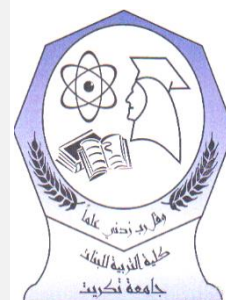




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## The Impact of COVID 19 on Non-verbal Politeness

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### Abstract

In the light of the great changes in the world due to Corona pandemic (henceforth COVID 19), and the weakness of communication imposed by the pandemic, the world has found a way to communicate and overcome the difficulties that people face during communication with the continuation of the pandemic. Even with the pandemic, politeness emerges in its most useful form. It is possible that nonverbal communication can be more effective in the current circumstances. Thus, different types of non-verbal communication are employed to express politeness and courtesy such as: facial expression, eye contact, haptics, proxemics, gestures, etc. These categories of non-verbal communication are of great use for effective social communication. They are expressed and used for different functions such as: to show respect and privacy or to express politeness. Nowadays, these cues are employed in an effective and special way to face the circumstances imposed by Corona pandemic and keep contact with others in a save way with the sense of politeness. This study aims at presenting different categories of non-verbal communication in the light of politeness, It also aims at explaining and analyzing different functions of these cues and showing how these cues are affected by Corona pandemic. It tries to answer the question 'to what extent could Corona pandemic affects the use of certain cues of non-verbal politeness. This study concludes that most of the non-verbal cues are corresponded differently according to the situation to express politeness. Non-verbal politeness is employed extremely to serve the current situation imposed by

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the pandemic. Non-verbal politeness responds positively to the effects of Corona pandemic.

**Key words:** Non-verbal politeness, COVID 19, Corona pandemic, proxemics, gesture, eye contact.

تأثير كوفيد- ١٩ على التأدب غير اللفظي

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**الملخص:** في ظل التغيرات الكبيرة التي يشهدها العالم بسبب جائحة كورونا (والمشار إليها كوفيد ١٩) ، وضعف التواصل الذي يفرضه الوباء ، وجد العالم طريقة للتواصل والتغلب على الصعوبات التي يواجهها الناس أثناء التواصل مع استمرار الوباء. حتى مع الوباء، يظهر التأدب في أكثر أشكاله فائدة. من الممكن أن يكون التواصل غير اللفظي أكثر فعالية في الظروف الحالية. وبالتالي ، يتم استخدام أنواع مختلفة من الاتصال غير اللفظي للتعبير عن الأدب واللباقة مثل: تعبيرات الوجه ، التواصل البصري ، اللمس ، الإيماءات ، وما إلى ذلك. تعد هذه الفئات ذات فائدة كبيرة للتواصل الاجتماعي الفعال. يتم التعبير عنها واستخدامها في وظائف مختلفة مثل: إظهار الاحترام والخصوصية أو للتعبير عن الأدب. في الوقت الحاضر، يتم توظيف هذه الإشارات بطريقة فعالة وخاصة لمواجهة الظروف التي تفرضها جائحة كورونا والبقاء على اتصال مع الآخرين بطريقة آمنة مع الاحتفاظ بصيغة التأدب. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى عرض فئات مختلفة من التواصل غير اللفظي في ضوء التأدب، كما تهدف إلى شرح وتحليل الوظائف المختلفة لهذه الإشارات وإظهار كيفية تأثر هذه الإشارات بوباء كورونا. وتحاول الإجابة على السؤال 'إلى أي مدى يمكن أن تؤثر جائحة كورونا على استخدام إشارات معينة للتأدب غير اللفظي. توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى أن معظم الإشارات غير اللفظية تستجيب بشكل مختلف وفقاً للموقف للتعبير عن التأدب. يتم استخدام التأدب غير اللفظي بشكل كبير لخدمة الوضع الحالي الذي يفرضه الوباء. التأدب غير اللفظي يتفاعل بشكل إيجابي لتأثيرات جائحة كورونا.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التأدب غير اللفظي ، كوفيد ١٩ ، جائحة كورونا ، المسافات ، الإيماءات ، التواصل البصري.

## 1. Introduction

Non-verbal politeness is a unique feature that characterizes civilized societies. Through the use of certain cues of non-verbal communication within Corona pandemic, people try keeping politeness in its simplest image. Since Corona becomes a reality that must be coexisted with, people rush to look for the suitable ways to communicate until the use of these cues of non-verbal politeness become a habit for people when they meet or when they gather for any reason. This study is meant

to highlight the use of non-verbal cues within the framework of politeness during Corona pandemic. Firstly, a general view of politeness will be discussed. Then, the two main dimensions of politeness strategies: Negative politeness and Positive politeness will be shown in a comprehensive way in order to understand how certain cues affected differently corresponding to the current circumstances. Then, non-verbal cues in relation to Corona pandemic are presented. Finally a review of Corona, and the idiomatic meaning of the word that will be used during the study will be explained deeply to understand the emergence of the word and its effects on non-verbal behaviors in different ways.

## **2. Politeness**

Generally politeness includes taking account of the feelings of others. A polite person lets others feel comfortable. It involves treating people appropriately in the light of their relationship. Politeness is a phenomenon that people are not born with but were programmed to deal with it in a civilized way (Holmes2008: 281).

Politeness, as mentioned by Crystal (2003:358), has the features of investigating the social behavior with respect to use expressions like deference, distance, courtesy, and rapport that include using suitable tones of voice, techniques of mitigation and appropriate address forms.

Politeness theory is developed by Brown and Levinson in the 1970s. The theory draws heavily upon Goffman's notion of face and has developed this notion with a particular emphasis on how and why we are polite to others. Goffman (1955) defines face as "*The positive public image [we] seek to establish in social interactions.*" It's also helpful to consider face as 'self-image'. Indeed, most of people need to protect their self-image and hope to reveal a positive image of themselves to others (Goldsmith, 2008:256).

### **Strategies of Politeness**

People rely on a number of considerations when decide on a choice of politeness strategy. They may consider how socially close or distant are from their hearers. For example, Are they close friends? Is the hearer older? Are they 'socially equals'? People may consider how much or how little power the hearer has over them (Paltridge,2012:53).

It is important to point out that the specific nature of face and politeness varies from society to society and from culture to culture. For example, in some cultures the idea of personal space and independence may vary. According to the current study, only two strategies will be applicated: Positive politeness strategy and Negative politeness strategy.

#### **2.1 Positive Politeness Strategy**

Positive politeness strategy aims at decreasing the threat to the listener's positive face. Positive politeness strategies include: finding common ground; juxtaposing criticism with compliments; telling jokes; and using statements of friendship. These strategies make the listener feel good about themselves and avoid conflict or offence by emphasizing friendliness and politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987:70) state that positive politeness strategy is "The strategy which is concerned with the speaker towards the positive face or the positive self-image of hearers" It is

conveyed by satisfying the hearers' positive faces. Holtgraves (2002:47) mentions that praising others simply satisfies the other person's desires directly. Wardhaugh (2010:292) argues that positive politeness may possibly lead to rapport. Using various in-group markers in friendship is commonly applied in speaking.

## **2.2 Negative Politeness Strategy**

Negative politeness means respect, the distance speaker – interlocutor, the avoidance of suppositions connected to the interlocutor, impersonalization, avoidance behaviour or that of redressing a difficult situation etc., “the decrease of one’s personality simultaneously with the exaggeration of the other’s value” It carries out the function of minimizing particular impositions on the hearer. Negative politeness strategies are directed to the listener's negative face and are expected to avoid any imposition on the listener. People tend to use negative politeness strategies when they believe that their act will impose on the listener in a particular way and hope to avoid feelings of awkwardness or embarrassment. (Brown and Levinson 1987:130).

## **4. COVID-19 (Corona Virus)**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global outbreak of coronavirus, an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus. The first cases of novel coronavirus were first detected in China in December 2019, with the virus spreading rapidly to other countries across the world. This led to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and to characterize the outbreak as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, over 2 million people in the European Region have died from the disease. A pandemic of an airborne infection, spreads easily through social contact, assails human relationships by drastically altering the ways through which humans interact. <https://www3.paho.org>

## **5. Non-verbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication is the transfer of information through body language, facial expressions, gestures, created space and more. For example, smiling when you meet someone conveys friendliness, acceptance and openness. Nonverbal behaviours (e.g. a gesture or eye contact) are occasionally denoted to as **tells** since they tell a lot about one's mind or state (Navarro,2008, 2011). Keiling (2019) mentions that nonverbal communication is important because it gives us valuable information about a situation, including how a person might be feeling, how someone receives information and how to approach a person or group of people.

### **5.1 Categories of non-verbal communication**

#### **5.1.1 Proxemics**

The averages of personal space seem to vary noticeably from culture to culture. Proxemics is the study of how people use different kinds of space in their everyday lives. The use of each of these spatial relationships can simplify or delay actual communication across cultures. (Martin and Nkayama,2010:273-274).

Pease (2005:193) mention that each person has his own personal portable 'air bubble' which he carries around with him. Hall (1966) defines four distinct zone distances: intimate (less than 1.5 feet – shared with dear ones), personal (1.5 to 4

feet – shared with good friends and family), social (4 to 12 feet – shared with acquaintances) and public (12 to 25 feet and more – shared with all).

Culturally rooted, these four zones are determined by the increasing physical distance between bodies, and each distance permits a different sensory perception between people.



**Image (1): Zone of accepted distance**

Within the existence of the pandemic, people have been asked to keep a social distance – not bring people (aside from the family or ones we reside with) into their personal space. They have to operate from homes and stay largely within their neighborhoods. For most, this means that people cannot share space with close friends and even some of families' members.



**Image (2) : The Social Public Distance**

Leech(1983: 126) adds a further crucial factor in determining politeness behavior: 'social distance', which involves considering the roles people are taking in relation to one another in a particular situation, in addition to how well they know each other.

The two strategies of politeness: negative politeness and positive politeness are essential to determine the use of certain cues, for instance: social distance. Before corona virus, people used to save the social distance as a kind of negative politeness to express respect to other's privacy, Nowadays social distance is a polite dimension for other's safety. Since people are obliged to communicate, they have to manage using proxemics as a way to keep a save contact with others. A rule to be followed concerning proxemics is: 'Maintain physical distancing, but stay in contact with people socially'. One may start to hear the term "physical distancing". This helps emphasize the importance of maintaining a physical distance. But in stressful times, it is even more important to maintain social contact

with friends and family. At the moment people need to support each other, but with physical distancing as much as possible.

A new addition to the notion of proxemics is the use of the mask. One of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads is through the respiratory droplets that people throw out when they talk, cough or sneeze. While research continues, people now realize that the virus can be spread by people without symptoms, which means that some people can be carriers of the infection without realizing it. This is one of the reasons why physical distancing is so important in places where COVID-19 is common. But we cannot always stay away from others in crowded public places, so it is recommended to use a mask in such circumstances to protect each other from the risk of infection.



**Images (3 & 4): The use of the mask**

Table (1): The Relationship between Proxemics and Politeness Strategies within Corona

<b>Politeness strategies</b>		
	<b>Negative politeness</b>	<b>Positive politeness</b>
<b>Proxemics</b>	Before corona virus proxemics is considered as a negative politeness to express respect of privacy	After corona virus proxemics is considered as positive politeness to keep contact with others safety.

### 5.1.2 Gestures

Gestures are movements of the body, especially the hands or arms, that express an idea or emotion. Gestures are shorthand ways of communicating a whole range of states of mind or ideas. Gestures play a part in the thoughts one thinks (Calero,2005:87). These movements are communicatively combined to or independent from verbal- paralinguistic language (Poyatos,2002:195). Kendon (1992:15) clarifies that the word gesture is a marker for movements that are obvious considered expressiveness.



Image (5): Declining Handshakes

From responding with the outstretched hand with greeting to avoiding kissing or hugging, passing by shaking hands with the foot, the habits of peoples around the world are changing in an attempt to reduce Coronavirus infection through direct human contact. Corona virus forces people to quit the habit of shaking hands and hugging when meeting each other, and new welcome rules begin to appear. And because one lives in the era of "Covid-19", which imposed on him/her a set of new and different things, including the rules of etiquette.



Image (6): The New Welcome cue

The new welcome may be limited to a simple bow in front of the other party to express respect and appreciation, and it replaces the handshake or embrace.



Image (7-1): Refusing A Handshake Politely

Greeting people by shaking hands as a habit which is considered as a positive politeness is changed to be negative one. Shaking hands is a behavior that people are accustomed practicing on a daily basis, which makes giving up and apologizing for them very difficult, and may cause embarrassment and perhaps criticism sometimes. Therefore, the cultivation of the custom of apology is required of individuals more than ever, with the importance of avoiding embarrassment or fear of criticism and the occurrence of reproach and disagreements.



**Image (7-2): Refusing A Handshake Politely**

Specialists considers that apologizing is a polite act that must be adhered to, especially in light of the circumstances in which the world live, and every individual is required to change himself so that positive behaviors prevail in society.



**Image (8): Greeting by placing hands on the heart**

A new appeal is launched by the World Health Organization regarding the spread of the new virus infection, Corona according to which the necessity of greeting others by placing their hands on the heart, instead of shaking hands.



**Image (9-1): The elbow greeting**

With the outbreak of the coronavirus in a large number of countries of the world, millions of people around the world have replaced the traditional handshake with an elbow greeting, to avoid contact with hands and hugs, and then preserve the health of everyone from the risk of infection with Corona.



**Image (9-2): The elbow greeting**



**Image (9-3): The elbow greeting**



**Table (2): The relationship between Gestures and Politeness Strategies within Corona**

Politeness strategies		
Gestures	Positive politeness	Negative politeness
		Before corona virus gesture- shaking hands- considered as a positive politeness to express welcoming and intimacy

### 5.1.3 Eye-Contact

Eyes, the 'portals of the soul', communicate fundamental messages, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Eyes transfers senses about respect and status and often regulates turn-taking. (Martin and Nakayama ,2010:270). Communication takes place through eye behaviors, frequently eye contact (Andersen,1999:40). Eye contact serves a number of communicative roles ranging from flexible contact, transporting information, developing social relations and so on.



**Image(10): Eye-Contact**

People communicate through body language and one might be surprised by the amount of information that the human body transmits. The technical director of Mississippi State University's speech and debate team, Sherrill Chambers, says that social interactions have been affected by wearing of masks, but that communication consists of many elements, and he adds that you can control and improve your communication with others by focusing on some other elements that the masks do not hide. If you cannot read another person's emotional state, your ability to empathize with them may be compromised. One can regain some control over communication with others with the only ingredient remaining, the eyes.



**Image(11): Eye-Contact within the Mask**

If one wants to increase understanding with a person wearing the mask, he\she should look into his\her eyes, which is not an easy thing, as eye contact leads to a feeling of self-awareness, consumes additional brain power, and becomes uncomfortable after only three seconds. Eye contact can make you appear smarter and more trustworthy. Maintaining eye contact is more important than ever, because research shows that constant eye contact increases feelings of understanding and empathy, whether the feelings you feel about others, or the feelings they emit towards you. People who have higher self-esteem tend to do better at maintaining long eye contact.

**Table (3): The Relationship between Eye-Contact and Politeness Strategies within Corona**

Politeness strategies		
	Positive politeness	Positive politeness
<b>Eye-contact</b>	Before corona virus eye- contact considered as a positive act in general. It shows that the listener is interested in the topic dealt with, and in the same time he\she gives his\her attention due to the speaker.	After corona virus eye-contact enhanced as a positive act to enrich the positive communication

#### **5.1.4 Paralinguistics**

The meaning of the words people use can be modified substantially by paralinguistic changes. These changes include differences in emphasis, volume, pitch, inflection, nasality and articulation. Silence and interruption behavior also tell much about what is going on in communication between people. People can change the meaning of what they say by emphasizing certain words and de-emphasizing others (Hall 1977:312)

According to the current circumstances concerning corona virus, speaking loudly still under the umbrella of rudeness, in other words, impolite action.

**Table (4): The Relationship between Paralinguistics and Politeness Strategies within Corona**

<b>Politeness strategies</b>		
<b>Paralinguistics</b>	<b>Positive politeness</b>	<b>Negative politeness</b>
	Before corona virus paralinguistics- the voice quality - considered as a positive act in general when it is in the acceptable range, i.e.: gentle, clear, and quiet.	The same context applicated to paralinguistics within the era of corona since people still have a negative reaction towards people who speak loudly.

**5.1.5 Chronemics**

Leathers and Eaves (2015:311) describe chronemics as “the way members of a given culture define, experience, structure, and use time”. The use of time can affect lifestyle, daily agendas, speed of speech, movements, and how long people are willing to listen.

In the time of Corona, managing time is a kind of art. It is so for those who work remotely and prepare themselves for this through the digital economy system; And in the time of Corona, some of them walk like a turtle for those who are tired and bored sitting at home as a result of their inability to work or their lack of modern technical skills. Some people in a normal situation do manage their day but hope for more - and those are the producers and the achievers - so here comes the need and necessity to manage time to increase productivity between important and urgent events and actions.

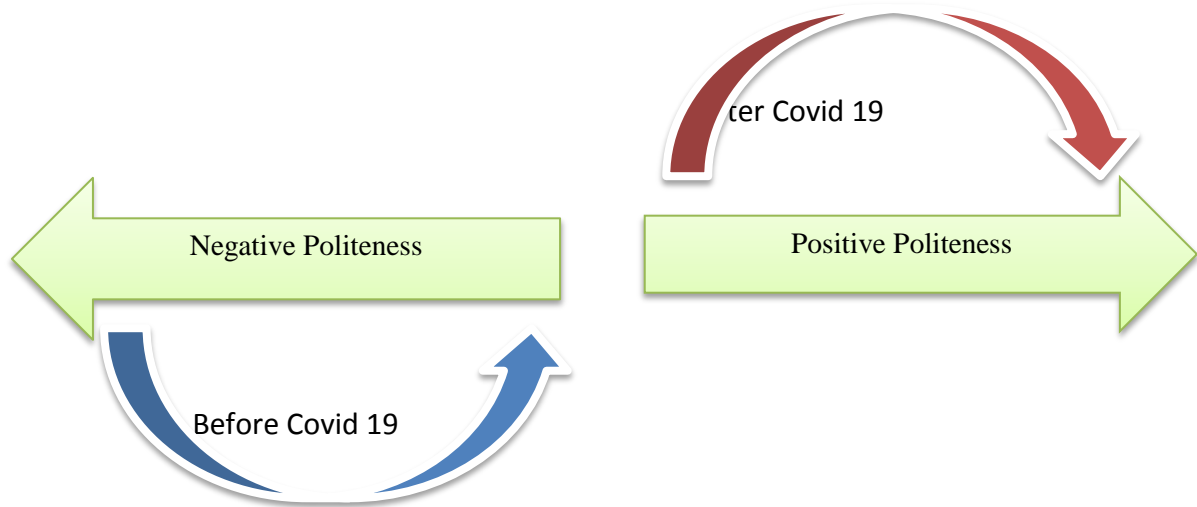
People, these days, are experiencing a crisis of time and its management despite the technology tools that bring distances closer, but the abundance and diversity of works make it necessary for us to make radical changes in our social system for the purposes of optimizing the use of time. And the matter increases the importance of the Corona pandemic, so that time becomes as diamond for remote workers.

**Table (5): The relationship between Chronemics and Politeness Strategies within Corona**

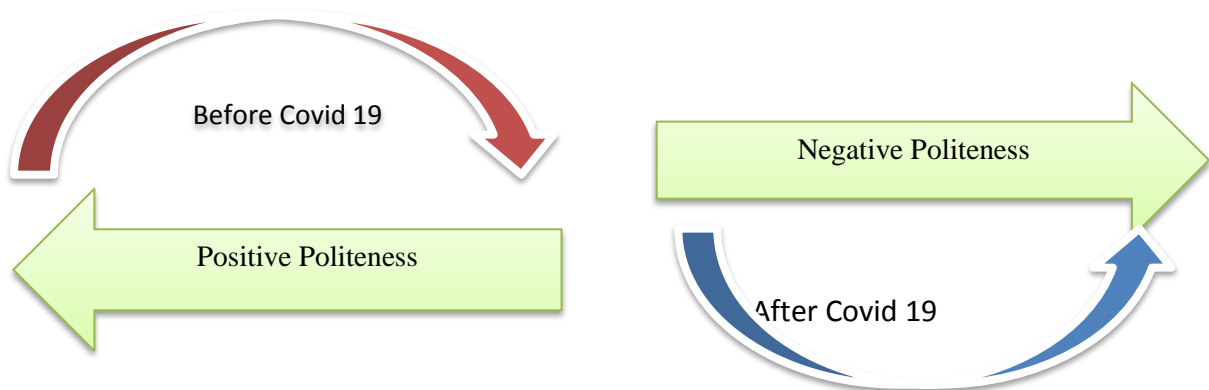
<b>Politeness strategies</b>		
<b>Chronemics</b>	<b>Positive politeness</b>	<b>Negative politeness</b>
	Before corona virus Chronemics-time - considered as a negative politeness in general because respecting other's time and be punctual is a preferable act and shows a great deal politeness and courtesy	The same context applicated to Chronemics within the era of corona since people still have the sense of the importance of time.

6. The Direction of Politeness and NVC within Covid 19

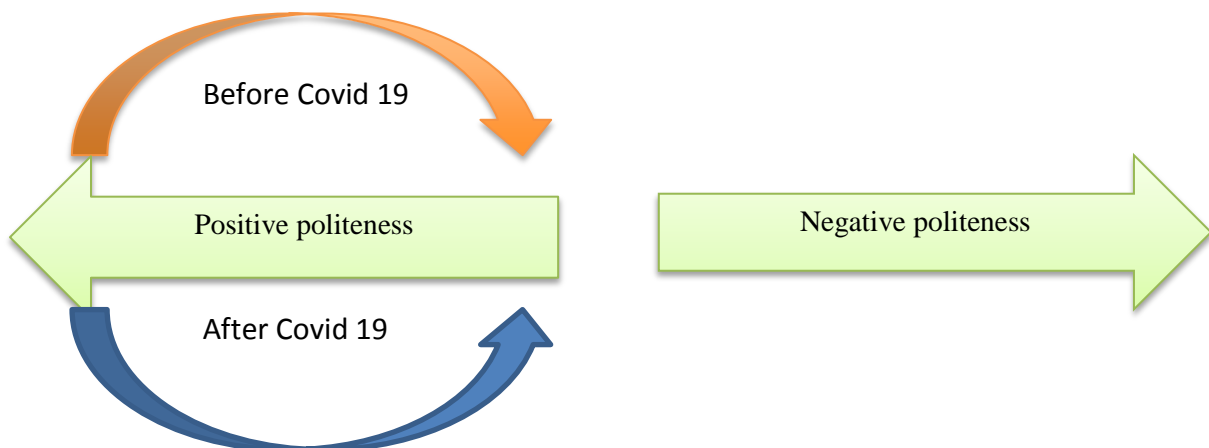
1- Proxemics



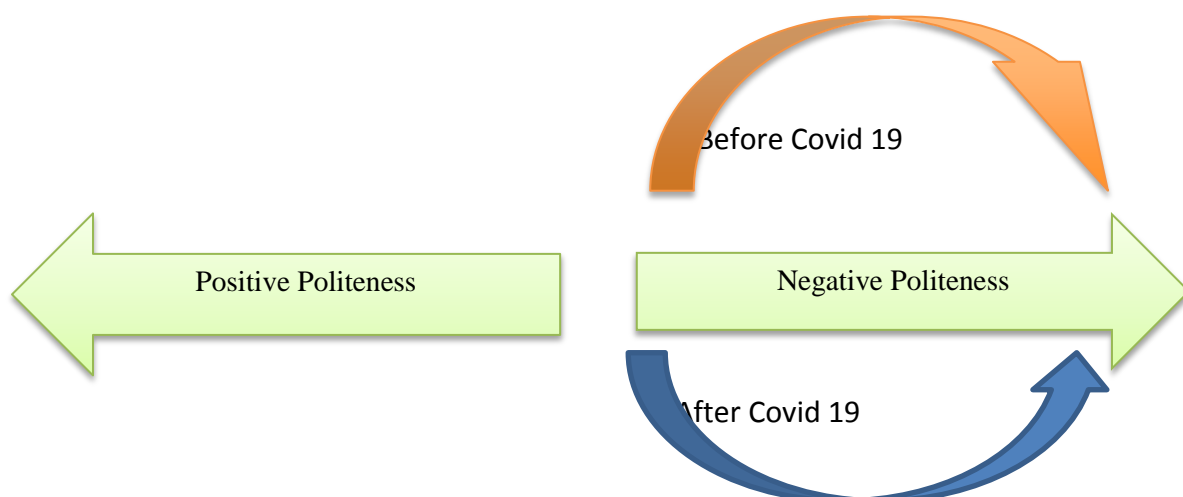
2. Gesture



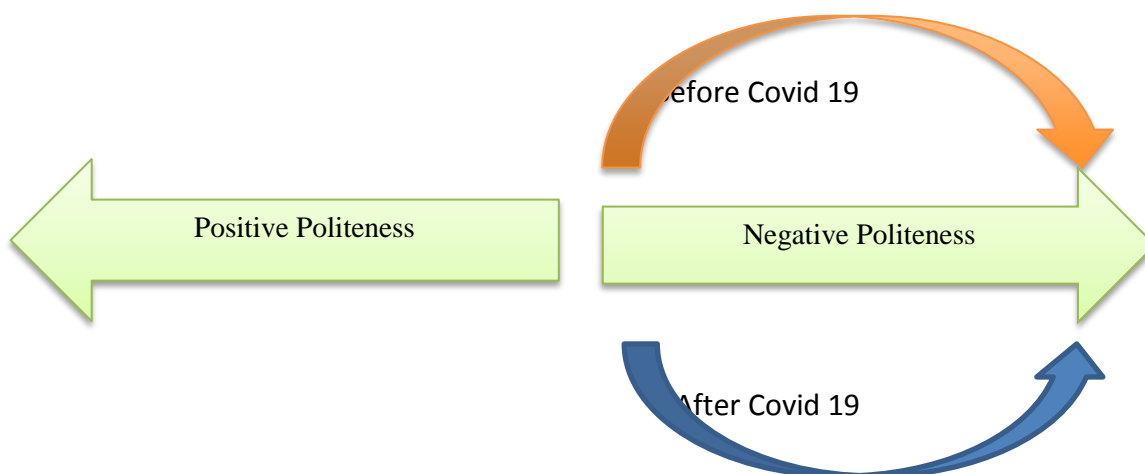
3. Eye Contact



#### 4. Paralinguistics



#### 5. Chronemics



#### 5. Conclusions

Throughout this study, it has been shown that non-verbal cues are corresponded differently according to the situation to express politeness. Nonverbal politeness has shown flexibility in use during the pandemic. Sometimes its use and expression changes with the change of the person and other times with the change of the situations and the circumstances, which indicates the possibility of responding each category of non-verbal cues according to the given situation.

Non-verbal politeness realization of these cues, as far as their expression is concerned, shows an extremely employment to serve the current situation imposed by the pandemic, as different cues are used extensively and are worked greatly through the process of polite communication to show the peoples' need and express their politeness and courtesy.

Non-verbal cues are corresponded in different ways to show politeness (positive and negative) within the effects of Corona pandemic. Some of these cues are enhanced to serve the same functions as they are employed to before the pandemic, and others are changed to work in different ways to cope with the urgent needs to use them during the pandemic

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## **Internet Resources**

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