

A Sociolinguistic Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns in Jordanians' Facebook Status Updates

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Received: May 17, 2017 Accepted: May 22, 2017 Published: June 26, 2017

doi:10.5296/ijl.v9i3.11245 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v9i3.11245>

Abstract

The study investigates the types of speech acts in the status updates posted by young Jordanian Facebookers. The data were elicited from 200 students from two Jordanian universities, Irbid National University and Jadara University. To deal with content analysis data, the researchers created a special scheme based on Searle's taxonomy. Six speech acts were found in students' status updates on Facebook: expressive, assertive, directives, God's invocation, quotation and humor. Also the study findings evidently indicate that the cultural norms and religious background profoundly rooted in all participants can strongly affect their linguistic choices in their native language. It is hoped that the results would help those involved in teaching and learning Arabic as a second/foreign language.

Keywords: Online speech acts, Jordanian discourse, Speech acts in Facebook, Social Media

1. Introduction

Social network sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, paved the way for scholars from different areas of social studies to take a considerable leap towards further progression in doing research on SNSs. In addition to features such as “profiles,” “friends,” “comments,” and “private messaging,” Facebook allows its users to update their status anytime. These statuses may reflect users’ views and feelings, or allow them to share the activities they care about with each other every time (Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008; Das & Sahoo, 2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These statuses consist of different types of speech acts that are mostly posted in a more spontaneous and less structured manner (Baron, 2003). In this line, Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, (2012) assert that Facebook offers a unique opportunity for researchers to examine a wide variety of social phenomena in a realistic setting. Androutsopoulos (2014) also asserts that studying Facebook is theoretically similar to studying culture over time.

In this respect, a plethora of research on Facebook has been conducted to examine a varied array of issues, from identity construction (Bachrach, Kosinski, Graepel, Kohli, & Stillwell 2012; Back et al., 2010; Laffond & Mossler, 2013; Schmit, 2012; Todd, 2013; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012), to social interaction (Akyildiz & Argan, 2012; Dogruer, Meneviş, & Eyyam, 2011; Lampe, Vitak, Gray, & Ellison, 2012; Maiz, Arranz, & Fdez. de Arroyabe, 2016; Li, Chen, & Popiel, 2015; Yang & Brown, 2013; Indian & Grieve, 2014), to second language acquisition (Tudini, 2010; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Irwin, Ball, Desbrow, & Leveritt, 2012; Grosbeck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011; Milošević, Živković, Arsić, & Manasijević, 2015; Kirschner, 2015)

Few studies have used Speech Act Theory or related taxonomies to analyze digital communication in Facebook or SNSs. Such studies were conducted in relation to different settings such as European and English (Stidham, 2014; Carr, Schrock, & Dauterman, 2012), Asian (Ilyas & Khushi, 2012), or within African context (Nartey, 2013). Although these studies are prolific in their contexts, there is a dearth of such studies within the Jordanian Arabic context. Most of the speech acts studies in Jordanian context are revolved around the same issues relating to interlingual or cross-linguistic investigation of particular act of speech. The available information is, therefore, limited and offers no more than a partial picture of how young Arab Jordanians (YAJs) perform speech acts either in real world or in virtual medium. This study, therefore, fills a current gap in the Jordanian sociolinguistic literature by investigating speech acts through the content of Facebook status update.

In sociolinguistic area, studying speech acts in particular context offers deep insights about social structure and value system of the target speech community. Fishbein (1979) claims that a person’s behavioral intention (and ultimately action) is a reflection of the person’s attitudes and social norms about that behavior. Consequently, these status messages may reflect users’ views and feelings, or allow them to share the activities they care about with each other every time (Das & Sahoo, 2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Thus, the current study observed the socio-pragmatic and cultural values inherent in the speech act of the young Arab Jordanian

Facebook users. Most of the relevant research (e.g., Atawneh & Sridhar, 1993; Abdel-Jawad, 2010; Al-Issa, 2003; Banikalef, Maros, Aladdin, & Al-Natour, 2015; Al-Momani 2009; Al-Shboul, Maros, & Mohd Yasin, 2012; Banikalef & Maros, 2013) focus on semantic and syntactic domains without giving attention to the pragmatic skill which is seen as a significant process through the daily life interaction. This is to say that the majority of speech acts studies in Jordanian context attempted to find out the strategies of particular speech act produced by foreign or second language learners compared to native speakers of that language. This study attempted to find out the use of speech act in FSUs based on Searle's (1975) taxonomy.

By using Searle's claims of speech acts, the current study attempts to identify speech acts in status updates of young Arab Jordanian Facebook users as an important step towards understanding the Jordanian sociolinguistics in general and specifically among the youth. This understanding will pave the way for more awareness of users' behavior as members of a community defined by their common beliefs (Brooks, 1997; Tu & Corry, 2002). In addition to the fact that 76% Facebook users are young people, youths are chosen because most of recent studies (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Livingstone, 2008) assert that Facebook helps, particularly, young people to construct their identities and enables them to share aspects of their personalities and their emotions in the way they create and modify their popularity.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The significance of the current study encompasses several domains including pragmatics (particularly speech act studies), and sociolinguistic studies. First and foremost this study will enrich speech act research by adding value to previous research of speech acts, particularly among young Arab Jordanians in its method. Most of the recent speech acts studies in the Jordanian context have been conducted conventionally whether through using discourse completion test (DCT) only (e.g., Al-Adaileh, 2007; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006 ; Al-Shboul et al., 2012), or DCT and interview (e.g., Banikalef & Marlyna 2013a; Al-khatib, 2006; Al-Issa 2003). This means that most of these studies elicit unnatural data because what people would write or say in the imaginary situation does not fully represented what they actually say in real situations (Nurani, 2009). Data of the current study which were collected through Facebook's status messages offered ample sources of naturalistic behavioral data (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007 ; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham 2012).

The current study contributes in sociolinguistic studies primarily in testing the claims of speech act theory involving the Arab Jordanian community that is culturally and linguistically different from the western context from which the claims of speech act theory are grounded. To the researcher's knowledge, the present study is also the first Arabic online speech act study that collects natural occurring data using the content of Facebook status updates. Thus, this study fills a current gap in the Jordanian sociolinguistic literature by investigating speech acts through the content of Facebook status update.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 To identify the types of speech acts in the status updates posted by the young Jordanian Facebook users.

1.2.2 To highlight the influence of culture on the speech act behavior among the Arab Jordanian youths from a sociolinguistic point of view.

1.3 Research Questions:

1.3.1 What are the types of speech acts in the status updates posted by the young Arab Jordanian Facebook users?

1.3.2 How do culture and society affect the realizations of speech act?

2. Literature Review

In order to situate the current study in the timeline of previous studies in the relevant areas, the researchers will first provide background information in the areas of social network sites (SNS) and speech acts in Jordanian studies. Although the studies that are reviewed in this section do not necessarily address the current study directly, they provide the reader with a sufficient background about the studies on Facebook and speech acts research in order to show the scope and the particular areas that have been investigated. This also aims to situate the current study in the field of speech act research. Therefore, this section serves as a general introduction to the field of Facebook and speech act researches, and it will be followed by a close examination of studies that are specifically relevant for the current research.

2.1 Social Network Sites (SNSS)

Previous studies have shown that social network sites (SNSs) offer rich sources of naturalistic behavioral data allowing researchers to explore large-scale patterns of behaviors, usage, and other daily activities. The brief review has shown that some researchers have investigated the utility of SNSs (e.g., Barasa 2010; Valenzuela, Park & Kee 2008; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham 2012), and other researchers have studied the potential role of SNSs in changing the political regimes in some Arab countries (e.g., Jones 2012; Al-Rawi 2014). It is found that SNSs offer a variety of ways for users to communicate with others, such as microblogging and chat rooms, e-mail, file sharing, forums of discussion groups, videos and so on. However, most communication exchanges still occur via microblogging (Carr, Schrock, and Dauterman 2012). Microblogging is a feature that allows users to share text-based messages about their actions, activities, and feelings. It therefore seems appropriate and relevant to extend previous analyses on microblogging to highlight the language functions in SNSs and specifically in Facebook status updates. In order to shed more light on the role of Facebook in academic research, the next section will discuss Facebook as a medium for studying various social phenomena.

The review of literature has also shown that different social networking sites (e.g. MySpace, Massari 2010; Twitter, Page, 2014; Facebook and YouTube, Al-Rawi 2014) were used in academic research for different purposes. However, the current study focuses on Facebook

because this is the SNS that is fast gaining a lot of popularity among Jordanian youth who have access to the Internet. In addition to features such as “profiles,” “friends,” “comments,” and “private messaging,” Facebook allows its users to update their status anytime. These statuses may reflect users’ views and feelings, or allow them to share the activities they care about with each other every time (Das & Sahoo 2011; Ellison 2007). According to internetworldstats.com, the number of Jordanian users who have Facebook profile in 2016 was about 4,800,000. That means that out of a population of 6.5 million, 86.5% of the total Jordanian population is on Facebook. Of the total Facebook users in Jordan, about 71 per cent are aged between 15 and 24 (jordantimes, 2014). In line with McNeill (2008) & Björnsson (2010) who argue that Facebook is growing in popularity among young people of, or approaching, university age, the sample in the current study is taken from Jordanian undergraduate Facebook users aged between 18 to 24 years old .

2.2 Speech Acts within Facebook

Literature on the study of the speech acts in Facebook is very scarce; the reason for this may not only be because of its infancy but also because of the fact that it is very difficult to study, as several acts of speech are concurrent in the same status message. This means that each status message may contain multiple intentions or acts (e.g., expressive speech acts in combination with directive speech act). In a research about the communicative functions of status updates on Facebook, Ilyas and Khushi (2012) investigated how identities were constructed and represented through language.

A total of 171 status messages were collected and classified according to their communicative functions. Some status messages were broken into two or more individual parts based on their communicative function. This means that some of these status updates were categorized according to their individual communicative function while some of them were taken as one unit. Findings revealed that status updates were mostly constructed with expressive speech acts (33.33 %), followed by Assertive (28.07 %), Directives (18.12%), and Commisives (2.32%). Two categories were added to the original taxonomy, namely, Quotations and Poetic Verses. These acts fall outside Searle's taxonomy of speech acts. Ilyas and Khushi (2012) identified Quotations speech acts as updates which the participant has not written. This act includes quotations, jokes, and epigrams. 15.21 % of the updates belonged to this category. Poetic Verses speech acts include complete poems or some verses from a poem. Only 2.9 % of the status updates belonged to this category.

The findings also showed that Facebook was used as a channel not only for communicating and connecting with users but also as a tool where one is being listened to. From the data, it is also found that the status updates were used as a place for self-expression and to let individuals in their network know about themselves. This means that self-expression on Facebook is reinforced through the sharing of status updates. These updates, moreover, represented different users’ identities such as Islamic or national identities. The authors concluded that people use language not only for expressing themselves but also for identifying their identities.

Nartey (2013), likewise, investigated the status updates of students of the University of Cape

Coast (UCC) on “UCC GOSSIPZ”, an online group page created on Facebook by UCC students. He claimed that most studies on online language use have examined Asian, American and European contexts and no attention has been paid to the African setting. Therefore, he tried to find out the different categories of speech acts used by Ghanaian university students to update their status on Facebook as well as the pragmatic underpinnings of these status messages.

His theoretical framework is based in on Austin (1962) and Searle’s (1969) Speech Act Theory (SAT) and Warscauer (2001) and Herring’s (2010) notion of online communication. SAT was chosen because it allows researchers to clarify intended meaning of status messages identified and coded as illocutionary acts. Data were collected for three consecutive days from 60 undergraduate students of UCC. Content analysis methodology was used in analyzing data.

Findings showed that five speech acts appeared in the data set, namely, directives, assertives, expressive, commissives and quotations. The content analysis showed that directives were the most frequent speech act (35%) , followed by assertives (23.3%) , expressives (21.7%), quotations (11.7%) and commissives (8.3%). The results also revealed that many intended meanings conditioned the messages that were used by the students to update their status such as; requests, asking questions, giving advices, suggestions and confessions.

In one of the recent studies on online speech acts, Banikalef, Marlyna, & Ashinida (2014) observed the speech act of humor in Jordanian Arabic as used by Jordanian Facebookers. In order to achieve the aim of their study, a total of 1535 status updates were collated and classified according to their communicative functions in line with Nastri et al.’s (2006) description of humor. These status messages were coded as humorous if they appeared to be funny, witty, ironic or facetious. The findings indicated that out of 1535 status updates, only 210 status messages were identified as humorous. This means that generally the Jordanians tend to be more serious and less humorous and that due to social, economic and political situation in Jordan. A content analysis of humorous status messages, moreover, suggested that humorous texts revolved around three basic needs, namely, life, love and work. The researcher concluded that Facebook status updates are sometimes constructed to evoke amusement, maintain interpersonal and emotional ties amongst Facebook users.

On the other hand, there have been many insightful studies on speech acts in the Jordanian context. The researchers’ concerns have mostly been with cross-cultural comparison through using one form of speech act such as an apology (e.g., Banikalef, Maros, & Al-Natour 2015, Bataineh 2006; Al-Adaileh 2007; Bataineh 2008, Banikalef 2013; Al-Hami 1993); refusal (e.g., Al-Issa 2003; Al-Kahtani 2006; Al-Shboul et al 2012); compliment (e.g., Farghal & Al-Khatib 2001; Migdadi 2011); request (e.g., Al-Khatib 2006; Al-Momani 2009; Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010); promising (Al-Omari & Abu-Melhim 2013); Insistence (Zoubi 2012); invitation making and acceptance (Al-Khatib 2006); and swearing (e.g., Abdel-Jawad 2000). Based on the literature cited, the research discussed in this section indicates studies that are related to speech acts in Jordanian Arabic. These studies focused on the same issues relating to interlingual or cross-linguistic investigation of a particular act of speech. It seems

that speech acts of apologies, refusals and compliments seem to have received more attention than any other speech act in the Jordanian context. However, studies on speech acts through Facebook status message content are still at infancy and should be explored.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Speech Act Theory (SAT) which attempts to clarify how speakers use language to achieve intended actions and how hearers infer intended meaning from what is said. Speech act investigation can have a significant role in recognizing the social and cultural rules and beliefs that organize speech act realization in a given speech community (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Chen, 1993).

The foundational basis of speech act theory is the claim that when someone speaks, an act of some kind is performed. Since J.L. Austin (1962) proposed speech act theory in his retrospectively published book "How to do Things with Words," a plethora of researches have written about it in a number of different areas. Apart from its focal point in philosophy of language, speech act theory has seen a widespread adoption in pedagogy, literary theory, and other disciplines.

Building on Austin's work, Searle (1969) claims that the main unit of human linguistic communication is the illocutionary act and that illocutionary acts are rule-governed forms of behavior. He states that "whenever we talk or write to each other, we are performing illocutionary acts". He, hence, mostly believes in the literal use of language where the speaker means what he says. What the speakers mean to perform in each possible context under consideration in a semantic interpretation is always the literal meaning of illocutionary act expressed by the utterance (if any) that he/she uses in that context, whenever that literal act is performable.

In fact, "the question of how many speech acts, or how many speech act categories there are, is one which remains open despite many attempts at classification" (Baron, 2003:12). However, it is Searle's classification that is still the most widely accepted (*ibid*). That is why it is the classification adopted in the current study. Searle categorizes speech acts based on their illocutionary functions, such as their "word-to-world" fit, their expressed psychological state, and their propositional content. According to him, there are five main categories of speech acts:

1. Assertive acts: covers any statement of fact, getting the viewer to form or attend a belief (Carr et al., 2012). This type of act includes asserting, concluding, informing, predicting and reporting (e.g., It is raining).
2. Directive acts: They are used to get the receiver to do something (e.g., close the window).
3. Commissive speech acts: The speaker commits himself to do something in future. They include offering, promising, refusing, vowing and volunteering.
4. Expressive acts: These speech acts cover what the speaker feels about his/her psychological state (e.g., I congratulate you on winning the race). This type of act

includes any statement of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy or sorrow.

5. Declarative acts: These acts of speech cover the expressions that change the world by their utterance (e.g., I pronounce you husband and wife) (Ilyas & Khushi 2012).

In conclusion, speech act theory is still relevant today because it offers an intelligible way to analyze complex features of online language. It is well known that individuals say and do things in virtual world that they would not ordinarily say or do in the real world. They loosen up, feel more uninhibited, and express themselves more openly (Suler, 2004). The goal of the current research is to use Searle's original speech act definitions and categories as the basis for this work to the greatest extent possible, allowing for some interpretation as warranted by the Facebook status updates. Hence, the current study contributes in sociolinguistic studies primarily in testing the claims of the speech act theory involving the Jordanian community that is culturally and linguistically different from the western context from which the claims of speech act theory are grounded.

3. Methodology

3.1 Subject and Setting

Subjects are university students from two private universities namely Irbid National University and Jadara University. The subjects consisted of 200 students; 100 male and 100 female, all of whom were between 19 to 24 years of age. They are purposely selected from different disciplines in the two universities which made it easy access to the students' updates on Facebook as they are added to the researchers' Facebook pages. The two universities are located in Irbid city in the north of Jordan.

3.2 Instrument

In this study, content analysis was applied to analyze the types of speech act in the students' Facebook statuses. Searle's taxonomy was used as a basis of the study to deal with the students' speech acts containing representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. This taxonomy was utilized in many speech act studies such as Ilyas and Khushi (2012) and Nartey (2013).

3.3 Data Collection

The obtained data was collected during December, 2016 and the whole process took about one and half months. The researchers personally observe the linguistics expression of speech acts across these statuses and assess the acts of speech by establishing regularity of co-occurrence between the forms of expressions and Searle's classification of speech acts. The found statuses were in Arabic, English and Netspeak language. The reliability of a content analysis rely on whether and to what extent agreement can be reached among coders, judges, observers, or measuring instruments ((Krippendorff, 2004). In order to achieve reliability of data, four independent raters were participated to assert that obtained status updates matched the data in the light of the study's taxonomy. The four coders have consistently and repeatedly coded material the same way.

3.4 Coding Scheme

To deal with content analysis data, the researchers created the below scheme based on Searle's taxonomy. The Facebook status were analyzed by their similarities and then placed into categories according to the similarities identified. The categories were assigned with codes before sorting them. Codes are the simplified tags or labels, assigned to hold meaning to the descriptive or inferential information gathered during the research. Six speech acts were found in students' status updates on Facebook. See Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of Speech Acts within Facebook Status Updates

Speech acts	N	%
Expressive	1176	29%
Assertive	1062	26%
Directives	606	15%
God's invocation	498	12%
Quotation	372	9%
Humor	378	9%
Total	4092	100%

4. Results

Status updates were analyzed according to Searle's speech acts taxonomy. The aim is to use Searle's original speech act definitions and taxonomy as the basis for the current study to the greatest extent possible, or as the starting point of a new classification for analyzing Facebook status updates. This means that each collected status update is assigned to a suitable category and categorized according to Searle's taxonomy (e.g., assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations). If there is any new speech act identified in the collected data outside the coding scheme, new category is arranged to them. This category will characterize the specific features of how the Jordanian Facebook users (JFs) perform speech acts in online community.

From the data, there were no declaration and commissives speech acts made by participants, and these acts consequently were excluded from the analysis. However, another three new speech acts were added to Searle's taxonomy. Thus, the new category includes 6 speech acts: assertives, expressives, directives, God's invocations, humors, and quotations. In other words, humor, God invocation and quotation are new communicative functions that were found in the data, and they are not in the original set of Searle's speech acts taxonomy.

The initial analysis of the data was first conducted by the researchers. A total of 3012 status messages were collected from 200 participants from December 1st 2016 to February 1st 2017. A few of them were broken into two or more parts because a particular status update could include more than one sentence and a sentence could hold more than one speech acts. This generated a total of 4092 speech acts, an average of 1.4 per status update. It is calculated by dividing the total number of speech acts by the total number of status updates.

Data analysis shows that 29% of status updates were constructed with expressive speech acts,

followed by assertives (26%), directives (15%), God's invocation (12%), humor (9%) and quotation (9%). This means that 29 % of status updates were used to share users' psychological state with other users. The analysis also revealed that 26% of speech acts were produced to confirm the user's belief about the presence (or absence) of a daily life events (i.e., assertive), consistent with the identity construction role of Facebook. Moreover, 15% of speech acts in status updates were created to get (though not essentially about) the receiver to do something (i.e., directive). The findings of the current study support previous claims that social networking sites (SNSs) intrinsically serve as arenas for users to share their feelings and keep in touch with other SNS users (A. Banikalef et al., 2014; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Stidham, 2014; Gonal, 2015). This may be a reason for the superiority of expressive speech acts in Facebook status updates (FSUs). The following sections will show how these speech acts were realized by giving examples for each of them.

4.1 Expressive Speech Acts

This act reflects emotional reactions to a particular situation and relates to the expression of an emotional state to the receiver. Expressive speech act is, therefore, relatively frequent in the construction of FSUs, comprising 29% of the speech act sample (n=1176). The following examples bear witness to the wide use of expressive speech act in constructing FSUs:

-express honest emotions

"أحببتك بقلب أم .. وَ لاشيء كبير من حب الامهات"

'I loved you by mother's heart and nothing is greater than mothers' love'

-express gratitude toward God Almighty

"الحمد لله حمد الله طيبا مباركا فيه .. حصولي على درع الغطاسين والحمد لله بدوره الغوص.."

'Praise be to Allah, much good and blessed praise, I got a scuba diving certification and again praise be to Allah'

-express anguish caused by the instability and conflict in the Middle East

"الله يلعن العرب والامم المتحده والاسلاميه الي بشوفوا الي عم بصير بطلب وما بعملوا اشئ والله جدا مستغرب من العرب كيف منخرسين؟؟؟؟!!!"

'God damn Arab and Islamic and United nations who see what's happening in Aleppo and they do nothing. I'm really shocked by Arab and how they say nothing'

-express the pain of losing a loved one

" إلى ابي النائم طويلاً : سلاماً على روحك البيضاء وجعل الله قبرك روح وريحان وجنة ونعيم □ □ "

'To my father who is sleeping forever: peace be upon your white spirit and may Allah make your grave rest and bounty and a garden of pleasure'

4.2 Assertive Speech Acts

A content analysis of speech acts found that assertives were the second most common act

used by the participants in approximately 26% of the status updates (n=1062). This category covers any status update used to inform others about the speaker's activities or current actions, or any other relevant information that would indicate the germaneness of the status updates. Consider the following examples:

"- صار عنا بيبى ..."

'We have got a baby'

"- إذا تذكّرتني أنت، فلا يهمني إن نسيني الجميع"

'If you remember me, then I don't care if everyone else forgets'

"- هذا يذبح بالتوراة وهذا يذبح بالانجيل وهذا يذبح بالقران لاذنّب لكل الاديان الذنّب يطبع الانسان"

'This is slaughtered in the name of Torah, this is slaughtered in the name of the Bible, and this is slaughtered in the name of the Quran! Religions have nothing with all of these atrocities, the responsibility rests on people's ignorance of these religions the guilt normalizes the human'

"سوف نبقي دوما يدا وحده ضد الراهب"

'We will be always one hand against terrorism'

"- اللحظة مقتل السفير الروسي في تركيا و صرخ البطل القاتل " هذا من أجل حلب"

'The moment of the death Russian ambassador in Turkey, the hero killer shouting: 'Allahu Akbar (God is Great). We die in Aleppo, you die here'

4.3 Directive Speech Acts

This category was found in a variety of contexts, such as make a request, ask a question, giving an advice, and placing an order. Therefore, it was the second most frequent speech act used by the participants in approximately 15% of the status updates (n=606). Consider the following examples:

"- فلتمطر علينا أيها الشتاء ... احلاما طال انتظارها في السماء ..."

'Oh Winter, hail us long-awaited dreams in the sky'

"- وكن لنفسك كل شيء"

'Be everything to yourself'

"- تصوروا ؛ الصور وحدا إلي بتضل"

'Take photos! Only photos remain'

4.4 God's Invocation

The data showed that many acts of speech were posted in the form of invocation to Almighty God. This is to say that this act was used frequently when the speaker made a request for something from Almighty God. Therefore, it was the fourth most frequent speech act used by

the participants in approximately 12% of the status updates (n=498). Making an invocation and reciting some Quranic verses are common language behaviors deeply rooted in the Jordanian speech community.

"- أعوذ بك يا الله مما لا تستطيع نفسي تحمله .."

'Oh Allah, I seek your protection from what I can't bear'

"-اللهم احفظ بلادنا من كل مكروه"

'Oh Allah protect our country from any harm'

It has been noticed that the speaker preferred to use the expressive speech act in combination with God's invocation act of speech in form ya rab, ya allah , allahumah (O' God), for example:

"-يا رب عفوك و رضاك والموضوع هضاك"

'Oh Allah, I ask you your kindness, you ,,,,,,, and that matter'

"- جمعة خير ويركه على الجميع يا رب ونسأل الله ان يحفظ الوطن ارضا وقائدا وشعبا من كل مكروه يا رب"

'Blessed Friday to everybody and may Allah protect this country, its king and people from any harm'

4.5 Speech Acts of Quotation

This form of speech occurs when the utterance is not originally produced by the speaker. Although quotations can be posted randomly, they do reflect some level of user's feelings, beliefs, and intentions. This category includes song lyrics, poetic verse, famous quotes, Quranic verses, and holy Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). It should be noted that this act is not in the original set of Searle's speech acts taxonomy. It is added as it occurs 372 times across the data. Consider the following examples:

"-ثلاث تجارات لا تعرف الخسارة ! :- التلاوة - الصلاة - الإنفاق" (ابن الذين يتلون كتاب الله وأقاموا الصلاة وأنفقوا مما رزقناهم سرا وعلانية يرجون تجارة لن تبور)

'Three trades do not know the loss! - Recitation - prayer – spending Allah says in his Holy Book: "Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah and establish prayer and spend [in His cause] out of what We have provided them, secretly and publicly, [can] expect a profit that will never perish ' (Quran 35:29-30)

"- (مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ)

'Allah says: No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah - He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things' Quran 64:11

'Imam Ash-Shafi'ee said:

*Let not your tongue mention the shame of another
For you yourself are covered in shame and all men
have tongues. If your eye falls upon the sins of
your brother Shield them and say: "O my eye! All
men have eyes!"*

"قال الشافعي

وعيناك إن أبدت إليك مساؤا
فدعها وقل يا عين للناس أعين
فلا ينطق منك اللسان بسوءة

فكلك سوءات وللناس ألسن"

A content analysis of the current study found that “quotation” was the fifth most frequently used speech act accounting for 9%. This could be an evidence that emerges from this body of work on how communication patterns are deeply related to the socio-cultural background of the participants. In other words, findings showed that speech acts are largely shaped by users’ social norms. A total of 372 quotations were observed. Quotations included Quranic verse, the Prophet Muhammad's words, known as hadith, song lyrics and famous quotes. Sharing Quranic verses and the Prophet Muhammad's words reflect the Islamic identity of Jordanian society. These linguistic behaviours are deeply rooted in the cultural and religious beliefs of the Jordanian speech community. This finding is consistent with Natri et al. 2006 & Baron, et al. (2005), who also found that the quotations were a common component of away messages.

4.6 Speech Acts of Humor

This speech act is not in Searle’s taxonomy therefore it is added because it is appeared in the data significantly. According to Lynch (2002) humor is an “intended or unintended message interpreted as funny”. Sociolinguistic studies (Banikalef et al., 2014; Stoll, 2015; Pennington & Hall, 2014; Carr et al., 2012; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Natri, Peña, & Hancock, 2006) confirm that humor serves an essential social function in Social network websites (SNSs). The findings of the current study support such a claim, with almost 9% of status updates containing a humorous speech act.

Findings showed that out 4092 status updates, 378 humorous updates matched Natri’s (2006) and Banikalef et al., 2014 (2014) description of humor. This means that only 9% of status messages contained some modicum of humor. In comparison to previous studies, the amount of humor contained in the update messages were significantly lesser in the current study compared to Carr, Schrock & Dauterman’s (2012) and Natri et al. (2006) studies by 20% and 21%, respectively. This reduction in humor content may reflect the nature of Jordanian speech community. In Jordanian culture, it is the expected norm for men to suppress any kind of emotional expression, including humour. This norm of behavior is often encouraged and supported by the society to instill the qualities as espoused in the stereotype of the heroic male (Zalameh), who is featured prominently in Jordanian culture. Man in the Jordanian society has to be fearless, resourceful, stoic, serious and less humorous and this is considered as the ideal male behavior.

In addition to the strict traditions that have led to a general expectation of frowning among Jordanians, the political and economic crises have worsened the situation in Jordan. Moreover, the shedding of innocent Arabs’ blood in other Arab countries such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Palestine is another reason behind Jordanians’ bad temperament and emotionless façade. The following status updates are the examples of speech act of humor:

"كل أعضاء الجسم تتكاسل بالبرد إلا المعدة صامدة"

‘All the body organs get lazy in cold except the stomach’

This study contributes to the existing literature by testing the claims of speech act theory involving a community that is linguistically and culturally different from the Western context in which the claims of speech act theory are grounded. Based on the comparison between the findings of the current study and those of Searle (1975), one might argue that the pattern of speech acts in American society (Searle, 1975) and in Jordanian society (present study) is expected to be found in other cultures as well. However, this study also finds evidence of additional sub-categories of speech act taxonomy. Findings of the analysis provide insights into the cultural norms of Jordanian speech community, and thus, micro sociolinguistic knowledge and Arabic pragmatics which are highly influenced by religion. It is found that Jordanian Facebook users usually transfer their religious beliefs to other aspect of their daily lives, including linguistic repertoire.

In closing, the findings of the study can function as “situated-learning platforms” especially for newcomers who are entering Jordanian universities and undergoing socialization. In other words, understanding and acquiring the Jordanian culture and how Jordanians express speech acts using Arabic language are required to improve socialization process with Jordanian society. Therefore, Jordanian curriculum leaders can use the findings of the current study to develop and deliver high quality learning programs which may help the international students to be easy socialized with the Jordanian community.

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