

## (Im)Politeness in Dialogues between some Prophets and the Polytheists in the Noble Qur'an:

### A Pragmatic Analysis

Islam A. H. R. Sorour<sup>1</sup>

MA candidate,

Department of English,

Helwan University, Egypt.

Corresponding E-mail: [islamy200@gmail.com](mailto:islamy200@gmail.com)

Maha S. Zaghoul<sup>2</sup>

Assistant Professor of

Linguistics,

Department of English,

Helwan University, Egypt.

Amany Y. A. A. Youssef<sup>3</sup>

Associate Professor of

Linguistics,

Department of English,

Helwan University, Egypt.

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#### ABSTRACT

This study<sup>1</sup> presents a pragmatic analysis of linguistic Politeness and Impoliteness in dialogues between six prophets (Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Shuaib and Musa) and their contemporaneous polytheists in the Noble Qur'an. The data comprises 35 dialogues from 20 surahs which revolve around how the prophets talked to the polytheists to persuade them to believe in the Oneness of Allah and in the Last Day and how the polytheists reacted to the prophets' call for faith. The analytical framework comprises Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Theory of Politeness, and Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Model of Impoliteness. Within a mixed approach, the qualitative analysis has revealed how the prophets have been modest, sympathetic and close to their communities while guiding them to true Monotheism. In addition, the study shows how the polytheists have reacted impolitely to the prophets' call for faith. The quantitative analysis has revealed that the six maxims of politeness have been present in the prophets' utterances, with the Tact, Modesty and Sympathy Maxims as the most prominent. Moreover, the four strategies of politeness (Bald on record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness and Off-record) have been evident in the utterances of the prophets. On the other hand, all five strategies of impoliteness (Bald on record, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness and Off-record) have been employed in the polytheists' utterances. Most significantly, the study proposes Mercy, as a potential addition to the maxims of performing Politeness. Mercy, in the form of non-reciprocal forgiveness and pity, was prevalent in the prophets' communication with their contemporaneous people. The prophets were the finest of creation as Allah (God) chose them over humanity in order to convey the message of true Monotheism.

## 1. Introduction

People interact with each other normally with some respect to keep others' faces not damaged, and to create harmony in conversations in order to mitigate confrontation and make it possible for potentially aggressive

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parties to communicate with one another as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) illustrate in their Theory of Politeness, or to maintain social equilibrium and friendly relations in order to be cooperative in their interaction as Leech (1983) explains in his Politeness Principle (PP). On the other hand, other people may perform Impoliteness in order to attack the face wants of others with or without any redress as Culpeper (1996; 2005 and 2011) clarifies in his Model of Impoliteness. This study aims to analyze dialogues between the prophets and the polytheists in the Noble Qur'an in terms of Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness, and Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Strategies of Impoliteness. The study is presented in the light of how the Maxims and Strategies of Politeness and Impoliteness can account for the interactions between the six prophets (Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Shuaib and Musa) who talked to the polytheists about faith to persuade them to believe in (Allah) and the polytheists who reacted to the prophets' call for faith and belief in the Oneness of Allah and in the Last Day.

The vast majority of research studies on Politeness generally focus on daily conversations and sometimes on literary texts, but seldom deal with religious discourse. As it pertains to the Noble Qur'an, there have been a number of research studies that have focused on verses comprising rules and guidelines from Allah (God) to mankind (Al-Khatib 2012), verses relating to dialogues between Allah (God) and his prophets (Hassan 2016) and verses concerning the utterances of the prophets and humans in general (Jewad et al. 2020), but very few paid attention to verses involving conversations that occurred between the prophets and the contemporaneous polytheists who were in dispute with them (Nawaz et al. 2018). To fill this gap, the present study aims to offer a pragmatic analysis of selected dialogues between the six prophets (Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Shuaib and Musa) on the one hand and the contemporaneous polytheists, on the other. The study adopts a comprehensive analytical framework including Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness, and Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Strategies of Impoliteness. Within a mixed approach, qualitative analysis of relevant dialogues is validated by manual quantitative analysis of the observed instances of Politeness and Impoliteness Maxims and Strategies. The quantitative analysis further reveals behavioral patterns and contrasts across the dialogues between each of the six prophets and the contemporaneous polytheists.

Adopting this comprehensive analytical framework, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1- Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses, what are the Politeness and Impoliteness Maxims and Strategies observed in the dialogues under study between each of the six prophets and the contemporaneous polytheists?

- 2- Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the dialogues under investigation, what are the observed similarities and differences in the linguistic Politeness and/or Impoliteness Strategies:
  - a) between the prophets and the contemporaneous polytheists?
  - b) across the prophets?
  - c) across the polytheists?

## **2. Analytical Framework**

The study adopts an eclectic analytical framework for the analysis of the pragmatics of Politeness and Impoliteness. The framework comprises Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Theory of Politeness and Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Model of Impoliteness.

Many scholars have devoted considerable attention to Politeness and have provided varied definitions of it. Leech (1983) explains that participants employ the Politeness Principle (PP) "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (p. 82). Brown and Levinson (1987) clarify that "politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol (for which it must surely be the model), presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties" (p. 1). Similarly, Lakoff (1989) explains that "[p]oliteness can be defined as a means of minimizing confrontation in discourse - both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening" (p. 102). Lakoff (1973) illustrates in her Politeness Principles Theory that there are three rules for achieving politeness and avoiding conflict with others. These rules are 1) Don't impose 2) Give options 3) Make a feel good – be friendly. She clarifies that these rules "may differ dialectally in applicability, but their basic form remains the same universally" (p. 305).

Several studies have illustrated that interlocutors cannot assess politeness without understanding the context in addition to the cultural and social values since it helps the speakers to know how to apply politeness towards others. Culpeper (1996) explains that context is really important to understand if the utterance is polite or impolite. Also, Thomas (1995) explains that the linguistic form alone which determines the speech act polite or impolite is not adequate, but the linguistic form, the context of utterance and the relationship between the speaker and the hearer are important in determining the function of the speech act. Culpeper (2011) illustrates that "[w]e acquire linguistic politeness from our experience of social interactions . . ." (p. 32). Similarly, Watts (2003) clarifies that "[p]oliteness is not something we are born with, but something we have to learn and be socialised into . . ." (p. 9). By the same token, Mills (2017) explains that cultures are different in representing politeness and the languages are various and much richer to be acknowledged by many politeness theorists. Mills cites Wierzbicka (1999) who states that people "in

Anglo-Saxon culture, distance is a positive cultural value, associated with respect for the autonomy of the individual. By contrast, in Polish culture it is associated with hostility and alienation” (Wierzbicka, cited in Mills, 2017, p. 35).

## 2.1 Leech's maxims of politeness

Leech (1983) states that Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) is important and needed, but it is not sufficient to explain 1) the relation between sense and force in non-declarative sentences and 2) why people are so indirect in conveying what they mean. Thus, Leech presents a Politeness Principle (PP) with conversational maxims which are similar to those of Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP). According to Leech (1983), the Politeness Principle (PP) maxims explain how politeness occurs in their interactions, and how the participants employ these maxims “to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocuters are being cooperative in the first place” (p. 82). Leech (1983) puts forth six maxims and illustrates that they differ from one culture to another; a maxim which is polite in one culture may be impolite or rude in a different culture. These maxims are Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy.

According to Leech (1983), “[t]here are two sides to the Tact Maxim, a negative side ‘Minimize the cost to h’, and a positive side, ‘Maximize the benefit to h’” (p. 109) in which ‘h’ stands for ‘*hearer*’. In the Tact Maxim, there is a cost/benefit scale in which the speaker ‘s’ can say something to the hearer ‘h’ politely without any indirectness if the speaker finds that this thing is beneficial to the hearer. On the other hand, the speaker may use greater indirectness if the thing is costly to the hearer. In the Tact Maxim, the speaker may use minimizers to reduce the implied cost to the hearer, for instance, “Hang on a second!” (Thomas, 1995, p. 161). In addition, the speaker applies the Tact Maxim by offering options to enable the hearer to choose whether to perform the action or not. The Generosity Maxim is observed by applying cost to the speaker as Leech (1983) states “Minimize benefit to self: Maximize cost to self” (p. 133). Leech explains that the Generosity Maxim is culturally specific as some cultures are more generous than other cultures and there is a variation in applying this maxim. Regarding the Approbation Maxim, it is observed when the speaker avoids saying hateful or condescending things about the hearer or when the speaker compliments the hearer. “Minimize dispraise of other: Maximize praise of other” (Leech, 1983, p. 135). Thomas (1995) states that “[a]s Leech points out, the ‘other’ may not be the person directly addressed, but someone or something dear to him or her” (p. 163). As for the Modesty Maxim, Leech (1983) states “Minimize praise of self: Maximize dispraise of self” (p. 136). He explains that the Modesty Maxim varies from one culture to another; some cultures are more inclined towards the Modesty Maxim than other cultures (Leech, 1983).

In other words, some cultures may accept the compliment and agree with the praise while others deny the compliment and try to observe the Modesty Maxim. For applying the Agreement Maxim, Leech (1983) clarifies that “there is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc.” (p.138). This maxim is observed when the speaker increases agreement between himself or herself and the hearer or decreases disagreement with partial agreement. As for the Sympathy Maxim, Leech (1983) states that “[w]e may also add a Maxim of Sympathy, which explains why congratulations and condolences are courteous speech acts, even though condolences express beliefs which are negative with regard to the hearer” (p.138). According to this maxim, the speaker sympathizes with the hearer and tries to avoid any expression that might harm the hearer’s feelings.

## **2.2 Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness**

Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) Theory of Politeness is based on the concept of face which was first introduced by (Goffman 1967) as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p. 5). Based on Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Politeness Theory, ‘face’ is known as every individual's feeling of self-worth or self-image in which it can be damaged or maintained in interaction with others. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) explain that the term ‘face’ has two aspects: positive and negative. Positive face refers to the person's desire to be liked and respected by others, while Negative face refers to the person's desire to be free and not to be impeded or imposed on to do something. According to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), there are some acts that may damage or threaten the face wants of others and these acts are known as ‘Face Threatening Acts’ (FTA). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) put forth five superstrategies for their theory and illustrate that social distance between the participants, power relation and the degree of imposition are three factors that play a crucial role in choosing the strategy for performing a face-threatening act (FTA). These five superstrategies are Bald on record, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, Off-record and not performing the FTA.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Bald on record strategy occurs in emergencies, highly task situations and if the weightiness of the request is very small (something trivial) or if the thing is beneficial to the hearer (hearer's interest). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) clarify that this strategy can be achieved in terms of two classes: the first class comprises face threat that is not minimized in which face is ignored or irrelevant, while the other class comprises face threat that is minimized by implication during doing the FTA. In Positive Politeness, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) explain that the speaker tries to be closer to the hearer by elevating solidarity. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) put forth 15 strategies for

performing Positive Politeness, for instance, noticing, attending to **H**'s interests or wants, exaggerating approval and sympathy, seeking agreement, offering and giving promises, using in-group identity markers and asserting **S**'s knowledge of and concern for **H**'s wants. Regarding Negative Politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) clarify that “[n]egative politeness is redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded” (p. 129). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) put forth 10 strategies for performing Negative Politeness. Among these strategies are being conventionally indirect, hedging, minimizing the imposition, giving deference, apologizing, stating the FTA as a general rule and impersonalizing **S** and **H**. For performing Off-record Politeness, the speaker tries to avoid the responsibility of the FTA process and the hearer works on the inference process. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) put forth 15 strategies for performing Off-record Politeness, for instance, giving hints or association clues, presupposing, understating or overstating, using metaphors and rhetorical questions, being unambiguous or vague, and being incomplete by using ellipsis. Finally, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) explain that, for not performing the FTA as a fifth strategy, the speaker intends not to use any strategy or make an **FTA** because the degree of face threat is too great. In other words, the speaker says nothing.

### 2.3 Culpeper's model of impoliteness

Culpeper’s (1996; 2005 and 2011) Model of Impoliteness emerged as a reaction to the idea that people are usually polite and maintain social harmony in their interactions, since people can sometimes perform impoliteness in order to attack the face wants of others. Culpeper (1996) explains that there are two kinds of impoliteness: inherent impoliteness and mock impoliteness. Inherent Impoliteness refers to utterances that are impolite by nature, while Mock Impoliteness refers to impoliteness that doesn't cause offence to the hearer, and creates solidarity and social intimacy between the speaker and the hearer. Culpeper (1996) clarifies that “[m]ock impoliteness, or banter, is impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence” (p. 352). Culpeper puts forth six superstrategies of impoliteness that are oriented to attacking the hearer's face. These superstrategies are Bald on record Impoliteness, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, Withhold Politeness and Off-record Impoliteness. In Bald on Record impoliteness, the intention of the speaker is to attack the face wants of the hearer directly with no minimizing and the **FTA** is clear, concise and unambiguous. For applying Positive Impoliteness, the speaker aims at damaging the positive face wants of the hearer by using some output strategies listed by Culpeper (1996), for instance, Ignoring the other, excluding the other from an activity, disassociating from the other, being disinterested or unsympathetic,

using inappropriate identity markers, using secretive language, seeking disagreement, making the other feel uncomfortable and calling the other names. Regarding Negative Impoliteness, the speaker aims at damaging the negative face wants of the hearer. Culpeper (1996) lists some output strategies for performing Negative Impoliteness. Among these strategies are frightening or ridiculing, being contemptuous, treating the other not seriously, belittling the other and invading the other's space. As for Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, Culpeper (1996) states that “[s]arcasm (mock politeness for social disharmony) is clearly the opposite of banter (mock impoliteness for social harmony)” (p. 357). He explains that, in performing Mock Politeness, the speaker intends to be ironic by using politeness strategies insincerely. Withholding Politeness, as another strategy, refers to the absence of politeness that may be expected in which it leads to impoliteness, for instance, failing to thank somebody for a present (Culpeper, 1996). The last strategy which is Off-record Impoliteness refers to performing the FTA “by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others” (Culpeper, 2005, p. 44). Culpeper (2005) argues that Off-record Impoliteness is not less impolite than any other direct strategies of impoliteness in which more indirect forms of impoliteness are more offensive.

### **3. Previous studies on politeness in religious discourse**

This section sheds light on previous studies concerned with Politeness in religious discourse (the Noble Qur'an and the book of Hadith Al Bukhari) and ends with clarifying the scope of the present study. The method of categorizing the following previous studies is drawn by providing studies that dealt with Politeness in dialogues in the Noble Qur'an (studies that are the most analogous to the present study) first, then studies that discussed Politeness in the Noble Qur'an and prophetic Hadith in general.

As per the studies that focused on dialogues in the Noble Qur'an, Hassan (2016) offered a qualitative investigation of the use of Politeness in dialogues between Allah (God) and the prophets (Adam, Abraham and Moses). The study adopted Van Dijk's Ideological Methodology in addition to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness. Hassan (2016) found that there were different types of Strategies of Politeness in the Noble Qur'an, and the Politeness instances in the dialogues were present to comfort the hearer in addition to giving the fundamentals of religious principles in the clearest shape. In another qualitative study, Nawaz et al. (2018) investigated Politeness and Impoliteness Strategies in dialogues between the prophets (Moses, Noah, Abraham, Lot and Muhammad) and their nations. The study adopted Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Theory of Politeness and Culpeper's (1996) Model of Impoliteness. According to Nawaz et al. (2018), the prophets used both Positive and Negative face-saving Politeness Strategies during addressing their nations to make them believe, and there were no Impoliteness Strategies

present in their words, while the polytheists mostly responded to the prophets impolitely and used both Positive and Negative face-threatening Impoliteness Strategies to show their refusal.

Al-Khatib (2012) investigated Politeness in the Noble Qur'an from a socio-pragmatic perspective through examining the text building mechanisms and functions of the verses. The verses were analyzed in two main categories: verses that are concerned with the God-man relationship and verses that are concerned with the man-man (i.e., interpersonal). Al-Khatib (2012) used Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness and Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness as analytical tools. The main aim of the study was to examine the applicability of these maxims and strategies to 22 extracts collected from 20 chapters in the Noble Qur'an, and to shed light on the principles of Politeness in Islam. Al-Khatib (2012) found that there were various Strategies of Politeness for conveying a huge number of divine ethical messages, and three main approaches were found to communicate the messages: the direct method of address, storytelling, and exemplifying. According to Al-Khatib (2012), the four Politeness Strategies of Brown and Levinson were present in which Bald on record had the greatest ratio, and next the Positive Strategy, then the Negative Strategy while Off-record Strategy was almost absent. Al-Khatib (2012) clarified that, in the context of religion, imperative forms were not as impolite as they were in other types of communication. He also explained that, in God-man interaction, instructions and requests can be classified as solidarity Politeness Strategies.

Politeness in selected verses from the Noble Qur'an with reference to their English renderings (presenting different translations for each verse) was conducted by Alkumet and Mohiddeen (2017). The data comprised examples of Politeness from the Qur'anic verses that refer to different situations of polite behaviour that Muslims have to apply. The study adopted four perspectives: social norms, conversational maxims, face-saving and conversational contract. The study discussed three patterns of Politeness: strategic politeness, discernment politeness and the pre-patterned speech view (the formulaic pattern). Alkumet and Mohiddeen (2017) found that prophets' Politeness was the grandest kind of Politeness, and polite behaviour during learning brought preparation of the teacher to teach the learner even if there were difficulties. In addition, they clarified some rules, extrapolated from the analysis, as follows: people should remain polite even if they reach high status, personal belongings should be kept and there is no obedience to anyone in disobeying God (Allah) (though each disobedient should be treated politely).

The following three studies were presented by Jewad et al. (2020) in which the researchers focused on Politeness in the Noble Qur'an in different surahs through adopting Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in addition to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness.



Jewad et al. (2020a) investigated Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle (PP) in the utterances of the characters in the three surahs (Al-Kahf, Maryam and An-Naml) from the Noble Qur'an. According to Jewad et al. (2020a), the five maxims (Tact, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy) were observed. By providing the frequency and percentage of the maxims' occurrence in the texts, the study showed that the Agreement Maxim was the most dominant one in the whole data. In addition, the Tact Maxim in surah Maryam had the highest frequency; whereas the Agreement Maxim in surah Al Kahf was the highest. Finally, the Generosity Maxim was not present in any of the three surahs as the researchers clarified. According to Jewad et al. (2020a), the dominance of the Agreement Maxim in the surahs aimed to teach how to speak politely and make a good social relationship during communications. In another study, investigating Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness and Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in the two surahs (Yusuf and Al-Kahf) from the Noble Qur'an was conducted by the same researchers. According to Jewad et al. (2020b), the dominant strategy in surah Yusuf was Negative Politeness (give deference or respect) with 21.25% of all texts, indicating that there was a large number of conversations which contained and referred to mutual deference and respect. On the other hand, Positive Politeness strategy (offer, promise) was the dominant one with about 22.2 % occurrence in surah Al-Kahf. Regarding Leech's (1983) maxims, the Tact Maxim had the highest percentage in surah Yusuf (7.5 %), while the Agreement Maxim had the highest percentage in surah Al Kahf (14.8 %). In addition to the previous two studies, Jewad et al. (2020c) presented another study investigating Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness and Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in the five surahs (Yusuf, Al-Kahf, Maryam, An-Naml and Nuh) from the Noble Qur'an. Based on qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study showed that the average of Positive Politeness strategies, Negative Politeness strategies and Politeness Maxims in surah Yusuf was the highest amongst the others. In addition, Positive Politeness strategies were more frequently present than Negative Politeness strategies and Politeness Maxims in all five Surahs. According to Jewad et al. (2020c), the analysis of the data indicated that mitigating imposition was taken into account more than gaining approval.

Unlike the previous studies that dealt with Politeness in the Noble Qur'an, Alhamidi et al. (2019) presented a study that was concerned with finding the patterns of prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) speech acts and their functions in addition to the Strategies of Politeness that were present when he (PBUH) talked to non-Muslims. The data comprised seven Hadiths extracted from the book of Hadith (Al Bukhari). The study adopted Searle's Speech Act Theory in addition to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1978) Strategies of Politeness. The study showed that Assertives and Directives were the speech acts that often appeared in prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) speeches, explaining that Assertive speech acts were used because prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) believed that the information that he conveyed to non-Muslims was a revelation from God (Allah), and Directive speech acts were used because the messenger's duty was to invite all people to believe and worship one God (Allah). Also, the study showed that the dominant Strategies of Politeness were Negative Politeness and Off-record Politeness in which Negative Politeness was mostly present in directive speech acts, showing how prophet Muhammad (PBUH) respected others during inviting them to believe in his message. Besides, Off-record Politeness was widely present in assertive speech acts, showing how he cared for others' face wants and allowed them to interpret the message conveyed.

To conclude thus far, the majority of the previous studies focused on analyzing and investigating Politeness in religious discourse in which the prevalent research analytical tools used in the analyses were Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in addition to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness. It is also noticed that a number of research studies shed light on the prophets' utterances in the Noble Qur'an, but very few paid attention to the utterances of the polytheists who were in dispute with the prophets. It is noteworthy that there was a research study which shed light on Politeness and Impoliteness in dialogues between the prophets and the disbelievers, but it used only Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness in addition to Culpeper's (1996) Model of Impoliteness in which the analysis revolved around presenting only Positive and Negative Strategies of Politeness and Impoliteness (according to the data selection), and didn't present other strategies such as Bald on record Politeness and Impoliteness, Off-record Politeness and Impoliteness and Mock Politeness. In addition, that research study adopted only qualitative analysis. The motivation for integrating Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness into the present study is that seldom research studies investigated Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in the dialogues between the prophets and the polytheists. Moreover, investigating Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in the present study enriches the analysis since it gives more explanation of specified Maxims (e.g., Tact, Agreement and Sympathy) which are pivotal in analyzing the data. It is hoped that the present study would present an additional contribution since it is concerned with analyzing more Maxims and strategies of Politeness and Impoliteness in dialogues under study between the prophets and the polytheists in terms of Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Theory of Politeness and Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Model of Impoliteness. Moreover, the present study adopts a mixed approach, offering both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Data selection**

The data in the present study comprises 35 dialogues selected from 20 surahs in the Noble Qur'an. These dialogues occurred between the six prophets (Nuh, Hud, Saleh, Ibrahim, Shuaib and Musa) and the

contemporaneous polytheists. The criterion for selecting the dialogues is based on a specific theme (faith); the dialogues revolve around how the prophets talked to the polytheists about faith to guide them to true Monotheism and how the polytheists reacted to the prophets' call for faith and belief in the Oneness of Allah and in the Last Day. For the purpose of meaning translation of the verses, the study adopts the Noble Qur'an meaning translation and commentary of King Fahd Complex. Besides, Ibn Kathir's and As-Sa'di's interpretations of the Noble Qur'an are provided for the sake of understanding the context of the dialogues.

#### **4.2 Procedures**

The study adopts a mixed approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses. In the qualitative analysis, the researchers analyze and investigate the applicability of the maxims and strategies to the selected dialogues between the prophets and the polytheists. In the quantitative analysis, the study presents manual counts of the observed maxims and strategies (every utterance that refers to Politeness or Impoliteness) in order to validate the results of the qualitative analysis and highlight similarities and differences in the observed maxims and strategies in the selected data. Furthermore, the study shows if there are certain leading maxims and strategies that are characteristic of the utterances of the prophets and/or those of the polytheists.

In presenting the selected examples, the researchers begin with presenting the selected verses from the Noble Qur'an and provide each verse with meaning translation adopted from the Noble Qur'an meaning translation and commentary of King Fahd Complex. Presenting the selected verses is based on the sequence of presenting the maxims and strategies as analytical tools, then analysis is carried out through observing Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy), Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Superstrategies of Politeness (Bald on record Politeness, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness, Off-record Politeness and Not performing the FTA) in addition to Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Superstrategies of Impoliteness (Bald on record Impoliteness, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock Politeness, Withhold Politeness and Off-record Impoliteness) in these selected verses which constitute the dialogues between the prophets and the contemporaneous polytheists. MS Excel is used to manage quantitative analysis and to generate graphs.

#### **5. Sample Analysis**

The following analysis shows that Maxims and Strategies of Politeness have been prevalent in the prophets' communication with their contemporaneous people, and there were no instances of Impoliteness Strategies in their utterances. On the other hand, all Strategies of Impoliteness have been evident in the polytheists' utterances. The analysis below is divided into three main sections. Based on the maxims and

strategies, the first and second sections provide data analysis which focuses on Politeness of prophets in terms of Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness in addition to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness, respectively. The third section provides data analysis concerned with Impoliteness of polytheists in terms of Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Strategies of Impoliteness, showing that all Strategies of Impoliteness have been employed in the polytheists' utterances.

## 5.1 Leech's maxims of politeness

### 5.1.1 The tact maxim (from prophet Nuh to his people)

01

" فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا (10) يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا (11) وَيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَيَبْنِيَنَّ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا (12) "

"I said (to them): Ask forgiveness from your Lord, verily, He is Oft-Forgiving ﴿﴾ He will send rain to you in abundance ﴿﴾ And give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers ﴿﴾" [Surah Nuh: 10-12]

Maximizing benefit to the hearers is present in prophet Nuh's (PBUH) utterances in which he advised his people to believe in Allah (God) for their own good and promised that if they believed and asked the forgiveness of Allah (God), they would get many blessings. As-Sa'di (2018) illustrates that prophet Nuh (PBUH) "sought to encourage them by telling them of the forgiveness of sins and what would result from that of attaining the reward and warding off punishment" (p.226).

### 5.1.2 The generosity maxim (from prophet Hud to his people)

01

" وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ - إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (127) "

"No reward do I ask of you for it (my Message of Islamic Monotheism); my reward is only from the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinn, and all that exists) ﴿﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara: 127]

Prophet Hud (PBUH) minimized benefit to himself and maximized cost to himself. He clarified to his people that he came as a messenger of Allah (God) and clarified that he didn't ask for any reward. He illustrated that if he asked for any reward, he would ask only Allah (God) for it.

### 5.1.3 The approbation maxim (from prophet Salih to his people)

01

" أَتُنْكُرُونَ فِي مَا ههْنَأَ ءَامِنِينَ (146) فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (147) وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَأَ هضِيمٍ (148) وَتَنْجَاتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بِيُوتَأَ قَرهِينِ (149) "

"Will you be left secure in that which you have here? ﴿﴾ In gardens and springs ﴿﴾ And green crops (fields) and date-palms with soft spadix ﴿﴾ And you hew out in the mountains, houses with great skill ﴿﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara: 146-149]

Prophet Salih (PBUH) urged his people to think in the graces that Allah (God) gave them so that they might believe in Allah (God); he reminded them with the blessings they got such as gardens, springs, green crops and date-palms with soft spadix. Also, he reminded them with the skills they got by saying ‘*you hew out in the mountains, houses with great skill*’.

#### 5.1.4 The modesty maxim (from prophet Shuaib to his people)

01

"بَعِيْتُ اللَّهَ خَيْرَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ (86)"

"That which is left by Allah for you (after giving the rights of the people) is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a guardian over you ﴿٨٦﴾" [Surah Hud: 86]

02

"وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَمْلِكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَنكُم عَنْهُ ۚ إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ (88)"

"I wish not, in contradiction to you, to do that which I forbid you. I only desire reform to the best of my power ﴿٨٨﴾" [Surah Hud: 88]

Prophet Shuaib (PBUH) said to his people that he didn't wish, in contradiction to them, to do that which he forbade them. He explained that he wasn't a guardian over them, but he only desired reform to the best of his power.

#### 5.1.5 The agreement maxim (prophet Musa with his people)

01

"فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِثْلِهِ ۚ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَا نُخْلِفُهُ ۚ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ مَكَانًا سَوِيًّا (58) قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُخَشِرَ النَّاسُ ضُجًى (59)"

"Then verily, we can produce magic the like thereof; so appoint a meeting between us and you, which neither we nor you shall fail to keep, in an open place where both shall have a just and equal chance (and beholders could witness the competition)" ﴿٥٨﴾ [Musa (Moses)] said: "Your appointed meeting is the day of the festival, and let the people assemble when the sun has risen (forenoon) ﴿٥٩﴾" [Surah Ta-Ha: 58-59]

Fir'aun (pharaoh) arrogantly wanted to challenge prophet Musa (PBUH) when prophet Musa (PBUH) showed him some signs to believe. Prophet Musa (PBUH) accepted the challenge and appointed the day of the festival as the meeting day to prove to Fir'aun (pharaoh) and his people that he (prophet Musa) and his brother (prophet Harun) were messengers of Allah (God).

#### 5.1.6 The sympathy maxim (from prophet Ibrahim to his father)

01

"يَأْتِبْتُ إِيَّيْ أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمْسَكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا (45)"

"O my father! Verily I fear Jest a torment from the Most Gracious (Allah) should overtake you, so that you become a companion of Shaitan (Satan) (in the Hell-fire) ﴿٤٥﴾" [Surah Maryam: 45]

02

" قَالَ سَلِّمْ عَلَيْكَ ۖ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا (47) "

"Ibrahim (Abraham) said: "Peace be on you! I will ask Forgiveness of my Lord for you. Verily He is unto me Ever Most Gracious ﴿٤٧﴾" [Surah Maryam: 47]

Sympathy is evident when Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) told his father that he feared for him the torment of the Hell-fire due to polytheism in which he oriented the fear towards himself and not towards his father to show mercy. Sympathy is remarkable when he said to his father ‘*peace be on you! I will ask forgiveness of my Lord for you*’.

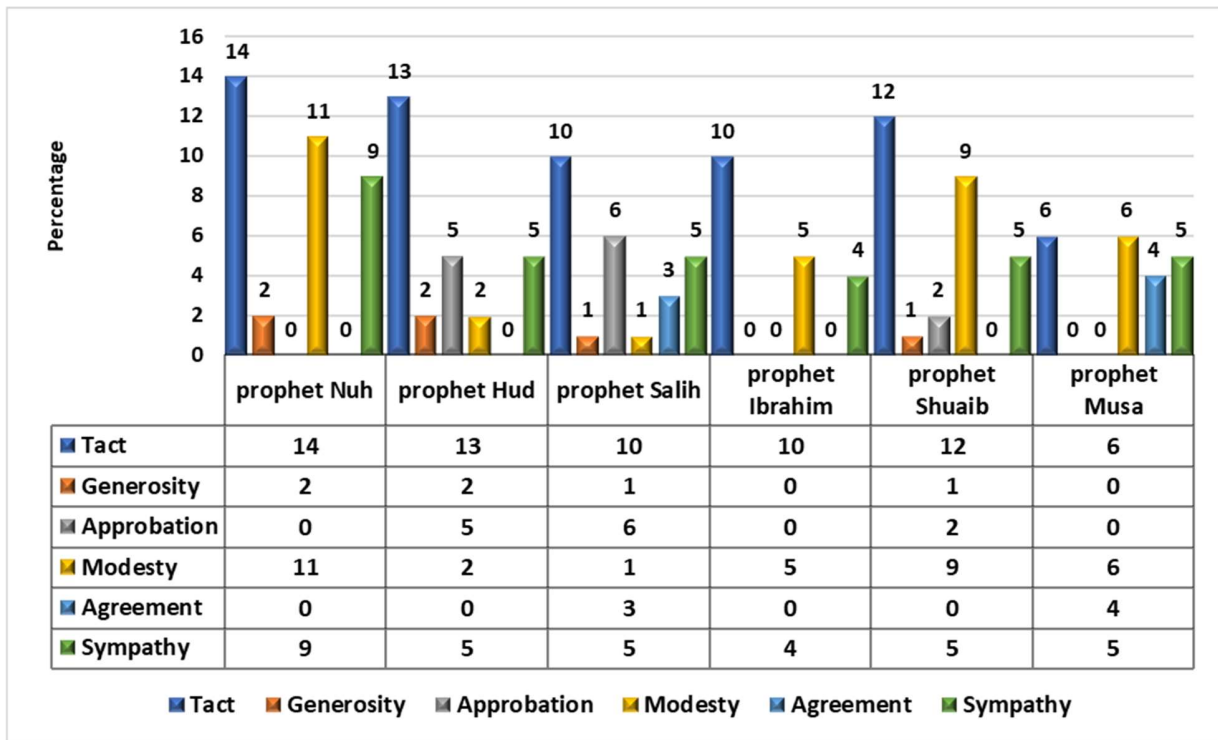


Figure 1: Frequency of maxims of politeness among the prophets

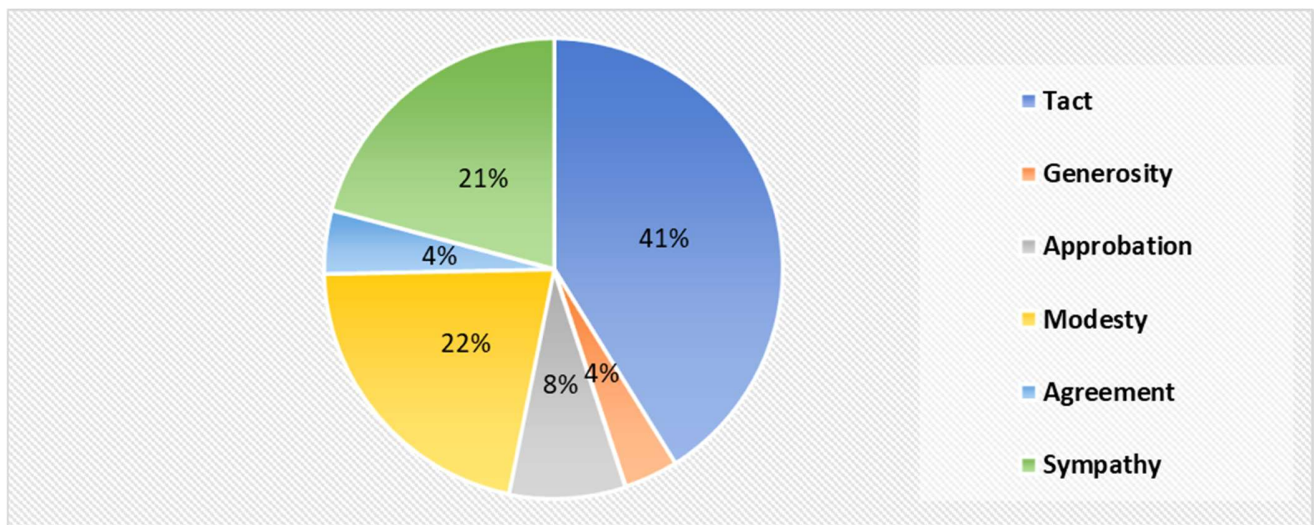


Figure 2: Percentage of maxims of politeness among the prophets

## Discussion

Figure 1. shows that the six Maxims (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy) are present, and this reveals how the prophets (PUBT) were very keen on guiding their people to the straight path. The prophets wanted to advise and guide their people to believe and worship only Allah (God). This is noticeable since the Maxims (Tact, Modesty and Sympathy) have the highest frequencies, indicating that the prophets were concerned with presenting what was beneficial to their people besides being modest and sympathetic during their invitations. In some situations, some prophets agreed to accept challenges and incapacitating matters for the sake of making their people persuaded to believe and accept the message (a specific purpose). Other prophets showed approval of some graces that the polytheists got so that the polytheists might think and repent to their God (Allah). Figure 2. shows that the Tact Maxim has the highest percentage (41%), illustrating how the prophets maximized benefit to the polytheists and minimized cost to them; the prophets advised and guided their people to what was beneficial to them (Belief in Allah (God) and the blessings that they would get after belief), and clarified that they didn't ask the polytheists any reward for the message. The percentage of the Modesty Maxim (22%) is close to that of the Sympathy Maxim (21%), showing how the prophets were modest and sympathetic while guiding their people to true Monotheism.

## 5.2 Brown and Levinson's strategies of politeness

### 5.2.1 Bald on record politeness (from prophet Salih to his people)

01

" وَإِلَىٰ تَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۗ هُوَ أَنشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ (61) "

"And to Thamud (people We sent) their brother Salih. He said: "O my people! Worship Allah: you have no other ilah (God) but Him. He brought you forth from the earth and settled you therein, then ask forgiveness of Him and turn to Him in repentance. Certainly, my Lord is Near (to all by His Knowledge), Responsive ﴿﴾" [Surah Hud: 61]

The imperative forms of prophet Salih (PBUH) such as 'worship Allah' and 'turn to Him in repentance' are softened and accompanied by guidance, sympathy and mercy towards his people. This is shown in his utterance 'certainly, my Lord is Near (to all by His Knowledge), Responsive'.

### 5.2.2 Positive politeness (from prophet Hud to his people)

01

"أَوْعَيْبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۖ وَأَذْكُرُوا ۚ إِذْ جَعَلْنَا خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَرَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصِطَةً ۖ فَادْكُرُوا ۗ الْآءَ اللَّهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (69)"

"Do you wonder that there has come to you a Reminder (and an advice) from your Lord through a man from amongst you to warn you? And remember that He made you successors after the people of Nuh (Noah) and increased you amply in stature. So remember the graces (bestowed upon you) from Allah so that you may be successful ﴿﴾" [Surah Al A'raf: 69]

02

"وَيَعْتَمِدُونَ آسْتَفْعُرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُؤْبِتُونَ إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَىٰ قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ (52)"

"And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him, He will send you (from the sky) abundant rain, and add strength to your strength, so do not turn away as Mujrimun (criminals, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah) ﴿﴾" [Surah Hud: 52]

03

"إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (135)"

"Verily, I fear for you the torment of a Great Day ﴿﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara': 135]

Prophet Hud (PBUH) used to call his people 'O my people' and 'a man from amongst you'. These utterances reveal that he elevated solidarity between himself and his people so that they might accept his message. He exaggerated sympathy by saying 'I fear for you the torment of a Great Day'. He exaggerated approval and asserted the polytheists' knowledge by saying 'remember that He made you successors after the people of Nuh (Noah) and increased you amply in stature' so that they might believe in Allah (God) when they remember all these blessings. He intensified interest and promised his people that if they asked the forgiveness of Allah (God), they would be blessed with graces as he said 'He will send you (from the sky) abundant rain, and add strength to your strength'.



### 5.2.3 Negative politeness (from prophet Shuaib to his people)

01

" وَيَقَوْمِ أَعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَمِلٌ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَذِبٌ وَأَرْتَبُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ (93) "

"And O my people! Act according to your ability and way, and I am acting (on my way). You will come to know who it is on whom descends the torment that will cover him with ignominy, and who is a liar! And watch you! Verily, I too am watching with you ﴿٩٣﴾" [Surah Hud: 93]

The utterances of prophet Shuaib (PBUH) illustrate that he didn't coerce his people to accept his message. This is present in his utterances 'O my people! Act according to your ability and way, and I am acting (on my way)' and when he stated the FTA as a general rule by saying 'you will come to know who it is on whom descends the torment that will cover him with ignominy, and who is a liar!'. These last utterances show how prophet Shuaib (PBUH) avoided coercion while inviting his people so that they might fear Allah (God) and believe in him.

### 5.2.4 Off-record politeness (from prophet Ibrahim to his people)

01

" فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَىٰ كَوْكَبًا ۖ قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفَلِينَ (76) فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ الْقَمَرَ تَارِعًا قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ "

الضَّالِّينَ (77) فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ الشَّمْسُ تَارِعَةً قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي ۖ هَٰذَا أَكْبَرُ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (78) "

"When the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star. He said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "I like not those that set ﴿٧٦﴾ When he saw the moon rising up, he said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the people who went astray. ﴿٧٧﴾ When he saw the sun rising up, he said: "This is my lord. This is greater." But when it set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from all that you join as partners (in worship with Allah) ﴿٧٨﴾" [Surah Al-An'am: 76-78]

Prophet Ibrahim's (PBUH) speech (about the planet, the Moon and the Sun) shows how he tried to persuade his people that these orbs were not lords because they set. He tried to arouse the thoughts of his people to make them interpret his intention by giving some hints, for instance, 'I like not those that set' and 'unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the people who went astray'. Then, he showed them the correct path (Monotheism) because the duty of the messenger of Allah (God) was to convey the message without any ambiguity. Ibn Kathir (2003) explains that "[w]e should note here that, in these Ayat, Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was debating with his people, explaining to them the error of their way in worshipping idols and images" (p.389).

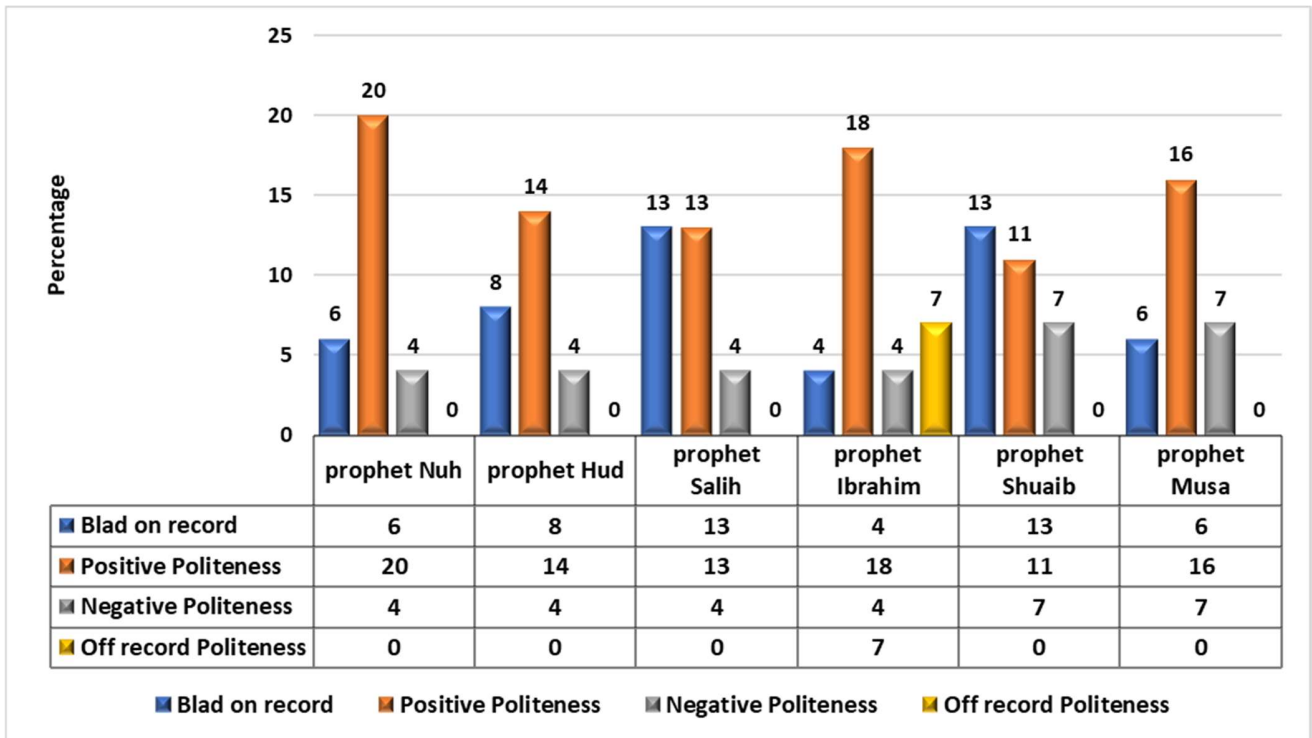


Figure 3: Frequency of politeness strategies among the prophets

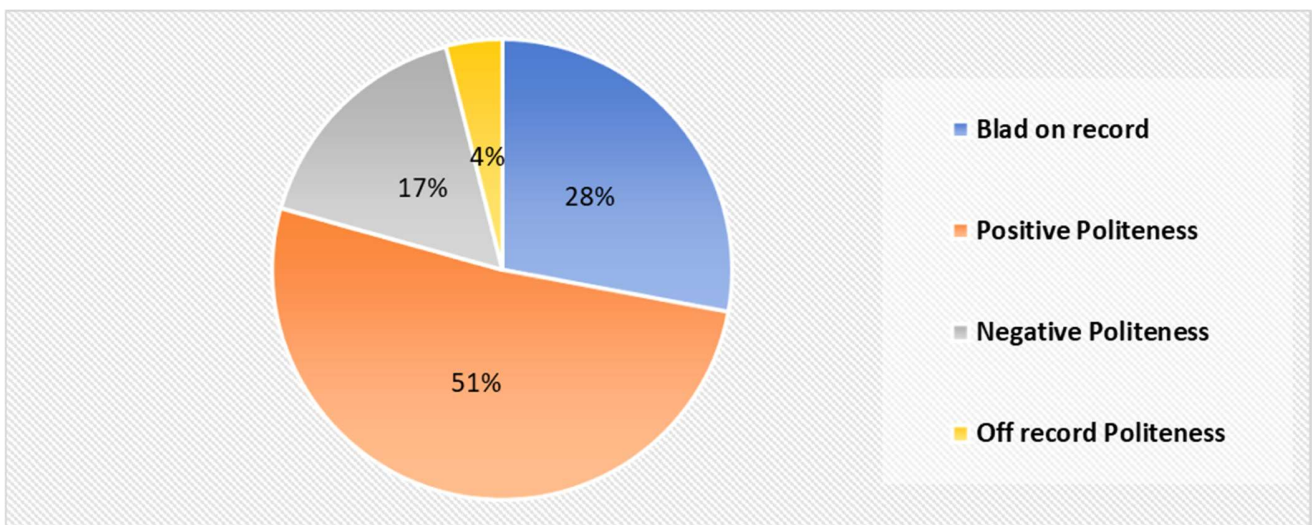


Figure 4: Percentage of politeness strategies among the prophets

**Discussion**

Figure 3. shows that Bald on record Politeness, Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness strategies were evident in the utterances of all the prophets. Off-record Politeness was present in the utterances of only prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) since he invited his people in some situations, as an elementary step, indirectly through using hints to urge them to think so that they might believe in the Oneness of Allah (God). Bald on

record Politeness was present in the utterances of the prophets in the form of imperatives. These imperatives were softened with guidance and mercy since the prophets feared for their people the torment of the Hereafter if they insisted on disbelieving in the Oneness of Allah (God). Positive Politeness shows how the prophets elevated solidarity so that the polytheists might follow them and believe in Allah (God). The most frequently used strategies in Positive Politeness were intensifying interest, exaggerating sympathy and approval, using in-group identity markers, asserting the hearers' knowledge, avoidance of disagreement for a specific purpose, offers and promises. Negative Politeness shows how the prophets avoided any coercion during their speeches to their people. The most frequently used strategies in Negative Politeness were giving questions to arouse thoughts, minimizing the imposition, stating the FTA as a general rule and giving deference. Figure 4. shows that Positive Politeness has the highest percentage (51%), indicating that the prophets elevated solidarity in their interactions in addition to being close to their communities while persuading them to believe. Bald on record Politeness has the percentage (28%) in which the imperative forms were minimized and mitigated to soften the disputations. Negative Politeness has the percentage (17%) which reveals that the prophets didn't coerce their people to believe. Off-record Politeness has the least percentage (4%) to show that in some situations, Off-record Politeness might be used at the beginning to arouse the thoughts of the polytheists, then directness was used by the prophet (PBUH) to show the correct path since the duty of the messenger of Allah (God) was to convey the message without any ambiguity, for instance, when prophet Ibrahim assured his people by saying '*O my people! I am indeed free from all that you join as partners (in worship with Allah)*' after he had shown them the error of their faith in worshipping the orbs.

### 5.3 Culpeper's strategies of impoliteness

#### 5.3.1 Bald on record impoliteness (from Fir'aun to prophet Musa)

01

" وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (19) "

"And you did your deed, which you did (i.e. the crime of killing a man) while you were one of the ingrates ﴿١٩﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara': 19]

Fir'aun ridiculed prophet Musa (PBUH) offensively by saying '*you were one of the ingrates*' in a clear, concise and unambiguous FTA.

#### 5.3.2 Positive impoliteness (from people to prophet Hud)

01

" قَالُوا يَهُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (53) "

They said: "O Hud! No evidence have you brought us, and we shall not leave our gods for your (mere) saying! And we are not believers in you ﴿﴾" [Surah Hud: 53]

02

" قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَأْفِكَنَا عَنِ الْهَيْبَةِ فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِينَ (22) "

They said: "Have you come to turn us away from our alihah (gods)? Then bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are one of the truthful! ﴿﴾" [Surah Al-Ahqaf: 22]

The polytheists belied prophet Hud (PBUH) and sought disagreement. Their utterances reveal how they were unconcerned with him and how they sought disagreement to refuse his message.

### 5.3.3 Negative impoliteness (from people to prophet Nuh)

01

" فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُو۟ا۟ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتَّقَصَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَٰئِكَةً مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي۟ ءَابَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ (24) إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ ءِجْنَةٌ فَنَرٰبُصُو۟ا۟ بِهِ ءَحَتَّىٰ جِيئَ (25) "

But the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said: "He is no more than a human being like you, he seeks to make himself superior to you. Had Allah willed, He surely could have sent down angels. Never did we hear such a thing among our fathers of old ﴿﴾ He is only a man in whom is madness, so wait for him a while ﴿﴾" [Surah Al-Mu'minun: 24-25]

02

" قَالُوا لَنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهَ يَنْوُحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ (116) "

They said: "If you cease not, O Nuh (Noah) you will surely be among those stoned (to death) ﴿﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara': 116]

Prophet Nuh (PBUH) was threatened by the polytheists when they said 'If you cease not, O Nuh (Noah) you will surely be among those stoned (to death)'. Also, the polytheists tried to prevent prophet Nuh (PBUH) from spreading his message and urged their community to disobey him by saying 'He is no more than a human being like you, he seeks to make himself superior to you'.

### 5.3.4 Sarcasm or mock politeness (from people to prophet Shuaib)

01

" قَالُوا يٰشُعَيْبُ اَصْلُوكُنْتَ تَأْمُرُكَ اَنْ تَتْرَكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ ءَابَاؤُنَا اَوْ اَنْ تَفْعَلَ فِى۟ اٰمُو۟لِنَا مَا نَشَآءُ ۗ اِنَّكَ لَآلِى۟مُ الْاَلْحٰمِی۟مِ الرَّشِی۟دِ (87) "

They said: "O Shu'aib! Does your Salat (prayer) command that we give up what our fathers used to worship, or that we give up doing what we like with our property? Verily, you are the forbearer, right-minded!" (They said this sarcastically) ﴿﴾" [Surah Hud: 87]

The polytheists said to prophet Shuaib (PBUH) 'Verily, you are the forbearer, right-minded!' insincerely to ridicule and belittle him. Ibn Kathir (2003) explains in his interpretation of this utterance that:

Ibn ‘Abbas, Maymun bin Mihran, Ibn Jurayj, Ibn Aslam, and Ibn Jarir all said, “These enemies of Allah were only saying this in mockery. May Allah disfigure them and curse them from ever receiving His mercy. And verily, He did so.” (Ibn Kathir, 2003, pp. 98-99).

5.3.5 Off-record impoliteness (from Fir’aun to prophet Musa)

01

" قَالَ أَلَمْ نُنزِقْ فِيْنَا وَلِيْدًا وَبَيَّنَّا فِيْنَا مِنْ عُمْرِكَ سِنِيْنَ (18) "

[Fir'aun (Pharaoh)] said [to Musa (Moses)]: "Did we not bring you up among us as a child? And you did dwell many years of your life with us ﴿١٨﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara': 18]

02

" قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ (23) "

Fir'aun (Pharaoh) said: "And what is the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)? ﴿٢٣﴾" [Surah Ash-Shu'ara': 23]

The first utterance of Fir’aun indicates that he reproached prophet Musa (PBUH) for bringing him up. Although the form of the utterance seems to be a question from its superficial meaning, its inner meaning refers to satire and sarcasm. when Fir’aun asked ‘what is the Lord of the 'Alamin?’ he wanted to be ironic in the form of a question. Ibn Kathir (2003) illustrates the interpretation of that utterance as follows:

Those among the philosophers and others who claimed that this was a question about the nature or substance [of Allah] are mistaken. Fir ‘awn did not believe in the Creator in the first place, so he was in no position to ask about the nature of the Creator; he denied that the Creator existed at all, as is apparent from the meaning, even though proof and evidence had been established against him. (Ibn Kathir, 2003, p. 221)

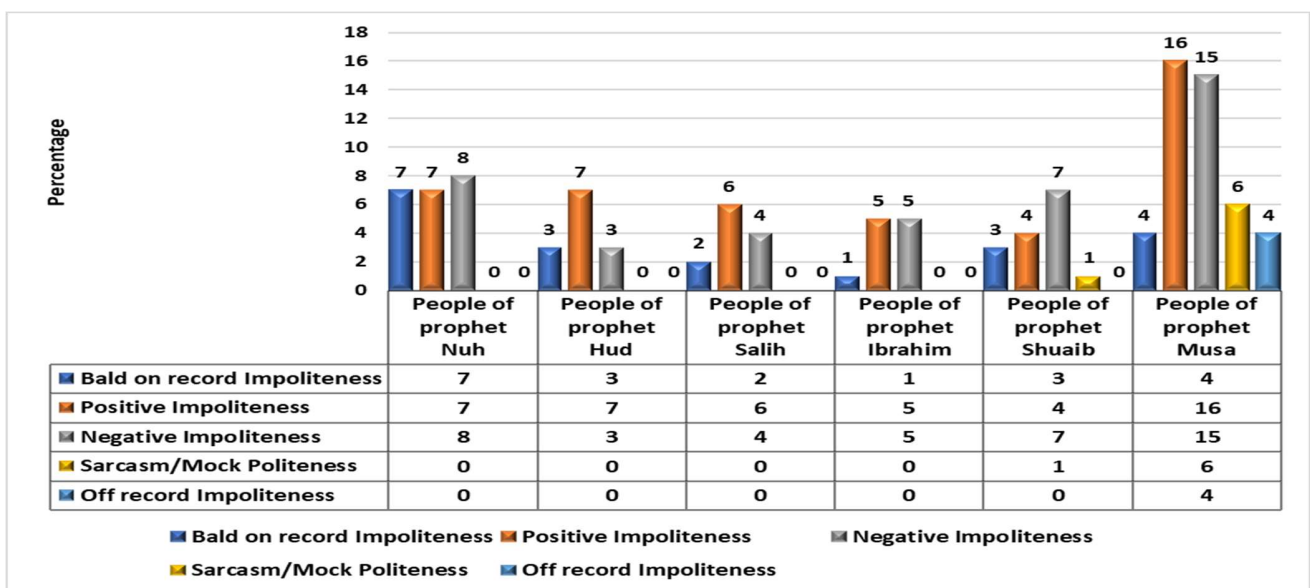


Figure 5: Frequency of impoliteness strategies among the polytheists

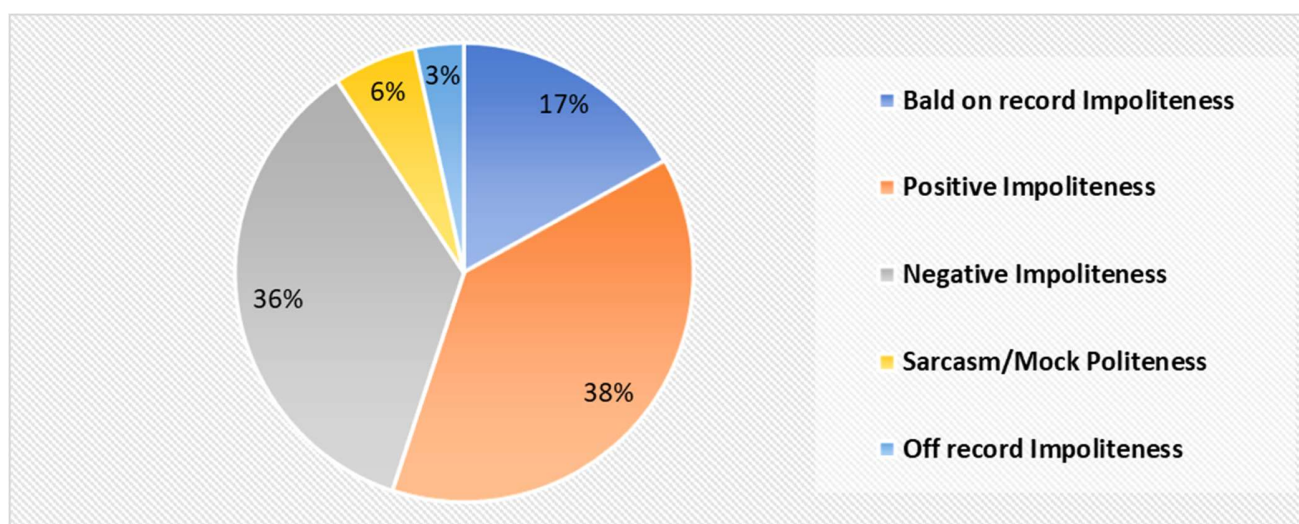


Figure 6: Percentage of impoliteness strategies among the polytheists

## Discussion

Figure 5. shows that Bald on record Impoliteness, Positive Impoliteness and Negative Impoliteness were evident in the utterances of all the polytheists. It also shows that Sarcasm/Mock Politeness was present in the utterances of the people of prophet Shuaib (PBUH) and the people of prophet Musa (PBUH). While, Off-record Impoliteness was present in the utterances of the people of prophet Musa (PBUH), particularly, Fir'aun (pharaoh). It is noteworthy that the people of prophet Musa (PBUH) were the only polytheists who were distinctive in using all the Strategies of Impoliteness. This distinctiveness is apparent since Fir'aun (pharaoh) and his followers were in the status of rulers (superiors) who emphasized and exploited their legitimate power. Figure 6. shows that Positive Impoliteness has the highest percentage (38%), indicating that the polytheists' primary concern was to reject the messages. The most frequently used Positive Impoliteness strategies were seeking disagreement, ignoring the others, being unconcerned and unsympathetic in addition to excluding the others. Negative Impoliteness has the percentage (36%) to show how it is close to the percentage of Positive Impoliteness, and to illustrate that it was not enough for the polytheists to seek disagreement and disobey the prophets, but they tried to impede them through frightening and urging their communities to disobey them as well. The most frequently employed Negative Impoliteness were frightening, ridiculing, emphasizing power, belittling and invading others' spaces. Bald on record Impoliteness has the percentage (17%) in which the polytheists attacked the face wants of the prophets with no minimizing, and the FTA was clear and unambiguous. Sarcasm/Mock Politeness and Off-record Impoliteness have the percentages (6%) and (3%) respectively, illustrating that some polytheists sought disagreement and refused the messages through adopting these two strategies as additional ways of

attacking the face wants of the prophets offensively, for instance, Fir'aun (pharaoh) who used to be more sarcastic.

Based on the analyses, there are further findings observed in the present study. They are categorized below according to the analytical tools used.

### **Leech's maxims of politeness observed in the prophets' speeches**

There was an overlap between the Tact Maxim and the Generosity Maxim, for instance, '*O my people! I ask of you no wealth for it, my reward is from none but Allah*'. Such an utterance can fall within the Tact Maxim (maximize benefit to the hearer and minimize cost to the hearer) or the Generosity Maxim (minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self). There was overlap between the Modesty Maxim and the Agreement Maxim, for instance, the utterance of prophet Musa (PBUH) '*I did it then, when I was ignorant (as regards my Lord and his Message)*' when Fir'aun accused him of killing the man. This utterance can fall within the Modesty Maxim (minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self) and the Agreement Maxim (increase agreement or decrease disagreement with the hearer). There was overlap between the Agreement Maxim and the Sympathy Maxim, for instance, when prophet Musa sympathized with the polytheists and agreed to invoke Allah for them to remove the punishment since the polytheists asked prophet Musa to do so, and promised him to believe. The Agreement Maxim and The Approbation Maxim were present for specific purposes. In other words, the prophets agreed to accept some demands of the polytheists so that the polytheists might believe in Allah (God) and follow them. The same matter was evident in the Approbation Maxim since the prophets reminded the polytheists of the blessings they got so that they might acknowledge these blessings and believe in Allah (God).

Leech (1983) clarifies that not all of the maxims are equally important and illustrates that the Approbation Maxim is more powerfully constrained on conversational behaviour than the Modesty Maxim, and this reflects that Politeness focuses more strongly on other than on self (p. 133). Based on the analysis of the present study, it shows that the Modesty Maxim was present in the utterances of the prophets more than the Approbation Maxim. That is to say that the Modesty Maxim was not less important than the Approbation Maxim since the speeches of the prophets revolved around persuasion (to persuade the polytheists to believe in the Oneness of Allah (God)), and Modesty in the domain of persuasion reflects how speakers are more polite and sincere in their interactions. In addition, Modesty, as it reflects Politeness, is one of the most significant characteristics that distinguish a person among different social classes and individuals.

There was a strong correlation between the Tact Maxim and the Sympathy Maxim in which all the utterances of the prophets that referred to the Sympathy Maxim show how the prophets were sympathetic

towards the polytheists in order to guide them to what will be beneficial to them in the Hereafter, and this was the same purpose of the Tact Maxim which refers to maximizing benefit to the polytheists. Sympathy, as a way of mercy, was most prominent in the prophets' communication with their people due to the fact that they were the finest of creation as Allah (God) chose them over humanity to convey the message of true Monotheism. According to Al-Khatib (2012), "[i]n reality, mercifulness is more than an attitude, more than polite manners and positive thinking. It is a way of life in which people, regardless of age, status, gender, or ethnic background, deal with each other politely and respectfully" (p. 503).

### **Brown and Levinson's strategies of politeness observed in the prophets' speeches**

Regarding Bald on record Politeness, all the prophets' utterances were sympathetic advice in which the prophets paid attention to the interpersonal aspects of the polytheists. The prophets used direct imperatives accompanied by Positive and Negative hedges Politeness (mixture of strategies) in order to raise solidarity and avoid coerciveness in the interaction. In other words, the direct imperatives were mitigated and softened with hedges, sympathy, mercy and fear for the polytheists the torment if they would insist on disbelief. This last point illustrates that the sympathetic advice of the prophets dealt with the class of Bald on record Politeness where the FTA was minimized and softened. Therefore, this counterexample reveals that not every sympathetic advice or warning could be considered as cases where non-minimization occurs and no redress is required as Brown and Levinson (1987) clarify (p. 98). Regarding Positive Politeness, not the entire Positive Politeness Strategies were present in the prophets' utterances. For instance, the strategy (Joke for putting the hearer at ease) was not present in the utterances of the prophets because the issue of the interaction was pivotal and crucial (relating to Faith), and the prophets sought to guide and persuade the polytheists to believe in the Oneness of Allah (God) since the duty of the prophets was to convey the message.

Seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement and asserting the hearers' knowledge as Positive Politeness strategies were used for a specific purpose (persuading and urging the polytheists to think and believe in the message). There was overlap between Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness in some utterances, for instance, the utterance of prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) when he said to his father '*peace be on you! I will ask forgiveness of my Lord for you*' after his father had threatened him. Such an utterance may refer to Positive Politeness (Give gifts to the hearer (sympathy) & promises) or may refer to Negative Politeness (Not coercing the hearer). Off-record Politeness was used for a specific purpose and as an elementary step in the interaction like what prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) did with his people who worshipped orbs and idols. At the beginning, prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) sought to arouse the thoughts of his people to



think about their false faith. Then, directness was used to show the correct path since the duty of the messenger of Allah (God) was to convey the message without any ambiguity.

### **Culpeper's strategies of impoliteness observed in the polytheists' speeches**

According to Culpeper (1996; 2005 and 2011), the Strategies of Impoliteness can be mixed, and one utterance may have an implication for another. The present study shows that there was overlap between Positive Impoliteness and Negative Impoliteness in the utterances of the polytheists, for instance, the utterance of the people of prophet Nuh (PBUH) '*He is no more than a human being like you, he seeks to make himself superior to you*'. This instance may refer to seeking disagreement, ignoring and disassociating from the other (Positive Impoliteness) or may refer to interfering, ridiculing the other and preventing prophet Nuh (PBUH) from his right to convey and spread his message (Negative Impoliteness). Overlap was present as well between Bald on record Impoliteness and Negative Impoliteness, for instance, the utterances of the polytheists '*he is only a man in whom is madness*' and '*Verily, we see you in foolishness, and verily, we think you are one of the liars*' to prophet Hud (PBUH). These utterances gathered between attacking the face wants of prophet Hud (PBUH) by doing the FTA in a clear way (Bald on record Impoliteness) and scorning him (Negative Impoliteness).

## **6. Conclusion**

This study investigated Politeness and Impoliteness in dialogues between the prophets and the polytheists in the Noble Qur'an. The major objective was to conduct a pragmatic analysis of these dialogues by adopting qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study investigated to what extent Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Strategies of Politeness, and Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Strategies of Impoliteness were applicable to the selected data. It showed that Maxims and Strategies of Politeness were prevalent in the prophets' communication with their contemporaneous people, and there were no Impoliteness Strategies in their utterances. On the other hand, all Strategies of Impoliteness were evident in the polytheists' utterances, and there were no Politeness Maxims or Strategies remarkable in their utterances.

Regarding Leech's (1983) Maxims of Politeness, the study provided that all the Maxims (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy) were present in the utterances of the prophets with the Tact, Modesty and Sympathy Maxims as the most prominent. This revealed how the prophets were very keen on guiding their people to what was beneficial to them in which the prophets were modest and sympathetic with their people, clarifying that they didn't ask the polytheists any reward for the message (the Generosity Maxim). In some situations, the Agreement Maxim was present since some

prophets agreed to accept challenges and incapacitating matters for the sake of making their people persuaded to believe and accept the message (a specific purpose). As for the Approbation Maxim, some prophets showed approval of some graces that the polytheists got so that the polytheists might think about these blessings and repent to their God (Allah). The study showed that there were overlaps between some maxims, for instance, Tact and Generosity, Modesty and Agreement, and Agreement and Sympathy Maxims, respectively, and how there was a strong correlation between the Tact and Sympathy Maxims. Moreover, the study revealed that the Modesty Maxim was not less important than the Approbation Maxim since the speeches of the prophets revolved around persuasion, and Modesty in the domain of persuasion reflects how speakers are more polite and sincere in their interactions.

As for Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Superstrategies of Politeness, the study showed that the strategies (Bald on record Politeness, Positive Politeness, Negative Politeness and Off-record Politeness) were evident in the utterances of the prophets showing how the prophets were close to their communities and how they elevated solidarity during their invitations to true Monotheism. In addition, the analysis revealed that the most noticeable superstrategies in the prophets' utterances were Positive Politeness in which the most remarkable strategies were intensifying interest, exaggerating sympathy and approval, using in-group identity markers, asserting the hearers' knowledge, avoidance of disagreement for a specific purpose, offers and promises. Then came Bald on record Politeness, in which the direct imperatives used by the prophets dealt with the class of Bald on record Politeness where the FTA was mitigated and softened with hedges, sympathy, mercy and fear for the polytheists the torment of the Hereafter. Afterwards, Negative Politeness followed, in which the most remarkable strategies were giving questions to arouse thoughts, minimizing imposition, stating the FTA as a general rule and giving deference. It is worth noting that not the entire Positive Politeness Strategies were present in the prophets' utterances, for instance, the strategy (Joke for putting the hearer at ease) was not present in the utterances of the prophets because the issue of the interaction was pivotal and crucial (relating to Faith). Furthermore, the study observed that there was overlap between Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness in some utterances, and Off-record Politeness was used as an elementary step in the interaction for persuasion, then directness was used to show the correct path since the duty of the messenger of Allah (God) was to convey the message without any ambiguity.

Eventually, the study showed that Culpeper's (1996; 2005 and 2011) Superstrategies of Impoliteness (Bald on record, Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness, Sarcasm/Mock Politeness and Off-record) were evident in the polytheists' utterances. The analysis revealed how the polytheists threatened the prophets and how they reacted impolitely to the prophets' call for faith and belief in the Oneness of

Allah and in the Last Day. This was remarkable since the most prominent superstrategies in the polytheists' utterances were Positive Impoliteness, Negative Impoliteness and Bald on record Impoliteness, then Sarcasm/Mock Politeness, and lastly Off-record Impoliteness in which the most evident strategies that they used were seeking disagreement, ignoring the others, being unconcerned and unsympathetic, excluding the other, frightening, ridiculing and emphasizing power, invading the others' spaces, belittling others in addition to attacking others with no minimizing. Besides, the analysis showed how the people of prophet Musa were distinctive in using all these Strategies of Impoliteness in order to be more sarcastic. The study observed that the Strategies of Impoliteness could overlap, and one utterance might have an implication for another. For instance, an overlap was observed between Bald on record Impoliteness and Negative Impoliteness, and between Positive Impoliteness and Negative Impoliteness in some utterances of the polytheists.

Most significantly, the study proposed Mercy as a potential addition to the maxims of performing Politeness. Mercy, in the form of non-reciprocal forgiveness and pity, was most prevalent in the prophets' communication with their contemporaneous people. The prophets were the finest of creation as Allah (God) chose them over humanity in order to convey the message of true Monotheism. Hopefully, the present study would pave the way for further research relating to Politeness in religious discourse.

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