How do celebrities respond to criticism in media interviews? The case of an Egyptian TV show

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Abstract: The current study examined the realization of the speech act of responding to criticism within the context of televised interviews with celebrities. A total of 146 male and female celebrities’ responses to criticism in a popular Egyptian TV show were transcribed and analyzed. The analysis aimed to develop an adapted model of criticism-response strategies that suit the context of media interviews and to examine the influence of gender on the celebrities’ responses to criticism. In addition to developing the target model, the analysis showed the celebrities’ preference to respond to criticism explicitly through the strategies of disagreement, providing counter-evidence and justifying the speaker’s criticized action while avoiding confrontations. Additionally, the celebrities’ responses did not show much significant differences across gender. The findings are interpreted in light of the existing literature, the influence of genre on the realization of speech acts and relevant theoretical models.

Keywords: responding to criticism; speech act; genre; media interviews; criticizing; celebrities

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Have you ever wondered how celebrities respond to criticism in media interviews? Have you been curious to know whether male celebrities use different strategies than female celebrities while handling criticism in the media context? The current study helps you find answers to these questions through analyzing a total of 146 responses to criticism by celebrities of both sexes at a popular Egyptian TV show. Through reading this article, you will learn about a new model that the author developed to represent the different criticism-response strategies used by the celebrities within this context. You will also discover the strategies the celebrities use the most and the ones they try to avoid. Additionally, you will find out how gender influences the celebrities’ responses. While reading, you will enjoy the comparisons made with earlier studies and the interpretation of results in relation to theoretical models.
1. Introduction
The current study examines the realization of the speech act of responding to criticism, an extremely under-researched speech act in the pragmatic literature. Responding to criticism involves reacting to the speech act of criticizing, which can be defined as “an illocutionary act whose illocutionary point is to give negative evaluation of the hearer’s actions, choice of words and products for which he or she may be held responsible” (Nguyen, 2005, p.7). Criticizing often aims to show the speaker’s dissatisfaction with the hearer’s behavior and to urge the hearer to improve his/her behavior in the future. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness Theory, criticizing is considered a face-threatening act as it runs contrary to the face wants of the addressee. As Cao (2005) explains, the speech act of criticizing threatens both the hearer’s positive face, which refers to one’s desire to be appreciated and approved, as well as the hearer’s negative face, which reflects one’s desire to enjoy freedom of action, as criticizing calls the hearer’s action into question and requires a change of the hearer’s future action. Responding to criticism is therefore a highly sensitive act since the hearer’s reaction to criticism requires careful consideration of a number of factors, including his/her status in relation to the speaker, the history of their relationship, the severity and sincerity of the content of the criticism, the audience involved, etc. Responding to criticism adequately and in a way that best serves the hearer’s purposes is thus a daunting task which involves careful assessment of the hearer’s proper position on a confrontation-conciliation continuum.

The current study examines the speech act of responding to criticism within the genre of TV shows which involve interviewing celebrities. The study aims to examine the criticism-response strategies employed by celebrities in the context of media interviews, develop a model that represents these strategies and investigate the effect of gender on how celebrities respond to criticism. A popular Egyptian TV show, entitled “Sheikh AlHara” (= The Neighborhood Mayor), was aired in 2017, 2018 and 2019 during the holy month of Ramadan. The show was presented by a popular Egyptian TV hostess and each episode lasted for an hour. The show included interviews with male and female Arab celebrities, each for the period of one or, in a few cases, two episodes. A main part of the program was a section entitled “They said about you” in which the hostess would convey criticism cited by the press, public or certain public figures against the guest and ask the guest to respond to this criticism. Examining the celebrities’ criticism-response strategies within media interviews reflects a belief that the location of speech acts in a specific genre, i.e., media interviews, is an important determinant of their occurrence and interpretation (Hiraga & Turner, 1996). As Araújo (2012) comments, genres typify participants’ actions when shaping interactions, and thus the realization of one and the same speech act may differ from one genre to another.

In addition to examining the influence of gender and genre, the current study represents a significant contribution to the literature for several reasons. First, research on the speech act of responding to criticism is notably scarce. Hence, new studies in this area fill a real gap in the literature. Second, the current study is conducted on the Arabic language, an underrepresented language in the pragmatic literature. Contributions from Arabic will be particularly interesting since the language represents a different culture than the commonly examined ones in the pragmatic literature. Third, the current study examines naturalistic speech as used by celebrities in real (not simulated) televised interviews. A number of earlier studies on speech acts relied on unnaturalistic data that were collected through discourse completion tasks and questionnaires, which cast doubt whether these studies represent authentic language as produced in real life-contexts (Nguyen, 2017). As Wolfson (1989) explains, what participants think they would say can be totally different than what they will actually say under communicative pressure.

2. Literature review
The speech act of criticizing has generally received less attention in the literature than other speech acts including requests, greetings and compliments (Don & Izadi, 2013). Studies on criticizing have been conducted in both the written and oral modes of communication. In writing, a number of studies examined the evaluative language of book reviews (e.g., Araújo, 2012; Hyland, 2004; Itakura & Tsui, 2011), teachers’ and peer feedback on students’ work (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2001, 2006; Lee, 2009) and criticism through electronic communication (e.g., Hosseinizadeh & Moqadam, 2019;
Lü, 2018). As for oral communication, sample studies include analyses of televised talent competitions (Chen & Rau, 2015; Tang, 2016), teacher-student interaction (e.g., Cao, 2005; El-Dakhs, Ambreen, Zaheer, & Gusarova, 2019; Riekkinen, 2010) and the pragmatic competence of language learners (e.g., Nguyen, 2013, 2008a, 2008b). In Arabic, studies on the speech act of criticizing are scarce. The only studies the author is aware of are Etaywe (2017a, 2017b) on Arabic academic book reviews. The relatively little attention researchers have paid to the speech act of criticizing led to a true dearth of studies into how people respond to criticism (Nguyen, 2005). The literature highlights a limited number of studies that examined the speech act of responding to criticism.

The earliest study that addressed the speech act of responding to criticism is Hiraga and Turner (1996). Comparing the student-tutor interactions in British and Japanese academic settings where tutors initiate criticisms, Hiraga and Turner (1996) noted significant cross-cultural differences between the two contexts. While British students paid great attention to their own face wants, Japanese students showed more concern for the tutor’s positive face. Additionally, British students and tutors dealt carefully with the negative face of each other, particularly the students who seemed to take special care of their own negative face. In contrast, neither Japanese tutors nor students showed serious concern for their own negative face or the negative face of their interlocutors. A cross-cultural interpretation of these differences referred to the egalitarian relationship between students and teachers in British academic settings and the more hierarchical and authority-based relation between students and teachers in Japanese settings.

Hiraga and Turner (1996) also identified five broad categories that their participants employed while responding to criticism. The categories included conciliation, negotiation, defending, resigning and non-elaboration. Conciliation involved agreement to the criticism and commitment to the critic’s suggestions. Negotiation referred to rejecting the criticism while employing a softener to minimize the threat to the critic’s face. Defending involved rejecting the criticism in protection of the speaker’s own face. Resigning referred to acknowledging the criticism while offering alternative suggestions. Finally, non-elaboration involved ignoring the criticism and addressing it only at face-value. Use of these categories varied across individuals, cultures and situations.

Another study that similarly followed a cross-cultural approach is Tuan (2010) who compared the Americans’ and Chinese’s reactions to criticism. More specifically, the study examined the influence of the speaker’s gender on his/her responses to criticism in situations where there is power asymmetry between the interlocutors. The statistical comparisons failed to reveal any significant influence for the speaker’s gender in his/her responses to criticisms. Interestingly, however, the addressee’s gender turned to be most influential. Participants were more likely to display aggravated disagreements with female addressees and mitigated disagreements with male addressees. These results were interpreted in light of a power/dominance approach to gender differences where individuals exhibiting more societal power (i.e., males) receive less direct forms of opposition. Tuan (2010) also identified five broad criticism-response strategies that were useful for the study purpose. The strategies included apology, counterclaim (= providing reasons without openly stating direct opposition), contradiction (= direct repudiation of the interlocutor’s claim), challenge (= disagreement while not making specific claims) and accusation.

More recently, a number of studies have examined criticism-criticism response sequences in the institutional contexts of MA/PhD vivas. The use of the viva as a context proved useful as “it demonstrates how criticism is accomplished in a speech event in which it is not only a common discourse function but also a sanctionable (if highly constrained) form of behavior” (Don & Izadi, 2013, p. 230). For instance, Don and Izadi (2013) and Izadi (2013, 2014, 2017) revealed that vivas involve a combination of pre-allocated as well as negotiated turns. It was also observed that examiners’ criticisms generally start smoothly, but the following criticism responses by MA/PhD candidates, often through defending their theses and clarifying aspects of their work, influence the quality of the subsequent turns. With increasing argumentation, adversarial competition on turn-taking won over collaborative negotiations of turns. The increasing argumentation also impacted the relational connection and separation between the examiners and...
candidates and their supervisors with a notable increase in the amount of separation. Additionally, the studies highlighted that the viva criticism acts involved mixed messages of positivity and negativity. Positivity was reflected in the use of mitigating strategies, such as hedging, downgrading and uncertainty, and aimed to establish solidarity with fellow community members (candidates and their supervisors) and, hence, maintain connections with them. Negativity, however, featured the use of aggravating strategies, including boosting, repetition and emphasis, which established separation from the candidates and their supervisors.

Studies on the speech act of responding to criticism were also conducted within the domain of interlanguage pragmatics. Two significant studies in this regard are Hiraga, Fujii, and Turner (2003) and Nguyen (2005). Hiraga et al. (2003) examined the difficulties of pragmatic understanding faced by Japanese students studying in Great Britain tutorial sessions with British tutors. Similar to Hiraga and Turner (1996), Hiraga et al. (2003) explained these difficulties in terms of cross-cultural differences in tutor–student interactive patterns. British tutors tended to view students as full members of the discourse community and thus addressed any face-threatening acts to students implicitly and expected students to exercise their critical appraisal and voice inquiries, worries and doubts. Japanese students, however, were more used to the authoritarian interaction prevalent in the Japanese context and thus did not expect much attendance to their own face. The students also tended to follow instructions rather than criticize or explore on their own. Hiraga et al. (2003) also identified another contributing factor to the Japanese students’ pragmatic difficulties. The dominant values behind the assessment of students’ performance and progress widely varied between the British and Japanese contexts. For example, being analytical referred to independent evaluation and critique in Britain while it involved careful execution of requirement in Japan.

As for Nguyen (2005), the study examined the L2 pragmatic development in the use of criticizing and responding to criticism among Vietnamese EFL learners. The results revealed major differences between L1 and L2 speakers in performing the two speech acts, and found little evidence of any proficiency effect on the L2 learners’ pragmatic development. The results also identified repeated instances of pragmatic transfer in the learners’ production. The findings were interpreted in light of the study foreign language learning context where learners receive insufficient exposure to the target language. Nguyen (2005) also developed a model of criticism-response strategies with adaptation from Hiraga and Turner (1996). Nguyen’s (2005) model, which contributed to the development of the criticism-response model for media interviews that is presented in the current study, included the broad categories of total acceptance, partial acceptance and total resistance (see Appendix A for details).

The current study takes the research into the speech act of responding to criticism to a new context, which is televised interviews. Similar to Hiraga and Turner (1996) and Don and Izadi (2013), the researcher believes that the occurrence of a speech act within a particular genre or a specific institutionalized context typifies the participants’ production and constrains their behavior, which is why examining speech acts within specific genres/contexts is recommended. The current study addresses the following research questions:

1. What criticism-response strategies do Egyptian celebrities use in televised interviews?
2. How frequently are the criticism-response strategies used?
3. What is the effect of gender on the use of these strategies?

3. Methodology

3.1. Study context

As explained in the introduction, the televised interviews under examination in the current study were extracted from a popular TV show that hosted celebrities and was aired daily during the holy month of Ramadan in 2017 and 2018. The part that was analyzed in the current study, titled “They said about you,” included criticism cited by the media or public figures against the hosted
celebrities. The TV hostess would show a relevant video to the criticism, mention the criticism to
the guest and seek his/her response (see examples 1 + 2). The TV show was broadcast on a popular
Egyptian TV Channel Alkahera Wal Nas (= Cairo and People) and received high viewing ratings. The
show did not include phone-ins.

Example (1)—Sample video + follow-up criticism

The hostess showed a video extracted from another TV show in which the hosted actress was
explaining the reasons behind her three marriages. Then, the hostess asked the guest:

“They said that all your marriages are marriages of convenience.”

Example (2)—Sample video + follow-up criticism

The hostess showed a video extracted from another TV show in which an actress was explaining
that she had worked with the hosted film producer without receiving her payment. Then, the
hostess enquired:

They said that you don’t give the stars their due payment.

It must be noted that the hostess and guests repeatedly emphasized that the guests had not seen
the videos off air and prepared to address the criticism on air.

3.2. Participants

The current study involved an examination of interviews with 33 celebrities (16 male and 17
female). All guests were Egyptian and the interviews were conducted in colloquial Arabic. The
female guests included actresses, film directors, dancers, singers, TV show hostesses and script
writers. As for the male participants, they included film producers, composers, footballers, TV show
hosts, singers and members of parliament. A total of 146 responses to criticism were examined in
the current study, equally divided between the male and female participants.

3.3. Data collection

Since naturalistic data are desirable for the study of speech acts (Nguyen, 2017), the current study
relies on examining the speech act of responding to criticism within the natural context of
television interviews. While watching the interviews on YouTube, the researcher transcribed the
hostess’s criticism as well as the guest’s responses. However, any follow-up questions for clarification
by the hostess were not transcribed since these follow-up questions and answers did not
display instances of criticism. For example, the researcher transcribed the hostess’s criticism to
a hosted footballer “They said that your disagreements with X footballer stem out of jealousy,” as
well as the guest’s responses. However, the follow-up question “Why are there many disagree-
ments in the sports context?” along with the guest’s response were not transcribed.

3.4. Data coding

The researcher initially attempted to code the celebrities’ responses to criticism using Nguyen’s
(2005) model of criticism-response strategies (see Appendix A), which had been adapted from
Hiraga and Turner’s (1996) categorization of criticism response strategies and formulas. Nguyen’s
(2005) model was chosen because it seemed easy to use and included three broad categories that
fit the criticism-response context; namely, total acceptance, partial acceptance and total resis-
tance. During the actual data coding, however, modifications were introduced to reflect language
as naturally produced in the televised interviews. Further details on the newly adapted model can
be found in the results section and in Appendix B.

4. Results

This section is divided as per the study research questions.
4.1. What criticism-response strategies do Egyptian celebrities use in televised interviews?
The participants’ criticism-response strategies were categorized into the broad categories of (1) total acceptance, (2) partial acceptance, (3) total resistance and (4) digression. Under the category of “total acceptance,” three strategies were employed. First, the strategy of “agreement” expressed the speaker’s approval of the criticism. Second, the strategy of “explanation” entailed that the speaker justify why he/she performed the criticized action. Third, the strategy of “offer to repair” involved the speaker in promising to take a different course of action in the future. See examples (3) and (4) for illustration.

Example 3—Total acceptance strategies

Hostess: They said that you hate the press.
Celebrity: I do hate them [strategy: agreement]. When I got married, a news headline read that I joined the divorced club after two months of marriage. This was because I had joined a TV series with the title “The Divorced Women.” And so many other headlines bother me. They write strange headlines … why so? I tweeted a number of times to the journalists’ union leader and told him to rid the union of such journalists [strategy: explanation].

Example 4—Total acceptance strategies

Hostess: They said that you did not have enough experience to handle this episode.
Celebrity: Certainly, certainly, that’s for sure [strategy: agreement]. If I were to go through the same situation with the same guest now, I wouldn’t tell him, “Go” if he said “I’d like to go.” [strategy: offer to repair]

As for the second broad category of “partial acceptance,” only one strategy was observed for its realization; namely; agreement to only one part of the criticism. This is illustrated in Example 5.

Example (5)—Partial acceptance strategy

Hostess: They said that you regret criticizing the January rebels.
Celebrity: I don’t regret my opinion, but I regret the way I expressed it [strategy: agreement with only one part of the criticism].

The third broad category of “total resistance” featured 10 strategies. The disagreement strategy entailed the speaker’s rejection of the criticism. The correction strategy involved the speaker in correcting the wrong information cited by the critic. The provision of counter-evidence strategy entailed that the speaker provide evidence contrary to the critic’s claims. The strategy of indicating a standard involved the speaker in stating a principle, sometimes in the form of a common saying, to refute the criticism. Examples (6) and (7) illustrate the use of these strategies.

Example (6)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that you were trying here to please the Muslim Brotherhood.
Celebrity: Never, I swear by God [strategy: disagreement]. I was trying to serve my country and wanted my country’s best interests [strategy: correction].

Example (7)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that you have a grudge against the Ministry of Interior.
Celebrity: The only one in Egypt, and your TV channel stands as a witness, … who kept defending the Ministry of Interior and its people during the January 25 Revolution throughout the first 18 days was me. People even called me … the Ministry of Interior’s guy … [strategy:
providing counter-evidence] The Ministry of Interior must accept criticism as much as it accepts praise. [strategy: indicating a standard]

At other times, the speaker opted to criticize the critic openly, express irony of the criticism or reveal the true reasons why the critic was attacking the speaker (i.e., the strategy of justifying the critic’s comment). Examples (8), (9) and (10) illustrate these strategies.

Example (8)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: [This actor] said that you criticized the revolution, but then celebrated its success. 
Celebrity: [This actor] turned out to be a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood ... . He and others, receiving fund to instigate the people, were issuing daily statements of insults against us because nobody at that time imagined that the media of Egypt could point out to the conspiracy. [strategy: criticizing the critic]

Example (9)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that your marriages are all marriages of convenience. 
Celebrity: Certainly. This is a must. My first husband, the film producer, made me 40 films ... . I was looking for my interests from the first day. [strategy: irony] Surely not ... I never got married for personal gains. [strategy: disagreement]

Example (10)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that you insult people in the studio. 
Celebrity: No, I never say bad words at work. [strategy: disagreement] What this actress said is untrue. Her role consisted of 4 scenes. When she read the scenario, she said she’d do it. After she played the role, she thought that this was too little. You see? So, she claimed that I insulted her and removed her role. [strategy: justifying the critic’s comment]

Three other total resistance strategies were employed by the speaker. He/she sometimes expressed surprise learning about the criticism, asked the critic and/or hostess for evidence to support their criticism or justified his/her action in a way that refutes the criticism. Examples (11), (12) and (13) illustrate these strategies.

Example (11)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that your hot scenes at the movies made men run away from you. 
Celebrity: Run away from me?! [strategy: expressing surprise] No, they don’t run away or anything. Not true. [strategy: disagreement]

Example (12)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that you play seductive movie roles to gain wide fame. 
Celebrity: Where are these seductive roles? I don’t know of any seductive roles for me. Where are these seductive roles? (strategy: seeking evidence)

Example (13)—Total resistance strategies

Hostess: They said that you were trying to get close to a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in this phone call. 
Celebrity: I was not trying to get close to him. [strategy: disagreement]. I am a journalist. I meet everyone and interview everyone. I am not a politician. I am not a member of a political
party. And if he gets out of jail, I’ll meet him and interview him. This is just normal. [strategy: justifying the speaker’s action]

In addition to the broad categories of total acceptance, partial acceptance and total resistance, the speaker sometimes opted to digress as shown in Example (14).

Example (14)—Digression

Hostess: They said that you agreed to let your guest leave the studio to make ends meet.
Celebrity: I am happy that you started [the show] with such fierce attack. [strategy: digression]

Figure 1 represents my proposed model for the criticism-response strategies celebrities use in media interviews based on the analysis in the current study.

4.2. How frequently are the criticism-response strategies used?
In order to examine how frequently celebrities used criticism-response strategies, the number of strategies were computed and percentages calculated. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 2, the broad category of “total resistance” dominated the scene with a percentage of 92% of the total number of strategies employed in the transcribed criticism-responses. A minimal role was assigned to other strategies including total acceptance (5%), digression (2%) and partial acceptance (1%). Interestingly, the total resistance strategies with the highest frequency were the provision of counter-evidence (24%), justifying the speaker’s action (17%) and disagreement (16%).

Regarding the frequency of the combinations of criticism-response strategies, the most frequent combinations were disagreement + justifying the speaker’s action (6.8%), disagreement and providing counter-evidence (5.5%) and disagreement + justifying the speaker’s action and providing counter-evidence (3.4%) as shown in Table 2.
4.3. What is the effect of gender on the use of these strategies?
In order to examine the effect of gender on the criticism-response strategies, a T-test was run to compare the responses of the male and female participants. As shown in Table 3, women
employed only three strategies significantly more than men; namely, partial acceptance, indicating a standard and correction.

5. Discussion
The current study addressed three questions in relation to the Egyptian celebrities’ use of criticism-response strategies in televised interviews. The first question aimed to identify the criticism-response strategies based on the naturalistic data collected from a popular Egyptian TV show. Examining the data resulted in constructing a model of criticism-response strategies including the broad categories of (1) total acceptance, (2) partial acceptance, (3) total resistance and (4) digression with each category including one or more strategies. The model is mainly an adaptation of Nguyen’s (2005) model which seemed to fit the context of televised interviews only partially. The need to adapt Nguyen’s (2005) model supports the proposition that the location of speech acts in a specific genre determines their occurrence and interpretation (Hiraga & Turner, 1996) and that genre shapes participants’ interaction (Araújo, 2005). Nguyen’s (2005) model was adapted from Hiraga and Turner (1996) model which mainly addressed the genre of tutorials. Nguyen’s (2005) study was based on a peer-feedback task through which students criticized their peers’ work and responded to their peers’ criticism of their own work as well. The current study, however, addressed the genre of televised interviews. The change of genre required changes in the model of analysis. For example, Nguyen’s (2005) strategies of “admission of difficulty,” “seeking help” and “complimenting” suit the student peer-feedback context while they were not represented in televised interviews. It is worth noting that a number of researchers have realized the influential role genre and institutionalized discourse play in the realization of speech acts. Reference can be made to earlier studies on

| Combination of Strategies | Number | Frequency |
|---------------------------|--------|-----------|
| Disagreement + Justifying speaker’s action | 10     | 6.8%      |
| Disagreement + Providing counter-evidence | 8      | 5.5%      |
| Disagreement + Justifying speaker’s action + Providing counter-evidence | 5      | 3.4%      |
| Agreement + Explanation | 4      | 2.7%      |
| Justifying critic’s comment + Providing counter-evidence + Indicating a standard | 4      | 2.7%      |
| Justifying speaker’s action | 4      | 2.7%      |
| Providing counter-evidence | 4      | 2.7%      |
| Disagreement + Justifying critic’s comment + Indicating a standard | 3      | 2.1%      |
| Disagreement + Correction | 3      | 2.1%      |
| Justifying speaker’s action + Criticizing the critic | 3      | 2.1%      |
| Justifying speaker’s action + Providing counter-evidence | 3      | 2.1%      |
| Providing counter-evidence + Indicating a standard | 3      | 2.1%      |

| Strategy | Gender | Mean  | SD    | T     | Sig |
|----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Partial Acceptance | Male | 0.0000 | 0.00000 | -2.043 | 0.043 |
|           | Female | 0.0548 | 0.22915 |       |     |
| Indicating a Standard | Male | 0.2192 | 0.41655 | -2.194 | 0.030 |
|           | Female | 0.4110 | 0.61994 |       |     |
| Correction | Male | 0.0548 | 0.22915 | -3.148 | 0.002 |
|           | Female | 0.2329 | 0.42559 |       |     |
tutorials (e.g., Hiraga et al., 2003; Hiraga & Turner, 1996) and MA/PhD vivas (e.g., Don & Izadi, 2013; Izadi, 2013, 2014).

The second research question aimed to examine the frequency with which the identified criticism-response strategies were used. The findings showed that the category of total resistance represented 92% of the total responses. This high percentage refuted Hall’s (1976) categorical description of the Arab World as a culture that prefers the use of implicit messages to maintain interpersonal relations as well as Hofstede’s (2001)’s collectivist description of the Arab World for their commitment to loyalty and support to others over their own interests. In the context of televised interviews, Egyptian celebrities preferred to defend and preserve their positive public image through explicit criticism-response strategies, particularly the strategies of disagreement, providing counter-evidence and justifying the speaker’s actions.

It must be noted, however, that Egyptian celebrities often delivered explicit, yet not confrontational, messages. This becomes obvious when one considers the frequency of use of the total resistance strategies. The most confrontational strategies were much less frequently used than the less confrontational ones. For example, the strategies of criticizing the critic, justifying the critic’s comment and seeking evidence represented 9%, 5% and 3% respectively of the total number of criticism-response strategies while the strategies of providing counter-evidence and justifying the speaker’s action stood for 24% and 17% respectively. Hence, celebrities often preferred to defend themselves using strategies that do not directly attack or challenge the critics. This comes in line with Egyptian cultural norms which prefer to save the other’s face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and avoid confrontations even with one’s enemies. For example, two famous Egyptian proverbs say “Lucky is the one who has the power yet forgives” and “Lucky is the one who spent his night suffering from injustice than the one inflicting injustice.” Similarly, a Quranic verse says, “And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend,” (Chapter 41- Surah Fussilat—Verse 34). The important role culture plays in the realization of speech acts is well documented in the literature (e.g., Hiraga et al., 2003; Hiraga & Turner, 1996)

The third research question examined the role of gender in the criticism-response strategies. The results showed minor significant differences in favor of female celebrities in the use of partial acceptance, indicating a standard and correction. These results come in line with Tuan’s (2010) similar failure to find a significant role for gender in the realization of the speech act of responding to criticism among Americans and Chinese. Tuan (2010), however, found an influence for the addressee’s gender with female addressees receiving more messages of aggravated disagreement. In the current study, comparisons between male and female addressees were not applicable since the TV show was always presented by the same hostess. Besides, the hostess’s continuous emphasis on her role as a hostess conveying others’ criticism led the guests to attack the criticism/critic, not the hostess. It is worth noting that gender differences may not have reached significance in the current study because the criticism-responses were all produced in the same genre. As suggested earlier, genre typifies the participants’ actions (Araújo, 2005) and thus reduce within-group differences. Gender differences failed to show in other similar studies within well-defined genres (e.g., El-Dakhs et al., 2019).

6. Conclusion
The current study examined the criticism-response strategies used by Egyptian celebrities in televised interviews with the aim of contributing to our understanding of how the speech act of responding to criticism, which is largely under-researched in the literature, is realized. The results led to the development of a model of criticism-response strategies that suits the context of televised interviews with celebrities. The model was an adaptation from Nguyen (2005) and Hiraga and Turner (1996) who devised models of criticism-response strategies that suit educational contexts (i.e., tutorials between teachers and students and peer-feedback tasks among
students). The need to develop an adapted model for the purpose of the current study lends support to the proposal that genre is a significant determinant of the occurrence and interpretation of speech acts (e.g., Araújo, 2005; Hiraga & Turner, 1996) and calls for further research on speech acts within different genres. Further research is particularly needed on the speech act of responding to criticism since earlier research is still scarce. It is also recommended to conduct more studies on criticism-responses within televised interviews to assess the effectiveness of the model developed in the current study against more data.

The current study also presents implications for data collection and analysis while examining the realization of speech acts. First, naturalistic data are highly desirable (Nguyen, 2017). The findings in the current study reveal how the participants naturally use the language, rather than how they think they will use it (Wolfson, 1989). It is recommended for future studies on dialogue analysis to collect natural data to enhance the authenticity of results. Second, cultural values, just like genre, constitute an essential dimension of analyzing how speech acts are realized. The interlocutors’ culture exerts a great impact on their preferred strategies. Finally, dialogue studies must be examined with a holistic perspective as relevant factors influence one another. For instance, in the current study, similar to others (e.g., El-Dakhs et al., 2019), the effect of gender may have been greatly reduced due to the influence of genre.

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Appendix A. Nguyen’s (2005) adaptation of Hiraga and Turner (1996) categorization of criticism response strategies and formulas

| Type                      | Examples                                                                 |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Total acceptance:      |                                                                          |
| a. Agreement              | “Yeah, that’s right” (NE), “yeah I haven’t paragraphed it” (L).          |
| b. Offer of repair        | “I won’t do that next time” (L), “I’ll pay attention to it” (L), “I’ll make it more simple” (L). |
| c. Seeking help           | “How would you change if you were me?” (L), “What is the best way to reorganize?” (L), “Can you give me some advice?” (L), “What you would have done differently?” (NE) |
| d. Admission of difficulty| “I didn’t know what to write then” (NE), “I’ve never been good at that” (NE). |
| e. Explanation            | “I was just trying to make it to the word limit. I had written all I had wanted to say, yet still hadn’t reached the word limit. So I had to add in words to make up for it” (NE). |
| f. Complimenting          | “You know when I talk about my ah my own writing I think we should be ah (.) I should have used some kind of opposing ideas, that is in the case because I can LEARN this from your ah your writing” (L). |
| 2. Partial acceptance:    |                                                                          |
| a. Agreement with one part and disagreement with another | “I think sometimes my essay lacks in kind words but as a whole my essay is coherent” (L). |
| b. Offer of alternatives to the critic’s suggestions | “But I think I should use general examples, not specific examples” (L). |
| 3. Total resistance:      |                                                                          |
| a. Disagreement           | “Well, regarding this point, I don’t think adding something about my own experience would really increase the value of my argument” (NE), “I think I used enough and relevant linking words” (L). |
| b. Return of criticism    | “As we talk about structures I also want to say that you used only ‘That’ structure. That, that, that, that all the time” (NV). |
| c. Justification          | “I thought that putting in those points were relevant as they explained my argument further” (NE). |
| d. Seeking evidence       | “Could you point out where?” (L), “In what way did I wander off track?” (NE) |
| e. Opting out             | Anything else?                                                          |

L, Learner; NE, English native speaker; NV, Vietnamese native speaker.
## Appendix B. Proposed categorization of criticism response strategies in media interviews

| Strategy            | Definition                                                                 | Example                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agreement           | The speaker expresses agreement to the critic’s comment.                    | Hostess: They said that you did not have enough experience to handle this episode.  
Celebrity: Certainly, certainly, that’s for sure. |
| Explanation         | The speaker explains why s/he actually commits the action under criticism.  | Hostess: They said that you hate the press.  
Celebrity: ... ... ... ... ... When I got married, a news headline read that I joined the divorced club after two months of marriage. This was because I had joined a TV series with the title “The Divorced Women.” And so many other headlines bother me. They write strange headlines ... why so? |
| Offer to repair     | The speaker proposes a way to repair his/her action which was criticized.     | Hostess: They said that you did not have enough experience to handle this episode.  
Celebrity: ... ... ... ... ... If I were to go through the same situation with the same guest now, I wouldn’t tell him, “Go” if he said “I’d like to go.” |

### Total acceptance

A main category including agreement, explanation and offer to repair.

- **Agreement with one part**  
The speaker expresses partial agreement to the criticism.  
Hostess: They said that you regret criticizing the January rebels.  
Celebrity: I don’t regret my opinion, but I regret the way I expressed it

### Partial acceptance

A main category including total acceptance.

- **Disagreement**  
The speaker disagrees to the criticism.  
Hostess: They said that you insult people in the studio.  
Celebrity: No, I never say bad words at work.

#### Justifying the speaker’s action

The speaker rejects the criticism and justifies why his/her action is acceptable.  
Hostess: They said that you were trying to get close to a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in this phone call.  
Celebrity: ... ... ... ... ... I am a journalist. I meet everyone and interview everyone. I am not a politician. I am not a member of a political party. And if he gets out of jail, I’ll meet him and interview him. This is just normal.

#### Justifying the critic’s comment

The speaker rejects the criticism and explains why the critic cited this criticism.  
Hostess: They said that you insult people in the studio.  
Celebrity: ... ... ... ... . What this actress said is untrue. Her role consisted of 4 scenes. When she read the scenario, she said she’d do it. After she played the role, she thought that this was too little. You see? So, she claimed that I insulted her and removed her role.

- **Expressing surprise**  
The speaker expresses surprise to the criticism.  
Hostess: They said that your hot scenes at the movies made men run away from you.  
Celebrity: Run away from me??!

(Continued)
| Strategy                  | Definition                                                                 | Example                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Criticizing the critic   | The speaker expresses criticism against the critic.                         | Hostess: [This actor] said that you criticized the revolution, but then celebrated its success. Celebrity: [This actor] turned out to be a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood ... He and others, receiving fund to instigate the people, were issuing daily statements of insults against us because nobody at that time imagined that the media of Egypt could point out to the conspiracy. |
| Providing counter-evidence | The speaker provides evidence to prove the criticism wrong.                  | Hostess: They said that you have a grudge against the Ministry of Interior. Celebrity: The only one in Egypt, and your TV channel stands as a witness, ... who kept defending the Ministry of Interior and its people during the January 25 Revolution throughout the first 18 days was me. People even called me “the Ministry of Interior’s guy.” |
| Irony                    | The speaker makes fun of the criticism.                                     | Hostess: They said that your marriages are all marriages of convenience. Celebrity: Certainly. This is a must. My first husband, the film producer, made me 40 films ... I was looking for my interests from the first day. |
| Indicating a standard    | The speaker indicates a standard that the criticism fails to fulfill.        | Hostess: They said that you have a grudge against the Ministry of Interior. Celebrity: ... The Ministry of Interior must accept criticism as much as it accepts praise. |
| Correction               | The speaker mentions information that provides correction to the criticism.  | Hostess: They said that you were trying here to please the Muslim Brotherhood. Celebrity: I was trying to serve my country and wanted my country’s best interests. |
| Seeking evidence         |                                                                              | Hostess: They said that you play seductive movie roles to gain wide fame. Celebrity: Where are these seductive roles? I don’t know of any seductive roles for me. Where are these seductive roles? |
| Total resistance         | A main category including disagreement, justifying the speaker’s action, justifying the critic’s comment, expressing surprise, criticizing the critic, providing counter-evidence, irony, indicating a standard, seeking evidence and correction. |                                                                                                                                           |
| Digression               | The speaker provides information that does not directly address the criticism.| Hostess: They said that you agreed to let your guest leave the studio to make ends meet. Celebrity: I am happy that you started (the show) with such fierce attack. |
