

The Role of Age in Jordanian Facebook Status Updates

By

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of age in the choice of proper speech acts related to Facebook status updates by some Jordanian users. The paper first classifies the dataset (200 Facebook status updates) into categories according to their communicative functions before classifying them according to Searle's (1969) speech act taxonomy. The study finds that the Religious category is the most frequent status update used among users whose ages are 18 to 35, while gratitude is the least category that is used among them. Also, Greetings is the most frequent category that is used among users whose ages are 36 and more, while Funny and comical are the least frequent category among them. Concerning the classification of status updates according to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the study finds that expressives taxonomy is the most frequent one that is used among individuals whose ages are 18 to 35 while the commissives taxonomy is the least used one. For users whose ages are 36 and above, the expressives taxonomy is the most frequent one while the directives taxonomy is the least frequent one among status updates .

Key Words: Age, Speech acts, Status updates, Facebook, Categories, Jordan

1. Introduction

The present paper deals with the role of age in Facebook status updates by Jordanian users. Facebook, one of the most popular websites on social media platforms, allows users to easily share their thoughts and feelings with other users. In this vein, Derks et al. (2012) argue that cases of emotional self-expression trigger users to regularly update their thoughts, feelings, and experiences to their larger network.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) classify Facebook and Twitter as blogs, micro-blog, and social networking sites and classify Youtube as content communities' sites. Social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube give researchers access to a great variety of participants and data. This allows researchers to collect data that are relevant to their studies. Then, they can analyze and discuss the behaviors and attitudes of participants towards personal data sharing on those sites. Also, researchers can analyze the social variables of participants such as gender and age.

Oh (2010) argues that users of social media utilize it to make friends with others and to build social relationships, connections, and communities. They also use it to create, publish, or distribute information in the form of texts, videos, texts, audios, or tweets. People also ask one another and share bookmarks, slides, presentations, and other files. Moreover, they provide feedback on or rate others' information. Surowiecki (2004), cited by Oh (2010), argues that people on social media seek and share ideas, information, expertise, experiences, emotions, and opinions with both acquaintances and strangers. This makes social media richer in data to be observed and analyzed. Therefore, researchers can extract and analyze the relevant wealth of data in their research that is available on social media platforms.

There are some benefits of using social media data in research. Researchers can get raw and natural data on human behavior and information. Social media give researchers easy access to the massive amount of data to analyze many different topics. However, there are some challenges that might confront the researchers while using social media data. Sometimes it is difficult to collect the wanted data especially data in social media that are seldom created for research purposes; that mean a large amount of data might be irrelevant or in formats that are difficult to analyze. Moreover, searching for data on social media might be time-consuming because one needs to spend a lot of time on those websites to obtain relevant data (Social Media Research Group, 2016).

Computer-mediated communication (henceforth CMC) has a great influence on our daily life communications. Yu (2011, p. 531) indicates that CMC is "any communicative transaction that occurs through the use of two or more networked computers". Moreover, it "encompasses any human interaction via Smartphone applications" (Shkour, 2019, p. 18). Crystal (2001) rings the alarm that CMC is considered as a new form of language that is full of linguistic properties and functions of both spoken and written languages. Thus, social websites and varied applications of communication technologies have become an ideal medium for online social interaction.

The appearance of Facebook, for example, among social interaction means is considered as a part of social networking sites around the world. Millions of people join Facebook to socialize with friends (Ilyas and Khushi, 2012). Yet, "the availability of more than 70 languages on Facebook indicates its popularity" (Wong 2012, p. 184). That is why Facebook can give a chance for its users to stay connected with their friends, to share and express what matters to them, and to discover what is going on in the world. A sizable portion of Facebook in Jordan constitutes the most widely used online social network (The Jordan Times, 2016; Alzougool, 2018). Therefore, Facebook is considered a great website to check in to see what important things Jordanians are doing and thoughts are thinking. It also provides the opportunity for Jordanians to think about what they prefer to show others. It has become saturated with all forms of speech acts. In other words, while using Facebook, people are using a wide range of linguistic choices and functions. What this means, Facebook users tend to express themselves via posts, comments, videos, pictures, status updates, etc.

As one of Facebook's features is status updates, people can put up (e.g., posts, photos, videos, etc.) emphasizing aspects of their self-presentation and conveying the best images of them to maintain a good impression from the others. Meanwhile, "status updates are short texts that can include pictures, links, videos, and typically appear on Facebook news feeds, allowing friends to "like" or "comment" below the status update" (Kramer, 2014, p. 195). Moreover, it may "reflect users' views and feelings, or allow them to share the activities they care about with each other every time" (Banikalef and Bataineh, 2017, p. 265). In this sense, a Facebook status update is generally designed to be short by giving some information without going into details. Furthermore, it allows users to receive information about what their friends are doing, reading, watching, or thinking, and provides opportunities for friends to comment and interact based on what is shared. Through status updates, people achieve a variety of functions and convey explicit and implicit messages.

The world today can surely witness that the internet plays a vital role in communication. In other words, the "internet can be considered as a linguistic revolution, exactly as it is a social one" (Crystal, 2001, p. 6). Yet, Facebook is considered one of the most social networking sites, in particular, in Jordan. Recently, it has been noticed that Jordanian Facebook users use various (i.e., different styles or patterns) when updating their

statuses. Various social variables such as gender, age, and education seem to play a crucial role in these updates. In this sense, there is a need to investigate the role of age in Facebook update statuses from a linguistic perspective.

2. Speech Act Theory and Literature Review

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that is concerned with meaning. Therefore, there are five principles of pragmatics which are deixis, presupposition, entailment, implicature, and speech act (Wulandari, 2014). As a subfield of pragmatics, speech act theory is concerned with "the ways in which words can be used not only to present information but also to carry out actions" (Shkour, 2019, p. 6). In other words, when people speak, they use language to achieve a variety of functions like expressing different emotions and thoughts. For this, speech acts have into consideration three things such as the usage of language, the speaker's intention, and the interaction in a social context (Ilyas and Khushi, 2012).

Historically, Austin (1962) is probably the first that ingrained the seed of speech acts theory in his work *'How to Do Things with Language'*. Accordingly, Austin (1962) distinguished between two types of utterances: *constatives* and *performatives*. Later, Austin moved away from the constative/performative distinction and proposed that speech acts be divided into three different levels of acts that issuing an utterance: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. To our discussion in a concrete shoe, Austin (1962, p. 94) introduced the locutionary act as "the act of 'saying something'". The illocutionary act is the act "which conveys force" (Hair 1976: 1), viz, it means "as an order" (Austin 1962, p. 100). Moreover, he defined perlocutionary act as the "performance of an act" (Austin 1962: 101). After that, he suggested taxonomy for utterance in terms of illocutionary acts which are namely: *verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives* (see Austin 1962, pp. 150-151).

In his influential article *'What is a Speech Act?'*, Searle (1969) tried to update and develop Austin's speech act theory. Searle assumed and claimed that Austin's proposed theory of speech acts suffered from some shortcomings as "the persistent confusion between illocutionary acts and illocutionary verbs, as well as overlapping of the categories of illocutionaries" (Kroupa 2017, p. 18). Moreover, Searle believed that Austin's classification of illocutionary acts lacks "clearly provided principles for describing each individual class" (Kroupa 2017, p. 18). Therefore, Searle's speech acts theory is considered as a theory of constitutive rules for performing illocutionary acts. Thus, Searle's work (1976) *'A classification of illocutionary acts'* suggested an alternative taxonomy for illocutionary acts:

- *Representatives* or (assertives) in which the speaker asserts a specific idea, proposition or belief to be true using such verbs as *claim, affirm, boast, believe, conclude, deny, predict, report, etc.*
- Directives are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something using such verbs as *request, command, suggest, order, invite, insist, etc.*
- Expressives are the speech acts state in what the speaker feels or expresses his/her attitude to some psychological state by using such verbs as *apologize, appreciate, congratulate, regret, thank, welcome, etc.* Besides, statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy or sorrow can be considered expressive speech acts.
- Commissives are the illocutionary acts in which the speakers commit themselves to future actions by using verbs including *guarantee, offer, promise, swear, undertake, etc.*

- Declarations acts are statements or expressions that change the world by their utterance. In other words, those utterances in which the speaker declares something done using some kinds of verbs such *resign, pronounce, name, promote*, etc. (For details, see Searle, 1976, p. 10-14)

Regarding studies on status updates on Facebook, Banikalef and Bataineh (2017) investigate the types of speech acts in the status updates posted by young Jordanian Facebook users (namely students from Irbid National University and Jadara University). The sample of the study was 200 participants. The data were collected and analyzed depending in terms of Searle's taxonomy. The results show that the participants applied six types of speech acts in their status updates on Facebook: "expressive, assertive, directives, God's invocation, quotation and humor" (Banikalef and Bataineh, 2017: 246). Moreover, the findings reveal that cultural and religious backgrounds were profoundly influential in all participants' responses, a state of affairs that has impacted their linguistic diversity. Therefore, the researchers recommend that foreign students at Jordanian universities need to improve their sociolinguistic skills to fit the Jordanian norms in order to communicate effectively. Thus, university professors should help international students to understand and acquire the Jordanian culture to improve the socialization process with Jordanian society easily.

Aljasir et al. (2017) investigate themes of Facebook status updates and levels of online disclosure generated by Saudi university students. The researchers conducted thematic and quantitative content analyses of profiles of a sample that included fifty students. A total of 7.928 status updates were analyzed for eleven months. Status updates were classified according to five categories depending on the kind of media they contained: "text only, text and photo, text and a video, text and a URL link, or a photo only" (p.81). The results of the inductive bottom-up thematic content analysis showed that Saudi university students generated a wide range of status updates that can be classified into 16 themes. In terms of classifying the themes of status updates, the findings revealed that the students' statuses, for example, about religious issues, advice, hobbies, and congratulations offered deep insights into Saudi society. Moreover, the results show that Saudi university students tend to disclose more personal information compared with those in Canada and South Africa. The researchers attributed that a high percentage of disclosure could be related to privacy concerns.

Daud and Mclellan (2016) investigate gender and code choice in Bruneian Facebook status updates. In other words, the researchers investigate the correlations between gender and code choice, the use of emotive language and emoticons, and non-standardized orthographic forms. For this, their study examines the language used by Bruneians on Facebook in terms of relational maintenance strategies. A sample consisting of 240 Facebook status update employed by undergraduates of University Brunei Darussalam were examined. After analyzing the data, the findings show that undergraduate students used varied categories of maintenance strategies to maintain relationships with other users through Facebook status updates. Moreover, gender influences the existence and frequency of several linguistic variables in such updates. In this sense, females are code-switched more than males, whereas males use a single code more than females. Furthermore, females use emotive language and emoticons on Facebook more than males do, whilst males use non-standardized orthographic forms more than females do.

Other studies on the topic of status updates include Ababneh (2021), Banikalef (2019), Khalaf (2018), Dawaghreh (2016), Catania-Opris (2016), Bazarova et al. (2015), Varghese (2014), Wulandari (2014), Nartey (2013), Deters and Mehl (2012), Ilyas and Khushi (2012), and Kramer and Chung (2011).

After surveying the literature on the topic, the Facebook status update still needs to be given more attention especially in more varied speech contexts, and according to different factors like gender and age. Therefore, the proposed study intends to contribute to the ongoing discussion on this topic in terms of those factors.

3. Method

The sample of the current study includes 200 Facebook status updates collected from posts by friends and acquaintances after obtaining their consent. The Facebookers chosen comprise both males (N= 73) and females (N= 127) categorized into two groups: those aged 18 to 35 years (N= 132), and those over 35 years (N= 68). The first group represents the individuals more active on Facebook, and the second people less familiar with the social media in Jordan. The data for this study are screenshots classified according to their communicative functions. Then, the statuses are categorized according to Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts.

The status updates are analyzed and sorted quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of their semantic domains. As for the quantitative analysis, the statuses are computed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The qualitative methods are used to identify the communicative functions of Facebook status updates and consequently to interpret them.

The researcher firstly classified the dataset (200 Facebook status updates) into categories according to their communicative functions before classifying them according to Searle's speech acts taxonomy. According to their communicative functions and similarities in content, the researcher came up with 11 categories (see Table 4.2). This classification helped to reduce the overall number of data units and made the examination and the comparison of the data easier. However, the researcher excluded statuses that have political, very personal, and taboo topics. Also, for the status updates that might have more than one speech act, the researcher either excluded or considered the main speech act not to make any confusion (see limitations 1.6). Then, the collected status updates were analyzed according to Searle's (1969) 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. This means that each collected status update is assigned to a suitable category and categorized according to Searle's (1969) speech act taxonomy (e.g., assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations). However, there were three new speech act taxonomies identified in the collected data outside the coding scheme; that means new categories were arranged for them. Therefore, three new speech acts were added to Searle's taxonomy, namely: God's invocations, humor, and quotations. Thus, the new category includes 8 speech acts (see table 4.3).

4. Findings

This section presents the statistical analysis interpretation and general findings of the study. It begins by listing the statistical tools and tests that were used to complete the statistical analysis. Then, it presents the classification of Facebook status updates according to Searle's taxonomies and their communicative functions. Finally, it provides general findings that answer the research questions.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences [SPSS] V. (26) was used for statistical analysis purposes, and the following tests and tools were used to complete the statistical analysis:

- 1) Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages to display sample profile, usage of status categories, and taxonomies of speech acts.
- 2) Bar chart, Cluster graph, and Population pyramid to visualize the frequencies for status categories and taxonomies use.

As the study is concerned with exploring the most frequent types of speech act taxonomies in Facebook status updates used by Jordanian Facebook users, statuses were categorized according to their communicative functions into 11 categories, whereas taxonomies of speech acts were categorized into 8 categories. Table (1) provides status categories according to their communicative functions and Table (2) provides taxonomies classification used in the current study.

Table 1: *Statuses categories*

Code	Category
1	Religious
2	Greetings
3	Congratulations and celebrations
4	Condolences
5	Invitation
6	Gratitude
7	Funny and comical
8	Ironic
9	Dictums
10	Sports
11	Others

Table 2: *Taxonomies classification*

Code	Category
1	Assertives
2	Commissives
3	Directives
4	Declaratives
5	Expressives
6	God's invocations
7	The speech act of quotations
8	Speech acts of Humour

The results in Table (3) provide frequencies and percentages of statuses categories used by users regardless of their age. Results were as follows in descending order: Religious statuses were the firstmost frequent statuses used ($F = 49 \rightarrow 24.5\%$). Greetings statuses were the second most frequent statuses used ($F = 48 \rightarrow 24\%$), next Others statuses ($F = 20 \rightarrow 10\%$), Dictums ($F = 19 \rightarrow 9.5\%$), Condolences ($F = 18 \rightarrow 9\%$), Funny and comical ($F = 12 \rightarrow 6\%$), Ironic ($F = 12 \rightarrow 6\%$), Sports ($F = 11 \rightarrow 5.5\%$), Congratulations and celebrations ($F = 5 \rightarrow 2.5\%$), Invitation ($F = 3 \rightarrow 1.5\%$) and finally Gratitude ($F = 3 \rightarrow 1.5\%$). Figure (4.1) depicts Bar graph for frequencies of statuses categories – total sample.

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of Statuses categories – Total sample (N = 200)

Code	Category	Frequency	%
1	Religious	49	24.5%
2	Greetings	48	24.0%
3	Congratulations and celebrations	5	2.5%
4	Condolences	18	9.0%
5	Invitation	3	1.5%
6	Gratitude	3	1.5%
7	Funny and comical	12	6.0%
8	Ironic	12	6.0%
9	Dictums	19	9.5%
10	Sports	11	5.5%
11	Others	20	10.0%
	Total	200	100%

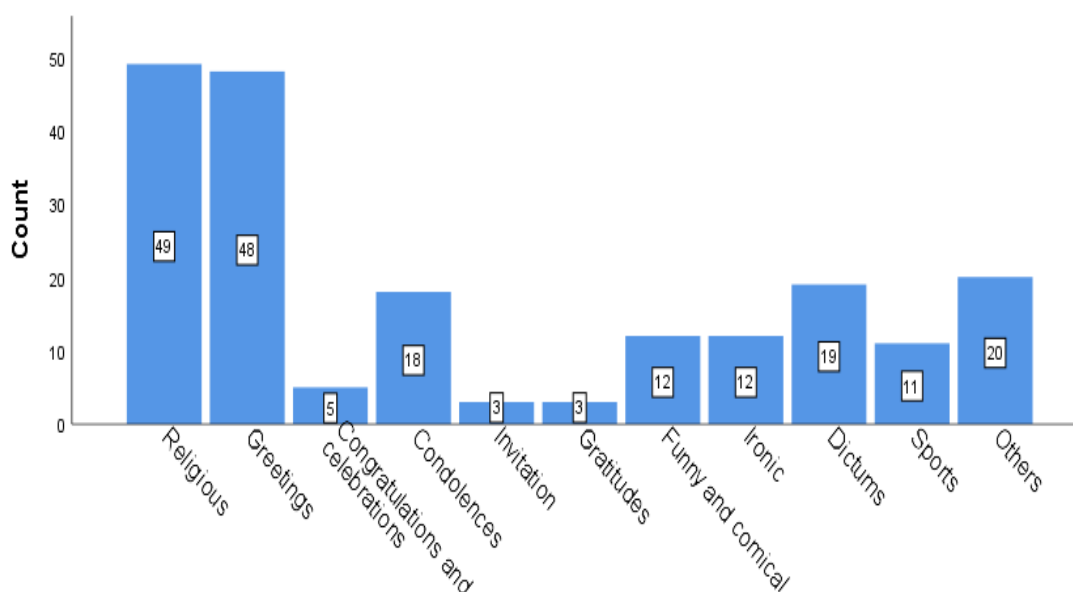


Figure 1: Bar graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – Total sample

Frequencies and percentages of status updates according to their communicative functions according to age are displayed in Table (4). Figure (2) depicts a Cluster graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – according to age. Figure (4.5) depicts the Population pyramid graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – according to age. Results were as follows in descending order:

- **Age 18 – 35 years:** Religious (F = 31 → 23.5%), Greetings (F = 29 → 22%), Condolences (F = 14 → 10.6%), Dictums (F = 14 → 10.6%), Funny and comical (F = 11 → 8.3%), Others (F = 11 → 8.3%), Ironic (F = 10 → 7.6%), Sports (F = 5 → 3.8%), Congratulations and celebrations (F = 3 → 2.3%), Invitation (F = 2 → 1.5%), Gratitude (F = 2 → 1.5%).
- **Age 36 years or more:** Greetings (F = 19 → 27.9%), Religious (F = 18 → 26.5%), Others (F = 9 → 13.2%), Sports (F = 6 → 8.8%), Dictums (F = 5 → 7.4%), Condolences (F = 4 → 5.9%), Congratulations and celebrations (F = 2 → 2.9%), Ironic (F = 2 → 2.9%), Invitation (F = 1 → 1.5%), Gratitude (F = 1 → 1.5%), Funny and comical (F = 1 → 1.5%).

Table 4: *Frequencies and percentages of Statuses categories – according to age (N = 200)*

Code	Category	18 – 35 years (N = 132)		36 years or more (N = 68)	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Religious	31	23.5%	18	26.5%
2	Greetings	29	22.0%	19	27.9%
3	Congratulations and celebrations	3	2.3%	2	2.9%
4	Condolences	14	10.6%	4	5.9%
5	Invitation	2	1.5%	1	1.5%
6	Gratitude	2	1.5%	1	1.5%
7	Funny and comical	11	8.3%	1	1.5%
8	Ironic	10	7.6%	2	2.9%
9	Dictums	14	10.6%	5	7.4%
10	Sports	5	3.8%	6	8.8%
11	Others	11	8.3%	9	13.2%
	Total	132	100%	68	100%

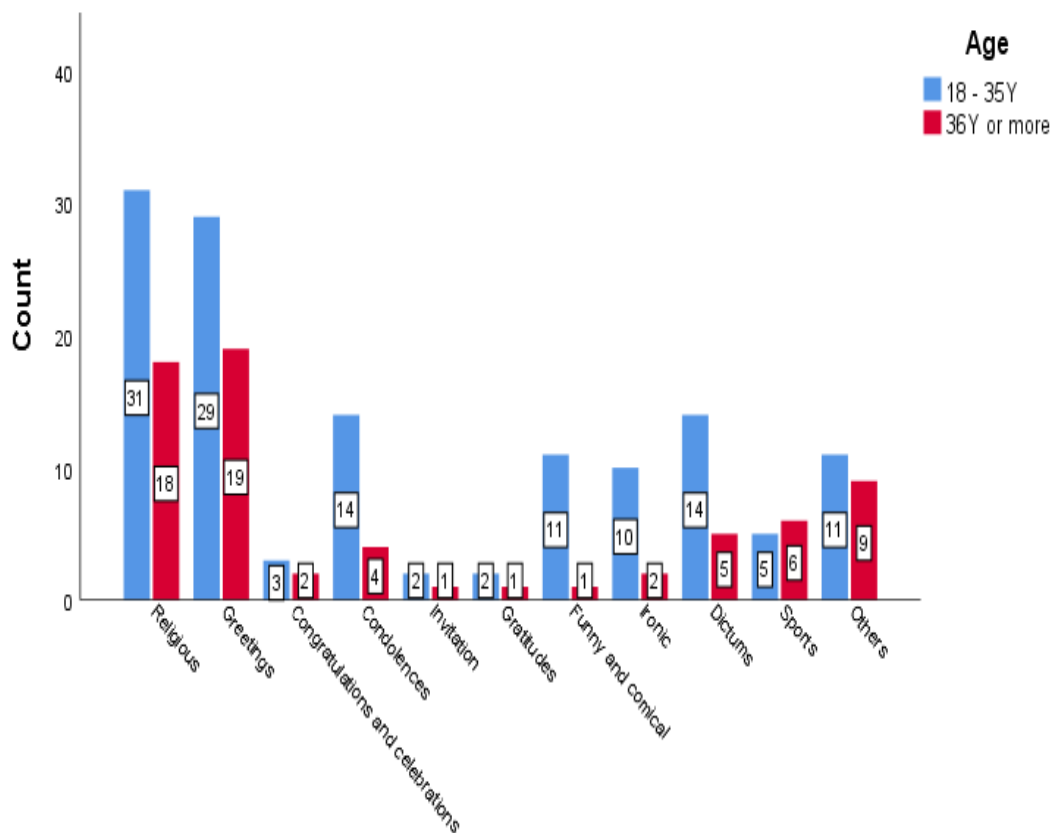


Figure 2: *Cluster graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – according to age*

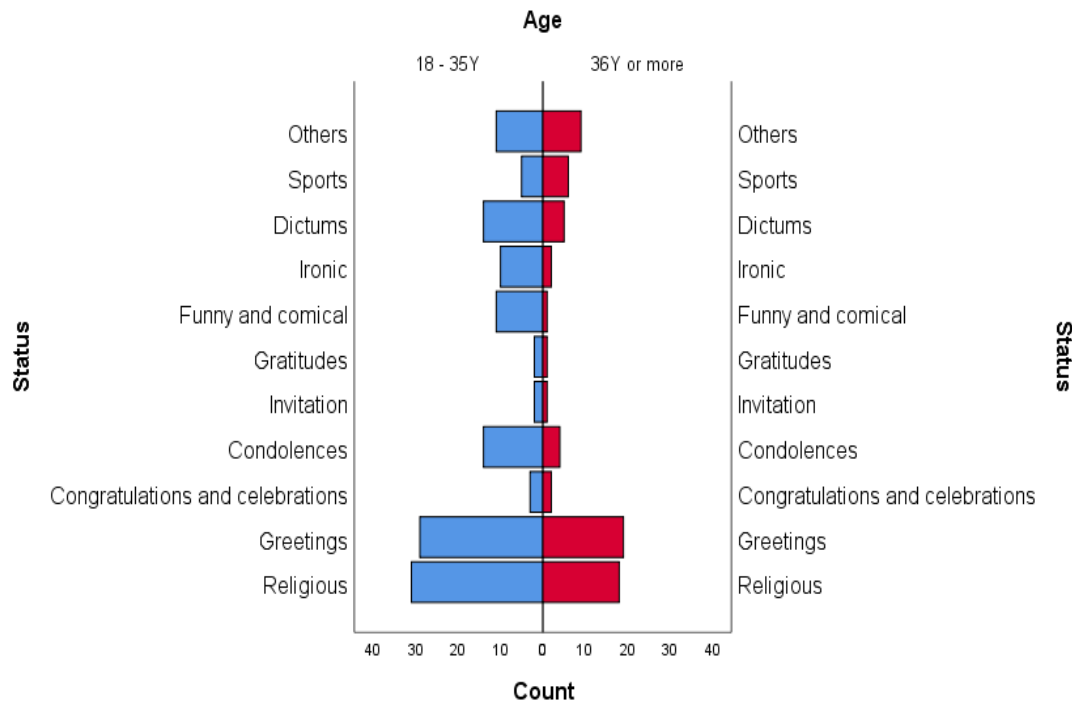


Figure 3: Population pyramid graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – according to age

Frequencies and percentages of status categories used by users according to gender and age displayed in Table (5). Figure (4) depicts a Cluster graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – male users according to age and Figure (5) depicts a Population pyramid graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – male users according to age. Whereas Figure (6) depicts Cluster graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – female users according to age and Figure (7) depicts Population pyramid graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – female users according to age Results were as follows in descending order:

1. Male users

- **Age 18 – 35 years:** Ironic (F = 7 → 17.1%), Religious (F = 6 → 14.6%), Funny and comical (F = 6 → 14.6%), Greetings (F = 5 → 12.2%), Condolences (F = 5 → 12.2%), Sports (F = 5 → 12.2%), Others (F = 3 → 7.3%), Dictums (F = 2 → 4.9%), Invitation (F = 1 → 2.4%), Gratitude (F = 1 → 2.4%), Congratulations and celebrations was not used.
- **Age 36 years or more:** Greetings (F = 8 → 25%), Religious (F = 7 → 21.9%), Sports (F = 6 → 18.8%), Others (F = 4 → 12.5%), Condolences (F = 2 → 6.3%), Dictums (F = 2 → 6.3%), Congratulations and celebrations (F = 1 → 3.1%), Invitation (F = 1 → 3.1%), Ironic (F = 1 → 3.1%). Gratitude, Funny and comical were not used.

2. Female users

- **Age 18 – 35 years:** Religious (F = 25 → 27.5%), Greetings (F = 24 → 26.4%), Dictums (F = 12 → 13.2%), Condolences (F = 9 → 9.9%), Others (F = 8 → 8.8%), Funny and comical (F = 5 → 5.5%), Congratulations and celebrations (F = 3 → 3.3%), Ironic (F = 3 → 3.3%), Invitation (F = 1 → 1.1%), Gratitude (F = 1 → 1.1%), Sports was not used.
- **Age 36 years or more:** Religious (F = 11 → 30.6%), Greetings (F = 11 → 30.6%), Others (F = 5 → 13.9%), Dictums (F = 3 → 8.3%), Condolences (F = 2 → 5.6%),

Congratulations and celebrations (F = 1 → 2.8%), Gratitude (F = 1 → 2.8%), Funny and comical (F = 1 → 2.8%), Ironic (F = 1 → 2.8%), Invitation and Sports statuses were not used.

Table 5: Frequencies and percentages of Statuses categories – according to gender by age (N = 200)

Code	Category	Male (N = 73)				Female (N = 127)			
		18 – 35 years (N = 41)		36 years or more (N = 32)		18 – 35 years (N = 91)		36 years or more (N = 36)	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Religious	6	14.6%	7	21.9%	25	27.5%	11	30.6%
2	Greetings	5	12.2%	8	25.0%	24	26.4%	11	30.6%
3	Congratulations and celebrations	--	--	1	3.1%	3	3.3%	1	2.8%
4	Condolences	5	12.2%	2	6.3%	9	9.9%	2	5.6%
5	Invitation	1	2.4%	1	3.1%	1	1.1%	--	--
6	Gratitude	1	2.4%	--	--	1	1.1%	1	2.8%
7	Funny and comical	6	14.6%	--	--	5	5.5%	1	2.8%
8	Ironic	7	17.1%	1	3.1%	3	3.3%	1	2.8%
9	Dictums	2	4.9%	2	6.3%	12	13.2%	3	8.3%
10	Sports	5	12.2%	6	18.8%	--	--	--	--
11	Others	3	7.3%	4	12.5%	8	8.8%	5	13.9%
	Total	41	100%	32	100%	91	100%	36	100%

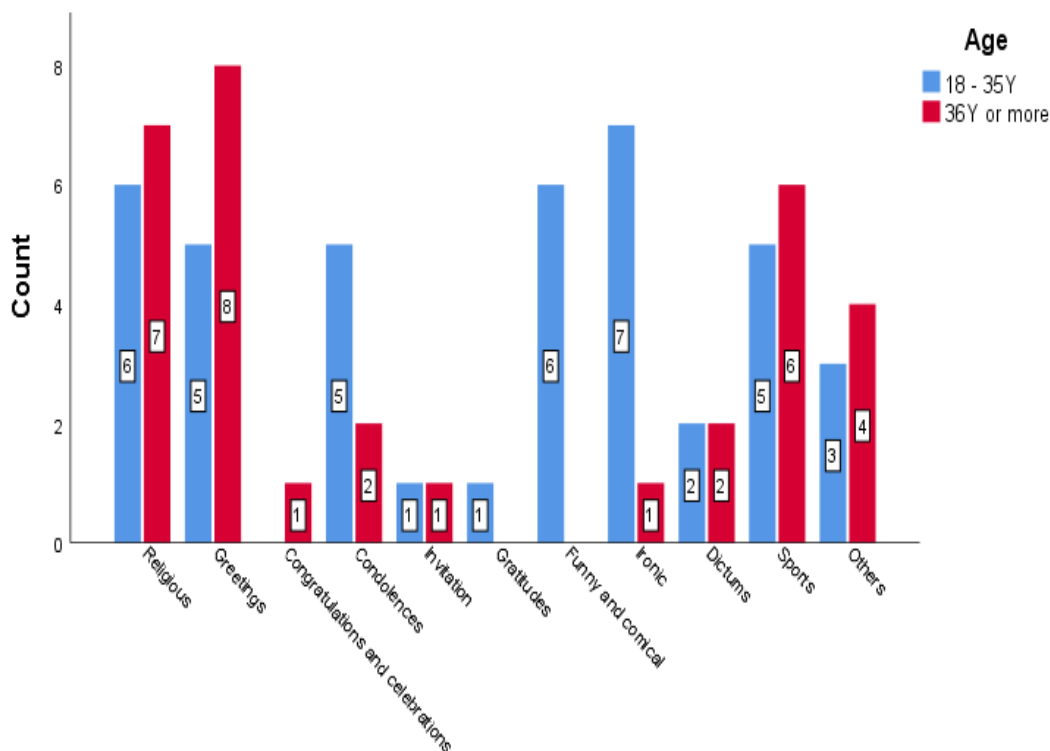


Figure 4: Cluster graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – male users according to age

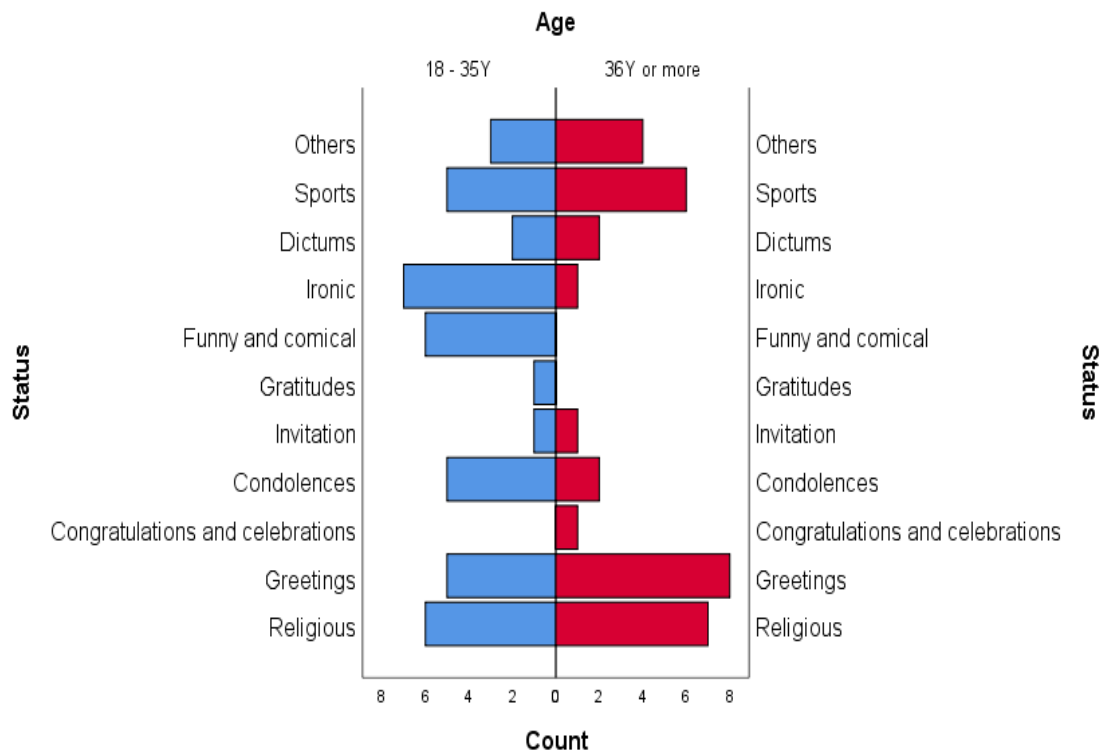


Figure 5: Population pyramid graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – male users according to age

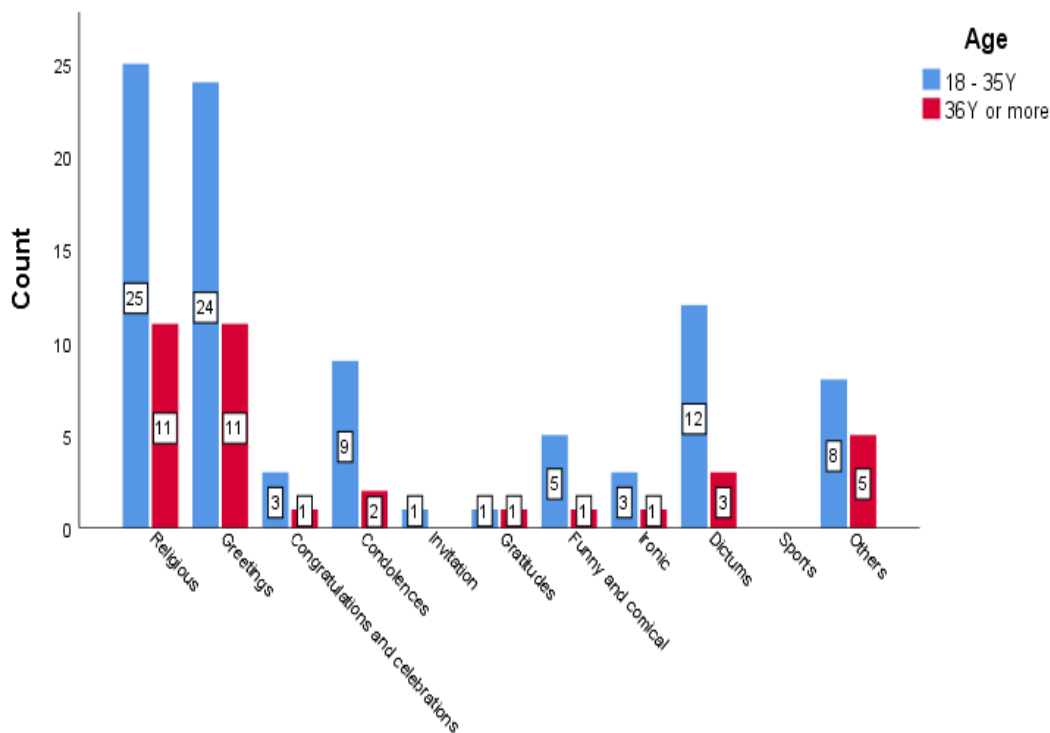


Figure 6: Cluster graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – female users according to age



Figure 7: Population pyramid graph for frequencies of Statuses categories – female users according to age

Results displayed in Table (6) provide frequencies and percentages of taxonomies categories used by users regardless gender or age. Results were as follows in descending order: Expressives (F = 82 → 41%), Speech act of quotations (F = 46 → 23%), Speech acts of Humours (F = 25 → 12.5%), Assertives (F = 13 → 6.5%), Declaratives (F = 12 → 6%), God's invocations (F = 11 → 5.5%), Directives (F = 8 → 4%), Commissives (F = 3 → 1.5%). Figure (8) depicts Bar graph for frequencies of taxonomies categories – Total sample.

Table 6: Frequencies and percentages of taxonomies categories – Total sample (N = 200)

Code	Category	Frequency	%
1	Assertives	13	6.5%
2	Commissives	3	1.5%
3	Directives	8	4.0%
4	Declaratives	12	6.0%
5	Expressives	82	41.0%
6	God's invocations	11	5.5%
7	The speech act of quotations	46	23.0%
8	Speech acts of Humour	25	12.5%
	Total	200	100%

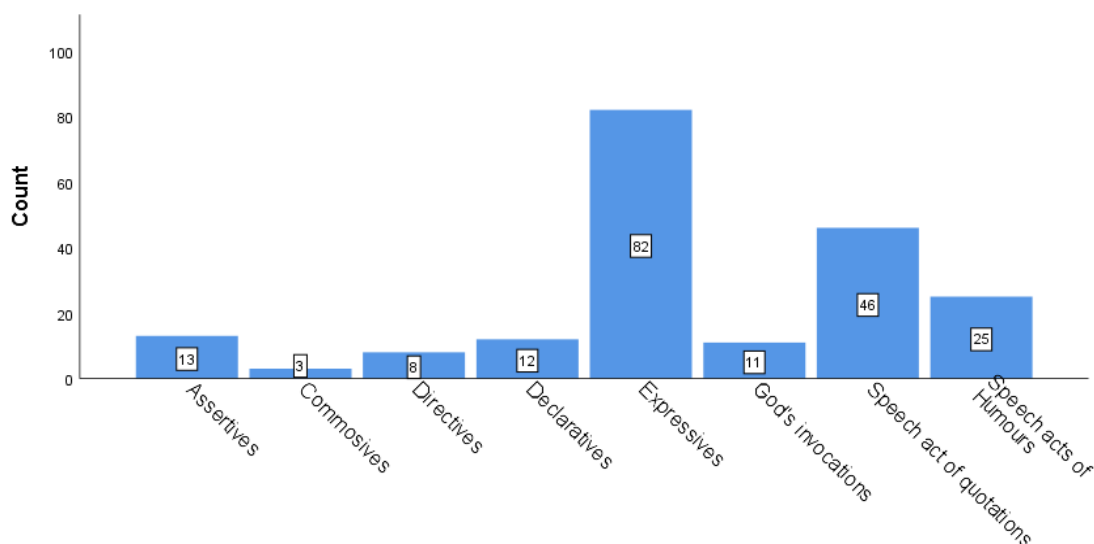


Figure 2: Bar graph for frequencies of taxonomies categories – Total sample

Frequencies and percentages of taxonomies categories used by users according to age are displayed in Table (7). Figure (9) depicts a Cluster graph for frequencies of taxonomies categories – according to age. Figure (10) depicts the Population pyramid graph for frequencies of taxonomies categories – according to age. Results were as follows in descending order:

- **Age 18 – 35 years:** Expressives (F = 52 → 39.4%), Speech act of quotations (F = 28 → 21.2%), Speech acts of Humours (F = 21 → 15.9%), Declaratives (F = 9 → 6.8%), Assertives (F = 7 → 5.3%), Directives (F = 7 → 5.3%), God's invocations (F = 7 → 5.3%), Commissives (F = 1 → 0.8%).
- **Age 36 years or more:** Expressives (F = 30 → 44.1%), Speech act of quotations (F = 18 → 26.5%), Assertives (F = 6 → 8.8%), God's invocations (F = 4 → 5.9%), Speech acts of Humours (F = 4 → 5.9%), Declaratives (F = 3 → 4.4%), Commissives (F = 2 → 2.9%), Directives (F = 1 → 1.5%).

Table 7: Frequencies and percentages of taxonomies categories – according to age (N = 200)

Code	Category	Total sample (N = 200)		18 – 35 years (N = 132)		36 years or more (N = 68)	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Assertives	7	5.3%	6	8.8%		
2	Commissives	1	0.8%	2	2.9%		
3	Directives	7	5.3%	1	1.5%		
4	Declaratives	9	6.8%	3	4.4%		
5	Expressives	52	39.4%	30	44.1%		
6	God's invocations	7	5.3%	4	5.9%		
7	Speech act of quotations	28	21.2%	18	26.5%		
8	Speech acts of Humour	21	15.9%	4	5.9%		
	Total	132	100%	68	100%		

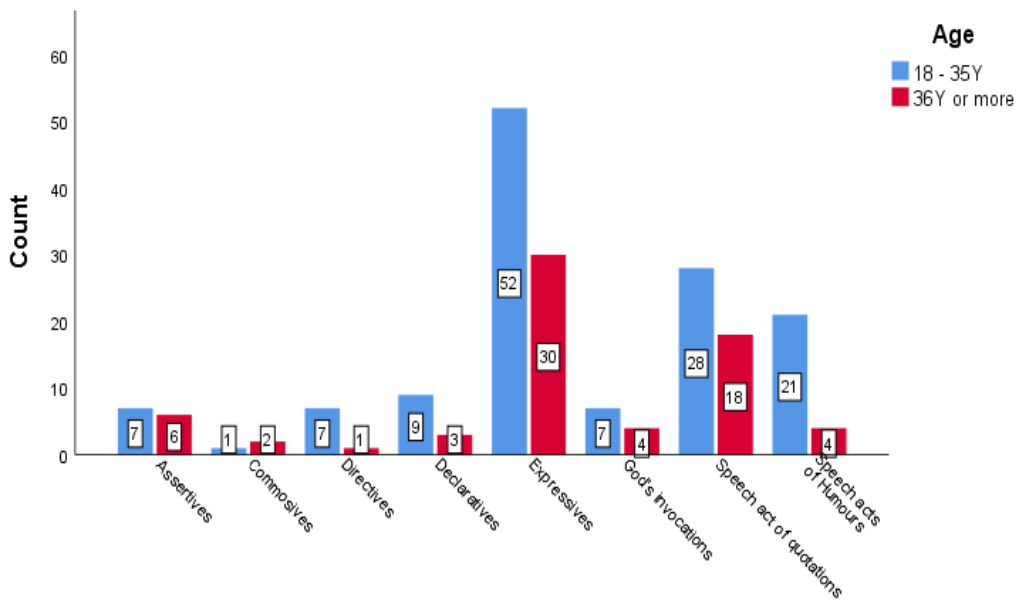


Figure 3: Cluster graph for frequencies of taxonomies categories – according to age

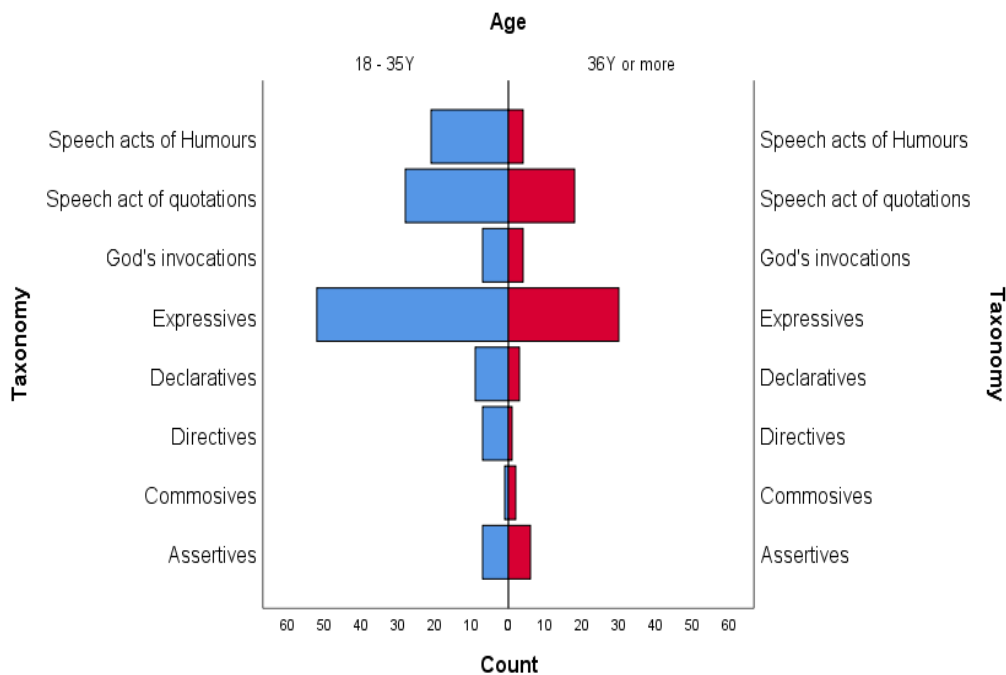


Figure 10: Population pyramid graph for frequencies of taxonomies categories – according to age

5. Discussion

This paper has presented the statistical analysis and general findings of the study. It listed the statistical tools and tests that were used to complete statistical analysis. The dataset analysis shows that the Religious status updates were the most frequent used statuses ($F = 49 \rightarrow 24.5\%$), while Invitation ($F = 3 \rightarrow 1.5\%$) and Gratitude ($F = 3 \rightarrow 1.5\%$) are the least frequent ones according to their communicative functions regardless of users gender and age. Concerning the classification of status updates according to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the dataset analysis finds that the Expressives taxonomy ($F = 82 \rightarrow 41\%$) is the most frequent

taxonomy while the Commissives taxonomy ($F = 3 \rightarrow 1.5$) is the least one among status updates regardless of users gender and age.

Regarding age, the dataset analysis finds that the Religious ($F = 31 \rightarrow 23.5\%$) category is the most frequent status update one used among users whose ages are to be 18 to 35, while Gratitude ($F = 2 \rightarrow 1.5\%$) is the least category that is used among them. Also, Greetings ($F = 19 \rightarrow 27.9\%$) is the most frequent category that is used among users whose ages are 36 and more, while Funny and comical ($F = 1 \rightarrow 1.5\%$) is the least frequent category among them. Concerning the classification of status updates according to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the dataset analysis finds that Expressives taxonomy is the most frequent one that is used among users whose ages are to be 18 to 35 at ($F = 52 \rightarrow 39.4\%$) while the Commissives taxonomy is the least used at ($F = 1 \rightarrow 0.8\%$). For users whose ages are to be 36 and more, the Expressives taxonomy is the most frequent one at ($F = 30 \rightarrow 44.1\%$) while Directives taxonomy is the least frequent one among status updates at ($F = 1 \rightarrow 1.5\%$).

As a form of internet-mediated communication tool, Facebook plays an important role in shaping the religious identity of the Arabic-speaking users in cyberspace. According to Ellison et al. (2007, p. 1144), "Facebook constitutes a rich site for researchers interested in the affordances of social networks due to its heavy usage patterns and technological capacities that bridge online and offline connections".

The findings of the study show that the religious status updates on Facebook were the first most frequent status update used among users regardless of their gender and age at the percentage of ($F = 49 \rightarrow 24.5\%$). The language used on Facebook status updates is highly influenced by the extensive use of religious texts from the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah (i.e., Prophet Muhammad's supplications) or the Holy Bible. Religious texts play a significant role and have main objectives in social events and have many functions that cover a lot of subjects in many fields in life. Religious texts such as preaching, supplications, prayers, etc, are some of the most common topics posted or discussed on Facebook (Alshdaifat, 2014; Khalaf, 2018). The analysis of the dataset shows that users post different religious texts on Facebook that have certain functions as discussed in the example below.

Example (1). A user shares a status as follows:

(مز64: 4) "طوبى لمن إخترتة وقبيلته ليسكن فى ديارك إلى الأبد" "Blessed be the one whom You chose and brought near to You to dwell in Your courts".

It is a Biblical quotation that is normally posted on social media by Christians when a Christian person passes away.

Greetings statuses were the second most frequent statuses used ($F = 48 \rightarrow 24\%$). Generally, greetings are important and essential in social interactions by employing them to start and end a rapport. Schottman (1995, p. 489) states that "greetings are the essential oil of encounters of all types and a reassuring confirmation of human sociability and social order". Holmes (1992, p. 308) states "greeting formulas universally serve an affective function of establishing non-threatening contact and rapport but their precise content is clearly culture-specific". Rabab'ah and Malkawi (2012) argue that social variables such as age, sex, the context of a situation, and time are significant factors in greetings' structure. Also, Islamic norms and Arabic traditions highly influence the rules for initiating proper greetings among Jordanians. Many verses in the Glorious Qur'an encourage followers to spread greetings in general and the greeting "peace be upon you" in particular.

Being a frequent Facebook user, the researcher noticed that posts of dictums occupy a large capacity of the Facebook walls. The dataset analysis finds that the percentage of sharing dictums is ($F = 19 \rightarrow 9.5\%$). Dictums have inspirational and motivational content. They may provide a reader with a quick and timely burst of wisdom to get back his/her focus or inspire a reader when his/her normal motivation has fizzled or lapsed (Ilyas and Khushi, 2012, p. 502). Khalaf (2018) defines dictums as they are short statements that communicate a general truth, principle, or something that someone believes in. Posts with dictums are commonly found on Facebook, usually attributed to a famous, a poet, and a wise person, or a religious preacher. Sometimes, these posts reflect the users' mood or present situations. Sometimes, users share them because they just like those dictums. For instance, some people post inspiring dictums or quotes just to make themselves feel inspired, or a loving couple who broke up with each other posts quotes related to love which are famous. The following is an example of dictums:

Example (1).

"اتق شر من أحسنت إليه".
"الطيور على أشكالها تقع".

"Beware the person who has received charity from you".

"Birds of a feather flock together".

Searle (1969) categorizes condolences under the expressive acts that an interlocutor uses to express his/her sorrow at the news of someone's death. Condolences are expressions of sympathy and encouragement. They are highly influenced by culture and religion which are offered to people in calamity to support and share feelings with them that might reduce their sorrow and pain of losing a beloved person. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) argue that condolences are used among people to achieve different functions. They are employed to express acknowledgment of death, express sympathy, offer assistance, express concern, and express future-oriented remarks. The present study finds that condolences are often used in Facebook status updates and the percentage is ($F = 18 \rightarrow 9\%$) as discussed in the example below.

Example (1) "انتقل الى الامجاد السماوية" "*S/he has transferred to the heavenly glories*". This expression is the most euphemistic expression used among Jordanian Christians to replace the expression "died".

Generally, Jordanian muslims and christians use the verb "انتقل" "*transferred*" with some expressions to break the news of someone's death. This is to share emotions and show sympathy on the first hand, and due to the belief that they have among them in life after death on the other hand. Using such expressions with the verb "*transferred*" such as in "انتقل الى رحمة الله تعالى" "*s/he transferred to the almighty God's mercy*", "انتقل الى جوار ربه" "*S/he transferred to the neighborhood of her/his lord*", and "انتقل الى الرفيق الاعلى" "*S/he transferred to the higher companion her/his lord*" are used to remind the bereaved family and other people that the deceased moved to a better place in heaven that could reduce the pains and grief of people in calamity.

The use of jokes has increasingly and noticeably spread among the users of Facebook. They address both important or hot topics and even simple issues by being funny. Users of Facebook often like to share funny stuff on their statuses to laugh or take the attention of others. The analysis of the dataset reveals that users use humor to achieve interpersonal goals such as evoking amusement, maintaining interpersonal and emotional ties amongst Facebook

users. Funny and humor used among Facebook users at the percentage of (F = 12 → 6%). The following is an example of funny and humor category:

Example (1) "الخروج من تحت الحرام في الشتوية اصعب من خروج العروس من بيت أهلها" "Getting out of your warm blanket in the wintertime is more difficult than the bride getting out of her family's house".

According to Grice, Cole, and Morgan (1975), irony in the standard pragmatic model is viewed as an apparent violation of the maxim of quality, stating that the speaker does not say what he believes to be false. In this model, when one ironically utters (P), one conversationally implicates its opposite, which is not (P). In computational linguistics, irony is often used as an umbrella term that includes sarcasm, although some researchers make a distinction between irony and sarcasm, considering that sarcasm tends to be harsher, humiliating, degrading, and more aggressive (Clift, 1999; Lee and Katz, 1998). When it comes to irony, hearers or readers should not take the utterance fully literal, rather they must first decide whether the utterance they are dealing with is intended descriptively or interpretively (i.e, considering the deep meaning or the meaning behind the words) (Sperber and Wilson, 1995).

Users of Facebook share a lot of ironic comments and posts especially these days because of covid-19 pandemic. They make a lot of ironic comments that criticize the government procedures, lockdown period, the vaccine, how people react to the virus, etc. Also, users share ironic posts to criticize the government or for fun. The percentage of ironic status updates in this study is (F = 12 → 6%). The following is an example of Ironic status updates on Facebook:

Example (1). "عزيزي رئيس الوزراء من كثر الدعم من الحكومة قربنا نبيع ثيابنا"
"Dear prime minister, because of the massive support from the government, we are about to sell our clothes"!

Throughout the history of humanity, sports have taken a significant part in societies. Sport also has always had the power to unify people. People might value sport in different ways based on their backgrounds, cultures, and statuses. The statistics on the number of people who are spectators and participants are impressive. Events such as the cricket world cup, grand slams, and Olympic Games attract millions of people (Derwent, 2016).

In some cases, people turn sport into a matter of life and death. Surprisingly, athletes are treated as heroes after a win, or they can be treated as a traitor after a loss. Also, the sport might have a religious significance. Rituals, costumes, and ceremonies might represent things that we can find their reflections in religions (Siedentop and Van der Mars, 2012).

In social media, some people generally like sports and like to share posts about their loved teams and players. Generally, young people are motivated by sports and like to watch matches more than the old. The present study confirms this statement that young people from 18 to 35 years old update their Facebook statuses more than the old do, especially the male users. The analysis finds that out of two hundred Facebook status updates, 11 posts are about sports. All were shared by the male users at the percentage of (5.5%). The following is an example of Facebook status updates about sports:

Example (2). "يالها من ليله قاسية على مشجعين الريال مدريد".
"What a harsh night to Real Madrid fans".

Congratulation is an expression of approval aimed at strengthening social relations and intimacy. It is an action that makes communication interactional (i.e., social in nature). Congratulation is intended to build relationships and encourage cooperation (Tsilipakou, 2001). Oraiby (2018) divides congratulation into two types namely, congratulation for doing and ritual congratulation. The former is concerned with congratulating others when doing something. It is used to express explicit pleasure to others on their occasions of success or good fortune. For example, "congratulations on your graduation". Whereas, the latter is thoroughly related to social glad occasions which are called archaic. In this type of congratulation, interlocutors congratulate each other on their ritual occasions to express sympathetic happiness for others' glad occasions. Thus, individuals need a social context to congratulate such as having a birthday, an anniversary, and a new year. In this type, people congratulate each other by saying: "Happy Anniversary", "Happy Birthday", and "Happy New Year".

In the current study, the percentage of using congratulations as a status update on Facebook is (F = 5 → 2.5%). Below are examples of this category.

Example (1) "My dear brother, Congratulations on your wedding!"

"أخي العزيز مبارك زواجكم"

Example (2) "Congratulations to Barcelona fans!"

"مبارك لمشجعي برشلونة".

Invitations are seen as social and communicative acts that are socially acceptable polite behavior that function to enhance and strengthen the relationship between interlocutors (Al-Khatib, 2006). An invitation is "a communicative act addressed to B's face-needs and intended to enhance and strengthen good and healthy relations between A and B (where A is the inviter and B is the invitee)" (Al-Khatib, 2006, p. 273).

The analysis of dataset finds that users update their Facebook status to make invitations to occasions such as a wedding, engagements, birthdays, etc. The analysis further shows that the percentage of using invitations as status updates on Facebook is low at (F = 3 → 1.5%). The following is an example about invitations as a form of Facebook status updates:

Example (1). "بكره خطوبتي – اهلا وسهلا بالجميع". "Tomorrow is my engagement – You are all welcome". The user updates his Facebook status to break the news of his engagement and invite his friend to this occasion.

The speech act of gratitude is a very common strategy to express appreciation among interlocutors in daily life in every culture. Searle (1969) categorizes them under the expressive acts that an interlocutor uses to express his/her gratitude to others. Leech (1983, p. 104) argues that gratitude is inherently polite, courteous, or respectful expressions and characterizes it as a "convivial (i.e., friendly and making you feel happy and welcome)" speech act. It is viewed as an expressive act supported by polite communicative behavior. It enables the hearer to recognize the speaker's intention and strengthen positive politeness. Although gratitude is frequently used in daily life, it was the least category used among others at the percentage of (F = 3 → 1.5%). Users normally use social media to offer

gratitude to people who participate in occasions such as graduations, funeral prayers, weddings, engagements, birthdays, etc, as in the following example:

Example (2). "الشكر الجزيل لك من شاركنا في زفاف شقيقي يوم امس و دامت الافراح حليفة دياركم العامرة"
"Many thanks to everyone who participated yesterday in my brother's wedding. May happiness stay in your flourishing homes".

Example (3) "الحمد لله حمدا طيبا مباركا فيه – فقد حصلت على قبول ماستر من جامعة اليرموك لغويات"
"Praise be to Allah, much good and blessed praise - I got a master admission in linguistics from Yarmouk University".

A last category contains Facebook status updates that do not go under the previous ten categories. It might be about family, friends, picnics, food, drinks, etc. It might be just one word. The following are examples of this category:

Example (1) راحت قبل ما أنهي الكلام
She has gone before I ended the speech.

Example (2) الجيم.
The gym.

Example (3) كورونا فيروس.
Corona virus (i.e., Covid-19).

6. Summary

This study has investigated the role of age on the speech act of Facebook status updates by Jordanian users. The analysis has shown that the Religious (F = 31 → 23.5%) category is the most frequent status update used among users whose ages are 18 to 35, while Gratitude (F = 2 → 1.5%) is the least category that is used among them. Also, Greetings (F = 19 → 27.9%) is the most frequent category that is used by people whose ages are 36 and more, while Funny and Comical (F = 1 → 1.5%) is the least frequent category among them. Concerning the classification of status updates according to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the dataset analysis finds that Expressives taxonomy is the most frequent one that is used among users whose ages are 18 to 35 at (F = 52 → 39.4%), while Commissives taxonomy is the least used at (F = 1 → 0.8%). For users whose ages are 36 and more, Expressives taxonomy is also the most frequent one at (F = 30 → 44.1%) while Directives taxonomy is the least frequent one among status updates at (F = 1 → 1.5%).

Future studies are recommended to cover the influence of other variables such as level of education, profession, religious background, social power, and status on Facebook updates in Jordan and other Arab countries.

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