

# Dubbing of English animated series into Arabic on Shahid and Netflix: an analysis based on the politeness theory

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Drawing on the politeness theory, this study explored the dubbing of English children’s cartoons into Modern Standard Arabic, focusing on negative face speech acts such as compliments, suggestions, rejections, and suggestions in rejections.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Through quantitative and qualitative comparative analyses, this study investigated the influence of cultural differences on the selection of dubbing strategies, analyzed the politeness strategies employed in dubbing, and examined the maintenance of pragmatic equivalence in translated speech acts. Data were collected from the cartoon series “The Loud House” from popular digital platforms Shahid and Netflix, chosen for their regional (the Arab world) and global popularity, respectively.

**Findings** – The findings revealed shifts and adaptations in the dubbing process influenced by linguistic and cultural factors, particularly emphasizing social norms and power dynamics (e.g. respect for elders) prevalent in the Arab culture. Translators strategically employed politeness strategies, such as off-record and bald on-record strategies, to ensure cultural appropriateness and maintain the integrity of familial relationships depicted in the content. The comparative analysis of translators’ approaches on Shahid and Netflix platforms highlights significant differences in the translation of negative face-threatening act scenarios. Netflix shows a tendency to adjust politeness pragmatic levels to better suit the preferences of the target audience, indicating a proactive effort to enhance viewer engagement through effective translation strategies. In contrast, Shahid adopts a more conservative approach, maintaining a consistent politeness level in its translations, which aligns closely with cultural norms and expectations. This comparative analysis underscores the divergent translation strategies employed by the two platforms, with Netflix prioritizing adaptation to audience preferences and Shahid favoring preservation of established politeness levels. The cultural social factors that influenced the translation and adaptation of face threatening acts can be grasped by considering elements such as social distance, power dynamics, and relative imposition. In Arabic culture, these factors play a crucial role in determining the social dynamics and interactions between individuals. The observed patterns of shifts and adaptations in the translation of face threatening acts on Shahid and Netflix reflect the nature of stratified Arabic societies where communal relationships are defined by factors like family ties, elder-younger dynamics, and friendships. These cultural factors shape the social norms and expectations surrounding face threatening acts, which, in turn, influence the translation choices made on these platforms.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study has several limitations that need acknowledgment. Firstly, the sample size was limited, focusing on the dubbing of only two versions of an animated series and four seasons, comparing translations across two platforms. Additionally, there were challenges related to the accessibility and availability of data, with limited information about the translators involved in the dubbing process. Furthermore, the study’s focus on specific types of translations may have overlooked other important factors influencing translation practices. Lastly, regional variations in translation practices within the Arab

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world were not considered. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into translation practices in animated series on Shahid and Netflix platforms, highlighting the need for future research to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of translation practices in the Arab world.

**Practical implications** – The findings of this study have significant practical implications for a wide range of stakeholders, including translators, educators, textbook writers, and even non-specialists. For translators, especially those working in the field of audiovisual translation, understanding the nuances of politeness strategies and their application in different cultural contexts is essential. The findings suggest that translators should be sensitive to cultural and social factors when translating negative face-threatening act scenarios in cartoons. By making strategic decisions to adapt translations to align with audience preferences while still preserving cultural appropriateness, translators can enhance viewer engagement and ensure that the translated content resonates effectively with the target audience. Educators and textbook writers can also benefit from these findings by incorporating insights into politeness theory and cross-cultural communication into their curriculum and materials. By teaching students about the importance of politeness strategies in translation and providing them with practical examples and exercises, educators can help prepare the next generation of translators to navigate complex linguistic and cultural challenges in their work. Additionally, non-specialists, such as viewers of translated content, can gain a better understanding of the intricacies involved in translation and the impact of cultural factors on communication. By being aware of these issues, non-specialists can become more discerning consumers of translated media and appreciate the skill and artistry involved in the translation process.

**Originality/value** – This study underscores the cultural competence and sensitivity of Arab translators in navigating linguistic and social dynamics, contributing to the creation of culturally resonant and entertaining content for young Arabic-speaking audiences.

**Keywords** Children’s cartoons, Cultural differences, Politeness strategies, Negative face threatening acts

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

“Sesame Street,” the classic children’s television series, with its accurate professional (Abu-Abisi, 1990) Arabic-dubbed version broadcast for Arabic-speaking audiences, has been entertaining and educating young viewers for over 50 years (Al-Doshi, 2019). According to Gettas (1992), the show features a diverse cast of characters who tackle various social issues, aiming to promote values such as kindness, sharing, and cooperation, specifically targeting child audiences from two to eight years of age. Through its engaging skits, songs, and relatable storylines, “Sesame Street” has been a consistent force in shaping positive behavior and politeness in children, “reflecting the varying educational, social and cultural needs of children from country to country.” (Gettas, 1992, p. 113). Indeed, several cartoons, including “Thomas and Friends,” “Paw Patrol,” “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood,” “Dora the Explorer,” and “Handy Manny,” have been developed with the objective of instilling politeness in children, successfully realized through their engaging narratives and positive character portrayals. In these shows, characters such as Daniel Tiger, Thomas, Dora, and Manny exemplify respectful behavior, cooperation, and kindness, serving as positive role models for young viewers. The captivating stories and relatable characters contribute to the effective integration of politeness strategies, fostering a positive and educational viewing experience for children.

The abovementioned examples demonstrate how cartoons can effectively portray important life lessons and cultivate politeness among young viewers, thus providing valuable tools for character development among children and young adults. Cartoons play a role in shaping young minds, not only providing entertainment for children but also fostering essential social skills among them (Gettas, 1992, p. 113).

The rise of streaming platforms and digital media has played a crucial role in making a wide array of dubbed cartoons easily accessible to children and young adults in the Arab world. Netflix (2024) provides streaming services in more than 190 countries and over 30 languages. With Shahid, an Arabic content streaming platform operated by MBC Group, the convenience of on-demand viewing has fueled interest in animated content, allowing for a

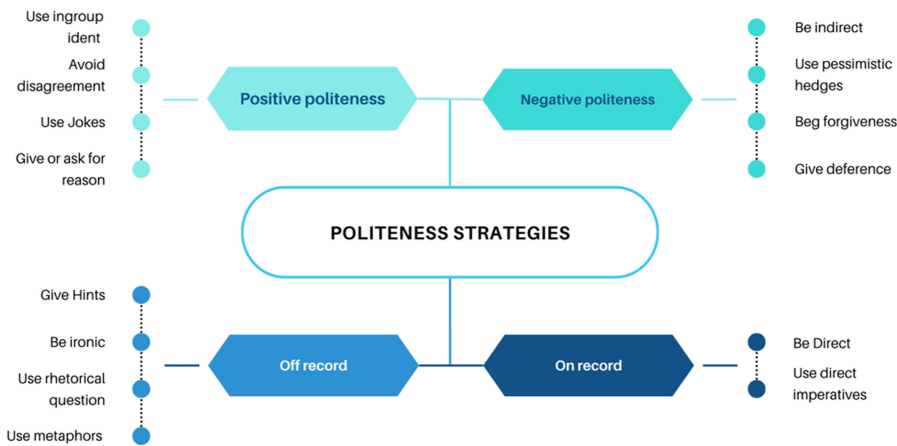
personalized and immersive entertainment experience. As Najjar (2020) stated, “After dominating the largest audience share and following its decision to invest significantly in drama and cinema in the Arab world in 2020, producing original content for its benefit, as well as showcasing both classic and contemporary Arab works, Netflix, the world’s most popular streaming platform with 195 million subscribers according to its latest statistics, ignited enthusiasm on modern platforms like ‘Shahid.’” Furthermore, according to BBC, Shahid is the world’s leading streaming platform in the Arab world (Biardzka, 2024).

Tareq Al-Ibrahim, Director of Content at Shahid, emphasized that the impressive children’s library on Shahid is distinct, offering a diverse range of educational and entertainment content. The platform ensures a secure and trusted viewing experience for families throughout the Arab world. Indeed, the rise of subscription-based streaming services and the expansion of dubbed cartoons in Arabic have led to an increased interest in monitoring the linguistic and behavioral outputs in their content to preserve and promote Arabic moral lessons and cultural values (Biardzka, 2024).

The current research presents an original perspective by examining the application of politeness theory to various negative face speech acts, such as compliments, suggestions, and rejections, within the context of dubbing cartoons into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). This study aims to illuminate the utilization of politeness and cultural nuances in the dubbing process of content for young audiences, offering unique insights in this regard. The study is structured around three specific objectives: (1) Investigating the influence of cultural disparities on the selection of politeness strategies in dubbing speech acts; (2) analyzing the politeness strategies utilized in the dubbing of negative face acts from English to MSA; and (3) exploring the degree to which the dubber maintains the pragmatic equivalence of the dubbed speech act, particularly concerning politeness levels, throughout the translation process.

**2. Literature review**

Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory focuses on the notion of “face,” representing an individual’s public self-image and social identity. This theory posits that in social interactions, individuals employ various politeness strategies to manage face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain social harmony. The main politeness strategies are as follows (see Figure 1 for examples): (1) Positive politeness, which minimizes the threat to the hearer’s



Source(s): Figure prepared by author

**Figure 1.** Analysis based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness strategies

(referred to as H) positive face; (2) negative politeness, oriented toward H's negative face and emphasizing avoidance of imposition on H; (3) the off-record strategy, to avoid unequivocal imposition by giving hints; and (4) the bald on-record strategy, which serves to explicitly convey intentions or requests without the use of mitigating devices.

However, the uses of each of these strategies are tied to social determination, including power (P), social distance (D), and the ranking of imposition depending on cultural factors (R), all of which are related to context. To avoid FTAs, an individual will employ certain indirect upgrading or downgrading strategies to minimize the threat, depending on the situation. Minimizing the threat is usually achieved using repressive action mitigating the threat with pragmatic "modifications or additions that indicate clearly that no such face threat is intended or desired" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 69).

With the widespread adoption of dubbed cartoons, the Arab world has undergone a notable transformation in its media and entertainment landscape. This shift not only exposes audiences to diverse animated content but also significantly influences social and cultural dynamics (Slamia, 2022, p. 79). Examining the existing literature on the application of politeness theory reveals a nuanced exploration of the integration of politeness into dubbed cartoons. Children's cartoons are an authentic source from which children learn politeness strategies while acquiring knowledge on speech acts and social behaviors within predefined sociocultural norms (Hakim and Novitasari, 2022, p. 192).

As the industry progresses, incorporating cultural elements into animated productions has become increasingly common (Slamia, 2022, p. 80). The expansion of dubbed cartoons in Arabic has been substantial over the years, featuring popular titles such as *The Loud House*, *Gumball*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Teen Titans*, *Dora the Explorer*, *Thomas and Friends*, and *Peppa Pig*. These popular animated series, alongside others such as *Adventure Time*, *Ben 10*, and *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*, have not only captivated the interest of youth in the Arab world but have also been instrumental in making cultural shifts. The adaptation of these shows to Arabic serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a means of preserving and promoting the Arab culture and values. By integrating local nuances, linguistic expressions, and cultural references, these dubbed cartoons safeguard the cultural identity and ethical principles of the younger generation in the Arab world. As for related literature, many studies have examined children's language development by focusing on the acquisition of politeness strategies while learning speech acts through cartoons (Alaiyed, 2023; Hakim and Novitasari, 2022; Mahmood *et al.*, 2019).

Hakim and Novitasari (2022) investigated the importance of attending to politeness strategies in communication, particularly when individuals from diverse cultures are involved. For instance, Disney Pixar, through its films, effectively portrays people and cultures. Hakim and Novitasari (2022) analyzed the politeness strategies employed by the main characters in the Disney Pixar animated adventure film *Onward*; using a descriptive qualitative approach, their analysis was conducted through the lens of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies. The findings revealed that Ian Lightfoot, the central character, predominantly utilized bald on-record strategies in communication. This aligns with the film's theme, often depicting emergency situations requiring prompt action and explicit directives to ensure the safety of the main characters. Importantly, the most frequently employed politeness strategies did not necessarily indicate emotional closeness between speakers, as the linguistic choices made by the main character were influenced by sociocultural aspects prevalent in his society.

Mahmood *et al.* (2019) explored how dubbing translators handle culturally nuanced linguistic references in Malaysian dubbed animated series for children. Using three foreign children's series dubbed into Malay, the study analyzed instances of sarcastic remarks, obscene language, and negative visuals, revealing varied approaches used by the translators. The findings underscore the crucial role of translators, particularly in children's text translation, where cultural nuances and appropriateness are paramount considerations.

[Samarah \(2015\)](#) stressed that politeness in speech acts is highly valued and deeply embedded in communication norms in the Arab culture. Language is considered a powerful tool that fosters respect and helps maintain positive relationships. Power, social distance, and relative imposition determine the use of honorific titles and formal language to convey politeness. Addressing individuals with appropriate terms based on their social status or age is considered essential. Overall, politeness in speech acts within the Arab culture underscores the importance of maintaining harmony, preserving face, and nurturing a respectful communication style. According to [Samarah \(2015\)](#), Arabs must navigate two primary forces concerning politeness: societal expectations and religious influences. A balance between the demands of society, with its specific norms and expectations, and the guidance provided by religious principles, defines politeness.

[Lozano \(2017\)](#) stated that in the domain of dubbing children's cartoons, there is a lack of substantial research and practical guidelines regarding the application of politeness theory; specifically, pragmatic politeness strategies applied to cartoons have not been fully investigated. In the context of dubbing animated films for children, [Lozano \(2017\)](#) explored the role of sensory information, as it optimally exploits the interaction of various signifying codes, particularly verbal, iconic, and musical puns. He classified the main semiotic codes of the cinematic genre, aiming to clarify whether sensory effects are diminished, preserved, or heightened in dubbed versions. He investigated whether these potential modifications are intentional adjustments made to enhance children's comprehension. Utilizing illustrative examples of the dubbing of American animated movies into Spanish, his study highlighted the strategies and techniques employed in dubbed animated films for children. In instances where a real culture is depicted in children's films, the two primary translation strategies observed are the maintenance or alteration of specific cultural elements. This choice leads to a translation approach based on either foreignization or domestication, depending on the representation of cultural nuances.

[Hatim and Mason \(2000\)](#) investigated politeness in screen translation, focusing on audiovisual media, such as films and TV shows. They underscored the importance of understanding politeness in translations in order to preserve the meaning and impact of the original content. The authors explored strategies, including linguistic choices and nonverbal cues, employed to convey politeness in various cultural contexts. Emphasizing the technical, linguistic, and cultural challenges faced by translators, they stressed the necessity for cultural awareness to accurately convey politeness. The study highlighted the crucial role of politeness in effective communication, urging translators to be attuned to cultural nuances. The focus was on understanding the challenges in conveying interpersonal meaning, particularly politeness, in FTAs. [Hatim and Mason \(2000\)](#) concluded by acknowledging the need for more extensive empirical research to generalize these findings to other films and languages, proposing an examination of source and target language auditor impressions of the characters' attitudes. The mention of politeness as a recurring theme and its cross-cultural perspective are highlighted, linked to broader discussions on pragmatic meaning in translation. The authors emphasized that the discussion extends beyond subtitling, providing insights into the challenges of conveying interpersonal meaning and politeness in various modes of translation ([Hatim and Mason, 2000](#)).

[Napoli \(2021\)](#) addressed the strategies used by audiovisual translators to preserve pragmatic politeness in dubbing, contributing to the field by providing insights from dubbing on politeness equivalence obtained at the speech act level. [Napoli \(2021\)](#) conducted a comparative qualitative study analyzing requests from 12 English films dubbed into Italian and concluded that translators employed some pragmatic shifts to compensate for the gap between the source and target cultures. These pragmatic shifts reflect linguistic manipulations using direct or indirect modification and upgrading or downgrading strategies to successfully maintain the same pragmatic level in the target language and culture.

Osama (2023) explored politeness and power relationships as part of socio-pragmatic competence, for effective communication. He examined specific elements of politeness and power relationships observed in the Arabic version of the popular American cartoon *The Amazing World of Gumball*. Specifically, qualitative analysis was performed to examine interactions within family and school settings, focusing on whether the employed FTAs are noticeable in these contexts. These violations are presented in a humorous and engaging manner, portraying them as socially acceptable socio-pragmatic practices for children. The analysis of the selected scenes revealed several instances of politeness and power relations violations, particularly in the representation of father–child interactions within the family context. These findings shed light on the deviations from expected norms in the Arab culture and provide insights into the portrayal of politeness and power dynamics in the cartoon series (e.g. reflected in the character openly expressing his negative feelings such as anger and distrust by showing disrespect to his father, mother, and grandparents).

Furthermore, Alaiyed (2023) employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework as the basis for her study comparing the utilization of politeness strategies in the English version of the animated cartoon *Angelo Rules* with its dubbed Arabic version, with a specific focus on investigating the potential influence of different cultures on the employed politeness strategies. The analysis was based on data from four episodes in English and their corresponding episodes in Arabic. The study examined the occurrence of positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald on-record strategies employed by the characters in both language versions, found to be present in nearly all the analyzed episodes, both in English and Arabic. Among these strategies, positive politeness was often noted, particularly using exaggerated interest when dealing with the main character and inclusive language involving both the speaker and hearer when the main character and his friends are engaged in a conversation. However, bald on-record strategies, where direct imperative is used, were the most frequently observed. Furthermore, the study did not identify any significant differences in the employed politeness strategies between the four English episodes and the corresponding Arabic-dubbed episodes. This suggests a consistency in the application of politeness strategies across the two language versions, as long as no cultural violations are observed.

The literature review indicated a dearth of research on the application of politeness strategies on dubbing children's cartoons and series into MSA. The present study takes a novel approach by examining how politeness theory can be applied to different negative face speech acts, specifically compliments, suggestions, and rejections, in the context of dubbing cartoons into MSA. With this unique focus, this study aims to shed light on how politeness and cultural nuances are applied in the process of dubbing for young audiences. In the context of this study's emphasis on negative face acts, threats to individual autonomy align with the recognition that these acts could potentially pose challenges in the Arab cultural context.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), negative face acts refer to linguistic behaviors that threaten an individual's desire for autonomy and freedom of action. Negative face relates to an individual's need to be unimpeded by others, not be imposed upon, and have the total freedom to act and express oneself without others' interference. Thus, negative face may be particularly important in cultures where preserving personal space and independence are highly valued. In the Arab culture, limitations on negative face may be perceived as restrictive, potentially impacting individuals' freedom. This research explored how linguistic expressions, particularly those related to negative face acts, may affect speakers' autonomy and personal space in the context of dubbing, providing insights into potential challenges or compromises in addressing negative face needs during translation. While emphasizing negative face acts, this study does not dismiss the significance of positive face needs. In the Arab culture, positive face acts, related to social connections and affiliations, may not pose the



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same challenges, with strong social bonds and a sense of community being highly valued in this context, aligning well with positive face desires.

### 3. Methodology

Drawing on the politeness theory, this study analyzed data sourced from a cartoon series titled “The Loud House” (2014), specifically chosen for the social context it represents. “The Loud House” portrays a unique family dynamic within a large house; the events revolve around a boy (the only male child in the family) living with his 10 sisters. The setting showcases the extended family relationships and the interactions among family members, including the father, mother, older siblings, and younger siblings. The show explores the challenges and humorous situations likely to arise in such a lively and bustling household. The choice of cartoons was based on their availability across platforms. The selected seasons on Netflix were one and two, and those on Shahid were four and five. These two platforms were chosen based on evidence indicating their popularity in the Arab world (Najjar, 2020). Yet, between them, some variations in cultural and linguistic contexts can be noted. Shahid, launched in Saudi Arabia and originally catering to a regional audience, tends to provide a more localized perspective, with content tailored specifically to Arabic-speaking audiences. Meanwhile, Netflix, which originated in the United States and has expanded globally, offers a broader international perspective, with dubbed versions of cartoons made available in several languages (Haddad and Dhoest, 2021).

The negative face acts identified in this study were classified into four distinct categories: compliments, suggestions, rejections, and suggestions in rejections. Each category was explored using quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, the total number of examples from the original cartoons was collected, alongside the total number of examples that underwent strategy shifts. Subsequently, politeness strategies utilized in both the original and the dubbed versions were identified. Then, comparisons were conducted between the original and the shifted instances to investigate whether the dubbed versions of the selected cartoons maintained the same level of politeness as the original or a pragmatic shift was implemented, and thus explore whether positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record strategies, or off-record strategies were employed. Further, data from an expert interview conducted with a prolific Arab audiovisual translator of films and shows, Dr Ahmad Khedro, were used to supplement the results and for additional insights.

### 4. Analysis and discussion

This study analyzed the dubbing of four negative face acts: compliments, suggestions, rejections, and suggestions in rejections. These negative face acts are discussed in light of the politeness theory.

#### 4.1 Compliments

According to Herbert (1991), compliments can be defined as positive statements or expressions of admiration, praise, or appreciation toward someone or something. They are used to highlight and acknowledge others’ positive qualities, achievements, or actions. Compliments can be related to appearance, skills, intelligence, accomplishments, or any other praiseworthy attribute. Giving compliments is a way to show kindness, build rapport, and enhance social bonds (Herbert, 1991). In this study, compliments fall under the category of FTAs because they involve expressing admiration or desire for something of H. This imposition on H’s attributes may create a sense of obligation or pressure to respond, making compliments a form of FTA. Twenty instances of compliments from Shahid and 17 from Netflix were grouped. Notably, no translation shifts were observed on either platform; all instances were literally translated, as indicated in Table 1.

Example	Episode	Running time	Original	Dubbed version	Context
<i>Shahid</i>					
1	1	06:40	Pretty good trick	حيلة جيدة	Cousins talk
2		10:14	You guys look great; speaking of flowers, my mom helped me order these for you	تبدو ان رانعين، وعلى ذكر الزهور ساعدتني اُمي في طلب هذه	Granddaughter taking to grandparents
3		12:52	Sounds good, Alexis	عزفك جيد	Girl talking to little neighbor playing a musical instrument awfully
4	4	02:36	Wow, that's really impressive guys	واو هذا كله مبهر يا رفاق	Meha impressed by planned activities for Grandpa's birthday, worried she did not plan anything yet
5		02:54	Don't worry, you are at least as talented as Lalo	لا تقلقي انت موهوبة مثل لالو	Friends talking
6		09:11	You are the funniest grandpa ever	انت اأخف الأجداد ظلا	Granddaughter talks to grandpa
7		16:03	Oh man, that is all three	رانع به الصفات الثلاث	Friends talking
8		16:17	Dang girl, you are a pranking genius	هذا مذهل انت عبقريّة مقالّب	Cousins talking
9		20:31	You are cool and smart and know the city like the back of your hand	انت رانعة وذكية وتعرفين كل شبر بالمدينة	Cousins talking
10		20:35	You are cool Ine, you are so funny and so fearless on that skateboard. I wish I was as bold as you	انت خفيفة ظل وجريئة على لوح التزلج ليبتني جريئة مثلك	Cousins talking
11	5	05:16	Wow, work those angles girl	واو انها صورة رانعة	Parrot to a customer
12	6	05:49	Dad, these purees are amazing	حلوى الفاكهة هذه مذهشة	Daughter to father
13		05:55	I'm so proud of you kids	انا فخورة جدا بكم	Mother to kids
14		08:53	Rita, we really have some ding ding resilient kids	رينا لدينا هنا أبناء مرنون رانعون	Father to kids
15		14:45	Your eulogy really captured your inner beauty	كلمة الرثاء التي ألقيتها كانت رانعة	Man to a little girl
16		19:16	Whoo, it's delicious, the sweetness brings out the saltiness	انها حقا شهية انه مذاق جديد ولذيذ	Teacher to student
17	8	02:55	Wow, that's literally dedication	رانع انت مخلص حقا	Girls to an employee
18		10:18	You are the best manager I could ever hope for	انت افضل مديرة تمنيتها	Father to a daughter

**Table 1.** Examples of “compliments” extracted from Shahid and Netflix

(continued)



Example	Episode	Running time	Original	Dubbed version	Context
19	7	00:46	Damn Looks, you are really on your rhyme stone game today	لولا كنت بارعة في لصق الأحجار اليوم	Sister to younger sister
20		04:38	Oh my gosh, it is perfect	يا خبير أنه رائع	Sister to siblings
<i>Netflix</i>					
1	1	2:00	This is literally the best gift ever in the entire world, let's go give it to Dad	هذه أفضل هدية في العالم على الإطلاق لنقم بشرائها بسرعة هل	Sister to siblings
2		04:52	So, ice-cream sounds good? Dad: marvelous	الفكرة جيدة؟ الأب: بل رائعة	Father to mother
3		12:10	Good job, Lily	أحسننت يا ليلي	Sister to younger sister
4	2	12:49	I knew I can count on you, Liz	كنت واثقة من الاعتماد عليك	Sister to sister
5	13	16:10	A+, my compliments to the chef	عشاء ممتاز وتحياتي إلى الطاهي	Daughter to father
6		10:13	Actually that's not a bad idea	هذه فكرة ليست سيئة	Sister to brother
7	17	13:00	Feather bow seat belt is a nice touch	أحزمة أمان ريش فكرة ظريفة	Sister to younger sister
8		03:00	I can't imagine a more delicious sandwich Luiann, you have some real talent	لم أدق شطيرة شهية مثل هذه لوين أنت موهوبة حقا	Father to daughter
9	20	12:00	Oh my gosh, that is literally the most glorious thing I have ever seen	هذا أروع شيء رأيته في حياتي	Sister to sister
10		11:10	Mr. Grouse, this literally has so much cute car	سيد براوس كيف لك أن تخفي سيارة بهذا الجمال	Sister to neighbor
11		19:30	Correct, Sadie. And nice slap shot.	صحيح يا سيدي رمية رائعة	Teacher to student
12	3	06:58	Here is a tip for a job well done	هذه اكرامية لمهارتك في العمل	Manager to employee
13	4	01:12	Bravo, great work team you can keep your show	احسنتم أيها الفريق سنبيقي البرنامج	Principal to students
14	5	20:40	Way to go Liza, you did it	احسننت يا ليزا نجحتي	Brother to his scientist little sister
15	6	09:55	Wow Lim, why you didn't stinkin ever tell me that you have an incredible arm	رائع يا ليم لما لم يخبرني ستينكن انك مدهش جدا في الرمي	Friends
17	16	02:43	You did good Lenny	أحسننت يا ليني	Father to daughter

Note(s): Table prepared by author

Table 1.

The decision to translate compliments literally, without introducing any changes, may be ascribed to cultural sensitivity and an understanding of the social dynamics within the Arab culture. For example, “you are the best manager I could ever hope for” when a father compliments his daughter was dubbed into “أنت أفضل مديرة تمنينها”. Compliments are often regarded as positive, face-enhancing acts. In the Arab cultural context, compliments are highly valued and appreciated; they contribute to a positive social atmosphere. Hence, the belief that compliments do not generally require softening to minimize threats aligns with the cultural norm of expressing admiration openly.

4.2 Suggestions

According to Sperber *et al.* (1995), suggestions are proposals or ideas put forward to offer guidance, advice, or recommendations to someone. They are intended to provide possible solutions, alternatives, or courses of action for specific situations or problems. Suggestions are often provided in a constructive and non-coercive manner, aiming to assist or influence others’ decision-making processes. A suggestion is deemed an FTA in this study as it entails predicting a future action (A) of H and, hence, exerts pressure on H to carry out or refrain from the specified action (A). Table 2 displays the total number of suggestions gathered from both Shahid and Netflix, along with the instances of translation shifts.

From Shahid data, 130 suggestions with 17 strategy shifts in dubbing were derived, constituting a 13% shift rate. By contrast, from Netflix data, 110 suggestions with 29 strategy shifts were derived, resulting in a higher 26% shift rate. This indicates that Shahid had a lower percentage change in strategy shifts than Netflix in the dubbed version.

A comparison of the number of politeness strategies employed in both the original and dubbed versions on Shahid and Netflix revealed the overall tendency of each platform, indicating whether the orientation is toward maintaining the same pragmatic level or adapting the content to be more suitable for the target culture. Table 3 shows the shifts in the application of the politeness strategy.

Table 3 shows that on Shahid, there are notable differences in the employment of politeness strategies when stating suggestions in the original English version compared to the Arabic dubbed version. Positive politeness reduced from 14 instances in the original version to two instances in the translated version, indicating a shift in the emphasis on the friendly use of direct language between siblings and friends. Additionally, negative

**Table 2.**  
Total instances of “suggestions” and strategy shifts

Platform	Total number of suggestions	Strategy shifts	Shift percentage
Shahid	130	17	13%
Netflix	110	29	26%

**Source(s):** Table prepared by author

**Table 3.**  
Shift in the application of politeness strategies based on “suggestions” between the original and dubbed versions on Shahid and Netflix

	Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Off-record	Bald on-record
<i>Shahid</i>				
Original	14	3	NA	NA
Dubbed	2	2	1	11
<i>Netflix</i>				
Original	13	15	1	NA
Dubbed	2	2	NA	25

**Source(s):** Table prepared by author

politeness decreased from three instances to two, suggesting a subtle change in the mitigation of potential imposition. Moreover, no trace of an off-record strategy was observed in the original version compared to one instance of an off-record strategy in the dubbed version (i.e. when a husband uses hints to suggest an idea to his wife).

On Netflix, these differences were more pronounced. Positive politeness, for example, using hedging opinions, offers, and promises in the original version, decreased from 13 instances to two in the translated version, reflecting a shift toward a bald on-record strategy. For negative politeness, for example, using questions and hedges, there was a substantial decrease from 15 instances to two, indicating a stronger emphasis on mitigating potential face threats. The off-record strategy using direct imperatives underwent a complete reversal, decreasing from one instance in the original version to none in the translated version. Notably, the bald on-record strategy witnessed a significant increase from no use to 25 instances, suggesting a more direct and assertive tone in the Arabic-dubbed version on Netflix using direct imperatives. These variations underscore significant changes in politeness strategies during the translation process on both platforms.

The dubbing process in the exchange between individuals of higher social status reflects a shift toward the use of bald on-record strategies in accordance with Arab culture. This shift was observed in the 17 examples collected from Shahid data (Table 4). Notably, 14 of these examples (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17) demonstrate the utilization of positive politeness strategies through syntactic linguistic realization mechanisms such as avoiding disagreement (Ex. 6), appealing to group identity (Ex. 7), expressing hedged opinions (Ex. 8), giving or asking for reasons (Ex. 11), seeking agreement (Ex. 15), and offering promises (Ex. 5). All these positive politeness instances are dubbed based on the bald on-record strategy, using imperative directives dubbed as "ان نفعل مثل كورتادو ونهديه تجربة لا أعرف يا سيد يجب أن نخبر الجميع بهذه الغرفة", "لنرسل له زهورا", "علينا", and "لدي فكرة ساعدني فيها", respectively. However, there is a shift in the positive politeness strategy employed in Examples 11 and 16. Initially, these examples utilized positive politeness strategies, such as giving reasons for suggestions a granddaughter makes to her grandfather (Ex. 11) and making offers when a little girl talks to an older neighbor (Ex. 16). However, during the dubbing process, these strategies were transformed into negative politeness strategies, involving minimizing impositions dubbed as "فكرت في تعديل أسلوب حياتك قليلا" and using questions dubbed as "(ماذا لو أبقينا القليل?)". A shift from negative politeness toward using an off-record strategy was noticed in Example 14, employing hints when a husband converses with his wife (أه ستأخرين على المدرسة إنه يومك الأول في التخفي). The negative politeness strategy was demonstrated in Examples 9 and 10. The use of a question in Example 9 and hedges in Example 10 were dubbed into a positive politeness strategy using an offer (يمكنني المشاهدة معك), and (الأفضل أن أتابع المباراة في منزلي أنتري) when the girl talked to her older neighbor.

Approximately 110 instances of suggestions were collected from Netflix data, and 29 examples were modified in the dubbing process (Table 5). Data collected from Netflix reflected the same tendency, where 26 of 29 examples shifted in the dubbing process to the bald on-record strategy. Among the 26 instances, 12 positive politeness strategies, such as Example 13 using the ingroup identity marker dubbed as (ما كان عليك لمس بيضتها), shifted to the bald on-record strategy. The remaining 17 examples of negative politeness, such as Example 7 using a question dubbed as (اجلسي بالقرب من أخيك), shifted to bald on-record too. These exchanges take place between siblings and friends, reflecting the same weight of R, or a teacher to her students, mirroring the weight of teacher power over students. Examples 3 and 4 dubbed to (وسأدلك أصابع قدمك المتعبة سأبحث عن أدوات المطبخ من أجلك) and (سنساعدكم) indicated a shift from negative politeness using adverbial clause and questions when dealing with parents to positive politeness attending to H's interests and needs. As for Example 6, there

		<i>Shahid</i>			Dubbed	Politeness	
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	version	strategy	Context
1	2	03:50	Well, you can just hang with me when I make mine	Positive politeness	اذن تعال معي وسنعد مشروب	On-record- direct imperative without redress	Friends talking
2		04:38	Maybe try peeling them first	Positive politeness	يجب أن تقشره أولا	On-record- direct imperative	Sister frustrated with elder brother Sister talking to elder sister
3		06:56	Instead of using all these tools for your hair, why not try a natural look	Positive politeness: give reasons + hedges	بدلا من استخدام كل هذا لشعرك جربي المطهر الطبيعي	On-record	Sister talking to elder sister
4		07:17	Why don't you try painting	Positive politeness: hedges	فلتجربي الرسم	On-record- direct imperative	Girl talking to aunt
5		07:42	Instead of plugging in car you can take marcato bike to work	Positive politeness: give reasons, hedges	بدلا من سيارتك الكهربيانية استخدم الدراجة	On-record	Girl talking to uncle
6		19:16	I don't know Sed, maybe we should tell everyone about this room	Positive politeness Avoid disagreement, hedges	لا اعرف يا سيد يجب أن نخبر الجميع بهذه الغرفة	Bald on-record	Friends talking
7	6	14:48	We should really send flowers	Positive politeness Use ingroup identity marker, hedging opinion	لنرسل له زهورا	On-record direct imperative + use ingroup identity	Friends talking
8	7	06:00	Well, maybe we should not give Dad a thing, maybe we should follow Guitaros lead and give him an experience	Positive politeness: hedging opinion	علينا أن نفعل مثل كورتادو ونهديه تجربة	On-record direct imperative + use ingroup identity	Elder sister to younger sisters
9	11	02:11	Can I watch it with you?	Negative politeness question	يمكنني المشاهدة معك	Positive politeness, offer	Girl to an older neighbor
10		03:55	You know, maybe it's better to watch the rest of the game at home	Negative politeness	أنتري الأفضل أن أتابع المباراة في منزلي	Positive politeness, offer	Girl to an older neighbor
11		12:29	I have been doing some research on increasing the human life span and thought if we could make some modifications to your lifestyle	Positive politeness: give reasons	فكرت في تعديل أسلوب حياتك قليلا	Negative politeness: be conventionally indirect-minimize imposition R	Granddaughter to grandpa

**Table 4.**  
Examples of  
“suggestions”  
extracted from Shahid

(continued)

Shahid							
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
12	5	14:00	Let us play one song for you and I promise we will leave you alone	Positive politeness: promise	فكرت في تعديل أسلوب حياتك قليلا	On-record, be direct	A girl to a famous singer
13	9		Maybe we should let her help us stop whoever the real prankster is	Positive politeness: use ingroup identity, hedging opinion	لنجعلها تساعدنا في كشف صانع المقالب	On-record- direct imperative	Brother to family member
14		12:38	oh Hun, don't you think you should get to class, you don't want to be late in your first day undercover	Negative politeness: question	أه سنتأخرين على المدرسة إنه يومك الأول في التخفي	Off record, hints	Husband suggesting to wife
15	10	03:00	I've got an idea but I need your help	Positive politeness: seek agreement	لدي فكرة ساعدني فيها	On-record: direct imperative	Friends talking
16	12	20:36	We could keep a few bucks for ourselves	Positive politeness: use ingroup, offer	ماذا لو أبقينا القليل	Negative politeness: question	A girl to an older neighbor
17	16	13:30	Maybe we should just leave	Positive politeness: hedging opinion	علينا أن ننصرف	On-record	Friends talking

Source(s): Table prepared by author

Table 4.

was a shift from positive politeness in attending to H's needs to negative politeness (هل تحتاج المساعدة؟) using a question when addressing the older neighbor.

#### 4.3 Rejections

Rejection often involves refusing or declining something offered by a speaker. This refusal may affect the speaker's face or social standing, creating a potential threat to the positive social value associated with their actions or offers. Rejections can be conveyed implicitly or explicitly, depending on the cultural and social context. They serve as a means of setting boundaries, expressing disagreement, or stating unavailability. Table 6 summarizes the data collected for rejections.

As indicated in Table 6, regarding rejection instances, Shahid and Netflix exhibit notable differences. Shahid data revealed 118 rejections, with a relatively low strategy shift count of seven, resulting in a modest 5.90% shift rate. This suggests a comparatively stable translation approach, indicating the translator's tendency to maintain an approximate level of politeness, through which the politeness strategies employed in the dubbed version closely align with the original content.

Conversely, Netflix displayed a distinct pattern. Although the total number of rejections was lower at 48, the strategy shift count was higher at 12, leading to a significant shift rate of 25%. This indicates a more dynamic translation process on Netflix, with a quarter of the rejection instances undergoing strategy shifts. These shifts could imply a deliberate adaptation of politeness in the dubbed version, reflecting a greater departure from the

Netflix							
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
1	1	03:31	Looking for gifts, have you checked Dad's underwear drawer?	Negative politeness: questions	هل تبحثان عن الهدايا؟ إنها في درج أبي	On-record	Brother to sisters
2		06:50	We could look in the basement	Negative politeness: minimize imposition	لنبحث في القبو	On-record, positive + ingroup identity	Sister suggesting to her sister
3		08:23	Allow me to look for the tinsel, and after I find it, I'll rub your tired, aching tootsies	Negative politeness: adverbial hedges	سأبحث عن أدوات المطبخ من أجلك وسأدلك أصابع قدمك المتعبة	Positive politeness: notice attend to H's interests	Daughter to mom
4	2	03:25	How can we help you?	Negative politeness: questions	سنساعدكم	Positive politeness: notice attend to H's needs	Elder brother and friend offering help
5		5:10	You can help the next customer ... partner	Positive politeness: offer	فلتساعد الزبون التالي ... يا شريك	On-record: direct imperative	Friend suggesting to his friend
6		05:20	Looks like you could use an assist	Positive politeness: attend to H's interest	هل تحتاج للمساعدة؟	Negative politeness: question	A kid to a father
7	5	01:15	Why don't you sit next to your brother?	Negative politeness: questions	اجلسي بالقرب من أخيك	On-record: direct imperative	Teacher suggesting to a student
8		01:16	Clyde you don't mind moving, do you?	Positive politeness: assert common ground using tag questions	كلايد لا تمنع بتغيير مقعدك	On-record	Teacher suggesting to a student
9		02:40	If you want us to retain the information, I suggest a pop quiz	Negative politeness: minimize imposition	وان أردت ترسيخ المعلومات فلتقضي اختبارا مفاجئا	On-record: direct	Smart student to a teacher
10		16:35	How about this one? It will bring out your eyes	Positive politeness: give reasons-questions	خذي هذا سيرز لون عينيك	On-record + positive politeness	A kid to a customer

**Table 5.** Examples of "suggestions" extracted from Netflix

(continued)

<i>Netflix</i>							
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
11		20:49	Care to explain!	Off record: presuppose	هلا شرحت الأمر	Negative politeness: question	A brother to his sister's boyfriend
12	7	10:54	How about giving me something I'm not allergic to?	Negative politeness: questions, hedging opinion	أعطني شيئاً لا أعاني حساسية منه	On-record: direct imperative	Neighbors
13		04:50	Maybe we shouldn't have touched his egg	Positive politeness: use ingroup identity, hedging opinions	ما كان عليك لمس بيضتها	On-record	Friends talking
14	15	04:10	Who's up for a boy's day out music montage?	Positive politeness: notice, attend to H's needs	هيا نخرج لنستمع بالاستماع موسيقى خاصة	On-record	Friends
15	1	02:30	You might want to grab your video camera instead	Positive politeness: hedging opinion	برايي أحضري الكاميرا وصورني فالتو أمان يتشاجران	On-record	Linc to older sister
16	5	02:53	Lori, could you maybe hang up the phone and get ready for school?	Negative politeness: questions, hedges	لوري هيا أنهي المكالمة واستعدي للمدرسة	On-record: direct imperative	Brother to elder sister
17		12:26	My point is why can't we go someplace different like Aloha Beach	Positive politeness: ask for a reason	أنا أقصد لنذهب إلى مكان مختلف مثل شاطئ ألوها	On-record	Brother to sisters
18	6	07:43	Maybe you should talk to Lana	Positive politeness: hedging opinion	عليك التحدث إلى لانا	On-record	Sister to a brother
19		14:34	Would you look at the time?	Negative politeness: question	انظري للوقت	On-record	Brother to a sister
20	8	09:54	Ok, this time, instead of Marco Polo, why don't we just use our real names?	Positive politeness: include S and H in the activity	حسناً هذه المرة بدلاً من ماركو بولو نستخدم أسماءنا الأصلية	On record + ingroup identity	Sisters

(continued)

Table 5.



<i>Netflix</i>							
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
21		12:20	Hey Lein, want to play video games?	Negative politeness: questions	لييني تعالى والعبى معي	On-record	Brother to sister
22		06:51	Can you come get me on the tandem?	Negative politeness: question	تعال خذني بدر اجتك	On-record	Friends
23		14:46	Why don't you admit it, Lynn?	Negative politeness: question	اعترفي بالامر يا لين	On-record	Brother to sister
24			Why don't you ask, Liza?	Negative politeness: question	ادهب واسال ليزا	On-record	Elder sister to brother
25	10	04:46	Why don't you get miss smarty-pants to help her?	Negative politeness: question	فلتستعين بالانسة العيقرية لتساعدنا	On-record	Elder sister to brother
26		15:07	Instead of using why not use a renewable energy?	Positive politeness: give reasons, hedging opinion	بدلا من استخدام كل هذه الكهرياء فلتستخدي الطاقة المتجددة	On-record	Brother to younger sister
27	11	7:43	Also, maybe we should let the kids handle this themselves	Positive politeness: hedging opinion	ويجب أن نترك الصغار يتولون مسؤوليتهم بأنفسهم	On-record	Wife to husband
28	12	16:47	You guys, maybe we should listen to her and stop fighting	Positive politeness: hedging opinion	أخواتي يجب أن نتوقف عن الشجار	On-record	Brother to sisters
29	15	07:30	Maybe I can help	Negative politeness: be indirect	سلساعدك	On-record	A stranger to a girl

**Table 5.** Source(s): Table prepared by author

original content compared with Shahid. The shift rates for Shahid and Netflix are shown in Figure 2.

Regarding preserving the same pragmatic level or deviating from it, significant differences were found. Table 7 summarizes the politeness strategies used.

Table 7 demonstrates that, on Shahid, when applying politeness strategies to rejection in the original English version versus the Arabic dubbed version, there were nuanced differences. The application of positive politeness remained consistent, with one instance in two different examples in the original, and the translated versions may be executed to avoid disagreement with friends and be pessimistic when addressing grandparents. Negative politeness saw a reduction from three instances in the original version to one in the translated

version, indicating a shift toward a more direct expression of rejection. Additionally, the off-record strategy remained steady at one instance in the two different situations. The bald on-record strategy increased from two instances in the original version to four in the translated version.

On Netflix, disparities in politeness strategies for rejection were more pronounced. Positive politeness, which had zero instances in the original, appeared once in the translated version, showcasing a potential effort to soften the impact of rejection (e.g. asking for a reason when addressing the older neighbor). Meanwhile, negative politeness decreased from four instances in the original version to none in the translated version, indicating a more direct expression of rejection shifting to positive politeness, off-record, and bald on-record. The off-record strategy witnessed a substantial decrease, from seven instances in the original version to two in the translated version, suggesting a shift toward direct rejection. Notably, the bald on-record strategy saw a notable rise from one instance in the original to nine in the translated version, indicating a more assertive and direct tone in rejecting statements (لا يمكنك الدخول) instead of providing hints (e.g. kitchen's off limits). These variations highlight the distinct approaches taken to apply politeness strategies during the translation process on Netflix. A higher percentage of politeness shifts employed by Netflix's translators reflects their tendency to adapt the dubbed version to the target audience.

Table 8 provides illustrative instances of the rejections observed on Shahid. Examining Examples 1 and 3, a shift is discerned from a bald on-record strategy to

Rejections	Total number	Strategy shifts	Percentage of shifts
Shahid	118	7	5.90%
Netflix	48	12	25%

Source(s): Table prepared by author

**Table 6.** Total instances of "rejections" and strategy shifts



Source(s): Figure prepared by author

**Figure 2.** Examples of strategy shift application based on "rejection" compared to the total number of examples from Shahid and Netflix

	Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Off-record	Bald on-record
<i>Shahid</i>				
Original	1	3	1	2
Dubbed	1	1	1	4
<i>Netflix</i>				
Original	NA	4	7	1
Dubbed	1	NA	2	9

Source(s): Table prepared by author

**Table 7.** Shift in the application of politeness strategies based on "rejections" between the original and dubbed versions on Shahid and Netflix

		<i>Shahid</i>						
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context	
1	5	18:45	- Oh, I-I can't help you	On-record	اوه لا أسفة لا أستطيع مساعدتك	Negative politeness: apology	المديرة ترفض طلب لنكلان	
2	6	14:23	Not really	Off-record	لن أجيب	Bald on-record	يُتهم لويد وصديقه أحدهم بسرقة الوصفات ويستجوبانه بطريقة غير مباشرة	
3	11	19:07	No no, you can't touch anyone	Bald on-record	من الآن عليك أن تتجنب أي تواصل جسدي	Positive politeness: be pessimistic	الحفيدة تتحدث مع جدها	
4	15	02:00	Disagree	Negative politeness: nominalize	اختلف معك	Bald on-record	الاخت الأصغر العالمية تتكلم مع الاخت الأكبر مشجعة الرياضة	
5	18	16:25	Sorry I can't	Negative politeness: apology	لا أستطيع	Bald on-record	البنيت لا ترغب اللعب مع اصدقائها	
6	3	04:10	Can I call you back?	Negative politeness: question	اتصلي لاحقاً	Bald on-record	Sister asking her faraway sister to help her	
7	4	13:12	Ah I don't know	Positive politeness: avoid disagreement	اه أشعر بالحيرة	Off-record: hint	Principal still refusing	

**Table 8.** Examples of "rejections" extracted from Shahid

**Source(s):** Table prepared by author

negative politeness with an apology (اوه لا أسفة لا أستطيع مساعدتك) and to positive politeness (تتجنب أي تواصل جسدي من الآن عليك أن). This transition occurs when a teacher rejects a student's appeal and a granddaughter communicates with a grandparent by employing positive politeness with a pessimistic tone. Being pessimistic "gives redress to H's negative face by explicitly expressing doubt that the conditions for the appropriateness of S's speech act obtain" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 173). In other words, it is used as a linguistic realization mechanism when the speaker assumes that H is unwilling to perform the act expected of him.

In Example 2, an off-record strategy is evident as an accused person responds with a vague denial ("not really") to a stealing accusation dubbed into a bald on-record statement (لن أجيب). This shifts to a bald on-record strategy when the individual openly refuses to address the accusation. Examples 4 and 5 show instances of negative politeness, employing nominal inaction when a scientist sister rejects another sister's opinion and when apologizing to friends to deter them from playing. These instances shift to bald on-record with a more direct rejection dubbed as (اختلف معك) and (لا أستطيع), respectively.

Furthermore, Example 6 illustrates negative politeness using a question, as a sister asks her distant sister for help, shifting to bald on-record (اتصلي لاحقاً). In Example 7, positive politeness to avoid disagreement is employed as a principal avoids disagreement with a student, transitioning to an off-record strategy with a subtle hint (اه أشعر بالحيرة), steering away from direct rejection.

In the context of Netflix, illustrated in Table 9, specific instances of rejection strategies are evident in Examples 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 12, where an off-record approach is adopted using hints (“bathroom’s off limits”) and metaphors (“don’t knock it till you try it”) in the interactions between sisters or conversations with a brother and younger sisters. Notably, these instances undergo a shift toward a bald on-record strategy, resulting in more direct rejections dubbed as (لا للدخول) and (لا ترفضه), respectively.

Further exploration revealed examples of negative politeness in Examples 1, 7, and 9. Example 1, where a child is interacting with an older adult and questioning his attitude, subsequently shifts to positive politeness asking for a reason (لم تتصرف بهذا الشكل أريد زلاجتي). Additionally, the instances of negative politeness in Example 7 and 9 are observed when a

<i>Netflix</i>							
Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
1	1	12:36	Why do you have to be so mean all the time?	Negative politeness: question	لم تتصرف بهذا الشكل أريد زلاجتي	Positive politeness	A boy with the older neighbor
2	3	11:41	Bro, kitchen's off limits	Off-record	لا يمكنك الدخول	Bald on-record	Elder sister talking to brother
3		12:13	Bathroom's off limits	Off-record	لا للدخول	Bald on-record	Sister to older brother
4		12:20	Don't knock it till you try it	Off-record: metaphor	لا ترفضه	Bald on-record	Sister to younger brother
5		12:30	TV's off limits	Off-record	التلفاز ممنوع	Bald on-record	Sister to brother
6		15:30	Ew ew no more bats	Off-record	لا تسمح لي بالخفايش بالاقتراب	Bald on-record	Sisters
7	4	11:40	Would you cut it out?	Negative politeness	توقفي عن ذلك	Bald on-record	Brother to younger sisters rejecting their acts
8	6	01:56	I would talk trash, but I refuse	Negative politeness: dissociate S, H from particular infringement	الجلوس في سلة القمامة مقرف	Off-record: give associated clues	Elder sister to brother
9		15:25	Can you knock it off?	Negative politeness: question	هيا توقفي	Bald on-record	Brother to sister
10	8	07:43	Stop splashing me	Bald on-record	أنتما ترشاني بالماء	Off-record: hints	Younger sister to elder sister
11	9	08:45	Uh hello	Off-record: hint	اوه مجنون	Bald on-record	Sister to brother
12	15	11:00	Oh I wouldn't say that	Off-record	اختلف معك في ذلك	Bald on-record	Stranger to a girl

Source(s): Table prepared by author

**Table 9.**  
Examples of  
“rejections” extracted  
from Netflix

brother rejects the actions of his sisters, transitioning to a bald on-record strategy, (توقفي عن ذلك) and (هيا توقفي), respectively. Example 8 employs a dissociative strategy, distancing from a specific misbehavior when an older sister converses with a brother. This strategy shifts to an off-record approach, incorporating associative clues in the rejection process (الجلوس في سلة القمامة مرفرف). These nuanced shifts highlight the varied rejection strategies employed in the dubbed content on Netflix.

The sole case of a bald on-record rejection in Example 10 was transformed into an off-record strategy employing hints when a younger sister rejected the actions of her elder sisters (أنتما ترشاني بالماء.) This shift emphasizes the context-dependent character of rejection strategies, specifically highlighting the use of indirect rejection through hints in certain instances within the dubbed content. This choice is influenced by Arabic cultural norms, particularly those related to preserving family ties and showing respect to elder siblings and older adults in general.

4.4 Suggestions in rejections

Rejections and suggestions are interconnected elements within the framework of FTAs. A rejection can be softened or mitigated by the addition of a suggestion. A suggestion, in this context, involves offering an alternative or proposing a different course of action in response to the initial proposal or request. By incorporating a suggestion within a rejection, the speaker attempts to reduce the perceived threat to H's face. This introduces a more constructive and considerate element of interaction, providing an alternative avenue for cooperation.

Rejection, as a form of FTA, poses a potential challenge to H's positive social value or face. This can lead to discomfort or tension during interactions. However, this tension can be mitigated by adding a suggestion, helping manage the potential face threat posed by rejection. This introduces a cooperative and solution-oriented element, allowing for more positive and less confrontational interactions.

Instances of suggestions in rejections are presented in Table 10.

Table 10 reveals notable differences between Shahid and Netflix. Shahid data revealed a higher number of instances (28) than Netflix data (12). However, when considering strategy shifts, Shahid data showed three instances of modification during the translation process, resulting in a 11% shift rate. This implies a moderate level of adaptation in conveying suggestions in rejections. Despite the higher total number, the percentage of shifts on Shahid indicates a relatively stable translation approach, with a limited proportion of changes in strategy. This percentage reflects the translator's tendency to maintain the same level of politeness as in the original.

By contrast, Netflix, with a lower total number of instances (12), demonstrated a higher strategy shift rate of 16%, as indicated in Figure 3. This suggests that Netflix implements a more dynamic translation approach, with a greater proportion of suggestions in rejections instances undergoing strategy modification during the dubbing process.

While Netflix data revealed fewer suggestions in rejections overall, the higher percentage of shifts implied a more varied adaptation in the way suggestions in rejections were conveyed (Figure 3). These differences underscore the distinct translation strategies employed by

**Table 10.**  
Total instances of  
“suggestions in  
rejections” and  
strategy shifts

Suggestions in rejections	Total number	Strategy shifts	Percentage of shifts
Shahid	28	3	11%
Netflix	12	2	16%

**Source(s):** Table prepared by author

Shahid and Netflix to handle suggestions in rejections in their dubbed content. The higher percentage of politeness shifts employed by Netflix translators may signify their tendency to adjust the translation to better suit the target audience.

Table 11 demonstrates the utilization of politeness strategies on Shahid and Netflix, particularly in the context of suggestions within rejection scenarios, provides insights into their translational approaches. In Shahid’s case, a positive politeness strategy was applied, with one instance in both the original English version and the translated version. Similarly, the negative politeness strategy remained unchanged, demonstrating one instance in both versions. The off-record strategy was also observed in one instance in both the original and the translated versions. However, regarding the bald on-record strategy, Shahid introduced one instance in the translated version, which was absent in the original, indicating a shift in strategy.

For Netflix, one instance of positive politeness was observed. However, the negative politeness strategy underwent a shift from no instances in the original version to one in the translated version. The original version featured one instance of the off-record strategy, which was absent in the dubbed version. However, for the bald on-record strategy, Netflix introduced a single instance in the dubbed version that was not present in the original version.

These shifts highlight the platforms’ distinct approaches in translating suggestions within rejection scenarios, revealing variations in the application of politeness strategies, as shown in Figure 4. Netflix demonstrates a tendency to implement shifts in politeness pragmatic levels to better align with the preferences of the target audience.

Three instances were identified in the examination of rejections softened by subsequent suggestions on Shahid (Table 12). In Example 1, an off-record strategy utilizing a metaphor was employed when a sister communicated with her brother. This approach shifted to negative politeness, presenting the FTA as a general rule (الوقت يمر بسرعة). Example 2 on Shahid utilized positive politeness with an ingroup identity marker when a

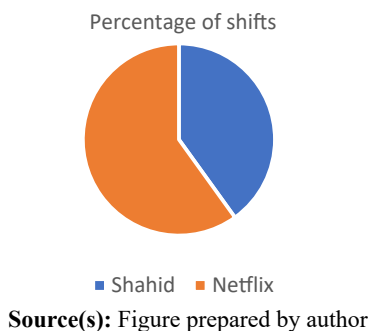


Figure 3. Percentage of strategy shift application based on “suggestions in rejections” from Shahid and Netflix

	Positive politeness	Negative politeness	Off-record	Bald on-record
<i>Shahid</i>				
Original	1	1	1	NA
Dubbed	NA	1	1	1
<i>Netflix</i>				
Original	1	NA	1	NA
Dubbed	NA	1	NA	1

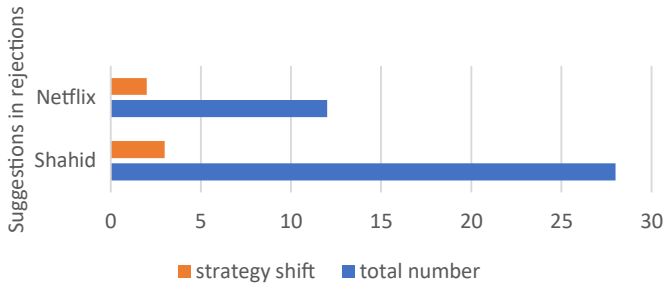
Source(s): Table prepared by author

Table 11. Shift in the application of politeness strategies based on “suggestions in rejections” between the original and dubbed versions on Shahid and Netflix

father conversed with his toddler. This approach shifted to an off-record strategy, presupposing an act rather than explicitly stating it (أنسة ليلي لم تعودي بحاجة لهذا فلدك لعب حقيقية). In Example 3, a negative politeness strategy using hedges was applied by an elder sister talking to her brother, and this shifted to positive politeness utilizing a bald on-record approach (إذا انتهيت من مشهك الدرامي هذا فسوف نساعدك).

Turning attention to Netflix (Table 13), Example 1 showcased positive politeness by providing a reason when a brother addressed his elder sister. This strategy transitioned to a bald on-record approach (تصالحا الآن). In Example 2, on Netflix, an off-record strategy marked by irony was used in a conversation between sisters. This approach shifted to negative politeness (هذا سخف ولماذا اصنعها سأجلس على الأرض), conventionally indirect, to navigate cultural restrictions and sensitivities, avoiding the use of taboo words such as “butt.” These instances exemplify the diverse strategies employed to soften rejections through subsequent suggestions, with variations observed between Shahid and Netflix. The instances of politeness strategies in the original versions and the shifts employed in the dubbed versions on Shahid and Netflix are presented in Table 13.

"Total number," "strategy shift" by "suggestions in rejections"



**Figure 4.** Examples of strategy shift application based on “suggestions in rejections” compared to the total number of examples from Shahid and Netflix

Source(s): Figure prepared by author

*Shahid*

Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
1	12	16:26	The clock is ticking here	Off-record: metaphors	الوقت يمر بسرعة	Negative politeness: state FTA as a general rule	Sister to brother
2	15	13:25	No Ms. Lily we know we don't need that anymore; you have plenty of real toys to play with	Positive politeness: ingroup identity markers	أنسة ليلي لم تعودي بحاجة لهذا فلدك لعب حقيقية	Off-record: presuppose	Father to toddler
3		10:26	If you're done with your pity party, maybe we could help	Negative politeness: hedges	إذا انتهيت من مشهك الدرامي هذا فسوف نساعدك	Bald on-record	Elder sister to brother

**Table 12.** Examples of “suggestions in rejections” extracted from Shahid

Source(s): Table prepared by author



This analysis suggests that shifts and adaptations in the translation of FTAs on Shahid and Netflix are driven by linguistic social factors, particularly those related to social distance, power dynamics, and relative impositions specific to the Arab culture. This shift in strategies can be attributed to the context of the interactions. In such situations, there is heightened sensitivity to respecting and preserving the face of older people, which may lead to a different weighting of politeness strategies. The employment of politeness strategies found through the current analysis is discussed further below.

(1) Negative politeness strategy

In both platforms, translators tend to resort to negative politeness in few cases. In interactions between youngsters and older individuals, such as parents, elder siblings, grandparents, older neighbors, principals, and teachers, the translator’s use of a negative politeness strategy is noteworthy. Politeness theory employs indirect linguistic realizations as a mechanism to mitigate potential FTAs. The translator employed various strategies, including giving deference, offering apologies, providing overwhelming reasons, begging forgiveness, using hedges, and employing adverbial clauses, to minimize the imposition on older individuals. For example, regarding the interaction between the granddaughter addressing her grandfather, employing positive politeness, the statement was dubbed employing negative politeness to be conventionally indirect to minimize imposition (فكرت في (تعديل أسلوب حياتك قليلا).

Negative politeness strategies play a crucial role in demonstrating respect and preserving social harmony. They encompass an extensive range of linguistic techniques that aim to address FTAs while adhering to established norms of etiquette. By utilizing negative politeness strategies, the translator ensures that interactions between youngsters and older individuals are conducted with utmost politeness and deference. These strategies helped effectively minimize the imposition on older characters and maintain a respectful tone throughout the translated material. Overall, the application of negative politeness theory and the translator’s use of specific linguistic realization mechanisms contribute to the preservation of respectful behavior in interactions between youngsters and older individuals. The shift from positive politeness to negative politeness strategies in the dubbing process highlights a nuanced understanding of politeness and the consideration of different weights placed on individuals in exchanges in relation to the specific social dynamics and cultural norms at play, particularly when interacting with older individuals in Arab cultural contexts. For example, the positive polite statement “looks like you could use some help” is dubbed into a negative polite question (المساعدة؟ هل تحتاج إلى) when a child is addressing his father. Employment of these strategies reflects the importance of etiquette and respect in the target culture.

Netflix

Ex	Episode	Time	Original version	Politeness strategy	Dubbed version	Politeness strategy	Context
1	3	12:22	It is time to get over it and makeup	Positive politeness: give reasons	تصالحا الآن	Bald on-record	Brother to elder sisters
2	6	07:46	This is dumb! I already have a sit up, it is called my butt	Off-record: be ironic	هذا سخف ولماذا اصنعها سأجلس على الأرض	Negative politeness: be conventionally indirect	Sisters

Source(s): Table prepared by author

**Table 13.**  
Examples of “suggestions in rejections” extracted from Netflix

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## (2) Positive politeness strategy

Netflix's translators showed a greater tendency to shift to positive politeness compared to Shahid's translators. When a girl engages in a conversation with her elder sister, brother, or older neighbor, a noticeable shift toward positive politeness is observed in both platforms. For example, a boy rejects the attitude of the older neighbor using the question "Why do you have to be so mean all the time?" The question was dubbed employing positive politeness, asking for reasons. The translator omitted the word "mean" when addressing the old neighbor, dubbed as "تتصرف بهذا الشكل أريد زلاجنني لم". Thus, positive politeness strategies were employed to enhance the sense of connection, courtesy, and mutual respect. In this regard, Dr Khedro emphasizes the dubber's crucial role in maintaining the same politeness level of the dubbed speech act to achieve pragmatic equivalence in the translation process. Acknowledging the diverse audiences, the dubber must be vigilant in selecting pragmatic equivalents. For instance, when dealing with swear words such as "son of a bitch" and "damn you," the dubber compensated with culturally appropriate Arabic equivalents such as *يا معنوه* and *تبا*, respectively. This strategic adaptation ensures a pragmatic equivalence that resonates effectively with Arabic-speaking audiences, while respecting cultural norms and sensitivities.

In these interactions, individuals often used linguistic realization mechanisms and expressions that aimed to acknowledge social hierarchy and age differences. Politeness mechanisms, such as attending to H's interest, using in-group identity markers, seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement, making promises, and offering/asking for reasons, become more prominent. Addressing the elder sister or brother with terms that convey respect and using an appropriate linguistic mechanism exemplifies the manifestation of positive politeness. For example, a granddaughter directly rejects the actions of her grandfather (No, no, you can't touch anyone) in the original version. The translator employed a positive politeness strategy, dubbed as *(من الآن عليك أن تتجنب أي تواصل جسدي)*. This contributes to a harmonious and respectful tone in conversations. Additionally, the use of polite language and avoiding any form of imposition reflect cultural norms that prioritize maintaining social harmony and showing consideration for others, particularly those in positions of authority or seniority. Overall, the application of positive politeness in these interactions aligns with the cultural norms of respect and contributes to fostering strong interpersonal relationships valued in the Arab culture.

## (3) Bald on-record strategy

Regarding social interactions between siblings of similar age and friends, the translators of content on Shahid and Netflix made a deliberate choice to adjust the translation to incorporate direct imperatives, particularly when the instructions came from parents to their children, elder sisters to younger siblings, the brother to his sisters, and teachers to students. This was noticeable in an exchange between an older sibling with her younger sisters, with "Can I call you back?" dubbed as *(اتصلي لاحقاً)*, or between a brother and his sisters, with "Why don't you admit it Lynn?" dubbed as *(اعترفني بالأمر يا لين)*. The translators determined when to use direct imperatives in the translation based on the context and relationship between the speakers. They considered factors such as social dynamics, power dynamics, and the specific instructions being given.

During the dubbing process, most of the analyzed examples were transformed into bold on-record statements. This transformation can be attributed to the consideration of social status in the Arab culture. It is important to note that all the exchanges analyzed in this study occurred within the same social rank, typically between friends and siblings or those with higher social status or power. This further reinforces the cultural influence on the choice of communication strategies. By employing bold on-record strategies, individuals aim to convey

their messages efficiently, even if this means potentially disregarding or minimizing the face threats faced by the other person. In the Arab culture, there are different motives for employing bald on-record strategies in various circumstances. Direct imperatives, such as the translation of “Lori, could you maybe hang up the phone and get ready for school?” (لوري هيا أنهي المكالمة واستعدي للمدرسة) to (لوري هيا أنهي المكالمة واستعدي للمدرسة), serve as prominent examples of bold on-record usage on which translators depended heavily.

#### (4) Off-record strategy

Few examples signified a transition to an off-record strategy in interactions influenced by social factors, particularly those involving relative impositions and power dynamics. This shift was particularly evident when younger sisters expressed suggestions or rejections in interactions with their elder brother or sisters, a strategic move aimed at minimizing perceived threats. This adaptation can be ascribed to prevailing cultural norms that emphasize respect for elder sisters and brothers and adults in general. These cultural influences shape the dubbing choices that align with societal expectations and norms. Additionally, a shift toward an off-record strategy is observed when taboo or culturally sensitive terms are indicated, especially when considering the audience, primarily children. This strategic decision reflects a sensitivity to cultural nuances and a conscious effort to navigate potential sensitivities within the target viewership. Dubbing choices consider the importance of maintaining cultural appropriateness and adhering to societal norms, ensuring a more seamless integration of content within the cultural context of the audience. With regard to making decisions about dubbing, Dr Kheddro expressed:

I take into account the type of audience I am addressing, adults or children (the age group for children, and according to which organization you have the definition of a “child,” the UN, EU, GCC, or the Arab League), and the region they come from, that is, the Arab world or Western world. As for politeness, it depends on the taboo subject selected, be it alcohol, drugs, religion, sex, or politics. Also, you need to decide on the audiovisual material/text itself.

On the importance of politeness theory as a valuable source of guidance in maintaining cultural relevance during dubbing, Dr Kheddro added, “Screen politeness by Basil Hatim is a good book” in this regard. Dr Kheddro emphasized the significance of politeness theory in ensuring cultural relevance during dubbing, significant considering how shifts in politeness strategies were noted in the current study of examples from the platforms Shahid and Netflix. Examining the content from both platforms revealed that these shifts were more pronounced in Netflix’s offerings. This suggests that a deeper understanding and application of politeness theory, as discussed in Basil Hatim’s work on screen politeness, can aid dubbing professionals in effectively navigating and adapting to diverse cultural contexts, thereby enhancing the overall quality and appropriateness of dubbed content for target audiences (A. Kheddro, personal interview, January 31, 2024).

## 5. Conclusion

The study results show shifts and alterations in the translation of FTAs in cartoons on the Shahid and Netflix platforms, attributable to linguistic and social factors. Notably, adaptation considering cultural and social factors relevant to the Arab culture was vital.

Strategic dubbing decisions reflected a sensitivity to cultural nuances and a conscious effort to navigate potential sensitivities among target viewers. The dubbing choices prioritized cultural appropriateness and adherence to societal norms for the seamless integration of content within the cultural context of the audience. Parallely, translations were performed by effectively aligning with the relational nuances and social dynamics depicted in the content. Careful consideration and conscious decision-making on the part of the

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translators were evident aspects, ensuring that the translated content was culturally appropriate and highly articulated while maintaining the integrity of the original material.

While translators of Shahid and Netflix platforms tend to alter and modify the level of pragmatic equivalence, the analysis of translators' approaches reveals notable differences in the translation of negative FTA scenarios. A higher rate of alterations and modifications is observed in Netflix translations to adjust them appropriately and cater to the preferences of the target audience. This highlights the platforms' distinct approaches, indicating Netflix's responsiveness to audience preferences and its proactive efforts to enhance viewer engagement through effective translation strategies.

These findings shed light on Netflix translators' awareness and utilization of politeness strategies, particularly in the context of children's cartoons. The concern with family ties proves substantial in this regard. When translating content for children, especially cartoons, this study reveals that Netflix translators are often mindful of cultural undertones and the need to maintain the appropriate language and themes compared to Shahid translators.

The findings of this study align with the trends observed in the reviewed literature, wherein translators tend to preserve face by making modifications and alterations in their translations. However, what sets this study apart is its comparative analysis of translator behavior across different platforms. While previous research has examined translation strategies in various contexts, this study uniquely explores how translators on different platforms, namely Shahid and Netflix, approach the translation of negative FTA scenarios in cartoons. By comparing the strategies employed by translators on these platforms, the study offers valuable insights into the nuanced differences in translation practices, shedding light on how platform-specific factors may influence translation decisions.

The findings of this study have significant practical implications for diverse stakeholders, including translators, educators, textbook writers, and even non-specialists.

For translators, especially those working in the field of audiovisual translation, understanding the nuances of politeness strategies and their application in different cultural contexts is essential. The findings suggest that translators should be sensitive to cultural and social factors when translating negative FTA scenarios in cartoons. By making strategic decisions to adapt translations to align with audience preferences while still preserving cultural appropriateness, translators can enhance viewer engagement and ensure that the translated content resonates effectively with the target audience.

Educators and textbook writers can also benefit from these findings by incorporating insights on politeness theory and cross-cultural communication into their curriculum and materials. By teaching students about the importance of politeness strategies in translation and providing them with practical examples and exercises, educators can help prepare the next generation of translators to navigate complex linguistic and cultural challenges in their work.

Additionally, non-specialists, such as viewers of translated content, can gain a better understanding of the intricacies involved in translation and the impact of cultural factors on communication. By being aware of these issues, non-specialists can become more discerning consumers of translated media and appreciate the skill and artistry involved in the translation process.

The study has several limitations that must be noted. First, the sample size was limited, with the study focusing on the dubbing of only two versions of an animated series and four seasons, and comparing translations across two platforms. Additionally, there were challenges related to the accessibility and availability of data, with limited information about the translators involved in the dubbing process. Furthermore, the study's focus on specific types of translations may have overlooked other important factors influencing translation practices. Lastly, regional variations in translation practices within the Arab world were not

considered. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights regarding the translation practices implemented for animated series on the Shahid and Netflix platforms, highlighting the need for future research to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of translation practices in the Arab world.

Looking ahead, future research in this area could explore how translators navigate other types of FTAs in translation, such as requests, complaints, and refusals. Moreover, studies could investigate the effectiveness of different translation strategies in preserving politeness and achieving pragmatic equivalence in various cultural contexts. Furthermore, research could examine the impact of platform-specific factors, such as audience demographics and viewing habits, on translation decisions. By exploring these topics, researchers can continue to deepen our understanding of translation practices and contribute to the development of more effective and culturally sensitive translation strategies.

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