

Analyzing (Im) Politeness in Political Discourse  
(With Reference to Lebanese Remarks on Russian and  
Ukrainian Women)

تحليل التآذب والافتقار إلى التآذب في الخطاب السياسي  
(بالإشارة إلى تصريحات لبنانية حول المرأة الروسية والأوكرانية)

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### Abstract:

The objective of the present study is to examine the impact of employing politeness strategies in political discourse. It analyzes behaviors from real situations of communication. A Lebanese politician commented on Russian and Ukrainian women in relation to the disgraceful act of "prostitution" in a televised interview. The incident sparked a reaction from him, his political party, and the Russian embassy in Lebanon. The study intends to figure out im/politeness strategies employed in the discourse of all parties to show to what degree these strategies can reveal real intentions and implied speech acts. The study also questions the validity of employing politeness strategies in such a discourse. The term impoliteness is not employed as equivalent to rudeness. The study reveals that the discourse of all parties underlies implicit indirect speech acts. Despite attempts of saving face wants, attacks on social media platforms continued; a fact which proves the ineffectiveness of politeness strategies in such discourse.

**Keywords:** Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies, Culpeper's impoliteness strategies, implicature, indirect speech acts, exercise of power

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### الملخص:

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو فحص تأثير استخدام استراتيجيات التآدب في الخطاب السياسي. تحلل الدراسة السلوكيات في المواقف الحقيقية للتواصل. قام سياسي لبناني بالتعليق على المرأة الروسية والأوكرانية فيما يتعلق بفعل "الدعارة" المشين في مقابلة تلفزيونية، وأثارت الحادثة ردود أفعال من جانبه، ومن جانب حزبه السياسي، والسفارة الروسية في لبنان. تهدف الدراسة إلى اكتشاف استراتيجيات التآدب/الافتقار إلى التآدب المستخدمة في خطاب جميع الأطراف؛ لإظهار إلى أي مدى يمكن لهذه الاستراتيجيات أن تكشف عن النوايا الحقيقية، وأفعال الكلام الضمنية، كما تتساءل الدراسة أيضًا عن مدى فاعلية استخدام استراتيجيات التآدب في الخطاب السياسي. ومصطلح "الافتقار إلى الأدب" لا يستخدم بمعنى الفظاظ. تكشف الدراسة أن خطاب جميع الأطراف ينطوي على أفعال الكلام الضمني غير المباشر. وبالرغم من محاولات حفظ ماء الوجه، استمر الهجوم على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي، مما يدل على عدم فاعلية استخدام استراتيجيات التآدب في مثل هذا السياق.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** استراتيجيات التآدب لبراون وليفينسون، استراتيجيات الافتقار إلى التآدب لكولبير، الضمنية، أفعال الكلام غير المباشرة، ممارسة السلطة

## **Analyzing (Im) Politeness in Political Discourse (With Reference to Lebanese Remarks on Russian and Ukrainian Women)**

### **1. Introduction**

Investigation of language and its communicational functions is one of the most important targets for any research in linguistics. Pragmatics is one of the linguistic branches that investigate language and communication. It is concerned with the study of the use and meaning of utterances in relation to the real situations in which they occurred (Leech 1983, Mey 2001). One of the pragmatic concepts that investigate communication is that of politeness. Politeness is not simply a matter being nice; rather it has to do with reflecting the nature of relationship between interlocutors (Grundy 2000). In everyday communications, politeness strategies have been long employed as a matter of courtesy to save face wants of the addressees. Its application extended to the field of politics as a means of “political correction” (Klotz 1999:155). However, this view is not wholly tenable because: (a) there is difference between everyday communication and political discourse (e.g., speeches, interviews of politicians, etc.) with regard to contextual aspects as the interlocutors and setting, and (b) the illocutionary force in both cases is mostly different. Accordingly, it is hard to equalize between two situations where a man reverses his words while talking to his friend on noticing that he is hurt by his words and a situation where a responsible politician reverses utterances documented in a speech or an interview on facing controversy. While the practice of the former is an act of politeness, that of the latter is not; rather is an act of reversing attitudes.

Interested in the linguistic expression of social relationship, Brown and Levinson (1987) have introduced the notion of politeness to investigate the language we use to communicate social meanings. Their theory is a typical example of a pragmatic phenomenon. Parallel to Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, Culpeper (2010) has introduced opposite theory of impoliteness. It is concerned with investigating inappropriate behavior in situated reactions. However different they are, the two models (i.e., of politeness and impoliteness) do

not only indicate the usual sense of displaying courtesy, but they are also used to detect a kind of language use that displays interpersonal relation between language producers and receivers.

The present research focuses on investigating the concept of politeness and its counterpart impoliteness in the field of political discourse. There is no straightforward definition of political discourse; rather there are two conflicting defining theories (Wilson 2015). The first theory broadly defines the term to include any discourse, whereas the second one restricts it to exclude everyday discourse and cover only political events. Even among analysts who adopts the restricted sense of the term political discourse, it is broadly defined to refer to the discourse practices of all actors involved in politics in one way or another, including politicians, organizations, trade unions, business associations, environmental groups, citizens, media practitioner of politics, etc. (Kirvalidze & Samnidze 2016). Broadly speaking, the term covers formal and informal political texts that intend to achieve political goals and are produced by politicians, political institutions, governments, political media, and political supporters in political environments (Graber 1981). The particular political discourse on which the present study focuses is remarks of a Lebanese politician during a televised interview and his Tweeter account, and the related subsequent comments of the politician's political party and the Russian Embassy in Lebanon.

The goal of the present study is to show the effect of politeness/impoliteness strategies in discourse and how they reveal real intentions and implied speech acts. Employing politeness/ impoliteness in discourse can even help to achieve the communicative intention of persuading others of a certain real or pretended intention.

### **2. Research questions**

The study purports the view that despite intentions of saving face wants and making a kind of political correctness, the employment of politeness strategies in political discourse is not as effective as in situational contexts in other fields than politics. Given the special nature of contextual resources of the domain of politics that differ from those associated with everyday communication, the perlocutionary impact of an

initial act of impoliteness in political discourse is hard to be ephemeral. This is specially the case as the speakers in political discourse are often politicians fully conscious of the fact that their words are publicly documented. The study aims at answering the following research questions:

- 1- What are the impacts of employing im/politeness strategies in real life situations in political discourse in the light of analyzing the strategies employed by a Lebanese former minister in his comment on Russian and Ukrainian women and the discursive redressive practices employed in the comments of both the Russian Embassy and his political party?
- 2- To what extent can politeness strategies be employed as acts of political correction for impoliteness?

### **3. Methodology and material of study**

The research is based on qualitative content analysis in terms of the pragmatic practice of im/politeness. The study adopts Brown and Levinson's theory of Politeness (1987) and Culpeper's (2005) model of impoliteness. Material of the study includes the early comment of the Lebanese former minister in a televised interview and his later comments, the comments of the Russian Embassy in reply, and the statement of the former minister's political party which comments on the incident.

The former Lebanese minister raises controversy by associating between "prostitution" and Russian and Ukrainian women, and his party clarifies. On Monday 13/9/2021, the **CNN news online** (<https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/article/2021/09/13/wiam-wahhab-russian-women-Isnult> ), and other credible digital news platforms as **the Emirati news agency** (<https://al-ain.com/article/lebanese-minister-russia-ukraine>), the Russian state-owned news agency Sputnik (<https://arabic.sputniknews.com/>), and the Lebanese news website ([https://arabic.rt.com/middle\\_east/1272613](https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/1272613)) **reported that the president of the Lebanese Arab Tawheed Party (Unitarian Party) who is the former Minister of Environment, Wiam Wahhab, caused controversy over a statement he said in a televised interview on "Al-Jadeed" channel. Wahhab said in the interview that he asked President Michel**

Aoun about the nature of Lebanon as a country and added: “I told him if we were a country of prostitution, let us bring in 10,000 Russian or Ukrainian women.” Wahhab even added that the Lebanese president “laughed” when he heard what he said.

**The statement sparked anger and condemnation of Russian media.** Lebanese media reported anonymous sources from the Lebanese Foreign Ministry as saying that the Russian Embassy demanded “a clear stance condemning the statement that Wahhab reported which is considered away from the morals of the Lebanese people”. The sources also reported that the embassy asserted in a statement, “Russian women are workers, educators, mothers, sisters and wives who have given everything for a great country and for men who have fought for dignity and fallen as martyrs and wounded in the face of terrorism in order to liberate the east from ISIS and its profanities”.

Facing a storm of criticism and condemnation, Wahhab tweeted on his account (<https://twitter.com/wiamwahhab/>) stating: “For all those who misunderstood my words about Russian women, I would like to say:

- 1- Russia has distinctive beauty, and this is well known.
- 2- Words were not intended for insult but were within the framework of talking about the Russian beauty.
- 3- The Russian woman is undoubtedly a fighter. She is respected and gets my admiration.
- 4- The Russian stance in our region has consistently got our support because it has deterred extremism and terrorism and saved Syria, Lebanon and the countries of the region. So, I hope to stop the bidding. Everyone knows our stance well.

**In an attempt to contain the crisis, Wahhab’s party media secretariat clarified in an official statement that** “What the president of the party meant as far as the Russian and Ukrainian issue is concerned is the Russian and Ukrainian beauty and not anything else. On our part, we appreciate the struggle of Ukrainian women throughout history in facing the Nazi occupation up to the wars Russia fought in Syria and all over the world. The Russian women are first-class. They deserve our admiration and love, and they have occupied the highest positions in the state

institutions, the army and the Russian society. All appreciation and respect are due to Russian and Ukrainian women. If required, we apologize. Minister Wahhab's words were misunderstood, and that required clarification".

#### **4. Literature Review**

The present section sheds light on the field of pragmatics as it is the branch that subsumes the phenomenon of politeness and its counterpart impoliteness, indirect speech acts, and implicature as pragmatic phenomena associated with politeness.

##### **4.1. What is Pragmatics?**

According to Levinson (1983), the term pragmatics has its origin in philosophy as it has been introduced by philosopher Charles Morris who was concerned with 'semiotics' (the science of signs). Morris (1938) holds the opinion that semiotics involves three main branches: syntax which is concerned with the study of the formal relations between signs, semantics which is the study of the relations between signs and the objects they designate, and pragmatics which is the study of the relation between signs and their interpreters.

Many linguists have adopted Morris' view regarding pragmatics and it has been generally defined as a branch of linguistic research concerned with studying language in use or in relation to context to understand how the user uses language and how the receiver interprets it (Levinson 1983, Yule 1996). Leech (1983) believes that pragmatics has to do with meaning in relation to the speaker, hearer, or particular situation. Unlike semantics which studies literal meaning, pragmatics studies meaning relative to aspects of speech situation, such as addressee/addressees, context of utterance, and the goal of the utterance. This view is also echoed by Recanati (1987) who believes that pragmatics studies what speakers do with words and depends on the speaker's use of the sentence in a specific context, whereas semantics studies what words literally mean.

One of the pragmatic areas of study is that of politeness that is briefly highlighted.

#### **4.2. What is politeness?**

The study of politeness is a major concern of pragmatic studies. Politeness has been identified as a way of understanding why people decide to say things in a certain way in their discourse and the motivations behind their choices (Norrick & Illie 2018). It is a communicative norm that embodies many social conventions and interpersonal relations since it is concerned with behaviours that are considered appropriate in a certain speech community. It is a linguistic tool used to avoid conflicts and differences (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 2005). By contrast, impoliteness is identified in terms of being a transgression of what is expected and appropriate (Kádár 2017). Units of im/politeness analysis can be either large or small discourse segments (Baider, Cislaru & Claudel 2020).

One of the theories of politeness that is adopted in the present study is that of Brown and Levinson (1987).

#### **4.3. Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness**

Many theories attempted to conceptualize politeness. One of these theories is that of Brown and Levinson (1987) that is concerned with saving face wants. The term politeness has been introduced by Brown and Levinson to indicate a kind of language use that displays interpersonal relation between language producer and receiver. It highlights the language we use to communicate social meanings. Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is based on the assumption that all language users have what they call "face" (p.13). That is, a kind of "self-esteem" or public "self-image" that everyone wants to maintain. This face is of two kinds: positive and negative. First, positive face has to do with a person's need to have a positive self-image and the desire to maintain this positive image. The positive face of a person may involve his desire to be approved by others, to be treated as an equal and as a friend, to be well-thought of, and to be understood by others. Second, negative face has to do with a person's need to have freedom of action and from imposition of any action. That is, one's desire not to be ordered by others, or required to do something.

Brown and Levinson have identified certain actions that may threaten one's positive or negative face ("Face Threatening Acts" (FTAs)) (p.14). FTAs can be either verbal (offensive utterances) or non-verbal (looks and facial expressions). They have also identified certain strategies available for speakers to minimize the effect of an FTA. These strategies are a kind of compensation or redress to satisfy the face wants of the addressee. Arranged gradually starting from those which are the least to threaten face to those which maximize the effect of FTAs, Brown and Levinson strategies (p.60) can be summarized as follows:

- Don't do the FTA at all
- Do the FTA off-record (by hiding the real intention just as in the case of hinting).
- Do the FTA on-record with a redressive action that pays attention to negative face wants of the addressee (just as expressions of respect and formality) (negative politeness).
- Do the FTA on-record with a redressive action that pays attention to the positive face wants of the addressee (just as mentioning expressions of agreement, approval, sympathy, friendship and intimacy, making a joke of the action) (positive politeness).
- Do the FTA on-record baldly without a redressive action (without hiding intention).

An important interesting aspect of politeness as highlighted by Brown and Levinson is their belief that the effect of FTAs is variable according to factors as distance and relative power of speakers and addressees. Thus, a direct 'request' for a favour is less face-threatening between 'friends' but more threatening between relatively strangers as an 'employee' and his 'employer'. Relatedly, pronouns of address always carry indication of FTA. For instance, the French pronouns *tu* and *vous* carry different indications with regard to 'distance' and 'power': *tu* is used with a familiar addressee who is not superior to the speaker, whereas *vous* indicates superiority of the addressee.

As parallel to politeness strategies, Culpeper (2005) has introduced counter-impoliteness strategies.

#### **4.4. What is impoliteness?**

Sometimes people do not speak politely because they have different interests, or they want to attack somebody's identity or rights (Culpeper 2010). Being impolite while communicating can cause disharmony and social disruption in social interaction (Bousfield & Locher 2008). Culpeper (1996) identifies impoliteness strategies related to Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. Culpeper believes that Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies have their opposites that attack positive/ negative face wants. His impoliteness strategies are concerned with evaluating the inappropriateness of the strategies employed in a certain communicative situation. One of the purposes of impoliteness on the part of a powerful speaker is to appear superior. This purpose is at issue when the more powerful speaker insults the addressees (Beebe 1995).

Impoliteness as a concept is not equivalent to rudeness. A slight difference does exist between the two concepts. Impoliteness is either intentional or accidental due to the hearer's linguistic incompetence whereas rudeness is always intentional (Culpeper 2011, Terkourafi 2008). In addition, whereas the act of rudeness is mainly associated with humanities (especially history), the act of impoliteness is associated with linguistics and communication (Culpeper 2011).

People do not always speak politely, sometimes they speak impolitely. An analysis of strategies of impoliteness is introduced by Culpeper (2005) whose strategies go parallel to these of politeness.

#### **4.5. Culpeper's theory of impoliteness**

Culpeper (2005) divides impoliteness strategies into five types: bald on record impoliteness, negative impoliteness, positive impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness. The first strategy, bald on record impoliteness, involves attacking someone directly without any intention to hide feelings. The Second one, negative impoliteness, means damaging the addressee's negative face wants by certain strategies as frightening, insulting, and ridiculing.

The third strategy is that of positive impoliteness which involves ignoring or disdaining others, excluding others from activity, using

inappropriate identity markers, using obscure or secretive language, using taboo words, being unconcerned, and making others feel uncomfortable. The fourth one is that of sarcasm or mock politeness which has to do with using politeness strategies insincerely. Finally, withhold politeness occurs when not meeting politeness expectations.

In (2011), Culpeper has added to his theory by identifying three types of impoliteness: “affective impoliteness”, “coercive impoliteness”, and “entertaining impoliteness”. First, affective impoliteness is that type where the speaker expresses his anger towards the hearer. Second, coercive impoliteness takes place when power is exercised through language. Third, entertaining impoliteness takes place when the speaker makes fun of the hearer to obtain entertainment.

Im/politeness may give rise to implicatures (implications) and may underlie performing indirect speech acts.

#### **4.6. Speech Acts and Implicature**

Austin (1975) introduced his theory of speech acts as a reaction challenging the then prevailing philosophical doctrine assuming that a sentence can be described as meaningful only if it can be verified and described as being true or false in relation to describing a certain state of affairs in the world. Refuting this truth-condition view, Austin suggests that sentences sometimes do certain acts rather than describe certain states of affairs. He calls such sentences “performatives” (Austin 1975: 4-5).

Performing a speech act involves performing a locutionary act, illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act. On the one hand, a 'locutionary' act is the utterance of the sentence with a certain specific sense and reference. On the other hand, 'illocutionary' act the real intention of the speaker behind the utterance. As for the 'perlocutionary' act, it is the effect or consequence of the utterance on its recipient (Austin 1975:109).

Interestingly enough, Austin (1975:32) observes that it is not always the case that the illocutionary force of an utterance is explicitly indicated through performative verbs as 'bet' or 'promise'; rather it is sometimes implicit in the utterance. For instance, the imperative 'go' may

be used to 'give advice' or 'entreat'. In such a case, the intended illocutionary force behind the utterance is identified by resorting to the contextual features of the given utterance.

Searle (1979: 12-15) agrees with Austin but he calls sentences with implicit illocutionary force as indirect speech acts and those with explicit indicators as directones. Searle further classifies speech acts into five types: “assertives”, “directives”, “commissives”, “expressives”, and “declaratives”.

Utterances may carry implications in addition to the semantic meaning (Searle1979). Implications are intended pragmatic inferences that are distinct from what is literally said (Brown & Yule 1983). Sentences with implicit illocutionary force indicators perform indirect speech acts (Searle 1979). Implied meanings are important because they explain linguistic facts (Levinson 1983).

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1. Discussion

This section discusses types of im/politeness strategies in relation to the incident under scrutiny and their discursive impact. Based on the data, there are three impoliteness strategies in Wahhab’s first offensive statement represented in the following table:

The utterance	Type of impoliteness strategy
“I told him if we were a country of prostitution, let us bring in 10,000 Russian or Ukrainian women.”	Bald on record
	Positive impoliteness
	Withhold politeness

Table 1: Impoliteness strategies in Wahabb’s statement

Table 1 shows that three impoliteness strategies underlie Wahhab’s utterance in line with Culpeper’s (2005) classification. In delivering his utterance, Wahhab employed “bald on-record impoliteness” by damaging Russian and Ukrainian women positive face when openly associating them with the disgraceful act of “prostitution” without hiding his intention or resorting to any accompanying redressive act. “Prostitution” is a pejorative term that has negative connotative component in all cultures. In addition, by being so direct in his attack, Wahhab is unconcerned about Russian or Ukrainian women’s feelings,

which is an act of “positive impoliteness”. An important impoliteness sign here is his not caring about rules of impression management. Stating the word “prostitution” directly that way assigns Wahhab responsibility of reporting an offensive term, given that the context of his comments is a televised interview watched by millions even all over the world, not a closed room.

Wahhab’s statement can be also generally regarded as an act of “withhold politeness” since Wahhab is deemed to have failed to attain the expectation of polite attitude towards Russian women. As far as expectation is concerned, Russian women surely have no expectation to be associated that openly and directly with such a disgraceful act by a Lebanese politician. Therefore, Wahhab’s association can be regarded as “deliberate impoliteness” that intentionally doesn’t meet expectations, in terms of Culpeper’s (2005:42) theory.

Furthermore, aggravation of the act of damaging positive face wants of Russian and Ukrainian women occurs when the female announcer, Samar Khaleel, has not commented on the former minister’s offensive utterance. That silence may underlie an implicit indirect speech act of agreement in view with regard to the insult, which is in itself another FTA to positive face wants of Russian and Ukrainian women. However, that silence on her part, though being female, may also reflect an exercise of power where she is the less the powerful party that cannot disagree with the more powerful party, the former minister and now-prominent politician. Accordingly, the act of silence can be regarded as an act of positive politeness on her part to save positive face wants of Wahhab by not disagreeing with him. At the same time, it can be regarded as an act of negative impoliteness on Wahhab’s part since the announcer could not freely tell or show her intention. Hence, Wahhab is damaging the addressee’s negative face wants and is practicing on-record impoliteness. His impoliteness implies an exercise of power since, as pointed out by Culpeper (1996), the more powerful participant tends to be impolite because they have more freedom to act than the less powerful participant.

In addition, the fact, as reported by Wahhab, that the Lebanese president “laughed” is another FTA to Russian women’s negative face

wants. This act of laughing embodies negative impoliteness as it implies an act of ‘ridicule’. It underlies indirect speech acts of insulting and agreement in view with Wahhab’s offensive remarks. Silence and no comment on the part of the Lebanese president are also FTAs that underlie the same indirect speech acts.

One of the purposes behind impoliteness is to exercise power by appearing as superior via resorting to the act of insulting (Beebe 1995). Taking into consideration contextual clues as the purpose of the interview which was to discuss the deteriorating situation in Lebanon that is currently suffering from severe humanitarian and political crisis, and the speaker’s reference to the Lebanese president seeking advice from him, it seems that the purpose behind Wahhab’s impolite discourse is to exercise power by appearing as superior and to boast acting as an advisor of the president. Furthermore, taking into consideration Wahabb’s smile and face expression of enjoyment that appear in the video of the interview when narrating the incident indicates an indirect speech act of obtaining entertainment and appearing funny. Consequently, his utterance belongs to the type of “entertaining impoliteness”.

Impoliteness is not only a matter of speaker’s behaviour but also of hearer when evaluating that behaviour (Eelen 2001). That is clear in the reaction of the Russian embassy which underlies various im/politeness strategies shown in the following table:

The utterance	Type of strategy employed
Russian Embassy demanded “a clear stance condemning the statement that Wahhab reported which is considered away from the morals of the Lebanese people”.	Positive politeness
“Russian women are workers, educators, mothers, sisters and wives who have given everything for a great country and for men who have fought for dignity and fallen as martyrs and wounded in the face of terrorism in order to liberate the east from ISIS and its profanities”.	Positive politeness Negative politeness Positive impoliteness

Table 2: Im/politeness strategies in the Russian Embassy discourse.

Since demanding an apology is an FTA to the negative face wants of Wahhab who won't like to be imposed on, the embassy excludes the Lebanese people from that imposition and saves their negative face wants when describing Wahhab's act as being "away from the morals of the Lebanese people". This attempt to minimize imposition is an exercise of negative politeness. Excluding the Lebanese people is a hedge and an act of politeness in itself that asserts variability in individual perceptions.

Praising Russian women and attributing good characteristics to them as the ones who "have given everything for a great country and for men" is a kind of positive politeness that aims at saving their positive face wants. More specifically, the description "...for men who have fought for dignity and fallen as martyrs and wounded in the face of terrorism in order to liberate the east from ISIS and its profanities" underlies implicit indirect speech act of reminding Wahhab of Russia's favours to the east in general, including Lebanon. In addition, the whole statement implies indirect acts of rebuking and dispraising Wahhab, which are FTAs to his positive face wants (positive impoliteness). At the same time, this indirectness is a type of negative politeness.

Though being directive and commissive in terms of Searle's speech acts, the statements of the embassy underlie the implicit indirect speech act of 'expressing anger', and, hence, belong to "affective impoliteness".

Unlike discourse of the Russian embassy that is a mix of politeness and impoliteness strategies, discourse of Wahhab's party is mainly a discourse of politeness strategies, as shown in the following table:

<b>The utterance</b>	<b>Type of politeness strategy</b>
1- "What the president of the party meant as far as the Russian and Ukrainian issue is concerned is the Russian and Ukrainian beauty and not anything else".	Positive politeness
2- "On our part, we appreciate the struggle of Ukrainian women throughout history in facing the	Positive politeness

<p>Nazi occupation up to the wars Russia fought in Syria and all over the world. The Russian women are first-class women. They deserve our admiration and love, and they have occupied the highest positions in the state institutions, the army and the Russian society. All appreciation and respect is due to Russian and Ukrainian women”.</p>	
<p>3- “We apologize”.</p>	<p>Negative politeness</p>
<p>4- “Minister Wahhab’s words were misunderstood”.</p>	<p>Positive politeness</p>

Table 3: Politeness strategies in the Lebanese Party discourse.

As shown in table 3, the party is attempting to contain the crisis by resorting to positive and negative politeness strategies. On the one hand, positive politeness is there when giving reasons and justifying Wahhab’s utterance as being (1) misunderstood and (2) meant in relation to Russian and Ukrainian beauty. One of the strategies deployed by the party to disclaim responsibility is manipulating agency by referring to different contextual assumptions about the event in question. This is the case when the party assumed that a kind of misunderstanding might have occurred. Thus, the party appeals to difference in perception as an act of redress.

Furthermore, positive politeness is employed when praising the Russian and Ukrainian women as being fighters throughout history up till now in Syria and all over the world. “In Syria and all over the world” in particular is an exaggeration that aims at wooing them and saving their face. Repeating the word “appreciation” and hedging it by the intensive qualifier “all” adds to the positive politeness bulk. Employing the inclusive pronoun “our” is also an act of positive politeness. On the other hand, the desire to maintain negative face leads the party to employ the direct act of apology and expression of regret: “We apologize”.

Facing a storm of criticism that is an FTA to his positive face wants, Wahhab published new comments on his tweeter official account that is wholly based on various politeness strategies as follows:

The utterance	Type of politeness strategy
1- “Russia has distinctive beauty, and this is well known”.	Positive politeness
2- “Words were not intended for insult but were within the framework of talking about the Russian beauty”.	Positive politeness
3- “The Russian woman is undoubtedly a fighter. She is respected and gets my admiration”	Positive politeness
4- “The Russian stance in our region has consistently got our support because it has deterred extremism and terrorism and saved Syria, Lebanon and the countries of the region. So, I hope to stop the bidding, everyone knows our stance well”.	Positive politeness

Table 4: Politeness strategies in Wahabb’s discourse on Twitter.

The most distinctive characteristic of Wahhab’s reaction is that it is a macro positive politeness strategy that it is wholly based on appeal to empathy. Tools of this appeal vary from:

(1) Expressing gratitude as in the case of utterance 4 which refers to fighting terrorism in the region on the part of Russia and its interference to save Syria, Lebanon and other countries in the region;

(2) Good evaluation and terms of endearment as in the case of utterances 1 and 3 where Wahhab is praising the Russian woman as having “distinctive beauty” and as being a “fighter” who “is respected” and “gets my admiration”;

(3) Employing intensifiers as in the case of utterance 3 when magnifying the impact of commanding the Russian woman by preceding it by the adverbial “undoubtedly”. This is also the case of the adverbial “constantly” that modifies “our support” to the Russian policy in the region. Using the inclusive pronoun “our” is another act of politeness that maximizes the support to include both Wahhab and his party.

(4)Resorting to justification as in the case of utterance 2 where Wahhab disclaims responsibility for his early offensive comment by stating that his comment was intended for talking about Russian beauty, not for insulting Russian women.

## **6. Results**

The study deals with the way im/politeness manifests itself in the event of a Lebanese former minister's comment about Russian and Ukrainian women and the subsequent reaction of his political party and the Russian Embassy. The impoliteness which characterizes the former minister's discourse underlies an exercise of power where he seems to desire appearing as superior. By contrast to his early offensive comment, the change of behavior in the former minister's later comment on his Twitter account which underlies many politeness strategies reflects an attempt on his part to save the positive and negative face wants of Russian women. Furthermore, by so doing, he is attempting to save his face wants as well by minimizing cost and maximizing benefits to himself (i.e., containing the storm of anger and criticism). The politeness strategies employed in the comments of both the Russian Embassy and the political party stress the social function of politeness: both parties exerted their effort to appear polite so as to avoid political dilemma. Both were keen on saving the positive face of Russian and Ukrainian women that has been threatened by the former minister's comment.

## 7. Conclusion

Results show that politeness strategies are employed by practitioners in political discourse as means of “political correction” (Klotz1999:155) for acts that may threaten face wants of their addressees and underlie impoliteness. However, the study purports the view that this practice is, hence, an act of reverse of an attitude rather than an act of saving face wants. This is supported by the fact that the minister’s later polite comments did not stop the mainstream attack on him on social media platforms and were not a remedy for his offensive initial utterance. It is true that the dilemma was politically and officially contained, yet at the public level it was not; the fact which supports the previously referred to view regarding difference between political discourse and everyday communication as far as contextual resources are concerned. Given the fact that the interlocutor in political discourse is often a responsible actor rationalizing and even sometimes preparing in advance what he is supposed to say, the offensive illocutionary force is hence intended. Therefore, any redressive act is indeed an act of pretention. Accordingly, politeness strategies are not effective means of redress in such discourse.

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