

Congratulation Strategies by Jordanians on a Royal Birthday Facebook Status

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Abstract—The current paper investigates the congratulation speech act among Jordanian Facebook users in terms of patterns and linguistic forms with reference to the congratulation strategies adopted in response to a birthday Facebook status posted on the occasion of the 60th birthday of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein. The types of positive politeness strategies attested in these congratulatory forms are also tackled in this study. The comments posted by Jordanian Facebook users on this occasion formed the data necessary for the purpose of this study. The data analysis revealed that the dominant congratulation strategy among Jordanian Facebookers is Illocutionary force indicating device, and the use of proverbs and sayings is the least used strategy. As for the strategies of politeness in the congratulatory forms among Jordanian Facebook users, the data analysis revealed that the dominant strategies are giving gifts to the listener and in-group identity marker (usage of address forms); exaggerate and seek agreement (safe topic) strategies are the least used ones. These results were discussed in light of the theory of speech act (Austin, 1962) and the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The religious beliefs, cultural values, and social norms of the Facebook users appeared to be influential with respect to these politeness and congratulation strategies. The study also touches upon several aspects related to the pragmatic competence of Jordanian Facebook users.

Index Terms—congratulation, Facebook, Jordanians, politeness strategies, speech act

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication has a significant role in our daily life. People cannot share information or knowledge without communication. Communication simply facilitates the process of expressing ideas, opinions, needs, thoughts, and feelings; it thus plays a vital role in developing and enhancing social relationships as well as increasing the effectiveness of life (Mahajan, 2015).

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. People normally express their thoughts using spoken words in verbal communication. By contrast, using symbols, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures are all possible manifestations of non-verbal communication. Nevertheless, communication can occur in direct interactions or indirect (i.e., virtual/online) ones, irrespective of if it is verbal or not.

The various speech acts (i.e., refusal, advice, apology, condolences, request, congratulation) are considered important components of communication in any language and can thus be expressed in face-to-face interaction or through online media, most notably Facebook. It is very common nowadays to resort to Facebook while expressing condolences or commiseration to others in sorrowful occasions. Similarly, congratulations in happy occasions (e.g., the birth of a new baby, birthday anniversaries, getting award, graduation, job promotion, obtaining an academic degree, inter alia) is a widespread online practice nowadays.

While some people are motivated and enthusiastic to express congratulations to others in their pleasant occasions, others face difficulties in doing so (Elwood, 2004). However, people are usually required to express their congratulation or commiseration to others. Not expressing congratulations to others in their pleasant occasions can be understood wrongly and might be taken as a sign of jealousy (Al-Hour, 2019).

People involved in interactions commonly express their happiness and emotions through different ways in such delightful occasions. Congratulating others can be expressed verbally or non-verbally through body language and

symbols. The choice of either strategy can be affected by the interlocutors' cultural and linguistic background, religion, gender, age, social class, among other sociocultural issues. For example, one of the congratulation strategies in marriage customs in the Arab World is giving the bride money, a strategy that is not followed in other cultures (Al-Hour, 2019). It remains to be said that people are required to avoid communication breakdowns and to be aware of what, when, and how to express congratulations.

A noticeable increase in the use of internet in general and social media in particular among Jordanians can be easily recognized during the last decade. The present study investigates the congratulation strategies adopted by Jordanian Facebook users. More specifically, this study analyses the patterns and linguistic forms of congratulatory expressions used by Jordanians while commenting on a birthday Facebook status posted on the occasion of the 60th birthday of His Majesty (HM, henceforward) King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein. It also aims to highlight the types of positive politeness strategy used in these comments.

Uncovering speech acts on a popular social medium such as Facebook has initiated the purpose of this study. The researchers believe that it would be exciting to collect and analyse data posted on Facebook to get better understanding of the pragmatic competence of Jordanian Facebook users as well as of the trends and patterns used to express congratulation in the Jordanian context.

The significance of this study stems from different factors. For example, it highlights how Jordanian Facebook users realize the speech act of congratulation, which in turn fosters our understanding of intracultural as well as cross-cultural differences in this regard. This study also uncovers several aspects related to the pragmatic competence of Jordanian Facebookers. Moreover, this study can familiarize teachers with how to teach students to congratulate others appropriately, which will in turn improve students' communicative competence and help them avoid communication breakdowns. Finally, this study diverges from previous research in the Jordanian context in terms of data collection. The only study identified in the literature on congratulation speech act in Jordan, namely, Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016), focused on EFL students' congratulatory forms employing a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). Nonetheless, the current study depends on naturally occurring data as it is concerned with comments posted on Facebook, hence a contribution to the literature in the field of speech act in general and congratulation in particular, especially in the Jordanian context. Accordingly, the present study purports to answer the following two research questions:

- 1) What are the congratulation strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users responding to a birthday Facebook status?
- 2) What are the main types of positive politeness strategies in the congratulations of Jordanian Facebook users responding to a birthday Facebook status?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research is couched within two well-known theoretical frameworks: The theory of speech act (Austin, 1962) and the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The next two subsections are dedicated for these two notions.

A. *The Speech Act of Congratulations*

This subsection addresses the congratulations speech act focusing on its definition and classification as proposed by different scholars such as Austin (1962), Searle (1979), Searle and Vanderveken (1985), Wierzbicka (1987).

In an attempt to analyse the relationship between utterances and performance, Austin (1962) introduced the theory of speech act in his influential book "How to do things with words"; later on, Searle (1979) expanded the theory. The two philosophers propose that language is frequently used to perform acts and do things in addition to its primary functions of informing and describing things. Since then, the notion that actions performed via utterances became to be known as speech acts.

According to Austin (1962), there are three types of speech act: (i) Locutionary, (ii) Illocutionary, and (iii) Perlocutionary. Whereas the Locutionary act refers to the actual act of uttering (e.g., "Please do the dishes"), the Illocutionary act represents the social function of the utterance; uttering the locution "Please do the dishes", for example, the speaker requests the hearer to wash the dishes. Perlocutionary act, by contrast, refers to what results on the hearer due to the utterance; uttering the locution "Please do the dishes" would lead the hearer to wash the dishes.

Congratulation was approached by several scholars within the speech act framework. Austin (1962), for example, classifies congratulation as a behabitive act. Austin perceives congratulation as a performative utterance that includes a first-person singular pronoun and a performative verb (e.g., "I congratulate you"). Searle (1979) classifies congratulation as an expressive act proposing that it is governed by four rules: (a) propositional content rule which involves an event/act associated with the listener; (b) preparatory rule which involves an event in the listener's interest and believed by the speaker to be in the listener's interest; (c) sincerity rule which represents the speaker's pleasure of the event; and (d) essential rule which implies the recognition of a pleasure expression at the event.

According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985), the congratulation act is related to the hearer, and the hearer is not responsible for the act involved. It would be just some item of good fortune. Wierzbicka (1987), by contrast, insists that the hearer is to somehow responsible for at least the "happy event"; the speaker, when offering congratulations, tells the hearer how (s)he feels because of the good event.

The concept of politeness is taken up in the next subsection with reference to the theory of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983).

B. *Congratulation in the Politeness Theory*

Leech (1983) considers the congratulation speech act (as well as greeting, offering, inviting and thanking) essentially polite and classifies it as a pleasant illocutionary function. This means that the social function of congratulation as well as other speech acts subsumed under this class meets the illocutionary goal. Leech (1983) believes that when the speaker offers congratulation to the listener, he/she adheres to the listener's positive face.

The influential theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) is widely assumed in politeness research. Their theory is mainly built upon Goffman's (1967) "face" notion. When people interact with each other, their feelings are usually associated with either positive or negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). While the negative face is connected to one's desire "not to be imposed on", positive face is related to one's desire "to be liked of/approved of".

The negative or positive face of the hearer (H) or the speaker (S) is susceptible to face-threatening act. For example, the speech act of criticism and refusal tend to threaten the H's positive face, while the speech act of promises, orders, and requests tend to threaten the H's negative face. Likewise, the speech act of apology most likely threatens the S's positive face, while making excuse tends to threaten the S's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The congratulation speech act, which is the focus of this study, is connected to the addressee's positive face desires and is, as a result, perceived as a positive strategy of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 101) indicate that positive politeness can be "a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy" or "a kind of social accelerator" in which a speaker indicates his/her desire to "come closer" to a hearer.

Politeness strategies involved in the different forms of speech acts like refusal (Al-Shboul & Maros 2020; Beebe et al., 1990), apology (Al-Khaza'leh, 2018; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), and request (Amer et al., 2020; Blum-Kulka & House, 1989) have been extensively examined in the literature. However, the speech act of congratulation has received little attention compared to the aforementioned speech acts (Elwood, 2004; Trujillo, 2011; Jahangard et al., 2016; Alameen, 2017; Al-Hour, 2019; Irahim & Bakar, 2019; Setyorini, 2020). Only one study tackling the speech act of congratulation among Jordanians has been identified in the literature, namely, Al-Shboul and Huwari's (2016) study which examined Jordanian EFL postgraduate students' congratulation strategies using DCT. To the researchers' best knowledge, no studies were carried out to examine congratulation strategies by Jordanian Facebookers. The dearth of research in this regard and bridging this gap in the literature are the real motives for conducting this study. The researchers believe that it would be of great importance to investigate how Jordanian Facebookers realize the speech act of congratulation while posting comments on Facebook statuses. This endeavour will add to the existent research in intracultural as well as cross-cultural comparative studies.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the researchers review some studies that are related, directly or indirectly, to the scope of the present study.

Trujillo (2011) examined congratulation strategies as realized in Colombian Spanish building mainly on three politeness models: The politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987), the model of Scollon and Scollon (2001) which was adopted to identify deferential and solidarity politeness, and the model of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) which was used to classify the congratulation strategies according to the principal head acts and supportive moves. Results revealed that Colombians tended to use positive politeness strategies when they had to offer congratulations and used them with some solidarity strategies such as expressions of gratitude, support, pride and approval. They also tended to offer congratulations in an explicit way. The participants also tended to use fewer request information and direct criticism strategies. As for gender differences, men and women differed in almost 95% of the strategies. Yet, results showed no significant differences between young women and young men or between younger and older people in general when it comes to offering congratulations.

Jahangard et al. (2016) examined the differences of congratulation strategies between Iranian and American Facebook users as reflected in their responses to a birthday status. A total of 60 congratulation notes posted by 60 Iranians and other 60 congratulation notes posted by 60 Americans formed the data of the study. Results revealed that the participants' congratulation notes fit under seven main categories: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Divine Statements, Blessing Wishes, Felling Expressions, Compliments, Endearments, and Poem and Pieces of Literature. While no significant differences between the two groups were found with respect to the patterns of "IFID" and "Blessing Wishes", there were significant differences between Iranian and American Facebook users in the patterns of the five remaining categories.

In the Malaysian context, Irahim and Bakar (2019) investigated the congratulation strategies offered by Malay speakers when they had to write messages on Facebook and Twitter. Data were collected using ethnographic approach by observing posted comments and the usage of non-verbal symbols. The content of these congratulatory comments was then analysed. The findings revealed that Malay speakers used more verbal strategies than non-verbal symbols. The most frequently used expressions were "tahniah" (congratulations) and "Syabas" (well done), which fit under the illocutionary act. Other congratulatory expressions included "Alhamdulillah" and "Terima kasih" (thank you) as well as expression of praise.

In the Indonesian context, Setyorini (2020) examined congratulation strategies offered to Arya Permana by Indonesian Facebook users and identified the politeness strategies used by those Facebook users. The data of the study

were naturally occurring collected by observing congratulatory comments posted on a status update on Facebook. The data were analysed following Pishghadam and Moghaddam's (2011) theory which is based on Elwood's (2004) classification of congratulation strategies. The classification of Brown and Levinson (1987) of politeness strategies was adopted for the sake of identifying the strategies of politeness used by the Facebook users. The collected data were found to fit under the following congratulation strategies: complimenting, expressing feeling, blessing wish, divine statement, offering congratulation, and mentioning the occasion. Regarding the politeness strategies, the Indonesian Facebook users tended to use positive politeness strategies and bald-on record.

Building on 19 English participants and 38 Sudanese participants, Alameen (2017) compared the congratulations in British English and Sudanese Arabic. The data were collected using a DCT, and two main variables were examined: the occasions which require offering congratulation and the age of the participants. The findings revealed that there were more occasions that require offering congratulation in the Sudanese context than in the British counterpart. In addition, Sudanese participants tended to use more congratulation strategies than their British counterparts. While the congratulations made by Sudanese tended to be warmer, the ones made by British participants seemed to be brief and straightforward. Regarding age, results showed that the participants' choice of congratulation strategies was influenced by their ages.

Al-Hour (2019) examined the positive politeness strategies and gender differences when offering congratulation in the Palestinian context. The participants were 30 male and 30 female students from the University of Hebron majoring in English and non-English who completed a four-scenario DCT. The findings revealed that the two groups tended to use six congratulation strategies: Expression of Validation, Illocutionary Force Indicating Devise (IFID), Encouragement, Thanking God, Joking, and Offer good wishes. However, (IFID) was found to be the most use strategy in all four situations. It was also found that "Giving gifts to listener" is the most recurrent strategy of politeness.

The congratulation speech act in the Jordanian context was tackled by Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) who asked 30 male Jordanian EFL postgraduate students to respond to a DCT established by Dastjerdi and Nasri (2013). They analysed the obtained data employing the classification of congratulation strategies proposed by Elwood (2004) and the classification of politeness strategies advocated by Brown and Levinson (1987). The results showed that the strategies of congratulation ranked in terms of frequency as follows: (IFID), offer of good wishes, and expression of happiness. It was also found that the participants favoured using "giving gift to listener", "exaggeration", and "in-group identity marker" as strategies of politeness.

The above review suggests that congratulation speech act has been investigated in different Western, Eastern and Arabic contexts. However, only one study was conducted in the Jordanian context (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2016). Offering congratulations by Jordanian Facebook users has never been addressed in the literature, hence a study in this particular context is needed.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Instrument and Procedure

This study examines the congratulation strategies and positive politeness strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users when commenting on a birthday Facebook status on the 60th birthday occasion of HM King Abdullah II of Jordan. The most common platform on the Jordanian social media, Facebook, was chosen to be the source of the data of the present study (Facebook most popular social media site in Jordan, 2016). A report published by The Jordan Times in 2016 indicated that the majority of Jordanian Internet users (93%) are users of social networks especially Facebook.

A more recent report released by NapoleonCat in December 2020 showed that around 59.6% of Jordan population (6258000 people) have Facebook accounts, of which 57.1% are male users. The majority of these male users ranged between 25–34-year-olds (2070000) (Facebook users in Jordan, 2020).

All this reflect the importance of this social network in the Jordanian society and suggest that it forms a rich source of data. Al-Shboul and Maros (2013) assert that Facebook is attractive to its users because of the different functions it serves, most remarkably the ability to post comments on others' statuses in a wide range of topics such as a birthday Facebook status.

After an extensive search in most popular Facebook pages in Jordan, the researchers adopted three unofficial pages on Facebook as sources of the data. These pages were chosen because they contained the largest number of comments posted on His Majesty 60th birthday status. Over a period of two weeks, the researchers have collected and analysed 2436 comments. It was found that 3012 congratulation expressions met the classification of congratulation strategies advocated by Elwood (2004) and 2619 semantic formulas fit under the politeness strategies taxonym by Brown and Levinson (1987). This indicates that many comments involved more than one congratulation expression and/or politeness strategy.

B. Data Analysis

The collected congratulation strategies posted by Jordanian Facebook users were coded and classified using Elwood's (2004) taxonomy; the classifications of Jahangard et al. (2016) and Setyorini (2020) were also adopted. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonym was adopted to locate and encode the positive politeness strategies.

Semantic formulas were adopted in the data analysis as this technique is widely used in research on speech act (Beebe & Cummings, 1985; Elwood, 2004). The concept of semantic formula has been defined by Cohen (1996) as “a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy; any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question” (p. 265). If a Facebook user’s comment, for instance, included the response (e.g., عيد ميلاد حفظك الله "Happy birthday, wish you good health and happiness, may Allah bless you”), it can be said that this response involves three units of semantic formulas:

- A. (عيد ميلاد سعيد) "Happy birthday" [IFID]
- B. (أتمنى لك الصحة والسعادة) "wish you good health and happiness" [An offer of good wishes]
- C. (حفظك الله) "may Allah bless you" [Praying for God's blessing and protection for his majesty]

Upon completion of the initial analysis done by the researchers, two independent raters were invited to make a double-check for the data and to ensure that the congratulation expressions fit under the classifications proposed by Elwood (2004) and Brown and Levinson (1987). Those independent raters are two professors of linguistics with expertise in the classification of data in terms of semantic formulas as they have many publications in speech act studies.

After the two independent raters have completed their classification, the researchers found some differences between them regarding the coding schema; accordingly, several discussions were held with them until consensus was established, and, consequently, additional modifications were made. Finally, the researchers have slightly modified Elwood’s (2004) classification of congratulation strategies; minor modifications were also made to the politeness strategies taxonomy of Brown and Levinson (1987). These modifications have been made in order to meet the prominent strategies used and omit those that did not occur in the data.

V. RESULTS

The data analysis of the 2436 collected comments revealed that they included 3012 congratulation expressions and 2619 semantic formulas that fit under the positive politeness strategies. The percentages (P) and frequencies (F) of the strategies of congratulation are shown in table 1.

TABLE 1
THE FREQUENCIES (F) AND PERCENTAGES (P) OF THE STRATEGIES OF CONGRATULATION USED BY JORDANIAN FACEBOOK USERS

Strategy	F	P
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)	2273	75.46
An offer of good wishes	368	12.22
*Praying for God's blessing and protection for his majesty	207	6.88
Affection expression	51	1.70
Endearments	47	1.56
Expression of happiness (Expression of personal happiness)	41	1.36
*Asking for the royal blessing	17	0.56
Proverbs and sayings	8	0.26
Total	3012	100.00

*Marks other strategies identified building on the data of the current study.

A quick glance at Table 1 above shows that the (IFID) is the dominant congratulation strategy among Jordanian Facebook users whereas proverbs and sayings represent the least strategy used.

The percentages and frequencies of the positive politeness strategies involved in the congratulation speech act are given in table 2.

TABLE 2
THE FREQUENCIES (F) AND PERCENTAGES (P) OF THE POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED

Strategy	F	P
Give gifts to the listener	1405	53.65
In-group identity marker (usage of address forms)	1134	43.30
Exaggerate	61	2.33
Seek agreement (safe topic)	19	0.72
Total	2619	100.00

Reviewing Table 2 above, it is clear that “give gifts to the listener” and “in-group identity marker (usage of address forms)” are the dominant strategies, while the strategies of “exaggerate” and “seek agreement (safe topic)” are the least used ones. The following section is a detailed discussion of these results in light of the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and the theory of speech act (Austin, 1962).

VI. DISCUSSION

The first research question was formulated to classify the congratulation strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users responding to a birthday Facebook status. The data analysis revealed that Jordanian Facebook users tended to use IFID strategy in 75.46% of the comments (n=2273). An example representing this strategy is the use of the comment “عيد ميلاد سعيد” ‘Happy birthday’. The second most frequently posted strategy is “offering of good wishes” which crystalized

in 12.22% of the comments (n=368). An illustrative example of this strategy is the use of the expression "اتمنى لك حياة سعيدة" 'I wish you a happy life'. The use of praying for God's blessing and protection for his majesty occupied the third rank among the most frequently used strategies. This strategy manifested in 6.88% of the comments (n=207). The use of the expression "حفظك الله" 'May God bless you' is an example of this strategy.

Using affection expressions (e.g., "انا احبك" 'I love you') ranked fourth among the most frequent strategies (1.70% of the comments; n=51). Endearment's expressions (e.g., "إطلالة رائعة جلالتك" 'Good looking your majesty') ranked fifth; it manifested in about 1.56% of the comments (n=47). Around 1.36% of the comments (n=41) used expressions of happiness (e.g., "انا فخور جدا بجلالتك" 'I am so proud of your majesty'), while about 0.56% of the comments (n=17) were asking for the royal blessing (e.g., "بدنا مكرمة ملكية براتب شهر إضافي" 'We need a royal blessing of an extra month's salary'). The least frequent strategy was the used of proverbs and sayings (e.g., "الإبداع هو ما يميز القائد عن التابع" 'Creativity is what distinguishes a leader from a follower'); this strategy manifested in only 0.26% of the comments (n=8).

These findings are consistent with those of Jahangard et al. (2016), Elwood (2004), Setyorini (2020), Al-Hour (2019), Irahim and Bakar (2019), and Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016). For example, Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) reported that the most common strategy was the IFID (37.7%). Similarly, Al-Hour (2019) found that IFID is the dominant strategy among Palestinians, reporting that 63.3% of the Palestinian participants adopted this strategy when they had to offer congratulations to someone who had a new possession.

The frequency of offering of good wishes among Jordanian Facebookers is also in accordance with Jahangard et al. (2016) who found that both Persians and Americans used it as the second most frequent strategy (78.3% and 68.3% respectively). Commenting with praying for God's blessing and protection for his majesty manifested in 6.88% of the comments. This particular finding reflects the cultural values of Jordanians as well as their religious orientation (being Muslims). According to Islamic teachings, one cannot be a true believer until he/she loves for others what he/she loves for himself/herself. In fact, this Islamic teaching is not restricted to fellow Muslims; it applies to all humanity regardless of their religious backgrounds.

In their study on the speech act of condolences among Jordanians, Al-Shboul and Maros (2013) assert that the use of some strategies is ascribed to the participants' Islamic background. Since almost 92% of the population of Jordan are Muslims, it is normal that people commonly use certain Islamic expressions in their daily life (Al-Shboul & Maros, 2013). For example, it is a common practice in Jordan to say "Bismillah" (which means "In the name of God") before starting any activity (e.g., before eating and drinking, before doing work, etc.). Along the same vein, Al-Hour (2019) reports that offering congratulations is seen by Palestinians as a matter of gaining rewards from Allah (God). She added that it is important for Muslims to show appreciation and respect and to strengthen their relations; this could be achieved by offering congratulations and feeling proud of others in their delightful occasions such as graduation. Not expressing congratulations to others in their pleasant occasions can be understood wrongly and might be a sign of jealousy which is denied in the Palestinian culture and increases conflicts (Al-Hour, 2019).

Finally, it remains to be said that Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) found that the participants asked the congratulated addressee to give them some sweets. Jordanian Facebookers in the present study tended to request a similar thing, but this request is mainly associated with his majesty who has the decision to offer such a thing. More specifically, the Facebook users asked for a royal blessing such as an extra salary; such royal blessings are common in public and national occasions such as Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice or the Big Feast) and Eid al-Fitr (The Little Feast).

The second research question was formulated to identify the major strategies of positive politeness that manifested in Jordanian Facebook users' congratulations while responding to a birthday Facebook status.

The data analysis revealed that the most frequent strategy among Jordanian Facebook users is to give gifts to the listener (e.g., "أطيب التهاني" 'Congratulations'), which formed 53.65% of the strategies (n=1405). The second most frequent strategy is to comment with in-group identity marker (e.g., "جلالتك" 'Your majesty'); this strategy crystallized in 43.30% of the comments (n=1134). Also 2.33% of the strategies (n=61) were related to exaggerate expressions (e.g., "انا فعلا بحب جلالتك" 'I really love your majesty'). Last, the respondents tended to post comments that represent seek agreement (safe topic) strategy (e.g., "عيد ميلاد سعيد، ولكن يجب ان يكون هناك مزيدا من الإصلاحات السياسية" 'Happy birthday, but there should be more political reforms'); this strategy manifested in only 0.72% of the comments (n=19).

The use of positive politeness strategies by Jordanian Facebook users can be taken as a way for saving the addressee's positive face desires. It is widely believed that the congratulation speech act is directly related to the hearers' positive face and could consequently be perceived as a positive strategy of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Some of these findings coincide with Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) who found that the Jordanian EFL learners express their congratulations most frequently by giving gift to the listener (55.2%). However, Jordanian Facebookers in the present study differ in their preference of in-group identity marker strategy compared with those who participated in Al-Shboul and Huwari's (2016) study. While this strategy is the second most frequent strategy (43.30%) in the present study, it ranked third in Al-Shboul and Huwari's (2016) study with only (7.1%). This significant disparity in this strategy can be attributed to the types and scenarios involved in the data collection instruments. While Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) employed DCT to examine congratulation strategies on marriage and birth of a baby occasions, the present study scrutinizes the comments posted on Facebook on the 60th birthday occasion of HM King Abdullah II. Addressing HM without address forms such as "Your Majesty, my beloved king, my dear king" is inappropriate.

Finally, the occurrence of in-group identity marker can also be ascribed to the social values and/or norms of Arabs in general and Jordanians in particular. Al-Shboul (2014) confirms that while Jordanians use the define relationship semantic formula in refusals (e.g., “My dear friend”), Americans do not. Using in-group address forms such as addressing someone by his/her first name and using endearment terms (e.g., darling, honey, dear, angel, sir, beloved) stress the solidarity, reduce the distant, and increase the friendliness between the interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1978). According to Hamady (1960), Westerners are less rank conscious compared to Arabs. This appears clearly in the Arabs’ communication style of emphasizing and overstressing their acknowledgement of the higher social status people which is taken as a matter of being more polite and to show more respect to their interlocutors.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study investigates the congratulation speech act and the associated strategies of politeness that manifest in the comments of Jordanian Facebookers. The data necessary for the purposes of this study were elicited from the comments posted by Jordanian Facebook users when responding in Arabic to a birthday Facebook status on the 60th birthday occasion of HM King Abdullah II. The findings showed that the (IFID) is the most common congratulation strategy among Jordanian Facebookers, and the use of proverbs and sayings is the least used strategy. As for the strategies of politeness in the congratulatory forms among Jordanian Facebook users, the data analysis revealed that the dominant strategies are giving gifts to the listener and in-group identity marker (usage of address forms); exaggerate and seek agreement (safe topic) strategies are the least used ones. These results were discussed in light of the theory of speech act (Austin, 1962) and the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The results of the study demonstrate some valuable insights in intracultural and cross-cultural research. This study asserts that people from different cultural backgrounds express their congratulations differently. For example, the data analysis revealed that Jordanian Facebookers’ choice of congratulation strategies and positive politeness strategies is influenced by their social norms, cultural values, and religious beliefs.

More research on the congratulation speech act and strategies of politeness among Jordanians is still needed to evaluate, or further validate, the results of this study. It is recommended that this study be replicated in other context to check whether the findings can be generalized or not. It is also recommended that variables like age, social status, and gender be examined to get better understanding of their influence. Furthermore, other data collection instruments such as DCT and role plays are highly recommended in order to elicit additional data about the possible congratulation strategies used by Jordanians. Finally, this study might open an avenue to a new topic that is worth investigation, namely, the pragmatic transfer in the congratulation strategies among Jordanian EFL learners.

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