# Politeness Pragmatic Orientation in the Production of Advice-giving Speech Acts in Arab TV Talent Shows

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**Abstract:** Identifying and understanding the distinctive features of speech acts' realization across different cultures is essential for the pragmatic profiling of any language variety. Existing literature on advice-giving speech acts in Arabic predominantly examines religious texts composed in classical Arabic, overlooking everyday utterances spoken in contemporary Arabic dialects. Although Arabic has many varieties across different cultures, there are some shared values and beliefs that connect various Arab speech communities. Consequently, certain generalizations regarding acceptable politeness patterns in the Arab culture may be established, while acknowledging the presence of cultural and linguistic peculiarities. This study offers a descriptive analysis of spontaneous speech, emphasizing the politeness patterns delineated by Leech (2014), in the context of advice-giving in the Arab culture. The data of this study was obtained from 'Boulevard Almawaheb' talent show, comprising a total of seventy-nine advice-giving acts. The analysis followed the mixed-method design, mainly applying qualitative content analysis, supported by quantitative data. The findings indicate a preference for on-record indirect strategies over direct strategies and hints, along with a tendency to prioritize certain constraints, such as Approbation. The present study seeks to address the research gap in advice-giving pragmatic orientation within the Arab culture, with the intention of contributing to the establishment of a comprehensive pragmatic profile of speech acts in the Arab world.

**Keywords:** advice-giving speech act, Arabic, Leech's politeness theory, pragmatics, reality shows

## 1. Introduction

Most literature on speech acts and politeness exhibits a preference for Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). While the two other pioneering theories by Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) were acknowledged, they received less attention, especially in relation to their applicability in different cultures (Leech 2014; Al-Duleimi, Rashid and Abdullah 2016).

Advice-giving is considered one of the face-threatening speech acts (Brown and Levinson 1987); therefore, it is anticipated that speakers would employ mitigating strategies when performing it. To assess the universality of the former assumption, and to identify any influencing personal and socio-cultural factors, further investigations across diverse cultures are due. The findings of these investigations are especially significant to the fields of second language teaching

and learning (Al-Shboul, Maros and Yasin 2012; Flor 2023), discourse analysis (DeCapua and Dunham 1993), and political sciences (Schaerer, Tost, Huang, Gino and Larrick 2018) among others.

The utilization of TV shows as the medium for data collection has been a longstanding practice. Reality shows possess a distinct advantage in authenticity compared to other TV shows, as they typically feature ordinary people speaking unscripted language (Aslama and Pantti 2012). Another advantage of the reality show examined in this study is that it included participants from different countries of the Arab world and was aired and viewed in those countries and others (MBC group n.d.). Therefore, the findings of this study could be particularly helpful to specialists in teaching Arabic as a foreign/second language, particularly in the development of curricula that accommodate various Arab cultures.

Achieving pragmatic competence in foreign/second languages should be a goal of their learners. Cross-cultural studies indicate that communicative purposes are conveyed differently in different cultures; thus, what is considered acceptable in one culture might be perceived as impolite in another (Schmidt, Shimura, Wang and Jeong 1996; Hamed 2020; Al-Shboul 2023). Differences may arise from cultural and linguistic idiosyncrasies, as well as religious values (Alsmari 2024; Ammari, Al-Mahameed, Al Bataineh and Al Ahmad 2024). Therefore, compiling pragmatic profiles for various cultures, through similar studies to the present one, could be beneficial for foreign/second language educators. Moreover, the present study seeks to enhance the limited yet valued contributions of other researchers who have acknowledged the significance of Leech's theory for the investigation of speech acts and politeness.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1 Leech's politeness theory

This study employs Leech's theory of politeness as its framework for two primary reasons. Leech was a pioneer in developing a theory of linguistic politeness and consistently refined his theory, integrating aspects from related theories, such as Grice's (1975), as well as competing frameworks like Brown and Levinson's (1987). The version of his work that informed the analysis in this study is the one published in 2014. Leech examined significant issues in politeness, such as the influence of culture on politeness judgments, the distinction between pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic elements, and the role of extra-linguistic factors. The revised version, (Leech 2014), enhanced the theory's comprehensiveness and applicability across various cultures (Dybko 2010; Al-Duleimi et al. 2016).

Leech aimed to formulate a universal politeness theory that eliminates Western bias. The main components of his theory are the Politeness Principle (PP), which postulates that speakers usually prefer to communicate polite rather than impolite beliefs, and the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP), which states that "[i]n order to be polite, *S* expresses or implies meanings that associate a favorable value with what pertains to *O* or associates an unfavorable value with what pertains to *S* (*S* = self, speaker)" (2014: 90). Furthermore, he identified ten GSP constraints: Generosity, Tact, Approbation, Modesty, Obligation of S to O, Obligation of O to

S, Agreement, Opinion-reticence, Sympathy, and Feeling-reticence. He redefined face as pos-politeness and neg-politeness and outlined five scales of value for evaluating the appropriate degree of politeness.

Leech described face as "the positive self-image or self-esteem that a person enjoys as a reflection of that person's estimation by others" (2014: 25). The distinction between pos-politeness and neg-politeness pertains to their significance for the speaker (S) or the addressee (O). The strategy employed to elevate the status of O, such as compliments, is part of pos-politeness. If, on the other hand, a strategy is employed to mitigate S's imposition, it is categorized as neg-politeness. Leech proposed five scales of value to account for the influence of cultural and situational factors on politeness assessment: Power, Distance, Rank of imposition, Obligations between S and O, and degree of membership to a group. His theory integrates several important concepts, including the pragma-linguistic plane of politeness, the sociolinguistic plane of politeness, and the clashing of constraints. In his discussion of the pragma-linguistic aspect of speech acts, he adopted the classification of strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1985), which delineates three primary strategies for executing directives: direct strategies, on-record indirect strategies, and hints (off-record).

Leech regarded advice as an ambivalent speech event, as it encompasses both polite and impolite implications. The polite aspect arises from the enhancement of interest in O, whereas the impolite one is rooted in the implicit superiority that S claims over O. Leech differentiated between solicited and unsolicited advice, asserting that the latter requires higher politeness strategies. He asserted that in certain contexts, impoliteness or rudeness prevails over politeness, citing reality TV shows as an example, "where contestants are routinely humiliated or are shown being subjected to verbal abuse" (2014: 5).

### 2.2 Related studies

According to Deller (2020), the term 'reality television' was first used in academic studies in the 1990s. He broadly defined it as any television program that emphasizes real experiences of celebrities or ordinary people. The use of reality shows as a source of linguistic data has been a common practice in social sciences (Lorenzo-Dus, Bou-Franch and Blitvich 2013; Karpenko- Seccombe 2022), and its benefits have extended to the fields of pedagogy (Mendick and George 2010; Digon 2019), linguistics (Ikalyuk and Doronyuk 2015; Gerencser 2021) and cultural studies (Payne 2016; Alam 2021). The nature of speech in such shows, being unscripted, unstandardized, and personal (Culpeper and Holmes 2013) qualifies these shows to be considered a source of natural speech.

A few studies investigated the realization of speech acts in various media forms, using different linguistic frameworks. Schmidt et al. (1996) examined the realization of suggestions in television commercials in four different cultures: American, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. The results revealed that since the 'suggestion to buy' bears some cost to the addressee, Leech's constraint of tact was used in the advertisements of all four cultures. The imperative linguistic form was more frequent in the American commercials, while the three Asian cultures

manifested an interesting use of request-like forms containing several formal politeness markers that were not common in the American commercials. Similar results were obtained by Al-Aadeli (2013) who compared the diversity of the linguistic structures of advice and suggestion speech acts in three English plays. However, Al-Aadeli concluded that both acts do not pose an imposition on the addressee since s/he has the freedom in performing the required act. Ghaisani and Haristiani (2021) were interested in the performance of advice in the Japanese culture; they reported that this culture exhibits a preference for using positive politeness strategies, which was interpreted by the researchers as a reflection of the Japanese people's habit to avoid hurting feelings.

In academic settings, both Vasquez (2004) and Culpeper and Pat (2021) studied the representation of speech acts. The former focused on the politeness strategies used by teachers' supervisors when advising, criticizing, and suggesting. The results revealed that supervisors tended to downplay their power through the use of negative politeness strategies. Culpeper and Pat (2021), on the other hand, analyzed compliment responses of university students within Leech's framework. They found out that acceptance responses were the most preferred ones, which could be placed within the Obligation constraint since a polite compliment socially obliges the addressee to respond politely with gratitude.

To the researcher's knowledge, few studies have explored the realization of speech acts within Leech's framework in Arab cultures. Shaya (2016) examined the effects of the social factors of Power and Distance on politeness strategies within Arab societies, in addition to investigating the politeness principles manifested in the Holy Quran. He proposed his own interpretation of the politeness theory by regulating the use of direct and indirect strategies. He highlighted the effect of tone and body language in determining the politeness level. Shaftar (2022) studied the representation of Lakoff's and Leech's theories in the story of Prophet Shuaib in the Holy Quran. His findings revealed that the application of the solidarity strategy varied according to the Prophecy phase during which the utterances were produced. Moreover, the results showed that within the Prophecy context, the goal of delivering the message was prioritized over that of being linguistically polite, resulting in the occasional production of direct utterances.

In Arab media forms, both Elfarish (2020) and Maulana (2020) examined the representation of Leech's politeness constraints in Arabic movies. The former's findings revealed that six constraints were implemented: Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, Sympathy, and Tact, with Approbation being the most implemented one. The latter's results showed that there were both application and violation of Leech's politeness constraints, with Generosity and Agreement being the most applied and violated ones.

## 3. Methodology

This study analysed data collected from 'Boulevard Almawaheb' talent show, streamed on MBC network and Shahid streaming platform. The speech acts analysed were produced by the two teams' managers: Hamdi Badr, an Egyptian (designated as S1 in the analysis section), and Hasan Talib, an Emirati (designated

as S2), both working as business managers for prominent Arab singers (MBC group 2021). The show aired from October 2021 to February 2022, documenting the daily progress and activities of the contestants, along with their interactions with the hosts and teams' managers. All 117 episodes were examined for instances of advice-giving. Out of these, twenty episodes exhibited the targeted acts, which are 2, 3, 4, 8, 15, 19, 20, 25, 26, 29, 33, 40, 47, 54, 61, 62, 68, 106, 114, and 117. This reality show was selected for two reasons; first, the anticipated production of targeted speech acts, given the show's nature, necessitated that the managers offer professional advice to the contestants. Second, the participants in the show came from different Arab countries, potentially enhancing the understanding of acceptable politeness forms within the Arab world.

### 3.1 Research design

The present study employs a pragma-linguistic descriptive approach utilizing a mixed-method design. It focuses on describing the characteristics of various polite linguistic forms in Arabic used for giving advice, including morphological, syntactic, and contextual elements. Although quantitative methods are employed, this research is mainly qualitative since it is the primary method used for data collection and analysis (Nassaji 2015). The applied qualitative approach involved four phases: transcription, coding, interpretation, and drawing conclusions (Obeyd 2021).

### 3.2 Participants

The data collection concentrated on the conversations between the managers and their teams of contestants, as these interactions were presumed to contain most of the advice-giving instances. Typically, a manager engages in a private discussion with one or more team members; and only on rare occasions, both managers would meet with all the contestants simultaneously. This paper investigates the speech of the managers, as it contained most of the advice-giving acts, and they, the managers, maintained a constant power and distance status, i.e. high, relative to the contestants.

### 3.3 Data collection

The method used for data collection is similar to the 'participant observation' method, where researchers only observe, or both observe and participate in, the activities of the study community (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey 2005). The participant observation method dictates the relocation of the researcher in the target community for direct observation. Since this condition could not be fulfilled, the researcher instead observed the behavior of the targeted group via recorded videos, in what Tressyalina and Ridwan (2015) call the 'indirect participant observation' method. To enhance the reliability of the research (Obeyd 2021), data collection and classification was carried out three times, with one-week intervals. During each, the researcher identified, revised, and transcribed the utterances containing the advice-giving speech acts.

### 3.4 Data analysis

To distinguish advice-giving acts from other directives, Searle's classification of speech acts (1969) was employed. Searle differentiated between request and advice based on their 'sincerity rules'. The 'sincerity rule' for 'request' states that S wants H to do A, while for 'advice' it states that S believes A will benefit H. Therefore, regardless of the grammatical structure of the act, whenever the production of the act was guided by S's belief that A is for H's benefit, that act was classified as advice-giving.

Following the qualitative examination of the data, it was analyzed quantitatively by converting it into numerical data to identify the politeness preferences in the investigated speech community. Six inter-raters independently analyzed a sample of the advice-giving acts. The percentage of inter-rater agreement was 86%, which is considered a high agreement score (Mandrekar 2011).

## 4. Results

The analyzed data constitutes the instances of advice-giving acts produced by the managers in the reality show 'Boulevard Almawaheb' (MBC group 2021). Two elements of the act were analyzed: the form of the act, whether on-record (direct or indirect) or off-record (hints), and the application of Leech's politeness constraints. The total number of advice-giving acts detected in the data was 79; 23 of which were classified as direct, 47 as indirect, and 9 as hints. Explanations and examples from the data are included in the following section. The examples are presented first in their original language (Arabic), followed by an English translation with the intended linguistic structures underlined.

### 4.1 The pragma-linguistic characteristics of advice-giving

The pragma-linguistic choices provided by a language could be tackled from different perspectives: morphological, syntactic, and contextual. This section explains and exemplifies the first two, while the last one is addressed in the subsequent section. Structures, identified in the data, corresponding to Leech's classification of politeness strategies are outlined below.

#### 4.1.1 Patterns classified as the direct strategy

Directives, either in the form of imperatives or performatives, are considered direct strategies. Examples (1) and (2) represent the two forms, respectively.

(1) (S2)

شدي حيلك وابدعي مثل ما انتي مبدعة في البرايمات اللي جاية

(Do your best and be creative in the upcoming primes, as you have always been.)

Here, the advice was delivered directly, using the imperative form of the verbs. In the next example the advice was explicitly given using the performative structure:

(2) (S2)

انتي نصيحتي لج اسهل من نور حداد.. ابتعدي عن ذكرى

(My advice to you is simpler than that to Noor Haddad: Stay away from Thikra's style.)

Although the speaker in this example did not use the traditional performative form: 'I advise you', the expression used is close in form and carries the same pragmatic meaning; therefore, it was classified as a performative.

### 4.1.2 Patterns classified as the on-record indirect strategy

According to Leech (2014), there are five linguistic structures manifesting this strategy (ordered from strongest to weakest): prediction statements (will), strong obligation statements (must, have got to), weaker obligation statements (should, need to), volitional statements (I want), and ability/possibility statements (you can, you might want to). An example for each is given below.

(3) (Prediction statements) (S2)

يتسمع كلامي هالمرة صح (المتلقي: ان شاء الله) عشان تطير..

(You will listen to me this time, right? (O responds: God willing) so you can fly (meaning excel)).

(4) (Strong obligation statements) (S1)

ده المطلوب ان انتو كل واحد لازم يخرج الحاجة اللي مش موجودة عنده.. مش اللي هو بيعرف يعمله

(This is what's required of you; each one must practice what he hasn't done before, not what he has already mastered)

(5) (Weaker obligation statements) (S2)

المفروض منك تطور نفسك لأن هذا في الأول والأخير يفيدك انت كشخص

(You should improve yourself because this would, after all, benefit you)

(6) (Volitional statements) (S1)

عاوز ده، فادي اللي قاعد معانا هو ده اللي يكون واقف على الستيج مش عاوز حاجة ثانيه

(I want this; Fadi who is sitting with us now should be the one standing on the stage; I don't want anything else)

(7) (Ability/possibility statements) (S2)

قلت لك، حاجة في الصوت. هاذي بيدك.

(I told you, there is something about your voice. It is in your hands.)

In example (7), S2 did not use one of the structures listed in Leech (2014), i.e. you can, you might want to; instead, he used a different structure with the same meaning. In both expressions 'you can', suggested by Leech, and "it is in your hands", produced by S2, the speaker emphasizes the addressee's ability to carry out a task. Leech (2014) asserted that the structures he included in his theory are not exclusive, and that they should be used as a guide to find similar forms in different languages.

The following are two additional patterns, not addressed by Leech, yet frequently detected in the data to perform advice in an on-record indirect manner.

- Including both S and O in the future implementation of the act

In (8), S was talking to one of the contestants. They were discussing the latter's performance in the previous concert and planning the coming one.

(8) (S1)

عجبتني جدا بس كفاية بأه ايه.. الشكل اللي انت بتغنيه ده. حنغني حاجات ثانية بأه مختلفة تماما

(I liked it very much, but enough of this genre that you have been singing. We will sing other genres that are completely different)
S, here, included himself in the execution of the advised act, even though both S and O know that only O will perform it.

- Directing the act to a group while the intended addressee is one.

In the following example, S was talking to a particular contestant while using a grammatical structure usually used to address a group of people. In the utterance's context, S1 was consoling one of the contestants who was upset because she ranked last in the weekly vote.
(9) (S1)
احنا لسه ما خلصناش، احنا لسه عندنا أسبوع، فالاسبوع ده مهم يعني كل واحد يقطع نفسه
(We still haven't finished. We still have a week. In this week, it is important that everyone does their best)

### 4.1.3 Patterns classified as the off-record indirect strategy (hints)

An utterance is classified as a hint when the advised act is not mentioned explicitly by the speaker. Leech specifies that in hints, speakers "do not actually mention *A* that *S* wants *O* to carry out" (2014: 158), as shown in the example below.
(10) (S2)
السوشيال ميديا كلام بيتوجه للكل، فيه فريق مختص حق كل واحد فيكم. أي حركة في السوشيال ميديا اليوم تسوونها بتبقى موثقة عليكم
(Social media, this is for everyone, there is a specialized team for each one of you. Anything you do on social media today is documented on you.)
Here, the speaker is implicitly advising the participants to be aware of what they post on social media and to consult their assigned media teams, without explicitly saying so.

## 4.2 Contextual act softeners: Leech's theory

Under this category, many patterns were observed; and through these patterns, Leech's theory could be seen in action. Therefore, the discussion of the formulae used here comes in relation to the constraints they represent. The table below summarizes the number of times each constraint was observed or violated in the data, followed by a discussion of the constraints as used by the speakers.

The process of categorizing the acts into their corresponding constraints followed Leech's original work and was assisted by the work of various researchers applying Leech's theory to their respective languages (Gittan, Ghapanchi and Ghazanfari 2020; Santoso, Nuraini and Kasiyarno 2020; Prayitno, Huda, Inayah, Ermanto, Ardi, Giyoto and Yusof 2021).

Table. Constraints representation in the data

| Constraint name | Constraint function | Frequency of observation | Frequency of violation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Generosity | placing a high value on the addressee's wants | 4 | 0 |
| Tact | placing a low value on the speaker's wants | 11 | 0 |
| Approbation | placing high value on the addressee's qualities | 26 | 1 |
| Modesty | placing a low value on the speaker's qualities | 0 | 0 |
| Obligation of S to O | placing a high value on the speaker's obligation to the addressee | 8 | 0 |
| Obligation of O to S | placing a low value on the addressee's obligation to the speaker | 0 | 0 |
| Agreement | placing a high value on the addressee's opinion | 2 | 0 |
| Opinion-reticence | placing a low value on the speaker's opinion | 12 | 4 |
| Sympathy | placing a high value on the addressee's feelings | 8 | 0 |
| Feeling-reticence | placing a low value on the speaker's feelings | 0 | 3 |
| Total number of constraints' observation and violation in the data (79 acts) | | 71 | 8 |

Based on the numbers displayed above, the speakers observed Leech's constraints while giving advice much more than they violated them. The table also shows that some constraints were observed more than others, and that some constraints were neither observed nor violated. In the rest of this section, the application of the used constraints will be analyzed using examples and adding clarifying contexts. Leech's original order of the constraints is adopted.

**4.2.1 Generosity constraint**

Leech links this constraint typically to commissives. It is an O-centered constraint that addresses O's wants. In the data, four utterances were classified as 'generous' because S conveyed the advice in a context showing his interest in O's want, which is his/her desire to succeed and be named 'the star of the show'. In the example below (the original number is retained), S had a previous conflict with O in an earlier interaction because O did not follow S's advice. Thus, when they had a new meeting to decide what to sing in the coming prime, S emphasized the importance

of not repeating the same mistake, highlighting that O's desire to succeed is the reason behind S's advice.

(3) (S2)

بتسمع كلامي هالمرة صح؟ (المتلقي: ان شاء الله) عشان تطير.

(You will listen to me this time, right? (O responds: God willing) so you can fly (i.e. succeed)).

### 4.2.2 Tact constraint

This constraint was observed eleven times in the data. In these utterances, S placed low value on his own wants by considering acts that were meant to ensure O's success as S's own wants. This constraint relates to the previous one, where S puts high value on O's wants. Pairing of constraints is one of the characteristics of Leech's theory. Thus, each two consecutive constraints share their locus, i.e. core interest, and differ in their focus, i.e. S vs. O, the first constraint always being O-centered and the second S-centered. Example (11) manifests the use of the Tact constraint.

(11) (S2)

فهالاسبوع اطلب منكم (موجه لسالم) انا ابغيك تغني شوي شعبي سعودي. ما ابغى نوصل مرحلة ملل.. عشان نشتغل.. لان الحفلات دايما يطلبون تنوع

(This week I ask you (addressing Salem) I want you to sing a Saudi folk song. I don't want us to reach the point of boredom.. to work.. and in concerts, they always ask for diversity)

Here, S makes the advice, which is for O's benefit, sound like a favor or want of S's.

### 4.2.3 Approbation constraint

In accordance with Leech's remarks (2014), and the findings of Elfarish (2020), this constraint was observed in many of the performed acts through praise and compliments. In example (1) above, S gives some advice to O, while at the same time complimenting her, assuring her that her creativity and talent were recognized and appreciated.

It could also be violated by performing direct criticism as in the following example.

(12) (S2)

ما اعجبني حضورج في حفلة حماقي..(المتلقية: ليش؟ من أي ناحية؟) مش انتي جوري الي تنططين على المسرح.. يعني انا قاعد ارسم لك امج.. انتي خطج الفني اثقل من اللي سويتيه على المسرح.. عامة تصير هاذي الأشياء بس مستقبلا نمشي على الامج اللي راسمينه.. افضل يكون.

(I didn't like your presence at Hamaki's party. (O: why? in what way?) It's not like you to jump on the stage. I mean, I'm creating an image for you. Your artistic approach is more subdued than what you did on stage. These things happen sometimes, but, in the future, it would be better to follow the image we established.)

In this example, S explicitly criticized O for her performance in the concert. He softened the criticism at the end by announcing that these things happen sometimes, followed by the actual advice at the very end of the utterance.

### 4.2.4 Obligation of S to O constraint

This constraint was observed eight times, and never violated in the examined data. Example (13) shows this constraint in use.

(13) (S2)

أنت غنيت أغنية حلوة ما بقول لك لا.. بس رجعت كررت نفس الخطأ من أسبوعين قبل. يعني اتفق معاك على أغنية نروح البرايم تغيرها.. أنا ظهركم أنا سندكم أنا موسيقي مثلك بس لما تغير.. أعتقد ذي ثاني مرة، أنت قول لي صح ولا غلط (االمتلقي: أتوقع أول مرة يعني) اسمعني اكثر.

(You performed a nice song; I'm not saying you didn't. but you repeated the same mistake you made two weeks ago. We agree on a song; then we go to the prime and you change it. I'm at your back, I'm your rock, I'm a musician just like you, but when you change.. I think this's the second time, you tell me if I'm mistaken (O: I think it is the first time) Listen to me more.)

In this example, S expresses his obligation to O by saying that he got O's back and by asking O to trust him. Again, the actual advice came at the very end of the utterance, when S explicitly asked O to listen to him.

### 4.2.5 Agreement constraint

Applying this constraint entails that the speaker values the addressee's opinion, either by agreeing with something they have said or by seeking their opinion in relation to a specific matter. In the following example, S is asking O to share his thoughts with him; he is seeking O's opinion and promising good results.

(14) (S2)

شوف شلون الحوار يجيب نتيجة.. قول.. اللي في خاطرك قول لي.. لان شوف الحين ساعدتني انت.. ساعدتني على نفسك

(See how having a conversation gives good results.. speak up.. tell me what's on your mind.. because this way you helped me.. you helped me help you).

### 4.2.6 Opinion-reticence constraint

When observing this constraint, S places low value on his own opinion. This could be done by formulating the advice as a general statement rather than an opinion. In example (9) above, S1 said "everyone does their best" without explicitly directing his advice to a particular addressee, although he was actually talking to one of the contestants, as explained above.

Despite being the most frequently violated constraint, it could be argued that, in this context, its violation did not risk being impolite. As shown in example (15), since S is the manager, he was required to provide his honest opinion, particularly given the contestants' critical position prior to the elimination round. Leech (2014) recognized that the power factor, referred to as 'vertical distance', could influence adherence to the Politeness Principle, suggesting that individuals might violate one of the constraints without necessarily being deemed impolite. S attempts to bolster

his viewpoint by referencing the perspective of another manager, suggesting that the merit of his advice derives not from his personal stance but from the consensus of experts in the field.

(15) (S1)

أنا شايف ان مكسبكم ان كل واحد كان يستغل كل لحظة وكل دقيقة زي ما حسن بيقول أن هو تعلم منها واستفاد منها عشان يخرج يطبقها

(I believe that your profit is that each one benefitted from every moment and every minute, as Hasan said, that you learned and benefited from it in order to go out and implement it.)

### 4.2.7 Sympathy constraint

Probably due to the show's nature, this was one of the frequently observed constraints. In such shows, advice usually entails assessment of the contestants' performance, which could result in hurting their feelings. In the following example, the act is full of expressions that are merely used in consideration of O's feelings.

(16) (S1)

زي ما قلت لكم احنا خوات مش عايزكم تكونوا متضايقين متوترين خايفين، عارفين راح تكسروا الدنيا

(As I told you, we are like brothers. I don't want you to be upset, nervous, or afraid, We know that you will blow minds.)

The use of this constraint reveals a difference in perspectives between the Arab culture and the Western culture. Leech (2014) assumes that insults are expected in reality shows; thus, they would not be considered impolite. In the analyzed data, however, insults to the contestants, by their managers, were never detected; and consideration of their feelings, i.e. applying the sympathy constraint, occurred 8 times, which is consistent with the results obtained by Elfarish (2020) on Arabic media.

### 4.2.8 Feeling- reticence constraint

This is the only constraint that was violated but never observed. In example (17) below, S expressed his feelings more than once in the same act. Placing high value on S's feelings is considered a violation of the feeling-reticence constraint.

(17) (S1)

هيثم، حقولها لك للمرة المليون ميسوط جدا جدا ان انت النهارده بقيت معانا في البرنامج بس انا برضو متضايق ان انت مرتين كنت في مرحلة الخطر فأكيد في حاجة غلط… لازم نخلي بالنا لان لو حصل كدا تاني في الجولة الثالثة حيبقى مش لطيف.. ولا ليا ولا ليك..فلازم نشد جامد.

(Haitham, I will tell you for the millionth time. I am very, very happy that you are still with us, but I am also upset that you were in the elimination round twice. Surely, something is wrong…We must be careful because if this happens again in the third round, it will not be nice.. neither for me nor for you.. so, we have to do our best).

**5. Discussion**

This study examined the advice-giving speech act within the Arab culture by analysing 79 instances from the reality talent show 'Boulevard Almawaheb', featuring participants from different Arab countries. The objective was to describe the application of Leech's constraints and advice forms within the Arab culture. The findings revealed that the on-record indirect form was the most preferred, utilized 47 times, followed by the direct form at 23 instances, whereas the off-record indirect form was the least employed, appearing only 9 times. This order indicates that giving advice is perceived as a face-threatening act in the Arab world, despite the advice being solicited and the speaker holding a higher vertical position relative to the addressee, both factors mentioned by Leech (2014) as face-threat minimizers. The results of this study challenge Leech's assumption, suggesting a potential area of cultural variation.

Additionally, two linguistic forms absent from Leech's theory emerged as recurring patterns in the data. The first one was the inclusion of S with O in the act, despite the understanding that only O is expected to perform the act. The second was the formulation of the advice as a general statement, avoiding direct address to O, while making sure that O understands that s/he is the intended addressee by means of contextual cues. In addition to their presence in the data, these two forms were recognized by Brown and Levinson (1987). Consequently, their incorporation into Leech's theory could have led to a more extensive universal framework.

The most applied constraint was Approbation, indicating that the investigated speech community typically demonstrates politeness by emphasizing O's qualities. This finding aligns with Elfarish's (2020) study on the representation of Leech's theory in an Arabic film. Furthermore, the only constraint that was violated but never applied was Feeling-reticence, suggesting that 'sharing feelings' is a prevalent characteristic among the members of the studied culture. Incorporating cultural differences into foreign and second language curricula may enhance learners' ability to avoid miscommunication and attain greater pragmatic competence in the target language.

Leech recognized that individuals occasionally downplay polite expressions without being deemed impolite. He asserted that "[w]hen horizontal distance is reduced (e.g., in communication with familiars or intimates) the need for politeness is also reduced- until we move to the zone of non-politeness or impoliteness" (2007: 189). Hence, I propose an added constraint in which the speaker strategically presumes a close relationship or common grounds with the addressee as a way of softening the performed act and claiming solidarity, potentially through humour. In example (18) below, S gave O some advice concerning his body language and facial gestures while singing. The advice included a humorous observation regarding O's performance, noting that O was singing a contemporary, fast-paced song while exhibiting the body language characteristic of a renowned classic female singer (the humorous part is underlined).

(18) (S2)

أنت قاعد تتطور بالعكس يعني كثير أشياء حلوة قاعدة تصير فيك.. أهم شي أنك حركات ام كلثوم وأغنية راشد الماجد ما يصير

(You are improving. I mean, a lot of good things are happening to you.. The most important thing is that you do not perform with the gestures of Umm Kulthum in a song for Rashid Al Majid. They don't match!)

The same meaning, i.e., having a close relationship, was also conveyed using the conventionally indirect strategy by including both S and O in carrying out the advised act.

Leech (2014) posits that reality television exemplifies a prevalent instance of deliberate impoliteness and verbal abuse. The findings of this study indicate a significant level of politeness when addressing the contestants, despite their younger age, lower power status, and the advice being solicited. This finding suggests that cultural norms' influence on politeness judgments need to be considered in any politeness theory claiming universality.

## 6. Conclusion, limitations, and recommendations

This study examined the advice-giving instances produced in the talent show 'Boulevard Almawaheb'. To control external factors, such as power, distance, and rank of imposition, the study concentrated on the instances produced by the two managers and directed to the contestants. The primary aim was to develop a pragmatic profile for speech acts' representation in the Arab world. This profile would facilitate cross-cultural comparisons and assist in teaching the pragmatic component of Arabic to its foreign/second language learners. The study also applied Leech's theory to the Arabic culture to evaluate its comprehensiveness and universality. The findings revealed a preference of the on-record indirect strategy, emphasizing O-centered constraints, mainly Approbation. The data also exhibited certain linguistic structures that were not accounted for in Leech's theory.

The investigation encompassed all instances of advice-giving by the intended speakers, resulting in a relatively small sample of 79 utterances. Consequently, any generalizations should be validated by future research. Furthermore, while the show featured participants from various Arab countries, certain countries were not represented, such as Algeria, which may exhibit different politeness tendencies (Lounis, Alghazo, Al-Sabbagh and Rabab'ah 2024). Therefore, further investigation is necessary to assess the generalizability of the results across all Arab cultures.

The findings of the study led to the following recommendations:

1. Teaching pragmatics is integral to language instruction; that includes acknowledging the community's preference of certain forms over others. Effective communication in a foreign language requires learners to perform various speech acts in a manner akin to native speakers to prevent communication breakdown.
2. An advantage of Leech's theory over other politeness theories is that it does not claim exclusiveness when it comes to specifics. For instance, it proposes three act forms; yet in the discussion of the sub-forms, it offers general guidelines and English examples, indicating that other forms may exist in different languages.
3. Researchers in the field of speech acts must consider the preparatory rules that differentiate advice from other speech acts, including requests. The preparatory

rules for advice state that "1- S has some reason to believe A will benefit H. 2- it is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of event." (Searle 1969: 67). Some researchers, such as Qomariyah and Ahya (2020), apply the first condition while neglecting the second. The classification of the act as either advice or request is contingent upon the identity of the beneficiary, S or H, as well as H's obligation to execute the act.

4. Further investigation into the representation of various speech acts across different Arab cultures is needed. Such research may contribute to the creation of tailored curricula for teaching Arabic as a foreign or second language, specifically addressing the needs of various Arab regions.

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