Social Context of Face-Threatening Acts in Abu Ubaidah's Speech on Al Jazeera Channel

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Abstract: This research examines Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) in Abu Ubaidah's speech on Al Jazeera's YouTube channel within the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Unlike previous studies focused on Western political discourse, this research uncovers distinct face management patterns within Arab-Islamic political communication broadcast globally. Using a qualitative approach with pragmatic discourse analysis, the research analyzes Abu Ubaidah's speech on the Gaza conflict on April 23, 2024. Data collection involved indirect observation through watching and transcribing the speech video, complemented by literature review. The analysis combines Brown and Levinson's politeness model with Miles and Huberman's data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing framework. The findings reveal Abu Ubaidah's strategic use of FTAs for delegitimizing adversaries, constructing resistance identity, and fostering solidarity, with 23 FTAs targeting positive face and 19 targeting negative face. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the interaction between FTAs and the social context as markers of cultural-religious identity in Arab political discourse during conflicts, and providing new insights into how FTAs is employed to achieve communicative and ideological goals in non-Western contexts. This research recommends further exploring communication strategies in similar conflicts through various linguistic approaches.

INTRODUCTION

In dialogue, face-threatening acts (FTAs) are communicative behaviors that have the potential to damage the public self-image of both the speaker and the listener[1]. FTAs encompass positive face, which refers to the desire to be liked and appreciated, and negative face, which refers to the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition[2]. Understanding and managing FTAs is crucial in social

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[1] I-Ju Chen, "Face-Threatening Acts: Conflict between a Teacher and Students in EFL Classroom," *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 07, no. 02 (2017): 151–66, https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2017.72012.

[2] Russel J. Aporbo et al., "Face-Threatening and Face-Saving Speech Acts of Teachers: A Discourse Analysis of Classroom Interactions," *World Journal of English Language* 14, no. 3 (March 28, 2024): 413–39, https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n3p413.

interactions, especially in sensitive contexts such as political discourse[3]. Therefore, FTAs play a role in influencing social relationships, power dynamics, and communication effectiveness[4]. In dealing with FTAs, speakers often use various strategies to mitigate these threats, such as indirect language, hedging statements, and other strategies[5]. The way FTAs are handled can either strengthen or damage relationships, reinforce or challenge power structures, and facilitate or hinder effective communication across different cultural and professional contexts[6].

In political discourse, political speeches are inherently rich in face-threatening acts (FTAs) because speakers must assert their positions while maintaining diplomatic relations and public image[7]. This challenge becomes even more complex when the speech is broadcast on international media platforms like Al Jazeera. In political speeches that cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, speakers must carefully navigate multiple challenges simultaneously: asserting authority, avoiding escalation of conflict to maintain diplomatic channels, and considering how diverse audiences will interpret their words[8]. Therefore, when addressing sensitive international issues, leaders often employ indirect language strategies and face-saving strategies that are acceptable across cultural contexts[9]. One such figure frequently involved in global political discourse is Abu Ubaidah, known for his ability to navigate these challenges effectively.

Abu Ubaidah is the official spokesperson of Hamas's Al-Qassam Brigades and has become a significant figure in regional political discourse, especially through his appearances on Al Jazeera[10]. His speech is interesting to analyze because it shows how face-threatening acts (FTAs) often occur within it, as the

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[3] Intan Tia Ajeng Aryani, "Strategi Kesantunan Yang Digunakan Presenter Amerika Dan Indonesia Dalam Suatu Acara Talkshow," *ETNOLINGUAL* 3, no. 2 (December 23, 2019): 75, https://doi.org/10.20473/etno.v3i2.14640.

[4] Emmanuel Njuki and Nancy W. Mbaka, "Negative Face Threatening Acts Used By Kenya's Members Of The 12th National Assembly," *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science* 26, no. 7 (2021): 09–18, https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2607040918.

[5] Penelope Brown and Stephen C Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[6] Jimmy Sapoetra, "Face Threatening Acts in Pre-Service Teachers and Students: A Case Study in EFL Classroom," *Biormatika: Jurnal Ilmiah Fakultas Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan* 7, no. 2 (September 2021): 199–205, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35569/biormatika.v7i2.1104.

[7] Tarak Dridi, "Face Threatening Acts (FTAS) in AIPAc Political Annual Speeches Between 2006 and 2012," *LLT Journal: Journal on Language and Language Teaching* 24, no. 1 (April 2021): 261–75, https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v24i1.2684.

[8] Mehrdad Vasheghani Farahani and Reza Kazemian, "Speaker-Audience Interaction in Spoken Political Discourse : A Contrastive Parallel Corpus-Based Study of English-Persian Translation of Metadiscourse Features in TED Talks," *Corpus Pragmatics* 5, no. 2 (June 27, 2021): 271–98, https://doi.org/10.1007/s41701-021-00099-z.

[9] Monika Kirner-Ludwig and Rana Fadhil Alsaedi, "A Pragmatics-Based Appeal to Saving Face so as to Save Lives: On Intercultural Pragmatic Awareness (or Rather: Lack Thereof) in a Handbook for US Soldiers Deployed for Iraq," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 50, no. 3 (May 4, 2021): 225–53, https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2020.1869581.

[10] Uswah Mujahidah Rasuna Said et al., "Politeness in Language and Speech Events in War Situations: Analysis of Abu Ubaidah's Speech," *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, Dan Budaya* 14, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 104, https://doi.org/10.26714/lensa.14.1.2024.104-125.

topic he raises is a high-stakes political communication. Abu Ubaidah employs various specific strategies to effectively convey his message to asserting his political stance and maintain diplomatic relations. With Al Jazeera's international reach, Abu Ubaidah carefully chooses his language, often employs self-defense strategies, uses collective pronouns, and considers diplomatic aspects, so that his message can resonate with local and global audiences[11]. This makes his speeches a valuable source for understanding the pragmatic dynamics and discourse level of FTAs in contemporary political communication that crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries.

This research's analysis is limited to Abu Ubaidah's speech on the Al Jazeera YouTube channel. This channel was chosen for its unique features in terms of accessibility, documentation, and its global reach[12]. Al Jazeera also provides replayable speech recordings with multilingual subtitles, facilitating detailed analysis and allowing for academic verification by the public. Al Jazeera also provides accurate and in-depth news analysis making it a reliable source of information[13]. With its rich digital narrative context, this channel serves as an ideal medium for studying how Abu Ubaidah's political speech manage face-threatening acts (FTAs) in the realm of global communication. This is significant as the messages in this speech cross cultural and linguistic boundaries while remaining relevant within the editorial context provided by Al Jazeera.

Several previous studies have examined political discourse on Al Jazeera Channel in the context of Palestine-Israel conflict. Amaireh[14] explored the network's reporters' ideology and attitudes through lexicalization and syntax using critical discourse analysis framework. Sarwar[15] examined how the Israel-Palestine conflict was portrayed in global media, focusing on BBC and Al Jazeera's reporting of death figures while distinguishing between terrorists and civilians. Qobulsyah[16] analyzed and compared variables in BBC and Al Jazeera mass media coverage.

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[11] Raghad Al-Minawi, "Analyzing the Rhetoric of the Aqsa Flood War (2023-2024): A Study of Hamas' Official Discourse through Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* 7, no. 1 (January 28, 2024): 191–98, https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.1.17.

[12] Zainab Abdul-Nabi, "Based on the Peace Journalism Model: Analysis of Al-Jazeera's Coverage of Bahrain's Uprising and Syria's Chemical Attack," *Global Media and Communication* 11, no. 3 (December 3, 2015): 271–302, https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766515606300.

[13] Hugh Miles, *Al Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World* (New York: Hachette Digital, 2010).

[14] Hanan Ali Amaireh, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Al Jazeera's Reporting of the 2021 Israel-Palestine Crisis," *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 24, no. 1 (October 5, 2023): 21–40, https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes.v24i1.559.

[15] Haseeb Sarwar, Afifa Tanveer Malhi, and Iram Naz, "Representation of Israel and Palestine Issue in International Media: An Analysis of BBC and Al-Jazeera Coverage in 2022," *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (2023): 375–381, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2023(4-III)34.

[16] Mochamad Alvin Dwiana Qobulsyah et al., "Dissecting the Initial One-Week Narratives of Al Jazeera and BBC Media on Covering Israel-Palestine Tension After 7 October 2023," *Ultimacomm: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 15, no. 2 (2024): 237–60, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31937/ultimacomm.v15i2.3568.

Building on these media discourse studies, recent research has explored face-threatening acts (FTAs) in various contexts. Aporbo[17] investigated teachers' use of politeness strategies in workplace conversations. Rashid[18] analyzed Donald Trump's negative FTAs in political speeches. Ugwu et al.[19] and Ojukwu and Dike[20] examined FTAs in fictional works, while Dridi[21], Agustina[22], and Gutiérrez[23] explored FTAs in direct social interactions. Said et al.[24] specifically analyzed Abu Ubaidah's speeches using Leech's politeness theory and Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework[25], providing a foundation for further analysis of his discourse strategies.

Most previous research has explored FTAs in various communication contexts, including workplaces, politics, and fiction. While this research shares similarities with prior works by using Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory[26], it differs by examining FTA phenomena specifically in Abu Ubaidah's speech on Al Jazeera. This research builds upon existing media discourse studies by Amaireh[27], Sarwar[28], and Qobulsyah[29] who analyzed Al Jazeera's coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict, while incorporating FTA analysis frameworks explored by Aporbo[30], Rashid[31] and others in various contexts.

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[17] Russel Aporbo, "Face-threatening acts of Teachers: A Discourse Analysis of Politeness in the Workplace," *IJRP: International Journal of Research Publications* 97, no. 1 (2022): 189–220, https://doi.org/10.47119/ijrp100971320222958.

[18] Bushra Ni'ma Rashid, "Face Threatening Act in Media Chat : A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis," *Multidisciplinary International Journal* 8, no. 8 (2022): 1–16, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363925207_Face_Threatening_Act_in_Media_Chat_A_Discourse-Pragmatic_Analysis.

[19] Nwani-Grace Ugwu, Juliana N. Onuoha, and Emmanuel A. Oguji, "Effects of Face Threatening Acts in Fictional Conversations: A Study of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo`s The Last of The Strong Ones," *UNIJERPS: Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies* 14, no. 3 (2022): 101–13, https://unijerps.org/index.php/unijerps/article/view/360.

[20] Chika Kate Ojukwu and Chidinma Joy Dike, "Politeness Strategies and Face-Threatening Acts in Master-Servant Relationships in Selected Wole Soyinka and William Shakespeare's Drama Texts," *IKENGA International Journal of Institute of African Studies* 24, no. 1 (March 30, 2023): 1–19, https://doi.org/10.53836/ijia/2023/24/1/008.

[21] Dridi, "Face Threatening Acts (FTAS) in AIPAc Political Annual Speeches Between 2006 and 2012."

[22] Sheila Agustina, "Face-Saving and Face-Threatening Negotiation By Lecturers: Gender and Teaching Experience Differences," *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching* 5, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 590–99, https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v5i2.4527.

[23] Raquel Lázaro Gutiérrez, "Analysis of Face-Threatening Acts Against Telephone Interpreters," *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 26, no. 10 (2021): 197–214, https://doi.org/10.13137/2421-714X/33271.

[24] Said et al., "Politeness in Language and Speech Events in War Situations: Analysis of Abu Ubaidah's Speech."

[25] Said et al.

[26] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.*

[27] Amaireh, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Al Jazeera's Reporting of the 2021 Israel-Palestine Crisis."

[28] Sarwar, Malhi, and Naz, "Representation of Israel and Palestine Issue in International Media: An Analysis of BBC and Al-Jazeera Coverage in 2022."

[29] Qobulsyah et al., "Dissecting the Initial One-Week Narratives of Al Jazeera and BBC Media on Covering Israel-Palestine Tension After 7 October 2023."

[30] Aporbo, "Face-Threatening Acts of Teachers: A Discourse Analysis of Politeness in the Workplace."

[31] Rashid, "Face Threatening Act in Media Chat : A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis."

This research offers originality by combining pragmatic analysis with face-threatening acts theory in examining Abu Ubaidah's speech. The research expands on Said et al.'s analysis by exploring social contextual aspects within Arab political discourse[32]. Unlike previous studies, this research analyzes political discourse from a pragmatic politeness perspective. This research provides three key novel contributions to pragmatic discourse analysis: First, it reveals how Arab political leaders like Abu Ubaidah strategically employ FTAs to establish authority while maintaining Islamic cultural values. Second, it demonstrates how power dynamics and socio-political identity specifically shape the use of face-threatening acts in Arab political discourse, particularly in resistance movements.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to identify FTA types in Abu Ubaidah's Al Jazeera speech and explore the influencing social contexts, including power relations, social distance, and socio-political identity. The research examines how Abu Ubaidah structures his discourse to affect social relationships with his audience. The results are expected to contribute to pragmatic and political discourse analysis, particularly in understanding pragmatic strategies within Arab and Islamic political contexts.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach aimed at analyzing Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) in Abu Ubaidah's speech on the Al Jazeera Channel through pragmatic discourse analysis while considering the supporting social context. The primary data in this research consists of the transcript of one of Abu Ubaidah's speech about the conflict in Gaza, uploaded to Al Jazeera's YouTube Channel on April 23, 2024, accessible via the link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWmOED0eSfI [33]. Secondary data includes relevant literature and research from books and journals that support the analysis. Data collection techniques involve indirect observation, namely watching and observing the speech video, which is then transcribed to produce written text ready for analysis[34]. Additionally, literature study was conducted by gathering relevant articles and books[35].

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[32] Said et al., "Politeness in Language and Speech Events in War Situations: Analysis of Abu Ubaidah's Speech."

[33] Aljazeera Arabic, *Shāhid | Kalimat Al-Nāṭiq Al-'Askarī Bi-Ism Katā'Ib Al-Qassām Abū 'Ubaydah Fī Al-Yawm Al-200 Li-Al-Ḥarb 'alā Ghazzah* (Saudi Arabia: Youtube, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWmOED0eSfI.

[34] Malgorzata Ciesielska, Katarzyna W. Boström, and Magnus Öhlander, "Observation Methods," in *Qualitative Methodologies in Organization Studies* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 33–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65442-3_2.

[35] Primadi Candra Susanto et al., "Qualitative Method Concepts: Literature Review, Focus Group Discussion, Ethnography and Grounded Theory," *Siber Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary* 2, no. 2 (September 3, 2024): 262–75, https://doi.org/10.38035/sjam.v2i2.207.

The data analysis in this research integrates Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness model for pragmatic discourse analysis[36] with Miles and Huberman's model, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing[37]. Data reduction was carried out by filtering relevant data to focus the analysis on FTAs. Subsequently, the application of pragmatic discourse analysis identified the parties involved, the types of face threats, and the social contexts within the reduced data. Data display was conducted in the form of tables to visualize the findings, including direct quotations from the analyzed speech, followed by descriptive interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by formulating initial findings, which were then verified through theoretical frameworks and previous studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings on the types of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) in Abu Ubaidah's speeches on Al Jazeera's YouTube channel and the social context influencing these strategies. The analysis focuses on two main aspects: first, identifying the types of FTAs and sub-actions with examples and analysis using Brown and Levinson's theory; second, examining the social context, including power dynamics, social distance, and identity, that shape the choice of strategies. The discussion concludes by delving deeper into these elements within the context of Arab politics, linking the findings to politeness theory, comparing them with prior studies, and exploring their implications for analyzing Arab-Islamic political discourse.

Types of FTAs in Abu Ubaidah's Speech

Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) is a theory focusing on threats to an individual's "face" or social honor in interaction. Brown and Levinson classify FTAs into four types with various sub-actions: FTAs to the hearer's positive face (criticism, contempt, reprimands, accusations, disagreements, challenges, irreverences, and bringing bad news about the hearer); FTAs to the hearer's negative face (compliments, orders, requests, advice, reminders, threats, and warnings); FTAs to the speaker's positive face (apologies, self-humiliations, confessions, and admissions of guilt); and FTAs to the speaker's negative face (offers, promises, giving thanks, excuses, and responses to the hearer's faux pas)[38]. Accordingly, the researcher identified four main types of FTAs in Abu Ubaidah's speech on Al Jazeera's YouTube Channel, as presented in table 1 and figure 1 below.

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[36] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*.

[37] Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014).
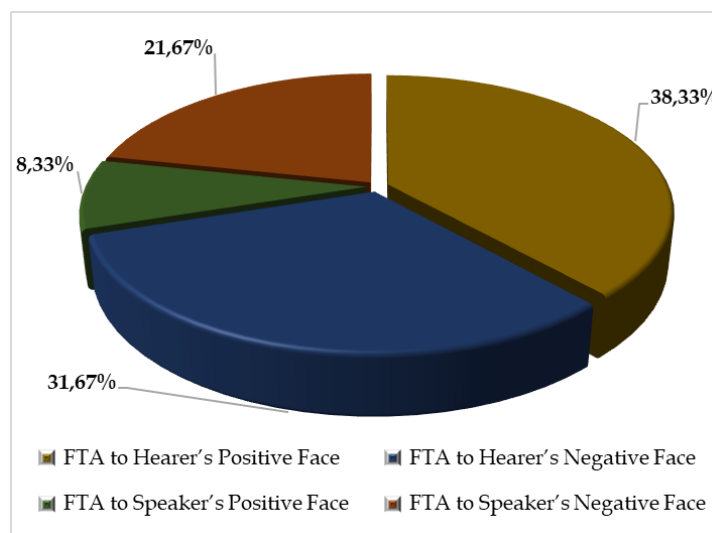
[38] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*.

Table 1. Frequency of FTA Types in Abu Ubaidah's Speech on Al Jazeera's YouTube Channel

No.	Type of FTA	Frequency	Sub-Actions and Their Counts	
1	**FTA to Hearer's Positive Face**	23	Criticism and Contempt	5
			Accusations	12
			Disagreements	5
			Bringing of bad news about hearer	1
2	**FTA to Hearer's Negative Face**	19	Orders and Requests	7
			Threats or Warnings	9
			Compliments	3
No.	Type of FTA	Frequency	Sub-Actions and Their Counts	
3	**FTA to Speaker's Positive Face**	5	Apologies (indirect)	2
			Admission of guilt	2
			Self-humiliations	1
4	**FTA to Speaker's Negative Face**	13	Promises	6
			Offers	4
			Giving Thanks	3
		Total		60

Source: Al Jazeera Arabic Youtube Channel[39]

Based on Table 1, it is evident that FTAs targeting the hearer's positive face dominate with a significant total (23 excerpts), particularly in the sub-action of accusations, which accounts for 12 excerpts, followed by criticism and contempt with 5 excerpts. To provide a clearer visualization of the data, the distribution of FTAs is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of FTAs in Abu Ubaidah's Speech

The pie chart above highlights that FTAs targeting the positive face of the audience are the most frequent (38.33%), followed by FTAs targeting the negative

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[39] Arabic, *Shāhid | Kalimat Al-Nāṭiq Al-'Askarī Bi-Ism Katā'lb Al-Qassām Abū 'Ubaydah Fī Al-Yawm Al-200 Li-Al-Ḥarb 'alā Ghazzah*.

face of the audience (31.67%). FTAs targeting the negative face of the speaker account for 21.67%, while those targeting the positive face of the speaker represent the smallest proportion at 8.33%. These numbers indicate that Abu Ubaidah frequently employs linguistic strategies to attack or damage the self-image of the hearer, specifically targeting Zionist Israel[40]. This approach is due to the use of direct criticism and accusations as primary linguistic tools to undermine the confidence and reputation of the opposing party. To clarify how these FTA strategies are linguistically realized in Abu Ubaidah's speech, the following table presents examples of specific terms and expressions used in each FTA sub-action.

Table 2. Examples of Terms Used in Each FTA Sub-Action

Sub-Action	Arabic Terms	English Translation	Context
Criticism and Contempt	"النازية الجديدة"، "جيشه الهمجي النازي"	*"The new Nazism"*, *"His Nazi barbaric army"*	Used to criticize and show contempt for the Israeli forces and leadership
Accusiations	"يستغل ورطته على الأرض في المزيد من التدمير الانتقامي الأعمى"	*"Exploiting its predicament on the ground for more blind retaliatory destruction"*	Accusing the enemy of deliberately causing destruction
Disagreements	"إن من أكاذيب حكومة العدو المتواصلة"	*"Among the continuous lies of the enemy government"*	Disagreeing with and refuting enemy claims
Bringing of bad news about hearer	"سيناريو رون أراد ربما يكون السيناريو الأوفر حظا أن يتكرر"	*"The Ron Arad scenario is likely to be repeated"*	Warning about potential negative outcomes for hostages
Orders and Requests	"ندعو كل جماهير أمتنا إلى تصعيد الفعل المقاوم"	*"We call on all masses of our nation to escalate the act of resistance"*	Calling for specific actions from supporters
Threats or Warnings	"حيثما بحث عن هذا النصر سيجد هناك في مواجهته ما لا يحتسب"	*"Wherever they seek this victory, they will face what they do not expect"*	Warning of consequences for military actions

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[40] Aljazeera, "Muḥallilūn Siyasiyyūn: Khiṭāb Abū 'Ubaydah Sayudhki Khilāfāt Al-Isrāʾīliyyīn," Shabakah al-Jazīrah al-Iʿlāmiyyah, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.net/programs/2024/5/17/محللون-سياسيون-خطاب-أبو-عبيدة-سيذكي.

Compliments	"يا شعبنا العظيم المبارك"	*"O our great blessed people"*	Praising Palestinian people's steadfastness
Apologies (indirect)	"نأسف للإزعاج الذي قد يسببه نضالنا للمدنيين"	*"We regret any disturbance our struggle may cause to civilians"*	An indirect apology expressing regret for civilian impact while maintaining political stance
Admission of guilt	"لم نكن مستعدين بما فيه الكفاية للهجوم الأخير، وندرك مسؤوليتنا عن ذلك"	*"We were not sufficiently prepared for the last attack, and we recognize our responsibility for that"*	Accepting responsibility for tactical shortcomings while maintaining overall resistance stance
Self-humiliations	"نحن نقر بتواضع قدراتنا العسكرية مقارنة بعدونا، لكن إرادتنا أقوى"	*"We humbly acknowledge our military capabilities compared to our enemy, but our will is stronger"*	Acknowledging limitations while maintaining dignity in resistance
Promises	"ستظل المقاومة الأمينة على تضحياتكم"	*"The resistance will remain faithful to your sacrifices"*	Promising continued resistance
Offers	"نقدم استعدادنا للتفاوض من أجل تبادل الأسرى بشروط عادلة"	*"We offer our readiness to negotiate for a fair prisoner exchange"*	Offering diplomatic solutions while maintaining political leverage
Giving Thanks	"تحية لعائلاتنا الكريمة"	*"Greetings to our honorable families"*	Expressing gratitude to supporters

Source: Al Jazeera Arabic Youtube Channel[41]

The examples of FTA sub-actions presented in Table 2, such as criticism, contempt, and accusations, align with Brown and Levinson's theory, which states that violations of an individual's positive face aim to reduce their sense of respect or social acceptance. This is evident in the excerpt:

"ولا يزال العدو المجرم وجيشه الهمجي يحاول لملمة صورته منذ ذلك اليوم، لكنه لا يحصل إلا على المزيد من الخزي والعار وسوء الوجه".

"Since that day, the criminal enemy and its barbaric army have been striving to repair their image, but all they achieve is more humiliation, disgrace, and a tarnished reputation."
- Abu Ubaidah

This excerpt demonstrates a violation of the hearer's positive face, using a bald-on-record approach. The speaker directly undermines the image of the occupiers (Zionist Israel) with contemptuous language. Terms like 'العدو المجرم'

(*criminal enemy*) and ʿجيشه الهمجيʾ (*barbaric army*) reflect disdain for the hearer's values and actions. The phrase ʿيحاول لملمة صورته، لكنه لا يحصل إلا على المزيد من الخزي والعار وسوء الوجهʾ (continues to attempt to repair its image, but gains nothing but more humiliation, disgrace, and a tarnished reputation) dismisses the occupiers' efforts to gain social respect, discrediting them and fostering solidarity with the speaker's supporters (Palestine). However, this can be seen as provocative by neutral parties. This strategy uses Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) to assert the speaker's stance and oppose the adversary.

FTAs targeting the hearer's negative face are also frequent. Sub-actions like threats, warnings, and reminders occur 9 times, while orders and requests appear 7 times. These FTAs show Abu Ubaidah's attempt to limit the hearer's freedom, whether implicitly or explicitly. This approach aims to create pressure, forcing the hearer to comply with the speaker's will. For example:

"الموت فينا وفيكم الفزع، أخزاكم الله في الغزاة".

"Death for us is glory, while for you it is terror. May Allah disgrace you like the other colonizers." - Abu Ubaidah

According to Brown and Levinson's framework, this excerpt constitutes an FTA against the hearer's negative face, directly threatening their freedom of action. The comparison of values between the two sides, ʿالموت فينا وفيكم الفزعʾ (*death for us is glory, while for you it is terror*), aims to degrade the hearers and force them to accept a negative view of themselves. The phrase ʿأخزاكم الله في الغزاةʾ (*may Allah disgrace you like the other colonizers*) implies a threat and an intent to belittle, reinforcing the speaker's moral superiority and denying the hearer's autonomy. This illustrates how Abu Ubaidah disregards the hearer's need to preserve their autonomy, central to negative face.

FTAs against the speaker's positive and negative face are less frequent. Apologies, confessions, and self-humiliations appear rarely, indicating that the focus is more on attacking the opponent than acknowledging the speaker's weaknesses. When these FTAs appear, they mainly aim to inspire the speaker's people, who are also suffering. The presence of sub-actions like promises and expressions of thanks reflects solidarity with the audience, aiming to strengthen the relationship with the supporters. For example:

"فنحن من شعبنا وهو منا، نحمل رايته وآماله وآماله ونشاركه آلامه وتضحياته التي ستثمر نصرا وعزا بعون الله القدير"

"Because we are part of our people, and he is part of us, we carry his banner, embrace his hopes, and share his pain and sacrifices that, with God's will, will bear fruit in victory and honor." - Abu Ubaidah

From Brown and Levinson's perspective, the above excerpt is an example of an FTA towards the speaker's positive face, that of Abu Ubaidah himself. This

is because the excerpt conveys Abu Ubaidah's humility through an acknowledgment of his weakness, showing his inequality with the hearers, both the Israelis and the audience. The statement emphasizes that the speaker (Abu Ubaidah) not only carries the banner of hope but also participates in the suffering and sacrifices of his people, reflecting solidarity. By highlighting his active participation in the collective struggle, the speaker implicitly diminishes his own image, thus threatening his own positive face. However, this act is intended to strengthen values of unity, togetherness, and collective struggle, as well as create a deep emotional connection with his supporters worldwide.

"ونخص جبهات القتال الباسلة في لبنان واليمن والعراق، ونحيي أرواح شهدائها الكرام، وأبطالها المقاتلين والمجاهدين،

وتضحيات شعوبها الحرة الأبية"

"We specifically honor the valiant battlefronts in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq. We salute the souls of their noble martyrs, their heroic fighters and mujahideen, and the sacrifices of their free and dignified peoples." - Abu Ubaidah

The above excerpt is an example of an indirect utterance of giving thanks, which falls under the category of FTA towards the speaker's negative face, according to Brown and Levinson's perspective. Through his speech, Abu Ubaidah, as the speaker, expresses his respect for the resistance movements in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq, which have helped reaffirm the values of courage, sacrifice, and honor for the fighters and martyrs[42]. While the speaker expresses respect for the mentioned parties, this can threaten the speaker's negative face, though with a minor impact, as it reflects Hamas's lack of strength in fighting for the independence of its people, highlighted by the large number of martyrs. However, by offering thanks, the speaker focuses more on showing respect and appreciation for those already involved, while maintaining politeness and recognition of their struggle.

Social Context Analysis of FTAs in Abu Ubaidah's Speech: Power Relations, Distance, and Identity on Al Jazeera Channel

In pragmatic discourse analysis, context is crucial, distinguishing it from semantics. This section examines the social contexts underlying Abu Ubaidah's FTA strategies through three dimensions: power relations, social distance, and social identity, which significantly shape his rhetoric. To elucidate how these social contexts of FTA strategies are linguistically realized in Abu Ubaidah's speech, the following table presents the dimensions of social contexts and its key characteristics in Abu Ubaidah's speech.

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[42] Deepika Saraswat, "Hamas–Israel War and the Evolution of Iran's 'Resistance Geopolitics,'" *Strategic Analysis* 48, no. 1 (January 2, 2024): 60–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2024.2331346.

Table 3. Dimensions of Social Context in Abu Ubaidah's Speech

Dimension	Definition	Key Characteristics in Abu Ubaidah's Speech
Power Relations	Hierarchical dynamics influencing language choices and FTA strategies.	Undermining Israel's legitimacy through accusations and criticisms.
		Emphasizing moral and spiritual authority over material limitations.
		Using religious references to assert divine protection and inevitability of victory.
Social Distance	Level of closeness or familiarity between participants in an interaction.	Widening social distance with adversaries by demeaning them.
		Minimizing social distance with in-group members through emotional bonding.
		Strengthening in-group solidarity while emphasizing distinctions with out-groups.
Social Identity	Construction of identity through language, reflecting societal positioning.	Linking Palestinian struggle to broader moral and religious values.
		Framing Palestinian identity as a symbol of global resistance.
		Invoking international solidarity and broadening the identity of resistance beyond geographical limits.

Based on table 3, we can see that these three dimensions are interconnected and form the basis of Abu Ubaidah's communication strategy. These dimensions not only help us understand how Abu Ubaidah constructs his narrative but also demonstrate how he uses language to influence the audience's perception of the ongoing conflict.

The first dimension is power relations, which is the most influential factor in shaping Face-Threatening Acts (FTA) strategies in political communication. Power relations describe the hierarchy of power and authority that influence language choices[43]. Brown and Levinson emphasize that power significantly affects how speakers construct threats or preserve "face"[44]. In the context of Abu Ubaidah's speech, power relations extend beyond military and territorial dynamics to include symbolic, moral, and narrative dimensions that influence audience perceptions. Out of the 60 total FTAs identified, the dominance of FTAs targeting the hearer's positive face (23 excerpts) and negative face (19 excerpts) highlights Abu Ubaidah's efforts to shift the audience's perception of power by

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[43] V. Vinod Kumar, Vijay Singh Thakur, and Justin James, "Face Management and Issues of Power, Solidarity, and Distance: Socio-Pragmatic Influences on Literary Discourses," *Journal of Language and Literature* 19, no. 2 (October 1, 2019): 1, https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v19i2.2115.

[44] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.*

undermining Israel's legitimacy. This strategy is executed through accusations such as 'وتمارس الكذب والتضليل على جمهورها فيما يتعلق بهذا الملف' (*and (they) practice lies and deception on their audience regarding this issue*) and criticisms labeling them as a 'جيشه الهمجي' (*barbaric army*). These strategies are not merely rhetorical but also aim to weaken the opponent's position of power in the eyes of the international audience.

Additionally, Abu Ubaidah establishes alternative power relations by emphasizing moral and spiritual authority. Statements like 'الموت فينا وفيكم الفزع، أخزاكم الله في الغزاة' (*death for us is glory, while for you it is terror*) reflect his effort to transform material limitations into moral strength. This strategy is reinforced by building collective solidarity, as evidenced by only 5 positive FTAs and 13 negative FTAs directed at himself. By focusing on uplifting the spirit of his people, Abu Ubaidah underscores that the struggle is not an individual endeavor but a collective movement rooted in values of justice.

Within the framework of Brown and Levinson's theory, religious references, such as the quote from *Surah Al-Baqarah (2: 250-251)*, serve as crucial instruments for creating moral justification grounded in religious values. This verse not only provides moral motivation for the audience but also implicitly threatens the opponent's negative face by asserting that victory for Abu Ubaidah's side is inevitable, as they are under divine protection. Thus, Abu Ubaidah's speech is not merely a medium for conveying messages but also a strategic tool for challenging the opponent's power while strengthening moral support for his cause.

The second dimension is social distance, which refers to how social proximity influences the strategy of Face-Threatening Acts (FTA) in Abu Ubaidah's speech. Social distance pertains to the level of closeness and familiarity between participants in an interaction[45]. Brown and Levinson argue that the greater the social distance, the more cautious the speaker will be in delivering threats[46]. In the context of the intense conflict between Hamas and Israel, social distance is not merely measured by geographic separation but also by historical tensions, ideological differences, and deeply rooted emotional conflicts spanning decades. Abu Ubaidah intentionally widens the social distance with Israel by employing language that significantly demeans his adversaries, using phrases such as 'الجيش الهمجي النازي عالقا' (*the Nazi barbarian army is stuck*) and 'العدو المجرم' (*criminal occupiers*). By portraying Israel as an entirely foreign and immoral entity, Abu

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[45] Kumar, Thakur, and James, "Face Management and Issues of Power, Solidarity, and Distance: Socio-Pragmatic Influences on Literary Discourses."

[46] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*.

Ubaidah successfully constructs a narrative that sharply separates 'us' (Hamas, Palestine, and its supporters) from 'them' (Zionist Israel).

Conversely, in his communication with the Palestinian people and supporters of his cause, Abu Ubaidah employs strategies to minimize social distance. Phrases such as 'يا أبناء شعبنا العظيم المبارك' (*O children of our noble and blessed nation*) and 'وما بقي فينا عرق ينبض فنحن من شعبنا وهو منا' (*And there is no vein left pulsing within us, for we are part of our people, and our people are part of us*) create a strong emotional bond. These expressions serve as social glue, reinforcing solidarity and minimizing internal distance.

Among the 60 identified FTAs, Abu Ubaidah allocates 24 excerpts to strengthen in-group solidarity[47] and 36 excerpts to emphasize distinctions with the out-group (the enemies). This demonstrates that political discourse has the ability to foster solidarity while excluding others[48]. This allocation demonstrates that Abu Ubaidah not only targets his adversaries but also focuses on reinforcing collective identity. This approach aligns with Brown and Levinson's theory of face-saving, where the communicator does not merely seek to damage the opponent's face but simultaneously builds and protects the face of their group.

The third dimension is social identity, which plays a crucial role in analyzing the strategies of Face-Threatening Acts (FTA) in Abu Ubaidah's speech. Social identity reflects the participants' position within society and refers to the new identity constructed by the speaker through their choice of language[49]. In his speech, Abu Ubaidah not only establishes his identity as a Palestinian but also creates an identity rooted in resistance, religion, and morality. Through various mechanisms, he constructs a strong collective identity by linking the Palestinian struggle to broader moral values. The use of Quranic references and phrases such as 'بإذن الله' (*with the permission of Allah*) serves not only as spiritual allusions but also as a means to reinforce a theologically justified narrative of resistance.

Out of the 60 identified FTAs, 19 directly refer to religious identity, while the remaining 41 focus more on shaping a resistance identity. Abu Ubaidah carefully frames the Palestinian struggle as a moral movement that transcends ethnic or territorial boundaries. Phrases like 'الموت فينا' (*death for us is glory*) illustrate how he positions Palestinian identity as a symbol of global resistance beyond the confines of a localized conflict. This framing transforms their material limitations

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47 Olga O'Toole, "(Im)Politeness as a Strategy in the Discursive Construction of In-Group Solidarity in Discussions about Love, Sex and Relationships on Incels.Is," *Półrocznik Językoznawczy Tertium* 9, no. 1 (November 15, 2024): 29–55, https://doi.org/10.7592/Tertium.2024.9.1.282.

48 Ebenezer Agbaglo, "Solidarity Building in Antagonistic Political Discourse on GhanaWeb," *Emerging Media* 2, no. 4 (December 4, 2024): 724–49, https://doi.org/10.1177/27523543241294086.

49 Helen Spencer-Oatey, "Conceptions of Social Relations and Pragmatics Research," *Journal of Pragmatics* 20, no. 1 (July 1993): 27–47, https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(93)90105-X.

into a source of moral pride that resonates with an international audience. Additionally, Abu Ubaidah employs inclusion strategies by calling for international solidarity. His speech is not solely addressed to Palestinians but also invites 'يا أحرار العالم في كل مكان' (*free people around the world*) to join the struggle. His acknowledgment of the resistance fronts in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq exemplifies his effort to broaden this identity of resistance beyond geographical limits.

According to Brown and Levinson's theory, this strategy represents an attempt to protect and elevate the collective face[50]. Abu Ubaidah seeks not only to preserve individual dignity but also to strengthen the collective dignity of the Palestinian people and their resistance movement. Each FTA he delivers is intended to weaken the enemy while reinforcing an internal narrative of identity that grows larger. Thus, social identity in Abu Ubaidah's speech is not a static category but a dynamic construction built through his complex rhetoric.

Based on a comparison with several previous studies, this research highlights unique aspects of the Face-Threatening Acts (FTA) embedded in Abu Ubaidah's speech. While all studies employ Brown and Levinson's theoretical framework, this research reveals a greater variety of FTAs and their contexts. Research such as that by Bushra Ni'ma Rashid[51] and Nwani-Grace Ugwu et al.[52] found a dominance of negative FTAs, whereas this research presents a more balanced distribution of positive FTAs (23 excerpts) and negative FTAs (19 excerpts) directed toward the audience. This balance reflects the complexity of Abu Ubaidah's strategies in articulating resistance within the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The main contribution of this research lies in its multi-contextual approach, which distinguishes it from previous studies. Unlike the works of Dridi[53] or Ojukwu and Dike[54], which focus on one or two contexts, this research comprehensively explores three dimensions of social context: power relations, social distance, and social identity. Aspects such as the use of religious references, the construction of a resistance identity, and an in-depth analysis of how FTAs are employed to shape a collective narrative add new dimensions. These findings position politeness theory as a potent tool for understanding discourse in prolonged conflicts, particularly within the Arab-Islamic context.

The findings of this research reveal significant patterns in Arab political discourse that extend beyond conventional analysis. Regarding power dynamics,

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[50] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.*
[51] Rashid, "Face Threatening Act in Media Chat : A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis."
[52] Ugwu, Onuoha, and Oguji, "Effects of Face Threatening Acts in Fictional Conversations: A Study of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo`s The Last of The Strong Ones."
[53] Dridi, "Face Threatening Acts (FTAS) in AIPAc Political Annual Speeches Between 2006 and 2012."
[54] Ojukwu and Dike, "Politeness Strategies and Face-Threatening Acts in Master-Servant Relationships in Selected Wole Soyinka and William Shakespeare's Drama Texts."

Abu Ubaidah's FTA strategies demonstrate a unique approach where power is not merely measured through military or territorial control. Instead, he consistently employs religious references and moral arguments as tools of power, transforming apparent physical weaknesses into moral strengths. For example, his use of Quranic verses and religious terminology serves to establish spiritual authority, a crucial element in Arab-Islamic political communication that often carries more weight than material power.

In terms of social distance, Abu Ubaidah's discourse shows distinctive features characteristic of Arab political communication during conflicts. His construction of social boundaries goes deeper than typical political opposition, incorporating cultural and religious elements that specifically resonate with Arab-Islamic audiences. The analysis reveals how he manipulates social distance through language choices, creating maximum distance with adversaries while simultaneously strengthening bonds with supporters through shared cultural and religious references.

The analysis of identity construction in Abu Ubaidah's speech reveals complex layers specific to political discourse. His FTA strategies demonstrate sophisticated identity building that combines the local Palestinian narrative with broader Arab-Islamic values. This dual approach to identity construction - maintaining local specificity while appealing to wider Arab-Islamic solidarity - represents a distinct feature of contemporary Arab political communication. The way he balances these identity elements through his FTA choices provides new insights into how political figures in the Arab world navigate complex identity politics through language.

Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of communication strategies in conflict situations. Russell Aporbo[55], Sheila Agustina[56], and Raquel Lazaro Gutierrez[57], from diverse backgrounds such as teacher interactions and translation, supports the argument that FTAs are not merely verbal acts that threaten but can also serve as instruments for constructing collective identity, fostering solidarity. This research underscores that in the context of resistance, face threats have the potential not only to delegitimize adversaries but also to strengthen internal relationships and construct a robust identity of struggle.

Furthermore, comparisons with Said et al.[58], which applied Geoffrey Leech's politeness maxims and Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework to Abu Ubaidah's speech, provide complementary perspectives. While their work helped

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[55] Aporbo, "Face-Threatening Acts of Teachers: A Discourse Analysis of Politeness in the Workplace."

[56] Agustina, "Face-Saving and Face-Threatening Negotiation By Lecturers: Gender and Teaching Experience Differences."

[57] Gutiérrez, "Analysis of Face-Threatening Acts Against Telephone Interpreters."

[58] Said et al., "Politeness in Language and Speech Events in War Situations: Analysis of Abu Ubaidah's Speech."

map various speech elements, this research offers broader social contexts that reveal how Abu Ubaidah constructs his narrative. By integrating FTAs with politeness theory and political discourse analysis, this research provides a significant contribution to understanding communication strategies in conflict situations, particularly in the Arab-Islamic world.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in Abu Ubaidah's speech, this research reveals that the rhetorical strategies employed by the spokesperson in the Israel-Palestine conflict go beyond mere linguistic confrontation. Through a comprehensive analysis of 60 FTAs along with their social contexts, the research demonstrates that Abu Ubaidah uses FTAs to delegitimize Israel, build internal solidarity, and construct a resistance identity grounded in moral and religious values. The primary contribution of this research lies in its multi-contextual approach, integrating the dimensions of power relations, social distance, and social identity, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of communication in major conflicts. These findings not only enrich Brown and Levinson's politeness theory but also offer significant insights into how resistance rhetoric is shaped within the Arab-Islamic context.

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