

Politeness in Imam Ali's Letter to Malik Al-Ashtar

التأدب في رسالة الإمام علي (عليه السلام) إلى مالك الأشتر

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ملخص البحث

ان التأدب هو فكرة تداولية شائعة تم تناولها بصورة موسعة من وجهات نظر مختلفة. وان هذا الشروع هو ما يضيف انطباع عدم اضافة شيء جديد للموضوع عند بحثه في الوقت الحاضر، وهذا هو ذات الامر الذي تحاول الورقة الحالية اثبات ضده. حيث ان هناك سياقات يؤدي فيها التأدب دورا ثانويا او قد لا يؤدي دورا اصلا في التواصل سواء كان مكتوبا او محكيا. ووضح مثال يمكن الاستشهاد به هو السياقات المؤسساتية حيث ان اصدار عقوبة رسمية مثلا ليس له علاقة بالتأدب. مع ذلك لا يمكننا الاستنتاج هنا بأن مثل هذه السياقات تكون غير مؤدبة، جل ما يمكننا وصفها به هو توظيفها للتأدب بطريقة متفردة الى حد ما.

ان هذا التفرد في توظيف التأدب هو ما يتكأ عليه البحث وعلى وجه الخصوص الطريقة التي يوازن بها الامام علي (عليه السلام) - وهو الحاكم الاعلى عند اصداره الاوامر للذين هم تحت امرته- بين كونه صاحب سلطة ومؤدب في الوقت نفسه. ويبرز هذا التوازن عند ملاحظة ان التأدب يتضمن في احدى اشكاله اعطاء المخاطب خيارات، في حين ان السلطة تحجب مثل هذه الخيارات (او الحرية) والتي هي في حالة مالك الاشتر على المحك كونه عيّن ليرعى مصالح الناس وشؤونهم الامر الذي يتطلب سياسة حكيمة لا مجال فيها للمجاملة. عليه في بعض المواقع يصدر الامام علي (عليه السلام) اوامر مسكنة اللهجة لمالك، اما في مواضع اخرى فيصدر اوامر مباشرة بدون اي تسكين. وهذا يعني ان استراتيجيات التأدب في رسالة مالك الاشتر - والتي تشمل بيانات البحث - تتنوع وفقا للقضية التي تناقش وليس للمخاطب نفسه.

Abstract

Politeness is a clear enough pragmatic concept that has been dealt with extensively from various points of view. This commonness brings to the forefront the impression that there might be nothing new to add to the topic when a paper makes its appeal to attempt it recently. However, this paper endeavors to prove something different. This is supported by observing that there do exist certain contexts where politeness plays a subsidiary (or no) role in communication (be it written or spoken). The most readily cited example is the institutional contexts whereby issuing an official punishment, for instance, has nothing to do with politeness. Yet, this should not lead to the over-hasty conclusion that such contexts are impolite; it is just that politeness is employed in a rather peculiar way. It is this peculiarity on which the present paper rests. More specifically, this work traces the way by which Imam Ali, being the super-ordinate ruler, makes, when issuing letters to address his co-ordinate rulers, certain alignments between being authoritative and polite at the same time. This alignment is mostly highlighted when noticing that politeness, in one of its instantiations, involves giving the addressee options, whereas authority impedes this freedom. As such, in certain positions, Imam Ali issues mitigated commands to Malik, in other cases, he uses direct counterparts. That is, the strategies of politeness in the aforementioned letter vary according to the issue being discussed, and not according to the addressee himself.

Keywords: Culture-sensitive, Deductive, Descending, Inductive, Lakoff.

Introduction

Politeness is a commonsense phenomenon that has been dealt with by many scholars the first of whom is Lakoff. Lakoff, as Eelen (2001) describes her, is the mother of modern politeness theory because she is the first who has tackled it from a decidedly pragmatic angle. For Lakoff politeness is “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange” (Lakoff, 1977, p. 88). Watts (2003) comments that Lakoff’s view of politeness to be developed by societies for the sake of reducing friction in personal interaction leads one to conclude that friction in personal interaction is undesirable. As such societies develop strategies, that is, politeness, to reduce that friction.

Politeness, thus, ends up as being a set of norms for a cooperative behaviour.

However, there are certain contexts where politeness plays a subsidiary role in communication. For example, in issuing a formal letter (about a certain thing, a punishment, for instance), politeness has a secondary role to play, what is more important (in such cases) is the content of what is issued rather than the way with which it is issued, because the former entails the latter anyway.

Furthermore, politeness is culture-bound: each culture has its own ways of expressing the polite behaviour. In English, for instance, as Leech (1983) asserts, the more indirect one is, the more polite s/he becomes as in:

- Could you possibly answer the phone? is more polite than
- Answer the phone.

where the first is indirect, and the second is direct.

Arabic, by contrast, as Al-Hindawi (1999) observes, prefers directness as a marker of politeness. For example, in inviting someone for lunch, the following can be used as equally polite:

- تناول غداءك معنا اليوم
) Have your lunch with us today(
- لمَ لا تتناول غداءك معنا اليوم؟
)Why don't you have your lunch with us today(

It must be indicated that in Arabic the more direct an invitation, offer, advice, etc., is, the serious intentions it communicates. As such, in the preceding example, the first (with the direct command) is a more sincere invitation than the second (which might be considered a kind of compliment).

Accordingly, what the present paper attempts to tackle is the employment of politeness by Imam Ali, the Master of Eloquence, when addressing Malik Al-Ashtar, who has been appointed as a governor of Egypt during the reign of Imam Ali. Put differently, this work traces the ways by which Imam Ali makes certain alignments between being authoritative and polite at the same time. This alignment shows its importance when noticing that politeness involves giving the addressee options, whereas authority impedes this freedom, and giving freedom in Malik's case is at stake due to the fact that he has been appointed to take care of people's welfare and affairs – a crucial matter that requires a wise policy. As such, in certain positions, Imam Ali issues mitigated

commands to Malik, in other cases, he uses a direct command (as will be clarified in the analysis).

Models of Politeness

There are many different views of politeness, and so are the models of politeness. The most common of these models are:

1. Lakoff's (1977) model, which has been hinted at above.
2. Brown and Levinson (1978) develop the term 'face' to show another view of politeness. The focus in their view of politeness is on the speaker; and
3. Leech (1983), on his part, develops still another view of politeness residing in what he calls 'self' (i.e. the speaker), and 'other' (i.e. the hearer). He (ibid.) proposes six maxims to sustain his view: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The focus in his view of politeness is put on the hearer.

In sum, whatever the view might be, politeness always remains the principle which must be available in interaction if that interaction is to be considered successful. [See Eelen (2001) for more theories of politeness].

Out of these models Lakoff's will be chosen. This is because her model "is part of a general system of interactional style which classifies people's interactional behaviour" (Eelen, 2001, p.49) (italics mine). The key word in Eelen's description is 'general' which means that this model can be applied to any kind of communication (whether written or spoken), unlike the other two models which are applied mainly to conversational situations, the thing which is not applicable to the text under investigation as it is mainly written. Accordingly, Lakoff's model is quite suitable, and is explained below.

Lakoff's Model of Politeness

Eelen (ibid., p.3) points out that Lakoff's model of politeness is summarized in three rules:

1. Impersonality (Distance): Don't impose.
2. Hesitancy (Deference): Give options; and
3. Informality (Camaraderie): Make A feel good, be friendly.

James (1980) gives an illustrative account of each of these rules. The **first rule** has to do with not intruding on the addressee's privacy or embarrassing her/him with the citation of 'unmentionables'. If one has to intrude, a permission should be asked for while so doing, e.g.

- May I ask you what this car cost you?

The gist of the **second rule** is to “let the addressee make his own decisions”. This rule is activated, for the majority of cases, when commands are issued. If a master says to his servant “It’s chilly in this room”, the latter will act to redress his employer’s discomfort by closing a window, for instance, without feeling servility.

The **third rule** has to do with establishing rapport, camaraderie, a sense of equality or respect, distance, and a recognition of inequality between the addresser and the addressee. It must be noted that this rule has converserealisations according to the real statuses of the addresser (i.e. the speaker S) and the addressee (i.e. the hearer H). If S is of a higher or equal status to H, the use of ‘familiar’ or ‘solidarity’ forms of address on her/his part will put H at ease. But the converse does not hold: if S is of a lower status than H, then S must not use familiar or solidarity forms.

Lakoff’s rules of politeness are linguistically realized by many strategies called ‘modality markers’. Modality markers are, as is indicated by Al-Hindawy(1999), various devices which interactants may appeal to so that they can convey the right degree of politeness to their partners. They are classified into ‘downgraders’ and ‘upgraders’ depending on whether they decrease or increase imposition. Since the whole structure of Imam Ali’s letter consists of commands, which entail imposition, then it is only ‘downgraders’ that are of particular relevance to this work.

Al-Hindawy (ibid.) elucidates, by depending on House and Kasper (1981) and Trosborg (1995), these markers more clearly. He argues that these markers either signal an internal modification (the structure of which can be slipped into the structure of the main act), or an external modification (which has a separate structure and thus external modifiers are usually longer and more explicit). These two types of modification have been illustrated by Al-Hindawy (ibid.) as follows:

Internal Modification

Downgraders that have to do with internal modification include different syntactic and functional mitigating devices.

Syntactic Downgraders

The following syntactic downgraders are listed within this label:

- a. Question: A question is often more polite than a statement or command as it

is the most indirect device (and in the English culture indirect devices are more polite than direct ones (Al-Hindawy, *ibid.*, p. 96)). As the first example is more polite than the second:

- Can you give me a ride?
- You can give me a ride.
- b. Past tense/ negation: These devices are polite because they give the addressee the impression of having freedom in deciding what type of response is required (and so they are the actual realizations of Lakoff's first rule), e.g.:
 - Could you come with me?
 - Couldn't you come with me?
- c. Tag questions: In trying to smoothen the impact of imposition, speakers may appeal to a tag question, e.g.
 - Give me that book, will/won't you?
- d. Conditional clause: This is another device of mitigating imposition, e.g.:
 - How much did you pay for your house, if I may ask.
- e. Embedding: In this downgrader, the impositive act is embedded in a clause that reflects the attitude of the initiator of that act. Embedding shows:
 - Tentativeness: As in, I wonder whether you can explain this matter to me.
 - Appreciation: As in, I would be thankful if you could help me.
 - Subjectivity: As in, I guess you don't mind coming home with me.

Functional Downgraders

This type of downgraders include a number of devices:

- a. Impersonalizing devices: These involve the use of mechanisms in which no explicit reference is made to the performer of the action. This is called 'agent indirection'. The following shows how the use of the pronoun 'you' is avoided:
 - Pass us the newspaper. (i.e. Pass me the newspaper)
- b. Politeness markers: These include expressions such as 'please', 'kindly', and 'so kind as to'; or the use of such titles as 'sir', 'Mr.', 'Madame', etc. These markers indicate deference to the hearer (and so they are the actual realizations of Lakoff's second rule), e.g.
 - Would you be so kind as to give me your book?
 - Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?

- c. Consultative devices: These include such expressions as 'Would you mind',
'Do you think', 'Do you object', etc., e.g.
- Would you mind giving me a hand?
- d. Downtoners: These include such modifiers as 'just', 'simply', 'possibly', 'perhaps', 'rather', etc., to downtone the impositive force of the speech acts, e.g:
- Just tell come with me, will you?
- You might send me a copy of the letter, possibly.
- e. Understatements: These markers have to do with understating, or to some degree, minimizing some aspects of the impositive act, e.g.
- May I have your attention for a minute?
- f. Interpersonal markers: These are devices that reveal the speaker's intention to establish and maintain good and lovely interpersonal relationships (andso they are the actual realizations of Lakoff's third rule). They are classified into:
- Cajolers: which attract the hearer's attention, interest, understanding, etc.
They include such expressions as 'you know', 'you see', 'I mean', etc.
- Appealers: which are intended to stimulate the hearer to respond willingly.
These include: 'right', 'okay', etc.
- In-group language means: which are used to show rapport and equality. They include the use of address terms (e.g. first names), endearments (e.g. dear, darling), and the inclusive 'we' which can be used to mean 'you' or 'me', as in the examples below:
- Let's go on with dinner, eh? (i.e. you)
- Give us a break. (i.e. me)

External Modification

Downgraders that are concerned with externally modifying imposition are of the following types:

- a. Preparators: speakers use devices to prepare the listeners for the utterance to be issued. Preparators fall into three kinds:
- Preparing the content: Such preparators are used to give a clue to the hearer

that what follows is a directive by means of expressing the speaker's attitude

towards the directive, or the proposition referred to in it. Typical examples of such preparators are the so-called 'attention getters' such as 'Excuse me', 'I'm sorry', 'You know something', etc., e.g.

- Excuse me please, what time is it?
- Checking availability: Other preparators are employed to check that the speech act to be issued is indeed within the limits of possible. This type is sometimes called 'enquirers' and sometimes 'pre-sequences', e.g.
- Are you busy right now?
- I wonder if you could spare a moment.
- Asserting the preconditions: This last type of preparators is used to assert the

precondition that the speaker has the right, owing to her/his superiority, that

the hearer do something, e.g.

- I've got something for you to do, you can start type these letters right now.

b. Disarmers: These devices include statements which (like the other downgraders) reduce the impact of imposition by softening the recipient's attitude and motivating her/him to respond willingly, e.g.

- I hate bothering you but....
- I hope I'm not intruding....
- I'm sorry to disturb you but....

c. Supportive reasons: One other way of showing politeness is by giving reasons for issuing a speech act. Presenting an explanation, a justification, etc., might help the addressee grasp the reason behind issuing a speech act, the thing which may lead the addressee to comply willingly with it, e.g.

Could you pass me the salt, please? I can't reach it.

It is to be noted that this paper applied a model developed from a certain culture to a text with a totally different culture. This should not lead one to infer the comprehensiveness of the model, due to the fact that the text had been written very much earlier before the development of the model. So, what should be inferred instead is the comprehensiveness, flexibility and, above all, versatility of interpreting the text.

Some Illustrative Examples for Analysis

In this section, the different classifications of the preceding model are investigated. This is done by highlighting the strategy which represents politeness and the meaning it communicates as far as the impositive act is concerned.

1. هذا ما أمر به عبد الله علي أمير المؤمنين ، مالك بن الحارث الأشتر في عهده إليه ، حين ولاه مصر

(This is what Ali, the servant of Allah and commander of the faithful, commands Malik ibn AL-HarithAL-Ashtar to do when he appointed him as a governor of Egypt) (Translation mine).

The text starts with issuing a direct command (أمر) which is not mitigated by any of the aforementioned devices. This is not to indicate that politeness is not attained to in this initiative command; politeness here plays a secondary role as hinted at before. This is supported by Imam Ali's use of the title (عبد الله) (servant of Allah) to describe himself. The use of this title pinpoints the fact that although Imam Ali is the commander of the faithful, he is first of all a servant of Allah, who issues commands in accordance with the authority given him formally and not subjectively.

It is also necessary to indicate that the use of Malik's full name in this extract does not represent a politeness marker, since this is the crucial command on which the letter as a whole is built. Rather, it is used to remove vagueness and disambiguation. After being set up, the text starts employing different strategies to show politeness, as will be discussed below.

2. أمره بتقوى الله ، وإيثار طاعته ، وإتباع ما أمر به في كتابه ، من فرائضه وسنته ، التي لا يسعد أحد إلا بإتباعها ، ولا يشقى إلا مع جحودها وإضاعتها ، وأن ينصر الله سبحانه بقلبه ويده ولسانه ، فإنه جل اسمه ، قد تكفل بنصر من نصره ، وإعزاز من أعزه . وأمره أن يكسر نفسه من الشهوات ، ويزعها عند الجمحات ، فإن النفس أمارة بالسوء .

[He charged him to fear God, to prefer obedience to Him (over all else) and to follow what He has directed in His Book – both the acts He has made obligatory and those He recommends – for none attains felicity but he who follows His directions, and none is overcome by wretchedness but he who denies them and lets them slip by. (He charged him) to help God-glory be to Him-with his heart, his hand and his tongue, for He-majestic is His Name-has promised to help him who exalts Him. And he charged him to break the passions of his soul and restrain it in its recalcitrance, for the soul incites to evil](1)

In this extract, the 'opening' commands are divided into two parts, where each starts with the verb (أمره):

He charged him to fear God ... who exalts Him

أمره بتقوى الله ... من أعزه

And he charged him to break the passions of his soul... the soul incites to evil

أمره أن يكسر نفسه ... أماراة بالسوء

What is remarked about these commands is their parallel use of two strategies of politeness:

1. The use of the impersonal device which is represented by the verb (أمره) instead of the direct command (أمرك); and
2. The use of supportive reasons, the underlined ones. The supportive reasons here are explanations for issuing the commands.

It is necessary to look for the ground on which these two strategies have been used. Each of these embodies one of the rules in Lakoff's model (the third and second rules, respectively). The use of the impersonal device, according to the third rule, establishes rapport and equality between interactants. Presenting explanations, in turn, implies, according to the second rule, giving the addressee the freedom to make his own decisions. Does this mean that Malik, in this case, has the freedom to comply or not with what Imam Ali commands? Certainly no. The reason why Imam Ali uses these two strategies is that Malik was "one of the most loyal companions" of Imam Ali before being appointed a governor of Egypt (web source 1), and that is why Imam Ali establishes rapport and respect in addition to giving Malik options. This is strongly supported by reviewing these two commands, where it will be noted that they have to do with Malik the companion, not the governor.

When issuing commands concerning people's welfare and public affairs, Imam Ali employs other strategies, as the following extract manifests.

3. ثمّ اعلم يا مالك ! إني قد وجهتك إلى بلاد قد جرت عليها دول قبلك من عدل وجور ، وأن الناس ينظرون من أمورك في مثل ما كنت تنظر فيه من أمور الولاية قبلك ، ويقولون فيك ما كنت تقول فيهم ، وإنما يستدل على الصالحين بما يجري الله لهم على ألسن عباده ، فليكن أحب الذخائر إليك ذخيرة العمل الصالح ، فاملك هواك ، وشح بنفسك عما لا يحل لك ، فإن الشح بالنفس الإنصاف منها فيما أحببت أو كرهت . وأشعر قلبك الرحمة للرعية ، والمحبة لهم ، واللطف بهم ، ولا تكونن عليهم سبعا ضارياً تغتنم أكلهم ، فإنهم صنفان : إما أخ لك في الدين ،

أو نظير لك في الخلق ، يفرط منهم الزلل ، وتعرض لهم العلل ، ويؤتى على أيديهم في العمد والخطأ ، فأعطهم من عفوك وصفحك مثل الذي تحب وترضى أن يعطيك الله من عفوه وصفحه ، فإنك فوقهم ، ووالي الأمر عليك فوقك ، والله فوق من ولاك !

[Be it known to you, O, Malik, that I am sending you as Governor to a country which in the past has experienced both just and unjust rule. Men will scrutinise your actions with a searching eye, even as you used to scrutinise the actions of those before you, and speak of you even as you did speak of them. The fact is that the public speak well of only those who do good. It is they who furnish the proof of your actions. Hence the richest treasure that you may covet would be the treasure of good deeds. Keep your desires under control and deny yourself that which you have been prohibited from, for, by such abstinence alone, you will be able to distinguish between what is good to them and what is not. Develop in your heart the feeling of love for your people and let it be the source of kindness and blessing to them. Do not behave with them like a barbarian, and do not appropriate to yourself that which belongs to them. Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are either your brethren in religion or your brethren in kind. They are subject to infirmities and liable to commit mistakes. Some indeed do commit mistakes. But forgive them even as you would like God to forgive you. Bear in mind that you are placed over them, even as I am placed over you. And then there is God even above him who has given you the position of a Governor](2)

In this extract, the 'tone' of politeness differs from what has been investigated so far. The use of the first name 'Malik' is used here as an in-group language means, which demonstrates rapport and equality. This is the all-and-only, yet an all-inclusive, device that is used in this lengthy extract. This finding makes us infer two things:

1. Imam Ali wants to make Malik feel rapport and equality with him, as both are, now, governors (with the difference that Imam Ali occupies a higher position). As such, Malik should behave in the same way with which his Master acts; and
2. Employing more than one device of politeness might sacrifice seriousness. Worded differently, dealing with people's public affairs and common good is not a matter which affords mitigation; it requires using a highly rhetorical language that communicates what is really required by the person to do, and this is exactly what the wording of this extract communicates.

4. ولا تنصبن نفسك لحرب الله ، فإنه لا يد لك بنقمته ، ولا غنى بك عن عفوهِ ورحمته ، ولا تندمن على عفو ، ولا تبجحن بعقوبة ، ولا تسرعن إلى بادرة وجدت منها مندوحة ، ولا تقولن : إني مؤمر أمر فأطاع ، فإن ذلك أدغال في القلب ، ومنهكة للدين ، وتقرب من الغير ، وإذا أحدث لك ما أنت فيه من سلطانك أبهة أو مخيلة ، فانظر إلى عظم ملك الله فوقك ، وقدرته منك على ما لا تقدر عليه من نفسك ، فإن ذلك يطامن إليك من طماحك ، ويكف عنك من غربك ، وفيء إليك بما عزب عنك من عقلك . إياك ومساماة الله في عظمته ، والتشبه به في جبروته ، فإن الله يذل كل جبار ، ويهين كل مختال .

أنصف الله وأنصف الناس من نفسك ، ومن خاصة أهلك ، ومن لك فيه هوى من رعيتك ، فإنك إلا تفعل تظلم ! ومن ظلم عباد الله كان الله خصمه دون عباده ، ومن خاصمه الله أدحض حجته ، وكان لله حرباً حتى ينزع أو يتوب . وليس شيء أدعى إلى تغيير نعمة الله وتعجيل نقمته من إقامة على ظلم ، فإن الله سميع دعوة المضطهدين ، وهو للظالمين بالمرصاد .

[Do not set yourself against God, for neither do you possess the strength to shield yourself against His displeasure, nor can you place yourself outside the pale of His mercy and forgiveness. Do not feel sorry over any act of forgiveness, nor rejoice over any punishment that you may mete out to anyone. Do not rouse yourself to anger, for no good will come out of it.

Do not say: "I am your overlord and dictator, and that you should, therefore, bow to my commands", as that will corrupt your heart, weaken your faith in religion and create disorder in the state. Should you be elated by power, ever feel in your mind the slightest symptoms of pride and arrogance, then look at the power and majesty of the Divine governance of the Universe over which you have absolutely no control. It will restore the sense of balance to your wayward intelligence and give you the sense of calmness and affability. Beware! Never put yourself against the majesty and grandeur of God and never imitate His omnipotence; for God has brought low every rebel of God and every tyrant of man].

In this extract, as well as the rest of the text, the only strategy of politeness explored is the presentation of supportive reasons, i.e. explanation in this text. As a matter of fact, the employment of this strategy needs some close inspection. This text, as Darweesh and Mirza

(2014) argue, exhibits two types of reasoning: inductive (which involves giving the conclusion first, and then providing supportive reasons, logically speaking), and deductive (which is the reverse of the inductive: giving supportive reasons first and then reaching the conclusion). As far as politeness is concerned, it does not matter whether the supportive reason (be it an explanation or a justification) comes first or last. For example, there is no such huge difference between issuing the first and the second acts for both communicate the same thing:

It is hot in here. Can you open the door?

Can you open the door, it is hot in here?

However, Darweesh and Mirza (ibid.) state that when explanations are given first, then they have an important role to play (other than that of politeness which occupies a secondary position in this case): moulding the addressee's mind to cope with the standpoint being tackled. This means that explanation in this text is double-rolled: first for politeness reasons, and second for enhancing the comprehensibility of the addressee.

Conclusions

The paper comes up with finding out that the text employs a descending scale of politeness starting with the use of impersonal devices to establish rapport and equality and ends with presenting deductive explanations that play a secondary role. This can be proved by noticing that Imam Ali first starts by employing various strategies of politeness when addressing Malik, the companion. When addressing him as a governor, only one strategy is used in order not to lose seriousness. Moreover, Lakoff's first rule, which impedes intrusion, does not apply to this text. This is quite logical because the relationship between Imam Ali and Malik is not reciprocal, that is, they cannot exchange positions due to the fact that Imam Ali is of a higher position and status. In other words, it is because of these factors that intrusion has no place to be mentioned, i.e. whatever Imam Ali commands cannot be, in any way, considered intrusion as he is addressing a governor about people's lives. Additionally, the only three strategies used have been employed rhetorically and deliberately to embody politeness in a salient way. Furthermore, the unemployment of the other classifications of Lakoff's model is justified by two things: first cultural differences, and second the channel of communication is writing, which has certain characteristics that distinguish it from the other kind of communication, i.e. speaking. Added to that, politeness has been first seeded in the Arabic tradition way before its western counterpart. This can be clearly proved by the fact Lakoff's model which is developed in 1977 has been easily applied to a

text that is far removed in time from the date of the model's development in addition to its (i.e. text) being created from another culture. Finally, strategies of politeness are infinite. They are as such owing to the fact that this concept is culture-sensitive. Consequently, what is politely applied in one culture does not have its own reflections or realizations in another. Each has its own being.

Notes:

1. The translation of the second extract is taken from Sewadi (2010, p. 36).
2. The translation of the rest of the text is Armstrong's, unless otherwise indicated. It is cited in: <http://paularmstrong.com/articles/caliph-ali-letter-to-malik-ashtar/>
3. It is to be pointed out that the version of the text under analysis is taken from web source 2, due to the availability of many versions.

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- b. Web sources
- Web source 1:
- <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/>
- Web source 2:
- <http://arabic.rt.com/forum/showthread.php/37309->
- Web source 3:
- <http://paulsarmstrong.com/articles/caliph-ali-letter-to-malik-ashtar/>