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# Warnings in Informal Conversational Settings in Jordanian Arabic: A Sociopragmatic Study

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the speech act of warning in Jordanian Arabic, focusing on the politeness strategies used to soften warnings within informal conversational settings. The motivation for this study arises from a need to understand how politeness strategies adapt in collectivist cultures, where traditional theories, such as Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, may not fully capture cultural nuances. Utilizing 56 hours of audio recordings from informal social gatherings, this research emphasizes the explicit yet indirect nature of warnings in Jordanian Arabic. While supporting the Brown and Levinson framework, the study identifies limitations in its applicability to collectivist societies like Jordan. Findings reveal a preference for positive politeness strategies and culturally specific mitigation devices, suggesting the need for modifications to the classical theory to better reflect local cultural practices. This research broadens the field of pragmatics and speech act theory by providing an in-depth analysis of warning practices in Jordanian Arabic, thereby enhancing our understanding of how cultural context shapes communication.

**Keywords**: Jordanian Arabic, speech act, warning, politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson, collectivist societies, cultural mitigation devices.

## 1 Introduction

This study presents a sociopragmatic study of the speech act of warning in Jordanian Arabic (JA). The theoretical aim is to examine the politeness strategies used to redress and soften oral warnings in light of Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive and negative politeness strategies. This contributes to the reformulation of this classical politeness theory through both empirical and theoretical lenses.

Empirically, this study is the first systematic investigation that describes the performance of the speech act of warning in natural oral settings within JA. The collected data consists of naturally occurring examples of oral warnings that were audio-recorded during informal social gatherings among family, friends, and acquaintances in Jordan. This research is part of a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Auckland in New Zealand in 2021 and published online in 2023.


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Most warnings in the current study were observed to be conveyed in a conventionally indirect manner. Regarding the theoretical outcomes, this research generally aligns with the Brown and Levinson framework, confirming that individuals place significant importance on their face needs in communication and adjust their linguistic behaviour based on the three social variables of power, social distance, and the rank of imposition (Brown & Levinson 1987). Their linguistic politeness strategies are also found to be effective in reducing any threat to face. However, the evidence indicates that the Brown and Levinson framework does not entirely align with the study data, especially the framework's hierarchical depiction of positive and negative face and politeness, and the assumption that most speech acts inherently threaten face.

The primary aim of a warning is to a large extent benefit the listener and/or the hearer, either directly or indirectly. Warnings can be delivered in various forms: verbally, in writing, or through body language (Hussein 2009; Al-Adaileh & Abbadi 2012). They can also be short-term or long-term in nature. Short-term warnings pertain to the immediate or near future, are more urgent, and tend to occur spontaneously without prior formulation—for example, alerting someone about a scorpion under their chair. Conversely, long-term warnings relate to actions whose negative effects might emerge over time, like advising a young man about the dangers of smoking.

Theoretically, warning is a significant speech act that has received limited attention in speech act research. A review of literature shows that, despite their common occurrence in daily interactions, warnings have not been as extensively studied in pragmatics as other communicative acts such as requests or apologies (Song 1995; Al-Omari & Shunnaq 2007; Bataineh & Aljamal 2014). To date, no study has thoroughly examined how warnings are expressed in informal settings with their linguistic manifestations in JA. This study, therefore, broadens the field of pragmatics and speech act research by providing an in-depth analysis of the use of oral spontaneous warnings produced in JA.

From a pragmatic perspective, the speech act of warning is considered a face-threatening act because it involves the speaker intruding on the hearer's personal space and privacy (Brown & Levinson 1987; Song 1995; Walton, 2014). Since individuals generally strive to avoid imposing on others, the warner (Wr) should select appropriate communication patterns and mitigation devices to facilitate smooth conversation and minimize the risk of offending the warned (Wd). To analyze the mitigation devices and strategies used to soften warnings in this study, Brown and Levinson's (1987) classical politeness model has been applied to the data.

Their framework was among the first to gain significant attention from authors starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s, particularly due to its connection between politeness and social theory. Eelen (2001) notes that the theory proposed by Brown and Levinson has been extremely influential, to the point where their names are nearly synonymous with the concept of politeness. Similarly, Huang (2014) observes that Brown and Levinson's face-saving model is widely regarded as the most influential framework in the modern study of politeness and impoliteness.

Furthermore, it is the first politeness framework built on the concept of face, which is a fundamental aspect of politeness in general and is considered a significant motivator for polite behavior in the

Jordanian community. Given its purported universality, the current study provides an opportunity to test this universality within the context of the JA community.

The Brown and Levinson framework has laid the groundwork for other politeness models, building on the core components introduced in their theory. Although this framework is primarily based on Anglo-Saxon cultural findings, it has demonstrated applicability across different languages and cultures. However, it has also faced major critiques since its re-publication in 1987. One of the main criticisms is its inability to adequately account for the conceptualization of politeness in non-Western cultures and societies (Eelen, 2001; Huang, 2014). Specifically, the current study contributes to the body of literature that argues the Brown and Levinson classical framework cannot fully address politeness in collectivist societies, such as most Arab societies where group needs are prioritized over individual needs (Al-Khatib 2006; Al-Adaileh 2007).

This study is driven by two primary research inquiries. Firstly, it seeks to unveil the politeness strategies utilized for the mitigation and softening of warnings within informal JA discourse. Secondly, it aims to assess the applicability of the Brown and Levinson framework in elucidating the deployment of politeness strategies within a collectivist community such as the Jordanian one. By addressing these questions, the study endeavors to deepen our understanding of linguistic politeness in JA and contribute to the broader discourse on cross-cultural communication dynamics.

JA, as referred to in this study, denotes the vernacular or colloquial varieties of Arabic spoken by nearly nine million native Jordanians. Linguistically, JA is an umbrella term that includes both standard and local varieties, each possessing distinctive linguistic features (Al-Khatib, 1997). Among these local dialects, three main varieties can be identified: Urban, Rural, and Bedouin JA. For this study, the data collected in informal contexts primarily consists of the rural dialect, with a few examples from the urban variety. Some Jordanian sociolinguists (e.g., Al-Khatib 1997; Farghal & Al-Khatib 2001) consider these three varieties as a single dialect, referred to as JA, as they adhere to similar politeness rules.

In summary, this research not only fills a gap in the study of speech acts in JA but also critically examines the applicability of a well-established politeness framework in a non-Western context. The findings have implications for the reformulation of classical politeness theory to better reflect cultural nuances in collectivist societies like Jordan.

## 2 Literature review

### *2.1Overview of Speech Act Theory and Empirical Studies on Warning*

Speech Act Theory, initiated by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), differentiates between 'performatives' and 'constatives' and categorizes speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Austin identified five types of illocutionary acts—verdictives, commissives, exercitives, behabitives, and expositives. Searle refined these categories into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. He highlighted the importance of indirect speech acts and the role of context in acts such as warnings, distinguishing between primary and secondary illocutionary acts.

Empirical research on warnings in JA and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is limited but valuable. Some studies have pointed out the relative neglect of warnings compared to other speech acts (Aljamal 2009; Smith-Jackson & Wogalter 2006; Song, 1995). Research has explored warnings in English films and Arabic proverbs (Haryatun 2011; Ghazanfari & Norouz Kermanshahi 2013; Issa 2015; Makhlef & Ali 2011). Ahmad (2013) examined warnings in the Holy Quran, differentiating between warnings for the addressee's benefit and threats meant to instill fear, demonstrating the importance of the speech act in religious and everyday contexts.

No study has exclusively focused on orally produced warnings in JA, except for Aljamal (2021), from which the current study is derived. Al-Omari and Shunnaq (2007) and Bataineh and Aljamal (2014) compared the use of warnings between Jordanian speakers and American undergraduates, revealing varied strategies influenced by cultural and social factors. Bataineh and (2014) also noted different warning strategies used by American undergraduates and Jordanian EFL learners, highlighting cultural and ideological differences.

Further research shows that warnings in JA are used to express acts such as blame and insistence (Al-Tamimi, 2009; Al-Zoubi, 2012). Studies on complaints within the Jordanian community (Al-Hammuri, 2011; Al-Khawaldeh, 2016; Al-Omari, 2008; Saleh, 2010) indicate that warnings are used to express direct complaints, reflecting cultural influences on speech acts. Additionally, Al-Kayed and Al-Ghoweri (2019) and Al-Shara' (2013) identified warnings as a means to express criticism in JA. These findings illustrate the diverse and context-sensitive use of warnings in Jordanian society, often interwoven with religious expressions and other communicative strategies.

### *2.2 The Brown and Levinson Politeness Framework*

Searle (1979) associates politeness with indirectness in directives such as warnings, while Huang (2014) describes politeness as behavior aimed at preserving the face of both the speaker (S) and the hearer (H). The Brown and Levinson framework, based on Speech Act Theory, is particularly useful for analyzing warnings within Jordanian culture. This model classifies face-threatening acts (FTAs) according to their effect on positive or negative face and suggests five politeness strategies to mitigate these threats.

Brown and Levinson (1987) developed a face-saving perspective of politeness, which remains one of the most prominent and influential theories in the field. Their framework is based on the concept of face, originally derived from Goffman's (1967) work. Brown and Levinson (1987, 61) defined face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" and argued that face "can be lost, maintained, or enhanced and must be constantly attended to". They proposed that individuals have two universal face wants: negative and positive face needs. Negative face refers to the speaker's desire for their actions not to be impeded by others, while positive face refers to the speaker's desire for their actions to be liked, approved, or admired. They consider the concept of face and its positive and negative aspects to be universal, with individuals inherently developing these face needs.

Brown and Levinson suggest that people generally avoid violating each other's faces unless necessary, in which case they must perform an FTA. Both types of face—negative and positive—can be

threatened when performing an FTA. This distinction has led to the concepts of positive and negative politeness. According to Brown and Levinson, speakers share an understanding of each other's face needs and aim to maintain or enhance each other's faces during communication or when performing an FTA. For instance, if speakers need to perform an FTA that might threaten the addressee's positive or negative face, they should mitigate it with redressive devices. However, speakers typically try to avoid performing FTAs unless absolutely necessary. In such cases, they should minimize or counterbalance the threat by selecting a politeness strategy from the five introduced by Brown and Levinson.

The five super-strategies of politeness are an integral part of their framework and universal that can be applied to any language and/or culture. These strategies are arranged from the most to the least direct or polite. To further evaluate Brown and Levinson's claim that their politeness strategies are universally effective in mitigating various communicative acts across different languages or communities, these strategies are applied to the current data to determine their effectiveness in mitigating warnings, specifically produced in spoken JA.

*2.2.1Bald on Record*

This is the most direct super-strategy, where face needs are mostly disregarded. However, it can be also used in situations where maximum efficiency is crucial, where the speaker does not aim to fully address the hearer's face, and the FTA is primarily for the hearer's benefit.

*2.2.2 On Record with Positive Politeness*

By using positive politeness redressive strategies, the speaker aims to express intimacy and solidarity towards the hearer. They demonstrate that they value the hearer's feelings, needs, and desires. This super-strategy includes three main strategies, each branching into fifteen substrategies. The three primary strategies are:

- Establish common ground with the hearer by indicating shared wants or needs.
- Convey that the speaker and hearer are collaborators.
- Fulfill the hearer's wants for some specific purpose (Brown & Levinson 1987, 102–128).

*2.2.3 On Record with Negative Politeness*

Negative politeness involves the speaker's effort to avoid imposing on the hearer and to respect their freedom of action by using apologies, hedges, and similar tactics. Brown and Levinson regard negative politeness as the essence of respectful behavior because it serves to minimize the imposition on the hearer (Brown & Levinson 1987, 129–210). This super-strategy includes five main strategies, each branching into ten substrategies. The five primary strategies are:

- Be direct.
- Don't presume or assume.
- Don't coerce the hearer.
- Communicate the speaker's desire not to impinge on the hearer.

- Redress other needs of the hearer derived from their negative face.

*2.2.4 Off Record Politeness*

This super-strategy includes two main approaches: inviting conversational implicature through hints and violating Gricean maxims, and being vague (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

*2.2.5 Do Not Do the Action*

Under this strategy, the speaker refrains from performing the FTA because the cost is too high despite the use of redressive strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987, 60). According to Brown and Levinson's super-strategy paradigm, being more direct (from five to one) is considered less polite and vice versa.

Brown and Levinson (1987) identify three social variables that measure the seriousness of an FTA: the social distance between the speaker and the addressee (D), the relative power the addressee holds over the speaker (P), and the absolute ranking of imposition in a specific language or culture (R). They incorporate these variables into an equation to determine the weightiness (W) of an FTA: $Wx = D(S,H) + P(S,H) + Rx$, where W stands for weightiness, x represents any particular FTA, S denotes the speaker, and H represents the hearer (Brown & Levinson 1987, 71–74). This equation suggests that the weightiness of any FTA can be assessed by the combined value of social distance, the power the addressee has over the speaker, and the rank of imposition of a specific FTA within a particular culture.

*2.3 The Speech Act of Warning in JA*

Crystal (2011, 195) highlights that highly informal language or dialect is "very loosely structured, involving a high level of colloquial expression, and often departing from standard norms (e.g., by using slang, regionalisms, neologisms, and code-mixing)".

In the current study, the authors examine the speech act of warning in informal JA conversations, characterized by casual language and colloquialisms. The study outlines the data collection and analysis methods, presents typical warning examples and their syntactic features, and discusses mitigation strategies within the context of politeness theory and cultural nuances.

The literature review reveals that no previous study has independently investigated the speech act of warning in JA. However, Al-Omari and Shunnaq (2007), in an interlanguage pragmatic study, compared the use of warnings among JA native speakers and American English undergraduates. Additionally, Aljamal (2009), in a second-language pragmatics study, compared the linguistic realizations and patterns of the speech act of warning in English among Jordanian EFL learners and American undergraduates. Nonetheless, these studies did not employ a theoretical framework to investigate politeness strategies (i.e., mitigation strategies or devices) used to address the speech act of warning. The current study addresses this gap by exploring, in addition to some linguistic realizations such as the directness pattern, the politeness strategies used to address the speech act of warning in spoken Jordanian dialect.

Al-Omari and Shunnaq (2007) compared the realizations and patterns of the speech act of warning by English and Arabic native speakers using a twenty-item questionnaire. The relationship between the warner (Wr) and the warned (Wd) was categorized based on three hypothetical contexts:

- Equal Status: The Wr and the Wd have equal status (e.g., strangers, friends).
- Lower to Higher Status: The Wd has a higher status than the Wr (e.g., son-father, son-mother).
- Higher to Lower Status: The Wr has a higher status than the Wd (e.g., professor-student, principal-teacher, teacher-student, manager-employee).

They found that Jordanian and American students used twenty different semantic strategies to express warnings, with nine strategies—requesting, alerting, threatening, showing surprise, advising, suggesting, begging, flouting, and offering alternatives—shared between the two groups. Eight strategies—swearing, reminding, blaming, apologizing, anticipating, amplifying and frightening, and wishing—were unique to Jordanians, while two—disallowance and encouraging—were unique to Americans. This indicated that Jordanians employed more semantic strategies to express warnings than American students did.

Regarding the use of these strategies in relation to the three contexts based on the power relationship between the Wr and Wd, some strategies were used exclusively in one context. For instance, threatening and ordering were used in context three (higher to lower) but not in context two (lower to higher). Other strategies were employed differently across contexts, such as "begging" and "alerting." Warnings were sometimes expressed using two or more strategies (e.g., requesting with alerting), and some of these warning strategies are considered polite and justified, while other strategies such as frightening and threatening are not. These differences can be attributed to the varying status between the Wr and the Wd; the Wr is more direct when they have a higher status than the Wd. The authors concluded that the similarities in how Americans and Jordanians use warnings suggest that the functional patterns of speech acts are universal, while the differences highlight that warning strategies are influenced by the cultural backgrounds of each group.

Bataineh and Aljamal (2014) conducted a comparative study to investigate the speech act of warning in English between American undergraduates and Jordanian EFL learners. They define warning as "the different linguistic strategies used for getting the attention of the addressee and making him/her aware of any specific danger or harmful consequences. It also refers to the way in which Jordanian native speakers of Arabic employ these strategies either directly or indirectly, politely or impolitely, as influenced by their cultures and ideological perceptions" (88). Besides Searle’s felicity conditions for warning, this study adopts this definition for its semantic and pragmatic relevance. Semantically, it helps to identify warning examples from informal contexts. Pragmatically, it aids in investigating the politeness expressions used to mitigate the warnings in informal contexts in the current study.

Bataineh and Aljamal utilized a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) in which students responded to twenty questions to report their reactions in English to situations that warranted a warning. Overall, Jordanian EFL learners employed more strategies to express the speech act of warning than American undergraduates. The study found that the two groups used twenty-one simple strategies to convey

warnings, with thirteen strategies shared by both groups, two unique to Americans, and six unique to Jordanians. The shared strategies included requesting, alerting, advising, threatening, criticizing, reprimanding, showing consequences, encouraging reconsideration, taking action, offering help, showing no concern, asking for a promise, and suggesting. The strategies exclusive to the American group were irony and giving alternatives, while the strategies exclusive to the Jordanian group were appealing to *Allah*, giving a religious sermon, ordering, punishing, drawing an analogy, and flouting a maxim.

Additionally, the two groups used 21 combinations of simple strategies, with seven shared by both groups, seven unique to Americans, and seven unique to Jordanians. The authors attributed the differences to cultural and ideological diversity, while the similarities seemed to confirm the universality of strategies used to express warnings.

The authors in the aforementioned studies used written DCTs, which might elicit unnatural warning examples. Moreover, the participants in each group shared similar social and contextual factors such as age range, setting, and environment. In Jordan, the university environment imposes certain social restrictions on how students, particularly females, produce communicative acts. They often try to appear more prestigious, gentle, and socially acceptable to the opposite gender. Consequently, their responses to the questionnaires were somewhat influenced by these factors.

Despite the thorough discussion of warnings in Arabic and English in these studies, they did not adequately address politeness, nor did they use a theoretical framework to distinguish between mitigated/unmitigated or (im)polite warnings and their data collection was elicited to a large extent using DCTs, while the current study employed naturally occurring data. Therefore, the current study aims to bridge this gap in the literature by investigating warnings in informal spoken JA dialect.

## 3 Methods

### *3.1Data Collection*

In this study, data were collected through approximately 56 hours of audio recordings from 30 informal social gatherings involving friends, extended family members, and acquaintances. These gatherings encompassed various social occasions, with conversations touching on topics such as health, local issues, safety, social matters, and religious discussions. The first author participated discreetly as a regular guest to avoid influencing the discussions. Participants provided consent for the recordings, which were made using an unobtrusive device to minimize awareness and preserve the natural flow of conversation. The author's role was passive, focusing on organically capturing instances of warnings while ensuring all participants had given prior consent to address privacy concerns.

More specifically, the data were gathered by recording casual conversations in private, informal settings among friends and acquaintances within their extended social networks over the period of six months. The first author attended these gatherings as a typical guest to maintain the authenticity of the setting. The gatherings usually took place on Fridays, either at homes, guesthouses, or neighbourhood locations where people gathered for tea, watched television, and discussed family matters and local

developments. Each gathering lasted between two to three hours, with conversations naturally evolving from one topic to another, as no single participant controlled the entire conversation.

Once participants had read and signed the Participant Information Sheet (PIS), the first author began recording, placing the device inconspicuously on a table in the room or lounge. To minimize the observer's paradox, a small, discreet recorder was used, which went largely unnoticed by participants. While collecting data, the author confined their role to that of a typical attendee, engaging in the range of topics as the other participants did, without actively steering the conversation. This approach allowed for careful listening and noting of the exact moments when a warning was produced during the conversation.

To ensure anonymity and further reduce the observer's paradox, recordings were made only with the full pre-approval of all participants. Additionally, the specific communicative function being researched—warnings—was not disclosed. Instead, the PIS explained that various communicative acts were being studied, preventing participants from intentionally producing warnings during the conversations.

*3.2Restrictions, Difficulties, and Limitations in the Recording Process*

Collecting and analyzing oral data in informal contexts is time-consuming, as the first author needs to record long stretches of conversations in hopes of finding instances of the speech act under investigation (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2013). To address this challenge, during the audio recording of the gatherings, the first author noted the approximate times when important conversations occurred, particularly those where potential warnings were produced. This practice facilitated the tracking of warning examples more efficiently during the coding and analysis phase, eliminating the need to listen to entire conversations.

Due to cultural sensitivities regarding male-female direct contact in the Jordanian community, a female assistant was enlisted to record interactions among women. The main author trained the assistant on how to conduct the recording procedure, and she followed the same protocols and ethical considerations adopted by the main author.

As this study focuses only on intentional warnings produced by adult participants, it did not consider any unintended warnings issued jokingly or by immature individuals such as small children.

In some instances, participants requested the deletion of entire conversations after recording due to concerns that the content might be circulated among local parties, potentially resulting in arguments or conflicts. Sound quality was also a significant issue in certain recordings. Some conversations had to be discarded due to poor audio clarity caused by background noises such as passing cars, wind, or the sound of smoking shisha in the same gathering. Additionally, there were recordings where overlapping speech made it difficult to distinguish individual words, as three or more participants spoke simultaneously without pauses between their turns. These deleted, unclear, or intersected conversations might have included potential examples of naturally occurring warnings.

It is worth noting that, from a sociolinguistic perspective, male and female speakers in Jordan may use a more formal style when interacting with each other. The use of the vernacular form is often connected with an informal, intimate style that men use only with members of their close family.

*3.3 Themes of the Collected Warnings*

The data presented warnings related to the following themes:

- Health: Urging better lifestyle choices related to diet, smoking, and exercise.
- Personal Decisions: Prompting re-evaluation of major life choices such as marriage and career.
- Parenting and Safety: Discouraging harmful family and safety practices.
- Social Conduct: Preventing actions that could tarnish reputations.
- Moral Understanding: Clarifying ethical and relational conduct.

*3.4 Identifying Warnings and Data Analysis*

To identify warnings in the informal conversations, the authors applied Searle's (1969) speech act theory, focusing on instances where the speaker anticipated a future event that could be harmful to the listener, who was unaware of it. Warnings were categorized as either direct (explicit) or indirect (illocutionary acts). Additional elements, such as mitigation phrases, were also recorded.

The power dynamics between speakers were classified based on social hierarchy—higher, lower, or equal power—determined by factors such as age, education, occupation, and socioeconomic status. Social distance was also considered, with "minus distance" indicating familiarity and "plus distance" indicating unfamiliarity between speakers.

The rank of imposition was assessed based on the sensitivity of the topic and the presence of others, as this could increase the potential for embarrassment for the listener. Some conversations were excluded from the analysis if the warning or content was deemed too personal or culturally sensitive, as it could hurt feelings or cause undesirable consequences, such as increased social friction within the group. For example, the first author was asked to delete a conversation in which one attendee warned another about a person who was also present at the same gathering that night. The participant later contacted the author, requesting that the conversation be deleted to avoid any potential fallout.

Defining the boundaries of warning examples was crucial for coding and analyzing the data. Each warning example consisted of a head act of warning (direct or indirect), identified by its propositional content as specified by Searle (1969). In addition to the head act, each example might include supporting elements that contribute to answering the research questions:

1. Phrases that express mitigation or redress of the given warning.
2. The type of politeness strategy emanating from these mitigation phrases, based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory.
3. Any cultural or religious-specific mitigation devices, other than those suggested by Brown and Levinson’s theory, that express the speakers’ affiliation to a specific culture or ideology and the kind of face these strategies address.

In classifying the power/distance relationship between interlocutors, power was categorized into three types:

1. **Plus Power**: When the hearer is more socially superior than the speaker.
2. **Minus Power**: When the hearer is less socially superior than the speaker.
3. **Equal Power**: When both the speaker and hearer have equal social status.

Social status (P) could be attributed based on factors such as the age difference between the speaker and addressee, their educational levels, their positions or jobs, and socioeconomic status—where individuals from higher socioeconomic classes might be considered more powerful than those from middle or lower classes.

The social distance variable (D) was also classified into two types:

- Minus Distance: If the speaker and the addressee know each other well.
- Plus Distance: If the speaker and the addressee do not know each other well.

The rank of imposition ($R_x$) was classified as either high or low, depending on the specific warning example. Several independent factors could influence the rank of imposition, such as the context of the situation and the sensitivity of the topic being warned about—essentially, the level of embarrassment that could affect the addressee's face. The presence of a third party or other participants also increased the likelihood of damaging the addressee's face, which in turn raised the rank of imposition. It is worth noting that these three factors were considered separately for each example while investigating the type of politeness strategy employed to redress the warning.

The first author went over each of warning examples separately and made a simple descriptive analysis for them. For each individual example, the analysis identified the directness pattern according to three categories mentioned above, the kind of mitigation strategy employed to redress the warning, and if the mitigation strategy included cultural and/ or religious device that was not originally predicted in the Brown and Levinson framework. While it was evident to decide which type of face is addressed in the mitigation strategies and devices communicated in each example, it was feasible enough to make a clear-cut descriptive counting for the culture and/ or religious specific mitigation strategies as these were used in combination with Brown and Levinson’s ones.

It is worth nothing that the original PhD dissertation from which the current study is derived contained 48 warning examples, from which 24 examples were only used for the purpose of the current study.

### *3.5 Data Confidentiality and Storage*

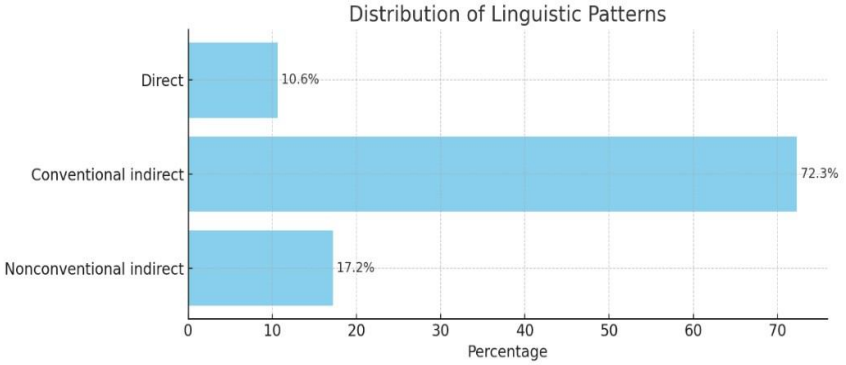
In Jordan, the audio data were stored securely on a hard disk and a laptop. Participants' real names were replaced with pseudonyms in the transcripts, and any identifiable information was removed to protect their privacy. This data collection method, which combines elicited and natural warnings in JA, aligns with pragmatic research preferences. It provides insights into conversational dynamics and real language use beyond what (DCTs) can offer, as noted by Yuan (2001) and Golato (2003).

## 4 Findings

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on the linguistic patterns in terms of directness used in conversational warnings in JA. The analysis specifically examines the levels of directness and explicitness in these warnings. Pragmatically, this study highlights the politeness strategies employed to mitigate the impact of warnings, drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and considering culturally specific mitigation techniques.

*4.1 Linguistic Realizations of Conversational Warnings in Informal Settings*

**Table 4.1:** Distribution of directness patterns




The data show that conversational warnings in informal settings in JA are predominantly conveyed through conventional indirect strategies, accounting for 72.3% of instances. Nonconventional indirect warnings make up 17.2%, while direct warnings constitute only 10.6%. This distribution suggests a preference for indirect strategies in informal conversational warnings.

*4.1.1Direct*

In this context, direct warnings refer to instances where the verb 'warn' (يحذر) or one of its morphological forms is explicitly mentioned. They also include conventional phrases such as 'be careful' or 'watch out' (انتبه, دير بالك). Direct warnings comprise approximately 11% of the examples in the data, as shown in the following example:

| (1) |
|---|
| **سعيد**: اهم شي انت لا تأمنش لحدى بسرعة.<br>**عمر**: [يخاطب عامر / يعني معنى الكلام خليك حذر من كل واحد حذِر. جامله واضحك معه وكل اشي بس خلي جواتك علامة استفهام إله.<br>**عامر**: اللي اتضحلي اللي ما بكون كذاب ما بعيش في ناس عايشه عالكذب.<br>**عمر**: يعني معنى الكلام خليك حذِر. |
| **Sae'd:** The most important thing is not to trust anybody too readily.<br>**Omar** [addressing Amer] What Sae'd means by that is to beware of everyone, be cautious or to be warned, be gentle with him, laugh with him, deal with him normally, but keep a question mark inside you.<br>**Amer:** What came clear to me that if you are not a liar, you will not survive [achieve your goals].<br>**Amer:** Some people are getting things achieved through lying [deception].<br>**Omar** [addressing Amer] What Sae'd means by that is to beware of everyone. |

This conversation occurred at Omar's house with two similarly aged guests present. Amer, a sales representative, discussed the challenges of meeting sales targets following a recent company restructuring that put a new representative in charge of his area. Surprised at Amer's continued success, Sae'd advised him to avoid direct engagement with the new representative, as they might relay sensitive information back to the manager. Omar emphasized this caution, reinforcing the need to be wary of others.

*4.1.2 Conventional indirect*

The majority of warnings in the conversational data are conveyed indirectly. In 73% of the total warning instances, speakers deliver warnings without direct language. This classification of directness or indirectness is determined by the explicit or implicit use of the verb "warn" or its morphological derivatives that serve a similar function in JA. Indirect warnings involve cases where the warning is expressed through another speech act, such as a request or a general statement. This can also include pragmatic functions like criticism, request, expressing disagreement or expressing disagreement or presenting a general rule or fact, as demonstrated in the following example:

| (2) |
| --- |
| **جميل :**اللي بلعب حديد وبترك برجع قد اول مرتين ثلاث.<br>**محمود :**ما ني بعرف ماني بعرف أنى عشان هيك مش راضي العب.<br>**جميل:** برجع الجسم بعبي كل إللي فقده, بكون الجسم متعود على أكل أكل أكل. |
| **Jamil:** A person who takes up bodybuilding and then stops will find himself two or three times heavier than his previous weight.<br>**Mahmoud:** I know, I know.<br>For that reason, I do not want to take up bodybuilding.<br>**Jamil:** A person will gain back the weight that has been lost. [after stopping practising]<br>The body will get used to taking in more food, food, food. |

In this example, Jamil indirectly warns his friend Mahmoud against abruptly stopping bodybuilding, suggesting that doing so gradually would be preferable to avoid significant weight gain. Jamil frames his warning as a general rule rather than addressing Mahmoud directly, implying that the same outcome could happen to anyone who stops bodybuilding suddenly. By using phrases like "a person who" and "the body," Jamil presents this caution as a general principle, thus avoiding a direct reference to Mahmoud's body or behaviour.

*4.1.3 Non-conventional indirect*

This category includes examples where the warned individual needs to infer the intended warning. Non-conventional indirect warnings make up 17.2% of the total warning examples and typically involve the use of a Quranic verse, prophetic saying, proverb, or tautological expression. Despite their brevity, these forms carry significant impact. Such unconventional devices are often used for several reasons. Firstly, they serve as a means of politeness, allowing the warner to protect the face of the warned individual and thus maintain social harmony. Secondly, they may be employed to avoid an argument or the need for an extended explanation, as the indirect nature of the warning allows for a more tactful approach. Lastly, these expressions are useful when time is limited, allowing the warner to convey a concise message without dominating the conversation, thus giving others an opportunity to participate. This category includes examples where the warned (Wd) needs to infer the point of the warning. These examples form (17.2%) of the total warning examples, and involve using a Quranic verse, prophetic saying, proverb, or tautological expression, all of which are influential due to their significant impact despite their brevity. There are several reasons for using these unconventional devices. Firstly, they may be employed for politeness to protect the Wd’s face. Secondly, they might be used by the warner (Wr) to

avoid causing an argument or providing a detailed explanation about the topic. Thirdly, they are useful when there is not enough time to deliver a lengthy warning, especially when the Wr does not want to dominate the conversation and wishes to allow others the opportunity to participate. Consider the following example:

| (3) |
| --- |
| إللي بموت بموت لحاله والوجع ما بوجع غير صاحبه. |
| He who dies dies alone, and pain only hurts he who feels it. [Nobody dies for anybody else, and nobody feels the pain of another]. |

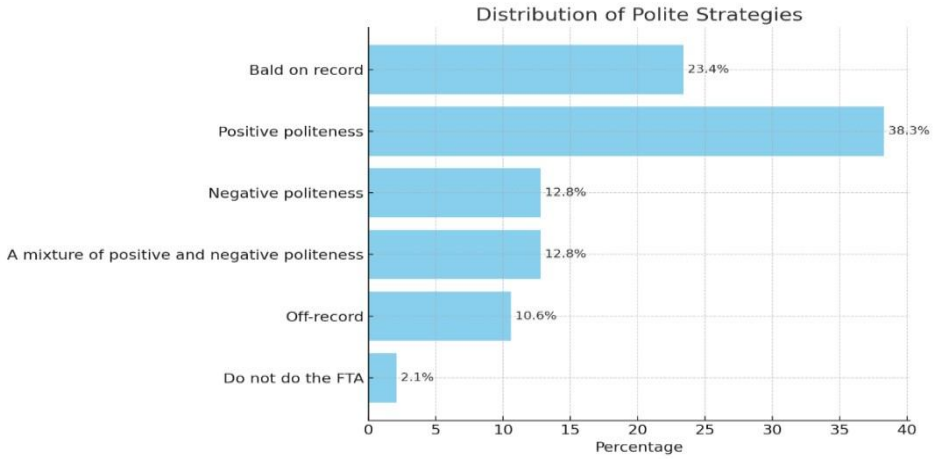
In this example, Munther cautions his friend Sami about the dangers of continuing to smoke excessively. The implication of this tautological statement is that Sami alone will bear the negative consequences of his heavy smoking. These consequences primarily concern his health, and no one will be able to assist him in overcoming the resulting issues.

Having examined the directness patterns of warnings, the following section introduces the politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson as they are applied to mitigate warnings in the current study, along with any other culture- and language-specific mitigation strategies.

*4.2 The applicability of Brown and Levinson's classical politeness theory to warnings in informal settings*

In this classification, the authors adhere to the order of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson in their classical theory (1987). Brown and Levinson's categories of various politeness strategies are largely applicable to the current data, with almost 80% of the examples in the informal set fitting within their framework. It is worth noting that three examples are repeated under different subsections as they contribute to different kinds of politeness strategies.

**Table.4.2** The distribution of mitigation strategies used to redress the conversational warnings in JA




*4.2.1Bald on record*

In approximately 25% of the total warning examples, the speakers delivered their warnings baldly and on record, as illustrated in the following example.

| (4) |
| --- |
| **حسين:** بقلك انه غلط تشرب قهوة على الريق أو علكة على الريق انه غلط.<br>**محمود:** كل الشعب الاردني بشرب قهوة على الريق.<br>**حسين:** ماشي ثلثين الناس بتصليش.<br>ولكن أكثر الناس لا يعقلون ولكن أكثر الناس لا يعلمون<br>الأكثرية دايما هي الغلط.<br>**محمود:** احنا غالبنا بالدار بنوخذ 3 حبات تمر حبة شوكولاتة.<br>**حسين:** لا تشرب الا إذا عبيت معدتك.<br>**محمود:** أي ما بتسطعمش بالقهوة إذا عبيت معدتك اقلك بصراحة. |
| **Hussein:** They say it is wrong to drink coffee or to chew gum on an empty stomach; it is bad.<br>**Mahmoud:** Everybody drinks coffee on an empty stomach.<br>**Hussein:** That is fine; however, two-thirds of people do not pray.<br>"But most people do not know; most people are not mindful."<br>The majority is always wrong.<br>**Mahmoud:** Most of us at home eat three dates or a piece of chocolate [early in the morning before having a coffee].<br>**Hussein:** Do not drink coffee unless your stomach is full.<br>**Mahmoud:** Honestly, you cannot enjoy the excellent taste of coffee if your stomach is full. |

In Jordanian culture, it is common for people to gather at night for conversations as a form of relief from daily work pressures. These gatherings often involve discussions about various topics or recent developments from the news or television programs, aimed at sustaining the excitement of the evening.

In this example, Hussein warns his friend Mahmoud against drinking coffee first thing in the morning before breakfast, relaying advice he heard on a medical TV program. He conveyed the warning by telling Mahmoud, "It is wrong to drink coffee or chew gum first thing in the morning; this is wrong." The intensity of the warning is heightened by Hussein repeating the phrase "it is wrong" twice. However, Mahmoud questioned the validity of the warning, offering a counterargument by stating, "Everybody drinks coffee first thing in the morning." With this response, Mahmoud directly contradicted the warning, pointing out that many Jordanians follow the practice without suffering the warned consequences.

As the conversation progressed into an exchange of opposing views, both Hussein and Mahmoud defended their positions. After the argument, Hussein restated his warning more directly, saying, "Do not drink coffee unless your stomach is full." By choosing a bald on-record warning for the second time rather than softening it, Hussein might have expressed his frustration with Mahmoud's challenge to the accuracy of the warning. Although Hussein was merely sharing information he had seen on television, the challenge to the truth of the warning threatened his positive face, as he believed the information to be correct.

At this point, the positive face of both Hussein and Mahmoud had been affected. The conversation could now follow one of two paths: either the argument would escalate into conflict with potential disrespect or mockery, or one of the participants would modify or partially withdraw their stance to restore harmony.

Choosing the latter, Mahmoud diffused the situation by remarking, "Honestly, you cannot enjoy the good taste of coffee if your stomach is full." This statement, which reframed the earlier challenge as a personal preference, was softened by Mahmoud's use of "honestly." His intent was to de-escalate the tension and shift the conversation to a phase where both parties could protect their own and each other's face. By doing so, Mahmoud ensured that the conversation could continue smoothly with the other participants engaged that evening.

*4.2.2 Positive politeness strategies*

Almost (38%) of the examples of the current study are mitigated with various positive politeness strategies. By employing such strategies, speakers aim to demonstrate a lack of social distance with their interlocutors, treating the addressee as an in-group member who shares the same rights, duties, and expectations of reciprocity as the speaker. These strategies also convey that the speaker genuinely cares about the hearer's wants, needs, integrity, and well-being, ensuring that the FTA (warning) does not imply a negative evaluation of the hearer's face or an intrusion into their matters or privacy. Brown and Levinson introduce three main positive politeness strategies: (1) Claim common ground, (2) Convey that the speaker and the hearer are cooperators, and (3) Fulfill the hearer's wants to some extent. From these, 15 positive politeness substrategies emerge, including:

- Exaggerate interest, approval, or sympathy with the hearer
- Attend to the hearer's interests, needs, wants, and goods
- Intensify interest in the hearer
- Use in-group identity markers
- Seek agreement
- Avoid disagreement
- Presuppose, raise, or assert common ground
- Joke
- Assert or presuppose the speaker's knowledge of and concern for the hearer's wants
- Offer or promise
- Be optimistic
- Include both the hearer and the speaker in the activity
- Give or ask for reasons
- Assume or assert reciprocity
- Give gifts to the hearer (material or non-material)

Of the 15 positive politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson, only 5 are relevant for mitigating informal warnings in private settings in JA and will be listed with examples in the following section. To avoid lengthy examples, only the parts that illustrate the specific politeness strategy employed are mentioned under each politeness sub-strategy, along with other language- or culture-specific mitigation devices.

*4.2.2.1Noticing H's interests, wants, needs, goods*

| (5) |
| --- |
| تذكّر إنه عندك أولاد... كفي حالك، خلك قادر تخدمهم وتوفّر لهم. **[فكّر في شؤونهم]** |
| Just remember you have kids… just stay able to serve them/to provide for them. [think about their welfare] |

In this example, the warner (Wr) advises the warnee (Wd) not to let his blood sugar levels rise as they usually do. The warning is mitigated by reminding the Wd that he has children to care for. The Wd is encouraged to manage his blood sugar to prevent his health from deteriorating, ensuring that he remains able to look after his children, meet their needs, and support their livelihood.

*4.2.2.2 Exaggerating (interest, approval, sympathy with H)*

| (6) |
| --- |
| **نور:** طول نهاري ابهدل وأصيح عالفاضي.<br>**أبو احمد:** لا حرام بنعمن عيونها يعني. طلي بدقيقه صارن عيونها حمر<br>**أبو احمد:** مش عالنت النت بخلصش. كيف تحت عيونها منفخ. |
| **Noor:** I shout at her all day long to get off the iPad, but she doesn't listen to me.<br>**Abu Ahmad:** No! That [too much iPad] is prohibited [1]; I mean she will make her go blind. Look at her eyes; they get bloodshot within a minute. Look how she is swollen under the eyes. |

Abu Ahmad warns Noor not to let her daughter watch an iPad for long hours as this would negatively influence her eyesight. Abu Ahmad uses the expression 'it is prohibited' in its social scope as this expression is originally used in religious contexts only. In its social broader sense, by using such an expression, the speaker exaggerates sympathy with H and intensifies interest in H's needs or wants.

Prohibition in this example is metaphorically used as real prohibition in Islam refers to those sins or actions that are originally mentioned in the Holy Quran and necessitate a sanction from *Allah*. These actions include theft, fornication, cheating, murder, and any other action that unduly causes harm to others.

*4.2.2.3 Intensifying interest in H*

| (7) |
| --- |
| **أيمن:** بتعرف حتى مزح ما بنحكيش داعش "تحذير"<br>**أحمد:** اه والله<br>**أيمن:** مزح، ما بنمزحش " بداعش " |
| **Ayman:** Did you know? Do not utter the word ISIS, even if you are kidding.<br>**Ahmad:** You are right.<br>**Ayman:** Even in irony, do not utter ISIS even if you are kidding. |

The Wr in this example starts his warning with a rhetorical question, 'Did you know?' to intensify interest in H. The Wr furthers intensifies interest in H by repeating the same warning using similar words.

*4.2.2.4 Assuming reciprocity*

| (8) |
| --- |
| علي: الحلو كثير واللي بده يلحق شهوة حاله بضيع.<br>خلف: نعم صحيح.<br>**علي:** والله الصبح اعطاني عامر حبة مبرومة هالقده, إنه أحطها بثمي<br>قلتله ولك ما بديش خلص بجيش على بالي انتهى مضر يعني شو هالاشي. |
| **Ali:** There are different kinds of sweet foods, and whoever gives in to temptation will be lost. [his health will deteriorate]<br>**Khalaf:** Yes, you are right.<br>**Ali:** By God, this morning, Amer [his son] offered me a piece of mabroma [a sweet pastry] like this big to eat [very small]. I told him; I don't want it; I don't feel like having any. "It is over for me [eating sweet food]. Sweet stuff is harmful; it is not a big issue for me to cut down on sweets. |

In (8), Ali warns his sister against eating sweet foods or desserts. He uses himself as an example, mentioning that he has eliminated most sweet foods from his diet. His warning is presented as a reciprocal action, encouraging his sister to reduce her intake of sweet foods as he has done.

*4.2.2.5 Asserting knowledge and concern for H wants*

| (9) |
| --- |
| **حسين:** لكن جسمي بيعطيني مؤشر بدّه حلو.<br>**صالح:** تمام تمام، بدل ما توكل هالقد أوكل هالقد "قطعة صغيرة"<br>**حسين:** لا انا ما بكثّرش.<br>**صالح:** شايف الي اكلتها هاي حبة التمر هاي أحسن من كل الأكل. |
| **Hussein:** But my body gives me signs that it needs sugar [something sweet to eat].<br>**Saleh:** Yes, yes. Instead of eating this much [big quantity], have just that much [small quantity].<br>**Hussein:** No, I don't eat too much.<br>**Saleh:** You see this date that I have just eaten? It is better than all other kinds of food. |

In example (9), Hussein has diabetes, and Saleh acknowledges Hussein's desire to eat sweet things despite his condition. Saleh does this by initially saying "Yes, yes" and then offering a choice by suggesting that Hussein reduce the usual amount he consumes.

*4.2.2.6 A combination of positive politeness strategies*

It is worth noting that most of the positive and negative politeness strategies in this study are used in combination with one another. These combinations often overlap significantly, making it impractical to list all possible combinations exhaustively. Therefore, the study refers to examples where a combination of politeness strategies is employed and explains how these combinations occur, as illustrated in (10).

| (10) |
| --- |
| **Hibba:** Do not let your little sons carry their baby sister.<br>By God, the little kids can cause disastrous things. Don't think that your other sons are even old enough to carry their baby sister.<br>Even Ayat [their cousin), do not let her carry your baby daughter, and do not let anybody else do so either. Only mature ones.<br>**Khalid:** Uuh, can you control a kid's actions and movements? [exasperated tone]<br>**Hibba:** Do not say that you can't. You have to be able control their actions.<br>**Khalid:** I do not know how to solve this. Can you keep control over children? [exasperation]<br>**Hibba:** By God, Khalid, the problem happens in the blink of an eye.<br>Kids cause very serious problems. Do not think it is an easy matter [it is very dangerous]. |

In example (10), Hibba employs three positive politeness strategies to soften the warning to her brother. First, she exaggerates her sympathy by saying, "May God protect him." She then intensifies her concern with the oath, "By God, little kids can cause disastrous things." Finally, she seeks her brother's agreement about the need to warn him by posing a rhetorical question, "Do you think that your other sons are old enough to carry their baby sister?"

*4.2.3 Negative Politeness Strategies*

As previously mentioned, negative politeness strategies are designed to respect the addressee's autonomy and avoid limiting their freedom to act. These strategies are typically appropriate for addressing people of higher status or greater social distance. In this study, approximately 13% of the warning instances are softened using negative politeness approaches. Among the ten strategies identified by Brown and Levinson, only three are applicable for reducing the impact of informal warnings in personal interactions in JA. These will be discussed with examples in the upcoming section. The identified strategies, used either independently or in combination with other negative or positive politeness strategies—include: depersonalizing the speaker and listener, employing appropriate hedges, and framing the warning as a general guideline rather than a direct act.

*4.2.3.1Impersonalising speaker and hearer*

| (11) mentioned above as example (8) |
|---|
| **علي:** لازم الواحد ينظم حاله هو مش الدوا اللي ينظمه هو ينظم حاله.<br>الحلو كثير واللي بده يلحق شهوه حاله بضيع.<br>**خلف :**نعم صحيح |
| **Ali:** A person should take personal control over their health; it should not be the medication controlling him. A person should maintain control over their health.<br>There are different kinds of sweet foods, and whoever gives in to temptation will be lost. [his health will deteriorate]<br>**Khalaf:** Yes, you are right. |

The speaker in the previous example uses the word whoever to impersonalize the FTA while in reality he refers to the hearer in front of him.

*4.2.4 A combination of the negative politeness strategies*

| (12) |
|---|
| **محمد:** بس شوف، بعيد عن القصة هاي، إنه الواحد يحذر يفسّر قدر الله من جهته.<br>يعني انت يعني زي اثنين محامين نفس الملف من القضية كل واحد بعطيك حكم.<br>**أحمد :**صحيح |
| **Murad:** The mother had sworn the oath on the Holy Quran. Her kids were burning to death while they [the mother and father] looked on [nobody could rescue them].<br>**Manaal:** Due to swearing the oath.<br>**Mohammad:** But look, apart from this story, one should be careful not to interpret Allah's destiny from his side [according to his understanding or for his benefit].<br>For example, if two different judges are assigned to the same case; each case will end up with a different sentence.<br>**Ahmad:** This is true. |

In example (12), the speaker employs two negative politeness strategies. First, the speaker uses a relevance hedge by indirectly saying "apart from this story," while actually referring to the same story the hearer mentioned. The purpose of this hedge is to indicate a topic change and "perhaps apologize for it" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 174). Second, the speaker issues the warning as a general rule and depersonalizes the hearer by saying, "one should be careful not to interpret *Allah*'s destiny from his side."

*4.2.5 Off-record*

The warning message is conveyed indirectly and must be understood by implicature to avoid damaging the hearer's face. This strategy was used in approximately 5% of the total warning examples, employing a well-known proverb and a tautological expression constructed with a proverb, as shown in the following examples:

| (13) |
|---|
| **فراس**: نصابة قتلها عالتجديد شو بدك 300 هاي 500 تا يجند.<br>**فاضل**: هاي بدها سلف.<br>**فراس:** انا ماعنديش سلف.<br>**عمر:** هاي بتكون بتعرفها واحد عميد مثلاً.<br>**فاضل:** لعاد شوبتسمعش البراطيل خربت جرش<br>**عمر:** شو هي<br>**فاضل:** االبراطيل خربت جرش مثل قديم |
| **Firas:** That one is a cheat, I know her.<br>**Faadil:** Firas paid her money, and now the money is gone [without getting the job].<br>**Firas:** She is a cheat. I told her that once my son formally gets the job, I would pay her whatever she wanted, 3,000 or 5,000 JOD, whatever.<br>**Faadil:** She wants the money in advance.<br>**Firas:** I do not pay cash in advance.<br>**Omar:** She must have a connection with a high-ranking official for example.<br>**Faadil:** Have you not heard the proverb, "Bribery ruined Jerash"?<br>**Omar:** What?<br>**Faadil:** "Bribery corrupted/ruined Jerash." It is an old proverb.<br>**Omar:** Uuh [long sigh]. |

The off-record strategy in this example is employed by Faadil by saying a well-known proverb in Jordan 'Bribery has corrupted/ruined Jerash'[Jerash is a city in Jordan]. In this example, Faadil warns Firas against paying bribe money to anyone claiming they have connections that can secure him a decent government job. Faadil cautions that paying bribes and obtaining a job unfairly can have negative consequences, not only for Firas but for the entire country, contributing to issues like corruption and societal decline.

*4.2.6 Do not do the FTA*

In this strategy, the speaker begins a warning but chooses not to finish it. This decision may stem from a realization that they cannot sufficiently soften the impact of the warning, or from an understanding that, regardless of the politeness strategies employed, they would be inadequate to preserve the hearer's

dignity—especially if the hearer holds a considerably higher age or status. This particular politeness approach appeared in only one instance in the data, where the speaker determined that any attempts at politeness would fall short in mitigating the effect of the warning.

| (14) |
| --- |
| **محمد :**دايما خلي عندك كيس تمر، رطب هذا دايما خلي معاك بجيبتك.<br>**حسن :**واني بسوق الحلال من وين بدي اجيب تمر؟<br>خلي دايما معك كيس حط فيه سبع تمرات.<br>**حسن :**مابزبطش يا خالي مابزبطش، بزبطش. " صوت يخف "<br>انت دايما إذا عندك طلعات مسافات طويلة، هالطلاعات فجأة بتيجي.<br>**محمد :**حبة شوكولاتة دايما خلي معك، حبة شوكولاتة.<br>**حسن :**بوكلها قبل ما ينزل.<br>ممكن خصلة عنب خلص بتسد الموضوع.<br>القصد دايما خلي معك اشي حلو.<br>**حسن :**إذا بمد ايدي بوكلها.<br>**محمد :**لكن إذا نزل معك فجأة مش بلا مؤاخذة تصير..... "كلام مقطوع"<br>**حسن :**لا هاي اول مرة بنزل معي |
| **Mohammad:** Always keep single sweets like dates.<br>**Hassan:** No, no, I just carry regular food.<br>**Mohammad:** Even if you don't have regular food, always keep some dates in your pocket.<br>**Hassan:** What if I am at the halal market? Where can I get dates?<br>**Mohammad:** Always keep a bag with you containing seven dates.<br>**Hassan:** That isn't practical, uncle; it isn't practical.<br>**Mohammad:** Do you often travel long distances?<br>**Hassan:** My work travel comes up with little notice.<br>**Mohammad:** Keep a piece of chocolate in your pocket.<br>**Hassan:** I will eat it before my blood sugar gets low. (kidding)<br>**Mohammad:** What I mean is always keep a sweet thing with you.<br>**Hassan:** But I can't resist eating it first.<br>**Mohammad:** <u>But what if your blood sugar suddenly drops? You will become—forgive me—become… [incomplete warning]</u> |

This dialogue took place between Hassan and his nephew Mohammad at Hussein's house, where they were visiting Hussein's son, who had recently undergone surgery. Hassan, who is insulin-dependent and prone to sudden and severe drops in blood sugar, was advised by Mohammad to keep some dates or a piece of chocolate with him to eat when this occurs. Hassan began to argue that this solution might not be effective. Mohammad attempted to warn him about the serious consequences of a sudden drop in blood sugar but only delivered part of the warning, as mentioning a bad outcome was considered an ill omen for his uncle. Despite the incomplete warning, Hassan understood the implication and responded that it was the first time his blood sugar had dropped so drastically.

### *4.3 The use of politeness strategies other than those suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987)*

#### *4.3.1 The use of Quranic verses*

The use of Quranic verses can serve as both positive and negative politeness strategies. In the context of the current data, Quranic verses are used as a negative politeness strategy where the speaker

implies that it is God who said this, not them. By doing so, the speaker avoids using any mitigation device, as the words are attributed to God as shown in (15) below.

| (15) |
|---|
| **سليم :**"يناول تيسير قطعة من معمول التمر" أكلك كم حبة معمول.<br>**صبري :**لا يا رجل، اليوم السكري بوصل سبعة مليون عندي.<br>**سليم :**لا ما بوصلش سبعة مليون ما بصلش سبعة مليون عند حدا "يحاول إقناعه".<br>**عمار :**يقرأ قوله تعالى "وكلوا وأشربوا ولا تسرفوا". |
| **Saleem**: *handing Tayseer a scone* Have some date scones.<br>**Sabri**: No, man, today my blood sugar will hit seven million.<br>**Saleem**: No, it will not hit seven million. It does not hit seven million for anybody.<br>**Ammar**: *reads from the holy Quran* "And eat and drink, but be not excessive." |

In this example, Saleem is hosting Sabri and Ammar at his house. Saleem urges Sabri, who is a diabetic, to have an extra piece of date scone. The warning is issued by Ammar in the form of a verse from the Quran, which means that *Allah* ordered us not to be excessive in having food, to indirectly tell Saleem not to put to pressure on Sabri and that Sabri feel forced to accept more sweet food.

*4.3.2 The use of some religious expressions which are mainly addressed to the H's positive face*

The use of religious lexical expressions as a mitigation device in Jordanian society reflects that Jordanians select their politeness strategies based on the cultural expectation that group harmony is prioritized over individual freedom or imposition.

*4.3.2.1 It is prohibited (haram)*

| (16) mentioned above as example (6) |
|---|
| **نور :**طول نهاري أبهدل وأصيح عالفاضي.<br>**أبو أحمد :**لا حرام بنعمن عيونها يعني.<br>طلي بدقيقة صارن عيونها حمر.<br>**أبو أحمد :**مش عالنت، النت بخلصش. كيف تحت عيونها منفخ.<br>بس على عيونها لدي كيف منتفخات من تحت |
| **Noor:** I shout at her all day long to get off the iPad, but she doesn't listen to me.<br>**Ahmad:** No! That [too much iPad] is prohibited; I mean, she will make herself go blind.<br>Look at her eyes; they get bloodshot within a minute.<br>Look how she is swollen under the eyes. |

Ahmad warns Noor not to let her daughter watch an iPad for long time, as this could harm her eyesight. Ahmad uses the phrase 'it is prohibited'[1] in a social context, although it is originally used in religious contexts. In this broader social sense, using such an expression, the speaker exaggerates sympathy for the hearer and intensifies interest in the hearer's needs or wants.

*4.3.2.2 By God (oath-taking)*

| (17) |
|---|
| **راشد :**ليش بتفريطهنش؟<br>**أيمن :**شو بدك تفرط فيهن، بقلي حبه قد حب القهوة.<br>**سالم :**صغير ومفرد عالشجرة، هذا كيف بده ينلم؟<br>**راشد :**حرام والله يروح.<br>**سالم :**تبعير، بدك أسبوع ما بتخلصيهن والا لا.<br>**راشد :**والله حرام تدشرهن، لو تنكة بجيبنلك، والله حرام، والله يا ابن عمي حرام.<br>**راشد :**بتعرف يا حجي هذول اللي ببعرن تبعير هذول ورا الشجر انهن بطلعن أكثر من صاحب الكرم.<br>**أيمن :**اكيد اه.<br>**اخلاص :**خلص خليهن لآخر 11، انا بروح افرطهن بكون حبهن كبير هههه |
| **Rashid:** Why don't you want to harvest these ten olive trees?<br>**Ahmad:** What can we get from them? Their olives are the size of coffee beans [very small].<br>**Ayman:** Very tiny olives and scattered around on the tree, how can these be harvested?<br>**Rashid:** By God, it is haram (prohibited) to leave them unharvested.<br>**Ayman:** It will take a week at least to finish harvesting them. Am I right?<br>**Rashid:** By God, it is haram to leave the fruit [olives] on the trees; even if you will only get one gallon of oil from them, by God, it is prohibited. By God, cousin, it is prohibited.<br>**Ayman:** Do you mean I should wait another week before picking them?<br>**Rashid:** Haji, did you know that those pickers [usually poor people coming to pick what's left unpicked after the farm's owner has finished harvesting] can sometimes get more fruit than the owner?<br>**Ikhlas:** That is fine. Just leave them on the tree until the end of November [when they are ripe to pick], and I will pick them, hahahahaha [kidding]. |

In the above example, two speakers, Rashid and his wife, employed three positive politeness strategies. Rashid warned Ayman not to leave small olive pits unharvested on the trees. He softened his warning by appealing to Ayman's emotions, using the expression "it is prohibited (Haram)" to invoke a moral or cultural obligation.

*4.3.2.3 Praise be to Allah*

| (18) |
|---|
| **صالح :**سبحان الله، هاي من رب العالمين بتيجيك يا حامد. عشان ايش؟ عشان تقطع تعلقك بالأسباب المادية نهائياً، عشان تقول اللي انته متوقعه. |
| **Saleh:** Praise be to Allah; this is a sign for you, Hamed from God. Why? In order not to rely on material considerations or earthly means to achieve your goals. |

The expression 'Praise be to *Allah*/Glory be to *Allah*' is used by the speaker to evoke the hearer's religious emotions. From the speaker's perspective, they share these emotions and do not want the hearer to commit a sin by relying more on earthly matters than on God's ability. This behaviour could lead to a form of disbelief in *Allah* and result in His dissatisfaction with the person, which the speaker fears for the hearer.

*4.3.2.4 Praying to God that the undesirable consequences of the warning do not happen*

| (19) |
| --- |
| **هبة: بنسولف هسه، ولد واقع على ظهره ومش قادر يحكي، شره على حاله من جيل ريان الله يحفظه.**<br>**هبة: بس لا تخليش بناتك يشيلن أختهن الصغيرة.** |
| **Hibba:** A boy fell on his back and he couldn't talk [they saw the child at the hospital]. He is at Rayan's age; may Allah protect Rayan.<br>**Hibba:** Do not let your daughters carry their baby sister. |

In this example, Hibba warns her brother not to let his older daughters carry their baby sister. She mentioned a real accident whose consequences she had seen at the hospital. Hibba intensifies sympathy with her brother by praying to God that such an accident does not befall his little daughter.

*4.3.2.5 Referring to a prophetic behaviour or saying*

| (20) |
| --- |
| **هاشم :**اللي بده يتحمم أكبر خطأ إنه تنزل تحت الدش دغري.<br>حامي بارد بعملك جلطات.<br>شوف طريقة الاغتسال اللي سنها الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم للمسلمين، الاغتسال.<br>أول اشي بتغسل إيديك ومذاكيرك، بعدين شو بتساوي، بتحط أربع حفنات على راسك مي مشان شو يتعود الجسم على المي.<br>بتحط المي على الجهة اليمين فيبرد الجسم شوي.<br>هاي مش سوالف فيسبوك يعني، هاي سوالف علمية يعني.<br>**مأمون :**أه أكيد.<br>**هاشم:** إنت يوم بما تيجي للقران والدين كلها موجودة هذا علم يعني شفاء. |
| **Hashim:** The biggest mistake is to get directly under the water when you want to take a shower.<br>Getting under cold water when your body is very warm causes strokes.<br>Look at the way the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered us to follow when taking a grave impurity bath.<br>First you wash your hands, then your private parts, then you wet your head. Why? For your body to get used to the water and cool down a little.<br>This is not Facebook information. This is scientific information.<br>**Maumoon:** this is completely true.<br>When you come to the Holy Quran and our religion, you will see that all that I said is there.<br>This is science and a proven way of treatment. |

The reference to prophetic behaviour and the Quran in the last sentence is used as a negative politeness strategy by the warner (Wr) to persuade the recipients of his warning. The speaker also cites the prophet's method of performing the grave impurity bath as evidence to support the reliability of his information. The Quran and Sunnah (prophetic sayings and behaviours) are regarded as the most trustworthy sources for guiding actions or behaviour, which the speaker uses to gain the hearer's trust.

*4.3.2.6 Shifting the recipient or shifting the topic*

| (21) |
| --- |
| **أفنان:** ديري بالك من فنجان القهوة<br>**أيمن:** هيه هيه أقعد أقعد لا أضربك، أقعد |
| **Afnan:** Watch out for that cup of coffee.<br>**Ayman [addressing his little son]:** Hey hey hey, sit down or I will hit you. Sit down. |

In this example, Ayman was visiting Afnan's house with his family. Ayman's young son was jumping up and down in the guestroom where coffee was being served. Instead of directly warning the child, who might spill coffee on the carpet, Afnan directed the warning to the child's father, Ayman, asking him to ensure that the coffee did not spill on his clothes or body. Issuing a direct warning to the child might cause his parents to lose face and feel unwelcome as guests. Ayman understood that the actual warning was meant for his son, so he immediately reprimanded his child to stop jumping.

*4.3.3Bald on record as a polite strategy*

In this strategy, the speaker uses no mitigation because he believes he has certain social rights and obligations over the recipient, compelling them to accept the warning without any mitigation. The recipient fully understands that the warner cares for them and that the warning is for their benefit, as illustrated in the following example

| (22) |
| --- |
| **نبيل :**بتعرف يا رجل، ما تخليش حجم الضغوطات علينا بالشغل. اتمنى أقدر أقدم استقالتي اليوم قبل بكرة.<br>**حامد :لا** تترك وظيفتك، دير بالك. خطر، خطر، خطر.. العب بالمقصقص تا يجيك الطيار. ما بتعرف شو بصير |
| **Nabil:** Oh man, you know? You can't imagine the amount of pressure I'm under at work. I wish I could quit today before tomorrow [as soon as possible].<br>**Hamed:** Don't quit your job. Be careful. This is dangerous, dangerous, dangerous. Stay in your current position until you find an alternative. You never know what's going to happen. |

In this example, Hamid warns Nabil in a casual and friendly setting, using a somewhat stern and urgent tone to emphasize that he should not resign, despite the challenges and stress he's facing at work. Hamid intensifies his warning by repeating the word "dangerous" three times, underscoring the unpredictable risks of leaving a job without securing another one. By saying, "You never know what's going to happen," Hamid implies that Nabil's decision carries significant risks. The relationship between Nabil and Hamid is balanced, as they are of similar age and neither holds authority over the other in this context. Nonetheless, the conversation remains smooth, with Nabil interpreting the strong warning as a well-intentioned caution. Hamid is expressing his deep concern about Nabil's decision, fearing it could lead to negative outcomes. This direct approach is socially acceptable because Hamid has a culturally expected right to warn Nabil without softening his tone—a concept known as "عشم" in Arabic. This concept reflects a mutual understanding in Jordanian culture, allowing close friends or peers to speak openly and directly when they believe it is for the other's benefit.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this study reveal that most warnings in JA are delivered through conventionally indirect methods, with non-conventional indirect pattern following, and direct warnings being the least frequent. This may be attributed to the fact that the explicit use of the verb "warn" or its derivatives isn't always essential to convey a warning. Instead, warnings in JA can be communicated effectively through other speech acts, expressions, and even linguistic devices such as Quranic verses, prophetic sayings,

proverbs, and traditional sayings. The informal nature of the data likely contributed to this, as it allows for communicative acts like requests or threats to function as implicit warnings without needing a high degree of explicitness.

In terms of mitigation strategies, it was observed that most warnings in the study were softened using a range of politeness strategies and expressions. This suggests that issuing a warning can be face-threatening, as it may affect either the hearer's (Wd) or the speaker's (Wr) social face in JA culture. Aligning with Brown and Levinson's theory, Jordanian speakers in this study employed all of the framework's main strategies—Positive and Negative politeness strategies, Off-record, and Avoiding the action. These were accompanied by several substrategies, lending support to the model's universality.

As far as the politeness super-strategies are concerned, participants in the current study employed 5 out of fifteen positive politeness super-strategies as the following: *Noticing H's interests, wants, needs, goods, Intensifying interest in H, Assuming reciprocity, Asserting knowledge and concern for H wants, Showing agreement with H, Exaggerate interest, approval, or sympathy with the hearer.* The participants also employed three out the ten negative politeness super-strategies as the following: *Impersonalising speaker and hearer, issues the warning as a general,* and *using a relevance hedge by indirectly issuing the warning.* The specific use of these super-strategies can be possibly justified that these super-strategies are more universally common devices that can be employed in any culture and language regardless of its cultural and ideological affiliation. Moreover, in addition to their universality, it can be also argued that they are more appropriate for the specific situations and occasions in which warnings are produced in the current study and the topics and themes that the majority of warnings revolve around such as health and religion. However, given the limitations of the current data in which the age range and the gender of the participants are not considered in analysing the data, some other super-strategies might have been also used if the scope of the data analysis had been made more comprehensive to include other social factors.

Despite general support for Brown and Levinson's framework, some findings diverged from its classical approach. Notably, Jordanian speakers showed a stronger tendency to use positive politeness strategies over negative ones, counter to the model's emphasis on negative politeness in many contexts. Furthermore, alongside conventional politeness strategies, Jordanian speakers employed unique cultural devices, including religious phrases, to address the hearer's positive face. In some cases, warnings were issued baldly on record without fear of face loss, as conversations continued without interruption. This implies that direct warnings are socially acceptable when the speaker has a culturally recognized right to warn, as reflected in the Jordanian concept of "عشم" (trust or social expectation), allowing for openness when it benefits the hearer.

The study's focus on positive politeness strategies rather than negative ones may reflect the Jordanian community's emphasis on positive face needs, supporting Al-Khatib's (2006) claim that Jordanian society is positively face-oriented. Religious norms also play a role in shaping communication, with expressions of prohibition, oath-taking, prayer, and blessings forming the basis for certain unique mitigation strategies observed here. These religiously motivated expressions reinforce the tendency to enhance positive face, a preference not fully anticipated by Brown and Levinson's framework.

Moreover, some findings from the study challenge the assumption in Brown and Levinson's model that increased mitigation necessarily correlates with higher politeness. For example, a few warnings were issued baldly on record yet were still perceived as polite and appropriate, especially if the conversation continued smoothly. This reflects the social expectations between interlocutors in Jordanian culture, where the warner is often expected to speak candidly if it serves the other's well-being.

Theoretically, this study supports the enduring relevance of Brown and Levinson's framework, particularly in terms of face, positive and negative politeness strategies, and the three social variables influencing politeness choices. However, the findings indicate that in JA, there may be less emphasis on negative face needs than in Western cultures, as speakers frequently prioritize enhancing the hearer's positive face. This preference for positive face is evident in the frequent use of strategies that address the hearer's social belonging and mutual respect, aligning with the collectivist values of Jordanian society.

In summary, the role of cultural and ideological norms in JA significantly influences the choice and use of politeness strategies and mitigation techniques, leading to some unique theoretical insights. Jordanian society's collectivist orientation, with a preference for positive face interactions, aligns with observations in other Arabic-speaking communities, supporting the view that Arabs, including Jordanians, prioritize positive face needs (Al-Khatib, 2006), a claim confirmed by the current study and other research in different Arab countries, e.g., Palestinian Arabic (Atawneh 1991; Farahat 2009); Egyptian Arabic (Mursy and Wilson 2001); Sudanese Arabic (Nureddeen 2008); Yemeni Arabic (Al-Marrani and Sazalie 2010); Syrian Arabic (Khamam 2012); and Iraqi Arabic (Ahmed 2017). While Brown and Levinson's framework offers a foundational perspective on politeness, this study suggests that additional cultural considerations are necessary when applying it to collectivist societies.

The study recommends further research on warnings in more formal settings and calls for a refined "Face" framework that incorporates cultural and ideological differences more effectively. Future studies could also explore the impact of gender on the production and mitigation of warnings in JA, as this may influence which face needs are addressed and which politeness strategies are most commonly employed.

# التحذيرات في المحادثات غير الرسمية في العربية الأردنية: دراسة أجتماعية تداولية

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**الملخص**

تتناول هذه الدراسة فعل التحذير في اللهجة الأردنية، مركّزةً على استراتيجيات التهذيب المستخدمة لتلطيف التحذيرات، وذلك استنادًا إلى نظرية براون وليفينسون(1987). من خلال تسجيلات صوتية لمدة 56 ساعة من الاجتماعات الاجتماعية غير الرسمية، تبرز الدراسة الأساليب المباشرة وغير المباشرة للتحذيرات. ورغم أن الدراسة تدعم إطار عمل براون وليفينسون، إلا أنها تبرز أيضًا بعض جوانب قصور النظرية في تحليل أساليب التهذيب في المجتمعات الجماعية مثل الأردن. تكشف النتائج عن تفضيل استخدام استراتيجيات التهذيب التي تراعي الوجه الجماعي وأدوات التلطيف الخاصة بالثقافة، مما يشير إلى الحاجة إلى تعديل النظرية الكلاسيكية لتناسب الفروقات الثقافية. توسّع هذه الدراسة من نطاق علم البراغماتية ونظرية أفعال الكلام عبر تقديم تحليل معمّق لاستخدام التحذيرات في اللهجة الأردنية، مما يسهم في فهم تأثير السياق الثقافي على التواصل.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اللهجة الأردنية، أفعال الكلام، التحذير، استراتيجيات التهذيب، براون وليفينسون، المجتمعات الجماعية، وسائل التهذيب الثقافية.

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