, Majesté, Excellence" as can be shown in the following examples:

Sa Majesté le Roi, son Éminence, Son Excellence le Président/le Député, Al-Beek, Le Pasha.

This reflects the sobriety and moderation of the English and French-speaking people when addressing leaders, as compared to Arabic speaking countries where people exaggerate their modality of respect and reverenceand this is an indicator of the differences in the corresponding cultures. This is not to neglect the fact that in expressing almost every single idea, the Arabic language has a very wide lexicon that enables its speakers to express their glorification in a magnificent array of linguistic options available to them.

2. The field of blinding or mystification and concealment:

In this field, the speaker does not disclose the identity of the person whether directly or indirectly in order to avoid revealing his/her name. For instance, in Arabic, we use the Arabic term: فلان، فلانة to refer to a person whose name we do not want to reveal. Arabs also use metaphors such as Palm or great long tree as a nickname for a woman, and such kinds of terms are used very frequently. In French and English, when the identity of the person is disclosed, the pronouns "elle" (French) and "she" (English) are also used but very rarely and less commonly when compared to Arabic. There is an example from English poetry where the name of the beloved is never revealed by the poet Lord Byron as it was referred to as "She" in "She walks in beauty like the night".

3. The field of moving away from the vulgar and obscene words:

One essential tool to show respect and decency is to avoid vulgar and obscene words, or expressions that have negative connotations. The avoidance of these is made through the use of metaphors. Metaphor is the language of fitness, elegance, taste, and refinement. Even the use of metaphorical expressions is variable among generations because it depends on the level of formality and politeness of a community of speakers, which is unfortunately showing a decline especially in today's generations. In this context, it is quintessential to explain the notion of face as explained by Brown and Levinson. In every conversational interaction, the speaker S and the hearer H try as much as possible to preserve their public self-image or face. According to Mills (2003), "face" is a term used to describe the self-image which the S or H would like to see maintained in the interaction" (p.58). Brown and Levinson (1978) discussed the value and presence of face for every individual in a society and they argued about the tendency of the speaker to use a politeness strategy when doing an act that can cause the hearer to lose face in order to minimize the risk.

3.1. The positive and the negative face of Brown and Levinson:

The present study is based on Brown and Levinson's vigorous model of linguistic politeness that explains the use of different levels of formality/informality in day-to-day communication and conversational exchange. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), there are two types of face, negative and positive face. Mills (2003) explained that a threat to a person's face is termed a Face Threatening Act (FTA) according to Brown & Levinson, and that such threats need a statement that is less intense, or some verbal repair through politeness. In order to ensure a successful conversational exchange, we need linguistic politeness markers and strategies such as the use of connotations and metaphors which are observed frequently in Arabic, French and English-speaking communities. Thus, in these cultures, the best way to avoid saddening, undermining and belittling a hearer is to use euphemisms, metaphors, and connotative meanings of words whose usage allows people to avoid taboo and obscene words.

In this context, Mills (2003) sees that positive politeness is concerned with showing closeness and belonging to a group, while negative politeness is related to distance and formality and to protecting ourselves from imposition.

French and English speakers usually recur to negative politeness strategies because they keep away from transgressing the personal life and the intimacy of the interlocutors. Hence, they select linguistic devices that increase the distance between the participants in a conversation. However, some

Arab speakers transgress the intimacy of the hearer by asking questions about the hearer's personal life, money earned, salary, marriage, children, love, etc.

All three communities of speakers use joking as a positive politeness strategy to put the hearer at ease and it is always the speech situation that determines the type of vocabulary that they use (colloquial, vernacular, standard) independently of the social ranking.

3.2. The use of phonological features, colloquialisms, euphemisms, connotative meanings and metaphors:

3.2.1. Phonological devices:

Arab speakers manipulate the rhythm, rhyme of words and other phonological features to distance themselves from the bad denotations of face threatening expressions by replacing them with figurative metaphorical expressions.

In the use of phonological features such as rhythm and rhyme, Arabic comes in the fore-front because of the refinement of its words, structures and flexibility of expressions. It is advanced in terms of polite expressions as well.

In Arabic, we find in dictionaries many words with negative connotations characterized by phonetic distortion, such as the words indicating the weakness of man or his integrity and so on. Phonological features and especially rhythm are available as in رجلٌ حَزَوَّرٌ وَهَزَوَّرٌ as a reference to a weak man, and رجل قَنْثَرٌ وَكَنْثَرٌ for an ugly man and رجل حَبَلَّقٌ وَهَبَلَّقٌ for a small man (Abi Al Tayyeb).

3.2.2. Slang and vernacular language:

French and English speakers tend to use slang or vernacular language in informal situations in order to convey words with negative connotations. In French, Guiraus, Pierre, as cited in Lodge, Anthony (1999) highlighted the frequent use of metaphor and metonymy in the colloquial speech of French people, and expounds this use by pinpointing the inability of the speakers to abstract notions, and the tendency of the illiterate speakers to concretize abstract terms.

In the three languages, speakers use colloquial language when they cooperate together in the speech exchange and when they claim to have a common ground. Ellipsis and contractions are used as well when both the speaker and the hearer share common mutual knowledge.

In this respect, it is very important to account for other linguistic variables such as the situational context of the speech, the distance between the speaker and the hearer, the level of formality, the age, sex, and gender. These variables should be taken into account in studying any language because they relatively affect the social encoding of expressions. Another factor that should not be neglected and that the researcher is trying to underline is the linguistic nature of the language and its linguistic repertoire because the researcher tries to prove that the Arabic language has a wider and richer repertoire of fixed polite formulas than English and French in terms of lexicon and vocabulary on one hand. On the other hand, French and English use a wide array of stylistic and syntactic devices to express politeness.

3.2.3. The use of euphemisms and metaphors:

In all three languages, euphemisms along with metaphors as metonymic descriptive phrases are used when speakers feel compelled to avoid the usage of terms that cannot be mentioned in a polite company and that shock the hearers, offend them, or sadden them. A typical instance of these is the use of pass away, go to sleep, go over to the other side (English). Other examples involve the metaphors used in the three languages when someone is naked, urinating and defecating, or drunk this is shown in the following table:

Table 1.

Euphemisms for sex, defecation, and drunkenness in Arabic, French, and English

	Sex	Defecation	Drunkenness
Arabic	هن لباس لكم، أفضى بعضكم الى بعض، تغشى، باشر، استمتع، نام مع، بكَّ، هكَّ، طفز، طعس، طغز، طحس، دعز، عسلَ، حطأ، فطأ، عَصَدَ وعَزد ودَسَمَ ودَفَسَ، وفَحَجَ وفَخَج المرأة	(defecation)الغائط سيلان الأمعاء (Stomach movement) النجو والعذرة faecesdischarge ، والخروج	ثمل، خمر، مخمور، نزيف، نشوان، مترنح

French	Coucher avec, partager la nuit, faire l'amour, connaitre, avoir une relation intime.	Défécation, décharge, Les selles, Aller à la toilette.	Prendre un acompte, Prendre une avoinée, Être chaud comme un marron, Se noircir comme un corbeau three sheets to the wind
English	Relationship, making love, sleeping together, hook up, hanky panky, .	going for a jimmy/pony, having a tinkle, pointing percy at the porcelain	

These expressions widely available in the three languages, are used for the sake of maintaining a level of politeness and respecting social norms. They are informal, casual and create a positive social value. In fact, the American cultural taboo about the elimination of personal bodily waste is so great that American-English language offers only euphemisms by naming the location in which this activity occurs. Such a use of this kind of language is called the**'unconscious use of euphemism'** (Rawson, 1981: 3). This is also a common practice in French and Arabic cultures.

Almost every single expression for Arabic sex euphemism can be translated even though the French and English equivalents are not the same.

The translation of some of sex euphemisms clearly indicates that it is possible to find the correct term in the other languages but it is almost impossible to find equivalent terms because of the cultural, social, and religious differences.

Table 2

Translation of sex euphemisms

copulation	مباشرة
satisfies his desire	قضى وطره
telling one's secrets	إفضاء

However, the strategies used in the three languages are the same and they always involve the use of euphemisms, metaphors, and colloquialisms. This is a proof of the usefulness of Brown and Levinson's theory in explaining these strategies. Brown and Levinson claim the universality of the set of strategies from which individual cultures choose. Grundy (2000) states that the central claim of Brown & Levinson's model is that "broadly comparable linguistic strategies are available in each language, but that there are local cultural differences in what triggers their use" (p.156). Hence, whatever the language used is, factors of age, intimacy, gender, social ranking, formality/informality in addition to the nature of linguistic markers should be accounted for by the speaker when choosing the stylistic device that is suitable for the context or situation.

4. The patterns of address usage:

One of the modes of showing signs of politeness is the use of common polite formulas that maintain good and sound relationships among community members. For instance, greeting, complimenting, congratulating, thanking, and offering condolences are all polite acts.

To express all these speech acts, the speaker uses what we call "ready-made" polite forms which are at the speaker's disposal if needed. These *fixed polite formulas* are studied under what is called *lingua-pragmatics,* which is defined as the: "study of the fixed forms of language that have fixed socio-pragmatic values in actual verbal communication."(Malyufa and Orlova, 2017).Such forms are different from all other forms of language in their translatability, politeness and other features.

Lingua-pragmatics is a term coined by Shammas (1995). The forms studied under lingua-pragmatics are used for maintaining social ties, recognizing social distance and keeping to the scale of culture-specific politenessin interpersonal interaction (cited in Boubendir, 2012).

The ability of using these forms adds to the naturalness of a speaker's speech. Speakers of the same language who share the same cultural background can easily interpret lingua-pragmatic forms, while non-native speakers may face some difficulties in the understanding of the message carried by these forms and this is due to the fact that lingua-pragmatic forms are totally language-specific and culture-specific. Because of the culture and language specificity of these forms, they can hardly be understood by members of a remote culture whether in context or in isolation, unless we find similar

utterances in the community language of that culture; examples of these words are the Arabic words Bismillah, mashallah, and Ismallah (when someone impresses us with his/her beauty, or intelligence, or wealth) or the words *"na'eeman"* (when someone got a new haircut) or *"shu fee ma fee"* (when people ask each other about themselves) or "Yallayalla" (to mean come/hurry up) or na'iman (to a person who has just taken a shower), Sahtein (to a person who is eating), ya'ateek El 'afyeh (to a person who has been working), etc.. These expressions are not translatable because they are culture-bound terms and have no equivalences in French and English.

4.1. The fixed formulas:

All expressions used in situations, such as *greetings, compliments, thanks and congratulations* as well as polite formulas such as those used in *apologies, complaints and condolences,* are included in the scope of the lingua-pragmatics. The following tables present the linguistic variations of the fixed formulas among the three communities of speakers.

4.1.1. Examples of greetings:

Table 3.

Greetings in Arabic, French, and English

Arabic	French	English
مرحباً، سلام، السلام عليكم أهلاً وسهلا"، شرفتونا	Salut bien venu, vous êtes les bienvenus, soyez les bienvenus.	Hi, Hello, Peace be upon you Welcome! You're welcome, you are most welcome
تشرفنا بكم، لنا الشرف	Enchanté(e)	Nice to meet you, Pleased to meet you, It was a pleasure to see you.
الله يعطيك العافية يعطيك العافية	Que Dieu vous-donne le bien-être, que Dieu te donne force, santé, et prospérité	Keep well, put your shoulder into it.

In this specific example of greetings, we notice variations in the length of expressions between Arabic on the one hand, and English and French on the other hand. In France, if you want to be warmly welcome by French people, then you should start any simple conversation with greetings that reflect a well-behaved exchange and good manners. However, French and English greetings are very short when compared to Arabic. A two-word Arabic greeting sometimes necessitates a 5-6 word expression from the repertoire of French and English to convey the same meaning. This is certainly not applicable to all formulas but it can be considered as a general feature of Arabic as compared to the other two languages.

4.1.2. Examples of condolences and for loss or disappointment:

Table 4.

Condolences in Arabic, French, and English

Arabic	French	English
عظم الله أجركم، إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون، هم السابقون ونحن اللاحقون، خاتمة الأحزان إن شاء الله	meilleures condoléances, sincères condoléances, nous appartenons à Dieu et chez lui nous retournons.	Sorry for your loss, God have mercy on him, God rest his soul, may his soul rest in peace.
بسيطة، تفرج إن شاء الله، اشتدي يا أزمة تنفرجي، ليس مهماً، عوضك على الله،	ne t'en fais pas, c'est pas la fin du monde, avec chaque mal, il y a toujours du bien,	never mind, this is not the end of the world, don't worry, don't make a mountain out of a mole hill.

Hence, what is noticeable is the richness and the pre-eminence of the Arabic language, having a multitude of expressions for phatic or formulaic expressions and creative consoling, relieving, and comforting utterances.

In condolences in Arabic, there are several expressions that designate the degree of loss (death/failure, etc.), the formality of the situation, and the interpersonal level of relation. In English, such expressions are few and lack the level of formality expressed in Arabic utterances. Thus, all the *condolence* expressions used in Arabic are formally equivalent to only one or two English expressions.

Nevertheless, in minor issues of loss such as a student's failure in a subject/year, a girl breaking up with her boyfriend, etc., similar expressions are used in the French and English cultures. Examples of these are:

English: - *"Oh, never mind", "try again!", "There is always tomorrow!", "She is not worthy of you!"*

French: ne t'en fais pas, essayez encore, elle ne te mérite pas.

But, of course, the linguistic representations of such functions in the three languages need to be learned as part of the lexicon in Arabic and the grammar and the lexicon in French and English because of the more complicated grammar of such utterances in these two languages.

Thus, the complexity of the Arabic language lies in the intricacies of the lexis and the stock of words Arab speakers have on these occasions.

However, the complexity of French and English lies in their grammatical structures as can be seen in تعازينا الحارة الصادقة whose equivalent English formula is: "May God have mercy on him" or الله يرحمه whose equivalent French formula is sometimes: veuillezagréer à mescondoléancesémues et à l'expression de ma sympathie la plus franche.

4.1.3. Examples of expressions of congratulations:

Since westerners and Americans have a different way of expressing emotions, i.e. non-linguistically and non-verbally, they do not have a wide array of fixed expressions for every single happy event such as child birth, success, and the like. Add to that, they do not interfere in others' lives and say just the minimum required congratulate someone on something of value.

Table 5.

Congratulations in Arabic, French, and English

Arabic	French	English
ألف مبروك، العقبى لك إن شاء الله، ما كل هذا الجمال، القالب غالب.	Félicitations, Quelle beauté, quelle belle fille.	Congratulations, best wishes that's lovely, what a sweet dress, that really suits you.

There are several expressions and wishes on the occasion of baby birth in every single language as shown in the above table; there are also special religious prayers for the newborn, which complicates the translation task among the three languages.

Let us take this example:

We were delighted to hear of the birth of your new baby boy/girl (English)

Nous avons été heureux d'entendre de la naissance de votre bébé (French)

which can be translated into Arabic as follows:

سررنا بسماع ولادة طفلكم/طفلتكم الجديدة.

The first five lexical items in the English and French congratulations are translated into two lexical items only in Arabic. This is due to the nature of the Arabic language where Arabic words undergo changes in the verb itself when there is a shift in the tense or a modification in the pronoun. Nevertheless, the same modifications in English require the addition of pronouns, auxiliaries, modal auxiliaries, infinitives to match the same shift. This partly explains the length variations of sentences in these three languages.

4.1.4. Examples of farewells in polite expressions:

Arabic: مع السلامة، تذهب وتعود بالسلامة، كان الله معكم، طريق الخير، انتبه إلى نفسك، طمئنا عنك، مثلما ودعت تلاقي، سمعنا أخبارك، فلتعد سالماً غانماً إن شاء الله

French: Au revoir, je vous souhaite un bon voyage, bonne chance

English: have a nice trip, take care, take good care of yourself, good luck, stay in touch!

The polite formulas used in this case are usually short in the three languages but again there are more choices and alternatives in Arabic where expressions are culture-bound and reflect the speaker's tendency to improvise new and creative words and formulas.

4.1.5. Expressions used with food and invitations:

Arabic: تفضل، بصحتك، سفرة عامرة، صحتين، تسلم يداك، جيرة الله تأكل (حلفتك بالله ان تأكل)، كل هذا الطعام من يدي.

French: Bon appétit.

English: Help yourself, you are welcome.

As mentioned earlier, the French expression used when someone is eating "Bon Appetit" has no equivalent in English. In Arabic, there are several options available for the speakers.

4.1.6. Expressions used to apologize:

Arabic: عفواً، عذراً، أعتذر، حقك على رأسي، لو سمحت، من فضلك، سأثقل عليك، سامحني، رجاءً

French: S'il vous plait, je m'excuse, excusez-moi, pardon

English : Excuse me, pardon me, I am sorry, I apologize, you are right, I am wrong! I wonder if you could possibly…, forgive me.

Arabic has quite elaborated sets of polite lingua-pragmatic forms for apology and other speech acts, while English and French have less fixed polite formulas. The exaggerated intimacy between family members, relatives and neighbors might be the reason why Arabic is rich with fixed polite expressions of greetings, hospitality, warm-heartedness, etc. French and English speakers have a different way of expressing hospitality and intimacy.

Arabic and English present cultural and social differences and this results in a considerable difference on the level of lingua-pragmatic expressions and their translation. For instance, Arabs resort to fixed linguistic expressions for conveying polite attitude. On the other hand, English native speakers prefer the use of modals, e.g. will, would, could, etc. and question forms to minimize imposition and maximize the factor of optionality in favor of the addressee.

4.1.7. The compliment speech act:

Each language has its peculiar way in expressing compliments and their response.

In compliments in English, for instance, it would be counterproductive and even funny to translate certain utterances into Arabic with the attempt of preserving the same pragmatic force.

For instance, the English utterance: "*you smell good*" can be taken as a severe criticism of the addressee in Arabic, whereas the Arabic equivalent of "What a good/lovely smell!" is acceptable only with reference to the kind of perfume used by the addressee. But if no perfume is ostensibly used by the addressee, this utterance will also be interpreted as sarcastic.

However, the English utterance: "*It really looks good*"is replaced by *al-qalebghaleb*(*The pattern is dominant!*) with reference to a suit or a jacket in Arabic, the reference of "pattern" here being made to the body of the wearer.

4.1.8. Formal polite phrases for closing e-mails: Instances of e-mail expressions:

Table 6.

Phrases and sentences for closing e-mails in Arabic, French, and English

Arabic	French	English
وداعا، الى اللقاء، ننتظر ردكم الكريم	Je vous prie de bien vouloir croire/agréer, cher Monsieur, en l'assurance de mes respectueuses et honorables salutations/de ma plus haute considération.,	Best regards, kind regards, sincerely, yours sincerely.

Unlike French, Arabic and English phrases used for closing e-mail are relatively short.

In English, emails are usually closed with very short expressions such as: Best regards, kind regards, sincerely, yours sincerely.

In Arabic, expressions are not very well developed.

French people often use expressions of courtesy at the end of an email and these should be formal and express our respect to the interlocutors because the situational variable here is formality. According to French people, it is preferable to use lengthy expressions to avoid showing a lack of respect.

4.2. Requests:

In English, a request can be linguistically realized with imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives. However, Leech (1983) explains that imperatives are the least polite constructions since they are tactless in that they jeopardize compliance by the addressee. For this reason, indirect means are usually sought to realize illocutionary needs.

The speech act of request in Arabic can be realized by different linguistic constructions: interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives. However, not all these request strategies have the same

force; we can see preferences to use one construction over another, depending on several sociological and situational variables.

In Arabic, a request also consists of two parts: the main act and modifiers as in the English language. The main act is the main utterance which conveys a complete request and can stand by itself without any modifiers, in order to convey a request. The main act is followed or preceded by modifiers that mitigate or aggravate the impact of the request on the addressee.

For example,

لو سمحت يا أخي ممكن تفتح الشباك؟

- Excuse me, brother, can you open the window?
- Excusez-moi mon frère, est ce que tu peux ouvrir la fenêtre

In this example, the main act is "*mumkintiftaħ el shubak?*" (can you open the window?) and it can stand by itself as a complete and clear request. "*Law samaħtyaakhi*" (Excuse me brother) on the other hand, acts as modifier to mitigate the effect of the request on the addressee.

Syntactic devices:

4.2.1. The use of interrogatives for requests:

Since the use of Imperatives is considered as rude, interrogatives are used instead:

Could you please do me a favor?/please, favor me with an answer

Est ce que vous pouvez me faire un service?

هل يمكن ان تسدي أو تؤدي خدمة لي؟

Linguistically speaking, there is a specific term in Arabic (min fadlek: من فضلك); which is not available in French and English:

4.2.2.The use of the passive

English: The director asked for the files to be submitted on time.

French: Le directeur a demandé que les dossiers soient déposés

English: The file wasn't submitted or You did not submit it: more polite expressions

French: Les dossiers n'ont pas été déposés Or Vous n'avez pas déposé les dossiers.

As can be seen in the above examples, the passive construction is usually preferred by English and French speakers when they want to avoid ascribing responsibility to the addressee.

Based on the analysis of the linguistic markers of politeness in the three languages, it can be concluded that in Arabic, speakers recur most of the time to fixed formulas unlike French and English speakers who prefer to manipulate the syntactical constructions and to use indirectness (could you please, and would/will you please, would you mind, if you may, is it all right if you… ?, do you think you could..?,) as equivalent expressions to (من فضلك، رجاءً، أرجوك، لو سمحت، هلا سمحت) in order to sound polite and considerate especially in giving orders and requests and hence, to alleviate the degree of imposition.

Though the above analysis is not exhaustive in terms of contextual situations and patterns of address usage, it proves the hypothesis of the study by demonstrating the fact that the richness of the linguistic repertoire of a language makes expressing politeness simpler and easier because of the various options available to the speakers of a language. In Arabic, what simplifies the expression of politeness is the richness in the lexicon while in French and English it is the affluence of direct and indirect syntactical constructions.

8.   Conclusion:

Not only the three languages under study but also all languages of the world have the notion of politeness inherent in everyday interaction and incarnated in the linguistic markers and in the good manners, behaviors, and etiquette that characterize both verbal and non-verbal communication. As can be shown in the above analysis, especially when comparing the linguistic realizations of these politeness markers, the researcher realized that they are language-specific and that the behavioral responses of the interlocutors are culture-specific. There are also different linguistic variations of the way speakers express politeness. Intimacy and privacy are very important issues for English and French native speakers, while imposition is accepted among most Arabic native speakers. The French language always proves to be a highly conservative model. The choice of the lexis and the syntactical structures is still determined by socio-cultural and pragmatic factors.

In all these cases, whatever the language used to express politeness is, the underlying principle of politeness is to preserve harmony by showing good intentions and consideration for the feelings of others. Every culture and every language has developed certain mechanisms to signal that speakers are attempting to be polite. The fact that a speaker uses an apparently "polite" linguistic marker may not necessarily mean that the individual intends either politeness or rudeness. The usage may be entirely neutral and conventional. Furthermore, some individuals habitually use more, or fewer, "polite" language markers than others.

The three languages: Arabic, French, and English have varying levels of politeness because they are different in terms of social encoding. In English and French, distinctions are shown by changing Grammar in accordance with the change in the system of pronouns that we recur to. In Arabic, politeness is more elaborated in various aspects and this is due to cultural and religious factors. For instance, the analysis shows that greetings in French and English can be either formal or informal while in Arabic, they can be religious, formal and informal. This is one of the factors that explains the existence of a multitude of synonymous expressions that communicate the same politeness formulae. Also, the essence of variations in the three languages is due to the nature of language and language variations such as the use of the singular versus the plural to refer to individuals, and the verbal substitution in both the verbal and the pronominal system (plural forms of address) and honorifics that are sometimes special to speakers of Arabic as is (حضرتَك، حضرتكم)، جنابكَ، جنابكم) that have no equivalents in French and English when addressing persons with a superior rank. The present study demonstrated that the three languages under investigation have varying degrees of expressing respect and intimacy. It also suggests that the universality of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness exists in the similarities between the three languages under study. It lies in the human social interaction across cultures, but the same intended function of politeness does not always match the semantic formula used to express the speech act among languages. On the other hand, cultural differences lead to pragmatic transfer since different forms are associated with different values in different cultures and this transfer can sometimes cause pragma-linguistic failure during communication.

Implications of the study:

One of the major implications of this study is the difficulty of finding exact equivalents of patterns of address usage and formulaic expressions that convey precisely the same meaning in the three languages. This entails the necessity of a deeper and a more comprehensive study of the nature of languages, especially in multilingual contexts where code-switching frequently occurs and where speakers try to avoid linguistic embarrassments and communication breakdowns in conversations.

Another policy implication for speakers of any of the languages under investigation is to apply the linguistic politeness theory and to diversify their linguistic choices that minimize social distance and possible face-threatening acts and maximize closeness and solidarity. Speech style shift and code-switching necessitate an extensive knowledge of language by multilingual speakers in both formal and informal situations. Hence, further research in the area of linguistic politeness and the intrinsic stylistic features of language is much needed in multilingual societies in order to conceptualize the metalanguage of speech communities and the interactional accomplishments of politeness.

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