

“You’re wrong!” How Egyptians and Americans Correct Others in Everyday Conversations: A Cross-Cultural Investigation

Nader Morkus

Indiana University

Abstract

The present study investigated the speech act of correction in Egyptian Arabic and American English, specifically examining how and why Egyptians and Americans modified the illocutionary force of their corrections through the use of mitigation and aggravation strategies in different situations. A Discourse Completion Task/Test (DCT) consisting of six situations was used to elicit corrections from 30 Arabic-speaking Egyptians and 30 English-speaking Americans. The situations represented different settings (e.g., classroom, restaurant, theater), different interlocutor relationships (i.e., lower, higher, and equal), and different types of correction (i.e., correction of misinformation and misbehavior). The results showed differences between the two groups in the frequency and type of mitigation and aggravation strategies used as well as in the effect of the contextual factor of status on these strategies. The results also showed differences between the two groups in their seriousness rankings of the correction situations. In addition, interesting gender-based differences were observed in the two groups in both the frequency and type of mitigation and aggravation strategies used.

Key words: speech act of correction, Egyptian Arabic, American English, cross-cultural pragmatics

1. Introduction

The main motivation for studying speech acts is to understand how human communication is carried out via linguistic behavior. Another goal is to describe similarities and differences in interpersonal communication across languages and cultures (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985). Speech act research can also help identify the underlying social and cultural norms that inform communicative behavior (e.g., Meier, 1995, 1997, 1999; Richards & Schmidt, 1983). It is particularly important in foreign/second language learning since teaching the pragmatic aspects of language (e.g., speech act realization strategies) can minimize intercultural communication breakdowns and help reduce cultural stereotyping (e.g., Meier, 1995; Takahashi & Beebe, 1993).

While a large number of speech acts, including apologies, requests, refusals, complaints, agreements, disagreements, and compliments, have been investigated, other equally important speech acts, such as corrections, have received minimal attention in the literature. The speech act of correction warrants investigation for a number of reasons. First, it is very common in everyday interactions, as Bolinger (1965, p. 248) reminds us “the correction of others in conversations . . . in classrooms . . . is an unending business.” In addition, its potential damage to the hearer’s face is high since it may imply that the hearer is “misguided or incompetent” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 38). The speech act of correction is similar to the speech act of refusal, which is describe as involving “delicate interpersonal negotiation” that requires “the speaker to build support and help the listener avoid embarrassment” (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990, p. 68).

Despite its importance, the speech act of correction has received minimal attention in cross-cultural pragmatics research. The present study aimed to bridge this gap in the literature by investigating this speech act in Arabic, an understudied language in speech act research. This study also extends the scope of investigation to include both correction of misinformation and correction of action (e.g., misbehavior), which is the result of

misinformation, misunderstanding, or lack of attention. Although the concept of action correction is not new in the literature (e.g., Keating, 1993), there has not been, to the author’s knowledge, any study that investigated action correction in the context of cross-cultural pragmatics research. Moreover, unlike most previous correction studies, the present study investigated corrections in different speech situations and different interlocutor relationships (i.e., both equal and unequal status relationships).

The present study particularly examined how native speakers of Egyptian Arabic and native speakers of American English modified the illocutionary force of their corrections with mitigating and aggravating strategies in different speech situations, involving different settings (e.g., classroom, restaurants, theater), and different interlocutor relationships (i.e., both equal and unequal status interactions). The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do Egyptians and Americans modify the illocutionary force of their corrections with mitigating and aggravating strategies in different situations?
- 2) How does the contextual factor of status affect the use of the mitigating and aggravating strategies?
- 3) Are there gender-based differences in the use of mitigating and aggravating strategies?

Correction Studies

Probably the first study to investigate corrections was conducted by Takahashi and Beebe (1993) who examined this speech act in American English, Japanese, and in the speech of Japanese learners of English. A discourse completion test (DCT), consisting of two situations (one involving a teacher correcting a student and the other a student correcting a teacher) was used to elicit the data from 15 Americans responding in English, 25 Japanese responding in Japanese, and 15 Japanese responding in English. Results showed that when correcting a student, the Americans tended to preface their corrections with positive remarks (79% of the time) more frequently than the Japanese responding in English (23%) and the Japanese responding in Japanese (13%). A similar pattern was observed in the

use of softeners such as hedges and questions, with the Americans using them 71% of the time compared to 50% by the Japanese responding in English and 26% by the Japanese responding in Japanese. It was also interesting to note that while 40% of the Japanese participants responding in Japanese opted out of correcting a teacher, only 13% the American participants opted out. What is interesting also is that when correcting a teacher, softeners were used more frequently by the Japanese responding both in Japanese (133%) and in English (116%) than by the Americans (100%).

Another correction study was undertaken by Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996) who investigated this speech act in Turkish using a DCT and adopting the same correction scenarios from Takahashi and Beebe (1993). The researchers collected data from 80 participants and used Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness as a framework for analysis. Results showed that Turkish speakers preferred negative politeness strategies when interacting with someone higher or lower in status. Another recent study (Pishghadam & Kermanshahi, 2011) investigated corrections among Iranian EFL learners using a DCT consisting of one scenario of an unequal-status interaction (i.e., a student correcting a teacher). The DCT provided six response options ranging from implicit to explicit correction, in addition to space provided for participants to write their own response if they chose to do so. The DCT was administered to 180 Iranian EFL learners, equally divided by gender and age (i.e., adults and teenagers). The learners belonged to three EFL proficiency groups: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. The researchers did not have a control group of native speakers of English, and that is why they compared their data to that of native speakers of American English and Japanese EFL learners from the Takahashi and Beebe's (1993) study. Results showed that age, gender, and language proficiency did not have an effect on how corrections were realized as Iranian EFL learners tended to be implicit in their reactions to teacher's mistakes. Results also showed that Iranian EFL learners, as Japanese EFL learners from Takahashi and Beebe (1993), tended to preface their corrections with hedges and softeners.

The most recent correction study was carried out by Darweesh and Mehdi (2016) who investigated corrections among Iraqi EFL learners. The researchers used a DCT consisting of six situations including both equal and unequal status interactions to elicit corrections from 40 participants. The researchers used a modified version of the Takahashi and Beebe (1993) model to analyze the data. Since the researchers did not have a control group, they also compared their data to that of the American participants from Takahashi and Beebe (1993). Results showed that while Iraqi EFL learners were generally more direct than Americans and Japanese, they tended to be less direct when interacting with someone higher in status. In addition, unlike Americans, Iraqi EFL learners did not use positive remarks or compliments to soften the illocutionary force of their corrections.

Method

Participants

Thirty native speakers of Egyptian Arabic from Egypt and 30 native speakers of American English from the US participated in this study. The participants were university students and young professionals ranging in age between 18 and 35, with the average age of the Egyptians 24.7 years and the Americans 21.1 years. Each group was equally divided by gender, and all the participants were nonpaid volunteers.

Materials and Procedures

A Discourse Completion Task/Test (DCT) consisting of 6 correction situations and 5 non-correction situations (used as distractors) was used for data collection. The last section of the DCT elicited participants’ rankings of the correction situations in order of seriousness. (See Appendix A for the English version of the DCT). The six correction situations represented different settings (i.e., classroom, restaurant, theater), different interlocutor status relationships (i.e. equal and unequal), and different types of

correction (i.e., correction of misinformation and misbehavior). See Table 1 for an overview of the correction situations.

Table 1: *Overview of the Correction Situations*

Relative Status	Type of Correction	Setting	Situation Number
Higher Status	Correction of information	Classroom	Situation 1
Higher Status	Correction of action	Theater	Situation 3
Equal-Status	Correction of information	(Unspecified)	Situation 7
Equal-Status	Correction of action	Classroom	Situation 9
Lower Status	Correction of information	Classroom	Situation 11
Lower Status	Correction of action	Restaurant	Situation 5

The DCT was first composed in English then translated into colloquial Egyptian Arabic by the researcher, who is a native speaker of Egyptian Arabic. The translation was then checked for accuracy by another native speaker of Egyptian Arabic, who was an Arabic-English bilingual; all required changes were made. The English and Arabic versions of the DCT were identical except with regard to minor details such as names of cities; this change was made to make the situations realistic and contextually appropriate.

The DCT was administered in the US by four graduate assistants to non-linguistic undergraduate and graduate students at a small public university in the Midwest. In Egypt, it was administered by four university students to graduate and undergraduate students at Alexandria University, as well as to young professionals at other locations in Alexandria. Each participant was given 30 minutes to complete the DCT, but most participants finished it in a much shorter time.

Data Analysis

The data consisted of responses to the six correction situations and rankings of the situations in order of perceived seriousness. The responses were thoroughly examined and all mitigating and aggravating strategies were identified and classified into different categories. The mitigating strategies comprised 17 categories and the aggravating strategies comprised 4 categories. Thirteen of the 17 categories of mitigation strategies (e.g., Hedges, Expressions of Regret, Joking, Expressions of Gratitude) have previously been documented in the literature (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987). The other four categories were created to accommodate the data, and these were: Appeal to Third Party, Implicit Correction, White Lie, and Comments/Distractors. The four aggravation strategies found in the data were Request for Action, Ridicule/Criticism, Admonishment/Chastisement, and Threat. See Appendix B for the Coding Manual, which lists all categories with examples from the data.

A frequency count of all mitigating and aggravating strategies was calculated for each situation, each status-relationship type (i.e., higher, equal, lower) and each correction type (i.e., information vs. misbehavior). The overall frequency of occurrences of each mitigating and aggravating strategy was also calculated for each group. The perceived seriousness rankings were examined and compared to the frequency counts of the mitigating and aggravating strategies to check for possible correlation.

Findings

This section reports the frequency counts of mitigation and aggravation strategies in each correction situation, each status relationship, and each type of correction (i.e., information and action) as well as the seriousness rankings. The term frequency refers to the total number of occurrences of a particular mitigation or aggravation strategy in a particular situation divided by the total number of participants performing the correction in that situation. For example,

if a particular mitigation strategy occurred 10 times in a situation that was performed by 10 participants, then the frequency of occurrence of that strategy is calculated as 100%, meaning that the participants used it 100% of the time. This is a well-established method for calculating frequencies of speech act strategies in cross-cultural speech act research, and it was used in numerous speech act studies including those studies investigating corrections (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe, 1993).

Higher-Status Interactions

When correcting a professor, the Egyptian participants used mitigation strategies more frequently than the Americans (227% vs. 177%). The most frequently used strategy by the Egyptians was Forms of Address and by the Americans Hedging, and neither group used any aggravation strategies in this situation. The most marked gender-based difference was between Egyptian males and females, with Egyptian males using mitigation strategies much more frequently than Egyptian females (282% vs. 173%). In the American data, the only noticeable difference was American males' preference for Questions (63%) compared to American females (20%). Interestingly, this tendency was reversed in the Egyptian data with Egyptian males using Questions more frequently than Egyptian females (45% vs. 18%).

The trend exhibited in the Professor situation was reversed in the Elderly Man situation, with the American participants using more mitigation strategies than the Egyptians (188% vs. 135%). The most frequently used mitigation strategy by the two groups in the Elderly Man situation was Attention Getters (i.e., *excuse me*), with both groups using it with a similar frequency. Hedging, however, was used frequently by the Americans (54% of the time), but was never used by the Egyptians in this situation. Another important difference between the two groups was that while the Americans used aggravation strategies 8% of the time, the Egyptians used them much more frequently (59% of the time). One interesting gender-based difference in this situation was that females in both groups used mitigation strategies more frequently than their male counterparts.

American females used two particular mitigation strategies, Attention Getters (e.g., *Excuse me*) and Hedging much more frequently than American males. Another interesting difference was that American females did not use any aggravation strategies in this situation whereas Egyptian males and females used them equally. See Figure 1 for frequencies of mitigation strategies used by the Egyptians and Americans in both the Professor and the Elderly Man situation.

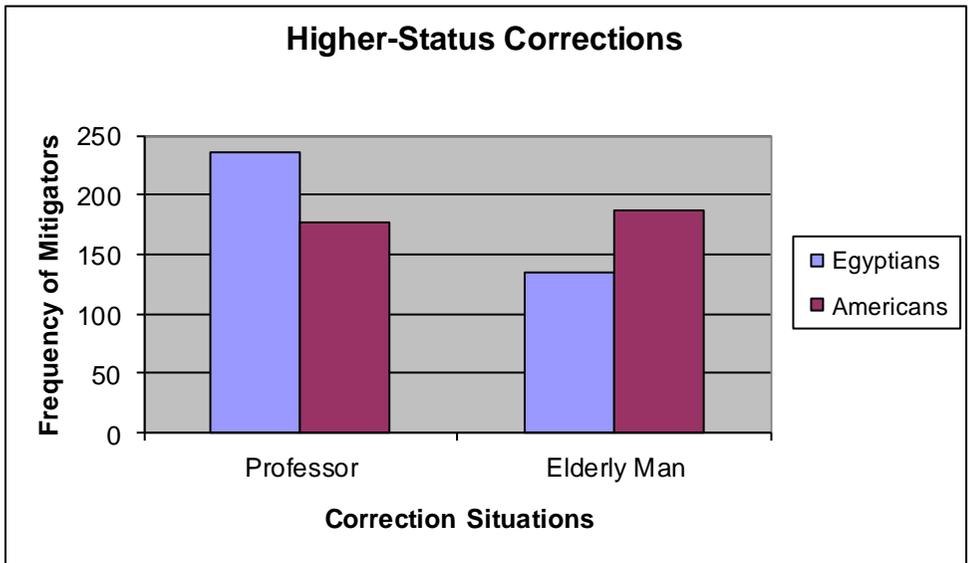


Figure 1: Frequency of Mitigation Strategies used by Egyptians and Americans in the Higher-Status Situations

Equal-Status Interactions

In the Friend situation, both Egyptians and Americans used mitigation strategies in similar frequencies, especially Hedging and Joking strategies although the White Lie strategy appeared only in the Egyptian data in this situation. The Egyptians also used some aggravation strategies such as Ridicule/Criticism more frequently than their American counterparts. Gender-based differences were

observed in the Egyptian data with Egyptian males using mitigation strategies more frequently than their female counterparts (79% v. 43%). Another interesting difference was that Egyptian males used Favorable Comments/Distractors 36% of the time whereas Egyptian females never used this strategy in this situation. In the American data, American females also used Hedging in this situation more frequently than American males (40% vs. 13%).

In the Classmate situation, the most frequently used mitigation strategy in the Egyptian data was Appealing to/Quoting a Third Party (33%) and the American data Hedging (30%). Other strategies preferred by the Americans included Attention Getters (e.g., *excuse me*) and Friendly Terms (e.g., *dude*) while the Egyptians had a preference for Joking, Exonerating/Defending the Interlocutor, and White Lies. The most pronounced gender-based difference was found in the American data with American females using mitigation strategies three times as frequently as their male counterparts. In contrast, Egyptian males used mitigation strategies twice as frequently as Egyptian females. American females also used two strategies that were not used by their male counterparts: Hedging and Appealing to/Quoting a Third Party. See Figure 2 for the frequency of mitigation strategies used by Egyptians and Americans in the equal-status situations.

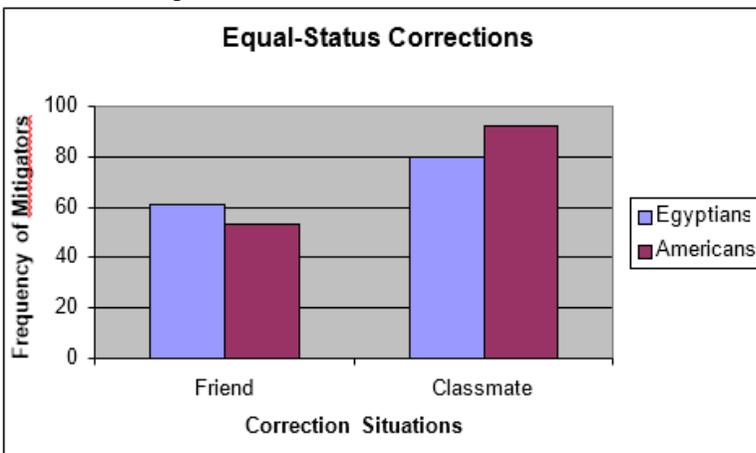


Figure 2: Frequency of Mitigation Strategies used by Egyptians and Americans in the Equal-Status Situations

Lower-Status Interactions

In the Student situation, the American participants used mitigation strategies more than twice as frequently as the Egyptians (147% vs. 65%). The most frequently used mitigation strategies by the Egyptians were Exonerating/Defending the Interlocutor and Positive Remarks, and by the Americans Questions, Hedges, and Positive Remarks. Some mitigation strategies only appeared in the Egyptian data such as Gratitude and Preparatory/Explanatory Statement, and others only appeared in the American data including Understaters, Forms of Address, and Joking. Another interesting difference was that while the Egyptians used aggravation strategies such as Ridicule/Criticism and Admonishment/Chastisement, no aggravation strategies were used by the Americans in this situation. Gender-based differences were observed in the American data with American females’ stronger preference for Hedging (females 56% vs. males 20%), and in the Egyptian data with Egyptian males’ preference for the Admonishment/Chastisement strategy (males 44% vs. females 9%).

The Waiter situation is similar to the Student situation in that the Americans used markedly higher frequency of mitigation strategies than the Egyptians, almost three times as frequently (100% vs. 38%). With regard to individual mitigation strategy use, while the Egyptians had a preference for Forms of Address and Exonerating/Defending the Interlocutor, the Americans preferred Hedges and Expressions of Regret (20%). Another interesting difference was that the Egyptians used aggravation strategies much more frequently than the Americans (33% vs. 4%). While no gender-based differences were found in the Egyptian data, American females used the mitigation strategy Attention Getters (i.e., *excuse me*) twice as frequently as their male counterparts (40% vs. 18%). See Figure 3 for the frequency of mitigation strategies used by Egyptians and Americans in the Student and Waiter situations.

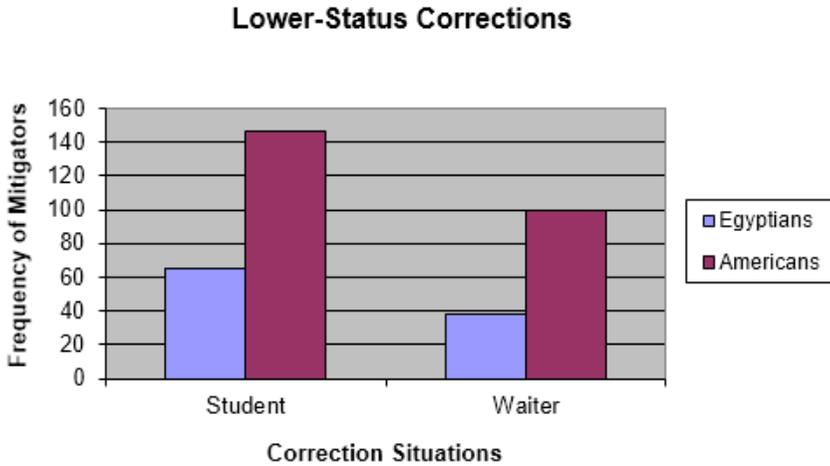


Figure 3. Frequency of Mitigators used by Egyptians and Americans in the Lower-Status Situations

Interlocutor Status and Style Shift

One of the most interesting findings in the study was the participants' shift in style based on the status of their interlocutor (e.g., higher vs. lower status). The shift in style here refers to the drop or increase in the frequency of mitigation or aggravation strategies based on the status of the interlocutor. The difference in the shift in style between the Egyptians and Americans was particularly pronounced in the use of mitigation strategies from the Student to the Professor situation. The Egyptians exhibited a dramatic increase in the frequency of their mitigation strategies from the Student to the Professor situations (171% increase) compared to a moderate increase by the Americans (30%). Figure 4 shows the shift in style from Professor to Student situation for both groups.

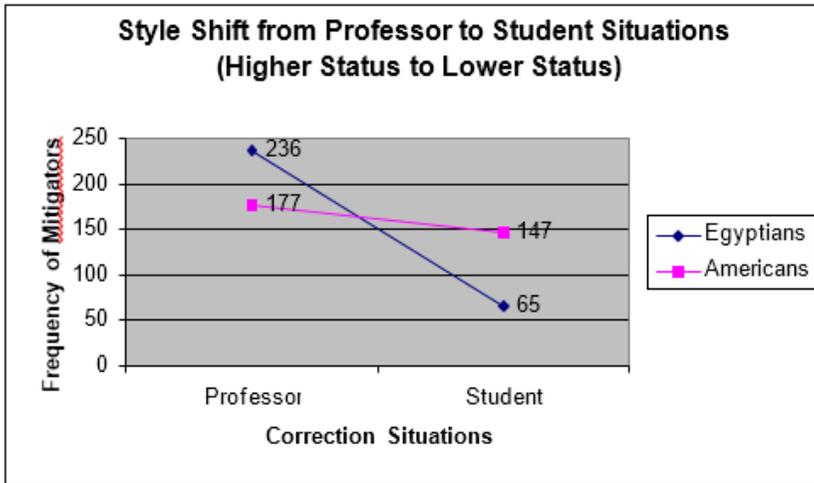


Figure 4. Style Shift from Professor to Student Situation

Interestingly, such marked difference in style was not observed when comparing the Elderly Man to the Waiter situation, as both Egyptians and Americans increased the frequency of their mitigation strategies in similar frequencies (97% and 88% respectively). Figure 5 shows the style shift from the Elderly Man to the Waiter situations.

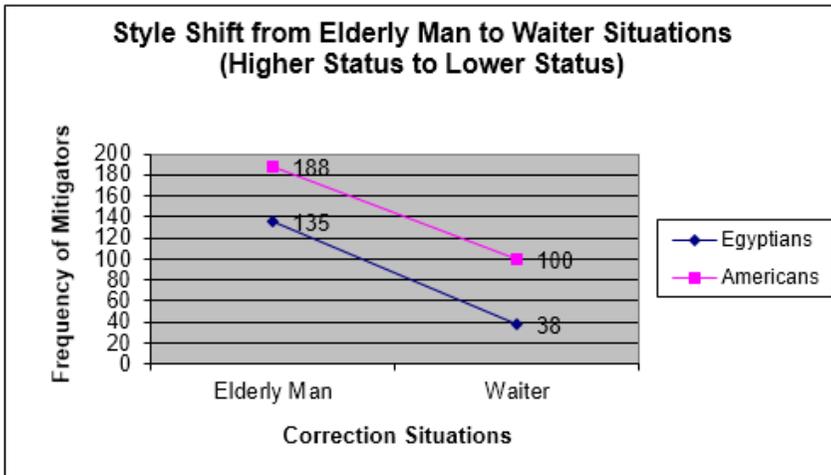


Figure 5: Style Shift from Elderly Man to Waiter Situation

Individual Strategy Use: Mitigation Strategies

The mitigation strategy most frequently used by the Americans was Hedging, occurring 51 times, and appearing in all six situations, and particularly frequent in the lower-status interactions. In the Egyptian data, the most frequently used strategy was Forms of Address, occurring a total of 30 times and used most frequently in the Professor situation. The strategy Appealing to Third Party was used more frequently by the Egyptians (12 occurrences) than the Americans (6 occurrences), and both groups used it exclusively in the Professor and Classmate situations. The Questions strategy, on the other hand, was more preferred by the Americans, occurring 16 times in the American data compared to 9 times in the Egyptian data. While the Americans used it in equal frequencies in the Professor and Student situations, the Egyptians used it most frequently in the Professor situation and only once in the Student situation. Finally, the Expressions of Regret and Positive Remarks strategies were more preferred by the Americans, occurring 7 times each in the American data compared to 2 and 3 times respectively in the Egyptian data.

One of the interesting gender-based differences in the use of mitigation strategies in the American data was American females' clear preference for Hedging (35 occurrences) compared to American males (16 occurrences). American females also used Attention Getters (e.g., *Excuse me*) three times as frequently as American males (24 vs. 8). American males, on the other hand, had a strong preference for the Forms of Address strategy using it more frequently than their female counterparts (15 vs. 9). In the Egyptian data, the most marked gender-based difference was in the Comments/Distractors strategy, used 6 times by Egyptian males, but never used by Egyptian females. Egyptian males also tended to use Hedging more frequently than their female counterparts (9 vs. 5 occurrences).

Individual Strategy Use: Aggravation Strategies

One of the interesting findings from the study was that the Egyptians used aggravation strategies more frequently than the Americans, especially in the lower-status interactions. For example, while the Egyptians used the aggravation strategy Request for Action 17 times, the Americans used it only twice. The Egyptians also used the aggravation strategy Ridicule/Criticism more frequently than the Americans (10 vs. 4 times), and while both groups used it in the Friend situation, only the Egyptians used it in the Student situation (4 occurrences). Finally, one of the aggravation strategies that appeared only in the Egyptian data was Admonishment/Chastisement, and it was used exclusively in the Student situation.

One of the interesting gender-based differences was that both Egyptian and American males used aggravation strategies more frequently than their female counterparts. For example, while Egyptian males used the Admonishment/Chastisement strategy 4 times, Egyptian females used it only once. Similarly, while American males used the Ridicule/Criticism strategy 3 times, American females used it only once. Finally, some aggravation strategies were exclusively used by males in each group, such as the Threat strategy by Egyptian males and the Request for Action strategy by American males.

Information vs. Action Correction

Comparing the action-correction situations (Classmate, Waiter, and Elderly Man) with the information-correction situations (Professor, Friend, and Student) revealed interesting differences. While the Americans preferred to point out the mistake in the action correction situations (e.g., *This is my seat.* or *You are sitting in my seat.*), the Egyptians tended to not only point out the mistake, but also make a Request for Action (e.g., *Please leave my seat.*). The Egyptians used this Request for Action strategy 10 times in the Elderly Man situation and 7 times in the Waiter situation. The Americans, on the other hand, used this Request for Action strategy only once in each of these two situations. The Egyptians, however, used a large number

of mitigation strategies to mitigate the illocutionary force of their requests.

Seriousness Rankings

While the Egyptians considered the Professor situation to be the most serious, the Americans ranked it as number 5. In fact, the Americans ranked one lower-status situation (Student) and the two equal-status situations (Classmate and Friend) as more serious than the Professor situation. Interestingly, the Egyptians ranked the Student situation as the least serious one. However, both groups ranked the Elderly Man situation as a very serious one, ranked number one by the Americans and number two by the Egyptians.

With regard to a possible correlation between the seriousness rankings and frequency of mitigation strategies, this correlation seemed to be more consistent in the Egyptian data. For example, the Egyptians ranked the two higher-status situations, Professor and Elderly Man, as more serious than the lower-status situations, Student and Waiter, and they consistently used more mitigation strategies in the two higher-status situations. No such possible correlation between seriousness rankings and frequency of mitigation strategies was found in the American data. For example, although the Americans ranked the Friend situation as more serious than the Waiter situation, they used more mitigation strategies in the latter than the former. See Table 2 for seriousness rankings of the correction situations.

Table 2: Seriousness Rankings for Correction Situations

Strategy	Egyptians	U.S. Americans
Elderly Man	2	1
Waiter	4	6
Professor	1	5
Classmate	3	4
Friend	6	2
Student	5	3

Discussion

It was interesting that the most pronounced differences between Egyptians and Americans were particularly in unequal-status interactions. For example, when correcting someone higher in status, particularly a professor, both Egyptians and Americans used a large number of mitigation strategies, in fact larger than in any other situation. The Egyptians also ranked the Professor situation as the most serious, and over half the Americans (16 out of 30) also opted out of it. In both Egyptian and American societies, teachers are expected to correct students, and when these roles are reversed, the act of correction becomes highly face threatening as it challenges the teacher’s authority and upsets the power relationship. However, it is interesting that the Egyptians used more mitigation strategies in this situation than the Americans. It is also interesting that while the Egyptians ranked this situation as the most serious, the Americans ranked it as number 5. In fact, the Americans ranked it as less serious than the equal-status situations and one lower-status situation (i.e., Student). It is possible to argue that while correcting a teacher is highly face threatening in both cultures, the teacher’s role may be

perceived differently in Egypt and the US. Whereas a teacher in the U.S. may be perceived as a resource, guide, and facilitator of learning, in Egypt a teacher is viewed as an authority figure. Teachers are also highly respected and held in high esteem in Egypt for their knowledge. In fact, one common Egyptian proverb likens teachers to prophets (*A teacher is almost a prophet*). This respect shown to teachers is also common in other Collectivistic cultures such as Iran in which teachers are also likened to prophets (Pishghadam & Kermanshahi, 2011, p. 346).

Another interesting difference between the two groups was in the shift in style from lower-status interactions (i.e., correcting a student) to higher-status interactions (i.e., correcting a professor). While the Egyptians exhibited a dramatic increase in the frequency of mitigation strategies the Americans exhibited a relatively small increase. Another interesting difference was that whereas the Americans used no aggravation strategies when correcting a student, the Egyptians used almost as many aggravation strategies as mitigation strategies. It seems that in Egypt, as in other Collectivistic cultures, such as Japan (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993), people are very conscious of the hierarchical structure of society and the distinctions among individuals pertaining to status and power. One popular Egyptian proverb captures this phenomenon: *The eye cannot rise above the eyebrow*, meaning that there is a fixed hierarchical order in society that cannot and should not be challenged. Begley (2000, p. 102) explains that “hierarchies according to age, gender, and experience are crucial in Egyptian society.” Wilber (1969, p. 98) also observes that in Egyptian society “older persons and those of higher social class are tendered ceremonial expressions of respect by their juniors and inferiors. Society is so arranged that nearly everyone is superior to someone.” In American culture, on the other hand, most Americans tend to believe in equality and usually view themselves as members of an egalitarian middle class and “generally, . . . social background, money or power, bestow perhaps fewer advantages than in any other major society” (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p. 89). This tendency in American culture may explain why the Americans did not exhibit a dramatic shift in style in interactions with a student versus a professor.

Another interesting difference between Egyptians and Americans was observed in the use of Forms of Address. This strategy was most frequently used by the Egyptians, and occurring especially frequently in the Professor situation. Forms of address seem to be particularly important in Egyptian culture, since they are not only used as a status marker, but also to mitigate the illocutionary force of face-threatening speech acts (FTA’s). Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 182) explain that a form of address is “typically strategically used to soften FTAs, by indicating the absence of risk to the addressee.” It seems that in Arabic, as in Japanese (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe, 1993) and Persian (e.g., Eslamirasekh, 1993), there is a preference for forms of address to mitigate the illocutionary force of FTA’s.

It was also interesting that the frequency of mitigation strategies used in relation to interlocutor status was different for the two groups. While the Americans used the lowest frequency of mitigation strategies in interactions with someone equal in status, the Egyptians used the lowest frequency of these strategies in interactions with someone lower in status. It seems that for Americans interacting with someone either lower or higher in status is more face-threatening than interacting with someone equal in status. For Egyptians, on the other hand, interacting with someone lower in status seems to be the least face-threatening, hence requiring the smallest number of mitigation strategies. This difference can again be interpreted in terms of the hierarchical structure of Egyptian society and people’s perception and awareness of differences among individuals with regard to status and power, while there is more emphasis on egalitarianism and equality in American society.

Conclusion

The present study provided important insights into how and why speakers of Egyptian Arabic and American English modify the illocutionary force of their corrections in different speech situations. In answering the why question, the study attempted to explain the results in terms of the underlying social and cultural values in each

speech community. The findings of the study are in line with the general characterization in the literature of the predominant cultural orientations of Egypt and the US as Collectivistic and Individualistic respectively.

Future research can investigate other Arabic speech acts as well as other dialects of Arabic. Other data collection methods such as observation of naturally-occurring speech or eliciting oral data using the role play method can be utilized to further investigate the speech act of correction. This is particularly important since eliciting oral rather than written speech act data is particularly important in Arabic since speech acts are realized orally in the dialect and not in the written variety of the language.

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Appendix A Questionnaire

Age _____ Sex _____

Education Level _____ The state you have lived in for

Native Language _____ the greater part of your life _____

Instructions

Imagine that you are actually in each of the following situations and say exactly what you would say if anything. Write down your answers in the space provided. This information is needed for research purposes.

Situation One

You are in a university history class. The lecture is about the Greek civilization. During the class the professor makes a mistake by saying that Alexander the Great died in 320 B.C., and you know the right year is 323 B.C. You say:

Situation Two

You feel very tired after a long day at work. Your car is at the mechanic’s. You want one of your coworkers to give you a ride home. You say:

Situation Three

You go to a live theater with your friends. During the interval you go to the restroom and when you come back you find a 50-year-old man sitting in your seat. You say:

Situation Four

Your professor lends you a book but you lose it. You have not told the professor yet. He asks you if you have finished reading the book. You say:

Situation Five

You are in a restaurant waiting for your order, shrimp. The waiter brings you a steak by mistake. You say:

Situation Six

Your mower breaks down and you want to borrow your neighbor's. You see her standing in front of her house. You say:

Situation Seven

Your friend asks you: *So did you have a good time in Germany last summer?* But you didn't go to Germany, you went to France. You say:

Situation Eight

Your brother, who lives with you, plays very loud music. You try to concentrate on your homework but the music is too loud for you.

You say:

Situation Nine

You are in class and your classmate, who sits next to you, has a hearing aid. You notice that he wrote the date of the next quiz wrong. The teacher said March 25 and he wrote March 29. You say:

Situation Ten

You promised to give your friend a ride to the airport on Sunday morning but the night before your car breaks down. You call her to apologize. You say:

Situation Eleven

Imagine that you are a university professor. During the class one of your students gives a presentation about the major cities in the Southern states of the U.S. He makes a mistake by saying that Albuquerque is the capital of New Mexico (rather than Santa Fe).

You say:

Which of the situations was the most embarrassing and which was the least embarrassing? Put the six situations below in order, starting with number (1), the most embarrassing, and ending with number (6), the least embarrassing.

- () When you were in the theater and a 50-year-old man sat in your seat
- () When the waiter brought you a steak by mistake
- () When the history professor made a mistake about Alexander the Great
- () When your classmate with the hearing aid wrote the date of the quiz wrong
- () When your friend thought that you had visited Germany rather than France
- () When you were a university professor and one of your students made a mistake about the capital of New Mexico

Appendix B

Coding Categories

Mitigators

Alerters

Attention Getters

Excuse me, Hey man!

Friendly Terms

Dude!

Buddy!

Brother!

Forms of Address

Sir, Professor, Dr., Your Excellency, Mr.

Questions

These questions serve as self-correction initiators

Didn’t he die in 323 B.C.?

You mean France?

Are you sure that Albuquerque is the capital of New Mexico?

Did you say the capital of New Mexico was Albuquerque?

Is Tanta the capital of Dakahlyia or Gharbyia?

Isn’t Santa Fe the capital of New Mexico?

Gharbia?

Understaters

You made *one small* mistake
 You made a *simple* mistake
 There was *just one* mistake
Just one small correction

Hedges

Well, I *actually* visited France
Unfortunately, I didn't go to Hurgada
By the way, I went to El Sharm
 I *think* the year was 323 B.C.
 Sir, I *am afraid* you are in my seat
 Sir, I *believe* that you are in my seat
 I *think* you made a mistake
 It *seems* that the quiz is on the 25th
 You *might have made* a mistake
 I *don't think* this is my order
 I *think* I ordered shrimp

Appealing to/Quoting a Third Party

As part of the correction statement

I *read that* he died in 323 B.C.
 I *have in my notes that* he died in 323 B.C.
 I *learnt from another class* that he died in 323 B.C.

As a suggestion

Let me ask the professor for clarification
 You might want to ask the teacher
 Let's go and ask the teacher to make sure
 Will you ask the one sitting next to you?

Implicit correction

This is correction made implicitly without directly drawing the interlocutor’s attention to the mistake.

Do you think you will be ready for the quiz on *March 25th*?
After Alexander the Great died in *323 B.C.*, who succeeded him?

Self-deprecation

According to my knowledge, *which is certainly limited compared to yours*, I think . . .

Expressions of Regret

I am sorry, Doctor, the correct year is 323 B.C.
Sorry, I didn’t order this!
I am sorry, but I ordered shrimp

Expressions of Gratitude/Appreciation

Doctor, you made a mistake It was 323 B.C.,
thank you, Doctor.
Thank you very much for your presentation
Thank you for your presentation

Positive Remarks

Good job!
Great presentation!
This looks great!
Overall well-done
Your answer was more than excellent!
All what you said was correct!

Joking

I went to Germany? I don't remember going!
 It seems that the pen made a mistake and 5 looks like 9!

White Lie

Sorry I forgot and told you I was going to Hurgada
 There was a change at the last minute, and instead of going to
 Hurgada we went to El Sharm
 I wrote it 29th at first, just like you did, but then the lecturer
 said 25th
 I think I might have it wrong (the date)

Comments/Distractors

These are used to lighten the gravity of the interlocutor's
 mistake by distracting the attention from it or commenting
 favorably on it

But that's beside the point!
 But I am sure Germany would have been a lot of fun, too
 They both have nice weather!

Hurgada is well-known for its nice weather and is highly
 valued by tourists
 Hurgada is a beautiful city
 Sharm El Shiekh was better than Hurgada

Exonerating/Defending the Interlocutor

You must've meant Santa Fe
 You must've got confused
 We all make mistakes

Preparatory/Explanatory Statement

Just thought you would want to know

I noticed that you wrote down the 29th
I wasn’t sure if you caught that!
I thought you might want to know

Aggravators

Request for Action

Can you move? Please move!
Can you go and get another chair?
Can you please leave my place and go to your place?
Please return this shrimp and bring me kebab!
Return this kebab and bring me the shrimp I ordered, please!
Get me what I ordered!

Request for Action with Mitigating Moves

Making sure the hearer is comfortable

Please leave my seat *if this is not going to be problem for you*
Please leave my seat *if this is not going trouble you*
You will be comfortable in this seat

Making offers/suggestions to the hearer

If you don’t have a place to sit *you can sit in my place*
Please leave and *I can get you another seat*

Ridicule/Criticism

Revise primary school geography first!
So Tanta is the capital of Gharbia! What’s the capital
of Dakahlya, then?
Sit down, clever boy! Tanta is the capital of Gharbia!
Hurgada! Are you on drugs?

Admonishment/Chastisement

You've got to make sure you know the correct
information!
Focus on what you're saying!
Dumbass!

Threat

Please get my order or *bring the manager so that I talk to
him about this mistake!*

Appendix C
Total Numbers of Occurrences of All Strategies

Table C1: Mitigating Strategies

Strategy	Egyptians			U.S. Americans		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Appealing to/Quoting a Third Party	6	6	12	3	3	6
Attention Getters	16	13	29	8	24	32
Comments/Distractors	6	0	6	2	1	3
Expressions of Gratitude	1	1	2	1	-	1
Expressions of Regret	0	2	2	3	4	7
Exonerating/Defending the Interlocutor	2	3	5	1	-	1
Forms of Address	14	16	30	15	9	24
Friendly Terms	2	0	2	3	0	3
Hedges	9	5	14	16	35	51
Implicit Correction	0	1	1	1	0	1
Joking	2	1	3	2	1	3
Positive Remarks	1	2	3	5	2	7

Preparatory/Explanatory Statement	2	1	3	1	4	5
Questions	5	4	9	10	6	16
Self-Deprecation	1	-	1	-	-	-
Understaters	-	-	-	2	2	4
White Lie	2	1	3	0	1	1

Table C2: Aggravating Strategies

Strategy	Egyptians			U.S. Americans		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Admonishment/Chastisement	4	1	5	-	-	-
Request for Action	9	8	17	2	-	2
Ridicule/Criticism	6	4	10	3	1	4
Threat	1	-	1	-	-	-
