

Positive and Negative Politeness in Nonverbal Communication Contexts: An Examination into Driving Behaviors in Europe

Mohammad Awad AlAfnan¹, Siti Fatimah MohdZuki²

¹American University of the Middle East, Eqilah, Kuwait

²University Technology MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia

Correspondence: Mohammad Awad AlAfnan, American University of the Middle East, Eqilah, Kuwait.

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Abstract

This study examines politeness as a nonverbal politic behavior in 29 European countries and territories using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The examination looked into the nonverbal acts of 'following road signs and speed limit' and 'giving signals before changing lanes' as they reflect (1) negative politeness in the form of avoiding imposition and reducing face-threatening-acts and (2) positive politeness in the form of noticing and appreciating other drivers' wants and interests to drive without imposition respectively. The examination looked into four variables that are the gender of drivers, age of drivers, level of education of drivers and their country of origin. The study found that European drivers are generally polite and they tend to use the positive politeness act (giving signals) of noticing and appreciating other drivers more often than the negative politeness act (following sigs and speed limits) of reducing imposition and avoiding face-threatening acts. The study also found that the level of education did not play a significant role in the adherence to the driving politic behavior. However, this study found a positive coloration between the age of drivers and their adherence to the driving politic behavior as older drivers follow the driving politic behavior more often than young drivers. This study also found that female drivers in Europe are more polite than male drivers as they notice and appreciate other drivers (positive politeness). This study also revealed that Danish (female), British (male and female), Irish (male), Finnish (male), Dutch (male and female), Belgium (female), Austrian (female), Greek (female) and Spanish (male) drivers have the highest frequency of adherence to the driving politic behavior. The study also found that Portuguese male and female, Croatian male and female, Macedonian male and female, Scottish male and female, Albanian male, Norwegian male, Czech male, Austrian female, Romanian male and Swedish female drivers have the lowest frequency of adherence to the driving politic behavior in Europe. The study also found that Cypriot (male), Catalanian (female), French (male and female), German (male and female), Hungarian (male and female), Italian (male and female), Polish (male and female), Russian (male and female), Serbian (male and female), Slovakian (male and female), and Turkish (male and female) drivers' adherence to driving politic behavior is relatively moderate to high.

Keywords: positive politeness, negative politeness, politic behavior, nonverbal communication, driving habits

1. Introduction

Politeness is a behavior that can be translated through written, verbal and nonverbal words and behavior. Even though some scholars, such as Brown and Levinson (1987), came up with theories to investigate politeness based on proposed universal strategies, some scholars challenged these theories and their universality. Politeness, according to AlAfnan (2021), is culture based. Politeness and politic behavior in individualist cultures can be interpreted differently from politeness in collectivist cultures and politeness in high-context cultures can be translated differently from politeness and politic behavior in low-context cultures. Similarly, as certain cultures value directness in communication, some other cultures views directness as an impolite behavior as they value indirectness. To avoid examining politeness based on cultures and possible interpretations, this study examines politeness as adherence to established rules that govern the expected etiquette or courteous behavior. This examination is carried out based on the mix of the established politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987, Watts, 2003), on the one hand, and the established rules and regulations of safe driving, on the other hand. The context of situation for this study is the continent of Europe.

On-road driving is an extremely dangerous act if drivers do not follow the established rules and regulation. The violation of these rules and regulations do not only pose danger to road users, but it also present a face-threatening act to users as

it imposes redness on the 'other' road user. Unlike most communication scenarios, communication while driving is naturally wholly nonverbal. It is carried out through following signs or giving signals. It is also carried out through on-road actions and behavior. Drivers who follow the rules and driving etiquette are considered polite and courteous drivers as they minimize imposition and reduce face redness on other road users. On the other hand, drivers who violate these rules and drive recklessly are viewed as imposing and impolite drivers who put their own lives and the lives of other drivers at risk. Acts as avoiding tailgating, giving way to pedestrians, giving signals before acting on roads, following road signs, avoiding lane hogging (AlAfnan, 2022a) as they can be perceived as safe driving, they can also be perceived as polite and courteous driving. They reflect politic behavior as they reflect the 'expected' driving behavior.

This study, following AlAfnan (2022a), investigates politeness as a nonverbal communication behavior while driving in Europe. It strives to examine the use of nonverbal communication cues while driving in the form of giving signals before changing lanes and following road signs and speed limit. This is investigated in relation to the country of origin of the drivers, their age, their level of education and their gender.

2. Literature Review

Politeness is the act of communicating with courtesy to avoid conflict, on the one hand, confrontation, on the other hand. It is the act of expressing feeling or understanding to the feelings of other people (Holmes, 2001). Brown and Levinson (1987) expressed that the main goal of politeness is maintaining two different faces that are the positive face and the negative face. Positive face, according to Brown and Levinson (1987) refers to the desire to be liked or appreciated by others. Negative face is the desire to avoid being forced or impeded. The maintenance of positive face and the negative face make the person more considerate to what he says and what he does to avoid, what is commonly called face-threatening acts.

Face-threatening- acts are the acts that challenge the face of the speaker. These challenges can be carried out through speech acts that may include orders, requests, suggestions, advice, and/or appreciation. In fact, most speech acts carry face-threatening-acts. However, according to Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1996), negative politeness is less imposing than positive politeness as positive politeness is built on an assumption that the hearer agrees with the speakers, which might not be the case. Negative politeness attempts to satisfy the possible desire of the hearer by letting him know that the speaker does not intend to impose on him.

To minimize the possible imposition on the hearers' positive and negative face, Brown and Levinson (1987) came up with four strategies that are the bold on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy and the off record politeness strategy. The on record politeness strategy is when the speaker does nothing to minimize the imposition on the hearer. This is the most direct strategy as it carries challenges to the hearers' positive and negative face. Positive politeness strategy is used to minimize an imposition on the hearer's positive face. This makes the hearer feels good about themselves. Negative politeness strategy is directed to the hearer's negative face by avoiding any form of imposition or redness. The off-record strategy is used as the speaker does not state what he wants clearly. This can be carried out in an ambiguous way by saying something that does not really reflect what the person wants.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory was used to examine politeness in business writing (AlAfnan, 2014a, 2015, 2021a), engineering articles (Martinez, 2001), research papers (Getkham, 2014), hedges in medicine (AlAfnan, 2022b, AlAfnan, 2022c; Falahati, 2007), university titles (Afful and Akoto, 2010). AlAfnan (2014b, 2023) built a theoretical framework to examine workplace emails in an organizational context in Malaysia based on politeness theory. The theory assisted interpreting the behavior of the employees in the organizational context. In addition, Harris (2001) extended the use of the politeness theory to investigate political discourse in examining the British Prime Minister's questions in the parliament.

This study, following AlAfnan (2022a), further extends the use of the politeness theory to investigate nonverbal communication in driving context. Even though the context of the study does not include a speaker and hearer as in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, it does include the communicators in the form of message sender and the message recipient. The message sender is the person performs the action while driving and the message recipient the driver who drives next to him/her. Drivers are communicators who send and receive messages while driving. These messages are carried out through signs, signals, actions and the adherence to traffic rules and regulations. The drivers who follow the driving etiquette are polite drivers as they minimize imposition. The drivers who do not follow the rules apply a face-threatening-act on other drivers as they apply force or imposition on other drivers.

According to AlAfnan (2022a), as following road signs reflects adherence to driving rules and regulation, the breach of these rules reflect imposition on other drivers and redness on their face. This is the case as drivers expect other drivers to follow the signs. Road signs violation also reflect imposition on other drivers' positive face of being respected and valued. On the other hand, giving signals before changing lanes is a driving etiquette and an expected behavior. Changing lanes without giving signals is an imposition on drivers' negative face as the action carries force on the willingness of other

drivers to avoid being forced. In this regard, extending politeness theory to examine nonverbal communication in the driving context would assist in providing interpretations of these actions.

Methodology

This study examines politeness and politic behavior in driving in Europe. The politic behavior is examined in relation to age, gender, level of education and country of origin. Politeness and politic behavior are examined in relation to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. In this regard, positive politeness is looked at as the act of showing solidarity between the message sender and the message receiver and that the want of the message sender is the same as the want of the message receiver. As such, the noticing of message receiver's wants and needs to drive in a safe environment is positive politeness. Negative politeness strategy is seen as having the message receiver's freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimbedded. This is carried out by being conventionally indirect, giving deference and using hedges. The bald on record strategy is carried out when the message sender does not attempt to minimize the weight of his action on the message receiver.

Based on politeness theory, the using of signals before changing lanes and the following of road signs and speed limit are viewed as driving politeness acts and strategies. Drivers who give signals before changing lanes practice positive politeness as they carry a face-threatening act but they inform the message receiver that his wants of being in a safe environment are also the wants of the message sender. The following of traffic signs and speed limit is viewed as negative politeness as the message sender does not want to impose on the message receiver by following rules and regulation. Drivers who neither give signals nor follow signs and speed limit use the bold on record strategy, as they do not intend to minimize the impositions on other drivers and carry out their actions recklessly.



Figure 1. Countries of respondents.

The data for conducting his study is collected electronically through google forms. A survey was created and it was shared with respondents using social media apps and forums. At the end of data collection period, 527 replies were received from 29 European countries and territories that are: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Catalonia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. Even though Catalonia is politically part of Spain, but it is listed separately in here as the respondents listed Catalonia as their country. Without getting into any political discussion and with political intentions, Catalonia is listed as a country/region of origin in this study. All respondents drive. They belong to different age groups and levels of education. They are males and females. To provide in-depth understanding of driving politeness, the analysis of driving habits in Europe takes four factors in consideration that are the age, level of education, country of origin and gender of respondents.

3. Analysis

This study examines driving behavior/etiquette in Europe based on four factors that are the gender of drivers, age of drivers, the level of education of drivers, and the country of origin of drivers. 527 respondents filled in the survey and all of them drive. The respondents are from 29 different European countries and territories that are Albania, Austria, Belgium, Catalonia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. The respondents, as figure 2 shows, are 268 males (51%) and 258 females (49%) drivers, which provides a balance in relation to examining the driving behavior based on the gender of drivers.

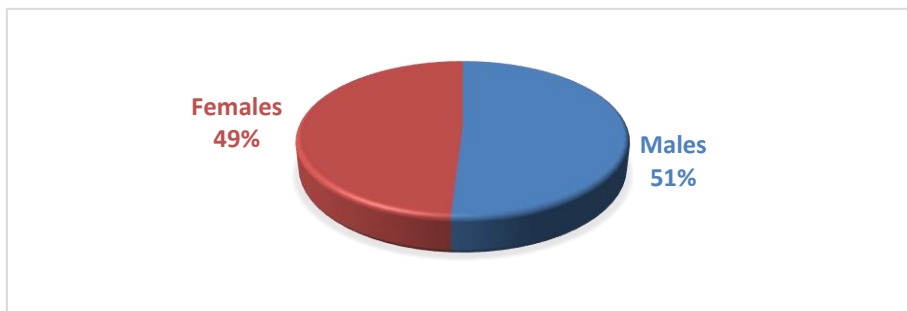


Figure 2. Gender of respondents

The respondents also belong to varied levels of age groups. As figure 3 shows, 83 respondents belong to the 20-29 age group (16%), 108 respondents belong to the 30-39 age group (21%), 116 respondents belong to the 40-49 age group (22%), 138 respondents belong to the 50-59 age group (26%) and 76 respondents (15%) belong to the above 60 age group. This varied and almost balanced distribution of age groups provides in-depth insights into the effects of age on the driving etiquette and politic behavior in Europe.

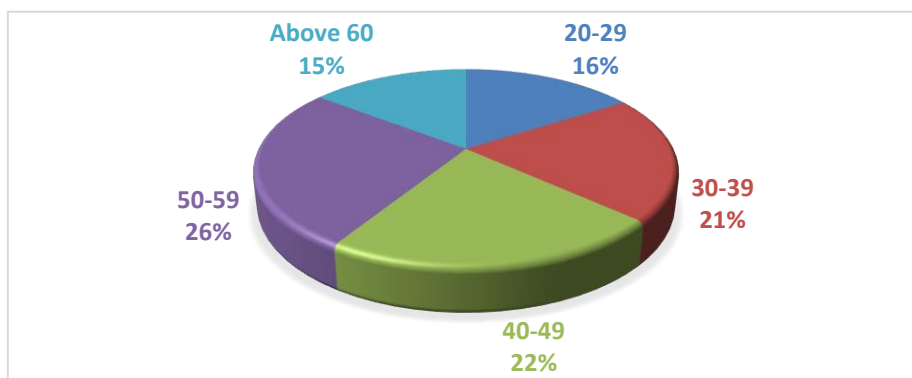


Figure 3. Age of respondents

The respondents’ level of education also varies, which also provides insights into the effects of education on driving etiquette and driving politic behavior in Europe. As figure 4 shows, 202 respondents have high school or below education (6%), 191 respondents have college education (36%), 202 have graduate school education (39%) and 100 respondents have PhD education (19%). The distribution above comprises all possible levels of education in communities, which would also provide in-depth insights into the influences of level of education on driving etiquette and politic behavior.

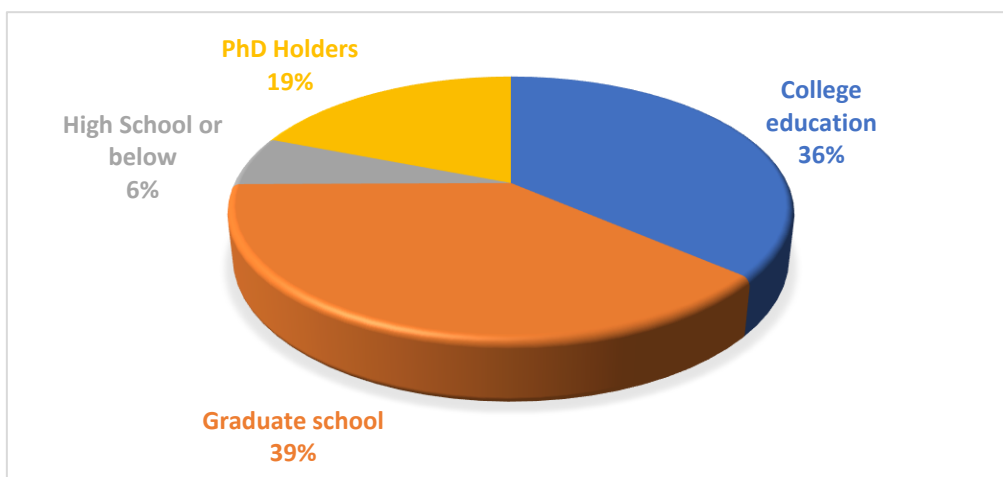


Figure 4. Respondents’ level of education

Investigating respondents’ replies into the questions shows that European drivers are mainly polite drivers as they, in general terms, pose to driving etiquette and politic behavior. As table 1 shows, 274 drivers (almost 51%) in Europe ‘almost always’ follow road signs and speed limit and 441 (almost 84%) ‘almost always’ signal before changing lanes, which reflects a high convergence to driving rules, on the one hand, and positive and negative politeness on the other

hand. The high frequency in ‘signaling before changing lanes’ reflects positive politeness among European drivers as they minimize the face threatening act (changing lanes-moving to other drivers’ lanes) before taking the action. Even though the ‘following of signs and speed limit’ is relatively high, but it is less frequent than ‘signaling before changing lanes’. This reflects a high frequency of negative politeness, but a less frequent occurrence. The ‘following of road signs and speed limit’ is negative politeness as it avoids any imposition on other drivers and reduces the risks of any face threatening acts. Table 1 also shows that a small number of European drivers do not ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ and do not ‘signal before changing lanes’ (5% and 3% respectively), which reflect a low frequency of using bold on record driving politic behavior among European drivers. In general terms, table 1 shows that European female drivers are more concerned with negative politeness than their male counterparts as they tend to ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ more than ‘signaling before changing lanes’. In fact, only 4 out of the 26 drivers (15%) who ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ in ‘less than half of the time’ and ‘almost never’ are females whereas 9 drivers out of 16 drivers (56%) who ‘signal before changing lanes’ in ‘less than half of the time’ or ‘almost never’ are females. This reflects that male drivers in Europe are more concerned with positive driving politeness whereas female European drivers are more concerned with negative politeness while driving.

Table 1. Overview of driving behavior in Europe

Frequency		Almost always	More than half of the time	Half of the time	Less than half of the time	Almost never	Total
Driving rules							
Follow road signs and Speed limit	F	146	78	30	0	4	258
	M	274	149	78	18	8	527
Signal before changing lanes	F	215	19	19	3	6	261
	M	441	30	40	0	13	527
Total	F	361	97	49	3	10	519
	M	535	83	69	18	11	535

Table 1 showed that female drivers in Europe are more concerned with negative politeness than their male counterparts and that male drivers in Europe are more concerned with positive politeness than their female counterparts. This was carried out in general terms without examining any other factors that can influence the behavior and provide in-depth investigation into the behavior. To provide these in-depth insights, the two driving behaviors provided in table 1 are further examined in relation to age, level of education, and country of origin.

Table 2. Influence of education on following road signs and Speed limit

Frequency		Almost always	More than half of the time	Half of the time	Less than half of the time	Almost never	Total
Level of Edu.							
High School or below	F	4	7	3	0	0	14
	M	14	10	13	0	0	37
College education	F	10	3	10	0	0	23
	M	60	4	5	0	4	73
Graduate school	F	73	28	10	12	4	118
	M	133	32	17	12	4	191
PhD Holders	F	56	40	20	0	0	116
	M	74	81	37	6	4	202
Total	F	18	41	17	6	4	86
	M	26	27	4	0	0	57
Total	F	27	53	27	0	0	97
	M	274	149	78	18	8	527

Edu: Education

As table 2 shows, the level of education has a positive correlation to following driving rules and driving in a polite manner, but this is not a general rule. Even though we have a big number of PhD holders who ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ on at least ‘more than half of the times’ (82%), the highest percentage of ‘following road signs and speed limit’ for at least ‘more than half of the times’ is reported by college graduates (86.38%). However, as college graduates have the highest percentage of ‘following road signs and speed limit’ for a minimum of ‘more than half of the times’, they, on the other

hand, have the highest percentage of not following them as 16 out of 26 drivers (61.53%) who ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ for a maximum of ‘less than half of the times’ also comes from this education group. Interestingly, the remaining 38.46% of drivers who follow road signs and speed limit’ for a maximum of ‘less than half of the time’ comes from graduate degree holders. Conversely, drivers who have high school or below ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ for at least half of the time’ (100%), which is, interestingly, equal to the percentage of PhD holders in the same category. However, it is noticed that educated female drivers in Europe are more polite than educated male drivers in relation to negative politeness as 75% of the college graduates and 100% of graduate degree holders who ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ for ‘less than half of the times’ are male drives. This confirms that initial finding above that female drivers in Europe are more concerned with negative politeness as they tend to reduce threat and avoid imposition.

In relation to examining the ‘following of road signs and speed limit’ based on the age of drivers, table 3 shows that age plays a significant role on ‘following road signs and speed limit’. It is noticed that 94% of the above 60 years old, 87.5% of the 50-59 age group and 70% of the 40-49 age group ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ at least ‘more than half of the times. In fact, none of the respondents who belong to these groups ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ less than half of the time. In comparison, it is noticed that 12% of the 20-29 years old respondents and 6.7% of the 30-39 years old respondents either ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ less than half of the times or do not follow them at all. In relation to gender variations in reference to the age of respondents, it is noticed that 67% of the 20-29 years old and 75% of the 30-39 years old and 100% of the 30-39 years respondents who ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ a maximum of less than half of the time are male respondents. This is compared to 0% for the 50-59 years old and above 60 years old respondents as none of them (male and female) ‘follow road signs and speed limit’ less than half of the time. The findings here confirm the initial findings of the study that female drivers in Europe are more concerned with their negative face than male drivers as they tend to reduce imposition and avoid face threatening acts more than male drivers in Europe. In addition, it is found that in relation to ‘following road signs and speed limit we have a positive correlation between the age of drivers and following the road signs and speed limit in Europe as elder drivers are more attentive to road signs and speed limit.

Table 3. Influence of age on following road signs and Speed limit

Frequency	Age	Gender	Almost	More than half	Half of the	Less than half	Almost	Total	Total					
			always	of the time	time	of the time	never							
20-29	F		27	46	27	37	5	5	0	8	4	4	66	100
	M		19		10		0		8		0		34	
30-39	F		24	41	14	34	9	24	0	3	4	4	51	103
	M		17		20		15		3		0		52	
40-49	F		39	57	4	21	14		0	7	0	0	57	111
	M		18		17		12	26	7		0		54	
50-59	F		31	76	29	44	0	14	0	0	0	0	64	137
	M		45		15		14		0		0		73	
Above 60	F		27	56	10	16	0	4	0	0	0	0	34	76
	M		29		6		4		0		0		42	
Total				276		152		73		18		8		527

As the findings above examined the adherence to negative politeness and negative face, the investigation into ‘giving signals before changing lanes’ is studied to provide insights into the nonverbal use of positive politeness in Europe while driving in relation to the age of drivers and level of education. As table 4 shows, even though European drivers, in general, tend to ‘give signals before changing lanes’, the level of education also plays a factor in the carrying out this positive politeness act. PhD and graduate degree holders tend to ‘give signals before changing lanes’ more than the drivers who have college degree and high school certificates or below. As table 4 shows, 94.8% of PhD, 93.5% of graduate degree, and 88.4% of college degree holders tend to ‘give signals before changing lanes’ at least ‘more than half of the times’. On the other hand, 45.9% of high school or below drivers ‘give signals before changing lanes’. This clearly reflects the importance of education in understanding the importance of the nonverbal communication sign of ‘giving signals before changing lanes’. This also shows that education has a positive correlation with carrying out the nonverbal communication act of reducing the threat to the positive face by signaling/hedging. Table 4 shows that gender does not play a significant politeness role in relation to giving signals. The only exception to this role is that female high school graduates are more polite and attentive to the need of saving ones positive face than male high school or below leavers.

Table 4. Influence of age on giving signals before changing lanes

Frequency		Almost always	More than half of the time	Half of the time	Less than half of the time	Almost never	Total	
Level of Edu.								
High School or below	F	11	0	3	0	0	14	
	M	2	13	4	4	14	17	
College education	F	54	0	13	0	6	73	
	M	109	163	6	6	3	16	
Graduate school	F	104	6	6	0	0	116	
	M	76	180	3	9	3	9	
PhD Holders	F	46	9	0	2	0	57	
	M	37	83	0	9	3	3	
Total		439		27	45	2	14	527

Edu.: Education

In relation to the influence of age on giving signals before changing lanes, table 5 confirms the findings related to the influence of age on ‘following road signs and speed limit’ as European elder driver tend to also be more attentive to the importance of saving ones face than young drivers. As table 5 shows, elder drivers to safe other drivers positive face by attending to other drivers’ interests and wants to not being forced. Based on the data, 94.7% of 60 years and above, 91.9% of the 50-60 years old and 94.5% of the 40-50 years old drivers tend to ‘give signals before changing the lane’ in ‘more than half of the times. In comparing this to the 79.6% of the 30-39 years and the 68% of 20-29 years old frequency of ‘giving signals before changing lanes’ in ‘at least more than half of the times’, we can see that elder drivers are more polite than younger drives. In addition, it is also noticed that drivers who belong to the above 60 years old, 50-59 years old, and 40-49 years old age groups have a 0% frequency of ‘giving signals’ in ‘less than half of the times’, which reflects responsible and polite driving. On the other hand, drivers who belong to the 20-29 years old and 30-39 years old age groups are the only groups that ‘give signals before changing lanes’ in ‘less than half of time’ with a 12% and 3% frequency. In relation to gender, we do not have significant differences. However, it is noticed that old female drivers are a bit more polite than old male drivers and young male drivers are a bit more polite than young female drivers.

Table 5. Influence of age on giving signals before changing lanes

Frequency		Almost always	More than half of the time	Half of the time	Less than half of the time	Almost never	Total	
Age								
20-29	F	26	45	21	23	10	23	
	M	16	2	2	13	0	3	
30-39	F	17	43	24	39	10	10	
	M	26	15	8	18	3	0	
40-49	F	57	101	0	4	0	7	
	M	44	4	4	7	0	0	
50-59	F	56	116	4	10	4	0	
	M	63	6	4	8	0	0	
Above 60	F	34	72	0	0	0	0	
	M	38	0	4	4	0	0	
Total		376		76	60	6	9	527

The analysis above provided in-depth insights into the nonverbal politic behavior of European drivers with regard to age, level of education, and gender. The examination on the influence of gender on the nonverbal politic behavior is also examined with respect to drivers’ country of origin. As table 6 shows, male and female drivers in the different European countries have different practices concerning ‘following road signs and speed limit’ and ‘giving signals before changing lanes’. In reference to the ‘following of road signs and speed limit’, it is noticed that Danish female, British female, Irish male, Dutch male, Finish male, Greek female, Belgian female, Austrian female and Spanish male drivers have the highest adherence to ‘following road signs and speed limit’ in an ‘almost always’ manner. This reflects these drivers tendency to save their negative face by reducing imposition and avoiding face threatening acts. On the other hand, it is noticed that Croatian male and female, Macedonian male and female, Norwegian male, Portuguese female, Scottish female, Romanian male and Swedish female drivers have the lowest overall tendency in Europe to ‘follow road signs and speed limit’, which reflects their tendency to

challenge other drivers negative face by imposing face threatening acts. Drivers from Albania (male and female), Austria (male and female), Czech Republic (male), Cyprus (male), Belgium (male), Catalonia (female), Cyprus (male), Denmark (male), Finland (female), France (male and female), Germany (male and female), Greece (male), Hungary (male and female), Italy (male and female), Netherlands (female), Ireland (female), Poland (male and female), Portugal (male), Romania (female), Russia (male and female), Scotland (male), Serbia (male and female), Slovakia (male and female), Spain (female), Sweden (male), Turkey (male and female) and the UK (male) have a mixed tendency towards ‘following road signs and speed limit’, which also presents a relatively mixed use of negative and on record politeness strategies. This is the case as they, in general, have a tendency to carry face-threatening acts.

Table 6. Following road signs and giving signals based on the country of origin

Replies	Country	Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never	
		FRS	GS	FRS	GS	FRS	GS	FRS	GS	FRS	GS
Albania	M	15%	20%	55%	40%	30%	40%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	51%	43%	30%	20%	19%	20%	0%	0%	0%	17%
Austria	M	38%	56%	40%	44%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	82%	18%	18%	75%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Belgium	M	60%	60%	40%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	20%
	F	85%	90%	15%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Catalonia	M	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	75%	85%	25%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Czech Republic	M	67%	0%	35%	33%	65%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Croatia	M	0%	75%	0%	20%	100%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	65%	75%	35%	15%	0%	10%	7%	0%	0%
Cyprus	M	75%	86%	10%	14%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Denmark	M	0%	50%	50%	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%
	F	97%	95%	3%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Finland	M	85%	95%	15%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
France	M	33%	85%	31%	0%	37%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	50%	50%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Germany	M	40%	88%	0%	0%	60%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	72%	57%	0%	0%	28%	0%	0%	0%	0%	43%
Greece	M	55%	83%	45%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	85%	85%	15%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hungary	M	55%	65%	0%	35%	45%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	50%	75%	0%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Italy	M	75%	86%	25%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	32%	84%	41%	16%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Macedonia	M	0%	0%	0%	50%	75%	25%	25%	0%	0%	25%
	F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Netherlands	M	73%	73%	0%	27%	0%	0%	27%	0%	0%	0%
	F	90%	95%	10%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ireland	M	93%	95%	7%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Norway	M	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Poland	M	43%	71%	0%	29%	28%	0%	0%	0%	28%	0%
	F	36%	50%	36%	0%	28%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Portugal	M	65%	0%	20%	0%	15%	0%	85%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	40%	0%	60%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Romania	M	0%	75%	73%	25%	27%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	42%	80%	42%	20%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Russia	M	70%	65%	30%	35%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	19%	74%	32%	0%	47%	26%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Scotland	M	50%	0%	25%	0%	75%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%
	F	0%	50%	35%	0%	65%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Serbia	M	50%	25%	25%	0%	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	25%	75%	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Slovakia	M	50%	25%	50%	25%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	25%	50%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Spain	M	80%	85%	20%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	33%	67%	67%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sweden	M	50%	50%	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	0%	75%	35%	25%	65%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Turkey	M	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%	25%	50%	0%	0%
	F	25%	25%	0%	25%	50%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%
UK	M	66%	94%	29%	6%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	F	95%	79%	5%	14%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%

FRS: Follow road signs and speed limit; GS: Give signals before changing lanes.

In relation to giving signals before changing lanes, it is noticed that European drivers have a high inclination to avoid the imposition by signaling/hedging the face-threatening act, which reduces the impact as it communicates to other drivers' wants and interests in not being imposed. As table 6 shows, Danish female, Finish male, Dutch female, Irish male, British male, and Belgium female drivers have the highest tendency to 'give signals before changing lanes' which reflects their adherence to saving other drivers positive face by signaling the face-threatening act to establish a common interest in using the road safely. On the other hand, it is noticed that Portuguese male, Scottish male, Norwegian male, Macedonian male, Czech male, Austrian female and Albanian male drivers have the lowest tendency to 'give signals before changing lanes' in Europe, which reflects their imposing driving behavior as they carry face threatening acts without hedging or signaling. Drivers from Albania (female), Austria (male), Belgium (male), Catalonia (female), Croatia (male and female), Cyprus (male), Denmark (male), France (male and female), Germany (male and female), Greece (male and female), Hungary (male and female), Italy (male and female), Netherlands (male), Poland (male and female), Portugal (female), Romania (male and female), Russia (male and female), Scotland (female), Serbia (male and female), Slovakia (male and female), Spain (male and female), Sweden (male and female), Turkey (male and female) and the UK (female) have a mix tendency towards 'giving signals before changing lanes'. This reflects their desire to create a polite and safe driving environment but at the same time with some risk of face threatening and imposing acts.

The examination on the influence of the country of origin and gender on the 'giving signals before changing lanes' and the 'following of road signs and speed limit' shows that drivers from Denmark (female), Finland (male), the Netherlands (male and female), the UK (male and female), Ireland (male) and Belgium (female) have the highest tendency to follow the rules, on the one hand, and avoid imposition and reduce face threatening acts, on the other hand. They tend to follow the politic behavior through the adherence to the nonverbal communication signs and signals used on roads.

4. Discussion

This study, following Alafnan (2022a), extends the use of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory to examine nonverbal communication behavior while driving. Driving is an art to control your vehicle and make sure that you create a safe environment for yourself and for other road users. To achieve this target, drivers need to follow traffic signs and give signs and signals to other drivers as well. All these signs and signals are communicated nonverbally. The adherence to the driving rules and regulations represent a polite behavior. The breach of these rules and regulations conveys a face-threatening act. Stemming from this view, this study examines the following of signs and speed limit, on the one hand, and the giving signals before change lanes, on the other hand as nonverbal communication cues that represent a polite behavior. The following of rules and regulations represent negative politeness as the driver intends to minimize imposition and avoid making threats. The giving signals before changing lanes is examined as a positive politeness as it presents the face-threatening act in a convenient and well established manner through the demonstration of that the wants and the interest of other drivers to have a save driving environment is also the want of the message sender. The study examines the politic behavior based on four factors that are the age of drivers, gender of drivers, level of education of drivers and their country of origin. The context of situation in this study is the continent of Europe.

This study showed that drivers in Europe are, in general, polite. The overwhelming majority of drivers in the 29 European countries subject of the study 'followed road signs and speed limit' and 'gave signals before changing lanes' at least 'more than half of the times', which reflects a high frequency of using negative politeness and positive politeness. In general, it was noticed that female drivers in Europe are more polite than male drivers as female drivers tend to adhere to traffic rules to avoid impositions and face threatening act. They tend to use negative politeness as they follow the rules and regulations and minimize imposition. They also tend to use positive politeness as they appreciate other drivers and respect their wants of not being imposed upon. Male drivers also tend to be polite but with a lesser frequency. Alafnan (2022a), who examined the adherence to traffic rules and speed limit and giving signals before changing lanes in the Asian context, also found that female drivers in Asia are more polite than male drivers as they tend to follow the driving etiquette more often than their male counterparts.

Unlike Alafnan's (2022a) findings in Asia, drivers' level of education in Europe does not seem to play a significant role in relation to following the politic behavior, especially in relation to following road signs and speed limit. The influence of level of education on the adherence to the politic behavior in Europe was noticed in relation to the 'giving signals before changing lanes' as the more educated the driver is, the more he/she gives signals before changing lanes. This reflects a difference in driving behavior between the educated Asians, as reported by Alafnan (2002a) and the educated Europeans as educated Asians are more concerned with face and avoid conducting face-threatening acts that can lead into shame. In other words, educated Asians are more concerned with their self-image than educated Europeans. The gender of educated drivers also played a role, especially in positive politeness as drivers want to show that the want of other drivers is also the want of the message giver. As reported in Asia, educated female drivers in Europe are more concerned with their self-image than male drivers as educated female drivers showed more adherence to the polite behavior than male drivers.

Age of drivers in Europe played a significant role in the adherence to traffic rules and polite behavior. It is noticed that older drivers in Europe are more polite than young drivers. This is reflected in the frequency of following road signs and speed limit, on the one hand, and giving signals before changing lanes, on the other hand. As mentioned above, this also confirms that the elder the driver gets the more concerned about his self-image he/she becomes. In relation to the influence of gender, this study showed no real coloration between the age of drivers and their gender, on the one hand, and the politic driving behavior, on the other hand. Elder male and female drivers follow the driving politic behavior more than young male and female drivers. These findings converge with AlAfnan's (2022a) findings in the Asian context as elder male and female drivers are more polite than young male and female drivers and gender variations do not collate to any significant difference.

Examining the adherence of European drivers to politic driving behavior based on their country of origin showed country based differences and gender based variations. It is noticed that female drivers from Denmark, male and female drivers from Britain, male drivers from Ireland, and male drivers from Finland have the highest frequency in Europe in relation to following traffic rules and politic driving behavior. Dutch male and female, Belgian female, Greek female and Austrian female, and Spanish male drivers also have a relatively high frequency of adhering to driving rules, reducing imposition, and avoiding face-threatening acts. These are followed by drivers from Albania (female), Austria (male), Cyprus (male), Belgium (male), Catalonia (female), Cyprus (male), Denmark (male), Finland (female), France (male and female), Germany (male and female), Greece (male), Hungary (male and female), Italy (male and female), Netherlands (female), Ireland (female), Poland (male and female), Russia (male and female), Serbia (male and female), Slovakia (male and female), Spain (female), Sweden (male), and Turkey (male and female) as their adherence to traffic rules and politic behavior varied from high to relatively moderate. On the other hand, even though Portuguese male and female, Croatian male and female, Macedonian male and female, Scottish male and female, Albanian male, Norwegian male, Czech male, Austrian female, Romanian male and Swedish female drivers have a moderately high frequency of adherence to traffic rules and politic behavior, they have the lowest frequency of adherence to the driving rules and politic behavior in Europe.

5. Conclusion

This study examined driving as a politic behavior in 29 European countries using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. It examined the use of two well-established attitudes expected from drivers to examine the observance of driving rules and politic behavior. The 'following of road signs and speed limit' is examined as it reflects drivers' tendency to avoid imposition and reduce face (life) threatening acts. The 'giving of signals before changing lanes' is examined as it reflects a nonverbal communication request to get into the space of other drivers through noticing the presence of other drivers and appreciating their want and interest of not being imposed. The examination was carried out in relation to four variables that are the age of drivers, gender of drivers, level of education of drivers and their country of origin. The study found that European drivers, male and female, have a high frequency of following driving rules and politic behavior. Age played a significant role in the adherence to driving rules as older drivers are more observant to driving rules and politic behavior than young drivers. Education, on the other hand, did not play a significant difference as the level of education did not necessarily collate to more/less adherence to politic behavior. This study also revealed that Northern European drivers, in general, and Danish (female), British (male and female), Irish (male), and Finish (male) drivers have the highest frequency of adherence of traffic rules and politic behavior. These are followed by a number of Western and Southern European countries drivers such as the Dutch (male and female), Belgium (female), Austrian (female), Greek (female) and Spanish (male) drivers. This study also revealed that European drivers are more concerned with the positive politeness act of noticing other drivers and appreciating their presence in the form of 'giving signals before changing lanes' than the negative politeness act of reducing imposition and avoiding face threatening act in the form of 'following of road signs and speed limit'.

Disclaimer

The findings of this study are based on the outcome of a driving habit survey that was shared online. The method of collecting data is based on random sampling, which is among the most credible data collection mechanisms. However, other similar surveys may lead to different outcomes based on responses.

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