

The Speech Act of Congratulation on Saudi National Day and Founding Day

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Abstract: This study explores the speech acts of congratulation on Saudi National Day and Founding Day, which are employed by Instagram users. The reason for choosing Instagram instead of other platforms is the availability of numerous comments in relation to National Day and Founding Day. The research uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect the necessary data and thereby to gain a better understanding of the Saudi congratulation acts in the context of National Day and Founding Day celebrations. Descriptive statistical analysis is employed to find out the frequency of congratulation strategies whereas the qualitative pragmatic analysis is applied to examine 500 comments and then identify the types of congratulation strategies, the formality level of the congratulation messages and the relation between the congratulatory acts and Saudi Islamic culture. The research findings indicate that participants prefer to use certain strategies over others, such as offering good wishes and praising the country. However, the least used strategies are regret and giving advice. The study data show that participants use highly formal language when they congratulate each other on National Day and Founding Day. Moreover, there is a strong connection between the congratulatory acts and the Saudi cultural and Islamic values that emphasise national identity and social unity. The speech acts of congratulation in this study reflect a sense of nationalism, patriotism, solidarity and national pride.

Keywords: Speech act of congratulation – Saudi Arabia – National Day – Founding Day – Saudi Culture .

أفعال الكلام المستعملة للتهنئة باليوم الوطني ويوم التأسيس السعودي

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أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية المساعد، اللغويات التطبيقية، قسم اللغة الانجليزية، كلية العلوم والدراسات الانسانية، جامعة شقراء،
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مستخلص البحث: تكشف هذه الدراسة عن عبارات التهنئة باليوم الوطني ويوم التأسيس السعودي التي يستخدمها متصفحون منصة إنستغرام. يعتمد البحث على كل من المنهج الكمي والمنهج النوعي لجمع البيانات اللازمة، بغية الحصول على فهم أفضل لعبارات التهنئة السعودية. أُستعمل في هذه الدراسة التحليل الإحصائي الوصفي لمعرفة عدد استراتيجيات التهنئة بينما طبق التحليل اللغوي والتداولي النوعي لفحص 500 تعليق؛ لمعرفة أنواع إستراتيجيات التهنئة ومستوى رسمية عبارات التهنئة وكذلك العلاقة بين عبارات التهنئة والثقافة السعودية.

تظهر نتائج البحث أن المشاركين يفضلون استخدام إستراتيجيات معينة بدلاً من غيرها، مثل عبارات التمنيات الطيبة والثناء على الوطن. أما الإستراتيجيات الأقل استخداماً فهي التعبير عن الندم وتقديم النصيحة، وتشير بيانات الدراسة إلى استخدام لغة رسمية عالية من قبل المشاركين أثناء تهنئتهم باليوم الوطني ويوم التأسيس. كما أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة قوية بين عبارات التهنئة وقيم الثقافة السعودية التي تؤكد على المبادئ الإسلامية والوطنية. فضلاً عن ذلك، تعكس عبارات التهنئة في هذه الدراسة الانتماء القومي والفخر الوطني وروح التضامن.

الكلمات مفتاحية: التهنئة – المملكة العربية السعودية – اليوم الوطني – يوم التأسيس – ثقافة السعودية.



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1. Introduction

Annually, Saudi Arabian citizens celebrate two national occasions, which are National Day and Founding Day. National Day takes place on the 23rd of September whereas Founding Day occurs on the 22nd of February (Case Study National Day in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Its Positive Impact on Society, 2022; Founding Day, n.d.). On National Day, the Saudi government, private sectors and citizens celebrate the unification of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdul Aziz bin Saud and the achievements of other leaders, including King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the Crown Prince and Prime Minister HRH Mohammad bin Salman, the driving force of the Saudi Vision 2030 (Case Study National Day in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Its Positive Impact on Society, 2022). However, Founding Day is more historically rooted because it highlights the achievements of Imam Mohammad bin Saud in establishing the first Saudi state (Founding Day, n.d.). On this day, Saudi leaders and residents commemorate the local culture and traditions including historical incidents, clothing, food and dance (Saudi Founding Day, 2025). On National Day and Founding Day, Saudi residents use social media to congratulate each other to express their happiness and maintain the national bonds. Thus, the study will explore the speech acts of congratulation, which are employed by Instagram users on National Day and Founding Day in 2025. The reason for collecting the speech acts of congratulation in 2025 is the need for recent data that reflect the current Saudi linguistic pattern.

Speech act theory was initiated by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1979). Congratulation is one of the speech act categories, which are used in global and Arabic contexts (Can, 2011; Pishghadam & Moghaddam, 2011; Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011; Migdadi et al., 2024; Abdulkhaleq, 2020; Al-Janabi & Al-Tememi, 2021; Alghazo et al., 2021; Mahzari, 2017; Nofendralova & Sartini, 2024; Al-Shboul et al., 2022; Al-Khatib, 1997; Ammari et al., 2023). Interlocutors employ different congratulation strategies such as illocutionary force-indicating device (IFIDs) and offering good wishes to express good feelings on happy occasions and hence to maintain interpersonal and social relationships (Norrick, 1978). Congratulatory messages also serve another function, which is reflecting the cultural and religious values and ideals in societies.

For example, Migdadi et al. (2024) find a strong association between the speech act of congratulation in the Jordanian society, and Islamic and Arabic cultural values. Congratulatory acts include the name of Allah (God) and linguistic forms that enhance social solidarity. In this study, the name of (Allah) will be employed instead of God since it is more related to Islam and Saudi culture. The current study will employ a mixed-method approach to identify the strategies and frequency of the speech act of congratulation on **National Day** and **Founding Day**, and it will explore the Islamic and Saudi cultural values which are embedded within the congratulatory messages.

Literature Review

This literature review will explore the theoretical underpinnings of the speech act of congratulation. Previous studies on the speech acts of congratulation in global and Arabic contexts will be reviewed to explore the cross-cultural variations and demonstrate how they are influenced by culture and context. The last section of the literature review will discuss Saudi National Day and Founding Day.

The Speech Act of Congratulation

Speech act theory, which was pioneered by J.L. Austin (1962) in *How to Do Things with Words* and further developed by John Searle (1979) shows how words can perform an action. Austin (1962) and Searle (1979) identify different speech acts such as congratulation, promise, request, refusal and apology. In regard to the speech act of congratulation, Austin (1962) categorises it as a behabitive act that is related to individuals' attitudes and behaviour in society. The behabitive speech act expresses a response to another person's actions or circumstances (Austin, 1962). Having said that, Searle (1979) considers congratulation an expressive act because people use it to express their feelings or psychological states towards the events.

The speech act of congratulation has different definitions. Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 212) define it as "expressing pleasure at the good fortune of others" or an expressing of positive feelings at the positive occasions of other people. Mariam Webster Collegiate Dictionary defines congratulation as a way "to express pleasure to a person on an occasion of success or good fortune" and "to express sympathetic pleasure at an event"

(*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2025). In addition, Searle (1979) shows how the congratulation act is employed by speakers. He states if an event belongs to a listener and, at the same time, a speaker has an interest in the listener and thinks the event is pleasing, the congratulatory act will occur. Such congratulations play a noticeable role in society, as they maintain the relationship between the two interlocutors (Norrick, 1978).

Global Studies on the Speech Act of Congratulation

Speech acts of congratulation have been studied globally in many countries, regions and languages, especially in the context of cross-cultural communication. Globally, the speech act of congratulating has been identified as a significant linguistic social tool that not only marks celebratory occasions but also serves to maintain interpersonal relationships and establish or reinforce social bonds (Can, 2011; Pishghadam & Moghaddam, 2011; Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011).

In a cross-cultural study of English and Turkish, Can (2011) identified some key differences. The study, which covered speech acts of congratulation, *tebrik* (in Turkish), and *kutlama* (in Turkish), found some key significant points of similarity as well as differences between the two acts in terms of contexts of use and the strategies employed. First, it was noted that while speakers from both British and Turkish cultures predominantly prefer a straightforward approach when delivering congratulations, speakers from Turkish culture tend to maintain formal tone adhering to social hierarchy principles and respectful customs. In addition, the speech acts of congratulation by Turkish people are closely tied to social occasions; however, British congratulations are more task-oriented and related to achievements.

In addition, Pishghadam and Moghaddam (2011) conducted a comparative pragmatic study of the congratulatory speech act in Persian and English. One of the primary objectives of this research is to investigate how cultural values and communication styles impact individuals' congratulatory forms and strategies. According to the findings, Persian speakers tend to frequently offer congratulations and blessing wishes; however, English speakers focus mainly on mentioning the occasion, expressing their feelings and offering their blessings. Thus, the

study implies that Persian speakers place a stronger emphasis on the formality and the religious aspect of congratulations than English speakers, who are more inclined to emphasise personal feelings and the specific occasion being celebrated.

Furthermore, Allami and Nekouzadeh (2011) conducted a study on the speech act of congratulation to explore different congratulation strategies and types of positive politeness strategies which are present in Iranian Persian society. The study used a discourse completion test (DCT) focusing on Persian speakers of both genders, aged between 17 and 75 years, from different socioeconomic areas. The result of the study showed five congratulation strategies used by the Iranian Persians, including expression of happiness, illocutionary force-indicating device (IFID), offering good wishes, and requesting information. The study findings showed that these strategies were employed in all situations but offering good wishes, IFID, and expressing happiness were the most frequently used, especially in weddings and getting a trophy.

The Speech Act of Congratulation in Arabic

Arabic-speaking cultures are unique due to their special cultural and linguistic attributes. For instance, the sociopragmatic study by Migdadi, Badarneh and Al-Wedyan (2024) was conducted to examine the online congratulatory messages for childbirth in Jordan aiming to identify the employed congratulatory strategies. The research has shown that across the different dialects and regional contexts, the speech act of congratulation often involves a unique interplay of religion, language and cultural beliefs. By examining comments on Facebook (n = 1206), it was shown that messages of congratulation could be categorised into seven main categories. These categories include the congratulating act, expressing happiness, offering good wishes, complimenting, using non-verbal language, making protective remarks and welcoming the newborn. The use of these categories emphasises the role of socio-cultural influence on congratulatory acts in Jordan, where religious and familial norms heavily form the strategies employed in congratulatory messages. For instance, a common feature of Arabic congratulatory expressions is the invocation of blessings using the word "mbrūk" (congratulation), which incorporates the noun barakah and "Llāh ībārک fīk" (may Allah bless you). Hence, such religious invocations are

essential in Arabic-speaking societies, serving not only as congratulatory expressions but also as markers of social solidarity (Migdadi et al., 2024).

Comparing congratulatory speech acts in Arabic with those in English, studies by Abdulkhaleq (2020) and Al-Janabi and Al-Tememi (2021) identified considerable differences in the employed politeness approaches. The pragmatic study of congratulation responses in Iraqi Arabic by Abdulkhaleq (2020) revealed that many Arabic speakers frequently employ positive politeness strategies, such as religious blessings and compliments. The study explored the main types of positive politeness responses to congratulatory messages including the wish strategy, invocation and thanking, many of which also incorporate metaphors such as thanking Allah and expressing joy.

In *A Pragma-Stylistic Analysis of Formal Congratulatory Letters in English and Arabic*, Al-Janabi and Al-Tememi (2021) noted that Arabic officials tend to use expressive forms in their congratulatory letters. This appears in the use of exaggerated hyperbole to glorify individuals in positions of authority. The comparison with a congratulatory letter extract from Donald J Trump, the President of the USA, shows that English officials employed a more moderate and reserved approach, as seen in their conventional and formal style. This illustrates how cultural values, deference and respect, are deeply embedded in the Arabic language, where the use of exaggeration, particularly when glorifying high-ranking individuals, is perceived as a sign of respect and acknowledgement of authority.

While religious references in Arabic congratulatory acts are common, research shows that the intensity and type of religious references vary greatly within the Arabic-speaking world. For example, Alghazo et al.'s (2021) study on the cross-cultural analysis of the speech act of congratulating in Kabyle, which is a dialect that is spoken by large number of Barber who live in the northern region of Algeria, and Jordanian Arabic points out that while both communities use religious invocations into their congratulation's speech, this practice is more pronounced in the Jordanian Arabic than in Kabyle. The study shows that in Jordanian Arabic, expressions such as "ān shā' Llāh tshūf khīrhā mū shrhā tārīb" (I ask Allah that you see its good not its bad) go alongside the congratulations

(Alghazo et al., 2021, p. 9). This shows the deeply embedded Islamic values in Jordanian society, especially in the role of Allah in both social and personal matters. On the other hand, even though the Kabyle speakers use religious expressions such as "adivarek rebbi" (Allah willing), they are less pronounced and frequent compared to Jordanian speakers (Alghazo et al., 2021, p. 9). This is because, despite the Islamic conquest in the region, the Kabyle language and culture maintain a stronger Berber identity, where religious expressions are borrowed from Arabic rather than originating from native linguistic structures. Hence, while religious references are a central feature in Arabic speech acts of congratulation, the degree to which they are used can vary from one Arabic-speaking community to another, shaped by cultural history, language development, and religious identity. This supports the findings by Goddard & Wierzbicka (1997), which showed that the "universality" of speech acts is far from reality, and both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic variations do exist in the realisation of different acts of speech. Thus, the variation within Arabic dialects and contexts makes it clear that while religion undeniably plays a role, it is not the sole factor shaping congratulatory behaviour.

Speech acts of congratulation are also explored in the Saudi context. Mahzari's (2017) study analyses 1,721 comments on Facebook to identify verbal and nonverbal congratulations, which are employed by Saudi men and women. The congratulatory acts are related to different occasions including the birth of a baby, graduation, passing a PhD thesis defense, getting married and passing an exam. Mahzari (2017) identified different congratulation strategies, including illocutionary force-indicating device (congratulation), offering good wishes and praising. The nonverbal strategies used by Saudi participants are praying hands, open hands and happy face emojis. The study reveals that congratulations are often accompanied by religious expressions, indicating a significant influence of Islamic culture on linguistic forms.

There are additional studies that relate Arabic culture to the speech acts of congratulation, such as the study by Nofendralova and Sartini (2024), which compares the speech acts of congratulation in Sudanese and Javanese and examines the influence of culture on them. Additionally, studies by Al-Shboul et al. (2022), Al-Khatib (1997) and Ammari

et al. (2023) also explore the congratulatory acts and their influence by Jordanian values and culture. These previous studies underscore ritualised nature of congratulatory acts in Arabic culture, which highlights not only linguistic but also cultural divergences in how positive emotions and social solidarity are expressed. For example, some of the studies above show how prayers and blessings are ingrained in the congratulatory discourse, suggesting that speech acts are not language-independent but rather culture-specific routines.

Saudi Arabia's National Day and Founding Day

Saudi National Day

Saudi National Day is a significant event for all Saudi citizens, which is held every year on September 23rd. On this day, Saudi people celebrate the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and King Abdulaziz's successful achievement in uniting all Saudi regions and incorporating them into one country, which is now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Celebrating this historical day for the first time was during the reign of King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the 75th National Day, when Saudi citizens were granted a holiday (Case Study National Day in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Its Positive Impact on Society, 2022).

On this special Day, Saudi citizens across the country participate in different activities and events, which are organised by the governmental institutions and private sectors. These activities increase the awareness of the Saudi leaders' achievements in education, economy, health and innovation as well as inform new generations about Saudi culture. Saudi National Day has additional objectives including enhancing the relationships between leaders and civilians, promoting an understanding of Saudi history and fostering a sense of patriotism, brotherhood and belonging (Case Study National Day in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Its Positive Impact on Society, 2022).

Saudi Founding Day

Saudi Founding Day is one of the significant historical days in Saudi Arabia, which takes place annually on February 22nd. King Salman bin Abdulaziz issued this special day in January 2022 to commemorate and celebrate the establishment of the first Saudi state by Imam Mohammed bin Saud.

The Saudi leaders and citizens place high value on this day because it highlights Imam Mohammed's achievements, strength and power, reflects the historical roots of Saudi Arabia and appreciates Saudi Arabia's stability, continuity and resilience (Founding Day, n.d.).

Celebration on this day differs from other Saudi events and occasions. The activities focus on the Saudi history and culture. Saudi people exhibit a variety of local dances, songs, food and clothing. For example, the national Ardah dance is performed in public squares and venues across the country to reflect glory, strength and pride. Saudi citizens wear traditional clothes and costumes and cook traditional dishes that enhance the Saudi identity (Saudi Founding Day, 2025).

The Current Study

This study aims to explore the speech acts of congratulation on Saudi National Day and Founding Day. The paper will examine the congratulation strategies employed by Instagram users and compare them to Elwood's (2004) strategies. The reason for choosing Elwood's congratulation strategies is that they cover a wide range of types that may occur in this study. Also, the frequency and the level of formality of the speech act strategies will be illustrated with examples and discussion. Also, a demonstration of the influence of Islamic and Saudi cultural values on congratulatory acts will be provided.

Method

The mixed-method approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods that will be used to strengthen the scientific study and provide a deeper understanding of the topic (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). A quantitative method will be applied to get descriptive statistics, including the frequency and percentage of the speech act of congratulation. To fulfil another aim of the research, the qualitative method will be adopted, particularly pragmatic analysis, to link between the speech act and formality as well as to identify the embedded Islamic and Saudi cultural values in the given speech acts.

Data Analysis

A quantitative method will be employed in this study to explore and analyse the frequency of

the speech act of congratulation. The data will be retrieved from an Instagram account called *Riyadh_today*. The reason for choosing Instagram, and particularly this account, is the intensive coverage of Saudi National Day and Founding Day and the availability of extensive comments about them. There are around 500 comments which highlight National Day and Founding Day in 2025. These comments will be analysed, and only the speech acts of congratulation will be identified. The congratulatory acts will be coded and categorised depending on Elwood's (2004) speech acts of congratulation strategies as shown below:

- Illocutionary force-indicating devices
- Expressing happiness
- Requesting information
- Expressing validation
- Self-related comment
- A prediction regarding the promoted person's future
- Requesting advice
- Offering good luck
- A related comment
- A suggestion to celebrate

- Expressing surprise
- Expressing pride
- A joke
- Offering help
- A request for continuing friendliness
- A request to improve the company

Then, the frequency of the given acts will be measured to identify the most and the least used strategies. Next, a qualitative method, particularly pragmatic discourse analysis, will be adopted to determine the level of formality in speech acts and the influence of the Islamic and Saudi cultural values on them.

2. Results

The Frequency of Speech Act of Congratulation

The data show a difference in the strategies employed on Saudi National Day and Founding Day. Some of them are similar to Elwood's (2004) speech acts of congratulation, which is presented in Table (1). However, the current study data give additional strategies, which appear in Table (2).

N	The current study strategies	Frequency	%
1	Illocutionary force-indicating devices	5	17
2	Expressing happiness	0	0
3	Requesting information	3	10
4	Expressing validation	6	21
5	Self-related comment	4	14
6	A prediction regarding the promoted person's future	0	0
7	Requesting advice	0	0
8	Offering good luck	0	0
9	A related comment	4	14
10	A suggestion to celebrate	0	0
11	Expressing surprise	7	24
12	Expressing pride	0	0
13	A joke	0	0
14	Offering help	0	0
15	A request for continuing friendliness	0	0
Total		29	100%

Table 1: The frequency congratulatory acts which are similar to Elwood's strategies

Table (1) indicates the frequency and percentages of using congratulation strategies. These strategies are similar to those proposed by Elwood (2004). The most used strategy in the above table is the expression of pride. The participants are proud and pleased of being Saudi, living in such a country and being under the role of King Salman and the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman, for example:

أنا فخور أنني سعودي
ānā fkhūr anī s'ūdī

I am proud of being Saudi.

أنا فخور بملكنا وبعراب الرؤية الأمير محمد بن سلمان
an fkhūr bmlknā ūb'rāb r-ru'īt l-amīr mḥmd bn slmān

I am proud of my King and the leader of Saudi Vision, Prince Mohammad bin Salman

كلنا فخورين بالسعودية
klnā fkhūrīn bāls'ūdīt

We are all proud of Saudi Arabia

In addition, the expression of validation strategy is noticeably employed by the participants. The interlocutors used it to prove the national celebrations, for example:

يليق بمملكتنا العظمى وشعبها العظيم الفرح والسعادة
īlīq bmlktna l-'ẓm ūsh'bha l-'ẓīm l-frḥ wāls'ādīt

Saudi Arabia and its great nation deserve to celebrate

في هذا اليوم العظيم لابد أن نحتفل باليوم الوطني
fī hdha l-īūm l-'ẓīm lābd an nḥtfl bālīūm l-ūṭnī

In this great day, we must celebrate National Day

تستحق المملكة أن تفتخر بهذا اليوم
tstḥq l-mmlkt an tftḥr bhdh l-īūm

Saudi Arabia deserves to celebrate this day

The third adopted strategy is the illocutionary force-indicating devices, which account for 17% of Table (1) data. Here are examples of this strategy:

نهننكم بيوم التأسيس
nhn'ikm bīūm t-t'asīs

We congratulate you on Founding Day

نبارك لكم بمناسبة هذا اليوم الوطني
nbārḥ lkm bmnāsbt hdha l-īūm l-ūṭnī
We congratulate you on National day

نهننكم بالعيد الوطني ٩٤
nhn'ikm bāl'īd l-ūṭnī 94
We congratulate you on the 94th National Day

However, the least used strategies in Table (1) are suggestions to celebrate, self-related comments and requesting information. The participants use the suggestion to celebrate strategy to show willingness and tendency to celebrate on these National days. Here are examples from the study's data:

أكد نحتفل بهذا اليوم
>akīd nḥtfl bhdha l-īūm
We will celebrate for sure

إن شاء الله بنحضر الاحتفال في كافد
ān shā' Llāh bnḥḍr l-āḥtḥāl fī kāfd
I will surely celebrate near King Abdullah Financial District

ودي احتفل
ūdī aḥtfl
I really want to celebrate

In regard to a self-related comment strategy, some speakers provide comments about themselves and their special circumstances instead of directly talking about National Day and Founding Day, for example:

بحاول ارجع من السفر عشان احتفل
bhāūl arj' mn s-sfr 'shān aḥtfl
I will try to return to Saudi Arabia to celebrate

بحتفل بيوم التأسيس مع أهلي
bhṭfl bīūm t-t'asīs m' aḥlī
I will celebrate Founding Day with my family

قاعد أخطط للاحتفال مع الشباب
qā'd akḥṭ llāḥtḥāl m' sh-shbāb
I am planning to celebrate with my friends

Only three comments are related to the request for information strategy. Speakers are inquiring about the location and time of the national activities.

وين مكان الاحتفال

wyn mkān l-āḥṭfāl

Where is the celebration?

الفعاليات في القيروان ولا وين

ālḥ ālīāt fi l-qīrwān ūlā wyn

Is the celebration in the Al Kairouan district or somewhere else?

الساعة كم تبدأ العروض

ālsā't km tbd'a l-'rūd

When will the celebration start?

Some of the speech acts of congratulation strategies have never been used in this study, including the expression of happiness, a prediction regarding the promoted person's future, requesting advice, offering good luck, expressing surprise, a joke, offering help, a request for continuing friendliness and a request to improve the company. Possible reasons for not using these strategies are the inappropriateness of adopting some of them on national occasions, like jokes, requests for advice and offering help. Some of these strategies, such as a prediction regarding the promoted person's future and a request to improve the company, are not meaningfully or thematically related to such occasions.

N	New strategies	Frequency	%
1	Regret	1	0.6
2	Praising the country	26	15
3	offering good wish	44	26
4	Emoticons	78	46
5	Admiration for leaders	12	7
6	Giving advice	1	0.6
7	Thanks	8	5
Total		170	100%

Table 2: New congratulation strategies

Table (2) presents new congratulation strategies, which have not been explored in Elwood's (2004) study. These strategies are used frequently to congratulate people on both National Day and Founding Day. The speaker used emoticons and emojis such as the Saudi green flag, green hearts, happy faces, crowns and palm trees, as well as pictures of King Salman and the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman to reflect an expression of happiness, appreciation for the country and admiration for the Saudi leaders.

Also, offering good wishes is employed significantly in this study, accounting for approximately a quarter of the new strategies data. The participants offer their best wishes for the country, royal family and citizens. Here are examples of this strategy:

كل عام والسعودية بألف خير

kl 'ām wāls'ūdīt b'alf khīr

Happy New Year to Saudi Arabia and its leadership

أسأل الله أن يحفظ السعودية وشعبها

as'al Llāh an ṭḥfz s-s'ūdīt ūsh'bhā

I ask Allah to protect Saudi Arabia and its citizens

دام عزك يا وطن دامت ديار ال سعود

dām 'zk tā ūṭn dāmt dīār l- s'ūd

May the glory of Saudi Arabia and of Al Saud family last forever

In addition, the third new strategy, which was employed in this study, is praising the Saudi land. The interlocutors emphasise the good quality and highlight the positive traits of the country, for example:

بلادنا بلاد الامن والامان
blādnā blād l-āmn wāl'amān
Saudi Arabia is the symbol of safety and security

وطني الحبيبي وهل أحب سواه
ūṭni l-hḥbībī ūhl aḥb swāh
I love nothing but my beloved country

فوق هام السحب يا أغلى ثرى
fūq hām s-shḥb iā aghl thr
My precious land is at the top above the clouds

However, the least used new strategies are thanks, regrets and giving advice. People congratulate each other on National Day and Founding Day by thanking Allah, King Salman, the Crown Prince and Saudi nationals. Here are examples of thanking strategy:

شكرا ملكنا العظيم شكرا قائدنا المفدى الملهم وعراب الرؤية
shkrā mlkna l-'zīm shkrā qā'idna l-mfd l-mlhm
ū'rāb r-ru'īt

Thanks to our great King and our beloved and inspiring Crown Prince, the leader of the Saudi Vision

شكرا للسعودية قيادة وشعبا
shkrā lls'ūdīt qīādt ūsh'bā
Thank you to the Saudi leaders and citizens

شكرا لله على نعمه
shkrā llh 'l n'mh
Thank you, Allah, for the blessings

The regret strategy is only used one time by an interlocutor, who regrets for not celebrating National Day this year. An example of the comment is provided:

أول يوم وطني ما أحضره للأسف
'awl iūm ūṭnī mā aḥḍrḥ ll'asf

Unfortunately, for the first time, I am not able to celebrate National Day

Furthermore, an advice strategy is also employed one time by a participant, who advises Saudi people to be grateful for this country:

على كل سعودي أن يسجد سجدة شكر ويحافظ على هذا
الوطن الغالي
'l kl s'ūdī an īsjd sjdt shkr wyḥāfz 'l hdha l-ūṭn
l-ghālī

Every Saudi should pray to Allah and protect this dear country

Saudi Culture and Speech Act of Congratulation

The speech acts of congratulation on Saudi National Day and Founding Day provide a fascinating lens on cultural dimensions such as the sense of nationalism and patriotism. The data show how the congratulatory acts reflect national pride, Saudi collective identity and a sense of solidarity. Both verbal comments and emoticons, which are examined in this study, highlight admiration for the royal family, a sense of belonging and unity. The interlocutors offer good wishes to the country and to the Saudi royal family, praising the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and expressing admiration for its leaders. They also provide emoticons and symbols that reflect the Saudi nationalism such as the Saudi flag, palm trees, crowns and green hearts.

Besides expressing feelings of joy, pride and enthusiasm, the given speech acts reflect the interlocutors' acknowledgement of the Saudi leaders' achievements. For example, some comments highlight the Saudi Vision 2030 and the country's transformation into a more prosperous and developed nation during the era of King Salman and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad Bin Salman. These congratulatory acts reflect how Saudi citizen narratives help in reinforcing a collective national sentiment, where individuals from various Saudi regions and backgrounds feel united in their national pride.

In addition, Islam is an important element in the Saudi culture, and it has a strong influence on the Saudi collective society in both public and private domains. The religious markers in speech acts of congratulation are noticeably shown in the data. The participants use the name of Allah and prayers to reinforce the sense of nationalism, admiration for the leaders and belonging to the Saudi land. In

Islam, Allah is the creator and protector of the world. Therefore, the interlocutors ask Allah to protect and defend the Saudi leaders and protect the country. They also thank Allah for being Saudi nationals.

Having said that, although history is the most important theme in Founding Day, and the historical incident, such as the creation of the first Saudi state, is rooted in this day, historical narratives are rarely found in the data. The participants in National Day and Founding Day use similar congratulation strategies, focusing on the current leaders and recent achievements. Here is one of the comments that mentions the Imam Mohammed bin Saud, such as:

اليوم ذكرى العز والامجاد

ālūm dhkr l-‘z wālāmjad

تأسيس الدولة السعودية

t’asīs d-dūlt s-s’ūdīt

أسسها محمد عليها ساد

›asshā mḥmd ‘līhā sād

حضرها وبدوها سوى سوى

ḥḍrhā ūbdūhā sū swyh

Today is the anniversary of glory and pride.

The Founding of Saudi Arabia

Founded by Imam Muhammad, the leader

In which their civilians are all equals

The Level of Formality of Speech Acts of Congratulation

In regard to the level of formality while using the speech acts of congratulation, the data show participants’ preference for using formal standard language when congratulating for both National Day and Founding Day. They use formal standard forms such as “عاشت السعودية حرة أبية” “āsht s-s’ūdīt ḥrt abīt” (I wish freedom and proudness to Saudi Arabia), «اللهم اجعل هذا البلد آمنا مطمئنا سخاء رخاء» “Lāhm aj‘l hdha l-bld amnā mṭm’inā skhā” rkhā” (I ask Allah to make this country full of safety and prosperity) and «مزيذا من التطور والازدهار» “mzīdā

mn t-tṭūr wālāzdhār” (I wish more development and prosperity to Saudi Arabia). Also, to indicate formality, the participants employ glorified titles and descriptions while referring to the Saudi leaders, Saudi Arabia and the citizens. For example, they use «عرب الرؤية» “rāb r-ru’ītthe” (leader of Saudi vision), «سيدي» “sīdī” (my mister), «الأمير» “āl’amīr” (the Prince), «القائد» “ālqā’id” (the Leader) and «ولي العهد» “ūli l-‘hd” (the Crown Prince) to refer to Prince Mohammad bin Salman. They also refer to Saudi Arabia as «البلاد المقدسة» “ālblād l-mqdst” (the holy land), «البلد العظيم» “ālblād l-‘zīm” (the great country) and «الوطن» “l-ūṭn l-ḥbīb” (my beloved country). In addition, Saudi people are referred to as «الشعب» “ālsh‘b l-‘zīm” (great citizens). This finding aligns with Al-Janabi and Al-Tememi (2021), who highlight the Arab interlocutors’ use of glorifying titles to acknowledge high-ranking people or great entities. Moreover, the participants add quotes from the Quran and poetry to enhance the level of formality. Example of a Quranic quote:

”رب اجعل هذا البلد آمنا وارزقه وأهله من الثمرات [البقرة: ١٢٦]

›rb aj‘l hdha l-bld amnā wārzqh ūahlh mn t-thmrāt

(My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day) [in Surah Al-Baqarah: 126].

دياري ديار السلام ومهبط التوحيد

dīārī dīār s-slām ūmhbṭ t-tūḥīd

وسنة نبي الله على السمع والطاعة

ūsnt nbī Llāh ‘l s-sm‘ wālṭā‘t

وفي كل عام لها من الولاء كل تجديد

ūfī kl ‘ām lhā mn l-ūlā’ kl tjdīd

أرض الرسالة ولها أرواحنا دوم خضاعة

arḍ r-rsālt ūlhā arwāḥnā dūm khḍā‘t

Saudi Arabia is the land of peace and Islam, and our prophet Mohammad asked us to obey the king. Every year, we celebrate for this land, and our souls are submissive to it.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study explores different congratulation strategies employed by Instagram users. Some of the congratulatory acts are similar to those described by Elwood (2004), while the others are new. Examples of similar strategies are illocutionary force-indicating devices, requesting information, expressing validation, self-related comments, suggestions to celebrate and expressing pride. The new strategies in this study include expressing regret, praising the country, offering of good wishes, emoticon, showing admiration for leaders, giving advice and expressing thanks.

The most used strategies by Instagram users are emoticons, offering good wishes and praising the country. These strategies represent approximately half of the congratulatory acts' data. The least used strategies in this study are requests for information, regret and giving advice. Some strategies have not been used by the participants completely, such as expressing happiness, a prediction regarding the promoted person's future, requesting advice, offering good luck, expressing surprise, a joke, offering help, a request for continuing friendliness and a request to improve the company. The interlocutors did not use these strategies because they are not related nor appropriate on both Saudi national occasions.

In regard to the Saudi cultural and Islamic influence on speech acts of congratulation, the study indicates a strong relation between National Day and Founding Day' congratulatory acts and the Saudi cultural and Islamic values. The participants employed linguistic patriotic forms, emojis, the name of Allah and religious verbal prayers to reflect a declaration of nationalism and patriotism. The given speech acts involve a sense of national pride, social solidarity, and admiration for the leaders and the country. Also, the participants used formal markers when celebrating National Day and Founding Day. They employed standard language, glorified titles and descriptions, as well as quotes from the Quran and Arabic poems.

Although the study provides demonstrations of speech acts of congratulation on the Saudi National Day and Founding Day, further studies on the same topic and theory are needed. Future research can examine Saudi speech acts of congratulation on National Day and Founding Day in formal public letters or through employing discourse completion

tests (DCT). Researchers can also compare between Saudi Arabic and American English nationals' congratulatory acts.

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