

## **Exploring Gender Differences in the Use of Politeness Strategies in Requests and Refusals - The Case of Algerian Students at Université 8 Mai 1945 Guelma**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

**Keywords:**  
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This paper aims to explore whether there are gender differences in the use of politeness strategies in performing requests and refusals with accounts of social power, rank of imposition, and social distance. It adopts a descriptive quantitative approach and uses a Written Discourse Completion Test on a sample of 44 male and female students at 8 May 1945 University – Guelma.

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## **Introduction**

At heart, language is a social enterprise. It influences, as it is influenced by, several social structures such as class, age, ethnicity, and gender. Such claims define the interdisciplinary area of sociolinguistics; “the field which studies the relationship between language and society” (Spolsky, 1998, p. 3). To this end, sociolinguists match linguistic variation with a host of social variables. Noteworthy among these is gender. Indeed, scholars have wondered for decades if men and women speak differently. Though it is mostly believed that gender has significant effects on language use, till now, there is little consensus on the differences and similarities in language use between men and women. Furthermore, one area of socio-pragmatic analysis that continuously intrigues and eludes scholars is politeness. Put simply, according to Kasper (2011), “politeness' refers to proper social conduct and tactful consideration of others. [It] contrasts with 'rudeness'”. Besides, politeness is realised differently from one culture to another, in that “[w]hat counts as polite in any given context is socio-culturally and historically determined” (p. 187). Arab countries, particularly those in the Maghreb region, are no exception. These nations are known for their emphasis on etiquette and good manners, whether linguistic or otherwise. In addition, politeness is bound by several social factors. In this vein, one reoccurring topic of study is gender and politeness. Admittedly, the line between stereotypes and rigorous investigation is thin, especially with the emergence of several diverging approaches. Consequently, researchers still strive to provide satisfactory and conclusive answers to issues in this area. Chief among these is the debate as to whether women are more polite than men. Indeed, it is generally accepted that women use more politeness forms and are, as such, more polite than men. In light of this, the current study raises two questions: the first is whether there are any differences between male and female students' choices of politeness strategies in enacting requests and refusals, and the second is whether social distance, power, and rank of imposition influence male and female students' choice of politeness strategies in performing requests and refusals. We hypothesise that gender might have no influence on the choice of politeness strategies in enacting requests and refusals. Also, both males and females might use more politeness strategies as social power, rank of imposition, and social distance increase between interlocutors. To answer the research questions, a written discourse completion test (WDCT) was distributed to male and female students at 8 May 1945 University – Guelma. The WDCT aims to explore any gender differences in the politeness strategies used by male and female students in situations of varying levels of social power, rank of imposition, and social distance.

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1.1. Linguistic Politeness**

The concept of politeness has been studied for decades. There is no shortage of proposed politeness concepts in pragmatics literature, and different scholars have approached it from vastly distinct perspectives. Because definitions of politeness differ, finding common ground is difficult. In socio-pragmatics, the term politeness is used to mean “the ways in which language is employed in conversation to show consideration for the feelings and desires of one’s interlocutors, to create and uphold interpersonal relationships, and to comply with the rules ... society or one’s culture considers appropriate” (Van Olmen, 2017, para. 1).

### **1.2. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Theory of Politeness**

The leading work in politeness research is that of Brown and Levinson (1987). Scholars argued that “the names Brown and Levinson have become almost synonymous with the word politeness itself” (Eelen, 2001, as cited in Bayles, 2008, p. 10). To start with, this model is based on Speech Act Theory and Goffman’s (1967) notion of ‘Face’, which can be seen as the individual’s public self-image or self-esteem. Brown and Levinson (1987) divided ‘Face’ into the negative face – the desire to be unhindered by others – and the positive face – the desire for approval (p. 62). Concerning this, Brown and Levinson introduced the concept of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) which are any verbal or nonverbal attempts to damage the speaker’s or hearer’s face positive/negative face. These include insults, swear words, obscene expletives, requests, apologies, refusals, or critiques (pp. 65-68). With this in mind, politeness, as defined by these two researchers, is “redressive action ... that ‘gives face’ to the addressee, that is, that attempts to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA” (p. 69). Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that politeness is dependent on three variables: social distance, power, and ranking of imposition between the speaker and hearer. First, interlocutors are expected to be more polite when the rank of imposition is high. Second, politeness forms decrease as social distance decreases. Third, a speaker with low social power is expected to use more polite forms when addressing a hearer with a higher power (p.74, as cited in Gray, 2009, p. 13). In efforts to mitigate FTAs, the speaker and hearer resort to many positive and negative politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed five supertypes of politeness strategies: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, off record, and not doing face-threatening acts. Positive politeness aims to save the hearer’s positive face by establishing solidarity between interlocutors. This can involve capitalising on the hearer’s cultural or social background, and the use of familiar varieties of language. Unlike positive politeness,

which minimises the social distance between interlocutors, negative politeness aims to enforce such distance through respect. This involves the use of words such as ‘could’ and ‘might’ in questions. Next, bald on record strategies are employed in informal settings wherein preserving face is not necessary. For instance, the speaker directly requests the hearer to perform a given action. Per contra, off-record strategies utilise indirectness and rely on hinting. Lastly, the politest among these strategies is to entirely avoid FTAs (as cited in Denana, 2019, pp. 15-17). In addition, Brown and Levinson held that the aforementioned strategies exist in several languages and, hence, call for considering politeness as a universal phenomenon. However, scholars contended that this model is rooted in a western view of what counts as polite, and so it cannot fit all languages and cultures (Leech, 2014, p. 81). Concerning this, El Hadj Said (2018) posited that “although the concepts of face and face-wants are characterized by universality, each culture displays its specific degree of imposition related to FTAs and its system of redressive strategies” (p. 2).

### **1.3. Speech Acts**

A speech act is any utterance that performs an action and thereby has an effect on the environment of the speaker. Speech acts usually occur within a conversation and can take the form of a request, an apology, an invitation, a greeting, ... etc. According to Searle, there are five types of speech acts or illocutionary acts: Assertives, Directives, Commissive, Expressives, and Declarations (as cited in Emike, 2017, p. 2).

#### **1.3.1. Requests**

A Request is a type of commissive or directive which is enacted for either attaining something or making the hearer act in a certain way. Brown and Levinson (1987) considered requests to be FTAs as they threaten the hearer’s face by limiting his/her freedom and intruding his/her space. Furthermore, three types of requests differ according to the level of directness. First, direct requests (e.g., performatives). Second, conventionally indirect requests “(e.g., would, could...etc.)”. Third, non-conventional indirect requests (e.g., hints). At the same time, requests can threaten the speaker’s face depending on how the hearer reacts. Therefore, it is expected of the speaker to employ politeness strategies to reduce the imposition to protect the faces of both interlocutors (as cited in Haddad, 2018, pp. 8-9).

#### **1.3.2. Refusals**

According to Searle and Vandervken (1985), “the negative counterparts to acceptances and consenting are rejections and refusals. Just as one can accept offers, applications, and invitations, so each of these can be refused or rejected” (as cited in Yunita and Wahyudi, 2020, p. 20). To put it simply, a refusal occurs when the hearer

says 'no' to an invitation or request made by the speaker. Within the theory of politeness, much like a request, a refusal is considered a face-threatening act since it risks the face of the speaker and hearer and put the interlocutors in a position of a clash. In addition, there are different types of refusals. First, a direct refusal is simply saying 'no'. Second, an indirect refusal involves strategies such as: apologizing and giving alternatives...etc. Of course, indirect refusals can be seen as being more polite. Furthermore, speakers can soften their refusal further by using adjuncts such as group identity/ solidarity markers (Indiana University Bloomington, n.d, para. 1).

#### **1.4. Gender and Politeness**

Gender is a social construct based upon specific beliefs of what social and cultural roles and behaviours males and females should perform and occupy within a particular society. It is acquired as a result of interaction with the environment (Newman, 2018, para. 1-3). In this regard, much research looks at the relationship between politeness and gender in terms of power and dominance. In other words, findings are interpreted in a way to demonstrate men's superiority (thus, their little need to use politeness markers), and women's inferiority (hence, their comparably higher use of politeness strategies). In this vein, Lakoff (1975) saw that in their raising, women were encouraged to be indirect regarding their opinions, while for men it is the complete opposite (as cited in Mekboul & Mostari, 2017, p. 154). Following this, Coates (2013) made account of two major studies in the area of gender and politeness, adopting Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. First, in her study of a Mayan speech community in Mexico, Brown (1998) found that women use more politeness expressions in same-gender conversation than men do. Second, Holmes (1995) pointed out that women in New Zealand are "more orientated to affective, interpersonal meanings than men." Both scholars concluded that women are more polite than men (pp. 106-107). Recent studies and researchers do not stray much. In fact, according to Speer (2002) and Hobbs (2014), men use significantly fewer politeness strategies in their speech than women do. Particularly, it is believed that women produce more compliments, apologies, and expressions of gratitude (as cited in Mahmud, 2013, p. 59).

Yet, some scholars do not believe that politeness is contained within specific segments of language, i.e., speech acts. For one, Litosseliti (2013) suggested that "... stereotypes that ... construct males as strong and vocal while labelling females as weak and reserved rub off on their conversational style regardless of context which validates research in discourse in particular and speech act in general" (as cited in Dozie et al., 2020, p. 2). Agreeing with this is Mills (2003); she heavily criticised Holmes' (1995) findings for the reason that this latter's sample was small and

exclusively comprised of white, middle-class women; generalisations as such cannot be made to all women. Instead, Mills (2003) called for adopting a discursive approach to gender and politeness. For her, not only is politeness accomplished across an entire conversation, but people also perform gender “in slightly different ways in each interaction” (as cited in Bayles, 2008, p. 13). Furthermore, she posits that what counts as polite is not up to the individual, be they a man or woman, but is agreed upon within communities of practice. I agree with Mills’ (2003) criticism of Holmes’ (1995) sample, and with Litosseliti’s (2013) opinion as to the influence of stereotypes on men’s and women’s speech. However, the discursive approach – as noted by Mills herself, is increasingly challenging to employ (Van der Bom and Mills, 2015, p. 1). This is more problematic when previous research on Algerian Arabic is scarce. More so, adopting a community of practice approach makes it unfeasible for outside observers to take account of politeness. Not to mention, even if one attempts to take on the role of a participant-observer, it would require an extended period to be integrated into a particular community of practice, if at all, to gather any meaningful amount of data. For these reasons, this study will adopt Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model of politeness.

## **2. Research Design**

The current research is a descriptive-quantitative study endeavouring to explore gender differences in university students’ use of politeness strategies in making requests and refusals, factoring in the parameters of social power, rank of imposition, and social distance. For this purpose, the study seeks to answer two questions:

- 1- Are there any differences between male and female students’ choices of politeness strategies in enacting requests and refusals?
- 2- Do social distance, power, and rank of imposition influence male and female students’ choices of politeness strategies in performing requests and refusals?

### **2.1. Sample**

The object of this study is the university of Guelma. This choice is based on the lack of similar studies in this particular community, as well as due to the factor of the convenience of access. As it is beyond the scope of this research to investigate the entire population, a random sample of 22 male and 22 female university students whose native tongue is Algerian Arabic will be taken as representative.

### **2.2. Data Collection Tool and Procedure**

In the field of pragmatics, there are specific research tools used to obtain natural data or that which resembles it in varying degrees. Among these, and chosen for the current study, is Discourse Completion Test. A written DCT is a type of questionnaire that briefly describes several situations to evoke speech acts (Ejaz,

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2016, p. 72). According to Ogiermann (2018), “DCTs can also be distributed to large groups of informants within a short period, they are the ideal instrument for the contrastive study of speech acts.” Although data obtained from written DCT responses do not completely resemble naturally occurring speech, the ease of administration and simplicity of eliciting speech acts are advantages that make the WDCT a valuable and effective data collection tool (p. 299). For this inquiry, WDCT has been equally distributed to 44 random male and female students from 8 May 1945 University – Guelma. The WDCT contains four situations, two for requests and two others for refusals. Each situation requires the informant to answer as if they were in that situation, using their dialect. In each situation, the informant is to provide an answer based on the parameters of social distance, power, rank of imposition, and gender. These parameters vary from one situation to the other.

**3. Results**

The following section lays forth the results of the WDCT for each situation and each gender.

**Situation 1 – Request 1**

You are on a bus and you want to ask the person in the seat in front of you to close the window as it is cold. How would you ask the following people to do so?

To start with, Table 01 demonstrates male respondents’ answers to Request 1:

**Table n° 01: Males’ answers to Situation 1 – Request 1**

Interlocutor Strategies	Men of your age	Women of your age
Off record	0%	0%
Negative Politeness	63.64%	68.18%
Positive Politeness	31.82%	31.82%
Bald On	04.54%	0%
Avoid FTA	0%	0%

The majority of males (63.64%) used negative strategies when requesting from men of the same age, and (68.18%) of them, a roughly similar number, did when requesting from women. Next, (31.82%) of males used positive politeness strategies with men of the same age, and similarly (31.82%) of them did so with women of the same age. Then, only (04.54%) of male respondents chose bald on strategies with men of the same age, but none of them did so with women. Further, none of the males avoided the FTA or opted for off record strategies. As for females, Table 02 contains their answers to Request 1.

**Table n° 02: Females’ answers to Situation 1 - Request 1**

Interlocuter Strategies	Men of your age	Women of your age
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Off record	04.54%	0%
Negative Politeness	63.64%	59.06%
Positive Politeness	18.20%	40.94%
Bald On	04.54%	0%
Avoid FTA	09.08%	0%

The majority of females (63.64%) used negative politeness strategies with men of the same age, while (59.06%) used these strategies with women of the same age. Next, less females (18.20%) used positive strategies with men, yet (40.94%) of them used these strategies with women. As for bald on and off record strategies, each were used by only (04.54%) of females with men of the same age, and were not used at all with women of the same age. Finally, only (09.08%) of females chose to avoid the FTA with men, and none did with women.

Aside this, we noted from the respondents' answers that they used certain strategies/adjuncts with positive strategies or as supplementary of negative strategies. These are: group identity markers, explanations, and softeners. Table 03 shows respondents' use of adjuncts in Request 1.

**Table n° 03: Respondents' use of adjuncts in Request 1**

Males		
Interlocutor Strategies	Men of your age	Women of your age
Identity Markers	77.18%	81.72%
Explanations	59.06%	63.64%
Softeners	50%	27.26%
Females		
Interlocutor Strategies	Men of your age	Women of your age
Identity Markers	77.18%	81.72%
Explanations	31.82%	54.52%
Softeners	13.62%	31.82%

Apparently, the most used strategy by males is identity markers (such as 'sahbi' /my friend/ 'chriki' /my partner/ 'khoya' /my brother/ 'okhti' /my sister/) with (77.18%) of males using them when addressing men, while (81.72%) did so with women. It is worthy to note that these markers were used by male respondents who opted for negative or positive politeness strategies. After this, we note that (59.06%) of male respondents offered explanations for men interlocutors (such as 'it's cold, I'm freezing) while (63.64%) of them offered these explanations for women. For these two strategies, there is no substantial differences between their use with men or women of the same age. Yet, for the third most used strategy, softeners, (50%) of male respondents used expressions such as 't?ich', 'rabi yahfdk' /may God protect



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you, when addressing men, while only (27.26%) of them used these softeners with women.

As with males, the most used adjuncts for females who opted for negative or positive politeness strategies are: identity markers, explanations, and softeners. Indeed, (77.18%) of females used group identity markers when talking with men, while (81.72%) did so with women. Next, we find less females, (31.82%), further explained the reason behind their request with men, while (54.52%) of them did so with women. Lastly, when opting for either negative and positive strategies, (13.62%) of female respondents used softeners with men, but more of them, (31.82%), did with women.

**Situation 2 – Request 2**

You are in urgent need of a sum of money. How would you ask these people to lend it to you?

As for request 02, Table 04 indicates male respondents' answers:

**Table n° 04: Males' answers to Situation 2 - Request 02**

Interlocuter Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Off Record	09.08%	04.54%	0%
Negative Politeness	54.55%	40.94%	27.26%
Positive Politeness	13.62%	45.44%	18.20%
Bald On	22.75%	04.54%	04.54%
Avoid FTA	0%	04.54%	50%

When requesting from a family member, the majority of males (54.55%) used negative politeness strategies while (22.75%) opted for bald on strategies, (13.62%) chose positive politeness strategies, only (09.08%) opted for off record strategies, and none avoided FTA. Contrary to this, the majority of respondents (45.44%) used positive strategies when requesting from a friend, followed by negative strategies (40.94%), then bald on, off record, and avoid the FTA equally at (04.54%) each. Lastly, in the case of a neighbour, the majority (50%) chose to completely avoid FTA while (27.26%) chose negative politeness, and (18.20%) opted for positive politeness. Only (04.54%) of them chose bald on strategies, and none chose off record strategies. For females' answers to request 2, the results are shown in Table 05.

**Table n° 05: Females' answers to Situation 2 - Request 2**

Interlocuter Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Off Record	09.08%	0%	0%
Negative Politeness	22.72%	40.94%	45.44%

Positive Politeness	40.94%	27.26%	18.20%
Bald On	27.26%	22.72%	0%
Avoid FTA	0%	09.08%	36.36%

By far, females (40.94%) used positive politeness with a family member, while (27.26%) chose bald on strategies, and (22.72%) opted for negative politeness. Only (09.08%) used off record strategies, and none avoided FTA. When dealing with a friend, most female respondents (40.94%) opted for negative politeness, (27.26%) preferred positive politeness, (22.72%) chose bald on strategies, and only (09.08%) avoided FTA. None chose off record strategies. Similarly, when requesting from a neighbour, female respondents opted mainly for negative politeness (45.44%), followed by avoiding FTA (36.36%), and finally positive politeness (18.20%). None chose off record or bald on strategies. As in request 1, we find that respondents used specific adjuncts. We note the use of promises (such as: ‘I promise to give it back in X time’) in Table 06.

**Table n° 06: Respondents’ use of adjuncts in Request 2**

Males			
Interlocutor Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Promises	45.44%	77.18%	45.44%
Females			
Interlocutor Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Promises	45.44%	54.55%	36.36%

Here, more males (77.18%) used promises with a friend, while (45.44%) of them used these with a family member, and equally (45.44%) of them did so with a neighbour. Additionally, like males, females used promises in making this request. In our sample, more female respondents (54.44%) used promise with a friend, whereas (45.44%) of female made promises to a family member, and (36.36%) of them made promises to a neighbour.

**Situation 3 – Refusal 1**

How would you refuse to give the following people money?

**Table n° 07: Respondents’ answers to Situation 3 - Refusal 1**

Males			
Interlocutor Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Direct Refusal	0%	04.54%	0%
Indirect Refusal	90.92%	95.46%	100%
Avoid FTA	09.08%	0%	0%
Females			

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Interlocuter Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Direct Refusal	9.08%	04.54%	0%
Indirect Refusal	86.38%	90.92%	100%
Avoid FTA	04.54%	04.54%	0%

As shown in Table 07, the majority of males chose an indirect refusal with a family member (90.92%), a friend (95.46%), and a neighbour (100%). Similarly, the majority of females indirectly refused the request of a family member (86.38%), a friend (90.92%), and a neighbour (100%). Notably, the respondents used two adjuncts in their refusals. Table 08 shows the use of adjunct in refusal 1.

**Table n° 8: Respondents' use of adjuncts in Refusal 1**

Males			
Interlocuter Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Identity Markers	31.82%	45.44%	40.94%
Jokes	04.54%	13.62%	04.54%
Females			
Interlocuter Strategies	Family Member	Friend	Neighbour
Identity Markers	0%	09.08%	13.62%
Jokes	04.54%	50%	04.54%

It can be noted that males used more group identity markers (such as 'sahbi' /my friend/, 'khoya' /my brother/ 'jari' /my neighbour/) with all three interlocutors as compared to females. First, (31.82%) of males used them with a family member, and none of the females did. Second, with a friend, (45.44%) of males used them while only (09.08%) of females did. Third, more of the males (40.94%) used them with a neighbour, while only (13.62%) of females did. Meanwhile, (50%) of females used jokes with friends, whereas only (13.62%) of males did. Both gender's use of this strategy with other interlocutors is negligible at (04.54%).

### Situation 4 - Refusal 2

You are invited to an academic/social event. How would you refuse an invitation coming from these people?

**Table n° 09: Respondents' answers to Situation 4 – Refusal 2**

Males			
Interlocuter Strategies	Teacher	Classmate	Friend
Direct Refusal	0%	09.08%	34.78%
Indirect Refusal	100%	90.92%	65.22%

Avoid FTA	0%	0%	0%
Females			
Interlocuter Strategies	Teacher	Classmate	Friend
Direct Refusal	04.54%	04.54%	34.78%
Indirect Refusal	90.92%	95.46%	65.22%
Avoid FTA	04.54%	0%	0%

For Refusal 02, Table 09 shows that the majority of males indirectly refused the request of teacher (100%), a classmate (90.92%), and a friend (65.22%), as did the majority of females with a teacher (90.92%), a classmate (95.46%), and a friend (65.22%). Finally, Table 10 shows respondents' use of adjuncts in refusal 2:

**Table n° 10: Respondents' use of adjuncts in Refusal 2**

Males			
Interlocuter Strategies	Teacher	Classmate	Friend
Apologetic terms	40.94%	27.26%	13.62%
Identity Markers	0%	04.54%	40.94%
Females			
Interlocuter Strategies	Teacher	Classmate	Friend
Apologetic terms	72.73%	36.36%	13.62%
Identity Markers	0%	04.54%	0%

Starting with the use of apologetic terms such as 'I'm sorry', and 'forgive me', more females (72.73%) used them when addressing a teacher than males (40.94%) did. There is a slight difference when addressing a classmate as well, whereby (36.36%) of females included apologetic expressions while (27.26%) of males did. When addressing a friend, only (13.62%) of each gender used apologetic terms. Second, addressing a friend, (40.94%) of males used group identity markers while none of the females did. Both genders' use of this strategy with other interlocutors is negligible at (04.54%) with a classmate, and at (0%) with a teacher.

#### 4. Discussion

Data analysis reveals several key points. Starting with Request 01, both females and males mostly employ negative politeness strategies when requesting from the same or another gender. Further, in terms of the use of group identity markers (positive politeness), we find that both genders highly and equally use them as supplementary for negative strategies or as positive strategies. Despite the rank of imposition being quite low in Request 1, we cannot forget that social distance is a key factor here regardless of the genders involved, and so it stands that both genders opt for the same politeness strategies, although their use of adjuncts is different; there

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is a higher use of softeners within the same gender than there is across genders; females use fewer softeners amongst themselves than males do; females provide significantly fewer explanations to males than males do to females; males provide more explanations to females than females do to males.

Moving to Request 2, interestingly, males mostly opt for negative politeness strategies with a family member. Such is unexpected if we assume that with the lowest social distance, there is the least need to be polite. Yet we cannot ignore that the rank of imposition is high. The second most used strategy is bald on. Then, the first most used strategies with friends are positive politeness strategies, while the second most used are negative politeness strategies but only by a margin of 04.54%. Furthermore, at the highest social distance and the rank of imposition, males seem to avoid FTA or use negative politeness strategies, which is expected. From this, we can deduce that the use of more polite strategies does not correlate with social distance for males, but with the degree of imposition. As for females, first, they mostly employ positive politeness strategies with a family member, while the second most used strategies are bald on strategies. Such is expected from a social distance view but not from a rank of imposition perspective. Second, females mostly opt for negative politeness strategies with a friend, followed by positive politeness strategies. Third, females either entirely avoid FTA or opt for negative politeness strategies when social distance and rank of imposition are high, which is typical. Hence, we can say that when the rank of imposition is high and as social distance increases, females are more polite, but such a pattern does not necessarily apply to males, as their answers mind the rank of imposition more than social distance, while females increase their forms of politeness as social distance increases. This leads us to conclude that Brown and Levinson's principle regarding the influence of social distance on politeness strategies' use is not set in stone and is certainly not adhered to by these male students. Aside this, more males choose to avoid FTA with a neighbour. If we consider this as being the politest course of action, coupled with the data from both genders' interactions with a family member, then males can be seen as being more polite than females when the rank of imposition is high, and when social distance is at its lowest and highest. Lastly, for this situation, both genders raise the level of politeness. They do almost equally use promises with family members and neighbours, but males use more promises with friends than females do. Yet, evidently, whether male or female uses a negative strategy in requests (such as being pessimistic or giving deference), they often add adjuncts potentially further raise the level of politeness.

Turning to Refusal 1, both genders choose to refuse indirectly through apologies and alternatives. Beyond this, we spot some gender differences in the use of adjuncts. First, males use significantly more group identity markers than females do, regardless of the social distance with the interlocuter, but especially more when the social distance is low (with a friend). Second, it appears that females use noticeably more jokes with friends, such being a positive politeness strategy. However, both genders almost equally use apologies across the spectrum of social distance. Next, in Refusal 2, when there is a power difference and a high social distance – in the case of addressing a teacher, the refusals are more formal and polite for both genders. Howbeit, females use more apologetic terms – a negative strategy, when there is a difference in power and a high social distance (with a teacher). This usage for both genders shrinks as the social distance decreases.

All in all, the findings are as follows: first, regarding requests, when the rank of imposition is low, but the social distance is high both genders were found to use negative politeness strategies when addressing the same and another gender. Also, both genders equally and highly use group identity markers. Yet, males were found to offer more explanations to males and females than females do with males. Further, females appear to use fewer softeners with each other even though both genders use these more amongst each than with the other gender. Additionally, in requests wherein the rank of imposition is high, males use of strategies seems to correlate with the said rank, not the social distance. As for females, their politeness forms increase as social distance increases. Besides, females use less promises with friends than males do. Second, in refusals, both genders use apologies and offer alternatives as means to indirectly refuse a request/invitation. Howbeit, it is evident that females use far less group identity markers at all levels of social distance. Next, females use more jokes with friends. Lastly, when there is a high social distance and difference in power, females use more apologetic terms than males, even though both genders use less of these as social distance decreases.

Hence, the results allow us to answer the research questions and verify our hypotheses. Regarding the first question, there are in fact gender differences in the use of certain positive politeness strategies (adjuncts) in requests; namely, group identity markers in refusals, and jokes, explanations, and softeners in requests. Further, females use more apologetic terms than males in refusals. Otherwise, there are no differences in males' and females' choices of negative strategies, as both genders opt for highly polite forms. For the second question, social distance, power, and rank of imposition do indeed influence males' and females' choices of politeness strategies in performing requests and refusals. Hence, our first hypothesis is invalid

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as we found gender differences in the use of politeness strategies in performing requests and refusals. The second hypothesis is valid since both genders opt for highly polite strategies (negative politeness) such as apologies, offering alternatives.

### Conclusion

Despite the abundance of research on the topic of gender and politeness in western and eastern countries, this area suffers from a severe lack of attention in Algeria. Further, gender is a social construct that is believed to have a close relationship with language. Nevertheless, the area of gender and politeness is plagued with a stereotypical assumption that perpetuates the idea that women are more polite and, as such, weaker than men. Using the work of Brown and Levinson (1987), this study strived to uncover any gender differences in the use of politeness strategies in requests and refusals at the University of Guelma. Specifically, it aimed to see if women are supposedly more polite than men in performing said speech acts. We found that both genders opted for highly polite forms, except in an instance of high power/high social distance, wherein females used more apologetic terms in refusals. Furthermore, the assumption that politeness decreases with low social distance does not apply to males when the rank of imposition is high, but does for females. Moreover, there are certainly gender differences in the tendency to use given positive strategies or adjuncts, namely, group identity markers in refusals and jokes, explanations, and softeners in requests. As such, we conclude that while there are gender differences in the use of politeness strategies in enacting requests and refusals, there is no substantial evidence for the stereotypical idea of women being more polite than men. If anything, males were more polite than females in several situations. Overall, the study of gender and politeness, with its various approaches, can reveal a wealth of insights on gender and language use, particularly in cross-cultural pragmatics studies.

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## Appendices

### Written Discourse Completion Test (Arabic)

الجنس :

يرجى قراءة أوصاف المواقف التالية وكتابة ما كنت ستقوله في كل موقف باستخدام لهجتك الخاصة.

الطلب -1

الموقف 1:



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أنت في الحافلة وتريد أن تطلب من الشخص الجالس في المقعد أمامك أن يغلّق النافذة حيث أن الجو باردًا. كيف تطلب من الأشخاص التالية القيام بذلك؟

رجل في نفس عمرك:

امراة في نفس عمرك:

**الموقف 2:**

أنت في حاجة ماسة إلى مبلغ من المال. كيف تطلب من هؤلاء الناس أن يقترضوه لك؟

جار/ة:

صديق/ة:

أحد أفراد الأسرة:

-2 الرفض

**الموقف 1:**

يطلب منك أحد إقراضه / لها بعض المال ، لكنك تمر بضائقة مالية. كيف ترفض منحهم المال؟

جار/ة:

صديق/ة:

أحد أفراد الأسرة:

**الموقف 2:**

أنت مدعو إلى حدث أكاديمي / اجتماعي . كيف ترفض الدعوة القادمة من هؤلاء الناس؟

استاذ/ة:

زميل/ة الدراسة:

صديق/ة :

### Written Discourse Completion Test (English)

Sex:

Please read the following descriptions of situations and write what you would say in each situation using your own dialect.

1- **Requests**

**Situation 1:**

You are on bus and you want to ask the person in the seat in front of you to close the window as it is cold. How would you ask the following people to do so?

Man:

Woman:

**Situation 2:**

You are in urgent need for a sum of money. How would you ask these people to lend it to you?

A neighbour:

A friend:

A family member:

2- **Refusals**

**Situation 1:**

How would you refuse to give the following people money?

A neighbour:

A friend:

A family member:

**Situation 2:**

You are invited to an academic/social event. How would you refuse invitation coming from these people?

A teacher:

A classmate:

A friend: