

Disagreeing in Tunisian Arabic: a Politeness and Pragmatic Study

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 29/03/2021

Accepted: 20/07/2021

KEYWORDS

Politeness, Speech act, Disagreement, pragmatics, preference, dispreference

Abstract

This research is a pragmatic and politeness study that deals with the speech act of disagreement in Tunisian Arabic, a variety of Arabic spoken in Tunisia. It accounts for disagreement in relation to the contextual factors of Social Distance, Social Power, and Rank of Imposition. Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is used to study the production of disagreement. Data was collected from a group of native speakers of Tunisian Arabic at “Institut Supérieur des Langues de Tunis, Tunisia”. Native speakers of TA used a variety of strategies, which were identified in other languages (e.g., Direct Refusal, Suggestion, Giving Account, and Request...) along with new strategies (e.g., Teasing, Unsympathetic advice, Challenge, and Criticism). The identification and quantification of the strategies of disagreement also helped develop insights into the Tunisian culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Speech Act of Disagreement

A large number of studies attempted to define disagreement. Some defined it as taking an oppositional position (Kakava, 1995; Clayman, 2002). Other studies expanded this definition by adding that disagreement is a reactive act (Herrero Moreno, 2002). Sornig (1977, p. 396) proposed another detailed definition whereby she perceives disagreement as “any utterance that comments upon a pre-text by questioning part of its semantic or pragmatic information, correcting or negating it”. Pearson (1986, p. 4) proposed a comprehensive account of disagreement where

The function agreement/disagreement occurs as an optional second pair part of an adjacency pair. [...] in order for agreement/disagreement to follow as a second pair part, the first speaker must assign some kind of personal judgment to the referent.

Disagreement is, then, a response to a prior utterance. Although Pearson has proposed a detailed definition of disagreement, her claim that the act of disagreement must absolutely be a response to a judgment is debatable. Indeed, a speaker S can disagree with a proposition P uttered by an addressee A the content of which is factual (Harlig & Salisbury, 2004). Speaker A may provide details or figures which are erroneous, then speaker S may disagree and probably provide a correction to the untrue/misrepresented proposition.

A thorough account of disagreement is provided by Rees-Miller (2000, p. 1088) who defines disagreement as follows.

A speaker (S) disagrees when s/he considers untrue some proposition (P) uttered or presumed to be espoused by an addressee (A) and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is not (P).

1.2.Preference/Dispreference of Disagreement

The term dis/preference was introduced by ethnomethodologists such as Pomerantz (1978), Schegloff et al., (1977), and Sacks (1987) among others. This notion was one of the most useful tools in Conversation Analysis (CA). In everyday encounters, it can be observed that there are preferred and dispreferred tendencies in conversations. Seen from the perspective of ‘dis/preference’, disagreement can be classified among the dispreferred options in conversations (Levinson, 1983). Agreement, however, is much more expected and appreciated in everyday encounters. Leech (1983, p. 132) lists the maxim of preference as one of the most important maxims in conversation: - (a) Minimize disagreement between self and other, and (b) Maximize agreement between self and other. Researchers report that agreement occurs more often than disagreement in oral discourse (Pearson, 1986). Interactants are reluctant and hesitant when expressing disagreement (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).

Preferred utterances are more likely to be structurally simpler and shorter if compared to dispreferred utterances, which are more complex and ‘wordy’. In initiating dispreferred utterances, the speaker makes more effort and mediation (Levinson, 1983).

Disagreement, defined as a second pair part to an initiation move (Pomerantz, 1984), is marked by verbal and/or non-verbal markers due to its dispreference nature. Pomerantz (1984) claims that disagreement is a dispreferred next action unless it is produced as a self-deprecation. Gardner (2000) among others (Sacks, 1987; Pearson, 1985; Leech, 2007) shares this view and maintains that speakers tend to agree and avoid conflict in interaction even when they disagree. Disagreement threatens the addressee’s positive-face defined as the need to be accepted and liked by others (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 81). The speaker neglects the hearer’s feelings and wants (Brown & Levinson, 1992, p. 66).

On the other hand, disagreement threatens negative-face which refers to the addressee’s right to freedom of action and not being imposed upon by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This happens when the initial assessment is perceived as an imposition on the part of the speaker (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1559). Sifianou elaborates on the notions of face and disagreement by stating that, in addition to the hearer’s face, the speaker’s face can be at risk. The speaker’s positive face will be endangered because “s/he is not a person to be liked or approved of” (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1600). Similarly, Pearson (1986, p. 125) stresses that disagreements among friends may damage or break the relationship. According to Kreutel (2007, p. 3), speakers give much attention to bridging “the gap between their desire to express their opinion and the presumption that this will be an undesired action.” This situation justifies the need for mitigation to redress disagreement (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In some situations, speakers may even resort to white lies to avoid the face threatening nature of their speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1992, p. 115).

However, the oppositional load of disagreement is not necessarily dispreferred or avoided. A large number of researchers (Tannen, 1981; Kakava, 2002; Angouri & Locher, 2012; Sifianou, 2012) assert that disagreement can be a supportive act. They have shown that, when speakers make disagreements, they show their argumentative and persuasive skills to prove that they are good at arguing and disputing when it comes to intellectual interactions (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1560). Thus, disagreement may be perceived from this perspective as a face-enhancing act for the speaker. On the other hand, Sifianou (2012, p. 1559) emphasizes on the face-threatening function that agreements may play by stating that:

Agreements may be face-threatening if, for instance, they are interpreted as insincere, manipulative or ingratiating. Moreover, agreements may also be self-face threatening acts if one feels impeded in voicing one's own views openly and freely.

New research in speech acts reveals that disagreement is no longer equated with negativity or perceived as an act to avoid or mitigate. Angouri and Locher (2012) give a new perception of a disagreement. This speech act can be tolerated and expected as an interactional tool to solve problems and make decisions in everyday encounters. They maintain that many aspects intervene in claiming whether the disagreement is preferred or dispreferred, like the context and norms of a particular society or culture group.

In the same vein, Georgakopoulou (2001, p. 1897) has suggested that “the occurrence of disagreements does not seem to pose a threat to the participants’ relation.” Tannen and Kakava’s (1992) study has shown that disagreement can be used to create intimacy. Kakava (2002, p. 1537) shows that disagreement is regarded as polite and appropriate, and it represents “a social practice that is pervasive and ‘preferred’ because it is expected and ‘allowed,’” He concludes that it is a ritual in interaction that does not cause any threat to solidarity (Kakava, 2002, p. 1563).

Disagreement at work is perceived as an act that triggers conflict because it is associated with negotiating power between participants (Rahim, 2011). Nevertheless, research in the same area has shown that disagreement can be appropriate and valuable (Tjosvold, 2008) and may not damage the participants’ rapport. Research on business negotiation (Angouri & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011) provides further evidence of how disagreement is appreciated and treated as an unmarked element of negotiations at the workplace. The present study aims at providing further findings on this preference/ dispreference dichotomy.

1.3. Strategies of Disagreement

In situations where disagreement is inevitable, the speaker tends to soften its effects on the hearer and endeavors to maintain social ties. From this perspective, disagreements are perceived as an indispensable part of everyday life. The difficulty of finding the suitable strategies to perform disagreement is the result of the delicate nature of this face threatening act. Participants are expected to meticulously find strategies that both allow them to express their viewpoints and soften the undesired and abrupt effect of the potential disagreement on their interlocutor.

Depending on the weight of disagreement, speakers generally resort to a series of strategies to mitigate and reduce the directness of the utterance. They may use ‘off record’ (indirect disagreement) strategy, such as ‘token agreement’ where the speaker pretends to agree (Locastro, 1986). Numerous studies report the use of this technique (Locastro, 1986; Kotthoff, 1993; Locher, 2004). Speakers resort to hedging to soften disagreements. Participants may resort also to ‘displacing disagreement’ by agreeing with part of the uttered statement or tell white lies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Locastro, 1986). Other mitigating devices include giving explanation for the uttered disagreement (Burdine, 2001; Kuo, 1994) and making positive remarks like compliments and expression of gratitude (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). The present study draws on Brown and Levinson’s model, which proposes various strategies to perform FTAs. It is worth pointing out, however, that these strategies are by no means the only strategies used to express disagreement. In the present study, new strategies were identified, as shall be discussed in the findings section. For analysis purposes, the strategies discovered are classified under Brown and Levinson’s super-strategies (i.e., Bald on record, Positive, Negative, and Off-record politeness strategies). The model proved to be flexible enough to include all the strategies found.

1.4. Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

Question 1: What are the politeness strategies used by Tunisian Arabic speakers to perform the speech act of disagreement?

Question 2: How do the contextual factors of Distance, Power and Imposition influence the speaker's choice of strategies?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1.Instruments

The present study uses a Tunisia Arabic discourse completion test to elicit data. DCT is the most popular data elicitation technique in cross-cultural speech act research (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). The large number of studies which used DCT (Blum-Kulka al., 1989; Beebe et al., 1990; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986) reflects the usefulness of this instrument as a data collection technique.

The DCT consisted of fifteen situations. The participants were asked to perform the speech act of disagreement in each situation. Some disagreement situations used in previous studies (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993) were adopted along with new situations set by the researcher. The situations consisted of every day encounters.

2.2.Subjects

The subjects of the study were thirty third year university students at “Institut Supérieur des Langues de Tunis, Tunisia”. They were all randomly selected using the method of Hatch and Lazaraton (1991). All the respondents spoke Tunisian Arabic as a mother tongue.

3. FINDINGS

3.1.Disagreement Strategies in Tunisian Arabic

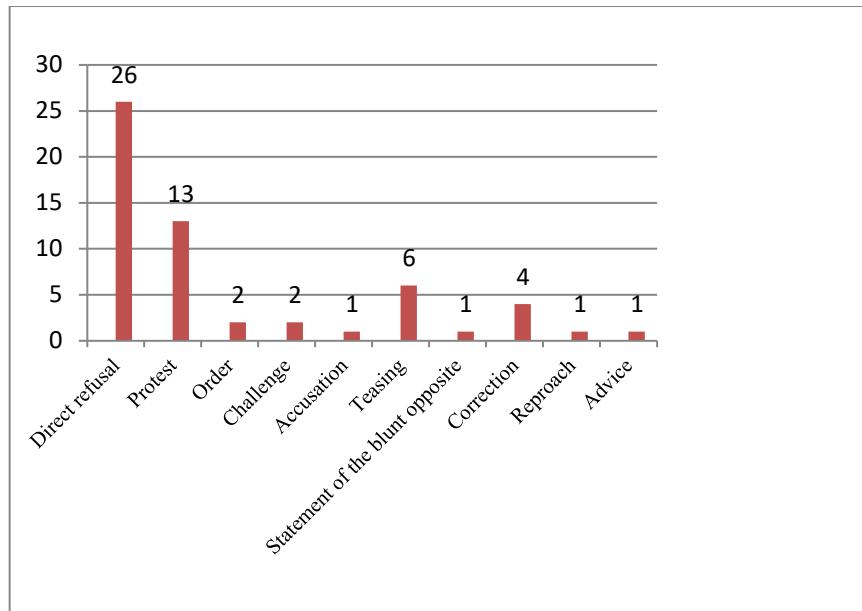
The primary objective of this study is to examine how Tunisian Arabic speakers produce the speech act of disagreement. Data was collected according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies (On-record, Positive, Negative, and Off-record strategies). This model is still used as a framework in many studies for it provides a rather comprehensive approach to politeness (Elarbi, 1997). The present study adopts and extends this model and through its findings hopes to contribute to the existing body of research in speech acts.

3.2.The Strategies of Disagreement

1. Bald on record strategies

Figure 1 below displays the distribution of disagreement strategies produced by NSTA. The most frequently used strategies by NSTA were 'explanation', 'direct refusal', and 'protest', while 'concession', 'advice', 'teasing', and 'accusation' were among the least frequently employed strategies. It is noticeable that NSTA used high frequencies of direct refusal and protest. NSTA seemed to use bald on record strategies considerably.

Figure 1: Distribution of bald on record strategies (percentages)



Direct refusal

Direct refusals were remarkably used by NSTA regardless of the context and the interlocutor whom they disagreed with. Direct refusals were not prefaced by a softening device (e.g.1.).

e.g., 1. lε misjø xðit i-θnija il-ðalta (Situation 7)

No sir took you the way wrong

(No sir this is not the way)

Protest

NSTA used this strategy almost across all the situations. 83 instances of this strategy were registered (13 %). The highest frequencies of this strategy occurred in situations 12 (cleaning the apartment) (19 instances out of 614 moves) (3 %), 14 (cancelled reservation) (16 occurrences out of 614 acts) (2 %) and 15 (at gas station) (20 instances out 614 acts) (3 %).

e.g., 2. NSTA -baʃd ma xdimtheðø l-kol tʃok fje (situation 10)

after work I this all suspect you me

(after all this hard work you suspect me)

-muʃ maʃqul rahu (situation 12)

Not reasonable it

(It's unacceptable)

This frequent use might be explained by the fact that the interlocutor caused an inconvenience to the speaker. Thus, using a protest is an appropriate, justified, and expected behavior in TA. This is plausible because the closer the relationship between interlocutors the less concern is attributed to face.

Order

Out of 614 disagreements performed, only 11 occurrences of this strategy were found in NSTA data. 'Order' occurred in situation 12 (cleaning the apartment) (5 instances out of 614

disagreements), situation 13 (parking spot) (3 occurrences out of 614 disagreement acts) and situation 15 (at gas station) (2 occurrences out of 614 acts). The significant use of this strategy in these situations might be explained by the severity of the action performed by the interlocutor. The following example elucidates this idea.

e.g., 3. qum lim il-xuða ili ɻmalthe (situation 12, cleaning the apartment)

Stand clean the mess that did you it

(Stand up and clean the mess)

Accusation

Although addressing a stranger, NSTA did not hesitate to accuse the clerk of promoting the product.

e.g., 4. jxalsu fikom ɻal publisətə. (Situation 5)

pay they you on publicity

(Do you make money on this?)

Teasing

Teasing between friends is seen as a playful friendly behavior, which does not carry a hurtful impact. In the Tunisian culture, it is normal that friends tease each other on matters like clothing and appearance.

e.g., 5. -mala ðawq ɻandək saħbi. (Situation 1)

what taste you have friend me.

(your taste sucks)

-bara rivəz darsik im-tef ɻorrifja (Situation 3)

go revise lesson your of geography

(go revise your geography lesson)

By implicature, the second example implies that the speaker ignores what he/she is talking about and has to reread the course of geography.

Correction

Correction was used when disagreeing with a person holding an occupational power, i.e., a teacher. Correction is a matter of knowledge holding and in this case the acquired status of the interlocutors will be ignored, and reassigned to the knowledge holder. The latter will enjoy more power.

e.g., 6. (Situation 7)

istenə laħda dur arzañ mnin ɻit rahu meħuʃ heħə tħriq

wait moment turn go back to where came you not this road

(wait a minute go back to where you came from this is not the right way)

Reproach

3 instances out of 614 disagreements were identified. It was used in situation 12 (cleaning the apartment) and situation 14 (canceled reservation).

e.g., 7. tawa həkə bilehi maw milulqulu ma ðəməʃ blasa rana ʃmalna ħaʒəz fi blasa oxra (Situation 14)

now this in God's name from the beginning say you no are place did we reservation in place another

(God! You should have informed us from the beginning so we could make a reservation somewhere else)

Advice

NSTA data contained an '**unsympathetic**' form of Advice. While the purpose of an advice is to give opinion about what should be done in a particular situation, unsympathetic advice is purposeless and it is meant to create a feeling of discomfort in the hearer and might be interpreted as a threat. This a case of a culture-specific strategy. The following example shows the degree of seriousness this strategy embodies.

e.g., 8. bara bara aʃmil ʃwəj autud wila maħw omija. (Situation 3)

Go go do some tutoring or illiteracy

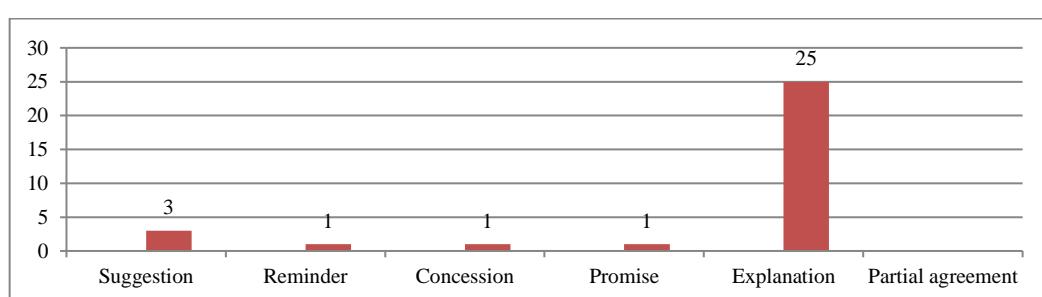
(You need tutoring or literacy classes)

Unsympathetic advice might be used to ridicule the hearer as the following example shows. By implicature the speaker praises him/herself (knowledge about the issue) and dispraises the hearer (ignorance about the topic).

2. Positive Politeness

Figure 2 below shows the distribution of positive politeness strategies in TA .

Figure 2: Distribution of on record strategies positive politeness (percentages)



The subcategories below represent the most relevant positive politeness strategies employed by the informants.

Suggestion

This face-saving strategy functions as a compromise between what the speaker believes and what the interlocutor wants. Suggestion was used frequently.

NSTA

e.g., 9. jizina mil aflem w qaʃdet id-dar xalina noxrżu naʃmlu dura w nbadlu

iżaw.

enough us from movies and staying at home let's go out make a tour and change weather.

(we watched enough movies. Let's go out and enjoy the weather)

Concession

As the following example shows, concession is meant to avoid conflict and to make the interlocutor react and eventually be persuaded by what the speaker wants or expects. Thus, the speaker assumes complete responsibility for an inconvenience he/she did not cause.

e.g., 10. brabi ja musjə la tityaſeſ ʒə swi dezole ken ʒit maxar. (Situation 8)

by God your mister no angry you I am sorry if come I late.

(please sir do not get angry. I am sorry for being late)

Promise

NSTA used this strategy less frequently in situation 6 (camping) where the speaker is supposed to disagree with his/her father. Promises “demonstrate S’s [speaker] good intentions in satisfying H’s [hearer] positive-face wants.” (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 125).

e.g., 11. xalini nimſi w nuſdik exir mara (situation 6)

let me go and *promise I you last time*

(let me go and *I promise this to be the last time I do it*)

Explanation (giving account)

This strategy was among the strategies most frequently used by the two language speakers.

e.g., 12. walahi əna fi bəli mawðuſ bəhi w fih ma naħki (Situation 9)

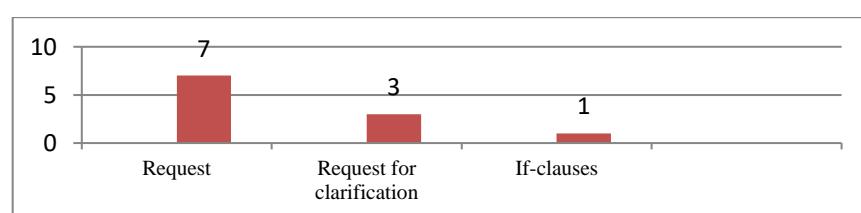
by God me in mind me topic good and in it speak I.

(I swear to God that I thought it's a good topic that I can handle)

3. Negative politeness

Figure 3 below shows the negative politeness strategies identified in NSTA responses.

Figure 3: Distribution of on record strategies negative politeness (percentages)



Request

Request is the fourth most frequently used strategy of disagreement. This strategy accounts for 7% of the total number of disagreements performed by NSTA (45 instances out

of 614 disagreements). NSTA used this strategy almost in all situations. The highest frequencies of request were found in situation 2 (watching a movie) (6 instances), situation 6 (camping) (9 cases), situation 9 (alternate topic) (5 instances), and situation 13 (parking spot) (5 cases). NSTA used this strategy with a stranger or a high-status person. They also used polite requests when addressing a person of high- status and simple requests with acquaintances.

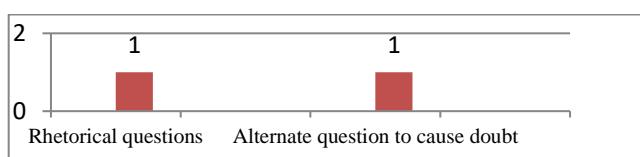
e.g., 13.

-sizei heðə leqi fih rahti aman xalini nkamil fih (Situation 9) (teacher)
topic this find in comfort please let me continue in it
(I feel more excited about this topic. Can you please let me continue working on it?)
-iʒə ɻawini (Situation 12) (friend)
come help me
(give me a hand)

4. Off record strategies

Figure 4 below shows that compared to other strategies, off record strategies were the least frequently used strategies to perform disagreement.

Figure 4: Distribution of off record strategies (percentages)



Rhetorical questions

As Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 223) claim, rhetorical questions are meant to leave the “answers hanging in the air” thus violating the quality maxim. This strategy is among the least frequently used strategies by NSTA.

e.g., 14. jexi muʃ tʃuf fja qablek? (Situation 15)

Not see me you before you?
(Don't you see I'm before you?)

Alternate question to cause doubt

e.g., 15. misjə jexi mi?taqed heðə i-triq? (Situation 7, the way to the airport)

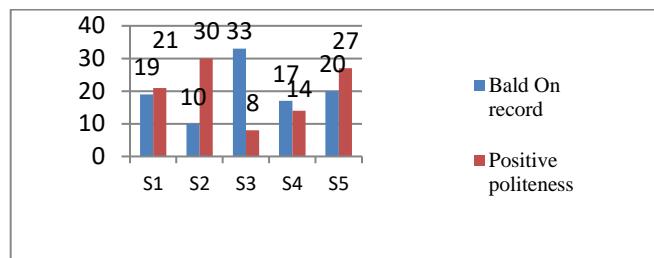
Mister sure you this the way
(Sir, are you sure this is the way?)

The following section investigates the effect of the variables of Social Distance, Social Power, and Rank of Imposition on the production of disagreement in American English and Tunisian Arabic. Brown and Levinson's super-categories are employed.

1. Social Distance

As figure 5 NSTA frequently used bald on record politeness strategies.

Figure 5: Distribution of politeness strategies across situations:
Distance (percentages)



The status of the addressee in situation 5 (clerk) might be behind NSTA use of positive politeness strategies. In the Tunisian culture, disagreeing with a clerk is expected to be less direct than disagreeing with a friend or a classmate. NSTA used positive politeness strategies in situation 1 (unfashionable shoes, 21%) and in situation 2 (watching a movie, 30%). However, situation 3 (the republic of Ireland) made an exception in that bald on-record strategies were used (33%). This might be explained by the fact that the setting (classroom) made it possible for participants to use bald on-record strategies to judge, evaluate, or correct the interlocutor. It is worth mentioning that NSTA used mitigation devices less frequently to reduce the directness of their disagreements regardless of the addressee's un/familiarity.

e.g., 16. *jexi la ha darža ȝehil ȝad bara aqra sw̥eja ktub* (Situation 3) (friend)

brother my to this level *ignorant* no go read some books

(you are ignorant you need to read some books)

e.g., 17. *thibu txaržu silf̥itkum* (Situation 5) (stranger)

want you sell goods your

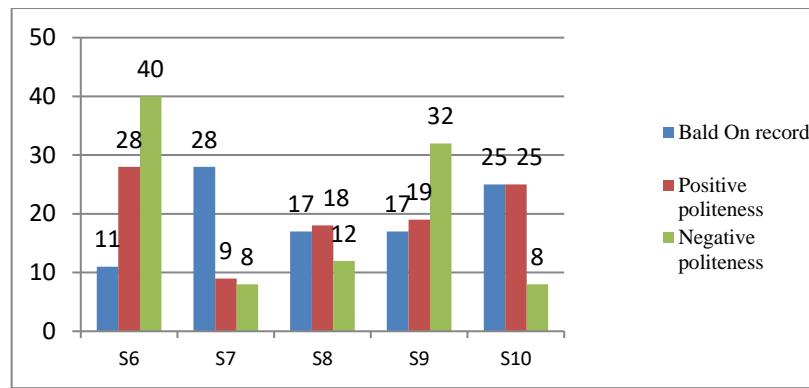
(you want to sell your products)

Examples 16 and 17 show that NSTA did not resort to mitigation devices to soften disagreements. Hence, in the Tunisian culture mitigation devices are not a common feature.

2. Social Power

As figure 6 below shows, NSTA used negative politeness strategies (40%). In their use of negative politeness strategies, NSTA showed that they did not want to be imposing on the addressee (father).

Figure 6: Distribution of politeness strategies provided across situations:
Power (percentages)



Situation 7 (the way to the airport) elicited 28 instances (28%) of bald on-record strategies. It is worth pointing out that NSTA less frequently mitigated their bald on-record strategies as shown in the examples below. NSTA were rather more direct and provided unmitigated disagreements.

e.g., 18 (Situation 7)

l^é l^é h^ék ^élot mus^é he^éje triq durt fal imin fi fu^éd dur fal- isar.

no no you mistaken not this the way turned you on the right instead of the left

(This is not the right way. You turned right while you should have turned left)

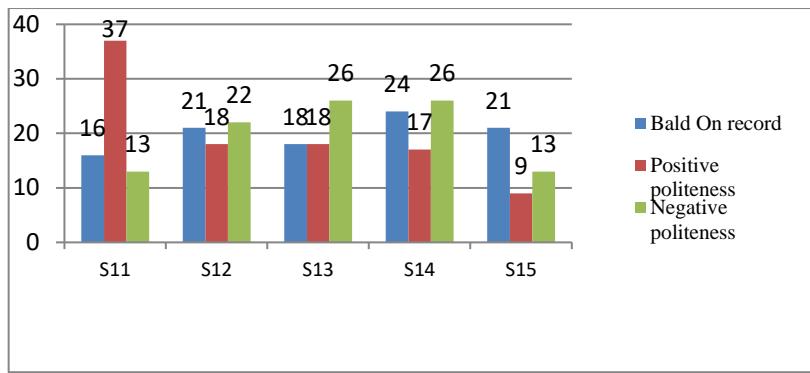
When addressing a high-status but friendly interlocutor such as a teacher in situation 8 (meeting with teacher), the informants used positive politeness strategies (18%), which shows that the good rapport and the familiarity shared by both parties made the informants resort to positive politeness. In situation 9 (alternate topic), the informants used negative politeness strategies to disagree with the teacher (who is not a friendly interlocutor). This choice shows that the informants were concerned with minimizing the imposition since the addressee is a high-status interlocutor.

As far as situation 10 (plagiarism) is concerned, NSTA frequently employed positive politeness strategies (25%) and bald on record strategies (25%). NSTA seemed more concerned with defending themselves than caring for the status of the interlocutor.

3. Degree of imposition

In situation 11 (friend uses car) and situation 12 (cleaning the apartment) the participants were friends. Situation 13 (parking spot), situation 14 (cancelled reservation), and situation 15 (at gas station) were conceived so that the degree of imposition would be high. The participants in the aforementioned situations were strangers. As figure 7 below shows, NSTA used positive politeness strategies (37%). Although the addressee was a close friend, NSTA did not resort to direct strategies in order to avoid conflict and minimize the threat to the addressee's face.

Figure 7: Distribution of politeness strategies across situations:
Imposition (percentages)



In situation 12 (cleaning the apartment), although the informants had to disagree with a friend, they used negative politeness strategies (22%). The informants avoided imposition on the hearer because the situation included a favor-seeking context in which the speaker is expecting a visit and needs the hearer's help.

In situation 13 (parking spot), NSTA used negative politeness strategies (26%). The Informants seemed less direct in their disagreements. This might be explained by the fact that the respondents thought that the hearer did not know that parking spaces were booked in advance.

In situation 14 (cancelled reservation), NSTA relied on two types of strategies: bald on record strategies and negative politeness strategies. Bald on-record strategies account for 24% and negative politeness strategies account for 26%. The frequent use of two types of strategies might be explained by the fact that what the hearer did (not offering a table for the speaker and his/her parents) was interpreted by the speaker as an act of disrespect that made him/her feel embarrassed, especially in the presence of his/her parents. Hence, on-record strategies were used to convey dissatisfaction and embarrassment. At the same time, the speaker resorted to negative politeness strategies to minimize threat to the hearer's face, hoping that the hearer would take some action to satisfy the speaker. The examples below explain this pattern:

e.g., 19. *kifεʃ məθεmεʃ tawla ħawil suf talqa ħal*

how no there table try you look find you solution

(how do you tell me there is no table? Try to find a solution)

In example 19, the speaker started the utterance with a protest then issued a request.

In situation 15 (at gas station), NSTA used on-record strategies (21%). The high severity of the offence in the Tunisian culture (taking the speaker's turn) made NSTA use direct strategies. However, NSE opted for positive politeness strategies to avoid conflict. Instead of using softening devices to mitigate the force of their disagreements, NSTA employed strengthening devices and they sometimes seemed impolite to strangers as the example below displays:

e.g., 20. (Situation 15)

-allah ɣalib il-mitxalif mitxalif la taʃrfu saf la taʃrfu priorité mala tfurix

God winner the ignorant ignorant not know you line not know priority what a childishness

(*Ignorant you have to wait in line like the rest of us. That's *childish**)

This section discussed the influence of the sociological factors of Social Distance, Social Power, and Rank of Imposition on the performance of disagreement by NSE and NSTA. The findings show that, in the Tunisian culture, the relationship between student/teacher is hierarchically determined because teachers hold a high degree of power and authority. Similarly, the relationship between father/son is socially determined. Challenging the father's decision is deemed impolite and disrespectful. However, direct disagreements among classmates, friends, and strangers are tolerated and expected in the Tunisian culture.

4. CONCLUSION

The investigation of speech behavior among NSTA revealed that at the level of disagreement strategies, the informants used a variety of strategies to perform disagreement (e.g. 'direct refusal', 'explanation', 'suggestion', 'request', 'advice', 'protest'). A few other strategies (e.g. 'accusation', 'teasing', 'counterfactuals', 'unsympathetic advice') were culture-bound. With regard to the linguistic markers used to soften disagreement, NSTA seemed to use them less frequently. Hence, it seems that in the Tunisian culture, mitigating a disagreement is not very common. The findings also showed that NSTA used religious fillers like 'billehi'/'brabbi' (for God's sake) to soften disagreement.

With regard to the second research question (Do contextual factors influence NSE and NSTA strategy selection?), the present study revealed that the variables seemed to affect the realization of disagreement in terms of frequency and strategy selection. NSTA used more direct and unmitigated disagreement with friends and classmates than with strangers and status unequal interlocutors. When the hearer is in a higher social rank (e.g. teacher, father), NSTA tend to use indirect softened disagreements. Thus, the choice of disagreement strategies seems to depend on the interlocutor to whom disagreement is addressed.

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About the Author

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Appendix I

DCT Tunisian Arabic

INSTRUCTION

Fifteen situations are described below in which you are expected to disagree with the speaker on different occasions. Please write down in **Tunisian Arabic what you would SAY in real life situations.**

1. خرجت بمعية أصدقائك للتسوق، فلفت انتباه أحدهم حذاء لم يحظ بإعجابك. غير أنك فوجئت برأي صديقك الآخر الذي أبدى انبهاره بالحذاء وحثّه على شرائه.
← لا تشارك صديقك الآخر الرأي فتقول:.....
2. لأول مرة في غضون أسبوع، استقرت الأوضاع الجوية فاقترحت على صديقك الذهاب إلى الشاطئ بيد أن صديقك قال: "أعتقد أنه من الأفضل أن نشاهد فلما".
← لا تشارك صديقك الآخر الرأي فتقول:.....
3. كان موضوع إحدى حلقات النقاش في القسم المملكة المتحدة. ادعى أحد المتتدخلين من أصدقائك أن جمهورية أيرلندا إحدى مقاطعات المملكة. غير أنك قمت مؤخراً ببحث على شبكة الانترنت وعرفت يقيناً أن جمهورية أيرلندا ذات سيادة مستقلة عن المملكة.
← لا تشارك المتتدخل الرأي فتقول:.....
4. في الجامعة وأثناء فترة الاستراحة قال أحد زملائك في الفصل والذي لم تكن تجمعك به علاقة وطيدة: "أعتقد أن العلاقات الحميمية بين الجنسين لا تخلو من جوانب سلبية على نتائج الطلبة الدراسية".
لكلك لا تشاركه الرأي فتقول:.....
5. أثناء تواجدك في المغازة لمساعدة صديقك على اختيار حاسوب جيد، تدخل الموظف متحدثاً عن الخصائص المميزة التي تتفرد بها نوعية بعينها من الحواسيب المعروضة. بيد أنك تعرف مسبقاً أن هذا الحاسوب ليس بالجيد إذ حدث وأن اشتريت واحداً ولم يحظ بإعجابك. هذا ما ولد اختلافاً بينك وبين الموظف.
← لا تشارك الموظف الرأي فتقول:.....
6. اتفقت مع صديقك على تنظيم مخيم في نهاية الأسبوع. وعندما أبلغت والدك بال المقترح رفض رفضاً قاطعاً متعللاً برداءة الأحوال الجوية المتوقعة. كنت قد وعدت صديقك ولا يمكن أن تختلف وعدك.
← تختلف مع والدك فتقول:.....
7. اصطحبك أستاذك معه في السيارة إلى المطار قصد استقبال وفد أجنبي من الأساتذة والطلبة. وعند بلوغ إحدى الإشارات الضوئية اخطأ أستاذك وسلك طريقاً غير طريق المطار.
← تختلف مع أستاذك حول الطريق الذي اختاره فتقول.....
8. كنت على موعد مع أستاذك المشرف على رسالة بحثك. وكانت تجمعك به علاقة مودة وصداقة. هذا وقد حدد موعد اللقاء على الساعة الثانية ظهراً. التزمت بالموعد غير أنك فوجئت بأستاذك مغاظطاً وقد ادعى أنك تأخرت عن الموعد.
← تختلف مع أستاذك فتقول.....

9. في نهاية السادس كان عليك اقتراح موضوع بحث تتولى نقاشه مع أستاذك. وبعد أن اخترت موضوعا كنت تراه مميزا، فاجأك موقف أستاذك الذي رفض موضوعك واقتراح موضوعا بديلا. لكنك تختلف معه اختلافا جذريا حول الموضوع الذي اقترحه.

← لا تشارك أستاذك الرأي فتقول.....

10. يوم تقديم بحث شئ أستاذك في مصدر البحث مدعيا أنه ليس من انجازك. لكنك واثق من عملك إذ أنت بذلت ما في وسعك لإتمامه.

← تختلف مع أستاذك فتقول:

11. استقل صديقك سيارتك دون إعلامك قائلا: "سأحتاج سيارتك لفترة ما لقضاء بعض الشؤون " لكنك لا تستطيع التفريط في السيارة لأنك تحتاجها للذهاب إلى الجامعة:

← تختلف مع صديقك فتقول:

12. أنت طالب تقاسم زميلك في الدراسة شقة و كنت تنتظر مجيء ضيف في غضون نصف ساعة. والملحوظ أن الشقة تحتاج بعض الترتيب والتنظيف وصادف أن هذه المهمة موكولة إلى صديقك هذا اليوم ولكن أزعجك انصرافه عن هذه المهمة وقضاء الوقت في الاستمتاع بألعاب الفيديو.

← تختلف مع صديقك فتقول:

13. أنت طالب بالجامعة أردت أن تركن سيارتك في مأوى السيارات في الجامعة. غير أنك لاحظت أن المكان الذي احتجزته مسبقا ودفعتك معلوما لاستغلاله قد استغله شخص آخر. ليس في المأوى فضاء آخر بديل.

← تختلف مع الشخص الآخر فتقول

14. في عيد زواج والدك قررت أن تفاجئهما فحجزت طاولة لثلاث أشخاص بأشهر مطعم . عند وصولك المطعم أرجوك أحد المشرفين على المطعم وأخبرك أنه لا يوجد مكان شاغر.

← تختلف مع المشرف فتقول

15. أنت في محطة البنزين تنتظر دورك لتزويد سيارتك. فاجأك شخص وقد تخطى موضع سيارتك وافقك دورك مما أزعجك.

← تختلف مع الشخص فتقول.....

Appendix II

(English translation of the TA Discourse Completion Test)

Situation 1: You are out doing shopping with your class friends. One of them tries on a pair of shoes that you find unfashionable, but your other friend says: "God, you have to buy these shoes. They are really good on you!"

You say:.....

Situation 2: For the first time in almost a week, really good weather conditions have prevailed on your city today and you think you should profit from it and go to the beach with your friend. However, your friend says: "I think we should go watch a movie."

You say:.....

Situation 3: In a classroom debate about the United Kingdom, one of your classmates claims that the Republic of Ireland is a constituent country of the UK. Because you did internet

research on the topic, you know for sure that the Republic of Ireland is a sovereign country, independent from the UK.

You say:.....

Situation 4: During a break at college, a classmate you are not familiar with says: “I think having a boyfriend or a girlfriend at college may have side effects on students’ studies.” However, you totally disagree with what s/he says.

You say:.....

Situation 5: While you are at the supermarket helping your friend pick a new computer, the clerk intervenes and starts talking about the good features of a specific brand. Recently, you have bought a similar computer and you are very dissatisfied with it. You strongly feel that you have to disagree with the clerk.

You say:.....

Situation 6: Your friend and you have planned to go camping this weekend. When you informed your father about your program, he totally refused to let you go on a camping trip claiming that bad weather conditions are expected this weekend. You cannot decline the camping trip because you gave your friend your word.

You say to disagree with your father:

Situation 7: You are in the car with your teacher who is driving to the airport to meet a group of foreign students and teachers. While driving, the teacher reaches a traffic light and says “I guess we should turn left”. You know very well the way to the airport and you know that it is still too far.

You say:.....

Situation 8: You have a meeting with your supervisor whom you have known for a long time and who is friendly with you. The meeting is scheduled at 2 o’clock. You arrive at 2 and you find that your teacher is really angry and he claims that you are one hour late.

You say:.....

Situation 9: By the end of the semester, you are required to hand an end -of -term paper on a topic that you choose and discuss with your teacher. Recently, you have found a topic that you think is interesting. You hope your teacher can give you some suggestions. However, your teacher suggests another topic instead of yours. You totally disagree with your teacher about the suggested topic.

You say:.....

Situation 10: The day you submit your mid-term paper your teacher questions its originality and thinks that it’s not your personal effort. You know very well that it’s your personal work and that you worked very hard on it.

You say:.....

Situation 11: Your friend gets into your car without permission, starts the car engine, and says: “I am going to take your car for a while”. You cannot let him do that because you need it to make it to college in due time.

You say:.....

Situation 12: You are a student and you share an apartment with your friend. You are expecting a guest in half an hour. The apartment is very messy .It is your friend's turn to clean the apartment today. However, s/he spends the whole time playing video games.

You say:.....

Situation 13: You want to park your car at the university parking. However you find that a person has just turned the engine of his car off and taken your parking area for which you have recently paid a fee. There is no other place where to park your car.

You say:.....

Situation 14: You want to surprise your parents on their wedding anniversary; you book a table for three at a famous restaurant. Once there, they tell you that they are fully booked and they are sorry to cause you such inconvenience.

You say:

Situation 15: While waiting in the queue to fill up the tank of your car at a gas station, a person in a black Mercedes came from behind and drove past you. You know it is your turn and you cannot let anyone fill up before you.

You say:.....