

A Socio-pragmatic Study of Terms of Endearment in Arabic

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(Received in 11/9/2022 Accepted in 5/12/2022)

Abstract

This study is an endeavor to investigate and explore the various pragmatic functions of endearment terms and expressions in Arabic. It tries to find out the different ways in which such expressions are used to perform different pragmatic functions and intentions. Such expressions are used extensively by Arab speakers. The misuse of such expressions may result in misunderstanding, embarrassment or even offence especially in the Arab-conservative community. The data of this study has been taken from Naguib Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy which includes: Palace Walk, Palace of Desire and Sugar Street. The model adopted in this study is an eclectic one. Hence, two major politeness theories are used in analyzing the data collected: First, Brown and Levinson's (1989) concept of "positive politeness", which is a strategy directed towards the positive face of the hearer, has mainly been adopted in the analysis of data. Second Leech's (1983,2014) politeness view or Politeness Principle which comprises six politeness maxims for conversation has partly been taken into account in the analysis.

In this study, it has been found that terms of endearment are employed by Arab speakers in order to create a friendly atmosphere in conversation, show solidarity and intimacy. They are also used to claim common ground with others, show sympathy and minimize the face-threatening acts. In addition, other forms and expressions such as some terms of address (e.g. diminutives, and kinship terms) as well as two of Leech's politeness maxims, "approbation and sympathy", are employed in order to perform the social function of endearments.

Keywords: Socio-pragmatics, terms of endearment, positive politeness

دراسة تداولية- اجتماعية لتعابير التحبب في اللغة العربية

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المستخلص

تحاول هذه الدراسة معرفة الوظائف التداولية المتنوعة لتعابير التحبب في اللغة العربية, و تحاول ايضا ان تكشف الطرق المختلفة التي تستعمل فيها هذه التعابير لتؤدي وظائف تداولية و تحقيق غايات مختلفة. اذ يستعمل المتكلمون العرب هذه التعابير بكثرة ومن الجدير بالذكر ان سوء استعمال هذه التعابير قد ينتج سوء فهم و خجل و حتى الالهانة خصوصا في المجتمع العربي المحافظ. وقد أُجِدَّت عينات هذه الدراسة من ثلاثية نجيب محفوظ التي تضم ثلاث روايات: بين القصرين و قصر الشوق و السكرية. و تعتمد هذه الدراسة أنموذجاً متنوعاً لتحليل البيانات لذلك وظفت نظريتا تأدب في التحليل: الاولى, نظرية التأدب الايجابي لبراون و ليفنسن (١٩٨٧) وهي استراتيجية تستخدم لتعزيز الوجه الايجابي (الصورة الاجتماعية) للمتلقى, اذ اعتمدت على هذه النظرية بشكل اساسي لتحليل البيانات. و أُجِدَّ بنظر الاعتبار نظرية و مبدا التأدب لبيتش (١٩٨٣-٢٠١٤) و الذي يشمل ستة مبادي للتأدب اثناء الكلام. و اعتمدت على هذه النظرية بشكل جزئي في تحليل بيانات هذه الدراسة.

و استنتجت هذه الدراسة بان المتكلمين العرب يستعملون تعابير التحبب لخلق بيئة ودية في الحديث, و من اجل تعزيز التضامن, و المودة. و تستعمل ايضا للمطالبة بخلفية اجتماعية مشتركة مع الاخرين, و اظهار التعاطف و تلطيف الافعال الكلامية التي ربما تنطوي على تهديد وجه الاخر. فضلا عن ذلك, استُخدمت اشكال و تعابير اخرى مثل صيغ المخاطبة (التصغير و اصطلاحات القربة) و اثنان من مبادئ التأدب التي اقترحها لبيتش و هي: مبدا الاستحسان و التعاطف, اذ استُعمِلت هذه التعابير و الصيغ لتؤدي وظيفه التحبب الاجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية الاجتماعية, تعابير التحبب , مبدا التأدب الايجابي

1.1 Introduction

It is a fact that one of the major functions that language can perform is to establish and maintain social relations with others. Greetings, for instance, are often used for a social purpose rather than exchanging information. Language can also be used to express emotions, admiration, respect, paying compliments, and so on. Sociolinguists are particularly interested in studying “the relationship between language and society”. They are trying to identify “ the social functions of language and the way it is used to convey social meaning” (Trudgill, 1974: 2; Holmes, 1992:1-2).

People select their language (style) appropriately according to the nature of their relation with their hearers. The relation between the speaker and hearer are represented in terms of power and solidarity. Brown and Gilman (1960: 252-253) have demonstrated that these forms have a close association with the social dimensions (variables): *power and solidarity*. The term *power* refers to the difference between interlocutors in terms of age, wealth, status and profession; whereas the term *solidarity* refers to the closeness between the interlocutors (whether they are close friends, intimates or strangers). Due to these social factors, there is a close connection between the form used and the relationship between the speaker and hearer.

Holmes (1992:1) says that investigating the different ways in which people use language in different social situations “provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community”.

Blum-Kulka (1997: 55) says that socio-pragmatic studies are concerned with how speakers choose linguistic strategies across different situations and are also concerned with the way in which pragmatic performance is governed or determined by social and cultural conditions. Cultural, social, and situational factors will be taken into consideration in the analysis.

1.2 The problem of the study

Successful and effective communication occurs when the interlocutors use or more specifically select their words and expressions appropriately. Terms of endearment occupy a great deal of our daily conversations whether within the family gatherings, with friends or in workplace. The misuse of such expressions may result in misunderstanding, embarrassment or even offence especially in the Arab-conservative community.

Braun (1988: 49-50) states that politeness operates in two directions in regards to address terms in general and endearments in particular. First such terms are regarded as polite when they are used appropriately, in accordance with the norms and rules of the society. They are perceived as impolite if they are used inappropriately. Second these terms are classified as polite regardless of the context of situation. The variation of politeness degree in these respective terms varies according to their use. It is worth noting that not adhering to politeness rules by speakers leads to a kind of violation and constitutes a problem in conversation.

In addition to learning the sociolinguistic features, non-native speakers of Arabic need to obtain the socio-pragmatic knowledge of the second (Arabic) language if they want to speak efficiently. The endearment terms may receive the attention of language teachers in order to teach their students the socially-appropriate uses of such terms in different situations in their daily life interactions.

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims at:

- i- Exploring the endearment expressions in Arabic language.
- ii- Finding out the forms of endearment as well as their pragmatic functions and the motives behind their use.
- iii- Investigating factors determining, as well as motives behind, the choice of such terms and expressions.
- iv- Examining to what extent Brown and Levinson's view of positive politeness and Leech's politeness maxims are applicable to the Arabic language, and how Arab speakers adhere to these politeness views.

1.4 Hypotheses:

In this study, it is hypothesized that:

- i- Arabic language is abundant with expressions that reflect endearment and intimacy.
- ii- Terms of endearment perform different pragmatic functions and are used by Arab speakers for different purposes, intentions and motives.
- iii- Social factors, culture and religion determine or affect the use of forms of endearment and their functions.
- iv- Arabic language is characterized by positive politeness and Arab speakers adhere to conversation maxims in daily conversations.

1.5 Data Collection

Most of the data of this study has been taken from Naguib Mahfouz's Cairo Trilogy which includes three related novels: *Bain al-Qasrain* "Palace Walk", *Qasr al-Shawq* "Palace of Desire" and *al-Sukkariyya* "Sugar Street". These three novels represent the daily life of an Arab Egyptian family which reflects the life of a collective society and traces three generations. Its style and language, which are rich with a variety of expressions (including terms of endearment), are carefully chosen by the Arab most famous writer, Naguib Mahfouz, in the previous century. Moreover, as a native speaker of Arabic, the researcher has added some examples, that have not been found in the three novels, using his "native-speakers' introspection" which is used by some researchers (like Al-Nasser, 1993) in collecting the data.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is restricted to investigating the different socio-pragmatic uses (functions) of endearment expressions in three Arabic related novels. It is worth mentioning that there are two major types of Arabic: Standard and Colloquial Arabic. Since these novels were written in Standard Arabic, mostly Standard Arabic will be investigated. However, a few examples that have been added by the researcher may have the characteristics of Colloquial Arabic.

2.1. Socio-pragmatic Politeness

Leech (2014: 9) defines politeness in terms of "socially communicative strategies" which fall within the scope of "rapport management or rational work". In other words, the skilled linguistic behavior used for establishing and maintaining social relations (rapport) between members of the community. He (ibid: 88) points out that this kind of politeness is related to the norms in a certain society, social group, or specific situation. Socio-pragmatic politeness involves terms like "overpoliteness" and "underpoliteness" as well as "politeness appropriate to the situation".

Socio-pragmatic politeness (or relative politeness) refers to the use of politeness in context. For example, "thanks" is considered adequate amount of gratitude for simple favours like lending a pen, whereas "thank you very much indeed" is considered as adequate amount of gratitude for big favours with a great value as in the case where A hosts B's family for a month. However, it is not considered adequate to say "thanks" for the latter favor (case), whereas "thank you very much indeed" would be overpolite for the former case (simple

favours). Thus, “socio-pragmatic politeness is politeness relative to the situation” (Leech, 2014: 17).

2.2 Previous Studies

Following Brown and Gilman’s (1960) prominent study on “*Pronouns of Power and Solidarity*”, a considerable number of studies on the *terms of address* has been conducted in different languages. However, little attention has been given to *terms of endearment*. Afful and Nartey (2013) have studied the “Terms of Endearment” as they are used by students and staff of Ghanaian Public University. In their study, they have found that the university students use *Epithets, Flora Terms, Royal Terms and Coinage of Personal Names*. The terms of endearment, it has been proved, are used to serve a social function and are used for other purposes such as expressing “innovativeness, playfulness and creativity of students as well as the warmth and conviviality and/or vivacity of African culture” (p. 92).

They (2013: 93) drew heavily on two notions in interactional linguistic: “social constructionism and community of practice”. They (ibid: 96-99) categorize terms of endearment into four categories:

- a- Epithets are used for different purposes such as *attention getters, identifiers and exaggerative markers*. Epithets are used to express solidarity and include: *dear / dearie , sweet / sweetie, honey / hon., love* etc. These terms sometimes accompany the names. For example, *dear, Linda*.
- b- Flora Terms refer to words derived from plants or flowers such as *lily* and *rosy*.
- c- Terms Denoting Royalty include words like queen and princess. They are uttered in a tone of solicitation and are used as pre-requests. For example, *Empress, could you pass me the salt?*
- d- Coinage from Personal Names are nouns derived from proper names which can be realized through phonological changes or reduplication like Lam-Lam (for Lamar), Georgie (derived from George) or Queeny (derived from Queen).

2.1.2 Defining Terms of Endearment

Leech (2014:172) points out that one of the pragmatic functions of endearments is to establish and maintain social relationships with the hearer. He (ibid: 173-174) states that “endearments (dear, love, darling) signal affection and some degree of intimacy or closeness”. In other words, he presents endearments in terms of *intimacy* and *closeness*. However, if a stranger is addressed with these terms, he/she may consider it as an offense.

Moreover, endearments perform a considerable function in rapport management, and are used due to politeness considerations. Afful and Nartey (2013: 92) say that terms of endearment are associated with “sweet words, sweet talk, affectionate talk, soft words and terms of affection”. Holmes (1992: 13) states that “endearments are used between people who know each other well (e.g. mornin’ sweetheart, hello love, hi Joho)”. He (ibid: 368) elaborates that endearments belong to the category of “pragmatic politeness devices” that are used by different social groups in certain contexts.

3. Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher tries to categorize the terms of endearment according to their pragmatic functions and uses in Arabic language. Besides, other forms and expressions that reflect endearments will also be categorized as endearments. To achieve the aims and test the validity of the hypotheses of this study, two major politeness theories have been taken into consideration in analyzing the data collected: First, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion of “positive politeness” which is a strategy directed towards the positive face of the hearer, has mainly been adopted in analyzing the data. It is used between friends as well as when the interlocutors belong to the same society and share the same face wants. This strategy is also employed by speakers in order to carry out a polite conversation, show intimacy and claim common ground with others, as well as sympathizing with other people and minimizing the face-threatening acts (in cases of requests and orders). Second, Leech’s (1983; 2014) politeness view has partly been taken into account in the analysis. In this view, Leech (1983:82) introduces Politeness Principle which enables speakers “to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place”. He (ibid: 132) elaborates his theory by introducing six politeness maxims that speakers observe in conversation (though two are of our concern in this study): Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxims.

Following the above mentioned model (politeness theories), data collected have been analyzed and categorized according to the functions and forms of terms of endearment. Generally, this topic can be divided into two main categories: (a) functions of terms of endearment, (b) other forms that function as endearments.

3.1 Functions of Endearment Terms

This category includes the socio-pragmatic functions and uses of endearments in Arabic language.

3.1.1 Pure Endearments

Leech (2014 :299) says that the term *endearment* “is associated with the expression of strong attitudinal warmth or affection”. Endearments fall under the category of Brown and Levinson’s (1987:108) positive politeness and serve “the function of claiming in-group solidarity”. Dickey (1997: 256) points out that the referential meaning of the word “love” is feelings and emotions of one person towards another.

Arabic language is rich with terms and expressions that express good feelings towards the hearer. Iraqi people, for instance, extensively use terms of endearment such as *eini* “my eye”, *eiuni* “my eyes”, and *galbi* “my heart”. *Fidwa* and *sadaqa* “may I be a sacrifice to you” are also used as endearments (Abu-Haidar, 2006: 227). Arabs use the terms of endearment in conformity with Wierzbecka (2003:122) principle of cordiality which entails: “I feel something good towards you, I want good things to happen to you, I want to be with you.” For example:

(١) متى يا عزيزتي نخرج معاً مرة اخرى؟ (Mahfouz, 1983:219)

Mata ya ʕazizati naxruj maratan uxra?

When, my darling, will we go out together again?

It is clear that the addressor is a man and the addressee is a woman since he addresses her with *ʕazizati* which has the possessive feminine pronoun “ti”. In this example the term of endearment *ʕazizati* “my darling” reflects cordiality, affection and intimacy. It also indicates that the addressee is dear and so close to the addressor.

Leech (2014: 174) says that “endearments (support to) establish a mutually affectionate relationship”. Arab speakers use different terms of endearment in their daily life such as *habibi* “my love” which is used to address a male hearer, and *habibati* “my love” which is used to address a female hearer. They may derive endearments from parts of the body like *ruhi* “my soul”, *kabadi* “my liver”, and *ʕumri* “my life”. Let’s consider the following exchange of greeting between the son and his mother:

(٢) The son: صباح الخير (Mahfouz, 1983: 24)

Ṣabaḥ alxair

Good morning.

His mother: صباح النور يا نور العين

Ṣabaḥ alnoor ya noor alʕain

Good morning, oh, (you are) the sight of my eye.

The son greets his mother with a traditional greeting, his mother, in her turn, answers his greeting with a sweet endearment expression *ya noor alʿain* “oh, (you are) the sight of my eye” which is uttered with a warm tone in order to create an intimate atmosphere in the house and creates an emotional, parental sympathy in the son’s soul.

It is worth noting that such terms of endearment are exchanged between spouses, family members, relatives and friends. However, such terms such as *habibati* “my love” or *qalbi* “my heart” cannot be used to address a foreign or stranger women in the Arab communities. Similarly, Cook (2003:44) says that it is sometimes inappropriate to call a police officer “darling”.

3.1.2 Endearments as Attention Getters

One of the major function of endearments is to get the attention or “to appeal for attention” of the hearer (Leech, 2014: 172). When these forms are used as attention-getters, they “occur only in sentence-initial position” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 259). Endearments are used extensively in daily conversations. Instead of using first names, Arab speakers use endearments to get the attention of their hearers especially family members and acquaintances in informal situations. Let’s consider the following exchange:

(٣) Mother: حبييتي؟

habibti (sweetie)

Daughter: نعم ماما

na’am mama (yes, mum)

Mother: تشربي عصير برتقال؟

tishrabi ʿasir burtaqal? (would you like to drink orange juice?)

In this exchange the mother uses the endearment term *habibti* “my love” rather than the first name or other terms like “daughter”. She uses this term to draw her daughter’s attention and to create a maternal sense in the conversation. In addition, the mother uses such a sweet term in order to convince her daughter to drink the juice rather than saying “come, and drink this juice”. Let’s consider another example:

(٤) يا حبيبي, توكل على الله و فارقنا (Mahfouz, 1983:186)

ya habibi twakal ʿal alla w fariqna

My dear, depend on Allah and get off.

Despite the fact that it is a request, the speaker initiates his utterance with an endearment term so that he/she can get the attention of the listener who expects something nice and sweet to come after the word *habibi* “my dear”. Then the speaker extends his/her utterance and asks the listener to leave.

The use of such expressions can easily be seen in formal speeches and formal situations. A speaker may start his speech, while trying to address an audience, by the use of *ahibati al afadhil* “my virtual dear friends” and *al-hudur al kiram* “our distinguished guests” in order to get their attention. Such polite expressions are preferred and precede even the formal greeting which is considered obligatory before one initiates conversation with anyone.

News presenter also starts the news casts with *sayedati aanisati sadati* “ladies and gentlemen” which gives a message to every listener that he/she is being addressed and is requested to pay attention to the news bulletin. Such expressions can also be used in daily life situations. For example:

(٥) يا سادة, تمهلوا (Mahfouz, 1983:477)

ya sadah tamahalu

Oh gentlemen, wait.

3.1.3 Endearments as Sympathy

Leech (2014:208) says that commiserations and expressions that show sympathy reflect “fellow feelings with the other person”. Such expressions show overpoliteness and allocate “high value on the feelings” of others. They imply that the speaker pays great consideration and sympathy to the hearer. Commiserations show the speaker’s sympathy with the hearer when the hearer had a misfortune (ibid: 210). Speakers use such expressions in conformity with Leech’s (1983:132) Sympathy Maxim which entails minimizing antipathy between self and others, and maximizing Sympathy between self and others. For example:

(٦) اسناني توجعني. A:

asnani twaja 'ni

My teeth hurt me.

يا عيني, ما تشوفين شر بحياتك ان شاء الله. B:

ya feini, ma tshufeyn shar b hayatik in sha Allah

O, my eye, may you not see evil in your life, God willing.

Such an exchange normally occurs between women. The first woman (A) tells the second (B) that she suffers from teeth ache in order to relieve her pain. The other woman (B) tries, through the linguistic behavior and sweet words, to share her a similar feeling in order to alleviate and soften her pain.

Expressions of sympathy become clear in the following example:

(٧) مسكين يا ربي, امه في ناحية و ابوه في ناحية اخرى. (Mahfouz, 1984: 10)

miskeen ya rabi, ummuh fi nahiya w abuhu fi nahiya uxra.

Oh, my God, poor boy, his mother is in one place and his father is in another place.

Two women are talking about a boy whose parents have separated. The woman starts her sympathy with the endearment *miskeen* “poor” to show her sympathy and solidarity with the boy, then she explains the reason behind her sympathy with him.

3.1.4 Endearments as Pragmatic Hedging

Endearments are used here to mitigate the force of requests or commands. Leech (2014:174) states that “there is little doubt that appropriate endearments make a request more acceptable to the recipient, as they show a positive social attitude to H”. Leech (ibid: 142) says that one of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) super strategies for performing any FTA is “on-record with positive politeness”. For example “Be a love and get me a sandwich”. The use of terms of endearment arise from positive politeness considerations.

Brown and Levinson (1987:108) illustrate that the use of endearments such as *mate* or *honey* alongside with the command or request indicates that the power factor (or status difference) between the speaker and hearer is small. Therefore, the speaker tries to mitigate (soften) the imperative or request by giving hints that this is not “a power-backed command”. Example:

(٨) Come here, honey.

When such expressions are used with children, they change the command into a request:

(٩) Bring me your dirty clothes to wash, honey/darling. (ibid)

When performing on-record requests or commands with positive politeness, the “speaker can minimize the face-threatening aspects of an act by assuring the addressee that S considers himself to be ‘of the same kind’, that he likes him and wants his wants” (Brown

and Levinson, 1987:71-72). The following example shows how a direct order is mitigated by a term of endearment:

(١٠) تعالي يا حلوة (Mahfouz, 1983: 438)

taʕali ya hulwah.

Come here, pretty.

This utterance seems an order uttered by a superior (someone who is either older or has more status in the house). However, this order is mitigated by the endearment term *hulwah* “pretty” which makes the hearer perceive it as a polite request and leaves an impression of friendliness and intimacy in the hearer. Let’s consider another example:

(١١) افتحي النافذة يا روح امك, افتحي يا روحي انا. (Mahfouz, 1983: 278)

iftaḥi al nafiḏaḥ ya ruuḥ ummik, iftaḥi ya ruuḥi ana

Open the window, oh, your mother’s soul, open it, oh my soul.

The speaker uses on-record strategy to perform her/her command with sweet mitigators (the endearments) to minimize the effect of the imposition on the hearer. Then the speaker repeats his command with a different and sweeter term *ya ruuḥi ana* “the soul of my self”. This strategy seems preferable between friends and intimates as well as within family circles. It seems that this strategy outweighs the polite request. That’s why the speaker uses the bald-on-record (direct command) post-modified by endearment expressions rather than saying “would you mind opening the window?”.

3.2 Forms of Endearments

Endearments can realized indirectly through the use of other different forms. There are some forms and expressions that serve the function of endearments or perform similar function as terms of endearment.

3.2.1 Praise as Endearments

Leech (2014:186) says that compliments and praise can be used as endearments. They carry “ a positive semantic loading in favor” of the hearer. Leech’s (1983: 132) approbation maxim, which entails maximizing praise of others when uttering expressives, can be applied to Arabic language. Arab speakers, for instance, use terms such as *ya batal* “ O, hero” , *ya asad* “O, lion” , and *bahar* “sea of knowledge” to give the addressee a message that he has reached an important status. The speaker gives the characteristics of good things to make him feel proud. These expressions are used to enhance the

relationship and intimacy between two participants. The following example supports the discussion above :

(١٢) تأخرت يا بطل (Mahfouz, 1984: 836)

ta'axart ya baṭal

You're late, hero.

The most widely used expression employed by teachers to their students is *ahsant ya shatir* "well-done, clever!". It is used when the student has done a remarkable achievement or got high marks in the exam. It is also used by parents to their children to encourage them and convince them to do things:

(١٣) انزل يا شاطر و العب تحت (Mahfouz, 1983:548)

inzil ya shaṭir w ilḥab taḥt

Come down, clever, and play on the yard (ground).

A subcategory of praise is the recruiting (mobilizing) terms which are used as endearments. For example, *sanaydi* "my support", *ḥizwati* "my supportive relative" and *hizam ḍahri* "lit. my back belt" which means "you are my rock" are used when the speaker is in a big trouble and tries to get support and help from his friends and relatives. Such terms may result in attitudes of the hearer towards the speaker (the speaker may become beneficiary here). Arabs use parts of the body or the house to show endearments such as *ḍiraḥi al yameen* "my right arm" or *ḥamood albeit* "pillar of the house". The last two expressions are used not only to show that the person is dear or close but rather occupies a paramount status in the life of the speaker. In the following example the daughter praises her father by saying:

(١٤) انت الخير و البركة يا بابا. (Mahfouz, 1984:178)

Inta alxeer w albaraka ya baba.

You are the goodness and blessing, my father.

Thus, the use of terms of endearment can be recognized by each social group and their use is a sign of membership of an individual to the same group. This strategy is similar to Brown and Levinson's (1987:103) "claiming common ground" positive politeness strategy. Through this strategy the speaker claims common ground with the hearer and gives a message (a feeling) that both the speaker and hearer belong to the same social group and share similar wants, goals and values. This strategy can be achieved through three ways.

First, the speaker may want to convey a message that he/she is interested in some desired want in the hearer. Second, the speaker “may stress common membership in a group or category” in which both speaker and hearer share common wants. Third, the speaker “may claim common perspective with H without necessarily referring to in-group membership” (ibid). The following example supports Brown and Levinson’s discussion in this paragraph:

(Mahfouz, 1983:506) جيران العمر و نعم الجيران (١٥)

jiran alʕumr w niʕm al jiran

The neighbors of our lifetime, and the best neighbors.

It is clear that the neighbors are so dear to the speaker; therefore, he exaggerates his praise to them. Or, he tries to claim common ground with the addressee and gives them a message that they occupy high status to the addressor. Other intentions may lie in the use of such expressions, he may use them either because of his desire to receive a similar one or receive a certain favor/support from the neighbor.

3.2.2 Terms of Kinship as Endearments

Kinship terms belong to positive politeness that’s addressed towards the positive face of the hearer. They are used to show deference and “their usage presupposes certain social attributes” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 182). Different intentions and functions lie behind the use of terms of kinship by Arab speakers. Terms such as *ʕami* “my uncle”, *bunai* “my son”, *bunayati* “my daughter” and *xala* and *ʕamma* “aunt” are not used in their referential meaning but are used to show respect to the addressee and make him/her feel that he/she is close to the speaker. Age factor, in such situations, works in all directions: it works from the older to the younger such as *bunai* “my son” and *bunayati* “my daughter”. For example:

(Mahfouz, 1984: 290) تعالي يا ابنتي و لا تحزني (١٦)

taʕali ya ibnati wala taħzani

Come, my daughter. Do not be sad.

The old woman was not addressing her daughter. She was addressing a woman (neighbor) who has quarreled with her husband and wanted to go to her parents’ house. In order to relieve the upset woman, the old woman selected the term *ibnati* in order to give the woman a maternal feeling and convince her to stay at her house for some time and return to her husband’s house.

Age factor also works from the younger to the older such as *ʕami* and *xali* “my uncle” and *xala* and *ʕama* “aunt”, and it works between people with similar age and status such as *axi* “my brother” or *oxti* “my sister”. All these terms support Maalij’s (2010: 161) claim that the use of the kinship form *ya bunai* “oh, my son” is to convey much more endearment than the blood relationship between the speaker and hearer. Let’s consider the following exchange between Kamal (a young man) and an old woman:

(١٧) She: اهلا بأبن الحبيب, اهلا بأبن اخي (Mahfouz, 1984: 863)

ahlan b ibn al ḥabeeb ahlan b ibn axi

Welcome, son of my beloved (dearest) person, welcome my brother’s son (nephew).

He: كيف حال الست جلييلة؟

kaif ḥal alsit Jaleelah?

How are you, Mrs. Jaleelah?

She: قل عمتي..

qul ʕamati

Say: my auntie.

He: كيف حالك يا عمتي؟

kaif ḥaluk ya ʕamati

How are you, my auntie?

In this exchange, the old woman’s welcoming expression is modified by the direct endearment term *ibn al ḥabeeb* followed by *ibn axi* which carries similar endearment connotations. If we consider the exchange, we will infer that the woman prefers the kinship term to the academic title and tells Kamal to address her with *ʕamati* “auntie” rather than *sit* “Mrs”. This is because the term *ʕama* reflects respect in the Arab community and implies a sense of endearment and cordiality.

Such expressions are used due to polite considerations. Sifianou (1992a: 82 as cited in Watts 2003: 52) comments that people pay others consideration because this yields a feeling of satisfaction to them. In addition, they satisfy the face of others and receive similar consideration. Most of the time, people do this without (few cases are exempt) any tangible motives. They know that (part of their internalized linguistic system) they need to

respect others and receive, in return, respect from others “in order to live in a harmonious society... and thus participate in maintaining the necessary equilibrium of relationships”.

Some other terms that reflect certain kind of relationship are also used as endearments. For example, *jari al ġaziz* “my dear neighbor” is used to show intimacy. It is also used out of neighbourhood considerations (neighbours’ rights and obligations). In other words, it is emitted from religious and societal perspectives. The following example reveals the intimacy between the neighbours:

(١٨) اهلا و سهلا بجارتنا المكرمة (Mahfouz, 1984: 140)

ahlan wa sahlan bi jaritna almukarama.

Welcome to our dear neighbor.

One of the most extensively used form of address is the masculine *hajji* or feminine *hajjah*, both refer to, figuratively or literally speaking, the person (especially old people) who went to Makah to perform pilgrimage rites. For example:

(١٩) مساء الخير يا حاجة (Mahfouz, 1984: 928)

masa’ alxair ya hajjah

Good evening, hajjah.

An old woman greets young people who respond through the utterance above. In this sentence, the polite address form *hajjah* is used here as a form of respect which is used to satisfy the positive face of the old woman.

3.2.3 Diminutives as Endearments

Diminutives are used to claim “in-group solidarity”. They go “beyond their function as address forms” and are often used to “function as an overall endearment” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 108-109). Pragmatically speaking, endearments can be realized through the use of diminutives. Arab speakers express love, tenderness and kindness through the use of diminutives (Maalij, 2010: 161). Wierzbecka (2003:53) says “ a rich systems of diminutives seem to play a crucial role in cultures in which emotions in general and affection in particular is expected to be shown overtly”.

In the Arabic language, diminutives are used extensively within the family circles especially mothers to their children such as *bunayati* instead of *ibnati* “my daughter” and *bunai* rather than *ibni* “my son”. Personal names can also be diminutivized such as *Hassuni* instead of Hussein and *Nowarti* instead of Noor. It is clear that the use of these

diminutives reflect a sense of endearment and affection of the speaker towards the hearer. For example:

(٢٠) يا بنيتي, جدتك لم تعد البيات خارج بيتها (Mahfouz, 1984: 922)

ya bunayyati, jadatuki lam taftad albayat xarij baitaha

My daughter, your grandmother does no longer sleep outside her house.

The grandmother uses the diminutive *ya bunayyati* “my daughter” to express endearment and affection. Through the term of diminutive *bunayyati*, the grandmother intensifies her emotions towards the listener. Such terms are used to address dear and intimate people. Let’s consider another example:

(٢١) اراك على حق يا بني فيما تقول (Mahfouz, 1983: 124)

arak fala haq ya bunai fima taqool.

I think you are right, my son, in what you say.

The father addresses his son by using the diminutive form *bunai* “my son” which reflects the father’s emotions and positive attitude towards his son. It also reflects the father’s support (agreement) to what his son says. *Bunai* “my son” is also used to create a feeling of cordiality and nearness in the son’s soul.

3.2.4 Religious expressions as Endearments

Arab speakers use certain expressions such as *rabi yxalik and rabi yihfadak* “may Allah protect you!” towards a nice and good behavior (or favor) by the hearer who initiates, verbally or behaviorally, an act that is desired by the speaker. Such expressions also reflect a fact that the listener is close to the speaker. For example:

(٢٢) أي شيء تحتاج انا برسم الخدمة. A:

ai shi' tahtaj ana brasm alxidma

If you need anything, I am at your disposal and ready to help.

B: ربي يخليك و يطول في عمرك.

rabi yxalik w yitawil fi sumrak.

May Allah keep you well and prolong your life.

The first sentence is a clear offer to help, the answer can be regarded as a gratitude through the direct invocation for the initiator of the offer. However, such expressions can be

regarded as endearments since they are used to show greater degree of politeness and intimacy.

There are different expressions used to express endearment and affection as we can see in the following examples:

(٢٣) براك الله في اليد التي قدمت لنا اشهى الطعام و أذنه (Mahfouz, 1984: 30)

barak Allah fi alyad allati qadamat lana ashha al ṭaṣam wa alaḏah

May Allah bless the hand that served (us) the delicious food.

Though this utterance reflects religious orientations, it serves an implicit function of endearment which is directed towards the positive face of the hearer since it includes some sweet and nice words “may Allah bless the hand”. In addition, the use of the word “delicious” that pre-modifies “food” reflects the admiration of the speaker in the offer (the food). Let’s consider another example:

(٢٤) انك لا تتطق الا عن صواب: سلم فوك, و براك الله في عمرك (Mahfouz, 1984: 245)

inaka la tanṭiq illa ṣan Ṣawab. Salima fuka wa barak Allah fi ṣumrak

You only say the right things. Blessed be your mouth, and may Allah bless your age!

It is worth mentioning here that Ibrahim (the son) offers a good suggestion to the family. The old woman, as it seems, not only likes the suggestion but is also fond of the speaker who is dear and close to her. Expressing her endearment in what he says, she fully supports his suggestion “you only say the right things”. Then she extends her endearment utterance through the religious expression “Blessed be your mouth, and may Allah bless your age”.

In addition, there is a variety of similar expressions that reflect a sense of endearment and cordiality. For example:

(٢٥) ربنا يطول عمرك ولا يحرمني منك (Mahfouz, 1984: 913)

rabina yiṭawil fi ṣumrak wala ya ḥrimini minak

May our Lord prolong your life and may not He deprive me from you.

3.2.5 Welcoming Expressions as Endearments

In some situations, the speaker feels that the hearer may think he/she is trespassing the speaker’s personal territory. Therefore, the speaker tries to alleviate the hearer’s concerns by welcoming expressions. This is the mutual orientation of face-respect in which “S

insists that H may impose on his negative face” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 99). Welcoming expressions can indirectly perform the function of endearments. The function of welcoming expressions such as *ahlan wa sahlān* “welcome” is to satisfy the positive face of the hearer. For example:

(٢٦) اهلا وسهلا, شرفت و نورت (Mahfouz, 1984: 124)

ahlan wa sahlān sharaft w nawarit

Welcome, you have honored us and enlightened the house.

The visitor always thinks that he/she will trespass the other’s territory and will restrict his/her freedom of action (negative face), the other person uses expressions like *ahlan wa sahlān* and *sharaft w nawarit* to give the visitor a message that he/she is dear to the family and his/her visit is desired. This way the speaker satisfies the positive face of the hearer and minimizes the his/her negative face. The host can also reaffirm his welcoming to the guest, the speaker can also use heart-touching expressions that arise from the heart and reflect endearment connotations. The following sentence is used by the host upon the guest’s departure:

(٢٧) اهلا بك من القلب في كل حين (Mahfouz, 1984: 819)

ahlan bika min alqalb fi kul ħeen.

Welcome from the heart, any time.

4. Findings:

- 1- This study proves the richness of vocabulary system of Arabic language. Endearments can realize different pragmatic functions and be realized in other different forms and expressions. Arab speakers employ some positive politeness strategies to perform different functions. For example, they use terms of endearments to get the attention of the listener, to mitigate the requests and offers, to claim common ground, to show intimacy and closeness to the hearer, and to establish a friendly context (atmosphere) for interaction. Other positive politeness strategies (forms) are also employed to express endearments. For example, Arab speakers use diminutives such as *bunayati* “my daughter” and kinship terms such as *axi* “my brother” and *ħami* “my uncle” to indicate endearment, respect and intimacy.



- 2- It has been found that two of Leech's politeness principles (maxims) "approbation and sympathy" are employed in order to perform the social function of endearment (see 3.1.3 and 3.2.1).
- 3- It has been found that religion and culture have a clear effect on the Arab people. That is evident in their language, they, for instance, use religious and welcoming expressions to perform the function of endearments. Such expressions are used out of religious, social and cultural considerations.
- 4- Power factor plays little role in favor of the solidarity factor. The data collected and analyzed shows that Arab speakers use endearments to express solidarity and intimacy even when speaking to a person of a higher status. They show deference to older people whether they are in the family hierarchy, relatives, or even strangers (see 3.2.2).
- 5- It has also been found that some expressions are used for certain purposes, intentions and motives. For example, praise, which functions as endearment, is used to get support, and help from others (e.g. *sanaydi* "my support"). In addition, the word *ya shatir* "clever" is used to motivate students and children to do well at school and in daily life.

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List of Arabic phonemic symbols used for Arabic transcription

Consonants:

Arabic letter	The symbol	Example of Arabic words	Meaning of the Arabic words
ء	'	<i>na'am</i>	yes
ب	b	<i>ibn</i>	son
ت	t	<i>mata</i>	when
ث	th	<i>thalatha</i>	three
ج	j	<i>naxruj</i>	We go out

ح	ħ	<i>ħulwah</i>	pretty, beautiful
خ	x	<i>axi</i>	my brother
د	d	<i>sadah</i>	gentlemen
ذ	ð	<i>laðeeð</i>	delicious
ر	r	<i>ruuh</i>	soul
ز	z	<i>ƣazizati</i>	darling
س	s	<i>miskeen</i>	poor boy
ش	sh	<i>shatir</i>	clever
ص	Ş	<i>Sabah alxair</i>	good morning
ض	ɖ	<i>ɖiyafah</i>	hospitality
ط	ɟ	<i>batal</i>	hero
ع	ƣ	<i>ƣazizati</i>	darling
غ	gh	<i>ghareeb</i>	stranger
ف	f	<i>kaif haluk</i>	how are you
ق	q	<i>alqalb</i>	heart
ل	l	<i>ħulwah</i>	pretty, beautiful
م	m	<i>miskeen</i>	poor boy
ن	n	<i>ƣain</i>	eye
هـ	h	<i>ahlan wa sahlan</i>	welcome
و	w	<i>noor</i>	sight / light
ي	y	<i>yad</i>	hand

Vowels

Arabic letter	The symbol	Example of Arabic words	Meaning of Arabic words
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ـ	i	<i>shatir</i>	clever
ـ	a	<i>batal</i>	hero
ـ	u	<i>ummuh</i>	his mother