Gender Differences as Manifested in Politeness and Impoliteness Strategies in the Comments of Facebook Users on Selected News Reports

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the types of politeness and impoliteness strategies adopted by both genders in a group of readers' comments on selected American news reports posted on the CNN Facebook page on November 15th, 2022. In addition, it identifies the most frequently used politeness and impoliteness strategies by males and females. Furthermore, it investigates whether there are any differences between both genders in adopting these strategies to determine which gender is more polite/impolite on Facebook. Following both quantitative and qualitative methods, the analysis revealed that all four strategies proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987) were adopted by the commenters in the selected news reports. Moreover, the most frequently used politeness strategy in the collected data was positive politeness, followed by bald on record politeness, negative politeness and finally off record politeness. Furthermore, only four of the five strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996) were identified in the comments. The most frequently used impoliteness strategy was negative impoliteness, followed by bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, and finally sarcasm politeness. The withhold politeness strategy, however, was not deployed at all by both genders in the selected data. There were also differences between genders in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies in the selected posts as males adopted politeness as well as impoliteness strategies more than females did.

Keywords: Gender, Politeness, Impoliteness, Facebook.

1. Introduction

Politeness and impoliteness are two closely related concepts in pragmatics (Leech, 2014). According to Brown & Levinson (1987), politeness has to do with any behaviour that attempts to preserve or save the face of the addressee during social interaction. Impoliteness, on the other hand, refers to those behaviours that attack the face of the addressee and create social disruption (Culpeper, 1996). These two linguistic phenomena, however, are not only observed in our face-to-face interaction, but also in the discourse of the users of social media platforms.

Social media is an alternative communication form to face-to-face communication that is growing rapidly and needs further research (Fox, Morris & Rumsey, 2007). It has attracted millions of users all over the world and enabled them to easily interact with each other, regardless of their different places, and express their opinions on different topics. It is also an ever-evolving field, with new platforms such as Clubhouse, Signal and TikTok coming out seemingly every year, joining the ranks of well-known platforms like Facebook, YouTube, X and Instagram (Dollarhide, 2024). These platforms have attracted a huge number of news readers as reported by Shearer and Matsa (2018) who state that about two-thirds of the American citizens depend on social media platforms to get news at least occasionally. They also mention that, among the different social media platforms, Facebook has been by far the most frequently used one to get news by Americans. It has also been the most popular platform globally according to a 2022 survey (Statista Research Department, 2022). One of the important features of this platform is the ability to engage in discussions by commenting on posts.

The language used by males and females while commenting on Facebook posts or even in face-to-face social interactions may not be similar. Several scholars have investigated the gender differences that occur in the speech of males and females. Lakoff (1973) argues that the language used by women sounds much more polite than that used by men. She states that this is due to their subordinate position in society. She also claims that women were brought up to speak in a less assertive way using tag questions, hedges and indirect statements as compared to men who are brought to speak roughly. Holmes (2013) agrees with Lakoff (1973) mentioning that in communities that marginalize women, women are found to be more linguistically polite than men. Mills (2003) similarly argues that women's linguistic behavior is described as "hesitant and unassertive and showing negative politeness for others" by overly

respecting them (p.205). This paper, therefore, examines the politeness and impoliteness strategies adopted in the comments of male and female Facebook users on selected American news reports on the CNN Facebook page.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims at

1. identifying the types of politeness as well as impoliteness strategies used in the selected Facebook posts.
2. identifying the most frequently used politeness as well as impoliteness strategies by both genders.
3. investigating the differences between genders in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies to determine which gender is more polite/impolite on Facebook.

3. Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of politeness and impoliteness strategies used in the selected data?
2. What are the most frequently used politeness as well as impoliteness strategies by males and females in the collected data?
3. To what extent is there any difference between males and females in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies?

4. Review of Literature

Several scholars have investigated the concept of politeness and formulated different theories and models on it. Following Grice's (1975) cooperative principle (CP) and conversational maxims, Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) built their models of politeness. Lakoff (1973) proposes two universal rules that people follow to be polite. The first rule is "Be clear" under which she integrates Grice's maxims. The second one is "Be polite" which consists of three rules of politeness: do not impose, give options, and be friendly (Lakoff, 1973, pp. 296-298). Leech (1983) proposes a politeness principle (PP) with conversational maxims like those formulated by Grice (1975). The PP, as he mentions, suggests to "minimize the expression of impolite beliefs" and to "maximize the expression of polite beliefs (Leech, 1983, p. 81). This PP is made up of six maxims that are summarised as follows:

- Tact Maxim: Minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other.
- Generosity Maxim: Minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self.

- Approbation Maxim: Minimize dispraise of other; maximize praise of other.

- Modesty Maxim: Minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self.

- Agreement Maxim: Minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other.

- Sympathy Maxim: Minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other. (Leech, 1983, p. 132)

The politeness theory proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987) is the most influential model of politeness so far. Brown & Levinson (1987) extend Goffman's (1967) notion of face into politeness and categorise two kinds of face for every person: the positive face and the negative face. The positive face, as they mention, is an individual's desire for approval and admiration, whereas the negative face is his/her desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition. During social interaction, interlocutors are expected to maintain each other's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, some behaviours that can damage the face of interlocutors are inevitable and they are referred to as face threatening acts (FTAs) (Erbert & Floyd, 2004). Politeness, as claimed by Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, lies in attempting to mitigate those FTAs and save the face of other interlocutors during social interactions. Accordingly, they propose four types of politeness strategies for doing FTAs: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

While several studies have been conducted on the phenomena of politeness, not so much attention has been paid to the opposite phenomenon that may occur during social interaction, i.e., impoliteness (Bousfield, 2008a; Locher & Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2011; Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; Mills, 2005; Shvidko, 2014). Culpeper (2011) states that almost all the politeness models tend to marginalise and ignore the phenomena of impoliteness. Mills (2003, p.121) suggests that this may be due to the view of conversation in much of the research as something harmonious, balanced between interlocutors and follows the contracts of communication between them. However, conversation does not always go this way. She argues that there are occasions when interlocutors would attack each other's faces during conversation rather than support them. In the same vein, Culpeper (1996) emphasizes that the impoliteness phenomenon is common in everyday conversation and thus an analytical impoliteness framework needs to be developed (Mullany & Stockwell, 2010, p.7).

Accordingly, he proposes an impoliteness framework in which he defines it as the use of communicative strategies to attack the interlocutor's face and create social disruption. For this purpose, he formulates five super strategies, namely, bold on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness and withhold politeness. The following subsection provides a review of some related recent previous studies.

4.1. Review of Previous Studies

Many studies tackled gender differences as a main variable in analysing the politeness and/or impoliteness strategies adopted in different social media platforms. The following sub-sections explore this in further detail.

4.1.1. Related Studies on Politeness and Gender Differences in Social Media

Several researchers examined gender differences in adopting politeness strategies in social media platforms. May et al. (2015), for instance, identified the similarities and differences between the UiTM Kelantan male and female students in deploying the politeness strategies, proposed by Brown & Levinson, in Facebook's wall posts. They also investigated the language features, proposed by Lakoff (1975) in the language deployed by the male and female students to convey politeness. The results revealed that gender is not the only factor which affects the application of politeness strategies. In computer-mediated communication (CMC), people choose to apply different patterns of language and strategies of politeness based on the context of their conversations.

Febriana (2017) analysed the FTAs commonly performed by male and female Instagram users as well as the politeness strategies used to minimize those FTAs under the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The results showed that Instagram users performed 26 FTAs, 14 of them were by males and 12 were by females. As for the politeness strategies, there were 14 examples of politeness strategies, five of them were by males and nine were by females. The research concluded, therefore, that Instagram users were less concerned with delivering their comments in a polite way; they only focused on delivering them by any means regardless of any FTA that may damage others' face during their communication.

Sholikatin (2019) examined the strategy of positive politeness proposed by Brwon & Levinson (1987) to find out the differences between males and females in responding to Bill Gates' captions on Instagram. The results of the study showed that ten of the fifteen sub-strategies of the positive politeness strategy were employed by both genders. There were also gender differences in

employing these sub-strategies. Males used seven sub-strategies and the most dominant one was noticing, attending to the hearer (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods). Females, on the other hand, used eight sub-strategies and the most dominant one was also noticing, attending to the hearer (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods).

Hosseinpur & Mousavi (2021) investigated the use of the politeness strategies proposed by Brown & Levinson's (1987) in gratitude expressions of English and Persian Instagram users. They also aimed to evaluate the gender roles in the production of those gratitude utterances. The findings of the study revealed some differences in the use of three of the positive sub-strategies and one of the negative ones between the English and Persian users which might be attributed to some extent cultural transfer. Concerning the gender investigation, no significant difference was observed between the male and female speakers of each language.

Smadi et al. (2023) investigated the positive politeness strategies, proposed by Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory, that were used by Jordanian males and females through their Facebook comments on the Roya news page in four different news topics. It further explored the effects of gender and news topics on the use of these strategies. The results showed that gender affected the way Jordanians used politeness strategies in their comments; the most frequently used strategy by Jordanian males was asserting common ground whereas the most frequently used strategy by Jordanian females was joking. The news topic, however, did not affect the use of politeness strategies by both genders.

4.1.2. Related Studies on Impoliteness and Gender Differences in Social Media

Gender differences in adopting impoliteness strategies in social media platforms has been investigated by many researchers. Hairetdin (2018), for instance, explored the characteristics of impolite language on Tumbler. It also investigated the most frequently used impoliteness strategies by males and females and the gender differences in their use. Furthermore, it examined whether the topic of the conversation influenced the impoliteness strategies used or not. The data of the study were collected from mixed-gender interactions on Tumblr on the five topics of feminism, politics, racism, religion and social justice. The data consisted of 404 separate utterances that were collected from 304 individual speakers and marked for gender and topic and then categorized under specific impoliteness strategies. The study reached the conclusion that

while there were differences between the genders in the use of impoliteness, this had little to do with who is more impolite as both men and women have strategies that they tend to use more often. The most visible differences in impoliteness between males and females emerge from the use of specific words or abbreviations, for instance. The topic of the discussion also proved to have some effect on the type of insults used.

Shinta et al. (2018) examined the impoliteness strategies used by males and females in Facebook and Instagram comments. They collected the data of the study from comments on posts related to Ahok on the Facebook accounts Merdeka.com and Teman Ahok se Indonesia, and the Instagram accounts Mahadewi161 and Suararakyat. The results of the study revealed that four of the five strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996) were found, namely, bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness and sarcasm or mock politeness. The highest strategy used in the data by males as well as females was the positive impoliteness. The study also concluded that there were no gender differences in using impoliteness strategies when commenting on social media.

Aprilliyani, Hamzah and Wahyuni (2019) investigated the types of impoliteness strategies used by male and female haters in Instagram comments. They collected the data of the study from comments on the accounts of Habib Rizieq and Felix Siauw. The results of this study showed that four of the five impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996) were used either by males or females, namely, bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness and sarcasm or mock politeness. The highest strategy used in the data by males as well as females was the sarcasm or mock politeness. Finally, the study reached the conclusion that there were no significant differences between male and female users in using impoliteness strategies while commenting on social media as the total difference between them was only 10%.

Pasaribu (2021) investigated the impoliteness strategies used by netizens in commenting on issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic that were posted on the official Facebook page of President Joko Widodo. The results showed that only four of the five strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996) were used by the two genders in conveying their hate speech, namely, bald on record, positive and negative impoliteness, and sarcasm or mock impoliteness. There were also gender differences in adopting impoliteness strategies. Results showed that the highest used strategy by male netizens was bold on record impoliteness

followed by positive, negative, and sarcasm impoliteness, respectively. Female netizens, on the other hand, used positive impoliteness, followed by negative, sarcasm, and on record impoliteness strategies.

4.1.3. Related Studies on Politeness, Impoliteness and Gender Differences in Social Media

Unlike all the previous studies, only one study examined the gender differences in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies using the politeness framework proposed by Brown & Levinson and the impoliteness framework proposed by Culpeper (1996). In this study, Al-Shlool (2016) investigated gender differences and similarities in the use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in the native Arabic discourse on Facebook. In addition, the study scrutinised the differences between the male-male, female-female, female-male communication in Facebook. The data were comments and posts on selected popular TV shows' Facebook pages. The findings of this study revealed that all the four politeness strategies proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), namely, bald on record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record politeness, were used by both genders in the collected data. However, only three of the five impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (2016) were used by both genders, namely, bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness and negative impoliteness. In addition, politeness strategies were used more than impoliteness strategies by both genders despite the informal setting of Facebook. Moreover, it was also found that females used politeness strategies more than males did, whereas males used impoliteness strategies more than females did. Furthermore, in male-female communication, males showed a higher tendency to use politeness strategies towards females except when the topic was a political one, they used impoliteness strategies. As for the male-male communication, males used more impoliteness strategies especially when the topic was related to sport or political issues. In female-female communication, however, females tended to use more politeness strategies especially when the topic was related to religion.

The current study also examines the gender differences in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies in the comments of the users of Facebook using the same frameworks. However, unlike the previously mentioned study by Al-Shlool (2016), it analyses only the comments written using the English language on selected news reports posted on the CNN Facebook page. It is, therefore, a contribution to this growing area of research.

5. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a brief discussion of the two theories deployed in the current study: Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and Culpeper's (1996) theory of impoliteness

5.1 Brown & Levinson's (1987) Theory of Politeness

As mentioned earlier, Brown & Levinson's politeness theory suggests that politeness lies in attempting to save the face of others and reduces the threats that may damage their face. They, therefore, propose four main strategies for doing FTAs in situations where they are inevitable: bold on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy and off record strategy. These strategies are explained below.

5.1.1. Bald on Record Strategy

Brown & Levinson (1987) mention that this strategy means to do the FTA in "the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way" (p. 69). They outline two classes of bald on record usage in different circumstances: the class where the face threat is not minimized, where face is ignored or is irrelevant and the class where in doing the FTA baldly on record, S minimizes face threats by implication. These two classes are explained as follows:

5.1.1.1. Cases of Non-Minimization of the Face-Threat

1- In cases of urgency, where maximum efficiency is very important and this is known to both H & S, no face redress is necessary.

2- In cases of metaphorical emergency where S wants to get the attention of the hearer.

3- In cases of channel noise, where communication difficulties put pressure on S to make him/her speak with maximum efficiency.

4- In cases where the focus of interaction is task-oriented. Such task-orientation probably accounts for the paradigmatic form of instructions & recipes.

5- In cases where S is powerful and does not fear retaliation or non-cooperation from H or because S wants to be rude or doesn't care about maintaining H's face.

6- In the case of socially acceptable rudeness such as joking or teasing where S wants to be rude and does not care about H's face.

7- In cases where the FTA is done primarily in H's interest such as in sympathetic advice or warnings.

8- In cases of accepting permission for something that H has requested.

9- In cases of cliché farewell formulae.

5.1.1.2. Cases of FTA-oriented Bald-on-record Usage

1- welcoming (or post greetings) where S insists that H may impose on his negative face.

2- Farewells where S insists that H may transgress on his positive face by taking his leave.

3- offers where S insists that H may impose on S's negative face. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 95-100)

5.1.2. Positive politeness

According to Brown & Levinson (1987), this strategy is concerned with softening the threat to H's positive face. They formulate fifteen positive politeness sub-strategies and they are as follows:

- Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods).
- Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H).
- Intensify interest to H.
- Use in-group identity markers.
- Seek agreement.
- A void disagreement.
- Presuppose/raise/assert common ground.
- Joke
- Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants.
- Offer, promise.
- Be optimistic.
- Include both S and H in the activity.
- Give (or ask for) reasons.
- Assume or assert reciprocity.
- Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation). (pp. 103-129)

5.1.3. Negative Politeness

Brown & Levinson (1987) state that negative politeness is directed towards the addressees' negative face. They propose ten negative politeness sub-strategies and they are as follows:

- Be conventionally indirect.
- Question, hedge.
- Be pessimistic.

- Minimize the imposition.
- Give deference.
- Apologize.
- Impersonalize S and H.
- State the FTA as a general rule.
- Nominalize.
- Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H. (132-210)

5.1.4. Off Record

Brown & Levinson (1987) state that doing an act off record is characterized by using indirect utterances in which S leaves it up to H to decide how to interpret them, so that S can avoid the responsibility for doing an FTA. They list fifteen possible sub-strategies for doing an act off record and they are as follows:

- Give hints.
- Giving association clues.
- Presupposing
- Understating.
- Overstating.
- Use tautologies.
- Use contradictions.
- Be ironic.
- Use metaphors.
- Use rhetorical questions.
- Be ambiguous.
- Be vague.
- Over-generalize.
- Displace H.
- Be incomplete, use ellipsis (213-227).

5.2. Culpeper's (1996) Theory of Impoliteness

Culpeper (1996) pioneers the research into the field of impoliteness. He formulates a framework that is "parallel but opposite" to the theory of politeness proposed by Brown & Levinson's (1987) (p.349). In this framework, he proposes five super strategies, namely, bold on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness and withhold politeness. Unlike the politeness strategies proposed by Brown & Levinson (1978), these strategies are a means to attack the face of interlocutors during interaction. As mentioned above, all these super-strategies are in parallel with

Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness super-strategies, except for sarcasm or mock politeness that is clearly not the equivalent of the off-record politeness strategy.

5.2.1. Bald on Record Impoliteness

By adopting this strategy, S performs the FTA directly, clearly, unambiguously and concisely (Bousfield, 2008 b).

5.2.2. Positive Impoliteness

According to Culpeper (1996), this strategy is performed by damaging H's positive face wants. He lists some output strategies to carry out a positive impoliteness act which include:

- Ignore, snub the other - fail to acknowledge the other's presence.
- Exclude the other from an activity.
- Disassociate from the other - for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.
- Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic.
- Use inappropriate identity markers - for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.
- Use obscure or secretive language - for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.
- Seek disagreement - select a sensitive topic.
- Make the other feel uncomfortable - for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.
- Use taboo words - swear, or use abusive or profane language.
- Call the other names - use derogatory nominations. (p. 357)

5.2.3. Negative Impoliteness

Culpeper (1996) states that this strategy is performed by damaging the addressee's negative face wants He lists some output strategies to perform a negative impoliteness act which include:

- Frighten - instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.
- Condescend, scorn or ridicule - emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous.
- Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).
- Invade the other's space - literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).

- Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect - personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.
- Put the other's indebtedness on record. (Culpeper, 1996, p.358)

5.2.4. Sarcasm or mock politeness

According to Culpeper (1996), this strategy is performed by adopting insincere politeness strategies.

5.2.5. Withhold Impoliteness

This strategy is performed through "the absence of politeness work where it would be expected" (Culpeper, 1996, P. 357).

6. Research Methodology and Data Collection

This research is a qualitative and quantitative study that investigates a corpus of readers' comments on selected American news reports posted on the CNN Facebook page on November 15th, 2022. The researcher has chosen this page because it is a credible news source for millions of people worldwide. The comments on the news reports of this page are considered a rich source for naturally occurring data for researchers to study. It is important to mention that the names of the commenters are not mentioned in order to maintain their privacy. To identify their gender, the researcher goes to the basic information section of their profiles where the gender is identified and checks it. In cases where the gender is not identified, the profile name and picture are checked. In cases of confusing names and/or pictures, the comment is excluded from the data. One example of "non-binary" gender has been detected and therefore excluded from the data. Off-topic comments, comments of languages other than English and comments that include only emoticons and gifs are also excluded.

6.1. Procedures

The total number of comments in the collected data is 449 of which only 402 comments that have politeness and impoliteness strategies are identified. Those comments are categorized in accordance with Brown & Levinson's (1987) model of politeness and Culpeper's (1996) model of impoliteness. Then, the total number of occurrences for the politeness and impoliteness strategies is counted and their frequency of occurrences is calculated. After that, the categorized data are further classified into two categories: those used by females and those used by males. The total number of occurrences for each strategy in the female set as well as the male set is counted and their frequency of occurrences in each set is calculated. In addition, a qualitative analysis of the collected data is also carried out to analyze the politeness and impoliteness strategies used. Finally, a comparison between the two genders is made with

respect to the politeness and the impoliteness strategies used to determine which gender is more polite/impolite on Facebook.

7. Data Analysis

This section provides an analysis of the politeness and impoliteness strategies detected in the selected data. It is divided into two parts. The first part introduces an analysis of the politeness strategies detected on the selected data deploying Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. The second part proposes an analysis of the impoliteness strategies detected in the selected data according to Culpeper's (1996) theory of impoliteness.

7.1. Analysis of Politeness Data

Bald on record politeness

The first example:

(Concentrate on Portugal n world Cup. This later if you want to dig it. Waste of time)

This comment was written in a news report about Ronaldo. In this post, Ronaldo criticizes the owners of Manchester United claiming that they do not care about the club. The commenter directly advises H to ignore any issue that distracts him from concentrating on the World Cup championship and the Portugal national football team. The comment is a typical example of the bald on record strategy as S does not attempt to mitigate the threat directed at H's face. She rather does the act boldly, clearly, and directly.

The second example:

(As a sports official, we call this "someone getting too big for their britches." If you're not happy, choose a new direction, it's a privilege to be able to play and get paid well at a high level. It's a privilege to have the health and opportunity to play a sport, period. Show class in the face of diversity is all I'm saying. Be an example for young athletes ✌️😊😊😊😊😊⚽)

The preceding comment was written in the same context as the first one. The comment involves two instances of the bald on record politeness strategy. The first one is (choose a new direction) and the second one is (Be an example for young athletes). The commenter directly advises H to choose another club to play for if he is not happy with Manchester and to be a good example for young athletes to follow. He does not attempt to minimize the threat directed towards H's face and does the FTA directly, clearly, and unambiguously.

Positive Politeness
Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
The first example:

(Wow!!!double nominations to the African giants❤️❤️❤️)

This comment was written on a news report about the Grammy Awards nominations. It is an example of the exaggeration sub-strategy. The speaker is enthusiastically expressing his joy and celebration of the double nomination received by the African Giant, Burna Boy in the prestigious Grammy Awards. The use of the exclamation marks as well as the heart emojis also show his admiration and support for the musician. By using this strategy, the commenter enhances the musician's positive face wants and emphasizes the importance of his achievement.

The second example:

(Which means elon musk is single handedly 100 times richer than the total population of the world. I should be having even a dollar of Elon Musk money. THIS MAN IS A GENIUS.)

This comment was written in a news report about the world's population. The underlined part of the comment is another example of the exaggeration sub-strategy. The commenter uses the word (GENIUS) to praise and strongly express his admiration of Elon Musk's intelligence and abilities. The capitalization of all the letters also conveys the intensity of his feelings, which helps enhance Musk's positive face wants.

Use In-Group Identity Markers
The first example

(Stay home my people….)

This comment was written on a news report about the Grammy Awards nominations. The underlined noun phrase (my people) serves as an in-group identity marker. This in-group identity marker helps mitigate the impact of the imperative. It also indicates familiarity with H and implies that the commenter cares about the safety of the addressees.

The second example:

(don't worry <u>folks</u> --- dems will win elections after elections to put & keep u on its plantation)

The preceding comment was written in a news report about the world's population. The underlined noun (folks) serves as in-group identity marker that supports H's positive face and creates a sense of familiarity between S & H.

Seek Agreement

The first example:

(I 100% agree with Cristiano Ronaldo. He only told the truth, nothing but the truth.I believe what Ronaldo has done should be commended by the fans. It will only help the club in the future and they should be proud of him for that.)

This comment was written in a news report about Ronaldo in which he criticizes the owners of Manchester United claiming that they do not care about the club. It is an example of the seek agreement sub-strategy. The commenter here tries to save Ronaldo's positive face by expressing his strong agreement with him using sentences like (I 100% agree with Cristiano Ronaldo) and (He only told the truth). He also praises his honesty and supports him in what he is doing suggesting that his actions will benefit the club in the future.

The second example:

(This one, I agree with him! They've turned the club into their piggy bag and are focused on buying players with commercial value than will help the club return to its past glorious days!)

The previous comment was written in the same context as the first comment. It is another example of the seek agreement sub-strategy. The commenter here states that he shares the same opinion as Ronaldo about the owners of the club saying (I agree with him!). He further elaborates on this emphasizing that they only focus on buying famous players not on helping the club get back to its glorious days. Using this strategy, the commenter supports Ronaldo's positive face wants by indicating that he understands his viewpoint and agrees with it.

Avoid Disagreement

The first example:

(Cool but would've wish some persons such as jcole, Ed Sheeran, Justin are nominated)

This comment was written in a news report about the Grammy Awards nominations. The comment is an example of the avoid disagreement sub-strategy. The commenter tries to avoid direct disagreement with the nominations by using the phrase (Cool but…). She expresses her wish for the inclusion of other artists such as J. Cole, Ed Sheeran and Justen Bieber without explicitly criticizing the current nominations. By using this strategy, she tries to mitigate any potential threat to H's positive face by expressing her personal preferences in a non-confrontational manner.

The second example:

(I really appreciate him to be straight. However business is business and Boss are always forwarding how to win money)

The preceding comment was written on a news report about Ronaldo in which he criticizes the owners of Manchester United claiming that they do not care about the club. The commenter avoids direct disagreement with H or Ronaldo in this case. He expresses his disagreement with him by first appreciating his honesty and then stating his point of view that business is business and that he cannot therefore blame the owners of the club. This way of avoiding disagreement softens any potential FTA and saves the face of H by expressing a different perspective in a respectful and non-confrontational manner.

Include both S and H in the Activity

(Challenges? Let's hope we don't impose some kind of limit as to how many children one can have......)

This comment was written in a news report about the world's population. The underlined sentence is an example of including both S and H in the activity sub-strategy. The commenter tries to include the readers or H in this case, in the activity by using the inclusive phrase (Let's hope). The use of this phrase indicates a shared concern with H about potential limitations on the number of children a person can have due to the population growth problem mentioned in the report. By using this strategy, the commenter saves H's positive face and mitigates any potential FTA by calling for cooperation between him and H.

Give (or ask for) Reasons

(why not to be on twitter)

This comment was written on a news report about Canada's Prime Minister Justen Trudeau deleting a tweet that contained false information on mass death sentences in Iran. It is an example of the give (or ask for) reasons sub-strategy. The commenter tries to explain to H the negative aspect of using Twitter, in this case, the risk of unintentionally sharing false information. By giving reasons why not to do something, S can minimize the FTA directed towards H's positive face.

Give Gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation

The first example:

(Cheering for Bonnie Raitt nominated song of the year for Just Like That. One of her best albums also. Got to see her sing it in concert this past March.
GO BONNIE LUV YOU❤️)

This comment was written on the Grammy Awards nominations news report. The commenter expresses her pleasure for the nomination of her beloved singer's song for the prestigious Grammy Awards. By writing (GO BONNIE) and (LUV YOU❤️), she shows her support and affection for the artist. The use of capital letters in addition to the heart emoji emphasizes the message. The heart emoji can also be considered a visual representation of this affection and admiration. Accordingly, the use of the give gifts strategy in this comment satisfies H's wants to be admired, supported, and loved.

The second example:

(Disinformation can not succeed under the current situation.I stand with Iranian government)

The preceding comment was written on a news report about Canada's Prime Minister Justen Trudeau deleting a tweet that contained false information on mass death sentences in Iran. The commenter expresses his support for and solidarity with the Iranian government suggesting that spreading false information about it cannot succeed this time. The comment thereby is an example of the give gifts to H positive politeness strategy.

Negative Politeness
Impersonalize S and H
The first example:

(They will be exposed.)

This comment was written on a news report about Canada's Prime Minister Justen Trudeau deleting a tweet that contained false information on mass death sentences in Iran. It is an example of the impersonalize S and H strategy. The commenter in this comment uses the passive voice to make the primary focus on the action rather than on the performer of this action. He also does not specify S or H which makes the sentence less confrontational and imposing.

The second example:

(Vasectomies urgently needed ..)

The preceding comment was written in a news report about the world's population. The commenter uses the passive voice and does not specify S or H which makes the sentence less imposing.

Nominalization

(The power to ensure our population does not exceed a desired number is in our hands.)

This comment was written in the same context as the previous one. In this comment, S changes the focus of the original sentence (We can ensure our population does not exceed a desired number) from the specific action of ensuring to the broader concept of having the ability or power to ensure doing so. This helps make the sentence less imposing on H and thereby meets the principles of the negative politeness strategy.

Off record Politeness
Use tautologies
The first example:

(I really appreciate him to be straight. However <u>business is business</u> and Boss are always forwarding how to win money)

This comment was written in a news report about Ronaldo in which he criticizes the owners of Manchester United claiming that they do not care about the club. The underlined phrase (business is business) is an example of

tautology in which S indirectly expresses his disagreement with Ronaldo highlighting that making money is a priority in the world of business. By doing the FTA indirectly, S thereby saves Ronaldo's face and leaves it up to him to interpret his message.

The second example:

(<u>What goes around comes around..</u> if the club doesn't want him, pay him his money and let him go.. this is probly his way out of the contract.. regardless, club has been disrespecting him since he came back.. why did they bring him on then?)

The preceding comment was written in the same context of the previous one. The underlined phrase (What goes around comes around) is an example of tautology. By deploying this tool, S indirectly expresses his discontent with the way the club has been treating Ronaldo since they brough him back suggesting that their treatment may lead to undesirable outcomes in the future. S thereby saves H's face and leaves it up to them to interpret his message.

Use Rhetorical questions
The first example:

(who else knows them more than him)

This comment was written in a news report about Ronaldo in which he criticizes the owners of Manchester United claiming that they do not care about the club. This rhetorical question is used to indirectly criticize the owners of the club without explicitly stating so. It suggests that Ronaldo knows them very well and therefore his opinion about them and their actions is possibly correct. By using this sub-strategy, S minimizes the potential FTA towards H's face and thereby saves their face.

The second example:

(What goes around comes around.. if the club doesn't want him, pay him his money and let him go.. this is probly his way out of the contract.. regardless, club has been disrespecting him since he came back.. <u>why did they bring him on then?</u>)

The preceding comment was written in the same context of the previous one. The underlined question in the previous comment is a rhetorical question in which S indirectly expresses his dissatisfaction with the way the club has been

treating Ronaldo since they brought him back. By not directly attacking the owners of the club, S minimizes the FTA and saves their face.

Over-generalize

(The truth always hurts alot)

This comment was written in the same previous news report. In this comment, S implies that Ronaldo's criticism of the owners of the club is accurate and based on genuine facts, stating that the truth can be painful and unacceptable, especially for those it is directed at. The comment therefore is an indirect way of expressing criticism without damaging H's face.

Be vague

(Someone needs to deflate his head!)

This comment was written in the same previous news report. It is somewhat vague as S does not directly criticize Ronaldo. Instead, the commenter uses a metaphor to express his criticism indirectly implying that Ronaldo's ego may be inflated. By expressing his criticism indirectly, S avoids damaging H's face.

7.2. Analysis of Impoliteness Data
Bald on record Impoliteness
The first example:

(What a joke why does adele deserve any nominations for an award ? <u>She is overrated and not that good</u> 🤦‍♀️)

This comment was written in a news report about the Grammy Awards nominations. The underlined sentence is an example of the bold on record impoliteness strategy. It is a direct and straightforward criticism of Adele describing her as an overrated singer who is not good enough and therefore does not deserve to be nominated for an award. S in this comment strongly expresses his negative opinion of her without any attempt to soften the FTA.

The second example:

(Worst forest management on the planet.)

The preceding comment was written in a news report stating that the first strong Santa Ana winds of the season is bringing critical fire danger to California. It is an example of the bald on record impoliteness strategy. S in this comment expresses his strong negative opinion of California's forest

management. He directly and unambiguously describes it as the worst one on the planet.

Positive Impoliteness
Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic
(I think I have plans to clean my toilet the night of Feb 5th.)

This comment was written in the same previous news report. It conveys S's lack of interest in the event by stating that cleaning the toilet is more important and a priority for him than following the event happening on that night.

Call the other names– use derogatory nominations
(Canadian here , my sincere apologies as our PM is a moron.)

This comment was written in a news report about Canada's Prime Minister Justen Trudeau deleting a tweet that contained false information on mass death sentences in Iran. S in this comment insults Trudeau by describing him as (a moron) which is a very disrespectful term when talking about a political figure. This derogatory term is an example of (call the other names) sub-strategy that conveys S's disapproval of Trudeau.

Use inappropriate identity markers
(Cancel little Castro Jr)

This comment was written in the same previous news report. S in this comment attempts to insult and belittle Trudeau by referring to him as (little Castro Jr) which is an inappropriate identity marker. By using this inappropriate identity marker (little Castro Jr), S associates Trudeau with Cuba's former leader, Fidel Castro whose rule was characterized by suppressing the freedom of expression (Amnesty International, 2016), implying that he shares negative and undesirable qualities with Fidel Castro. The use of the diminutive (little) suggests that Trudeau is even inferior to Fidel Castro.

Use taboo words– swear, or use abusive or profane language
(This P.O.S. needs a coup.)

This comment was written in the same context of the previous two comments. The acronym (P.O.S.) stands for a very profane phrase and is considered a taboo word. This highly offensive taboo word is used by S to insult Trudeau, implying his lack of respect towards him.

Negative Impoliteness

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

The first example:

(Couldn't stomach watching that krap)

The preceding comment was written in a news report about the Grammy Awards nominations. It is an example of the negative impoliteness sub-strategy, condescend, scorn or ridicule. In this comment, S expresses a strong negative opinion about the Grammy Awards. The use of the phrase (couldn't stomach) and the derogatory word (krap), which implies that S finds the event intolerable, conveys a sense of contempt, disdain and aversion towards the event.

The second example:

(looks like they are going to have even more clowns this year!)

The preceding comment was written in the same context of the first one. It is an example of the negative impoliteness sub-strategy, condescend, scorn or ridicule. The commenter expresses his strong disdain for the Grammy Awards and its nominees referring to them as (clowns). By using the noun (clowns), S ridicules the nominees and implies that they are unworthy of respect or attention. The use of the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence also emphasizes S's strong negative opinion of the event and its nominees.

Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect - personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

The first example:

(Just another Tyrant.)

The preceding comment was written in a news report about Canada's Prime Minister Justen Trudeau deleting a tweet that contains false information on mass death sentences in Iran. S in this comment criticizes Trudeau by labelling him as a [Tyrant] which is a highly negative and unfavorable aspect.

The second example:

(This is the hypocrite that want to censor SM!)

The preceding comment was written in the same context of the previous one. S in this comment strongly criticizes Trudeau by associating him with two

negative aspects. First, he describes Trudeau as a hypocrite which implies that he is a dishonest man. Then he associates him with another negative aspect which is the desire to restrict freedom of expression by censoring social media.

Sarcasm Politeness

The first example:

(Thanks for the warning)

This comment was written in a news report about the Grammy Awards nominations. It is an example of the sarcasm politeness strategy because S writes something with the intention of conveying the opposite of the literal meaning of his words. By writing (Thanks for the warning) in this situation where there is no clear danger, S sarcastically implies that the information shared on the news report about the Grammy Awards and the date it will take place on is not important for him.

The second example:

(Create another pandemic! Bill Gates is good about it in conjunction with Fauci)

The preceding comment was written in a news report about the world's population. S sarcastically presents a solution to the challenges facing the planet due to the problem of overpopulation. She ironically suggests to create another pandemic with the help of Bill Gates and Dr. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). S thereby indirectly criticizes these two figures, implying that they are involved in creating pandemics without explicitly stating so.

8. Findings

The first research question was concerned with identifying the types of politeness as well as impoliteness strategies used in the selected Facebook posts.

Table 1

The Distribution of the Politeness Strategies Used

Politeness strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Positive politeness	69	57
Bald on record politeness	32	26.4
Negative politeness	11	9.1
Off record politeness	9	7.4
Total	121	100

Table 2

The Distribution of the Impoliteness Strategies Used

Impoliteness strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Negative impoliteness	117	41.4
Bald on record impoliteness	71	25.3
Positive impoliteness	67	24
Sarcasm politeness	26	9.2
Withhold politeness	0	0
Total	281	100

After analysing the data, findings showed that all the four strategies proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), namely, bald on record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record politeness, were present in the readers' comments on the selected news reports. In addition, only four of the five strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996), namely, bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and sarcasm politeness were identified in the reader's comments. Findings also showed that 121 examples of politeness strategies were deployed by both genders in the selected comments, as indicated in table 1 above, which means that 30% of the data collected show politeness strategies. In addition, 281 examples of impoliteness strategies were deployed by both genders in the collected data, as indicated in table 2 above, which means that 70% of the data collected show impoliteness strategies. This finding indicates that people prefer to adopt impoliteness strategies rather than politeness strategies during their interactions on Facebook. This finding is expected, however, due to the informal nature of Facebook.

The second research question aimed to identify the most frequently used politeness as well as impoliteness strategies by both genders in the selected data. As for the politeness data, findings showed that the most frequently used politeness strategy in the collected data was the positive politeness strategy with 69 occurrences. The second most frequently used politeness strategy was the bold on record politeness with 32 occurrences. The negative politeness strategy came third with 11 occurrences. Finally, the least used politeness strategy in the collected data was the off record politeness with only 9 occurrences. The distribution of these strategies is presented in table 1 above. As for the

impoliteness strategies, the most frequently used strategy in the collected data was the negative impoliteness strategy with 117 occurrences. In the second rank came the bold on record impoliteness strategy with 71 occurrences. Positive impoliteness strategy came third with 67 occurrences. After that came the sarcasm politeness strategy with 26 occurrences. Finally, the withhold politeness strategy was not deployed at all by both genders on the selected data. This may be because this strategy is expected to be deployed only in face-to-face interactions not in online contexts. The distribution of the impoliteness strategies is presented in table 2 above**.**

As for the third research question, it was concerned with investigating the differences between genders in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies.

Table 3

Frequency of Different Types of Politeness Strategies Used by Males and Females

Politeness strategy	Males	Females	Total
Bald on record	25	7	32
Positive politeness	53	16	69
Negative politeness	8	3	11
Off record politeness	8	1	9
Total	94	27	121

Table 4

Frequency of Different Types of Impoliteness Strategies Used by Males and Females

Impoliteness strategy	Males	Females	Total
Bald on record	56	15	71
Positive Impoliteness	55	12	67
Negative Impoliteness	99	18	117
Sarcasm politeness	21	5	26
Total	231	50	281

Concerning the politeness data, findings indicated that there were differences between males and females in adopting politeness strategies. According to table 3 above, males used politeness strategies more than females while commenting on the selected news reports with 94 and 27 occurrences respectively out of 121 ones. This refutes Holmes (2013) suggestion that females are more polite than males. The table also shows that, comparing the frequencies of the use of the positive politeness strategy by males and females in the selected data, males adopted this strategy more than females did. This also refutes Holmes (2013) suggestion that females are more likely to adopt positive politeness strategies while interacting than males. She claims that the way women use language explicitly indicates that they care for the feelings those they are talking to more than males do.

Table 3 above also shows that the positive politeness strategy was the most used strategy by males with 53 occurrences. The second used strategy by males was the bald on record politeness strategy with 25 occurrences. The negative and off record politeness strategies were the least used strategies by males as they were used equally with 8 occurrences for each of them.

Furthermore, the table shows that the most used strategy by females was the positive politeness strategy with 16 occurrences. The second most used strategy by females was the bald on record strategy with 7 occurrences. After that came the negative politeness strategy with 3 occurrences. The least used strategy by females in the selected data was the off record politeness strategy with only one occurrence.

As for the impoliteness data, findings also showed that there were differences between males and females in adopting impoliteness strategies. According to table 4 above, males adopted impoliteness strategies more than females did while commenting on the selected news reports, with 231 and 50 occurrences respectively. This goes in line with Lakoff's (1973) view that the language used by men is more impolite than the language used by women. The table also indicates that the negative impoliteness strategy was the most used impoliteness strategy in the collected data by males as well as females with 99 and 18 occurrences respectively. Bald on record impoliteness strategy was the second used strategy by males and females with 56 and 15 occurrences respectively. The third most used impoliteness strategy by males and females was the positive impoliteness strategy with 55 and 12 occurrences respectively. The least used impoliteness strategy in the collected data by males and females

was the sarcasm politeness strategy with 21 and 5 occurrences respectively.

9. Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is needed to investigate the differences between genders in adopting politeness and impoliteness strategies in the discourse of the users of other social media platforms such as X, YouTube or Instagram.

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الفروق بين الجنسين في استراتيجيات التأدب والبذاءة في تعليقات مستخدمي الفيسبوك على مجموعة مختارة من التقارير الإخبارية

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المستخلص:

هـذا البحـث هـو محاولـة لدراسـة نظريتـي بـراون وليفنسـون (1987) فـي التـأدب اللغـوي وكلبيير(1996) في البذاءة اللغوية في سياق تعليقات مستخدمي الفيسبوك علـى مجموعـة مختـارة مـن التقارير الإخبارية الأمريكية. وقد نُشرت هذه التقاريرفي صفحة قناة السي إن إن الإخبارية على الفيسبوك في الخامس عشر من شهر نـوفمبر لعـام 2022. ويهدف هذا البحـث إلـى معرفـة استراتيجيات التـأدب والبذاءة الأكثر استخدامًا من قبل الجنسين. كما يهدف أيضًـا إلـى التحقق من وجود اختلافات بـين الجنسين في استخدام هذين النوعين من الاستراتيجيات. وكشف التحليل أن المعلقين من الجنسين استخدموا جميـع استراتيجات التأدب اللغوي التي اقترحها براون وليفنسون (1987) في تعليقهم علـى التقـارير الإخباريـة المختارة. فكانت الاستراتيجية الأكثر استخدامًا هي استراتيجية التأدب الإيجابي تلتهـا استراتيحية التـأدب المباشر ثم التأدب السلبي واخيرًا التأدب غير المباشر. كما كشف أيضًا أن المعلقين من الجنسين استخدموا أربعة فقط من استراتيجيات البذاءة اللغويـة الخمسـة التي اقترحها كلبيير (1996). فجائت استراتيجية البذاءة السلبية الأولى من حيث الاستخدام تلتهـا استراتيجية البـذاءة المباشـرة ثـم البـذاءة الإيجابيـة واخيـرًا التأدب التهكمي. وأخيرًا فقد أوضح التحليل أن هناك اختلاف بين الجنسين في استخدام استراتيجات التأدب والبذاءة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النوع الإجتماعي، التأدب، البذاءة، فيسبوك