

The Impact of Aging on Egyptian Adults' Use of  
Politeness Strategies

أثر التقدم في السن على استخدام المصريين البالغين لاستراتيجيات  
التهديب

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### Abstract

The present paper presents a psycholinguistic and pragmatic analysis of a study conducted on 90 Egyptian adults of different age groups in order to investigate the politeness strategies they preferred in situations arousing different emotions. The findings analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively indicate that the older adults show tendency to use bald on record strategies in situations arousing fear signaling their vulnerability and need for assistance and prefer off-record strategies in situations arousing anger in order to avoid direct conflict with others. The middle-aged group choose more positive politeness strategies, in general, indicating their tendency to maintain strong social relationships and to control negative emotions. The younger adults, on the other hand, choose more negative politeness strategies indicating their inclination to enhance social distancing and avoid threatening the face of others. The present study attempts to link research on aging, emotion processing and politeness with the aim of providing a complete picture of linguistic social interactions across different age groups.

**Keywords:** Psycholinguistics/ pragmatics, Politeness strategies, Aging, Emotions

### أثر التقدم في السن على استخدام المصريين البالغين لاستراتيجيات التهذيب ملخص البحث

يتبنى هذا البحث منظورا من علم اللغة النفسي وعلم التداول لتحليل نتائج دراسة أجريت مع تسعين شخصا بالغاً يمثلون مجموعات عمرية مختلفة في المجتمع المصري للوقوف على استخدامهم لاستراتيجيات أو أساليب التهذيب في مواقف تستدعي مشاعر مختلفة. وتوضح نتائج الدراسة التي تم تحليلها تحليلا كميا ووصفيا اتجاه كبار السن لاستخدام الاستراتيجيات المباشرة في المواقف التي تستدعي الشعور بالخوف مما يشير إلى شعورهم بالضعف واحتياجهم للمساعدة المباشرة، وتفضيلهم للاستراتيجيات غير المباشرة في المواقف التي تستدعي الغضب وذلك لتفادي الصدام المباشر مع الغير. كما توضح نتائج الدراسة تفضيل متوسطي العمر عموما لاستراتيجيات التهذيب الإيجابي مما يشير إلى ميلهم لتقوية العلاقات الاجتماعية والتحكم في المشاعر السلبية. وتبين الدراسة أيضا تفضيل الشباب لاستراتيجيات التهذيب السلبي مما يعكس ميلهم لوضع مسافات اجتماعية بينهم وبين الآخرين وتجنبهم لإحراج الغير. ومن هنا تمثل الدراسة الحالية محاولة لربط الأبحاث في مجالات كبر السن وإظهار العواطف واستراتيجيات التهذيب من أجل تقديم صورة واضحة عن التفاعلات الاجتماعية واللغوية لدى المجموعات العمرية المختلفة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** علم اللغة النفسي/ علم التداول، استراتيجيات التهذيب، تقدم السن، العواطف

## **The Impact of Aging on Egyptian Adults' Use of Politeness Strategies**

### **1. Introduction**

In every human society, individuals differ in terms of personal traits, emotional wellbeing, social perspectives and behavior. Yet, it is mainly through language that individuals manage to communicate their emotions, attitudes and social needs. Hence, it becomes important to analyze language use with the aim of exploring personal attitudes and social relationships, which has often been the focus of linguistic fieldwork in the areas of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

Age is one of the factors that can impact one's attitudes, experiences, social interactions and, consequently, linguistic interactions. The impact of aging on emotional wellbeing and emotional language use has often been investigated by previous researchers. Although traditional views perceived the elderly as pessimistic, lonely and withdrawn (Perdue & Gurtman, 1990), recent research has shown that emotional wellbeing increases with age increase, and that older adults tend to express more positive emotions than do younger adults (Carstensen 1995; Carstensen et al, 2011; Pennebaker & Stone, 2003). However, one area that needs further research is the impact of aging on the use of politeness strategies, which is also related to emotional language use.

Emotional wellbeing is believed to have influence on a speaker's degree of politeness (Forgas, 1999). For example, it was found that people in a happy mood may underestimate the likelihood of giving offense and hence use more direct and less polite request strategies (Mann, 1992; Sinclair & Mark, 1992). On the other hand, negative mood may lead to reduced self-confidence and pessimistic judgments (Forgas, 1994; Mayer & Strong, 1995). Accordingly, negative mood may result in more polite request strategies in conversations (Forgas, 1999). In another research, it was found that people who experienced positive emotions tended to use more positive politeness strategies while those who experienced negative emotions tended to use negative politeness, bald on and off-record politeness strategies (Normand, 2010).

The present study intends to investigate the impact of aging on the use of politeness strategies in the context of the upper-middle social class in the Egyptian society. It provides a quantitative-qualitative analysis of the results of a study conducted on 90 mixed-gender Egyptian adults divided into three equal groups: young, middle-aged and elderly in order to investigate their use of politeness strategies in situations arousing the six basic human emotions of love, happiness, surprise, anger, sadness and fear (Ekman, 1992 and Shaver et al., 1987). Politeness strategies refer to the linguistic choices made in different social settings to claim a certain public self-image and maintain social relationships with others (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

The paper attempts to examine the following research questions:

1. What types of politeness strategies are preferred by each age group in situations arousing positive and negative emotions?
2. What are the emotional and social implications of the preference of each type of politeness strategies across the three age groups?

The answers to the above research questions will hopefully clarify the impact of aging and emotional wellbeing on the use of politeness strategies in the Egyptian society.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section serves to provide an overview of the main theories and research studies related to politeness strategies. Little research has been done on the impact of aging on the use of politeness strategies. Hence, the present research aims to fill the gap in this research area by conducting a study that investigates how age differences may lead to differences in the use of politeness strategies.

Recent research has shown that emotional wellbeing increases with age increase, and that older adults tend to express more positive affective language than do younger adults (Carstensen 1995; Carstensen et al, 2011; Pennebaker & Stone, 2003). Relevant to the use of affective language, or language carrying emotional content, is the use of politeness strategies in verbal interactions, which is a matter of taking into account the feelings of others and showing concern for their emotional gratification (Brown, 2015). In fact, politeness is an essential component

of affective conversational behavior since it implies showing positive or negative feelings towards the addressee through the language choices made (Gupta, Walker & Romano, 2007). Gudykunst & Hall (1994) believe that positive interactions showing adherence to politeness strategies produce positive emotions while negative interactions produce negative emotions.

The politeness model, which was first proposed by Brown and Levinson in 1978 and then reissued in 1987, has often been described as one of the most influential politeness frameworks used by sociolinguists (Eelen, 2001 & Fraser, 2005). Brown and Levinson's model is based on Goffman's (1967) notion of face as the positive social value a person claims for himself/ herself. Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that face is the public self-image that each person aspires to have, and they claim that people tend to maintain one another's face continuously in human interaction.

The politeness model adopted by Brown and Levinson (1987) owes much to the theoretical framework proposed by authors such as Grice (1975), Lakoff (1977) and Leech (1983). Grice (1975) proposed the theory of meaning and cooperative principle, which maintains that a speaker has to make his/ her conversational contribution as is required and expected by the hearer. Lakoff (1977) integrated Grice's conversational maxims and added to them the rules of politeness which the speaker needs to follow to avoid imposing and to be friendly with the hearer. Similarly, Leech built on Grice's approach to propose the principle of politeness as including a set of maxims that represent forms of behavior aimed at establishing and maintaining respect and friendship (Leech, 1983). Brown and Levinson built on the above theories and developed their model of politeness strategies which accounts for strategies used in language interactions to satisfy people's face wants (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Brown and Levinson (1987) sum up politeness behavior in four main strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record and off-record. The positive politeness strategy shows that the speaker recognizes the hearer's desire to have his/ her face respected and

approved of, and it also implies that the relationship between the speaker and the hearer is a friendly one. It includes using statements implying friendship, solidarity and compliments, and it mainly seeks to minimize threat to the hearers' face, attend to their needs and make them feel good about themselves. Examples include statements such as "You look sad. Can I do anything?" and "That's a nice haircut you got; where did you get it?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

While positive politeness is oriented toward showing solidarity and expressing affection, negative politeness aims at minimizing imposition and softening negative statements. The negative politeness strategy seeks to avoid imposition on the hearer and recognizes the hearer's desire to remain autonomous and have his/her freedom intact. Negative politeness may be demonstrated through the use of distancing verbal styles such as using modal verbs, apologizing and asking questions. Examples include statements like "Could you please pass the rice?" and "I'm sorry, it's a lot to ask, but can you lend me a thousand dollar?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The bald on record strategy is a straightforward strategy that does not minimize the threat to the hearer's face but is rather used to directly make a request or express the speaker's needs. However, it may sometimes be used to minimize face-threatening acts implicitly as in giving advice in a non-manipulative way. Examples include using the bald on record strategy in situations of urgency as in "Watch out!" or in situations where the threat is minimized implicitly as in "Welcome, come in." (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The off-record strategy refers to the use of indirect language to remove the speaker from the potential of being imposing. It usually relies on pragmatics to convey the intended meaning in a way that avoids losing face. Off-record strategies include giving hints, giving clues, presupposing, over-generalizing, being ironic or ambiguous, and using rhetorical questions that do not require an answer. An example showing the use of this strategy is saying, "Wow, it's getting cold in here" to imply that the speaker wants the hearer to close the window (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The above-mentioned politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) provide evidence that people do not just cooperate in communication to achieve understanding and get things done, but they also maintain one another's face and attend to each other's face wants. The level of politeness used in conversation may be affected by a number of variables such as power, social distance and formality. This means that when speakers have power over their addressees, they tend to have more influence in conversation and therefore use less polite speech. Similarly, when the participants in a conversation are not familiar with each other or when there is a social distance between them with one being superior to the other, the inferior speaker will use more politeness strategies in addressing his/ her superiors. Also, in situations where people are expected to act and speak in a formal manner, more politeness strategies will be used in communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Research on the relationship between politeness and emotions has often been neglected due to the excessive focus on rationality in previous research (Kadar & Haugh, 2013). However, a growing interest in this field has been witnessed in post-2000 research. Spencer-Oatey (2005) and Locher and Langlotz (2008) have argued that there is a significant relationship between politeness and emotions since certain politeness acts are meant to arouse certain emotions. Spencer-Oatey (2005) explains that emotional reactions such as those expressing joy, surprise, anger, sadness and their subgroups are directly related to face concerns and show the speaker's willingness to save or threaten the face of the hearer. Similarly, Langlotz and Locher (2017) believe that emotions such as happiness, anger, disgust, love, shame or guilt can cause a person to feel positively about a certain object and get attached to it, or feel negatively about it and shun away from it.

Researchers differ in their classification of emotions. Andersen and Guerrero (1998) argue that the primary emotions include happiness, love, pride, anger, fear, sadness, jealousy and guilt. Plutchick (2003) proposes a multidimensional structural model representing eight basic emotions, namely, anger, anticipation, joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness and disgust. Ekman (1992) believes that basic human emotions are measurable, discrete and universal, which makes it possible to examine



them across different cultures. Several theories maintain that the basic human emotions are happiness, surprise, anger, sadness and fear (Ekman, 1992 and Izard, 1992); however, they do not include love in the list of basic emotions under the premise that it is a mixture of emotions such as joy, anxiety and jealousy, and that it is a sentiment or attitude other than an emotion (Ekman, 1992). However, Shaver et al (2001) disagree with this view maintaining that though love is not included in many official lists of basic emotions, yet it is included in every day emotion concepts. They believe that love is one of the most important human emotional experiences and is frequently listed by subjects in surveys as one of the basic human emotions. In this paper, the researcher focused on the six basic human emotions that most of the above researchers agreed upon, i.e. happiness, love, surprise, fear, anger and sadness, in her questionnaire design.

Langlotz and Locher (2017) state that emotions have two sides: a personal side and a social one. The personal side of emotions refers to the emotions that one feels as a result of an internal stimulus such as feeling sad after remembering a sad experience. On the other hand, the social side of emotions refers to emotions that are aroused by an external stimulus such as social interactions or acts performed by others. Every type of emotion can also be seen as leading to a specific behavioral sequence (Langlotz & Locher, 2017).

Emotions can be observed on the linguistic level through emotional cues that are produced in interpersonal interaction or through descriptions of internal emotional states (Langlotz & Locher, 2017). Emotions are believed to be intricately tied to politeness, face and identity construction since what people feel about themselves is greatly affected by social interaction as well as the emotional stances that interlocutors express towards one another (Langlotz & Locher, 2017).

The valence of an emotion, represented by the attractiveness or averseness of an object, is significant in social interactions because the experience of a certain positive or negative emotion can be face-threatening, leaving an impact on interpersonal relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, an expression of anger can threaten the

hearer's positive face implying that the speaker dislikes something about the hearer's behavior. Similarly, the same expression of anger can threaten the hearer's negative face implying that the speaker could harm the hearer for doing that 'something' (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

One of the few studies conducted to explore the relation between emotional states and politeness strategies is that made by Normand (2010) in which she explored the politeness strategies used by American stepsiblings when experiencing certain emotions. The results of the study showed that stepsiblings tended to use positive politeness strategies when experiencing positive emotions in order to get emotionally closer to the addressee. When experiencing negative emotions, however, the participants used negative politeness strategies to distance themselves from the hearer, bald on strategies to indicate lack of concern for the hearer's face, and off-record strategies to avoid interaction with the hearer (Normand, 2010).

Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that their politeness model accounts for politeness strategies used in modes of communication that are universal to human interaction, which makes it suitable for application in the present study to investigate Egyptian adults' use of politeness strategies in different situations. Langlotz and Locher (2017) believe that the politeness field needs further exploration of the link between emotions and (im)polite social interactions, which is one of the objectives of the present research that attempts to fill in the gap in literature on the impact of aging on using politeness strategies in situations arousing the basic human emotions.

### **3. Methodology**

The present paper adopts a psycholinguistic perspective in an attempt to investigate the impact of aging on the use of politeness strategies in situations arousing different positive and negative emotions. The paper provides a quantitative-qualitative analysis of the results of a study conducted on 90 mixed-gender Egyptian adults divided into three equal groups: young, middle-aged and elderly through the last quarter of the year 2015 in order to investigate how the three age groups differed in the use of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987)

in situations arousing the six basic human emotions of happiness, love, surprise, fear, anger and sadness.

The subjects are 90 Egyptian adults divided into three different age groups: 20-39, 40-59 & 60-79. Each age group has 30 subjects with an equal number of males and females to rule out the effect of gender differences on the survey results. The participants are chosen from three different convenient samples that the researcher has access to: academic and administrative staff working at a private university in Cairo, administrative staff in a government institution and members of a social club in Cairo. All the subjects in the young and middle-aged groups have a white collar profession, and the subjects in the oldest group had a white collar profession before retirement. The subjects all hold at least a B.A. university degree and represent members of the middle and higher-middle social classes in Egypt. This choice of subjects' socioeconomic social class makes the subjects representative of the majority of educated Egyptian citizens who have a social circle of acquaintances and can therefore make appropriate judgments on the use of politeness strategies in different situations.

A questionnaire was distributed among the subjects to examine their preference for the use of politeness strategies in situations arousing the six basic emotions of love, happiness, surprise, anger, fear, and sadness. The first page of the questionnaire includes instructions on how to answer the questions and how the basic human emotions are classified. The questionnaire is written in Arabic so it can be understood by the majority of the Egyptian subjects representing the different age groups - (the Arabic and English versions of the questionnaire are provided in Appendices I and II.) The questionnaire requires the respondents to choose the politeness strategy they are more likely to use in each of the six given situations arousing the six basic emotions. For each given situation, four utterances are given to choose from, each representing one of the four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), namely, positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record and off-record. The results of this part are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to examine differences among the three age groups in the use of politeness strategies. However, more focus is laid on the

qualitative analysis based on the description and implications of the subjects' preference for politeness strategies since the quantitative analysis only provides numbers and percentages. It was difficult to use inferential statistics in this study due to the small size of data, which is a matter that can be developed in future research.

The analysis of the questionnaire results aims to address the two research questions: what types of politeness strategies are preferred by each age group in situations arousing positive and negative emotions?, and what are the emotional and social implications of the preference of each type of politeness strategies across the three age groups? The answers to the above research questions are explored in the following section with the aim of clarifying the impact of aging on the use of politeness strategies in situations arousing different emotions in the context of the Egyptian society.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

The questionnaire used in the present study require the respondents to choose the politeness strategy they are more likely to use in each of six given situations arousing the six basic human emotions of happiness, love, surprise, fear, anger and sadness. In each situation, the participants assume experiencing one of the basic emotions and select the politeness strategy they are more likely to use in that situation. For the situation arousing love, the participants assume meeting a person they loved and haven't seen for a long time; for happiness, they assume receiving an award for success; for surprise, they assume receiving a visit from an acquaintance at an unexpected time; for fear, they assume the presence of a burglar in their house; for anger, they assume being hit by another car; and for sadness, they assume having to attend a funeral of a dear one. Also, in each situation, the respondents assume asking for a favor using one of the suggested politeness strategies. For each given situation, four utterances are given to choose from, each representing one of the four politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), namely, positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record and off-record. The following table shows the total number and percentage of times each politeness strategy is chosen by each age group. Each age

group has chosen a total of 180 strategies to use in the six given situations.

**Table 1** Number and percentage of times each politeness strategy is chosen by each age group

Politeness strategy	Number and percentage of times the politeness strategy is chosen by age group					
	20-39 (N = 180)		40-59 (N = 180)		60-79(N = 180)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Positive Politeness	51	28%	79	44%	62	34%
Negative Politeness	40	22%	28	16%	18	10%
Bald On Record	46	26%	38	21%	50	28%
Off-Record	43	24%	35	19%	50	28%

The above table demonstrates that in general, the positive politeness strategy is the most commonly used strategy among the three groups, and the negative politeness strategy is the least commonly used one among the three groups. However, the group showing more instances of choosing positive politeness strategies in the six given situations is the middle-aged group (44%) followed by the oldest group (34%) then the youngest group (28%). This implies that the middle-aged group respondents are more willing to maintain stronger social relations and show appreciation of others through the use of positive politeness strategies. The youngest group show more preference for negative politeness strategies, followed by the middle-aged group then the eldest. This implies that the youngest group are more cautious in dealing with other people as the use of negative politeness indicates that the speaker is worried about the reaction of others and therefore tries to minimize the pressure on them (Gupta, Walker & Romano, 2007). The eldest group, however, do not seem to be under the same pressure to avoid face threats to others, which implies that the senior citizens hold a higher status in the Egyptian society and feel more entitled to be treated with respect rather than to worry about threatening others' face. The same implication is supported by the fact that the oldest group show more preference for bald

on strategies, followed by the young group then the middle-aged. The choice of bald on strategies indicates the speaker's preference for making direct requests rather than mitigating the force of the request or worrying about its effect on the listener. Finally, the off-record strategy is mostly preferred by the eldest group, followed by the young then the middle-aged. The use of off-record strategies is preferred by the elderly, especially in situations arousing anger, which implies that they prefer to make indirect requests in such situations rather than get into direct conflict with others. This implication is supported by Birditt, Fingerman and Almeida (2005) who found that older adults were less willing to engage in conflicts and usually avoided escalation of a tense situation more often than did younger adults.

In order to investigate the impact of positive versus negative emotions on the politeness strategies used, the six basic human emotions of happiness, love, surprise, fear, anger and sadness need to be classified into positive and negative emotions. Previous research maintains that positive emotions refer to pleasant states and emotional wellbeing resulting from fulfillment of desires and a feeling of gratitude, whereas negative emotions reflect unpleasant states and are associated with unmet needs and overall dissatisfaction with one's conditions (Andries, 2011). Positive emotions include feelings of relief, joy and love while negative emotions refer to feelings of fear, hate and disgust (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Accordingly, in the present paper, love and happiness are classified as positive emotions while the remaining four emotions (surprise, fear, anger and sadness) are classified as negative emotions.

The following tables (2, 3, 4 and 5) show the number and percentage of times each politeness strategy was chosen by each age group in the situations arousing the six basic emotions of love, happiness, surprise, fear, anger and sadness.

**Table 2** The number and percentage of times positive politeness is chosen by each age group in situations arousing the six basic emotions

Emotion aroused by the situation	Number and percentage of times positive politeness is chosen by each age group					
	20-39 (N = 51)		40-59 (N = 79)		60-79 (N = 62)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Love	14	27%	19	24%	19	31%
Happiness	21	41%	27	34%	18	29%
Surprise	9	18%	11	14%	12	19%
Fear	4	8%	9	12%	6	10%
Anger	1	2%	8	10%	3	5%
Sadness	2	4%	5	6%	4	6%

The above table indicates that the three age groups prefer to use more positive politeness strategies in situations arousing the positive emotions of happiness and love and fewer positive politeness strategies in situations arousing negative emotions such as anger and sadness. However, the elderly group show more preference for positive politeness in the situation arousing love where they assume meeting someone they love and haven't seen for a long time. This implies that the elderly feel lonelier and long for visits from their loved ones, possibly their children and family members who may be too busy to visit.

The table also shows that 41% of the young group compared to 34% of the middle-aged and 29% of the elderly chose positive politeness in the situation of happiness. This implies that the young group show more preference for positive politeness strategies in the situation arousing happiness where they assume getting rewarded for a successful accomplishment. This may also show that the younger adults are more concerned with achieving success and getting rewarded in their early job careers.

The above results agree with the finding of Normand (2010) that speakers tend to use positive politeness strategies when experiencing positive emotions. They also support the claim that positive interactions produce positive emotions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), and that older adults tend to experience more positive emotions and react in a more

positive way than do younger adults (Carstensen 1995; Carstensen et al, 2011; Pennebaker & Stone, 2003). However, the results of the present study do not support the findings of other research which found that people in a happy mood may underestimate the likelihood of giving offense and hence use more direct and less polite request strategies (Forgas, 1999; Mann, 1992; Sinclair & Mark, 1992). Also, the middle-aged group's choice of more politeness strategies in situations arousing negative emotions of fear, anger and sadness shows their stronger ability to control negative feelings and maintain intimate social relationships.

**Table 3** The number and percentage of times negative politeness is chosen by each age group in situations arousing the six basic emotions

Emotion aroused by the situation	Number and percentage of times negative politeness is chosen by each age group					
	20-39 (N = 40)		40-59 (N= 28)		60-79 (N = 18)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Love	8	20%	3	11%	5	28%
Happiness	5	13%	1	4%	1	5%
Surprise	2	5%	2	7%	2	11%
Fear	9	22.5%	6	21%	3	17%
Anger	9	22.5%	6	21%	4	22%
Sadness	7	17%	10	36%	3	17%

The above table demonstrates that in general, the three groups prefer using more negative politeness strategies when experiencing negative emotions than when experiencing positive ones. It also shows that the group choosing more negative politeness strategies in all situations is the youngest group, followed by the middle-aged then the oldest. This implies that the young adults are more concerned with mitigating the force of a request and avoiding threatening the face of their addressees. It also implies that they are more likely to distance themselves from the interlocutor in the assumed situations. The oldest group, on the other hand, select fewer negative politeness strategies than the other two groups as they do not feel the obligation to avoid threatening the face of their addressees, possibly because they feel in power owing to their age, which entitles them to be respected by others. This supports the claim



made by Brown and Levinson (1987) that when speakers have power over their addressees, they tend to have more influence in conversations and to use less polite speech.

However, the above table also shows more preference on part of the elderly group to use negative politeness in the situation arousing love where they assume meeting someone they love and haven't seen for a long time (28% of the elderly chose negative politeness in this situation compared to 20% of the young group and 11% of the middle-aged). This implies that the elderly, as previously mentioned, appreciate being visited by others but at the same time try not to be imposing on them when asking them to visit more often.

**Table 4** The number and percentage of times the bald on record strategy is chosen by each age group in situations arousing the six basic emotions

Emotion aroused by the situation	Number and percentage of times the bald on record strategy is chosen by each age group					
	20-39 (N = 46)		40-59 (N = 38)		60-79 (N = 50)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Love	4	9%	3	8%	2	4%
Happiness	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Surprise	15	33%	14	37%	15	30%
Fear	12	26%	7	18%	19	38%
Anger	6	13%	5	13%	3	6%
Sadness	9	19%	9	24%	11	22%

The above table indicates that all the subjects tend to use bald on record strategies in situations arousing negative emotions more than they do in situations arousing positive emotions. The most significant difference between the three age groups is mainly in the situation arousing fear. The oldest group show more preference for the bald on record strategy when experiencing fear (38% compared to 26% of the young group and 18% of the middle-aged), which implies that they are less able to regulate their emotions during fear, possibly due to the fact that their physical strength is declining and that they need to directly seek

others' help in emergencies. Even though addressing face wants is not always expected in cases of emergency, the young and middle-aged groups seem to have more preference to use other politeness strategies that are more face saving than the direct bald on record in situations arousing fear.

**Table 5** The number and percentage of times the off-record politeness strategy is chosen by each age group in situations arousing the six basic emotions

Emotion aroused by the situation	Number and percentage of times the off-record politeness strategy is chosen by each age group					
	20-39 (N = 43)		40-59 (N = 35)		60-79 (N = 50)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Love	4	9%	5	14%	4	8%
Happiness	4	9%	2	6%	11	22%
Surprise	4	9%	3	9%	1	2%
Fear	5	12%	8	23%	2	4%
Anger	14	33%	11	31%	20	40%
Sadness	12	28%	6	17%	12	24%

The above table shows that the three groups prefer to use more off-record strategies in situations arousing negative emotions than they do in situations arousing positive emotions. The table also demonstrates that the significant differences among the three age groups in their choice of off-record strategies are mainly in situations arousing happiness, fear and anger. In the situation arousing happiness, the oldest group prefer using the off-record strategy more than the other two groups (22% compared to 9% of the young group and 6% of the middle-aged group). This could imply that when the older adults feel happy, they try not to spoil their happiness, hence they avoid imposing or making direct requests, perhaps for fear of losing face and feeling embarrassed if others turn them down. In the situation arousing fear, the middle-aged group show more preference for the off-record strategy (23% compared to 12% of the young group and 4% of the old group), perhaps because they do not want to appear weak or in need of assistance by directly asking for help. At this age, they serve as role models for their children and subordinates, so they

seem to avoid admitting their fear and need of help. As for the situation arousing anger, the oldest group is the group that prefer the use of off-record strategy the most (40% compared to 28% of the young group and 17% of the middle-aged group). This implies that the older adults tend to avoid conflicts and, as maintained by Birditt, Fingerman and Almeida (2005), usually avoid escalation of a tense situation more often than do younger adults.

The data analysis of the questionnaire used in the present research provides an answer to the first research question; that is, what types of politeness strategies are preferred by each age group in situations arousing positive and negative emotions? The results of the present study indicate that in general, the oldest group show more preference for bald on record and off-record strategies, the middle-aged group show more preference for positive politeness strategies and the youngest group show more preference for negative politeness strategies.

The detailed analysis of the above results addresses the second research question; that is, what are the emotional and social implications of the preference of each type of politeness strategies across the three age groups? The implications of each group's preference for certain politeness strategies indicate that the oldest group show more preference for the bald on strategy in situations arousing fear and the off-record strategy in situations arousing anger. This suggests that older adults feel more entitled to be respected and obeyed by others and therefore use direct commands, especially at times of fear, to get people to help them immediately. In situations arousing anger, the older adults prefer the off-record strategy to avoid getting into direct conflict. The middle-aged group show more preference for the use of positive politeness strategies in most situations followed by the oldest then the youngest adults, which implies that the middle-aged group respondents are more willing to maintain stronger social relations and show appreciation of others through the use of positive politeness strategies. The youngest group show more preference for negative politeness strategies in most situations, followed by the middle group then the oldest, which implies that the youngest group may lack self-confidence or feel less powerful than others and therefore feel obliged to minimize the pressure on others by using non-

threatening negative politeness strategies. In this way, negative politeness strategies highlight respect for the hearer and are meant to enhance social distancing (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of the present study is the possible mismatch between each specified emotion and the situation mentioned under it. The situations provided in the questionnaire are intended to make the participants assume experiencing one basic emotion in each situation; however, it is possible that each situation may arouse emotions other than the one mentioned. For example, the situation that comes under the emotion of love, which is related to meeting a beloved person, may also arouse the emotion of happiness. Similarly, the situation listed under the emotion of anger, which is related to having a car accident, may also arouse the emotion of fear. One way to address this problem in future research is by asking the respondents to mention a real-life situation representing each of the basic emotions and to mention what they actually said in that situation. This would give a more accurate explanation of how the subjects actually behave and what politeness strategies they tend to use in real life situations. Another limitation is that gender differences are not accounted for in this study. Gender is an important factor that may greatly affect the choice of politeness strategies (Lakoff, 1987). Therefore, it is suggested that future research studies compare between male and female preferences for politeness strategies across different age groups. Finally, a third limitation lies in the fact the data size is relatively small as the questionnaire requires the choice of given politeness strategies in six given situations, which does not provide for wider range of choices in more varied situations. This could be addressed by designing more elaborate and comprehensive questionnaires covering more situations that are likely to occur in real life, and by also inviting respondents to describe their use of politeness strategies in actual real-life situations that they have experienced.

### **Conclusion**

The present study provides a contribution to the literature on the impact of age differences on the use of politeness strategies in situations arousing different emotions. The findings demonstrate that the older adults show tendency to use bald on record strategies in situations arousing fear signaling their vulnerability and need for assistance and prefer off-record strategies in situations arousing anger in order to avoid direct conflict with others. The middle-aged group show more preference for positive politeness strategies indicating their tendency to maintain strong social relationships and to control negative emotions. The younger adults, on the other hand, show more preference for negative politeness strategies indicating their tendency to enhance social distancing and avoid threatening the face of others. The present study attempts to link research on aging, emotion processing and politeness with the aim of providing a complete picture of social interactions across different age groups.

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## Appendix I Questionnaire (Arabic Version)

استطلاع رأي  
الأسئلة التالية تهدف لاستطلاع رأيكم فيما يتعلق باستخدام أساليب التهذب في مواقف تثير مشاعر مختلفة، وهي تمثل جزءاً من بحث أكاديمي أقوم به في مجال علم النفس اللغوي، ويسعدني مشاركتكم في هذا الاستطلاع مع ضمان عدم كشف هويتكم أو الإشارة إليها بأي شكل من الأشكال.

أولاً: بيانات خاصة بالمشارك:

ضع علامة (√) أمام الإجابة المناسبة لكل من الأسئلة التالية:

١. المرحلة العمرية:

(أ) من ٢٠ إلى ٣٩

(ب) من ٤٠ إلى ٥٩

(ج) ٦٠ فما فوق

٢. النوع:

(أ) ذكر

(ب) انثى

ثانياً: بيانات الاستطلاع

يمكن تقسيم المشاعر التي يشعر بها المرء في المواقف المختلفة إلى ستة مشاعر أساسية وهي:

الحب – السعادة – الدهشة – الغضب – الحزن – الخوف

ويوضح الجدول التالي أمثلة من المشاعر الثانوية التي قد تندرج تحت كل من المشاعر الأساسية السابق ذكرها:

الحب	السعادة	الدهشة	الغضب	الحنن	الخوف
العاطفة	الحماس	التعجب	الضيق	اليأس	الرعب
الشوق	الدهجة	الاستغراب	الغيظ	الحرج	الصدمة
الرغبة	الاستمتاع	الحيرة	الكراهية	الأسف	القلق
اللهافة	الفخر	الشك	الحقد	التعاطف	الارتباك
الإعجاب	الانتصار	الذهول	الانتقام	الاكتئاب	الاضطراب
الانجذاب	الأمل	المفاجأة	الرفض	الوحدة	الجزع
الاهتمام	التفاؤل	التساؤل	العداء	الذنب	التوتر
الحنان	الرضا	الفضول	الاشمئزاز	الإحباط	الهلع

والآن يرجى الانتقال للصفحة التالية للإجابة عن أسئلة استطلاع الرأي.  
تمثل الجمل التالية ستة مواقف تثير المشاعر الأساسية الموضحة أعلاه. ضع علامة (√) أمام  
الجمل المناسبة التي تتوقع أن تقولها حال تعرضك لكل من المواقف المذكورة.

#### ١ - الحب

- ترى شخصا مقربا إليك تحبه ولم تراه منذ فترة طويلة وتتمنى أن تراه أكثر في المستقبل.
- (أ) أنا سعدت جدا بمقابلتك وأتمنى رؤيتك كثيرا بعد ذلك.
- (ب) ألا تستطيع أن تزيد من زيارتك؟
- (ج) يجب أن تكثر من زيارتك لي.
- (د) هل لديك خطط أخرى للزيارة قريبا؟

#### ٢ - السعادة

- حصلت على جائزة تقدير لنجاحك في أمر ما وتريد أن تطلب من أحد زملائك أن يقوم  
بتصويرك لتسجيل هذه اللحظة.
- (أ) أنت موهوب في التقاط الصور ويسعدني أن تقوم بتصويري الآن.
- (ب) هل يمكنك أن تقوم بتصويري أثناء استلامي للجائزة؟
- (ج) قم بتصويري عند استلامي للجائزة.
- (د) أنا أحتاج لشخص يقوم بتصوير هذه اللحظة.

#### ٣ - الدهشة

- يقوم أحد معارفك بزيارتك في وقت متأخر لا تتوقع الزيارة فيه.
- (أ) زيارتك تسعدني جدا.
- (ب) أعتذر لك ولن هل تستطيع الزيارة في وقت لاحق؟
- (ج) أهلاً، تفضل.
- (د) لقد كنت ذاهبا للنوم الآن.

#### ٤ - الخوف

- تشك في وجود لص داخل بيتك فتذهب لطلب المساعدة من أحد الجيران.
- (أ) أنت شخص يعتمد عليه ولذلك لجأت لك للمساعدة في الإمساك بلص تسلل إلى بيتي.
- (ب) هل تستطيع مساعدتي في الإمساك بلص تسلل إلى بيتي؟
- (ج) ساعدني في القبض على لص!
- (د) أشعر بوجود لص في منزلي. ماذا أفعل؟

٥- الغضب

- يقوم أحد الأشخاص بالاصطدام بسيارتك أثناء قيادتك في الحارة المخصصة لك.  
(أ) أنا سعيد أنك بخير ومتأكد أنك بالكرم الذي يجعلك تدفع تكاليف إصلاح الخسائر.  
(ب) هل يمكن أن تدفع تكاليف إصلاح الخسائر؟  
(ج) يجب أن تدفع تكاليف إصلاح الخسائر.  
(د) من الذي يدفع تكاليف إصلاح الخسائر في مثل هذه الحالات؟

٦- الحزن

- تشعر بالأسى لوفاة شخص عزيز وتريد أن يصطحبك صديقك لحضور الجنازة.  
(أ) أنت الشخص الذي ألجأ إليه دوماً في المواقف الصعبة. أنا أحتاجك معي لحضور جنازة.  
(ب) عذراً ولكن هل يمكنك أن تأتي معي لحضور جنازة؟  
(ج) تعال معي لحضور جنازة اليوم.  
(د) لا أستطيع الذهاب للجنازة اليوم بمفردي.

## Appendix II

### Questionnaire (English Translation)

The following questions aim to investigate your view on the use of politeness strategies in situations arousing different emotions, and your answers will be used as the basis of an academic research I am currently conducting in the field of psycholinguistics. Your contribution is highly appreciated, and I assure you that your identity will not be revealed under any circumstances.

#### I. Demographic questions

##### A. Circle the age range that you belong to.

1. 20-39
2. 40-59
3. 60-79

##### B. Specify your gender

1. Male
2. Female

#### II. Questionnaire Items

Human emotions may be divided into the six basic emotions of love, happiness, surprise, fear, anger and sadness. The following table shows these six primary emotions with a list of secondary emotions that fall under each of them.

Love	Happiness	Surprise	Fear	Anger	Sadness
Affection	Enthusiasm	Exclamati	Horror	Annoyan	Despair
Longing	Cheerfulne	on	Shock	ce	Embarras
Desire	ss	Astonish-	Anxiety	Irritation	s-ment
Passion	Enjoyment	ment	Agitation	Hate	Pity
Infatuatio	Pride	Confusion	Disturb-	Envy	Symphath

n Attraction Caring Compassion	Triumph Hope Optimism Contentment	Doubt Amazement Surprise Wonder Curiosity	ance Alarm Tension Panic	Vengeful -ness Resentment Hostility Disgust	y Depression Loneliness Guilt Disappointment
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**Proceed to the following page to start answering the questionnaire items.**

**Following are six situations arousing the six basic human emotions listed above. Put a check mark before the utterance you would most probably say in each of the proposed situations.**

**1. Love**

You meet someone you love and have not seen for a long time. You would like to see him/her more often in the future.

- a) It's been a pleasure seeing you and I hope to see you more often.
- b) Can't you visit more often?
- c) You should check on me more often.
- d) So, do you have any plans to visit again soon?

**2. Happiness**

You are given an award for success and would like a colleague to take a picture of you to document this event.

- a) You're talented at taking pictures. I'll be glad if you can do it for me now.
- b) Could you take a picture of me receiving the award?
- c) Take a picture of me receiving the award.
- d) I need someone to take a picture of this special event.

**3. Surprise**

A distant friend pays you a visit at an unexpected late time.

- a) Your visit pleases me so much.
- b) I'm sorry but could you drop by later, please?
- c) Welcome; come in.
- d) I was just about to go to bed.

**4. Fear**

You suspect a burglar has broken into your house, and you seek your neighbor's help.

- a) You are very reliable, and that's why I'm turning to you to help me catch a burglar that sneaked into my house.

b) Could you possibly help me catch a burglar that sneaked into my house?

c) Help me catch a burglar!

d) I feel there is a burglar in my house. What shall I do?

### **5. Anger**

Someone hits your car while you are driving in your lane.

a) I'm glad you're fine, and I'm sure you are generous enough to pay for the damage done.

b) Could you pay for the damage done?

c) You have to pay for the damage.

d) Who usually pays for the damage in such cases?

### **6. Sadness**

You are grieving the death of a dear person, and you need your friend to accompany you to the funeral.

a) You're the one I always turn to in hard times. I need you to come to a funeral with me today.

b) I'm sorry, but could you come with me to a funeral?

c) Come with me to a funeral today.

d) I can't go to the funeral alone today.

