



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ARAB CELEBRITIES' POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SELECTED 'TALK
TO AL JAZEERA' TALK SHOWS**

TAHA MAHMOOD TAHA

FBMK 2018 88



**ARAB CELEBRITIES' POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN SELECTED
'TALK TO AL JAZEERA' TALK SHOWS**

By

TAHA MAHMOOD TAHA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

September 2018

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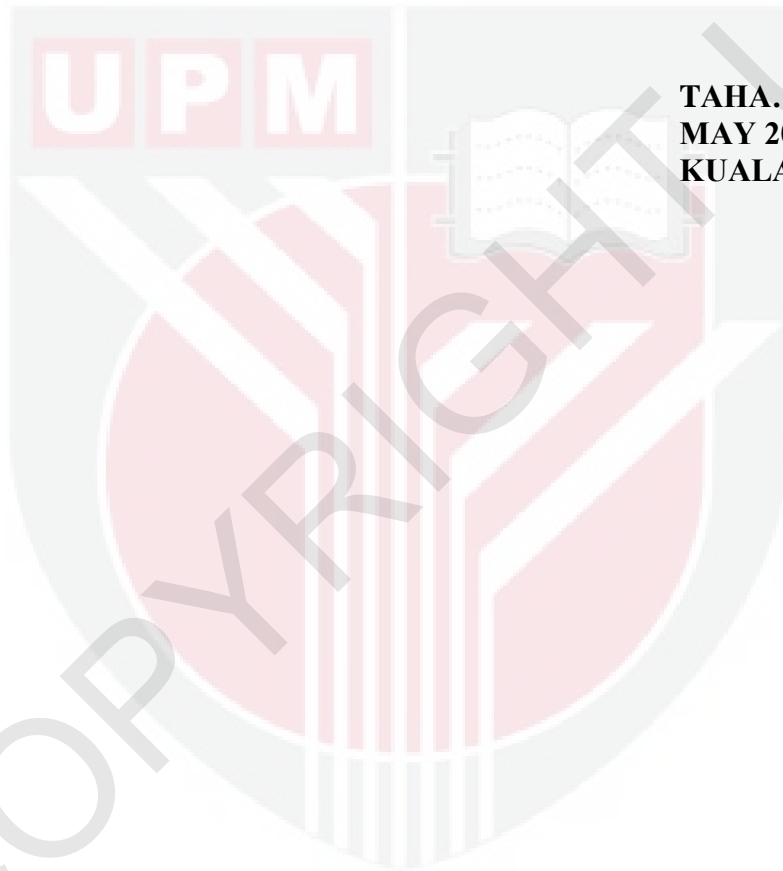
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DEDICATION

***TO
MY PARENTS, BROTHERS, SISTERS, AND MY NIECE (MIADA),
THE MEMORIES OF MY DEAREST LATE BROTHER....(BAHA'A),
AND
THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND, THE DEAREST LATE(MARWAN).***



**TAHA...
MAY 2018...
KUALA LUMPUR...**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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By

TAHA MAHMOOD TAHA

September 2018

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Faculty : Modern Languages and Communications

When people communicate they usually perform various speech acts such as giving compliments, apologizing, thanking, and making requests. The performance of these speech acts most often involves different types of politeness strategies. The present research focuses on investigating how the Arabs use English language in TV talk shows to express politeness. The main purpose of this study is classifying the speech act categories and analysing the politeness strategies performed by Arab celebrities in talk shows. Also, it aims to examine the linguistic expressions used within the speech act categories as well the politeness strategies. The dearth of studies which were conducted to identify the politeness strategies and speech act categories used by Arab celebrities during talk shows was the main reason behind doing this study. Seven episodes from the 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk show were downloaded from YouTube and transcribed by the researcher. The data were analysed according to Searle's (1976) speech act theory and Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory. The study is a qualitative study and a discourse analysis approach was used to analyse data. The study was conducted at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The results of the study revealed that the Arab celebrities tended to use more positive politeness strategies than other strategies. It also showed that they used representative speech acts more than the other categories. Furthermore, they used different linguistic expressions within speech act categories and politeness strategies during the talk shows. The findings of the study showed that the Arab celebrities tended to use narrative during the talk shows. Also, the findings revealed that the celebrities tended to use the inclusive (i.e., *we*) form to include both the speaker and the hearer in the activity during their speech. The findings of the current study provide some useful insights into how the Arab speakers utilise politeness strategies when they interact in English in TV talk shows and serve as a guide for ESL and EFL users in avoiding conflict when interacting with others.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**STRATEGI KESANTUNAN YANG DIGUNAKAN OLEH CELEBRITI
ARAB DALAM RANCANGAN BUAL BICARA ALJAZEERA**

Oleh

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Apabila orang berkomunikasi, biasanya mereka melakukan pelbagai tuturan lakuan, seperti menyatakan komplimen, kemaafan, terima kasih dan melaksanakan permintaan. Pelaksanaan tuturan lakuan tersebut kebanyakannya melibatkan strategi kesopanan yang berbeza. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengklasifikasikan kategori tuturan lakuan tersebut dan menganalisis strategi kesopanan yang digunakan oleh selebriti Arab dalam rancangan bicara. Ia juga bertujuan untuk meneliti ekspresi linguistik yang digunakan dalam lingkungan kategori tuturan lakuan di samping strategi kesopanan. Kekurangan kajian yang telah dijalankan bagi meneliti strategi kesopanan dan kategori tuturan lakuan yang digunakan oleh selebriti Arab semasa rancangan bicara merupakan sebab utama kajian ini dijalankan. Tujuh episod (7) dari 'Bicara Dengan Al Jazeera' rancangan bicara telah dimuat turun daripada YouTube dan ditranskripsikan oleh penyelidik. Data telah dianalisis berdasarkan teori tuturan lakuan Searle (1976) dan teori kesopanan Brown dan Levinson (1987). Kajian ini merupakan kajian kualitatif dan pendekatan analisis wacana telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di Fakulti Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa selebriti Arab berkecenderungan untuk menggunakan lebih banyak strategi kesopanan yang positif berbanding strategi lain. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa mereka menggunakan lebih banyak tuturan lakuan representatif berbanding kategori lain. Di samping itu, mereka menggunakan ekspresi linguistik yang berbeza dalam lingkungan kategori tuturan lakuan dan strategi kesopanan semasa rancangan bicara tersebut. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa selebriti Arab berkecenderungan untuk menggunakan cara naratif semasa rancangan bicara. Di samping itu, dapatan memperlihatkan bahawa selebriti tersebut berkecenderungan untuk menggunakan bentuk inklusif (kita) bagi merangkumi penutur dan pendengar dalam aktiviti dalam pertuturan mereka.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
APPROVAL	iv
DECLARATION	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study	5
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Scope and Limitations	6
1.7 Definition of Terms	6
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Politeness	8
2.3 Politeness Theories	9
2.3.1 Grice's Theory of Conversation	9
2.3.2 Leech (1983) Conversational Maxim Model	10
2.3.3 Robin Lakoff (1975) Social Norm Model	12
2.3.4 Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness theory	13
2.3.4.1 Payoffs	17
2.3.4.2 The Circumstances	17
2.3.4.3 The Integration of Imposition of the Payoffs and Weighting the Risk in the Choice of Strategies	18
2.4 Impoliteness	18
2.4.1 Culpeper's Model of Impoliteness (1996)	19
2.4.2 Terkourafi's (2008) Impoliteness Model	20
2.5 The Speech Act Theories	21
2.6 Formats of Talk Shows	22
2.6.1 Talk Shows as Institutional Talk	23
2.6.2 Managing a Talk Show	23
2.6.3 Celebrity Interviews vs. Political Interviews	24
2.6.4 Role of Audience in Talk Shows	25
2.7 Theoretical Framework	25
2.8 Conceptual Framework	26

2.9	Previous Studies on Politeness and Speech Acts	28
2.9.1	Previous Studies on Politeness	28
2.9.2	Previous Studies on Speech Acts	31
2.10	Summary	33
3	METHODOLOGY	35
3.1	Introduction	35
3.2	Corpus of the Study	35
3.2.1	Selection criteria	35
3.2.2	Sampling Design	36
3.2.3	Description of the Corpus	36
3.3	Phases of Data Collection	37
3.4	Description of Participants of the Seven Talk Shows	37
3.5	Data Analysis Procedures	39
3.5.1	Identification of the Speech Acts Used in the ‘Talk to Al Jazeera’ Talk Shows	40
3.5.2	The Politeness Strategies Used in the ‘Talk to Al Jazeera’ Talk Shows	42
3.5.3	Frequency of Politeness Strategy Use	44
3.6	The Transcription of Data	45
3.7	Coding of the Data	45
3.8	Summary of the Chapter	47
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	48
4.1	Introduction	48
4.2	Speech Acts	48
4.2.1	Analysis of Assertive/Representative Speech Acts	51
4.2.2	Analysis of the Commissive Speech Acts	53
4.2.3	Analysis of Directive Speech Acts	55
4.2.4	Analysis of Expressive Speech Acts	56
4.3	Politeness Strategies Performed by the Arab Host and Guests during the ‘Talk to Al Jazeera’ Talk Show	57
4.3.1	Positive Politeness Strategies	59
4.3.1.1	Include Both S and H in the Activity Strategy	60
4.3.1.2	Give or Ask for Reason Strategy	61
4.3.1.3	Avoid Disagreement Strategy	61
4.3.1.4	Presuppose, Raise, Assert Common Ground Strategy	62
4.3.1.5	Intensify Interest in Hearer Strategy	64
4.3.1.6	Exaggerate Strategy	64
4.3.1.7	Promise, Offer Strategy	65
4.3.1.8	Notice, Attend to Hearer Strategy	66
4.3.1.9	Be Optimistic Strategy	67
4.3.2	Negative Politeness Strategies	68
4.3.2.1	Question, Hedge Strategy	68
4.3.2.2	Give Deference Strategy	69
4.3.2.3	The ‘Be Pessimistic’ Strategy	70
4.3.2.4	Conventionally Indirect Strategy	71

	4.3.2.5	Minimize the Imposition Strategy	72
	4.3.2.6	Apologize Strategy	72
	4.3.3	Bald On-Record Strategies	73
4.4		The Frequency of the Politeness Strategies in the Selected Talk Shows	75
4.5		The Linguistic Expressions Used within Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies during the ‘Talk To Al Jazeera’ Talk Show	79
	4.5.1	The Linguistic Expressions Used within Speech Acts	79
	4.5.1.1	The Expressions of Expressive Speech Acts	80
	4.5.1.2	The Expressions of Commissive Speech Acts	80
	4.5.1.3	The Expressions of Representative Speech Acts	81
	4.5.1.4	The Expressions of Directive Speech Acts	83
	4.5.2	The Linguistic Expressions Used within the Politeness Strategies	88
	4.5.2.1	Linguistic Expressions Used within Positive Politeness Strategies	89
	4.5.2.2	Linguistic Expressions Used within Negative Politeness Strategies	90
	4.5.2.3	Linguistic Expressions Used within Bald-On-Record Politeness Strategies	91
4.6		Discussion	93
5		CONCLUSION	97
	5.1	Introduction	97
	5.2	Summary	97
	5.3	What are the different types of speech act categories performed by the Arab celebrities in ‘Talk to Al Jazeera’ talk shows?	97
	5.4	How Are Linguistic Expressions That Were Used by Arab Celebrities in the ‘Talk To Al Jazeera’ Talk Shows?	98
	5.5	How Are the Different Types of Politeness Strategies Used in the Selected Talk Shows?	99
	5.6	What Are the Most Frequently Used Politeness Strategies in the Selected Talk Shows?	100
	5.7	Limitations of the Study	101
	5.8	Recommendations for Future Studies	101
		REFERENCES	102
		APPENDICES	111
		BIODATA OF STUDENT	154

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
3.1	Selected 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk show episodes	37
3.2	The participants of the talk shows	39
3.3	The analytical framework	40
3.4	Speech act analysis	42
3.5	Politeness strategies analysis	43
3.6	Transcription and coding sample	45
3.7	Coding abbreviations for speech acts	46
3.8	Coding abbreviations for politeness strategies	46
4.1	Speech act classifications according to Searle (1976)	50
4.2	The Statistics of Speech Act Categories	50
4.3	The statistics of politeness strategies	58
4.4	Frequency of linguistic expressions used within politeness strategies	75
4.5	Asking expressions	84
4.6	Examples of commanding expressions	85
4.7	Linguistic expressions within speech acts	86
4.8	Linguistic expressions used within politeness strategies	88

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	Terkourafi's Impoliteness Categories	21
2.2	Theoretical Framework	26
2.3	Conceptual Framework	27
3.1	Concordancing for the Thanking Strategy	44
4.1	Understanding Searle's Speech Theory	49
4.2	Commissive Speech Act Component	53
4.3	Directive Speech Act Diagram	55
4.4	Percentages of Politeness Strategies	59
4.5	Positive Politeness Strategies Used in the Current Study	60
4.6	Negative politeness strategies used in the current study	68
4.7	Concordances of the 'We' Expression	77
4.8	Concordances of the 'I Think' Expression	78
4.9	Concordances of the 'Look' Expression	78
4.10	Using 'Let' as a Linguistic Pattern	92
4.11	Linguistic Patterns of 'Quite Sure'	92
4.12	Linguistic Patterns of 'I Think'	93

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

H	Host
G	Guest
EPS	Episode
TU	Turn
SPA	Speech Act
AS	Assertive
ST	Statement
SG	Suggestion
EX	Explanation
DI	Directive
A	Asking
CO	Commanding
R	Requesting
C	Commissive
P	Promising
PL	Planning
E	Expressive
TH	Thanking
AP	Apologizing
W	Welcoming
DE	Declaration
DC	Declaring
FTA	Face Threatening Act
PS	Politeness Strategies
PP	Positive Politeness
NP	Negative Politeness
BR	Bald On-Record
OFR	Off-Record
LEXP	Linguistic Expression

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives and research questions. It ends with the definitions of main terms and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a means of communication and a part of culture which reflects on one's cultural identity and social behaviour. It is a fact that people communicate with each other differently in different situations such as meetings, weddings, educational classes, entertainment shows, etc. The different communications which take place in different situations may result from differences in education, age, personality, gender, and setting. The other factors that are likely to affect the communications are the social distance and relationship between the interlocutors. In addition, the context of talk, whether it is formal or informal, affects the way we speak (Fauzi, 2010).

In different communications, language speakers usually use different words and expressions to achieve a number of purposes, and at the same time, they try to explicitly and straightforwardly express themselves (Elliott, Alexander, Mescher, Mohan, & Barnato, 2016; Martin et al., 2016), express their feelings and ideas effectively and successfully (Tiwari, 2016), facilitate communication and reinforce relationships (Flaherty, Pearce, & Rubin, 1998; Frohlich & Oppenheimer, 1998), help listeners to easily follow up and interpret the meanings being communicated (Tiwari, 2016), and threaten or avoid threatening the hearer's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The branch of linguistics that is concerned with studying the way people speak and how they negotiate meaning is called pragmatics. Pragmatics, as defined by Yule (1997), is the "study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)" (p. 3). Such communication between people requires being polite so as to achieve successful communication as 'impoliteness' does not only affect the communication process between interlocutors, but it also allows a person to be perceived negatively; it can make others judge or label us as "rude", "uncooperative" or "offhand" (Watts, 2003). Due to the fact that people sometimes need to communicate unpleasant and threatening information to the hearer, studying politeness strategies seems to be crucial.

According to Escandell (1998), politeness can be understood as a collection of social norms established by a society that regulates the behaviour of its members, prohibiting some forms of conduct and favouring others. Those behaviours that fit in with the standards are considered polite, and those that do not are considered impolite. In this

sense, the standards of politeness are not only a part of the culture but also a part of the language. Spencer-Oatey (2000) defines politeness as the use of formal and deferential language. In a similar vein, Lakoff (1973) viewed politeness as a means of reducing friction in social interaction. The concept of 'politeness' is based on the notion that interlocutors should keep their talk smooth. According to Brown and Levinson, there are three social factors that could have effects on politeness (1987, p. 74), which are the social distance, relative power, and absolute ranking of imposition in a particular culture.

In talk shows, politeness is prioritized by the host when it involves celebrities or famous guests because to a large extent, the invited guests' reputations are at stake. By employing politeness strategies, the guests may reduce the probability of friction in the conversation which have negative effects to leave good impression in the public eyes (the guests) and the host as well. For example, in TV talk shows, which are broadcast in a live format to the public, the speakers might select their words carefully during the interaction to maintain smooth conversation and to leave a good impression about themselves on a public, as well.

For example, in response to the host's questions, the guest of the talk show, who is usually an experienced person in a specific area of life, can select different words during the conversation to provide answers that are informative and convincing not only to satisfy the host but also to influence the audience's opinions behind the screen (Deshotel, 2003). Moreover, the guests' responses to the host questions are crafted in such a way as to hide his or her real personality, identity, and true feelings, which makes this type of communication a deceiving environment (Caspi & Gorsky, 2006; Donath, 1999; Dwyer, Hiltz, & Passerini, 2007). While attempting to answer the questions, the guest selects his or her words carefully to reflect a good impression about him or her in the eyes of the public (Deshotel, 2003). In response to the guest answers, the host, on the other hand, selects his or her questions to persuade the guest to provide the required facts and information that the audiences are eager to know.

To do so, a guest must have sufficient information about the topic being discussed, possess negotiation skills and strategies, and have interviewing tactics (Deshotel, 2003). During this process, a host usually starts asking indirect questions that are hedged by longer introductions, hoping to elicit straightforward answers from the guest and to avoid threatening the face of the guest (Katrňáková, 2001). However, when the host realizes that the guest is not responding appropriately and in a straightforward manner, he or she becomes more direct to force the guest to answer his/her questions more accurately and in a straightforward manner.

Brown and Levinson (1978) have said that there are certain acts that intrinsically threaten the face and cannot be performed without posing a threat to the hearers' or speakers' face. Brown and Levinson (1978) have developed "the concept of the face threatening act (FTA), which refers to a verbal act which intrinsically threatens face

and may require a face redressive action.” They explained the idea of ‘Face’ as “the public self-image that which every member wants to claims for himself” (1987 p. 2).

From a pragmatic point of view, the higher directness in the hosts’ questions, the more threatened the guest’s face, as more imposition is placed on him or her (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Although antagonistic positions are one of the traits of a host (Lauerbach, 2007), being polite is still required on his part so that he will not be perceived as being ‘rude’ or ‘impolite’ to the guest. Thus, it seems that both the guest and the host do not only need to reflect a good ‘face’ about themselves in front of the vast audience, but also use certain politeness strategies to avoid being stigmatized as ‘rude’ or ‘impolite’.

In relation to this, interviews with celebrities have gained much attention, with their different genres. Interviews with celebrities usually aim to reveal some personal aspects of the interviewee’s life, and thus, a host is likely to maintain a level of intimacy (Koskela, 2005). Interviewing celebrities in TV shows, as one of the most important types of program appealing to audiences, is a powerful tool in the hands of press reporters and journalists to elicit more information about the celebrities’ lives and experiences (Clayman, & Heritage, 2002). Moreover, these interviews are used by public and private channels to uncover the celebrities’ private lives and to display their image as it is (Rojek, 2001, p. 11). This is motivated by the curiosity of people to uncover the hidden lives and personalities of these important people.

Interviewing a celebrity on TV is also important to the channel broadcasting the interview as these interviews increase the ratings of audiences and, thus, the popularity of the channel. This curiosity of the audience and TV broadcasting channels have motivated some researchers and sociolinguists to study the speech acts used by the celebrities, who are regarded as models in society. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the speech acts used by some celebrities in the Arab world, and how the Arab celebrities use politeness strategies when they address the world in English, which is not their native tongue. One more motivation for this study is the desire to analyse the speech acts and the politeness strategies used by the selected Arab celebrities in a more holistic way. This study will examine the speech acts and the politeness strategies used by the host and the guests, simultaneously.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The inappropriate use of language, to a large extent, might distort the reputation of a host and a guest in the eyes of the public through the media. It could also make them look less persuasive, and thus prevent them from affecting people’s attitudes and opinions. The use of politeness strategies in talk shows has been extensively investigated in the literature of discourse analysis, and more particularly in L1 and L2 research, but the landscape on how EFL users behave in talk shows remains less clear. For instance, Morizumi (1997) has studied how Japanese EFL learners used politeness

strategies in a famous Japanese talk show, and specifically how these strategies were used to manipulate the social and psychological distances between the interactants. The study found that the honorific system was used to create distance so as not to threaten the face of the individuals and joking was used to lessen distance and satisfy the positive face of the individuals. In this study Morizumi focused on the social and psychological distances between the interactants and how they affected the use of politeness during the talk shows. Likewise, Pishghadam & Zarei (2011) investigated the strategies of expressing gratitude that were used in Iranian English in different situations. This study concluded that the Iranian learners felt pleased to show their gratitude to others and they used mostly thanking and positive feeling strategies. They conducted this study on university EFL students in Iran instead of talk show hosts and guests, as in the present study.

Similarly, Bassiouney (2012) studied the politeness behaviour of Egyptian people on Egyptian TV talk shows with special emphasis on assertiveness techniques, such as interruption and floor controlling. She collected the data from five talk shows that recorded verbal interactions. The results of the study reported that Egyptians establish their status and identity in TV talk shows through the use of Modern Standard Arabic. Bassiouney added that the participants tend to assign positions to themselves and to others, such as being an expert. They may also show solidarity with others, claim distance, or even condescend to them. To our knowledge, this study by Bassiouney is the one of the dearth studies that has thus far attempted to investigate the politeness strategies used in the Arab EFL context, and hence further investigation seems crucial for informing the theories and literature on the ways in which EFL learners behave in EFL research.

It is worth mentioning that EFL research has yielded ample evidence on how Arab learners use politeness strategies in their speech, but this evidence is limited to only the context of daily conversations rather than talk shows. For instance, Al-Natour, Marlyna Maros, and Kemoja Ismail (2015) examined politeness in relation to the reference and strategies of request with selected Jordanian students who were studying at the National University of Malaysia. The result obtained shows that the participants (Jordanian learners) were being direct in their requests by the use of imperative forms, and also tended to be polite by using positive politeness. The results reported by Al-Natour and colleagues were further supported by a similar study by Ghounane, Serir-Mortad, and Rabahi, (2017). They investigated Algerian Arabs and found that they tended to be positive in their daily conversations.

As shown above, the picture on how EFL learners use politeness strategies, in general, and talk shows, in particular, remains incomplete. Specifically, there is still no evidence on how Arabs behave in talk shows. The evidence available in the literature is solely established on the use of politeness strategies in daily conversations, which makes this study particularly important in the Arab context of discourse analysis. This study aims to investigate the use of politeness strategies in celebrity talk shows between the host and the guests using Searle's Speech Act Theory (1976) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies (1987). Specifically, it attempts to identify how

Arab hosts and guests perform and manage their talk during talk shows when they use English during the interaction.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- 1- Classify the speech act categories in the interaction performed by Arab celebrities in the 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk shows.
- 2- Identify the politeness strategies used by Arab celebrities in the 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk shows.
- 3- Examine the different linguistic expressions used by the Arab celebrities in the 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk shows.

1.4 Research Questions

To meet the above objectives, the following research questions are formulated:

- 1- What are the different types of speech act categories performed by the Arab celebrities in the 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk shows?
- 2- To what extent are politeness strategies used in the selected talk shows?
 - a- What are the different types of politeness strategies used in the selected talk shows?
 - b- What are the most frequently used politeness strategies in the selected talk shows?
- 3- How are linguistic expressions used within speech acts and politeness strategies by Arab celebrities in the 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk shows?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study hopes to contribute practically and theoretically to the literature of sociolinguistics and language studies. Practically, this study will contribute to understanding how politeness strategies are used among Arab interlocutors in a formal context when they speak English as a foreign language. This will also give the readers insights on how Arab speakers who converse in English use politeness strategies to address other people who can speak English around the world rather than only addressing Arab people. This study will help non-Arabic speakers to have a better understanding and successful more interactions when they interact with Arabs using English. There is a lack of research in this field in the Arab context which could bridge theoretical development and communicative improvement in the real world. Theoretically, this study will be a reference for future students in understanding the politeness strategies used by Arab celebrities. Also, it will help researchers attempting

to conduct comparative studies between Arabic celebrities and other celebrities around the world such as Asian and European celebrities.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study limits itself to analysing seven episodes that took place between Arab celebrities who spoke English as a foreign language during interviews. The study is concerned with analysing the selected episodes from a pragmatic perspective. In other words, the speech acts and politeness strategies identified in the episodes were analysed. The seven episodes were selected according to the participants because the host and the guests during all the episodes were Arab, while the other episodes (of the selected program or others) had non-Arabic participants (host or guests). The 'Talk to Al Jazeera' talk show was the most famous talk show at the time of this study among the Arabic channels, watched even by non-Arabs around the world; therefore, it was selected to be studied in this research.

1.7 Definition of Terms

a- Speech Act:

Searle (1976) defined speech acts as basic or minimal units of linguistic communication. Searle differentiated between the notion of a proposition and that of an assertion. He claimed that an assertion is an illocutionary act, "but a proposition is not an act at all, although the act of expressing a proposition is part of performing certain illocutionary acts" (p. 381).

b- Politeness Strategies:

Brown and Levinson (1987) explained politeness as a communication strategy that aims to reduce Face Threatening Acts (FTA) and to maintain relationships. There are four types of Politeness Strategy, as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61): bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record.

c- Talk Show:

Ilie (2001, p. 210) defined a talk show as a "host-controlled, participant-shaped and audience-evaluated speech event." In the current study, seven TV shows are selected. In the whole shows, non-native speakers of English, the host and seven guests who non-native speakers of English. The whole participants use the English during their interactions.

d- Linguistic Expressions:

Genetti (2014) defined linguistic expression as a word, a sentence, and stretch of discourse. In other word, the linguistic expression could be spoken, written and gestures tools which help people to understand each other well and express their feelings, ideas and thoughts in a proper way.



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