

**LEECH'S POLITENESS PRINCIPLES IN ARABIC INSTRUCTIONAL DIALOGUES: A
PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF *DURUS AL-LUGHAH LI GHAIRI AN-NATHIQINA BIHA*
VOLUME 2**

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ABSTRACT

Arabic textbooks teach both language structures and sociocultural values, yet studies on politeness within formal instructional dialogues remain scarce. This study addresses this gap by examining Leech's (1983) politeness principles within conversational dialogues in Volume 2 of *Durus al-Lughah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha*. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, 18 dialogic exchanges containing politeness markers were purposively selected from all 30 chapters and analyzed using Leech's six maxims. The findings reveal that sympathy, generosity, agreement, and approbation maxims are most frequently represented across various interaction contexts. Tact and modesty occur less frequently but carry significant sociocultural weight. Consequently, the textbook facilitates linguistic acquisition while internalizing authentic Arab politeness norms and Islamic communicative ethics, highlighting the need for explicit pragmatic instruction

INTRODUCTION

Politeness has long been an important topic in pragmatics because it helps explain how speakers maintain harmonious social relationships through language use, as posited

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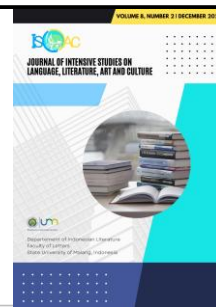


by Lakoff (1973), Fraser (1990), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Leech (1983). Among these frameworks, Leech's Politeness Principle offers a particularly detailed taxonomy of six cooperative maxims that speakers draw upon to maintain social harmony and minimize interpersonal friction. Despite extensive application of this framework to spoken interaction, film dialogue, and student communication, its manifestation in formal Arabic instructional discourse has received comparatively limited scholarly attention.

Arabic is both a liturgical language of global significance and a target language for millions of non-native learners worldwide. Arabic language textbooks are designed not only to teach grammar and vocabulary but also to introduce learners to the cultural and communicative norms of Arabic-speaking societies. As educational resources, they function as sociocultural artifacts that transmit communicative norms, relational values, and pragmatic conventions. The book *Durus al-Lughah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha* by Dr. V. Abdur Rahim, produced under the auspices of the Islamic University of Medina, is one of the most widely used Arabic Learning resources for non native speakers. Its dialogues are crafted to be functional and contextually realistic, making them a productive site for pragmatic analysis.

Language politeness, according to Holmes (as cited in Urahmah, 2025), can be expressed through verbal utterances or non-verbal gestures that signal social deference and consideration. Chaer (2010) further notes that polite language use is fundamentally an ethical dimension of social interaction—shaped by word choice, situational context, and the relational status of interlocutors. In the Arabic-Islamic communicative tradition, these considerations are reinforced by cultural values such as respect for elders and teachers, humility before knowledge, and collective orientation in social interaction.

Several prior studies have applied Leech's framework to Indonesian and Arabic discourse. Nurfadia and Antono (2023) identified all six maxims in the film *Habibie & Ainun*, demonstrating that politeness strategies are closely tied to cultural norms. Nugroho Rahmad et al. (2016) found that the maxims of tact and sympathy predominated in student conversation. Ritonga and Munawaroh (2024) examined politeness in Qur'anic



narrative using Brown and Levinson's approach. However, no study to date has systematically examined how Leech's maxims are distributed within Arabic instructional textbook dialogues, nor has prior research explored how such dialogues simultaneously fulfill linguistic and sociocultural pedagogical functions. This study addresses that research gap. Specifically, this study aims to identify which of Leech's six politeness maxims are present in the conversational dialogues of *Durus al-Lughah* Volume 2, explain their communicative functions, and reveal the sociocultural values reflected in those dialogues.

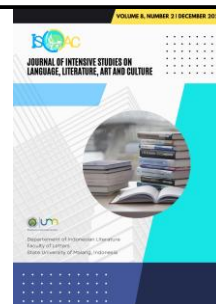
This study contributes to research on politeness in Arabic by showing how politeness principles are represented in instructional materials. In addition, the findings provide insights for Arabic language teaching by demonstrating that textbook dialogues can be analyzed not only as sources of grammatical input but also as representations of pragmatic and cultural values.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze politeness expressions found in the dialogues of *Durus al-Lughah* Volume 2. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the meaning and communicative functions of politeness expressions within their context (Creswell, 2014).

The primary data source is Volume 2 of *Durus al-Lughah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha* (Abdurrahim, 1961), which comprises 30 chapters of structured dialogues designed for intermediate-level non-native Arabic learners. This volume was selected because it contains the highest density of interpersonal dialogue contexts, including teacher-student, parent-child, and peer interactions, which constitute productive sites for the realization of politeness maxims.

Data were collected through a systematic watch-and-record technique (Mahsun, 2005), which involved a careful and repeated reading of all dialogues in the volume. Speech acts that contained identifiable markers of one or more of Leech's six politeness



maxims were recorded as primary data units. Selection was carried out purposively, meaning that only utterances demonstrating clear pragmatic politeness features—such as explicit offers, expressions of empathy, approval, agreement, or self-minimization—were retained for analysis. A total of 18 dialogic exchanges across 5 chapters were selected.

Data analysis followed an iterative qualitative process adapted from Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction, in which raw dialogic excerpts were coded according to the maxim most prominently realized; (2) data presentation, in which coded data were organized into a summary matrix by maxim type, chapter, and communicative function; and (3) conclusion drawing, in which patterns across the dataset were interpreted in relation to Leech's theoretical framework and the sociocultural context of Arabic instructional discourse.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the researchers conducted member-checking by collectively reviewing and discussing each coding decision. Disagreements in categorization were resolved through deliberation guided by Leech's (1983) definitions of each maxim. The analysis was also grounded in the original Arabic text, with English translations provided for accessibility but interpreted in conjunction with the source-language context.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The systematic analysis of Volume 2 of *Durus al-Lughah* identified 21 instances of politeness maxim realization across 18 dialogic exchanges from 5 chapters. The distribution of maxims is presented in Table 1.



Maxim	Freq	Key Example(s)	Communicative Function
Sympathy	5	Lesson 27: Teacher-Adnan dialogue	Expressing concern, empathy, and interactional care
Approbation (Praise)	3	Lesson 12: Hamid-Students Lesson 11: Abdullah-Faisal	Maximizing praise affirming positive qualities
Generosity	4	Lesson 16: Father-Children. Lesson 11: Abdullah hands card	Minimizing self-benefit offering assistance voluntarily
Agreement	6	Lesson 7, 16, 11: Multiple dialogues	Minimizing disagreement maintaining conversational harmony
Tact (Wisdom)	2	Lesson 7: Father-Children	Polite questioning without coercion
Modesty (Humility)	1	Lesson 27: Uthman's apology	Minimizing self-praise accepting responsibility

Table 1. Distribution of Leech's Politeness Maxims in Durus al-Lughah Volume 2

As shown in Table 1, the maxim of agreement is most frequently realized (n=6), followed by sympathy (n=5), generosity (n=4), approbation (n=3), tact (n=2), and modesty (n=1). The following sections present representative data for each maxim.

Maxim of Sympathy

In Lesson 27, the teacher opens a conversation upon noticing Adnan's extended absence ('two weeks'). Rather than issuing a reprimand, the teacher employs a gentle



inquiry that foregrounds concern for the student's wellbeing. When informed that Adnan had been seriously ill and hospitalized, the teacher explicitly expresses regret at not having been informed, asks after the student's current condition, and offers a prayer for full recovery (كاملًا شفاءُ الله شفاكَ). These utterances collectively reflect the maxim of sympathy, as the speaker consistently maximizes empathy and minimizes emotional distance in the interaction.

Maxim of Modesty

In the same lesson (Lesson 27), Uthman's response to the teacher's address is instructive. Rather than offering justifications or deflecting blame, Uthman apologizes directly (أستاذ يا آسيف انا) and commits to being punctual in the future. This self-minimizing, accountability-accepting response exemplifies the maxim of modesty, in which the speaker reduces self-praise and acknowledges personal shortcomings.

Maxim of Generosity

Lesson 16 presents a father who, before leaving for the mosque, proactively offers to run errands for his children from the market. This unsolicited offer (السُّوقُ مِنْ شَيْئًا أَتُرِيدُنْ) reflects the maxim of generosity, wherein the speaker voluntarily assumes a burden on behalf of others, minimizing personal inconvenience and maximizing benefit to the interlocutors. Similarly, in Lesson 11, Abdullah's immediate handing over of his business card, rather than directing Faisal to find the address himself, reflects the same maxim.

Maxim of Agreement

The maxim of agreement is the most frequent in the dataset. In Lesson 16, the children's affirmative response (كَثِيرَةَ أَشْيَاءَ تُرِيدُ، نَعَمْ) to their father's offer, and Umar's confirmatory use of بلى in response to a negatively framed question, both minimize disagreement and maintain harmonious interaction. Likewise, in Lesson 7, the children's straightforward and topically compliant responses to the father's questions serve the



same function.

Maxim of Approbation (Praise)

Lesson 12 provides a clear instantiation of the maxim of approbation. The teacher Hamid praises the students with the expression *بَنَاتِي أَحْسَنُ* ('Well done, my girls') and reinforces this by attributing the positive behavior to the characteristics of diligent students. This maximizes the approbational value of the utterance. In Lesson 11, Abdullah's description of Salman as 'the best teacher in the faculty' serves the same function.

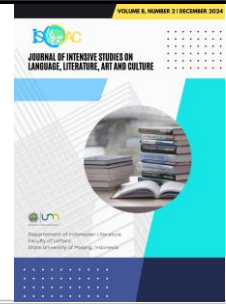
Maxim of Tact

In Lesson 7, the father asks his children about their post-lesson activities using a non-coercive binary question ('Did you play football or basketball?'). This framing grants the interlocutors freedom of response, avoids any implication of wrongdoing, and reflects the maxim of tact by minimizing any imposition on the children.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The empirical findings from Volume 2 of *Durus al-Lughah* confirm that Leech's politeness maxims are systematically embedded in the textbook's instructional dialogues. The predominance of agreement and sympathy maxims aligns with Leech's (1983) observation that these maxims are particularly salient in cooperative social contexts where interactants seek to establish and maintain relational harmony. This pattern parallels the findings of Nugroho Rahmad et al. (2016), who identified sympathy and tact as dominant in student discourse, suggesting that pedagogical contexts reliably elicit these cooperative politeness strategies.



Comparison with Previous Studies

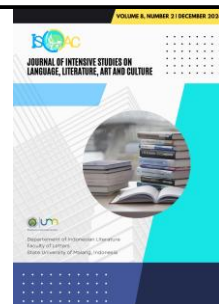
Unlike Nurfadia and Antono's (2023) study of Habibie & Ainun, which found all six maxims distributed relatively evenly across natural film dialogue, the present study finds a clear asymmetry in the textbook data: agreement and sympathy are markedly more frequent than modesty and tact. This asymmetry likely reflects the pedagogical design intent of the textbook author, who crafts dialogues to model cooperative, harmonious interaction for novice learners. The scarcity of instances of modesty and tact does not indicate their absence from Arabic communicative culture, but rather reflects the constraints of a pedagogically simplified dialogue register.

Sociocultural Interpretation

The distribution of maxims in these dialogues encodes and transmits a specific sociocultural vision of Arab communicative ethics. The high frequency of instances of the sympathy maxim in teacher–student dialogues reflects the Islamic pedagogical ideal of the teacher as a caring, spiritually invested guide rather than a mere information transmitter. The prevalence of the generosity maxim in family contexts resonates with the collectivist orientation of Arab culture, in which proactive care for family members and hospitality are regarded as moral virtues. The agreement maxim's dominance across all dialogue types reflects the Confucian-like Arabic communicative value of avoiding public disagreement and preserving group harmony (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). These findings indicate that Arabic instructional dialogues function not only as linguistic input but also as pragmatic and sociocultural representations of Arab politeness norms.

Pedagogical Implications

For Arabic language educators, these findings underscore the value of using authentic or authentic-like textbook dialogues as sites for explicit pragmatic instruction. Rather than treating politeness as incidental to grammar lessons, teachers are encouraged to draw learners' attention to the maxims realized in textbook dialogues, thereby



developing both linguistic competence and cross-cultural communicative awareness. For curriculum designers, this study demonstrates the importance of intentionally constructing dialogues that represent the full range of Leech's maxims, ensuring that learners are exposed to diverse politeness strategies across a variety of social contexts.

Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, this study analyzed only Volume 2 of *Durus al-Lughah*, and the findings cannot be generalized to other volumes or to other Arabic-for-foreigners textbooks without further investigation. Second, as the researchers served as the primary analytical instruments, there is a potential for interpretive subjectivity in the classification of utterances, particularly in cases where multiple maxims overlap. Third, the analysis was conducted on translated dialogue, and subtle Arabic pragmatic nuances may not be fully preserved in the English rendering. Future research should employ inter-rater reliability measures and extend analysis across multiple textbook series and proficiency levels.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has demonstrated that Leech's (1983) six politeness maxims are systematically and purposively represented in the conversational dialogues of *Durus al-Lughah li Ghairi an-Nathiqina Biha* Volume 2. The maxims of agreement, sympathy, generosity, and approbation are most frequently realized, while tact and modesty appear with lower but contextually significant frequency. These patterns reflect both the cooperative communicative norms of Arabic-speaking culture and the pedagogical design choices of the textbook author.

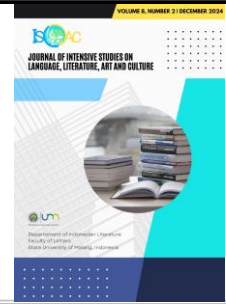
Theoretically, this study contributes to the pragmatics of Arabic language education by establishing that politeness is not merely incidental to textbook content, but is structurally embedded in it. Pedagogically, it demonstrates that Arabic instructional dialogues constitute a rich resource for teaching pragmatic competence alongside



grammatical form. Future research should conduct comparative, corpus-driven investigations across multiple volumes and series of Arabic instructional textbooks and explore learner uptake of the politeness norms modeled in these materials.

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