

Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Mahmud Taymur’s Short Story “Thariqun ila Al-Hubb”: The Brown-Levinson Perspective

Lita Oktavya Wulan Syamhana¹, Abdullah Zainur Rauf¹

¹Universitas Islam Negri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

*Correspondence: 220301110016@student.uin-malang.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the realisation of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness strategies in the short story Thariqun ila Al-hub by Mahmud Taymur, focusing on how characters’ utterances reflect the four main strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected from the original Arabic text through careful reading and note-taking, followed by translation into Indonesian for analysis. The findings reveal that, out of 17 identified utterances, positive politeness is the most dominant strategy (47%), followed by negative politeness (24%), bald on record (18%), and off record (12%). The distribution varies across characters: some predominantly employ positive politeness to foster solidarity and closeness, while others rely on negative politeness to preserve distance and minimise face threats, and a few opt for directness (bald on record). These findings show that language politeness strategies not only serve to maintain social harmony but also serve as a means of expressing something, both in literary works and in real life.

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1. Introduction

The nature of language as the primary means of human communication and daily life allows individuals to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings to their conversation partners (Mailani et al., 2022; Yaumi et al., 2024). More than just a communication tool, language also serves as a social and cultural norm. In communication, polite language strategies are crucial for maintaining social relationships, avoiding conflicts arising from differences of opinion or misunderstandings, and showing respect to the interlocutor. According to (Noviyenty & Anwar, 2023) Pragmatics examines the relationship between linguistic forms and their speakers, with an emphasis on the process of meaning formation and change in context.

Politeness in language can be understood as courtesy, etiquette, or manners referring to the recognized and practiced customs, traditions, or habits of language use in society (Saleh et al., 2020; Said et al., 2021; Adinda et al., 2025). According to Prayitno (2011), linguistic politeness serves to maintain social and psychological balance while fostering friendly relationships between speakers and their conversation partners. In communication, politeness is not only reflected in the choice of polite words, but also in paying attention to the context, situation, and feelings of others as a form of respect for the rights and status of the conversation partner.

In addition, linguistic politeness is a form of social behavior that creates civility in communication (Prayitno et al., 2019; Andini et al., 2021; Weda et al., 2021). Linguistic politeness occurs when speakers benefit not only themselves but also their interlocutors and third parties, whether or not those third parties are present in the communication situation (Nida et al., 2024). Furthermore, politeness also serves to maintain relationships through tolerance (Kreswantono, 2022; Dalyan et al., 2025). Yule (1996) states that linguistic politeness aims to show awareness of the interlocutor's face. Meanwhile, according to Brown, Levinson, and Gumperz (1987), it is viewed as a system to soften behavior that has the potential to threaten face.

In other words, politeness can be understood as a form of managing one's image and self-esteem in public spaces. Every individual needs to maintain their image when interacting with others. When someone feels their image is valued, they are encouraged to do the same. Thus, a reciprocal relationship is created in the concept of politeness (Aryani, 2019). The concept of face in Brown and Levinson's theory originates in the work of Erving Goffman. In social interactions, Goffman argues that society is governed by a principle that recognizes each individual has certain social characteristics and the

moral right to receive appropriate evaluation and treatment. This principle emphasizes that individuals should be themselves, not behave like others. To present themselves to society, a person will use what Goffman calls "face," which is a generally recognized self-image (Goffman, 1959).

The theory of face plays an important role in language studies, especially in the context of language use as a means of communication. The concept of face does not refer to physical meaning, but rather to public image or self-esteem. Every speaker has an obligation to maintain their own face while respecting their conversation partner's face, so that the purpose of communication is achieved (Refanzah & Yoyo, 2023). There are two main aspects to the concept of face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), namely: First, negative face, which describes freedom from interference, relating to the image of each rational individual and the desire to be respected by allowing them to act freely. This means having the freedom to act without interference from others (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Second, positive face reflects the desire of every speaker to be accepted and liked by others. Every individual wants to be recognized as a good person and worthy of respect by others. The concept of negative face can be understood as the need for every speaker to feel free to act without pressure from others. Conversely, positive face refers to the need for every speaker to be accepted and treated well in their social group (Rahman, 2016).

In this study, the researcher used Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, which consists of five types of strategies: first, speaking directly, without small talk or being straightforward (bald-on-record strategy). Second, speaking using positive politeness (positive politeness strategy). The positive politeness strategy is used when the speaker wants to reduce the distance and status difference with their interlocutor (Budiarti, 2022). The positive politeness strategy can be realized by: (a) paying attention to and providing what the interlocutor needs, (b) expressing interest, agreement, and sympathy towards the interlocutor, (c) involving the interlocutor in the speaker's activities, (d) using speech that indicates solidarity within the same group, (e) finding safe topics in speech, (f) avoiding disagreement or incompatibility, (g) emphasizing similarities in knowledge, feelings, and views with the interlocutor, (h) jokes, (i) using apologies, (j) offers and promises, (k) showing optimism, (l) using inclusive pronouns (we), (m) asking questions or requesting reasons, (n) using reciprocal relationships, (o) giving praise to the interlocutor (Asmara & Kusumaningrum, 2020).

Third, using negative politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson describe ten types of negative politeness strategies, as follows: (a) using indirect speech, (b) using hedging, (c) expressing pessimism, (d) minimizing burden and coercion, (e) showing respect, (f) apologizing, (g) using impersonal forms, (h) expressing statements as general conditions, (i) using nominalization, (j) explicitly stating that the speaker is indebted to the interlocutor (Pramujiono et al., 2020). Fourth, performing speech acts indirectly (off the record). In indirect or veiled speech, Brown and Levinson (1987) identify two general methods: using conversational implicatures and using ambiguous speech. Fifth, not performing a speech act, or speaking silently.

In addition to being used in spoken language, politeness is also relevant in literary works. Literary works that contain forms of human self-expression, including thoughts, ideas, experiences, and feelings, are presented through vivid descriptions that are able to generate appeal using language, such as short stories (Sumarjo & M, 1986). Short stories are works of fiction presented in prose and dialogue, with the main focus only on the main events that convey the author's message (Hikmah, 2020). In addition, literary works are a process of thinking that can encourage communication and serve as a value in actions to respect and improve life in society. The conversations between characters in short stories are examples of communication in literary works.

The short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hub* by Egyptian writer Mahmud Taymur presents quite complex social interactions between its characters. A young man named Abbas Farid is the main character in this short story, which recounts his emotional and psychological journey as he struggles with love and the social norms that constrain him. His mother wants him to adhere strictly to moral values, while his friend tries to introduce him to a woman whom Abbas initially rejects but eventually becomes attracted to. The conflict escalates when Abbas meets a wise man who tells him that true love requires understanding and sacrifice. Ultimately, this story not only depicts Abbas' journey in search of the meaning of love, but also shows how communication strategies and politeness shape interactions between the main character and others.

In conducting this study, the researchers identified several relevant previous studies, including Research by (Kusmanto et al., 2020) on the realization of positive politeness in academic discourse on social media from a humanistic perspective, which shows that students use forms of positive politeness when communicating with lecturers. Another study on linguistic politeness in the Talkshow *Perempuan Berbicara* by (Yuditha et al., 2024) identified two strategies of linguistic politeness and six politeness principles applied in conversations by the speakers. A study by (Simangunsong et al., 2024),

which analyzed data from Barack Obama's speech, found evidence of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy. There are four types of strategies in the delivery of his speech, and 124 utterances containing politeness strategies.

Furthermore, research on President Joko Widodo's positive politeness strategy in foreign diplomacy speeches (Asmara & Kusumaningrum, 2020) found that the President employs 13 sub-strategies to maintain his image and enhance communication effectiveness. Research (Mawaddah & Fitriani, 2021) In their study, "Positive and Negative Speech Act Politeness Strategies by the Characters in the Film 'Let it Snow,'" the authors show that the characters in the movie use positive speech act politeness more often than negative speech act politeness. Another study on the politeness strategies of the host of the Ngobam program, Krisyanto Jamrud edition (Asyafi, 2022), shows the use of several politeness strategies in accordance with the Brown and Levinson framework.

Based on the previous study, the researcher found similarities and differences. The similarities lie in the use of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as a framework for analysis and in the focus on the application of politeness strategies across various communication contexts, such as academic discourse, talk shows, speeches, and interviews. The difference is that this study examines politeness strategies in literary texts, particularly short stories. This provides a new perspective on how politeness strategies are used not only in direct communication but also in interactions between characters in a literary work.

Thus, the position of this study is to complement previous studies that tended to focus on spoken discourse or everyday communication practices. The aim is to complement previous research, which has not extensively studied literary texts using the theory of linguistic politeness. Through this study, it is hoped that the strategies of linguistic politeness in a short story can be identified, thereby revealing their meaning and function in shaping the social dynamics among the characters in *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb*.

In Mahmud Taymur's short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb*, various forms of character speech reflect social communication strategies. Although this short story presents multiple types of interaction, this study explicitly limits its analysis to politeness strategies as outlined by Brown and Levinson. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the application of the four politeness strategies in the short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb* to reveal how politeness shapes social relationships, moral conflicts, and norms, drawing on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Sugiyono (2013), qualitative research is a research method used to explore objects naturally, in which the researcher functions as the main instrument. This research method was chosen because it aims to analyze and describe the forms of language politeness strategies in the speech of characters in the short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb*. The primary data source in this study is the original Arabic text of the short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb* by Mahmud Taymur (1951, تيمور). In addition, secondary data sources include literature related to polite language, especially those focusing on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987). These include books, journal articles, and relevant previous studies.

Data collection was conducted using reading and note-taking. According to Sudaryanto (1993) reading is a data collection method that involves analyzing the use of language or objects in a particular context. At the same time, note-taking is the activity of recording essential elements from the reading as research data. In this step, the author will translate the short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb* into Indonesian to facilitate analysis of its discourse. The researcher observes the characters' discourse in the short story and records the politeness strategies used in the text.

This technique allows researchers to identify in detail the expressions relevant to further analysis. The data analysis technique used in this study is the Miles and Huberman analysis model. This model involves three main steps, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The collected and recorded data will be reduced to select relevant and important data. Only relevant data will be presented, and in the last part, the researcher will draw conclusions from their findings. Data presentation is carried out so that the data is organized and arranged based on a predetermined pattern, and finally, conclusions are drawn, and the data is verified (Sugiyono, 2013).

3. Result and Discussion

The separation between sub-headings and sub-sub headings should be numbered as well. The researcher used the read-and-record technique by repeatedly reading the short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb* by Mahmud Taymur, translating the Arabic text into Indonesian, analyzing each character's speech, marking expressions that contained politeness strategies, and then categorizing them into four language politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson's (1987)

theory: Bald on Record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, Off Record. A total of 18 utterances were successfully identified.

Table 1. Frequency of Politeness Strategy

No	Types of Politeness Strategy	Occurrence	Percentage
1.	Bald on Record Strategy	3	18%
2.	Positive Politeness Strategy	8	47%
3.	Negative Politeness Strategy	4	24%
4.	Off Record Strategy	2	12%
Total		17	100%

Table 1 shows that the Positive Politeness Strategy was the most dominant, with 8 occurrences (47%), reflecting the characters' tendency to build emotional closeness, foster a friendly atmosphere, and show attention and acceptance of the interlocutor's feelings. The Negative Politeness Strategy obtained (24%), indicating that respect for the interlocutor's personal space and freedom of action is still quite significant. The Bald on Record Strategy (18%) is used in situations that demand firmness and authority, while the Off Record Strategy (12%) is used the least, only when the character wants to convey something implicitly and avoid direct responsibility for what they say.

3.1 Bald on Record Strategy

This strategy is used when someone speaks bluntly, without trying to disguise their intentions or beat around the bush, and is straightforward.

Data 1

كذاب أنت!
وعزَّ على الفتى أن يُبَيِّنَ ظِلْمًا ، وألا تصدِّقَه أمُه فيما ينفيه من هذا الاتهام، فكسَتْ وجهه غشاوة من كآبة
واغتمام....(تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (You liar!)

(The boy was sad when he was unfairly accused. His mother did not believe his denial of the accusation, and his face was filled with gloom and sadness).

Abbas was sitting pensively by his room's window, thinking about the victory he had won while racing boats with his friends, when he accidentally caught sight of his neighbor's daughter. While he was in this state, his mother suddenly entered the room angrily and forbade Abbas from looking at a woman. His mother accused Abbas of looking inappropriately at the neighbor's daughter. When Abbas denied his mother's accusation, his mother said to Abbas, "كذاب أنت!"

With the reprimanding phrase "كذاب أنت!" uttered by Abbas' mother while confronting him directly. The mother made a direct accusation, without beating around the bush, threatening Abbas' positive image, namely his image as a good son, to force a direct confession from him. The mother believed she had the right to control her son's behavior, which reflected her anxiety to maintain her family's good reputation amid the threat of social norms at the time. This statement made Abbas feel unfairly accused, which triggered his inner conflict.

Data 2

وشرع «عباس» يقصُّ على أمه في تُؤدِّدِ ما جرى له في يومه ، وما كان من تجافيه عن النظر إلى الفتاة ، فلم
تمهلُه الأم ليستكمل روايته، ولكنها عاجلته بقولها في لهجة صارمة : هذه آخر مرة أحذرك فيها وأذكرك
(تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (Abbas began to tell his mother what had happened to him that day, and his avoidance of seeing the girl. His mother did not give him time to finish his story, but hurriedly told him in a firm tone: "This is the last time I will warn you ...")

Abbas's mother cut off Abbas's attempt at explanation directly and without warning, using a firm tone. Abbas' mother's words threatened Abbas' negative face, namely, threatening his freedom to explain what had actually happened to him with threats and consequences without mitigation from his mother.

With a stern warning from Abbas' mother, who emphasized the moral urgency of preventing Abbas from deviating from the right path in the future. Furthermore, this direct warning reflects the absolute authority of parents to control their teenage children's behavior, especially in romantic relationships, even though it may create tension between the two

Data 3

عباس: دَعْنِي مِنْ سَخَافَتِكَ !

فَعَجِبَ مُرَادٌ مِنْ قَوْلِهِ ، وَحَدَّثَ فِيهِ..... (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (Abbas: Stop being silly!

Murad was surprised by Abbas' words and stared at him...)

In this context, Murad offered to introduce Abbas to a girl who was his friend, and also at the casino. However, Abbas rejected Murad's offer directly and rudely, without explanation, threatening Murad's positive image as a wise friend. Abbas' words came out spontaneously in response to Murad's offer without considering his friend's feelings and expression. This was due to internal pressure from family norms and having received a direct reprimand from his mother. This was followed by Murad's astonished response upon hearing Abbas' blunt answer, which heightened the tension.

3.2 Positive Politeness Strategy

The positive politeness strategy is used when the speaker wants to reduce differences in distance and status with their interlocutor. The speaker intends to create a friendly atmosphere and emphasize their similarities with the interlocutor. Examples of the use of this strategy can be seen in the following data:

Paying attention to what the interlocutor needs

Data 4

فَتَدَانَتْ مِنْهُ الْأُمُّ ، وَقَدْ أَدْرَكَهَا عَلَيْهِ بَعْضُ إِشْفَاقٍ ، قَائِلَةً لَهُ : إِنِّي أَبْغِي خَيْرَكَ يَا «عَبَّاسُ» ... أُرِيدُكَ

شَابًا عَلَى خَلْقِ كَرِيمٍ....(تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (The mother approached him with pity and said to him: "I want what is best for you, Abbas... I want you to be a young man with good character.")

After accusing Abbas of lying, his mother saw her son's sad face. She approached him, called him, and emphasized that she only wanted what was best for him. This took place in Abbas's room after the earlier accusation about the neighbor girl. Here, Abbas's mother emphasized her good intentions to show concern. With the words «إِنِّي أَبْغِي خَيْرَكَ يَا «عَبَّاسُ» ... «أُرِيدُكَ شَابًا عَلَى خَلْقِ كَرِيمٍ», she showed that she cared about her son's emotional and moral needs. This fulfilled a positive face by making Abbas feel valued as a priority in the family. This affirmation of good intentions also aims to prevent negative impacts and ease the tension and emotions from the previous accusations. Even so, Abbas's mother strives to maintain an emotionally close and loving relationship with her son while firmly emphasizing moral values.

Expressing interest, agreement, and sympathy toward the conversation partner

Data 5

(تيمور, 1951) مَا أَحْلَى الْحُبِّ فِي مَيْعَةِ الشَّابِّ !

Meaning: (How sweet love is in the life of a young man)

Siti Iqbal expressively shows sympathy and positive interest in Abbas's experience of love. Siti Iqbal also acknowledges that the feelings Abbas is currently experiencing are normal and commonly felt by other teenagers his age. This builds closeness through emotional validation, making Abbas feel understood and supported, thus fulfilling the positive face through empathy. Siti Iqbal's words to Abbas encourage and support him in exploring his emotions as a teenager and in building his confidence in the storyline.

Signifying group solidarity

Data 6

فر بَنت الأم كتفه في ملاطفة ، وهي تقول : أنصح لك يا بُني أن تتجنب هذه الفتاة (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (The mother patted his shoulder and said: I advise you, my son, to stay away from this girl!)

The term of endearment “يا بُني” coupled with the gesture of patting his shoulder while speaking, can mitigate the FTA stemming from the previous threat. It affirms family solidarity, positioning Abbas as an integral part of the mother-child bond. This action reflects the norm in a family where physical and verbal affection are used to maintain close relationships. It creates a sense of togetherness and warmth, filling the positive face with recognition of an intimate relationship without threat.

Data 7

: إن قلبك كجيبك ملآن ... والحب كالذهب يشغل البال ! (تيمور, ف ثم رنت ضحكها التيسوية العابثة وهي تقول
(1951)

Meaning: (Then a cheerful laugh was heard as she said: Your heart is like your pocket, full... and love, like gold, fills your mind)

On the house terrace, Abbas met Siti Iqbal, a family guest known for her sense of humor. Siti Iqbal noticed that Abbas looked gloomy and teased him with a joke about love, comparing Abbas's heart, full of gold-filled pockets, to his thoughts. This humorous metaphor was a light joke Siti Iqbal made to ease tension and make Abbas smile or feel relaxed. This joke builds solidarity through shared laughter, thereby filling the positive face by showing a friendly, relaxed relationship.

This joke is also Siti Iqbal's way of creating familiarity with Abbas. Siti Iqbal tries to create a relaxed atmosphere and encourages Abbas not to be shy about his feelings. Through humor, Siti Iqbal deepens her character as someone experienced in matters of love. Unlike his strict mother, Siti Iqbal uses humor to show acceptance, which makes Abbas more comfortable thinking about his attraction to the girl next door. This joke is important because it helps Abbas move from fear to greater openness

Offer or promise

Data 8

ورجع إلى صديقه ، فالفاه واقفا نُجاة البحر ، يَلُوخُ عليه التزمُت والجدُّ ، فقال له : كان بودي أن أعرفك بصاحبتي(تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (He returned to his friend and found him standing facing the sea, looking serious and solemn, and he said to him: I would like to introduce you to my friend!)

Previously, they were outside when Murad offered to help Abbas meet his girlfriend's friend. Murad knew that Abbas had feelings for the girl even though Abbas had never told him. By taking the initiative to offer an introduction, he aimed to involve Abbas in social interaction and show his goodwill and support for their friendship. This fulfilled the positive face with a sense of belonging and solidarity within the group, namely friendship, and strengthened the bond through offers, promises, or the like.

Giving praise or compliments

Data 9

و بغتة بدت «بنث الجيران «على مقربة من الرفيقين ، وهي تتهادى في لمة من الصويحات فشدَّ «مراد «على يد رفيقه ، قائلاً له : هذه جارتك ... ما أملحها من فتاة (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (Suddenly, the neighbor's daughter appeared near the two friends, chatting with a group of her female friends. Murad grabbed his friend's hand and said, “This is your neighbor... what a beautiful girl...!”)

Data 10

وحانت منها التفاتة إلى الحديقة المجاورة للدار ، فوقع بصرها على « بنت الجيران » تجوسُ خلال الشجر ،
فغمزت المرأة يد الفتى ، وهي تقول مهتاجة النبرات : انظر .. انظر .. ما أحلاها ... يا بختك يا « عباس » !
(تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (She glanced at the garden next door and saw the neighbor's daughter walking among the trees, and the woman winked at the boy and said excitedly: Look... look... how beautiful she is... You are so lucky, Abbas)

The praise given by Murad in data 9 in the sentence *هذه جارتك... What a lovely girl, and other compliments uttered by Siti Iqbal on data 10 in the sentence "Look... look... how beautiful she is... lucky you, Abbas,"* which praised the beauty of Abbas' neighbor. Indirectly, Murad's and Siti Iqbal's remarks made Abbas feel that his criteria and views were validated by the two of them. This reduced Abbas's FTA doubts by fulfilling his positive face in their acknowledgments and gaining indirect emotional support.

Reaffirming knowledge, feelings, and views to the interlocutor

Data 11

ونفضت تأخذ بكتف الفتى ، وتهمس في أذنه : لا تُثريبَ عليك ... كل فتى في مثل سنِّك يَعْشَقُ) ... تيمور
1951)

Meaning: (holding the boy's shoulder and whispering in his ear: "Don't be discouraged... Every boy your age is in love")

Siti Iqbal's words to Abbas not to be discouraged and not to feel ashamed of his feelings for the girl next door emphasize that every teenager in his generation has had similar experiences. By emphasizing this similarity and perspective on teenagers, she alleviates Abbas's feelings of shame by fulfilling his positive face and also shows the older character's development of self-confidence and wisdom.

3.3 Negative politeness Strategy

Negative politeness involves respectful behavior that aims to maintain social distance. The following are examples of the use of negative politeness strategies:

Expressing pessimism

Data 12

ما تقولين يا أماه ... لا تَعَلِّقْ لى بهذه الفتاة (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (What are you saying, Mom... I have nothing to do with this girl)

Data 13

لم أكن لم أكن أبْتَسِمُ لأحد ... لقد تذكرتُ شيئاً سرَّني فابتسمتُ ! (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (I didn't smile at anyone... I remembered something that made me happy and I smiled!)

In his mother's room, Abbas was again accused of interacting with the neighbor's daughter. He was in a weak position when his mother said that because of his position as a child and his mother's position as a parent. Abbas did not fight back against his mother's accusation, but instead slightly belittled himself to stop it and protect his mother's negative face. If Abbas had denied it with harsh words, the conflict between them would have exploded. However, if Abbas had just remained silent or admitted that he had feelings for the girl next door, he would have lost face in front of his mother.

So Abbas responded to his mother's accusation with a hint of doubt or disbelief, as if to say that he couldn't believe his mother would accuse him of such a thing, but he conveyed this meaning very subtly with "ما تقولين يا أماه" so as not to challenge his mother's authority. As well as in the words *لا تَعَلِّقْ لى بهذه الفتاة* and *لم أكن أبْتَسِمُ لأحد* , which contained a careful denial, emphasizing that he had no relationship with the girl, even though he was actually beginning to be attracted to her.

Instead of saying that he didn't like her or that it wasn't true, he chose words that downplayed his involvement in the accusation. It was as if he considered himself unworthy or incapable of doing such a thing.

Fenced speech

Data 14

إني أُنْبِغِي خَيْرَكَ يَا «عَبَّاسُ» ... أُرِيدُكَ شَابًا عَلَى خُلُقِ كَرِيمٍ...أُصَدِّقُنِي ... لَقَدْ كُنْتُ تَبْتَسِمُ لِبِنْتِ الْجِيرَانِ ...
(تيمور, 1951) أليس كذلك؟

Meaning: (I want what's best for you, Abbas. I want you to be a young man with good morals. You smiled at the neighbor's daughter...isn't that right?)

The mother changed her assertive statement into a slightly weaker confirmatory question. The phrase «أليس كذلك» The addition at the end of the question gives Abbas an implied choice; he can answer "no" without directly challenging his mother's question. This softens the accusation and reduces the positive face threat of the previous accusation «لقد كنتُ تبتسم لبنت الجيران...» This allows Abbas to respond with a safer denial rather than anger or something else.

Minimizing burden and coercion

Data 15

(تيمور, 1951) أَنْصَحُ لَكَ يَا بُنَيَّ أَنْ تَتَجَنَّبَ هَذِهِ الْفَتَاةَ! فَرَبَّتْ الْأُمُّ كَتْفَهُ فِي مَلَاطِفَةٍ، وَهِيَ تَقُولُ:

Meaning: (His mother patted him on the shoulder and said: I advise you, my son, to stay away from this girl!

Abbas' mother's prohibition on staying away from the neighbor's girl in the sentence "أَنْ تَتَجَنَّبَ هَذِهِ الْفَتَاةَ" is a heavy FTA condition that could hurt Abbas' self-image. However, if the mother explicitly said not to approach her forcefully, it would be more hurtful and coercive. Therefore, by adding or framing her intention, Abbas's mother provides an explanation that changes the command or coercion into advice, counsel, or a recommendation that sounds lighter and minimizes the burden on Abbas. It gives the illusion of freedom to choose whether to follow his mother's advice, even though the context remains firm.

3.4 Off record Strategy

Conversational implicature

Data 16

وَصَبْحًا خَرَجَ «عَبَّاسُ» إِلَى الشَّرْفَةِ، يَتَمَلَّى مَنَظَرَ الْبَحْرِ، فَأَلْفَى «الْسِتَ إِقْبَالَ»... ضَيْفَةَ الْبَيْتِ، تِلْكَ الَّتِي تَوَسَّسَ أُمُّهُ بِحَدِيثِهَا الْعَدْبَ وَمَا يَتَخَلَّلُهُ مِنْ دُعَابَاتٍ وَأَفَاكِيهِ، فَقَدْ كَانَتْ فِي عَصْرِ شِبَابِهَا الْغَارِبِ سَبَّاقَةً فِي مَغَامِرَاتِ الْحُبِّ وَالْهَيْامِ ... وَمَا كَادَ يَرَاهَا «عَبَّاسُ» حَتَّى أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهَا قَائِلًا: مَاذَا تَفْعَلِينَ يَا «سِتَ إِقْبَالَ»؟

أَرْتُقُّ ثَوْبِي الْمَهْلَهْلَ ... إِنْ جِئْتِي أَصْبِحُ كَقَلْبِي خَالِيًا فَمَنْ أَيْنَ لِي بِثَوْبٍ جَدِيدٍ؟ (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (In the morning, Abbas went to the balcony to enjoy the sea view, and found Siti Iqbal, a guest of the house, a person who entertained his mother with her sweet words and humor. In her youth, she was a pioneer in adventures of love and passion ... As soon as Abbas saw her, he approached her and said: What are you doing, Siti Iqbal! I'm fixing my worn-out clothes ... My pockets are as empty as my heart. Where can I find new clothes?)

On the terrace, when Abbas asked what Siti Iqbal was doing, she replied poetically that she was mending worn-out clothes, and switched to the metaphor «إِنْ جِئْتِي أَصْبِحُ كَقَلْبِي خَالِيًا», comparing her empty pockets to an empty heart. Siti Iqbal's words implied feelings of sadness and loneliness in love, not because of actual poverty. The metaphor was stated without explicit mention, leaving Abbas to conclude for himself that Siti Iqbal was referring to his feelings, which she had already read.

However, if Abbas was offended by Siti Iqbal's words, then Siti Iqbal could evade responsibility by claiming that she was only talking about an empty pocket. This is an indirect way to open up an emotional topic, making Abbas feel

comfortable sharing his feelings with Siti Iqbal. This strategy is effective because it encourages Abbas to think about his feelings without feeling judged, which helps him transition from fear to courage.

Ambiguous utterance

Data 17

: انظر .. انظر .. ما أحلاها ... (تيمور, 1951)

Meaning: (Look... look... how beautiful she is...)

The repeated command *انظر .. انظر* is considered ambiguous because it can be interpreted as either a friendly encouragement to look at the neighbor's daughter or a romantic hint directed at Abbas alone. The compliment "ما أحلاها" can be interpreted either as support or as sarcasm. So Siti Iqbal obscures the meaning of her words to avoid commitment. If Abbas is offended by her words and the situation becomes awkward, Siti Iqbal claims she only said she was beautiful or something similar to avoid using explicit words that could be considered embarrassing.

4. Conclusion

Based on the study's results, several linguistic politeness strategies are used by the characters in the short story *Thariqun ila Al-Hubb*. There are at least four strategies of politeness used in this short story, namely bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. This study identified 17 utterances in the short story: bald on record 3 (18%), positive politeness 8 (47%), negative politeness 4 (24%), and off record 2 (12%).

The results of this study indicate that positive politeness strategies dominate language use in the stories and reflect the characters' tendency to build emotional solidarity and provide support for one another. Mrs. Abbas uses the "bald-on-record" strategy to uphold morals and remind her son of the norms that must be upheld, while Abbas uses negative politeness strategies as a form of subtle resistance against his mother. Siti Iqbal uses off-record to discuss an ambiguous topic implicitly, to avoid being held responsible if her interlocutor is offended by the conversation. Thus, by applying these four language action strategies, speakers and interlocutors can build and maintain good relationships, especially when interacting.

This study has many shortcomings it focuses solely on analyzing one short story using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, thereby failing to describe the variety of politeness strategies across other genres and literary works. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers expand the scope of the study to include various types of literary texts and examine in depth the influence of local cultural context on characters' choice of politeness strategies.

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