The Linguistic Phenomenon of Politeness in Trevor Le Gassick’s Translation of Ibn Kathir’s *As-Sīra an-Nabawiyya (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad)* (2006)

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**ABSTRACT**

The linguistic phenomenon of politeness has been studied as an area that flourished through the increasing body of knowledge in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. As Blum-Kulka (1981) notes, “systems of social politeness seem to represent culturally colored interpretations of basic notions of tact, (e.g., face concerns) as conventionalized in any given culture or even speech event type” (p.258). Religious discourse has not received the attention it deserves as far as the linguistic analysis of the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic politeness formulas in translation is concerned. By investigating selected passages for analysis from Trevor Le Gassick’s (2006) translation of Ibn Kathir’s *As-Sīra An-Nabawiyya (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad)*, I aim to explore how the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic functions of politeness formulas are rendered in translation. The methodology of analysis is based upon Blum-Kulka’s two proposed dimensions of the means available for mitigating FTAs, as well as her model of cultural variation. First, I locate the polite utterance or redressive strategy to one of the two means, which are 1) directness/indirectness and 2) internal or external mitigation. Second, I examine the TT to find out whether the same linguistic forms exist in the target language, whether they have the same function, and whether their pragmatic value can be expressed by other means if their equivalents are not found in the target language. Third, I attempt to account for the difference or similarity in the use of that strategy using one or more of the four parameters identified by Blum-Kulka as constituting a model of cultural variation. These parameters are: 1) social motivation, 2) expressive modes, 3) social differentials, and 4) social meanings. The purpose is to highlight the (in)appropriate transfer of source language norms to target language situations, which is an important factor in the success or failure of the translation process. The analysis reinforces Blum-Kulka’s (1981) view that translation, as an attempt to render the locutionary and illocutionary acts, very rarely would have the same perlocutionary force on the target reader. Further, the results discussed in the analysis section go in line with her observation that “the more universal the rules governing the performance of any indirect speech act, the easier it will be to reconstruct it in a different language” (p.98).

**KEYWORDS**

Cross-Cultural Pragmatics, translation, the life of the Prophet Mohammad, Politeness

**ARTICLE DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2022.5.2.23

1. Introduction

The notion of politeness has received a great number of definitions and interpretations. Lakoff (1975) defines politeness as those forms of behavior that have been “developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction” (p. 64). Leech (1983) defines politeness as those forms of behavior that enable the participants to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony (p.104). Juliane House (1998) views politeness as a socio-cultural phenomenon “roughly to be defined as showing or appearing to show consideration to others” (p.54). Friederike Braun (1988) asserts that “the impression that certain languages are particularly polite does not only result from a finer gradation of the scale but frequently from literal, hence inadequate translation of polite expressions in a foreign language” (p.62). In this respect, the main objective of this study is to explore the problems that arise in translation as a result of the differences in the underlying, culture-based assumptions about what it means to be polite. Those differences affect both the conditions of use of a particular formula and the interpretations associated with it. By choosing...
examples for analysis from the translation of Ibn Kathir’s *As-Sīra An-Nabawiyya* (2005), this paper aims to explore how the pragram-linguistic form and socio-pragmatic function of the linguistic elements that are used to show politeness are rendered in translation while depicting the (in)appropriate transfer of the source language norms to target language situations.

Ibn Kathir (701–774 AH) was a prominent Syrian scholar in Islamic history. Compiled in the fourteenth century A.D., *As-Sīra An-Nabawiyya* is a full examination, in chronological order, of the background, life, and mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). Drawn from the earliest and most reliable Arabic sources, it offers, in this English translation, the fullest available account of the historical circumstances and personalities most important in the founding of Islam. Ibn Kathir presents the narrators, their validity, and the slight variations in the accounting that can lead to misinterpretations. The book used in this study is the second volume in a series of four volumes that involve a full examination of the background, the life, and mission of the Prophet Muhammad. The series begins with the pre-Islamic period, including the events that took place right after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). This book was selected to be the corpus of the present study because, in comparison with other books giving an account of Prophet Muhammad’s life, it is rich in dialogue and in politeness formulas used by the Arabs, who were known for their rhetorical skills at the time. This book is part of a project developed by the Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization with the aim of making available in English a wide selection of works representative of Islamic civilization in all its diversity. As such, it is the role of researchers to fully investigate the translation and ensure that it achieves the purposes for which the project was established. Trevor Le Gassick is a Professor of Arabic Literature at the University of Michigan.

2. Politeness in Terms of Management of Face
John Gumperz, in his foreword to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) *Politeness*, emphasizes the importance of politeness, which “is basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation, so that any theory which provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundations of human social life” (p.xiii). Brown and Levinson lay the foundation of the theory stating that all competent adult members of a society have (and know each other to have):

(i) ‘face’, the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting of two related aspects:

(a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

(b) positive face: the positive consistent of self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image is appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

(ii) certain rational capacities, in particular consistent modes of reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends. (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61)

Brown and Levinson’s notion of ‘face’ is based on that of Goffman’s (1967) public image. As one’s face is in danger of being lost by being embarrassed or humiliated, it is presumable that people cooperate (and assume each other’s cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) note that while the notion of ‘face’ is universal, in the sense that it is a basic need for every human being to preserve his or her face needs regardless of the group, community, or country in which he or she belongs, “the content of face will differ in different cultures (what the exact limits are to personal territories, and what the publicly relevant content of personality consists in” (p. 62). ‘Face threatening acts’ are defined as acts that “by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker” (p.65).

3. The Linguistic Phenomenon of Politeness and Translation
Over the past two decades, research projects in cross-cultural pragmatics attempted to investigate intercultural discourse analyses. Blum-Kulka observes that such studies prove to be useful as they provide general hypotheses about the nature of different languages and the cultural differences, as displayed in a variety of everyday situations and discourse types. Such scholarly endeavors collect open, self-directed dyadic role-plays, often followed by retrospective interviews, discourse completion tests, combined with a variety of meta-pragmatic assessment tests, and naturalistic interactions between native speakers of the languages under study, comparative analyses of texts and their translations, filed notes, interviews, diary studies, and the

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1 All Muslims are instructed to say [صلاة الله علیه وسلم] whenever they hear or write the name of prophet Muhammad.

2 He got his Ph.D. (1960) in Arabic studies, University of London. His major works in translation include *Midaq Alley* (1996) by Naguib Mahfouz, *Wild Thorns* (1985) by Sahar Khalifeh, *The Thief and the Dogs* (1984) and *The Secret Life of Soeed (A Palestinian Who Became a Citizen of Israel)* (1982) by Emile Habiby.
examination of relevant background documents. In this study, I highlight the importance of incorporating such cross-cultural pragmatic studies in translation analysis with the purpose of achieving equivalence on the interpersonal level in the target text.

3.1 Problems of Rendering Politeness in Translation

The notion of social acceptability is of major importance in translation. For example, it is perfectly acceptable in Hebrew to disagree with the speaker by a direct statement that he is wrong (ata to’e, literally- you’re wrong) or by denying the facts (lo akon- not true) (Blum-Kulka, 1981, 93). However, native speakers of English might consider that to be a FTA (Face Threatening Act) and need to mitigate it by statements such as “you might have made a mistake...” or “I may be wrong but...,” or “Are you sure...?”. These English indirect patterns are linguistically possible in Hebrew but not socially acceptable. Such a difference in the socially acceptable norms could also be observed in the Japanese versus American norms of using direct imperatives. In American advertisements, it is acceptable to use commands like ‘Drink Coca Cola!’ ‘Buy now, Pay later!’ or a slogan like ‘Pray Together, Stay Together!’ However, Higa (1970) notes that such a use of the direct command is totally unacceptable in Japanese society. Therefore, the comparison of the linguistic and social acceptability of indirect speech acts shows that differences create ‘translation gaps.’ Blum-Kulka (1981) states that:

In such cases, the gap between formal and functional translation equivalents seems quite systematic, and it should be theoretically possible to specify ‘instructions for translators’ for ways of moving up and down the formality scale between two languages in any given context and register. (Blum-Kulka, 1981, 93).

Politeness formulas become problematic in translation when there is a difference between the source and target languages in terms of a certain preference for positive or negative politeness. Leo Hickey (2000) suggests that “when samples of text which display explicit, linguistically expressed negative politeness are translated-not adapted or adjusted, but just translated, if such a distinction is valid-from English into Spanish, what emerges may not be samples of politeness at all but something else.” This could be attributed to the fact that what is commonly identified by native speakers of English as necessary polite behavior, such as indirect speech acts, expressions of thanks, and requests for permission (negative politeness), may not be recognized in Spanish as having anything to do with politeness (pp.229-230).

3.2 Differences between the Arab World and the West in Realizing the Linguistic Phenomenon of Politeness

As noted above, the field of cross-cultural pragmatics witnessed an increasing focus on contrastive research that address the linguistic phenomenon of politeness. The Arabic-English pair has received some attention, although more studies are needed. For example, the importance of understanding the pragmatics of politeness and subsequently translating it appropriately into the target language was underlined by Mahmoud Farghal and Ahmed Borini (1996) in their study on the translatability of Arabic politeness formulas into English from a pragma-linguistic perspective. They emphasized that the main task of the translator lies in knowing “the relationship between the propositional content (i.e., semantic meaning) and illocutionary force (i.e., pragmatic function) of any politeness formula” (p.3). In some cases, the relation between the two is clear as in the English ‘good luck’, which corresponds to the Arabic (لماذا سأيدان) ‘good luck’ and Arabic (شكرًا) ‘thank you,’ which corresponds to the English ‘thank you!’ In other cases, however, “it is not possible to relate the propositional content to its pragmatic function,” as in the Arabic politeness formula (لاقظم رأسك) (lit. may your head be saved), which a nonnative speaker of Arabic will have difficulty understanding the pragmatic meaning of. (Pp. 3-4)

Nelson et al. (1996) observe that a major point of difference between the Arabic and American responses is the length of the utterance. They note that:

Arabic sequences are much longer than English; they contain more words and are more likely to continue beyond the initial compliment and corresponding response. This interaction between speakers relates to the sincerity of the compliment and the compliment response; the longer the interaction, the greater the sincerity. (p.429)

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) also note that a typically long compliment from an Arab native speaker would be deemed by a native speaker of English as “overindulgence in words” (p.175). Similarly, Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) as they note that whereas appreciation tokens are a dominant category within acceptances in the English data, they ranked only fifth within acceptances in the responses of the Jordanian subjects (p.1499).

As such, the task of the translator involves “knowledge of the application linguistic units have in particular situational and socio-cultural contexts” (House, 2008, p.111). The word ‘application’ refers to the pragmatic meaning of the utterance or the attempt to achieve pragmatic equivalence between sense and reference. House explains that a translator needs to place a cultural filter in the sense of viewing “the source text through the glasses of a target culture member.” Translators thus need to be aware of the ‘cultural
Translating the illocutionary force of an expression is one of the main challenges faced by translators when the same formula is used to perform more than one illocutionary act in different situations. Farghal (1993), studying the pragmatics of Arabic politeness, addresses the issue of ‘politeness from an interpersonal view’, i.e., being impolite in polite ways. This is because “ironies require particular background assumptions to rule out the literal interpretations” (Levinson, 1983, p.126). Arndt and Janney (1985) also address the issue of ‘politeness from an interpersonal view’, i.e., using polite phrases in polite ways, as one of the serious obstacles faced by the translator. In the following example, a politeness formula is used to insult a person not participating in the interaction: 

إن شاء الله برحيم أبيه/ (lit. may God have mercy on his father) or ‘May God rest his father’s soul!’ If the translator is not aware of the ‘conflicitive’ act of insulting in the previous example, the translation would be distorted. It is, thus, the translator’s task to determine the performative verb of the illocutionary act assigned by certain formulas.

To sum up, there are considerable differences between Arab and Western societies in terms of their conception of the notion of politeness, as realized in different speech acts. Such differences affect both the conditions of use of a particular formula and the social interpretations associated with it. Therefore, translators need to benefit from cross-cultural pragmatic research on politeness to achieve interpersonal equivalence in translation. As Nydell (2002) notes:

When we set ourselves the task of coming to a better understanding of groups of people and their culture, it is useful to begin by identifying their most basic beliefs and values. It is these beliefs and values that determine their outlook on life and govern their social behavior. We have to make broad generalizations in order to compare groups of people here, Arabs and Westerners. Bear in mind that this generalizing can never apply to all individuals in a group; the differences among Arabs of some twenty nations are many, although all have an Arab identity. (p. 23).

4. Analysis
The analysis involves selecting passages from Trevor Le Gassick’s translation of Ibn Kathir’s As-Sira An-Nabawiyya (2005). In what follows, five examples identified as problematic on the interpersonal level in translation equivalence level are discussed. The purpose is to understand how the pragmalinguistic forms and socio-pragmatic functions of the linguistic elements used to show politeness are rendered in translation. Further, the analysis highlights the (in)appropriate transfer of source language norms to the target language.

4.1 Methodology of Analysis
For the purposes of this study, I built a framework of analysis based on Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategies, and Blum-Kulka’s (1992) proposed dimensions of the means available for mitigating FTAs, as well as her model of cross-cultural variation. First, the polite utterance or redressive strategy shall be located to one of the two dimensions of the means available for mitigating FTAs, namely: 1) directness/indirectness and 2) internal or external mitigation. Second, the internal or external means of mitigation shall be classified under one or more of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness strategies as applicable. Third, the TT (Target Text) is examined to find out whether the same politeness forms exist in the target language, whether they have the same function, and whether their pragmatic meaning can be expressed by other means. Fourth, the difference or similarity shall be accounted for using one or more of the four parameters identified by Blum-Kulka as constituting a model of cultural variation. These parameters are: 1) social motivation, 2) expressive modes, 3) social differentials, and 4) social meanings.

Blum-Kulka and Olshoatin (1984) analyze utterances by dividing them into three parts: a) address term(s); b) head act; c) adjunct(s) to the head act. For Example:

Danny/ could you lend me $100 for a week/ I’ve run into problems with the rent for my apartment.
The sequence could be divided into three parts:

a) ‘Danny’ (Address term)
b) ‘could you...etc.’ (Head act)
c) ‘I’ve run into problems...’ (Adjunct to Head Act) (p. 200)

Blum-Kulka (1992) identifies two basic dimensions of the means available to mark the politeness of a speech act:

1. Choice of strategy at a particular level of directness.
2. Internal and external modifications.

The internal means of modification act on the strategy proper or the head act and includes syntactic (modals), lexical (hedges and minimisers), and phrasal (consultative and understaters) components. External modification, on the other hand, is used as a redressive act that is independent of the Head Act. As these can precede or follow the Head Act, they can be regarded as “a supportive move” to it (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, pp. 266-267).

According to Blum-Kulka (1992), as cultures differ in their preferences for direct versus indirect means of expression, the level of directness involves the choice of form and illocution. In fact, the different levels of directness and indirectness in the expression of politeness represent an important aspect of contrasting speech act realizations between languages and cultures (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). The second dimension “represents types of mitigation independent of the choice of strategy” (p.266).

Blum Kulka (1992) identifies four parameters along which cultures differ in their norms of politeness. The four parameters are: social motivations, expressive modes, social differentials, and social meanings. She explains that cultural notions interfere in determining the distinctive features of each of the four parameters and, as a result, significantly affect the social understanding of politeness across societies in the world. Those four parameters inform the analysis in the comparison between the politeness norms used in the ST and the TT.

The first parameter of Blum-Kulka’s model is social motivation; it is concerned with explaining the different values that societies attribute to the notion of the face and which are, in turn, reflected in different culture-bound forms of expressing politeness. The second parameter is the expressive mode of politeness, whether verbal or non-verbal. Blum-Kulka explains that there are two sources of cross-cultural diversity along with this parameter, which is the availability of linguistic means and obligatory versus optional choices. Concerning cross-cultural diversity in the availability of linguistic means, she notes that “the process of mapping basic social needs with linguistic forms will obviously be constrained by the pragma-linguistic repertoires available in any specific language” (p.271). Social differentials are the third parameter of cross-cultural differences in systems of politeness. Cultures vary in the relative weight they assign to the societal factors that affect politeness. Blum-Kulka explains that if it is believed that power, distance, and degree of imposition are the factors that determine the weightiness of a face-threatening act, as mentioned by Brown and Levinson (1987), then these three dimensions must carry different sociolinguistic associations across cultures (p.274). Social meanings are the fourth parameter of Blum-Kulka’s model of cross-cultural variation in politeness norms. It involves the question of how the same speech event can be subject to culturally colored interpretations.

4.2 Analysis

When Quraysh persecuted Muslims at the time of Prophet Mohammad, a group of them fled to seek protection in Abyssinia in Africa, whose Christian King The Negus was known for his justice. Quraysh, however, sent a group of them to bring those Muslims back to Mecca. In the following passage, the Negus expresses his refusal to return them to them before discovering their views. They are a group who have taken refuge in my land and have chosen my company above that of all others. If they are indeed as your people say, I will return them to them. But if they are otherwise, I will protect them, give their people no access to them and no satisfaction.” (Le Gassick, 2005/2006, pp. 10-11)

Example 1:

فغضب ثم قال: لا تعمم الله! إلا أردتهم عليهم حتى أدعوهم فأناكمهم و أنظرما أمرهم. فقوم لجأوا إلى بلادي و اختاروا جواري على جوار غيري. فإن كانوا كما يقولون

(2002، ص. 140)
The first strategy identified by Brown and Levinson as a form of positive politeness is *claim common ground*, which is manifested in different ways, the first of which is: “Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, good.)” That strategy is clear in the Negus’s speech about the Prophet (SAAS)’s companions, although they were not present in the scene as hearers. He does not want to send them back to Quraysh before listening to them and knowing their interests and needs. Negus’s act of positive politeness is clear in his choice of verbs. This is most apparent in the two verbs ردٌ /radda/ ‘return’ and ردٌ ل��ٌ /radũwahum/ ‘summoning.’ The following table illustrates the difference in the dictionary meaning between the word used in the source text and its equivalent in the target text:

| Source/T Arabic | lisan: al Sarab/ My translation | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ردٌ /radda/ return | ‘orzd az-za, an-za, mla-za, ma. Dwwt bi-ya ‘um s-ya w-s-r, al-kawm al-ḍƯwādy al-luyb. | "come or go back: ~home". Another definition is “give, put, send, pay, carry, back: when will you ~ (me) the book I lent you? In case of non-delivery, ~ to the sender (often written on letters sent by post). ‘All books are to be ~ed to the library before Friday’. He ~ed the blow (i.e., hit back) smartly.” |
| ردٌ ل��ٌ /radũwahum/ (summoning) | "To return a thing means to not accept it, also if you disagree with the speaker. You say: ~to his home and ~a letter. And ~from doing something, which means to softly dissuade someone from doing something.” (Ibn Man†ur, 1981, p.162). [my translation] | |

From the table, it becomes clear that while it is possible in Arabic to have a human being as the object of the verb ردٌ /radda/ ‘return’, it is not possible with the English Verb ‘return.’ The object used with the verb ‘return’ is always an inanimate object, and it is not mentioned that the object can be a human being except in one case, but the verb then acquires the meaning ‘state or describe officially, especially in answer to a demand: ‘The prisoner was ~ed a verdict of guilty’ (p.843). Therefore, it is not appropriate to use the verb ‘return’ in reference to the Prophet (SAAS)’s companions as it does not render the politeness of the Arabic verb ردٌ /radda/ ‘return.’ In addition, the definition of the Arabic verb includes the element برُفِط /birifah/ ‘tenderly’ which adds to the politeness of the verb and which is absent in the translation. Moreover, the repetition of ‘them’ in the translation is redundant and deforms the beauty of the Arabic version.

Another problematic pair in the same passage is the translation of ردٌ ل��ٌ /radũwahum/ as ‘summon,’ in the target text:

| Source/Target | Source text: lisan: al Sarab/ My translation | Target text: Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| ردٌ ل��ٌ /radũwahum/ (summoning) | "والمدْعاة وتدْعى والمدْعاة والمدْعاة: ما دَعا به من طعام وشراب، الأُسْمَار في الدُّعاء لعَدِيٍّ، يَفْحَدُون الدُّعاء وَيَفْحَدُون الدُّعاء إلى الطعام. وعلى الله غُفْرَة وَهُوَ يُشْرعُ إلى دار السُّلام وَيُشْرعُ. وفي الحديث: أنَّ رَبَّكَ تَحْيَاهُم وَمِلَّانَ فِي دُنْيَاهم وَكَانَ صَانِعَ فِي غَرْسِهِم: “وَنَا ذُو الْغُرْسِ دُعْنَاءً يَفْحَدُون، وَهُوَ مِن مُّدْعَاهُم” (ج: 1384ص 1941)." | "Summon "2 ~ sb (to sb) (formal) to order sb to come to you: [vn] In May 1688, he was urgently summoned to London. She summoned the waiter. He was summoned before the board of directors.” |

"~ and its derivatives: being invited for food and drinks, addyi Ibn Al-Rabbab and most Arabs use the word with the short vowel "fatha", Al-Lehyani notes ~ is particularly for a banquet. Al-Gawhary says: in ‘mad’at’ (~source) someone, Allah in the Quran says: ‘Allah ~ to the ultimate place of peace,’ and the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) says: ‘if someone gets invited for food, it’s better to accept the invitation if he wasn’t fasting and if he was he’d better pray. Also, in weddings.” (Ibn Man†ur, 1981, p.1387).

The politeness of the Arabic verb is lost in the translation as the implied meaning of ‘inviting’ becomes ‘ordering to come’ in translation. A possible equivalent could be ‘call them for a meeting’ or ‘invite them to explain…’, both of which would maintain the level of politeness in the original text.
In addition, the use of /tanð/ur maa /ˈmaruːm/ ‘look into their matter’ in Arabic also has a level of positive politeness implied in it.

| Source text: Arabic         | My translation    |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| لسان العرب /lisān ʾal ʿarāb/ | My translation    |

| Target text: Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary |
|--------------------------------------------------|

Discover: to find somebody/something that was hidden or that you did not expect to find. **Police discovered a large stash of drugs while searching the house.** We discovered this beach while we were sailing around the island. **discover somebody/something doing something.** He was discovered hiding in a shed. **discover somebody/something + adj.** She was discovered dead at her home in Leeds.

The definition proves that the Negus is still attending to the Prophet (SAAS’s) companions’ interests, as he is willing not only to “discover,” as the translation conveys, their views but also to subject what they say to his mind and heart as part of a process to thoroughly understand them.

According to Blum-Kulka’s (1992) classification of the means available for expressing politeness, the above-mentioned verbs are internal means of modification as they are part of the head act. From the categories of internal means, these are lexical means of modification. In Blum-Kulka’s model of cross-cultural variation, the internal means of mitigation (the above-mentioned verbs) could be classified under the second parameter of the model: expressive modes. The analysis shows that politeness in the Arabic language can be conveyed through the words themselves without the use of other means of external mitigation. This represents a challenge to the translator, as the equivalent words in English might not carry the same polite connotations. Therefore, the translator should try to compensate for that loss with other means of politeness so that the equivalence on the interpersonal level could be successfully achieved.

**Example 2:**
Ja‘far was chosen to be the spokesperson on behalf of the Muslim group of fleeing worshippers to address the Negus after Quraysh sent their representatives to bring them back to Mecca. The following passage is an excerpt of Ja‘far’s speech.

"If you say looked at him, it’s about seeing with the eyes, and if you say looked into the matter, it is possible that there is thought with the mind and heart that goes into it." (Ibn Manṣūr, 1981, p. 4466).

When they treated us with violence and persecution, besieged us, and prevented us from practicing our religion, we left for your country and chose you above all others. **We desired your hospitality and hoped we would not be harmed in your domain, O king.** (Le Gassick, 2005/2006, p.13)

In Ja‘far’s speech to the Negus, several means of positive politeness can be noticed. He is direct in his request to obtain the Negus’s protection against Quraysh. /raylbnā: fī: džīwarik/ ‘requested your protection.’ He uses the positive politeness strategy ‘Be optimistic’ /radžawna: fī: lalla noθlam ʾindak/ ‘Hoped we would not face injustice in your presence’ as well as ‘give reasons’ /falamā: qaharūnā: wa ʾalayya: fī: bayla: wa ḥa:lu: ba:ynā: diːnīnā:/ ‘When they forced oppression on us, besieged us, and prevented us from practicing our religion....’ In translation, such means of politeness become problematic as research has shown that western societies are negative politeness cultures (Ogiermann, 2009, p.36). According to Blum-Kulka and Olshatin’s (1984) scale of indirectness, the strategy used by Ja‘far /raylbnā: fī: džīwarik/ or ‘desired your hospitality’ on the scale of indirectness is identified as “want statement” (p.201). This example supports the observation that Arabs used more direct means of request as the distance and social power between the interlocutors increases (Umar, 2004, p.78). However, Native speakers of English prefer to use indirect strategies and more syntactic and semantic modifications (Umar, 2004, p.78). Ogiermann (2009) also observes that while native speakers of English use indirect requests with “marked elaborations and explanations,” the Arabic sample requests are “rather short and less tactful” (p.36). As such, a native speaker of English possibly views Arabs’ direct and optimistic requests as an impairment upon Hearer’s negative
In the light of the above observations, the translator can opt for a hedged indirect request to indicate the Speaker’s keenness on not imposing on the H, which would achieve the same interpersonal level of politeness in the ST. A suggested pragmatic equivalence would be an utterance along the lines of: ‘We are subjected to oppression. We were wondering if there is a way you think you can help us end that injustice.’ The verb ‘wonder’ performs the function of a hedge to make the request less of an imposition on the addresssee and offer him a way out of how he thinks he can offer help.

In addition, the Arabic verb رغب/rayib/ ‘wanted’ holds the meaning of request in itself, as clarified by its definition in لسان العرب/lsan al’arab/ (The Tongue of the Arabs):

| Source/Target | لسان العرب/lsan al’arab/(The Tongue of the Arabs) | Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| رغب/ desired  | ‘wanted’ is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary as “a strong wish to have or do something.” | |
| جوار/ hospitality | While the Arabic utterance conveys the meaning of ‘seeking refuge’ and/or protection, the translator uses the word ‘hospitality’, which implies the need for “food, drink or services” as defined by the Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary. It is noteworthy that in the Arab society at that time, seeking someone’s hospitality/djiwar/ (protection) is in itself a compliment speech act, as it implies that the hearer is strong and is resorted to by the weak for protection against the powerful and the unjust, which is a highly-valued trait in that society. It becomes clear then that the polite request of seeking refuge and protection is rendered as a forceful, impolite desire for food, drink, and services. |

The table above shows that the word used in the translation of رغب/ rayib/ ‘desire’ does not convey the implied meaning of a request or seeking a favor that is part of the meaning of the word in Arabic. Possible equivalents could be ‘beseech,’ ‘implore,’ or ‘request.’ Therefore, pragmatic failure is noted in the translation of that utterance on the level of the strategies used (positive as opposed to negative politeness) and on the level of the meanings associated with the word choice as well.

According to Blum-Kulka’s classification of the means available for showing politeness, the act رغب/ rayib/ ‘wanted your protection’ is an internal means of mitigation as it is the head act. The pragmatic failure in the translation of the associated meanings resulting from the translator’s lexical choices is accounted for through Blum-Kulka’s fourth parameter of social meanings in her model of cross-cultural variation. The Arabic text carries positive; polite speech acts the meaning of which is altered in the translation, and pragmatic failure is noted. The other positive politeness strategy used by Jaffar: رجوتا/ radzawna: ‘I did not tell the H to do something.” which is a ‘be optimistic’ positive politeness strategy, is another means of internal mitigation. However, that positive politeness means of internal mitigation is likely a cause of pragmatic failure in translation as well. The definition of رجوتا/ radzawna: in لسان العرب/lsan al’arab:/

الرَّجُوتا مِن الأَمْلَ: نَقِيضُ الْبَيْسٍ (ابن منظور، ١٨٩١، ص. ١٦٨٤)

(meaning: hope: the antonym of despair, ([Ibn Manṣūr] 1981, p. 1684).)

In the target text, the translator uses the word ‘hope,’ which is the closest equivalent. However, the translation is a case of pragmatic failure when considered in the light of social motivations, the fourth aspect of Blum-Kulka’s culture’s styles of redress model. In Arab speech communities, being optimistic is categorized under positive politeness, whereas Western cultures opt for negative
politeness to avoid imposing on the H’s freedom of action by being pessimistic. The translator needs to transfer the meaning of the utterance using a negative politeness strategy. An example can be a request along the lines of: ‘If you can help enforce justice in this situation, we’d greatly appreciate it.’ The use of the conditional allows the addressee a way out and is less of an imposition than ‘hoped we would not be harmed in your domain.’

Example 3:
When the Negus announced that he was offering protection to the Muslim group fleeing from Quraysh’s oppression in Mecca, his generals were not satisfied with his decision, upon which he made the utterance below.

His generals grumbled at this, and he responded, ‘Grumble away, by God! You people may leave now, and you are shuyum in my land! (The word shuyum means in their language: those who are secure, i.e., those whose life is safe.) Whoever reviles you will be fined! (He repeated this phrase three times.) I’d rather not have darb than that I harmed one man among you! (Dabr in their language means: gold).’ (Le Gassick, 2005/2006, p.13)

| Source/Target | أنس ان تانجتربم /waˈin tanaːr-tartum/ | The Tongue of the Arabs | Grumble away |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| سنابن العرب   | النحر: الصدر...وتنجره: نحرا: اصاب نجره. ونجر البقار ينجره: نحرا: طعنه في منجره...وتنجر البقار على الشيء. والتنجر: نثوا عليه فكاد بعضهم ينجر بعضهم بحبيش من لىدة. حرصهم. وتنجروا في القتال. | [intransitive, transitive] to complain about somebody/something in a bad-tempered way grumble (at/to somebody) (about/at somebody/something). She’s always grumbling to me about how badly she’s treated at work. + speech ‘I’ll just have to do it myself,’ he grumbled. grumble that... They kept grumbling that they were cold. |

The Negus, who is doing an FTA to his generals, mitigates the FTA by going off record through the last strategy identified by Brown and Levinson as ‘Be incomplete, use ellipsis.’ Brown and Levinson explain that despite the fact that “this is as much a violation of the Quantity Maxim as of the Manner Maxim...By leaving an FTA half undone, S can leave the implicature hanging in the air” (p.227). As an internal means of mitigation in the Arabic text, the ellipsis is the omitted conditional clause, which, otherwise, would be an FTA. If we rewrite the utterance without the ellipsis, it will be: ‘even if you grumble, I will carry out my decision and offer protection to that group of Muslims.’ In the translation, the utterance was rendered as a directive “grumble away,” thus obliterating the mitigation effect of the ellipsis. Further, as noted in the table above, the word /tanjar-/tanaːr-tartum/ literally means ‘fighting,’ which implies that the Negus is very supportive of the fleeing group to the extent of being willing to accept the fight among his generals over letting down the group of Muslims seeking his protection. Le Gassick, however, uses the verb grumble, which means to covertly complain. The Negus’s utterance in Arabic, thus, addressed to the scared group fleeing injustice and subjugation by Quraysh is an empowering and reassuring one, particularly as he emphasizes that his generals’ fight will not dissuade him from the mitigation effect of the utterance, even if those modes were not used in the source text.

Example 4:
Before Umar B. Al-Khattab embraced Islam, he wanted to kill Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), at which point he ran into Nu‘aym, who wanted to dissuade him from such an act and said:

"By God, you’ve lost your mind, Umar!” (Le Gassick, 2005/2006, p.21).
One of the positive politeness strategies identified by Brown and Levinson is the ‘personal-center switch.’ In this example, Nu‘aym makes a FTA as he tries to make Umar aware of his wronged stance, but the FTA is mitigated by the use of the ‘personal-center switch’ positive politeness strategy. Nu‘aym implies that it is Umar’s /nafs/ (lit. ego) that misguided him and is the one to blame, thus shifting the blame from Umar, the person, to his /nafs./ The translation, however, does not convey that mitigation. Instead, the use of the pronoun ‘you’ increases the weight of the FTA. According to Blum-Kulka’s model, this is an internal means of mitigation as it is performed on the head act, not a supportive move to it. The pragmatic failure that occurred in the translation could be accounted for through the parameter of expressive modes in Blum-Kulka’s model of cross-cultural variation. In order to maintain the mitigation, the translator could have opted for the passive voice as in ‘you have been misguided, Umar,’ or ‘you have let your ego get the best of you,’ where ‘you’ is the object rather than the subject of the ‘misguidance.’

Example 5:
The Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) had started touring the Arab tribes to explain Islam to them. In the passage above, Hani responds to the Prophet’s call for his tribe to embrace Islam. The following passage is an excerpt of Hani’s response to Prophet Muhammad in this regard.

Hani’s said ‘I heard what you said, O Quraysh brother, and believed what you said. I consider that our abandoning our religion and following you in yours because of one meeting we are having with you which had neither introduction nor follow-up, and without our giving it full consideration nor examining what the consequences would be of what you suggest- that would be a lapse in judgement, rashness and inadequate consideration for consequences. A lapse of judgement only comes with haste. We have behind us a people for whom we should be reluctant to make any pact. You should retire, as we should too; you should think it over, as we should.’ (Le Gassick, 2005/2006, p.112)

Hani uses a positive politeness marker, namely: the use of the Address term ‘O Quraysh brother’ as a form of the strategy ‘use in-group identity marker.’ Mohammed Farghal and Abdullah Shakir (1994) note that: "Among Jordanian adults, the most common kin terms in casual summoning among strangers are: /ax/ brother...these kin terms may function as politeness formulas in polite requests” (pp.242-243). The politeness strategy used by Hani in this passage is a typical example of the distant kin vocative that drifts from the denotational significance toward a connotational one to mitigate the request for giving them enough time to think about the H’s offer. As the readers’ socio-cultural expectations represent a major factor that should guide the translator’s choices, it is important to consider the target reader’s response to such a term of address ‘O Quraysh brother.’ According to Methven (2006), in English, family terms are used to refer to non-family members but to those who are “close family friends.” He adds that “in English, the use of family or reverential terms to convey politeness to non-family members could actually be considered quite rude; for example, referring to an older woman as ‘granny’ is likely to cause offense, as in this context old would not carry the same connotations of wisdom and respect” (pp.5-6). In the example above, the speaker’s use of ‘O Quraysh brother’ in the Arabic text conveys, in addition to politeness, respect to his tribe ‘Quraysh.’ Methven notes that “often the only way to translate honorific and assumption terms into English is through the pragmatic translation of the address term into its simple deictic equivalent” (p.8), which is used in everyday conversation as an ‘in-group’ identity marker.’ The word ‘brother’ is an acceptable translation as it conveys the meaning of ‘in group’ marker and fraternity. However, the cultural connotation of showing respect and holding the addressee highly, as is conventionalized among the Arab tribes, is lost in the translation. The address term is an external means of mitigation, for it is used as a supportive move to the head act (the request). As such, an explicit expression of respect in translation can account for that lost connotation. For example, an addition along the lines of ‘you know I hold much respect for you...’
The Linguistic Phenomenon of Politeness in Trevor Le Gassick’s Translation of Ibn Kathir’s As-Sira an-Nabawiyya (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad) (2006)

compensates for the loss of respect connotations in the translation of the kin expression. Kulka’s parameter of social differentials accounts for the lost meaning in translation as cultures vary in the relative weight they assign to politeness formulas.

Hani’ also uses the positive politeness strategy identified by Brown and Levinson (1987) as ‘Token agreement’, which is the speaker’s attempt to appear to agree with H. In such cases, speakers can use several mechanisms for pretending to agree or to hide disagreement, for example, responding to a preceding utterance with ‘Yes, but…’, rather than a blatant ‘No’ (pp. 113-114). This is apparent in Hani’s first sentence: “I heard what you said… and I believed what you said,” even though he still needs time to assess, it is the use of hedges (e.g. ‘might’ or ‘could’ is a possible means for mitigating your utterance) is expressed in the past tense, the translator similarly uses the past tense in English. However, Brown and Levinson note that the “use of the ‘vivid present,’ a tense shift from past to present tense, seems in English to be a distinctively positive-politeness device” (p.120). As such, it is a better option for the translator to use the present tense in the target text, as in ‘I believe what you say.’

Having used two positive politeness markers (the address term and the token agreement), Hani’ then proceeds to the FTA:

\[\text{\textit{ittiba}\text{\textasciitilde}ana} \text{\textit{\textasciitilde}yak… zillah fi \textit{\textasciitilde}lra\text{\textasciitilde}y, wa \textit{\textasciitilde}zi\text{\textasciitilde}jah fi \textit{\textasciitilde}ala\text{\textasciitilde}qal wa qillat na\text{\textasciitilde}dar fi \textit{\textasciitilde}al\text{\textasciitilde}qibah}/
\]

‘following you…that would be a lapse in judgement, rashness, and inadequate consideration for consequences.’

This utterance is a face threatening act, but as it was preceded by external means of mitigation: ‘the address term ‘O Quaysh brother’ and the token agreement: ‘I heard what you said… and believed what you said,’ the face threat is mitigated. However, to the target reader, the means of mitigation do not perform the same functions in translation as explained above. Brown and Levinson note that “a ‘hedge’ is a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial or true only in certain respects” (p.145). In English, hedges play a significant role in conveying politeness and thus are needed to create the same effect as the source text. Therefore, instead of Le Gassick’s usage of ‘would’ in “that would be a lapse in judgement,” a hedge like ‘might’ or ‘could’ is a possible means for mitigating the threat as it makes the statement ‘partially’ true rather than a fact. Umar (2004) also observes that there is a greater tendency among native speakers of English to use indirect strategies and more syntactic and semantic modifications than the native speakers of Arabic, who prefer directness and impositives, especially when the social distance between the interlocutors is relatively close. Umar attributes this to the fact that “the Arabic culture may permit a more direct level of interaction between close people, i.e., brothers, sons, daughters, sisters and even close friends” (pp.77-79). Therefore, while the act is polite in the ST, the target reader might find it rude and lacking the simplest rules of showing politeness. In addition, while repetition is also acceptable in Arabic, it sounds ‘inappropriate’ to a native speaker of English. Accordingly, the target reader might find that the repetition in the use of three different forms that more or less have the same meaning: “lapse in judgement, rashness, and inadequate consideration” is wordy and unnatural.

The lack of interpersonal equivalence in the example above is attributed to the differences in the means of expression available in Arabic and English, which is the third parameter of Blum-Kulka’s model of cultural variation. In this case, it is the use of hedges that is an indispensable part of performing a polite utterance in English, unlike the Arabic language, which depends on other means of mitigation. In addition, the parameter of social motivations, in terms of the different values that societies attribute to the notion of the face, also factors in the assessment of the translation of the above utterance, particularly the address terms.

In addition, the phrase اما تكون الرائدة مع العجلة translated as ‘lapse of judgement only comes with haste’ is an external mitigation strategy that falls under Brown and Levinson’s negative politeness, in terms of: ‘state the FTA as a general rule.’ This strategy is used by Hani’ to justify their request for more time and mitigate the refusal speech act. In this example, no pragmatic failure is observed in the translation as there is no evidence in cross-cultural pragmatic research, to the best of my knowledge, that attributes a cultural specificity aspect to this negative politeness strategy.

In requesting from the H to give them time to think about the offer, Hani’ uses the present tense, والتي ترجع وترجع وتنظر، واتبعتنا التوك:nu-لاسيلة ma:la al ʔadjalal/ translated as ‘lapse of judgement only comes with haste’ is an external mitigation strategy that falls under Brown and Levinson’s negative politeness, in terms of: ‘state the FTA as a general rule.’ This strategy is used by Hani’ to justify their request for more time and mitigate the refusal speech act. In this example, no pragmatic failure is observed in the translation as there is no evidence in cross-cultural pragmatic research, to the best of my knowledge, that attributes a cultural specificity aspect to this negative politeness strategy.
request, such as ‘consultative devices,’ ‘preparators,’ and ‘interrogatives’ more than the native speakers of Arabic who prefer directness and impositives, especially when the social distance between the interlocutors is relatively close. As mentioned earlier, Umar (2004) attributes this to the fact that the Arabic culture allows a more direct level of interaction between individuals. Therefore, translating the utterance as an imperative entails a loss on the interpersonal equivalence level. In addition, the utterance in the ST is further mitigated by the positive politeness strategy identified by Brown and Levinson as ‘Include both S and H in the activity.’ In this case, where it is the S who needs time to consider the H’s offer, both are included in the act to assert reciprocity and to mitigate the threat that is likely to arise from phrasing it as the speaker is the only one who will ‘reconsider’ the situation and that a refusal might be on the way. That strategy is maintained in the translation and has the same effect in the target text.

5. Results and Discussion
In this paper, I explored some major problems that translators encounter as they attempt to achieve interpersonal equivalence in translation. The analysis shows that in his attempt to render Arabic politeness formulas into English, in several instances, the translator fails to place the cultural filter in the sense of viewing “the source text through the glasses of a target culture member” (House, 2008, p.119). Instances of pragmatic failure show the importance of dealing with assessments and adjustments of social role relationships and social attitudes to create in the target reader the same effect as that achieved on the source text reader. Pragmatic failure was detected in 87.5% (14 out of 16 instances) of the 5 select passages examined in the analysis. As far as translating the external means of mitigation is concerned, pragmatic failure was detected in 31% (4/13) of the select examples and in 70% (9/13) of the internal means of mitigation. The expressive mode accounts for 11 instances of problematic/successful equivalence. Social motivation accounts for 3 instances (there is an overlap with the expressive mode parameter in one example as illustrated in the table above), 1 other instance of social meanings, and 1 using social differential parameters of Blum-Kulka’s cultural variation model in accounting for the pragmatic failure/success in translation.

A wide range of politeness strategies was discussed in Brown and Levinson’s seminal work on politeness. Those include positive politeness strategies such as ‘claim common ground,’ ‘be optimistic,’ ‘ellipsis,’ ‘personal-center switch,’ ‘include S and H in the activity,’ ‘use in-group identity marker,’ ‘token agreement,’ ‘terms of address,’ and negative politeness strategies such as ‘give hints,’ ‘impersonalize S and H,’ ‘don’t presume,’ ‘state the FTA as a general rule,’ and ‘don’t coerce.’ The analysis shows that positive politeness strategies account for 7 out of 16 examples of pragmatic failure. The numbers suggest that in translating positive politeness strategies from Arabic into English, pragmatic failure is most likely to occur. This goes in line with the view that Arab societies are positive politeness cultures, whereas English-speaking countries are negative politeness cultures. In light of the above discussion, translators need to pay close attention to cross-cultural pragmatic research as it provides significant insight into contrasting the linguistic and socio-cultural conventions of different languages. That insight should form an important factor in the translator’s decisions with the purpose of working towards a more successful equivalence on the interpersonal level in the target text. An important component of social identity is the way people use language for interpersonal communication, and as such, the analysis of politeness strategies in the source text reveals valuable insights necessary to achieve the same effect in the target text. The translation process then requires some shifts in the strategies used to better meet the expectations of target language readers.

6. Conclusion
In this study, I analyzed the translation of select passages of politeness formulas in Ibn Kathir’s As-Sira An-Nabawiyya and their translation by Trevor Le Gassick. The analysis involves two languages representing two different cultures, though the culture here is discerned mainly through the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic systems of its language. The analysis reinforces Blum-Kulka’s (1981) view that translation, as an attempt to render the locutionary and illocutionary acts, very rarely would have the same perlocutionary force on the target reader (p.89). Further, the results discussed in the analysis section go in line with her observation that “the more universal the rules governing the performance of any indirect speech act, the easier it will be to reconstruct it in a different language. It follows that the more language-bound the rules, the lower the degree of translatability” (p.92). Translators need to be aware of two things: first, the direct/indirect techniques and strategies employed to manifest politeness in the source language; second, the conventionalization of the linguistic forms in the target language, their function, and whether their pragmatic meaning can be expressed by other means. House (2008) finds that cross-cultural pragmatic research provides insights into the nature of different languages and the cultural differences as displayed in a variety of everyday situations and discourse types. In addition, the “linguistic differences in the realization of discourse phenomena may be taken to reflect deeper differences in cultural preference patterns and expectation norms at a conceptual-cognitive and emotive level” (pp.121-122). As such, the integration between translation studies and cross-cultural pragmatic research promises new possibilities for achieving higher rates of successful equivalence in translation.
7. Limitations and Future Research

The study is based on the analysis of selected passages from Trevor Le Gassick’s translation of Ibn Kathir’s As-Sira An-Nabawiyya. An analysis of every single politeness passage of the four volumes of the book seems to be a huge project that is beyond the scope of this paper. As such, it is important to highlight the fact that the results of the study are based on a large sample of passages that involve the linguistic phenomenon of politeness. Therefore, more bridges need to be built between the linguistic and cultural approaches to translation in general and to the translation of politeness, in particular. This can be achieved through ethnographic research that analyzes how members of a particular culture conceive of different politeness markers. More scholarly research in translation needs to examine how to benefit from ethnographic and cross-cultural pragmatic research in a way that helps the translator gain the insight necessary to understand the source readers’ as well as the target readers’ expectations about what it means to be polite. Kasper (1990) asserts that for an understanding of cross-cultural differences in the choice of politeness strategies, “their intra-culturally determined values have to be considered” (as cited in Ogiermann, 2009, p.38). Therefore, more transdisciplinary research can yield promising results in understanding the nature of the translation practice and providing guidance for future translations.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Dr. Soheir Mahfouz for all the support and help she gave me during this research process.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

The following table illustrates the main points of the analysis, which will be followed by the results and discussion.

| Source Text | Target Text | The dimension of the means of Politeness | Brown and Levinson’s model | Pragmatic failure | Parameter of the model of cultural variation |
|-------------|-------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| أردهم       | return      | Internal means of mitigation (lexical)   | Pragmatic failure occurred on the level of the choice of words. | Expressive mode  |
| أدعوهم      | Summon      | Internal means of mitigation             | Pragmatic failure occurred on the level of the choice of words | Expressive mode  |
| أنظر ما أمراً هم | Discover their views | Internal means of mitigation | Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy, namely, claim common ground | Pragmatic failure occurred on the level of the choice of words | Expressive mode |
| رغبيا في جوارك  | Desired your hospitality | Directness as a means of politeness (want statement) as well as internal means of mitigation as it is the head act | Positive politeness | Social motivation |
| رغب         | desire      | The word الرغب in Arabic carries the meaning of request | Pragmatic failure occurred on the level of the choice of words | Expressive mode  |
| جوارك       | Hospitality | The word جوارك in Arabic is an act of compliment in itself | Pragmatic failure occurred because the target reader is unaware of the politeness of such a word that stems from the meanings associated with it | The parameter of social meanings |
| رجونا ألا نظلم | Hoped we would not be harmed | Internal means of mitigation | Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategy ‘Be Optimistic’ | Social motivation |
| أو ان تناحرتم والله! | Grumble away, by God! | Internal means of mitigation | Brown and Levinson's positive politeness | The ellipsis was not rendered in the translation as so but was conveyed to a directive in | Expressive mode |
| Arabic Text | English Translation | Mitigation Strategy | MITIGATION |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------|
| اذهبوا | you people may leave | The internal means of mitigation ‘hedge’ in this case was added by the translator | Hedge |
| غرتك نفسك | You’ve lost your mind | Brown and Levinson’s strategy of personal-center switch | The translation does not convey that slight mitigation. Instead, the use of the pronoun ‘you’ increases the weight of the FTA. |
| يا أخ قريش | O Quraysh brother | Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategy of ‘use in-group identity marker.’ | The pragmatic failure that is likely to occur in this example stems from the fact that although the word ‘brother’ might seem acceptable to the English reader, the cultural connotation of respect will be lost in the translation. |
| سمعت مقالتك وصدقت قولك | I heard what you said...and believed what you said | Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategy ‘Token agreement.’ | No pragmatic failure, but while the past tense is used in Arabic to indicate a present state, the present tense is a better choice in the English language as Brown and Levinson noted that it is a means of positive politeness |
| زلته في الرأي وطبيعة في العقل وثقة نظر في الحقيقة | a lapse in judgement, rashness, and inadequate consideration for consequences | A FTA mitigated by the above two means of mitigation | Pragmatic failure stems from the fact that the above two means of mitigation are not enough from a native speaker’s point of view, who would deem such an utterance as too direct or too rude. In the English language, hedges are extremely important and would be highly recommended in such a situation. In addition, on the socio- |
In the pragmatic level, the Arabic culture may permit a more direct level of interaction between close people, i.e., brothers, sons, daughters, sisters, and even close friends. Therefore, while the act is polite in the ST, the target reader might find it rude and lacks the simplest rules of showing politeness.

| Lapse of judgement only comes with haste | External means of mitigation | Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategy 'State the FTA as a general rule.' | In this example, no pragmatic failure is likely to occur as there is no evidence that such a means of mitigation has less weight in one language or another. | Expressive mode |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| You should retire, as we should too; you should think it over, as we should | Internal means of mitigation through the usage of the present tense rather than the imperative | Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy 'Include both S and H in the activity.' | Pragmatic failure stems from the fact that English generally uses more semantic and syntactic devices to mitigate the force of the request, such as 'consultative devices', 'preparators', and interrogatives' more than the native speakers of Arabic who prefer directness and impositives especially when the social distance between the interlocutors is relatively close. | Expressive mode |
The Linguistic Phenomenon of Politeness in Trevor Le Gassick’s Translation of Ibn Kathir’s As-Sīra an-Nabawiyya (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad) (2006)

### List of Symbols

| IPA      | Romanized Version | Arabic Letter |
|----------|-------------------|---------------|
| [ʔ]      | Glottal plosive   | إ             |
| [b]      | voiced bilabial plosive | ب             |
| [t]      | voiced dental plosive | ت             |
| [θ]      | voiceless inter-dental fricative | ث             |
| [dʒ]     |                     | ج             |
| [h]      | voiceless pharyngeal fricative | ح             |
| [x]      | voiceless fricative | خ             |
| [g]      | voiced dental plosive | د             |
| [ð]      | voiced interdental fricative | ذ             |
| [r]      | alveolar trill     | ر             |
| [z]      | voiced alveolar fricative | ز             |
| [s]      | voiceless alveolar fricative | س             |
| [ʃ]      | voiceless post-alveolar fricative | ص             |
| [ʃ]      | emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative | ص             |
| [dʒ]     | emphatic voiced alveolar plosive | ض             |
| [t̪]     | emphatic voiceless dental plosive | ض             |
| [z]      | emphatic voiced alveolar fricative | ض             |
| [ʃ]      | voiced pharyngeal fricative | ع             |
| [j]      | voiced velar fricative | ع             |
| [f]      | voiceless labiodental fricative | ف             |
| [q]      | voiced uvular plosive | ق             |
| [k]      | voiceless velar plosive | ك             |
| [l]      | alveolar lateral   | ل             |
| [m]      | bilabial nasal     | م             |
| [n]      | alveolar nasal     | ن             |
| [h]      | voiceless glottal fricative | ه             |
| [w]      | voiced labialized approximant | و             |
| [j]      | palatal approximant | ي             |
| [u]      |                     | ع             |
| [i:]     |                     | ع             |
| [a:]     |                     | ع             |

Table 2. Adapted from [http://arabic.tripod.com/Arab10.htm](http://arabic.tripod.com/Arab10.htm)