

Social Media Leads Arabs to Accept Change and Neglect Face

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Abstract

This paper examines face as one of the most prominent features of Arabs that make them reject change out of fear for decades. However, Arabs are starting to accept change and liberate from face dominance, I argue, after exposing to social media. This paper aims to study Arabs' shift across time from being afraid of embracing change to protect their face, to start being a nation that accepts change. The features of face and fear of change will be examined across almost eight years from 2013 to 2020 to demonstrate that Arabs are changing over time owing to social media prime influencers. Social media is the scene that will be used to study the transformation of these features in the Arab world. The examination will be conducted by studying Arabs' reactions toward social media influencers through different social networking platforms such as Twitter, Instagram as well as video streaming applications like YouTube. Talal Mahmoud Al Samdan, who is known as Talal Sam, the creator of "Wanasa Wanasa" a 2.1M viewed video, is the selected representative example of social media influencers who plays a key role in shifting Arabs to accept change. The paper will discuss people's reactions, across eight years, toward Al Samdan after publishing the Wanasa Wanasa video in 2013. This paper argues that 1) face is the main reason for Arabs' regression in several life aspects, and 2) social media influencers aid in changing Arab people to make them such a resilient nation that accepts change and neglects face more than ever. This paper found that people shifted from using an impolite-oriented discourse to use polite-polite oriented discourse due to the positive impact of social media.

Keywords: Arabs, Wanasa Wanes, social media, Talal Al Samdan, fear of change, face-attack, feature

The structure of the paper

After the introduction, the paper will be divided into three main sections: 1) the causes that make Arabs characterized by face and fear of change, 2) the effects of face and fear of change in the Arab world, and 3) the shift of these two features over 8 years with the lens of moral discourses. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the findings. Noting that the framework of this paper discussion is illustrating that fear of change feature is one result of face and Arabs in the infant stage of having the courage to diminish face and accept change after realizing the face negative dominance.

1 Introduction

1.1 What it is a culture

Anthropologists and sociolinguists devote their effort and knowledge to provide a suitable and applicable definition of culture so that culture members live with consciousness about their cultural identity. An agreement to one definition of culture to be employed is illogical because "culture is learned" (Spencer-Oatey, 2012) which means that it changed with time, and it will continue changing and developing parts of it in accords with how people are changing and with the existence of new political, technological,

scientific or social movements. therefore, perceiving culture as a rigid concept is the most prominent mistake that one can fall a victim to because those who believe that culture is fixed will reject change and will remain in one position incessantly which is against life's dynamic laws. For this reason, refusing change is a destructive feature that should be dismissed. One of the most insightful definitions of culture is what Hofstede (1994) stated; he defined culture as "the collectivistic programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012). That means, in essence, each individual behaves in life apropos to what a surrounding political, social, and religious environment demands without many realizations of their behaviors since they are programmed into it. Whether one likes it or not, the social and political forces have their dominance in people's behavior, so the sensibility is not to deny or refuse this fact but to change and enhance culture through learning the desired aspects of any other cultures. If people do not admire parts of their original culture, they can acquire what they prefer via borrowing from others. This leads one to a firm conclusion that the programmed culture can be changed and evolved through learning.

Flipping another page to comprehend the culture concept is going to drive knowledge seekers to Rone Scollon, a great sociolinguist who lavished learners with a well-communicated definition. Scollon said that culture is "a discourse system" which assist in "dividing people up into groups according to some features of these people which helps us to understand something about them and how they are different from or similar to other people" (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, cultures are distinct, and the best method to study a certain culture is through studying its common discourse systems. As the whole world has witnessed a technological revolution that transformed the world to be a digital world (Al Zidjaly, 2019), anthropologists and sociolinguists should examine the digital context of a society to understand its nature and identity. Scollon succeeds in formulating culture definition which stemmed from the understanding that culture is not only customs, traditions, or norms, it is also what people do consistently to form their identity and community. Al Zidjaly (2019) pointed out that there are new online "modes" of interaction that hand in forming a new digital identity. Within this framework, acknowledging the significance of the "light identity" (Blommaert, 2017) will help cultures to keep the pace of this new movement. Culture is a sensitive and multifaceted term as well as it contains detailed intricacies that make it challenging to be understood and defined. Additionally, it deals with human beings who are difficult to be investigated which causes complex interactions contexts. So, sociolinguists' life was not smooth to produce a well-expressed definition. Yet Scollon simplified the definition and made it compatible with any social change so that other sociolinguists can build on it.

1.2 What it is Arab

According to Al Suwaidi (2008), Arabs "are people who speak the Arabic language or descend from Arab tribes" (p. 13). The Arab world is constructed with a remarkable aid of the religious identity since approximately "95% of Arabs are Muslims" which is the reason that makes Islamic culture influences Arab people in almost all their life aspects as Britannica (2007) argued (as cited in Al Suwaidi, 2008, p. 14). A case in point, Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) recorded three aspects that have been affected in the Arab world due to Islam which are the "social values", "social practices", and the "legal system" (as cited in Al Suwaidi, 2008, p. 14). Like any other nation, the Arab nation is attributed with many features that form their cultural identity and distinguish them from others. This paper studies the fear of change feature which is caused by another Arab feature which is the face. Al Zidjaly pointed out that face that Goffman defined as "a social, relational, and emergent construct that is claimed and negotiated in (inter)actions" (as cited in Al Zidjaly, 2017, p. 576), is the most commanding feature comparing to all other Arabs features

(class notes, 2020). To some degree, it can be said that face is the trigger of other features such as fear of change and pride. For example, Arabs extremely proud of their history and past achievements that supply them with a prestigious self-image and strengthens their egos. Hence, because of face dominance, pride becomes one of the distinctive Arab features. Face is a holding-back feature because Arabs misuse it and because it arouses within them the motives to "face-attack" to protect their self-image (Al-Zidjaly, 2017, p. 587). Generally speaking, attacking is a negative behavior that should not be acceptable because it may cause harm to the offended party. Therefore, both the cause (face feature) and the result (face-attack) should be omitted from Arab's context as they retreat Arabs to bring productive people. Many causes led Arabs to be dominated by face; thus, this dominance reflected to produce a nation that rejects change due to fear of damaging their face.

2. Background to study

Talal Mahmoud Al Samdan is a Kuwaiti blogger, singer, creative writer, and actor who is at the age of 22 years old. Al Samdan was selected to be this paper example of prime social media influencers because he faced severe rejection from the Arab society in 2013 after creating and publishing a video known as Wanasa Wanasa video singing in a Kuwaiti dialect at the age of 14 years old (see the original video ([235](#)) [KEEK كيك - YouTube - YouTube](#) [واناسه واناسه خلصنا دراسه دراسه](#)). This video created a public dispute in all Gulf countries and the Arab world as Arabs considered Al Samdan's video a defective presentation of Arabs. Even though the video does not contain any blemish content as it was a 24-seconds video long of a teenager who was expressing his feelings after finishing school time. Within a week-time hashtag (#واناسه_واناسه) became a trend that attracted Arab people to negotiate about it for 8 years. Arab people started bullying and attacking Talal verbally, non-verbally, and physically. (see a sample of people react to the video at that time ([210](#)) [مرتفع ضغط من واناسه خلصنا الدراسة - YouTube](#)). More links will be attached as examples in the appendix. This paper will present various mediums that used to attack Al Samdan because of his video that was distributed in Keek, a public social networking app founded in 2011. At that time, there was a paucity of social media Arab users because many Arabs reject social media for several reasons that will be discussed later in this paper. Noting, Blommaert (2016) clarified that social media movements started in 2012 which means that in 2013 social media still in its infant stage (as cited in Al Zidjaly, 2019). This is why Al Samdan's second-long video created vast attention in the Arab world. Numerous hashtags (see the appendix) on different platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube were made regarding the Wanasa Wanasa video. The hashtags of this controversial dispute video started on 1st January 2013; however, its circulation remained until 2020. This paper will demonstrate that Arabs reactions toward Al Samdan and his video completely differ year after another to shift from impolite linguistic discourse to be polite discourse.

Justification

Selecting the Arab features, face, and fear of change, is due to several reasons:

1. Fear of change is the result of a major destructive feature which is the face, and one of this paper aims is to aware Arabs of the adverse effects of the face. "Face-attack" (Al-Zidjaly 2017), for instance, one of the negative techniques caused by the face culture. In other words, Arabs use face-attack to prevent change because they are afraid of losing their self-image.
2. Fear of change feature has undergone remarkable changes across time; therefore, Arabs have become more flexible to accept new social, political, and other useful movements. So, sociolinguists are in charge of examining this shift.

Selecting Wanasa Wanasa incident is due to the following reasons:

This incident happened during a period that Arabs ascribed with a huge fear of change embracement, and they perceived social media in 2013 as a new face threat. However, the same incident triggered Arabs differently comparing 2013 to 2020 which is a remarkable observation that needs to be investigated. Moreover, Arabs activate the Wanasa Wanasa hashtag more than once annually for 8 years whether to link it with any current events like schools' closure during the pandemic (وناسه_وناسه_علقت_الدراسة), celebrate their vacations after schools' closing, to write comments to Talal Al Samdan, or to post videos and memes reflecting their distinct opinions.



This picture is an example of some active Wanasa Wanasa hashtags. See the appendix for more hashtag's examples

This incident supports the paper's argument that social media has changed Arabs. According to Spencer-Oatey (2012), any change guides an individual to think of his motives behind a behavior by bringing it "back to awareness". Social media with the support of its positive influencers will be the new toolkit for examining and enhancing people. This is because it enables them to discover the dark side of their personality. Al Zidjaly (class notes, 2020) argued that all people have the "good" and the "negative" sides of their character that need to be investigated to help in enhancing the "negative" and develop the "good" side. However, Arabs people afraid to critique themselves which makes their progress slowly over a course of time. Yet, there is progress even if it is slow.

Selecting Talal Al Samdan as a representative of prime social media influencers due to the following reasons:

Al Samdan a model of a suitable reaction in front of people attack. Even though he encountered severe rejection, he did not respond with the same disrespected language. He decided to focus on his life and study his persona for development's sake. Al Samdan prevails his fear and that what gives Arabs the courage to face their fear as well. He, further, sudden people and attackers with his achievements which make the majority of those people reflect and rethink their identity.

Spencer-Oatey (2012) pointed out that anthropology is a "type of snapshot view of one particular time". Therefore, linguists and anthropologists should "return several years" to study the changes as Spencer-Oatey (2012) argued that they "would not find the same situation" because cultures are changing continuously. Al Samdan confirmed his individualism and impact Arabs to be authentic as well; he influences Arabs, especially, youth to embrace change and not allow bullying, attack, or society rejection

stopping one from following his intuition. Within a week of 2013, people around the Arab world attacking Al Samdan, and within a year after 8 years, Al Samdan followers reached 1.1M. This is an indicator that people's perceiving is changed.

3 Section one

The causes that make Arabs characterized by face and fear of change

3.1 Misperception of some Islamic values: Taqwa Allah

Taqwa Allah is “the love and **fear** that a Muslim feels for Allah. A person with Taqwa desires to **be** in the good pleasures of Allah and to stay away from those things that would displease Allah” (Team, 2020). Arabs lost the correct path of reaching Allah's complacency as they frequently live in a fearful state of Allah's rage that leads them to avert any matter that may make Allah angry with them. This bewilderment and pressure situation creates an acute fear within every Arab Muslim. Therefore, it is easier for them to reject change instead of accepting it even if there are possible benefits of that change. In the Arab world, if change effects are vague and may cause unfavorable results that bring Allah's rage, Arabs favor maintaining the status quo. However, Allah encouraged all people to accept and strive for change because change is working for one's benefit even if it seems like a risk or uncomfortable state. Verse eleven of Surah Ar-Ra'd (إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ) clarifies that Allah asks people directly to embrace change because change is a basic rule of life and to growth. One should accept change because Allah encourages one to embrace it. Because social media is a western movement, the Arab world's rejection of it increased as they lack trust in the West. Arabs for many years believed that the west is a bitter enemy that is aiming to destroy Islam and Arab culture; hence, they believe that fighting their innovations will protect their Islamic face.

3.2 Arabic language and identity preservation

A ubiquitous statement that all heard: "Arabs are not changing", and some people claim that maintaining the status quo of Arab culture reflects a loyalty to the Arabic language. Centuries ago, the Arabic language was prominent among almost all other languages because of Arab art and science pioneers' effort and knowledge; it was the source of education, and those who want to expand their education capacities choose to learn Arabic sciences. It was the first language as it kept up to date its sciences so that other nations draw from its rich knowledge. However, Arabs devote their time to talking about their past achievements but not in maximizing their effort to learn and create a new powerful Arabic civilization. As a result, the Arabic language lost its power. What Arabs left with is their previous glories history; the history that created a good self-image for them in front of other nations. The desire to feel valuable is driven from past not present when it turned to Arabs, and this is because Arabs are “short-term orientation” (Hofstede, 2005) culture that focuses on the past and neglect planning the present for future achievements (as cited in Al Suwaidi, 2008, p. 6). Face, further, make Arabs lack the confidence to develop the Arabic language and Arabic culture as they programmed that their value generated from past Arab experts and pioneers, and they do not have the same capacities to flourish Arabic language. From this facet, one realized that the Arabic language one of the sources that fed face features, and Arabs afraid to lose part of their integrity by changing it. Their fear makes them persevere Arabic language and refuse possible linguistic updates and developments. Arabs, moreover, afraid that western outsider innovations steal their thunder, and indeed that what happened because Arabs shifted their focus to be oriented toward the West instead of concentrating on their progress.

A Language plays a key role in changing one's culture and attitude, so updating it is essential to elevate a nation's status and prove its cognitive and affective abilities. The same holds true for the Arabic language. Arabs should realize the power of their language in changing their reality. Arabs are not weak but strong, and they are not slow-witted but intelligent and creative, and this paper will present a sample of their strengths and creativity that they diminish through fear of change. One additional reason that Arabs refuse to change parts of the Arabic language is the "uncertainty avoidance" (Hofstede, 2005) component of their culture. They are uncertain that embracing change will benefit them which is an expected assumption since the threat of losing face dominates their assumptions. Changing a language also has the power to change identity. If Arabs utilize this power effectively, they can construct a new cultural identity better than the past one. The connection between Arab people and their glorious history which is shaped owing to the Arabic language power is so sturdy that deepened face within them to be their key feature. Therefore, separating Arabs from the face is challenging which makes Arab people use several strategies to protect their face. One of the techniques that Arabs use to save their face is "face-attack" (Al-Zidjaly 2017). Noting that this paper found that Arabs using this technique differ in terms of its seriousness and density over time. It started to be used through aggressive modes and languages before its shift to lighter and politer language. This language shift is the guide for new identity construction.

4 Section three

The shift of face and fear of change features (from 2013 until 2020)

4.1 Analysis

The data was collected from two social networking platforms, Twitter and Instagram, to discuss the transformation of Arab people over 8 years. The data examined Arabs reactions regards the same incident (Wanasa Wanasa incident) and Talal Al Samdan as a social media influencer. The data mainly is taken from two hashtags (#وناسه وناسه) and (# طلال سام يمثلنا), and the data is in the form of tweets, posts, and pictures. I classified the analysis into four stages each one reflects the connection between Arabs reactions. Noting that their reaction has shifted from being impolite and destructive to be polite and constructive. This because, as I observed, the dominance of face over their behaviors has been decreased. The four stages are started with: 1) the infant stage of social media, which is from 2013 to 2016 in accord with the selected data, 2) the initial stage of Arabs' self-realization which was in 2017, 3) Arabs' self-analyzation which is from 2018 to 2020, and 4) Arabs' shift from fear to courage in the Corona time. The analysis is based on examining Arabs multimodality discourses and language that was used in each stage which framed in certain words' tone, adjectives, emojis, and pictures. Analyzing Arab's various discourses is vitally important to determine the shifts that nations are experiencing whether in conscious or unconscious perceptions. Hence, observing people's distinct modes and determining the motives behind them is the aim of the following sections.

Arabs responses have been transformed from being aggressive and disrespected discourses in the first stage to be politer and more respectful communication in the following stages. The "face-attack" strategy (Al Zidjaly, 2017) that Arabs used aggressively with Al Samdan to destroy his personality so that he follows the collectivistic culture has changed to be a supportive communication after 8 years of using social media. The factors that lead Arabs to mitigate face-attack was not only social media but also it is the presence of brave models who take the responsibility to show Arabs that their fear of accepting and using social media is invalid. Arabs need time to break the fear barrier as they are afraid of the unknown and the uncertain future (Hofstede, 2005), but change will be easier if someone takes the path before them

to illustrate that change is not harmful as what Al Samdan did. Social media enables Arabs to analyze themselves through illuminating their negative side of their persona which is the first step to the improvements. Before social media, Arabs obeyed the collectivistic society unconsciously. However, after the existence of such effective means like social media platforms that allowed Arabs to voice their opinions and observe their behaviors, Arabs' perception started to change over time to be more flexible and braver to accept change.

4.2 The infant stage of social media (from 2013 until 2016)

This stage illustrates the powerful dominance of face over Arabs in 2013 through analyzing some of the circulating tweets, posts, and pictures at that time. The face was the motive behind the attacking strategy that Arabs used to stop many social media influencers as Talal Al Samdan. Their fear of accepting social media and losing their dignity and self-image led them to use acrimony communicative language such as insulting him via using abuse, sarcastically mimicking his voice, and using offensive behaviors like shooting a phone that display Al Samdan' Wanasa Wanasa video (see an example video [\(235\) وناسة وناسة](#) [YouTube](#) - [خلصنا دراسة...وقفوا سب هالولد](#)). From observing people's impolite reaction at that time toward such a normal video of a teenage boy expressing his pleasure after finishing his school hours, one can conclude that the sense of face threat and the sense of fear that social media will change Arabs' culture blocked Arabs' minds. Arabs are programmed to be within the collectivism and stepping out of the society's traditions means social rejection. In 2013, Arabs rejected Al Samdan and abused him without considering the consequent psychological and social harm that affected Al Samdan and his family. Noting the aggressive language that Arabs used in social media platforms to express unconscious assumptions regarding face. I selected four examples to analyze distinct modes that Arabs used 8 years ago.

Example 1



Translation

#وناسة_وناسة

The video application 📺 Keek

Dawned us impairments... 🧐

Keep going... 🤝

The use of multimodality discourses makes this tweet, which is tweeted on 19, 1, 2013, implicit polysemous interpretations that the author meant to convey. The word (dawned) is derived from the dawn phenomenon when the light of the sun starts shining at the beginning of a day, and it meant the start of a new thing. Keek was one of the first social networking platforms that Arabs were exposed to which is the start of the online interactions among Arabs. Due to the rejection of social media in its initial stages, Arabs do not accept anyone who would participate in this new technological development which is the biggest reason underneath the attack on Al Samdan thought its video was so simple and ordinary. The issue was

not in the video or even in Talal Al Samdan; the issue was the perception of Arabs regarding social media. The word (عاهات) which means impairments in English does not use for all people and all events because it means the severe state of a disease that could not be recovered. The author uses it to refer to all people who accept and take part in the social media platform, and he used this trending hashtag to express his opinion of social media rejection. The author used this emoji (🤔), which represents noble people in some cultures, to ridicule social media influencers. This is because the explicit meaning that these emojis give is pride, yet the author uses it to imply inferiority toward Al Samdan. In other words, the author wants to deliver that social media produced inferior people who are going to diminish the nobility of their society. This author did not mention any personal information related to Al Samdan, but he used the Wanasa Wanasa hashtag and the word (Keek). This indicates that the author wanted to generalize all social media users. This technique is similar to example 2 of this stage as both authors not only want to ridicule Al Samdan but also want others to reject him socially. Adding that the author used another generalization linguistic technique which is a plurality to ensure that all social media uses should be rejected as he believes that they are breaking the social rules. Another technique that the author used to reflect his rejection of social media is the various trend hashtags that he used besides (#وناسه_وناسه) hashtag. The tweet was ended with a word and emoji that reflect the opposite feeling of his previously used language. He moved from a sarcastic tone to an encouraging tone to boost the irony which indexes his huge disapproval of social media in the Arab world, whatever the reason was, whether for saving their cultural face or heritage, their language or religion. People use this emoji (👏) and this term (keep going) if they admire an action and want it to be continued. Yet, this was not the author's intention. He wants to ridicule anyone who thinks positively about the online platform because, as he mentioned, it produced such (عاهات) people who increase the burden on the Arab societies instead of mitigating it. The author's language is malignant because he tried to deceive the reader with polysemous meanings. His tone does not match his language, and his language does not match the used emojis. These distinct discourses reflect the author's bewilderment about right and wrong, and acceptable and unacceptable.

Example 2



Translation

#وناسه_وناسه

Did you know the little young man who said it is fun we have finished school? I bring you good tidings, he will appear in a Ramadan series, and I hope that The Ministry of Electricity turns the electricity off.! The author used in this example, which is tweeted on 27, 4, 2013, a language that seems normal and abuse-free, but he used another manner of expressing disrespect toward Al Samdan. He used a reversed language's tone as he started with a positive tone, and then he reversed his tone to be a pessimist. People normally when they have a piece of good news they use the word (ابشركم) translated into (I bring you good

tidings), but the author used this expression in this example ironically. He is bringing news that the creator of (وناسه وناسه) video has a series in Ramadan so the wants the Ministry of Electricity turns the electricity off to not watch him. Using a phrase of enthusiasm that something good will happen to express a negative feeling toward Al Samdan is what this author used. In other words, he started with a positive expression (I bring you a good tidings) to index a sarcastic tone, and the altering this tone to a negative and implicit one. This irony is used to show sarcastic language and disapproval. This sarcastic and disapproval tone is implied by the author's desire to not seeing Al Samdan on the television. Noting that he wrote it a form of a request to the Ministry to prevent others from seeing Al Samdan as well which evident that Al Samdan faced a vast social rejection. Al Rashdi (2015) clarified that emojis are used as "mitigation tools" to reduce the severity of the attack or negativity. but the author did not use any emojis to increase the severity of his sarcastic tone (as cited in Al Zidjaly, 2017, p. 581). Arabs' use of impolite-oriented discourse in this stage is hurting Al Samdan, and according to Al Zidjaly (2019), impoliteness is "an interpersonally and culturally embedded social practice" which means that the main motive of this author sarcastic discourse and other attackers' disrespectful language is the cultural identity and assumptions (p. 1041). They use such impoliteness as a defensive manner to save their cultural norms. I could name this period as the *unconsciousness period* as Arabs' minds were not accustomed to reflecting and evaluating their motives.

Example 3



Translation

#وناسه وناسه

This oaf's mustache reminds me of a young Filipino woman with McDonald's.

This tweet example that is tweeted on 13, 9, 2013 is showing direct abuse that Al Samdan faced after publishing the video. The reason for selecting this tweet is the direct impolite language that the author used to describe Al Samdan. Because this aggressiveness was not ordinary to be ignored; Arabs after this incident showed an extremely negative character. The author's language of this tweet indexes a weak educational background as he made some mistakes regarding the basics of the Arabic language. Noting that this observation derived from many tweets and posts. The majority of people who abused and used impolite discourses were not well educated. For instance, the preposition (في) that the author used in this word (فشبث) is the wrong preposition that leads to different meanings. In that context, the author of the tweet should use another Arabic preposition to convey the correct meaning. Besides, the author used direct and disrespectful language to show his hatred towards Al Samdan. This directness was used for the sake

of harming or abusing a person is not favorable and recommended from a well human. This language appears when the author compared Al Samdan's mustache to a Filipino woman. First, the author abuses Al Samdan when he made a nexus between him and women; not because one is better than the other, but women and men are different in nature so there is no point in comparing both. Yet, some Arabs use this offensive language in various situations, and harming one's emotions is one context of the usage. Adding secondly, that Arab males disliked being compared in terms of their physical appearance to women, but the author did it for the sake of abusing Al Samdan.

There are several examples posted on Twitter and Instagram that show discriminated language as this example and even worse. The majority of the comments under this tweet were written with the same offensive language or commenting with laughing emojis to the assent of the used impolite language. This indicates that Arabs were not brave enough because people who offend others and laugh after offending them are timid. They hide their fear by presenting a reckless language and manner. This implies that face is dominated their behaviors as they reacted impolitely; however, they did not perceive this impoliteness as a serious issue. (I felt when I was reading the comments that Arabs were proud that they are using such direct disrespectful language). Then, I realized that a human cannot harm others with laughter unless this human is facing some internal issue, and Arabs' issue at that time was scariness; this is my opinion. Besides, some Arabs are over-influenced by their culture to the degree of thinking that harming one person for the entire society's advantage is good. This idea prevented them from considering their behaviors as negative behavior, and the list of reasons behind Arabs' attacking and abusing at that time is long. However, the focus in this paper is in two main feature that they function as key reasons for Arabs' negative reaction. Noting the following example where the author did use another expression to show his rejection of Al Samdan different than this directed abuse.

Example 4



Translation

#وناسہ_وناسہ

It was enough for you to lose weight like an ox-like Wanasa.

In 2015, after three years from the publication of (وناسه وناسه) video, Arabs still attacking Al Samdan using disrespectful language which shows that change is difficult in Arabs culture owing to the rigid and destructive manner toward innovations. The author replied to Talal's tweet, which showed his picture, ascribing Al Samdan using the name of an animal (ثور) translated into (ox) to express impolite juxtaposing discourse. This impolite manner of expressing himself was to show his animosity towards Al Samdan. The author used this particular animal because of its giant shape to juxtapose Al Samdan's weight in 2013 with this animal's weight. Worthy to mention that Al Samdan lost his weight while he tried to overcome people's attacks after the published video. Another possible interpretation of using this word is that the author considers Al Samdan a person who have the same intellectual abilities as the ox, and this is maybe because the author believes that social media users are foolish people. Noting that both interpretations awing to one aim which inferiority. The author used aggressive manner, words, and comparison that demonstrating the dominance of cultural face over Arab's discourses. Al Samdan did not harm those attackers, so it is illogical to harm someone whom they did not know even. Arabs dealt with (وناسه وناسه) phenomenon via the adaptation of utilitarianism; they attack and hurt Al Samdan which is a severe negative behavior thinking that this aggressive reaction is acceptable as they safe their self-image and their culture. However, what they did was an expression of unconscious and distractive manner that destroys people and the Arab world.

4.3 The initial stage of Arabs' self-realization (in 2017)

After coding the data, I found that Arab people started to realize several negative parts of their personality and others' due to the frequent attacks that many social media users faced. Before social media, most Arabs did not have the opportunity to express their identity freely. They have been governed by the cultural collectivistic identity, misunderstood Islamic conceptions as well as face dominance which derived them to be afraid of accepting social media. Fear, furthermore, makes Arabs unable to distinguish between the positives and negatives which is obvious from Al Samdan's illogical attack. It is reasonable if Arab people react in such a serious manner toward a video that harms the Arab culture, but it is illogical to attack a person for creating a normal video. That unreasonable reaction explicated how Arabs were behaving unconsciously out of cultural programming. It is easy to see the behavior, but it is difficult to explain it, and that was the case with Arabs. They notice their aggressiveness in offline contexts, but they could not analyze it without the online context. Online interaction enabled Arabs to confront part of their negative reality. Sociolinguists have the opportunity to study societies easier and access many hidden aspects of Arab cultural identity. In 2017 and after 5 years of rejecting Al Samdan, some Arab people realized that there is no logical sense in attacking a person who did not harm anyone. They started to observe themselves and notice their impolite affective and cognitive discourses. Social media illuminated that hidden aspect of Arabs whom they were not observed before. This is why I argue that social media assist in developing the intellectual aspect of Arabs as it allowed them to study and evaluate their motives and behaviors. In this section, I will present two different examples that evidence the change of Arab people's perception.

Example 1



Translation

#وناسه_وناسه

In the picture: your face causes illness 😂.

The caption: do you think that we forget you

This was one of the videos posted on Instagram in May 2017 criticizing Tala personally by using a Khaliji word (اليهه) which is an offensive word when it used to describe people. The author wrote that Al Samdan's face brings the illness, and to maximize the density of his sarcastic tone, he used a laughing (😂) emoji. The author meant to abuse Al Samdan in a ridicule's language using different linguistic modalities like emojis and terminologies. This post is uploaded in one of the hashtags that were created because of Al Samdan's video. The author wrote in the post caption (علي بالك نسيناك) translated into (Do you think that we forgot you). The phrase in the caption implicated two interpretations; one related to Arabs' fear that is hidden in fake brave expressions, and the other interpretation clarified the educational background of the author. Arabs use such phrases if they want to threaten others, so the author used this common phrase in deliberate to threaten Al Samdan by telling him that people will not forget him owing to your video. The author wants to index that Al Samdan ashamed Arabs with that video, yet the author himself does not know how to use an Arabic preposition correctly (علي) which indicated his low educational background. Noting example 3 of the first stage where the author reflected the same low education background. This derives one to conclude that the less the education level is, the more violence in behaving and reacting. Noting that the meant education does related to school years but to awareness and consciousness. Al Samdan did not harm the Arab nation by the video and now means is working to contribute to the develop the Arabs' nation using his talents and education. He tries to prove that social media is a good way to learn and teach. However, the existence of uneducated people who criticize with lack of insight and realization is going to harm the Arabs' development. The author put his account on the video with bold font and

attracted color (I removed the account from the picture for privacy respect) which evidence that the author was not afraid of the consequences after posting this video. He used direct offensive language without consideration which can be attributed to the low legal monitoring in the online contexts. Moving to the next example where the change of people's discourse illuminated.

Example 2



Translation

#وناسه وناسه

Maybe the bullying make you shingling start as this guy

!! But if you use it for your benefit

Talal Sam, I respect and appreciate people like you ❤️❤️

2017, the year where a slight shift was in its initial appearance; Arabs started to admit the change as social media becomes an ultimate part of their reality. Besides the discouragement and attack this year, there are some noticed constructive responses and discourse to support Talal Al Samdan. This change is a remarkable indication that the coming years will be better regarding social online interactions, embracing change, and diminishing face dominance. The author of this tweet used a bold font to emphasize the certainty that bullying, which is an example of savage behaviors that could destroy a person, can create a positive power to fight the negative collectivism of society as what happened with Al Samdan. If Al Samdan and any social media influencer decided to obey the society after the severe attack from almost all Arabs people, Arabs will remain the nation that lacks the experience of dealing with technological demands. Collectivism in the Arab world is so deep that required an act of huge courage to stand against it. This is why people started to respect and admire Al Samdan after approximately five years of rejection; Al Samdan has a firm decision and courage that what he did is not wrong or a taboo, and one day Arab people will understand the significance of “light identity” (Blommaert, 2017) and digital world progress (Al Zidjaly, 2019). Noting that the world is moving toward the artificial intelligence prosperity that social media and online interaction are significant parts of it. Therefore, master their utilization is a demand. If Arab people remain to refuse social media, their future will be affected negatively from the social, economic, political, and technical aspects. Socially, fighting a person who decided to accept and take part in the global technological surge will emaciate the solidarity within the Arabs' culture. From a political lens, nations that fight a person for no logical reason with impolite-oriented discourses via the use of

different online platforms cannot gain political confidentiality across nations. Hence, the economic sector will be affected negatively as well. Adding that if the Arab culture continues refusing to keep pace with innovations and technology evolvments, it will not be able to build a solid base in the *entrepreneur* and business world. Life demands flexibility and acceptance with great connections with individual, collective, and light identity because they are interrelated and each one completes and affects the other. The author uses these emojis (❤️❤️) that people use to express love because he wanted to reflect appreciation and respect to Talal. The stressed message that the author wanted to convey is love due to Talal's courage to survive socially.

4.4 Arabs' self-analyzation (from 2018 to 2020)

After the realization of the negative side of Arabs culture that kept holding them back from advancements, this stage started to build. In this stage, many Arabs observed that face dominates their lives and minds, and several issues resulted due to face. Adding that the globe's rapid evolvement has forced nations to keep pace with that development. In this stage and through social media interaction, Arabs connected to other people from different countries and cultures. They started to compare Arabic culture with other cultures. This comparison leads them to examine the factors that prevented them from being one of the top nations in the world. Many people strived to learn and extend their intellectual capacities; thus, they were able to comprehend new important skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical interpretation. Many educational institutes employed these skills into their curriculums after realizing the significance of teaching Arabs skills they lack. That was the role of the educational academic sector, and the aim of teaching Arabs those skills will not be achieved without self-learning. Arabs learned the skill of analyzing the surrounded circumstances from spending a lot of time on social media observing other people's discourses. The combination between the educational sector and social media assists Arabs to move from realizing to analyzing as the analysis required deeper cognitive ability. I argue that social media without Arabs influencers will not be able to make this remarkable shift because people are inspired by each other. Adding that social media influencers have helped in this important process not only via using social media but also via conveying their courage to others to ensure the validity of their choice. The following are some examples to illustrate people's inspiration for Al Samdan's courage and their shifted discourse regarding the Wanasa Wanasa incident.

Example 1



Translation

#واناسه_واناسه

Swear to Allah you have done well because you were able to break a fair stone that is difficult to be broken. In 2019, after seven years of the published video, I observed that the constructive responses in #) (واناسه_واناسه) hashtag more than the destructive ones because of Talal Al Samdan determined mind that enabled him to alter the attack with his achievements to support. He shows that this new digitalized

movement is to Arabs' advantage, so it deserves an investigated attempt. The author illustrated the same interpretation in this tweet as he expressed his voice via the use of supportive terms (كفو). This tweet aligned with this paper's argument; Arabs afraid of the unknown; however, if they break the fear barrier, the world will demand their creativity and influence. Talal Al Samdan is the great model of what Arabs should do to have their influential contribution to the world. They need to be stronger than the pressure of the collectivistic face. Many Arabs attacked Al Samdan via using impoliteness-oriented discourse, yet after several years they want to learn from him what they should do to express themselves. Social media influencers succeed in inspiring other people; they are remarkable influencers in society. The author did not use multimodality discourses, and this might be to index the seriousness of his opinion as people tend to not use emojis if they are talking about serious issues to sound certain and objective. The author used a new linguistic manner which a confederate term (والله), and this is a way Muslims tend to use to stress their utterance/writing to gain the hearer/reader trust. Adding that some people swear to Allah if they are amazed about what they receive, and the author wanted to show positive amazement that Al Samdan was able to overcome his fear though the society attack and reject him. The author's amazement, further, derived from the inspiration of Al Samdan's courage. This is an example of the inspiration that people feel due to social media influencers.

Example 2



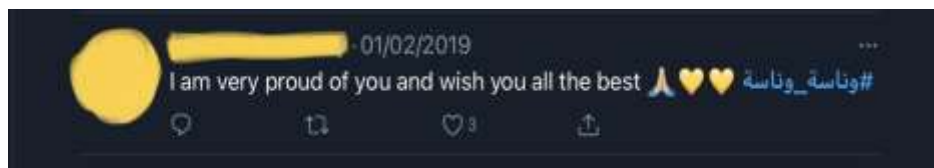
Translation

#وناسة_وناسة

Talal who sang Wanasa Wanasa is studying business in American, and his song was released. A human who continues his life successfully; the wonder where are the people who were abusing him now? 🙌😂 The tone that the author decides to use in this tweet reflected that the author is proud of Al Samdan because of his achievements after singing Wanasa Wanasa. The author's language, further, implied that s/he respects Al Samdan because he completed working on himself and succeed in overcoming people's bullying. Moreover, the author compared Al Samdan to those who attacked and abused him admitting that Al Samdan exceeds them via his achievements. The author claimed implicitly that those who were attacking Al Samdan are disappeared as there are no achievements evident in their existence. The author used positive juxtaposing discourse to support Talal (noting the destructive juxtaposing comparing to the author in example 2 of the first stage). At the end of the caption, the author used a laughing emoji (😂) to mock Al Samdan's abusers and the waving hand emoji (🙌) that bear two usages. One usage is to greet someone, and the second is to say goodbye. The author wanted to challenge Al Samdan's abuser if he

meant the former usage as if the author was welcoming them to witness Al Samdan's achievements and to prove that he was able to overcome their severe attack. The author wanted to demonstrate that Al Samdan is stronger than the attackers. Nevertheless, if the author meant the second usage, the interpretation will be different. Using goodbye emoji for people whom one does not admire is a pleasure, and this is could be the reason for using the laughing emoji after the waving hand (👋😂). As if the author saying to Al Samdan's abusers you are not welcome to witness Talal's achievements, which is the opposite of the previous interpretations, because you were at one day the cause of his disappointment. Noting that people in 2013 were using laughing emoji to mock Al Samdan, and in 2019 people are using it to support Al Samdan (see the previous stage). This shift proves that Arabs are changing to neglect face dominance and support change embracing.

Example 3



The previous examples show the pride of Al Samdan as a person and the pride of his strength to overcome the abasement and social rejection. This example also shows the pride of Al Samdan; however, the previous example is showing implicit pride via the used language and emojis. While this example is showing implicit pride, which is indexed by the word (proud) and the emojis (💛). While the other used emoji (🙏) signaled a true wish for a better life. People used various expression discourses to present respect, love, appreciation, and pride toward Al Samdan during this stage. I tried to compare the positive and negative responses, and I found that there are very few people who are against Al Samdan. I noticed, further, that the few people who are against him are using less aggressiveness which means that Arab people are conscious that there are limits to criticizing a human. Moreover, this indicated that people started to break the fear boundary as they are expressing their supportive voice without being afraid of the collectivistic face. The initial spark of a society change burns by the society's members. Thus, to change the collectivistic face of a society, the people of this society should neglect the negative dominance of the collectivistic face.

Example 4



Translation

#وناسة_وناسة

Talal Sam Wanasa Wanasa video faced the biggest number of bullying so that I feel glad when I see people love him and his success.

We all do kinds of stuff which we regret after a while .. the most important thing is people's reaction

And he responded with the best image 🙏

Many people cannot bear this severe bullying. Today, his existence and his success are big in front of him before it is a public success.

This example was tweeted in 2020 to demonstrate the power of individualism that Al Samdan has to fight the destructive collectivism in the Arab world. This example is important because the author reached the deepest level of thinking and analyzing people. Analyzing the author's language leads to figure out several changes that Arabs passed through. This is why this example is a good representative of the Arab people's shift. Al Samdan overcame the social rejection and attack as well as his own psychological pressure out of rejection in teenage age. Due to no logical reason, people bullied, abuse, hurt, and harm Al Samdan physically and psychologically. The author mentioned that no one can confront the attack and bullying which Al Samdan faced which is a great achievement that people need to learn the courage out of it. The author wrote that Al Samdan's video was ordinary and does not give people the right to react severely as what they did. The author's analytical discourse illustrates that people analyze society from many angles and proves that Arabs can distinguish between positives and negatives. They reached the degree of evaluation that aware them of the destructive behaviors that Arabs acquired because of the cultural face. The author examined Al Samdan's reaction as well when he wrote (And he responded with the best image 🙏) which index pride and admiration. Al Samdan's reaction was so peaceful and intelligent that inspired people to learn from him. In fact, Al Samdan did not react verbally using the same impolite-discourse orientation, but instead, he makes his actions and achievements speak louder to stop that attack. He succeeded because the next discussed hashtag (#طلال_سام_يمثلنا) which was a trend in December 2019 is reflecting people admiration; Arabs consider Talal their representatives in the Arab world.

4.5 Arabs' shift from fear to courage (current infant stage)

In this stage, people changed remarkably as there are many events assisted in this changing process. I wrote that the first stage could be named as the unconsciousness period in the Arab world, and I desired to name this period as the consciousness era in the Arab world. Arab people changed to be more flexible working for creativity sake, not tradition sake; they become critical thinker people. This is because this stage is aligning with the Corona time where several incidents occur that helped to teach people the courage to embrace change and the destructive consequences of face culture. Covid-19 allowed almost all people to re-examine themselves and their lives. The online interaction was in its peak influence at this period which derived people to use social media platforms more than ever. People started to attend online social and psychological seminars as well to learn and develop in life. I observed during the Corona time that a new trend was distributed among Arabs which is attending a course with life coaches. (I noticed the popularity of life coached among my siblings and friends, and people whom I never have heard them talking about life essence, they started to adopt a new habit which is meditation). This shift amazed me as many people started to talk in a wiser language which a positive indication about life in the future. Al Zidjaly (2020, class notes) argued that language is so powerful that can change one's life. within this framework, the remarkable change of Arabs' discourse will lead them to a better future. Language empowers one's actions as "what people say is the reason for their behaviors" (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). The following examples are taken from the previous hashtag regarding hashtag regarding Al Samdan which is (#طلال_سام_يمثلنا) hashtag to examine Arabs' ability to analyze the surrounded incidents. This hashtag was created to support Al Samdan and voice that he is a good model for Arabs.

Example 1



Translation

#طلال_سام_يمثلنا

The educated and successful human does not talk about him and his achievements like our friend...

People supposed to admit that

And it is not necessary to say anything for now ... observe people who support you 🍌 you are international

🌍 my friend ❤️

And if he says that his family is proud of him... Kuwait, as a whole, proud of you.

The author's optimistic language clearly illustrates his pride in Al Samdan which appears on his selected words (educated and successful) to describe Al Samdan, on the emojis that he used to express his feelings toward Al Samdan (❤️ and 🍌), and on the intimate tone. The author expressed his intimacy toward Talal through using the word (human) which is a word that carries the meaning of human traits such as courage, honesty, integrity, and self-awareness. The author shortened all these traits with one word. He clarified that successful people are action takers who let people speak about their achievements and that what Al Samdan is doing as the author wrote. Moreover, the author expressed his intimacy with the phrase (my friend) to make solidarity with Talal so that the author's emotion can access Al Samdan easily and truly. The author, further, used an emoji to index generalization (🌍) and show that many people admire Al Samdan due to his strong character that enabled him to overcome society's collectivistic face. Arab people shifted completely to be a good support to the same person whom they attack years ago which is a good shift the Arab world need for advancements.

Example 2



The author used a blue heart (❤️) to express his deep love toward Al Samdan as the color of this heart is similar to the watercolor, and the similarity of the author's love and the water is the depth. Additionally, the author expressed his respect and love via the use of friendly adjectives such as (humble and talented) to show intimacy and admiration. To support Al Samdan, the author used the phrase (keep going) which is a common phrase that people use if they admire one's work. Noting that in example 1 of the first stage, the author used the same phrase to ridicule Al Samdan and other social media influencers. The author's polite manner illustrates that people realized Al Samdan's individualism and freedom of expression that he showed at the age of 13 years old. Although many people perceived Wanasa Wanasa video as a shame and they hated Al Samdan because of it, they eventually realized that he did want a thing but expressing himself. This indicates that Arabs started to appreciate the difference. Moving to **example 3** that is short in terms of length but deep in terms of meaning. The author of the following tweet summarized his opinion in two words "our hero". The author sees in Talal's courage is what many Arabs need to express their individuality without being afraid. The author attached a picture of an actor who played the role of a hero in a historical series. The author meant to juxtapose Al Samdan to this hero to say that he perceived them the same. The interpretation of this juxtaposition is that Al Samdan has liberated Arabs from being afraid of social media even if they faced attack and rejection. While the historical hero (in the picture) liberated a region to free its population from being afield of the enemy. Both worked to free people from fear in various ears.

Example 3



Discussion and conclusion

This paper examined the impact of social media on the Arab world as it argues that social media enabled Arabs to discover one of the negative features that prevented them from advancement in life which is the face. The online interaction through social media platforms helped people to accept change and allow them to express their creativity without being dominated by the face. Al Zidjaly (2019) examined Arabs' online practice of face, and she found that Arabs employed "impoliteness-Oriented discourses" as a strategy against "Islamic culture face" attack (p. 1039). She also found that Arabs used this indirect strategy to protect their face whenever they sense it could be damaged. The fear of damaging face is the main reason for change rejection. This paper studied the Wanasa Wanasa incident that started in 2013 and

continued to gain Arab's interaction until this year. However, the interaction is completely different as people have shifted from using impoliteness-oriented discourse to use polite-oriented discourse. Both what Al Zidjaly (2019) found and what I found are techniques that people used to protect their face. Nevertheless, I claim that they used an "indirect impoliteness-Oriented discourses" (Al Zidjaly, 2019) because the face-threatening was bonded with a sensitive identity which is the Islamic identity. While this paper found that Arabs used the impoliteness-oriented discourses because they aim to protect a social identity that is less sensitive than the Islamic one.

The paper examined the shift through 8 years from 2013 until 2020, and it found that Arab people from 2013 to 2016 were in an unconscious period where the collectivistic face threat blocked their minds. They behaved in so aggressive manner using impolite-oriented discourses to destroy Al Samdan's individualism, to stop social media movements, and to fight creative innovation. Ten years ago, when Keek, Messenger, and Facebook appeared to the Arab world, the Arab people's reaction toward it was governed with aggressiveness, impoliteness, face-attack, and disrespect. Noting that in 2020, many people are using a controversial platform like TikTok, and they accept unusual videos that are brand-new to the Arab culture. While in 2013, people could not accept Keek and Al Samdan's videos though they were not as unusual as TikTok videos. This proved that people during the previous years were changing to be more flexible, and I argue that social media is one of the key factors of that change. Society is reconstructing because of social media since people analyze events and relate others to themselves. In 2013, Arabs prefer to attack not to accept, but currently and starting from 2017, I found that they tweet and post brave and politer discourses to express their feelings and thoughts. They realized that impoliteness is the language of foolish people, so they alter it to be politer and more respectful. Social media diminish the dominance of face so that their tendency to accept change is increasing over the past years.

I noticed when I was comparing Arabs' reaction toward social media ten years ago to now, their acceptance and resilience of digital media are highly considered. The price of embracing change and accepting it has been paid for by Arab social media celebrities and Artists. Therefore, presenting a great example of social media influencers who fought face-attack to show his creativity and influence in the Arab world is essential in my opinion. Anthropologists are in charge of studying cultures evolution as well as people who have a key role in this evolution, and one way of doing so is presenting the good models of Arab influencers who challenge the status quo of Arab culture to make a positive impact so that others take the courage to complete the path. Besides, social media celebrities have a great influence on Arab culture as they are followed by millions of Arabs. They are a good example to be shown and analyzed, excluding celebrities who use social media for personal desires with no positive influence, and Talal Mahmoud Al Samdan is one of those positive influences.

I found also that the face feature is the most dominant feature in the Arab world that reflects a huge part of Arabs identity. Before the existence of new platforms, Arab unaware of their negative side, that each individual has. According to Al Zidjaly (2020, class notes) who argued that any individual has the negative and the positive side of his/her persona, and people should analyze themselves, their behaviors, and intuitions as well as examine their thoughts and attitudes to comprehend the reasons behind their actions. She added that the majority of Arab do not know how to analyze themselves as critical thinking skills was not gain much attention in the past. Allah said in the Holy Quran (بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ الْقِيَامَةِ: 14) and he also said (كفى بنفسك اليوم عليك حسيباً الإسراء: 14) which evident that a person is responsible for discovering himself/herself to enhance the negativity and develop the positivity. Online interaction via the use of various platforms acts as the highlighter to identify the position of Arabs currently, and where they may

be in the coming years. This prediction is based on the Arab language and selected discourses. I found that they shifted from using impolite-oriented discourse to use polite-oriented one which predicts that the Arab world is moving forward. Adding that Arabs were dazzled by their history to the point that analyzing their inner side was not favorable. However, with the evolution of the “light” identity theory by Blommaert (2017) people accept the new phase of life, and what they are reflecting via their language, behavior, and attitudes.

I found that Arabs in the first stage shared some components which lack education background (see example 3 in the first stage and example 1 in the second stage). I argued that attacking is the language of foolishness, and Arabs were aggressive attackers who lack the skill of examining their motives behind their language selection. I also argued that social media aid the education sector in the Arab world to teach vital skills such as analytical thinking as they observe and evaluate the subtle aspect of their persona via social media. I found that people in the first stage cannot also use social media properly as it was new to their world and because they were rejecting it. The posts and pictures were not to gain Likes or even Dislikes. However, note the example in stage three and four where tweets and post gain several Likes, Dislikes, Retweets, and quote tweets. This observation leads to conclude that Arab people are deciding to embrace that change and value their individualism via stop attacking and increase acceptance.

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