

**Investigating (Im)politeness/(In)appropriateness in Saudis'
Twitter Disagreements: A Discursive Approach**

Sarah Surur Almutairi

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The University of Leeds

School of Languages, Cultures, and Societies

Department of Linguistics and Phonetics

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Declaration

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This study explores (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in naturally occurring disagreements in Saudis' Twitter replies (currently known as X posts) to 12 main tweets posted about sociocultural and political topics in 6 trending hashtags between 2017-2018. The analysis of the data draws on discursive approaches to (im)politeness, particularly relational work (Locher and Watts, 2005) and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Also, the classification of disagreement strategies and the linguistic devices employed to mitigate or aggravate these disagreements were inspired by different taxonomies, including Harb (2016), Shum and Lee (2013), and Culpeper (1996; 2011a; 2016).

In addition to the corpus of tweets, metalinguistic data were collected through online questionnaires. Also, follow-up interviews with 20 respondents were conducted to obtain a clearer picture of lay observers' emic perceptions of (im)politeness, particularly in the context of Saudis' Twitter disagreements.

The main results showed that the percentage of aggravated Twitter disagreements in the corpus was higher than their mitigated and unmodified counterparts. This is likely to be due to several factors: the relative anonymity of posters on Twitter and the nature of the relationship between them, the poster's orientation to the topic of interaction, the poster's association/dissociation from the target, and the poster's personality, awareness and considerations of consequences on self and others. Additionally, the analysis of metalinguistic data also revealed that classifications of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness do not say much about how respondents evaluated Twitter disagreements in themselves. Rather, the justifications they provided gave insight into their emic views of the moral order at the societal level. The analysis suggests that the choice of categorization seems to represent an individualistic conceptualisation of (im)politeness, while the justification shows the argumentative attempt to link these classifications to the assumed shared moral order between the members of the society.

Finally, the analysis presented in this study underscores the importance of integrating perspectives from (im)politeness₁ and (im)politeness₂ approaches, and argues that the combination of different perspectives in these two approaches can help unpack different layers of (im)politeness in social interactions.

Phonetic Symbols for Transliteration of Arabic Sounds

In this thesis, I followed the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for the transcription of Arabic. The table below provides the list of consonant symbols used, including Arabic letters, IPA symbols, sound descriptions and approximate English equivalents of Arabic to aid readers' comprehension.

Consonant

Arabic Letter	IPA symbol	Sound Description	English Approximation
أ, ء	ʔ	Voiceless glottal plosive	Uh-/ʔ/oh
ب	b	Voiced bilabial plosive	B ike
ت	t	Voiceless dental-alveolar plosive	T all
ث	θ	Voiceless dental fricative	Th in
ج	dʒ	Voiced post-alveolar affricate	J oy
	ʒ	Voiced post-alveolar fricative	Gen re
ح	ħ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	No equivalent
خ	x	Voiceless uvular fricative	Loch (Scottish English)
د	d	Voiced dental-alveolar plosive	D og
ذ	ð	Voiced dental fricative	This
ر	r	Voiced alveolar trill	R un
ز	z	Voiced alveolar fricative	Z ero
س	s	Voiceless alveolar fricative	S un
ش	ʃ	Voiceless post-alveolar fricative	Sh ip
ص	s ^ɛ	Voiceless emphatic alveolar fricative	No equivalent
ض	d ^ɛ	Voiced emphatic dental-alveolar plosive	No equivalent
ط	t ^ɛ	Voiceless dental-alveolar plosive	No equivalent
ظ	ð ^ɛ	Voiced emphatic dental fricative	No equivalent
ع	ʕ	Voiced pharyngeal fricative	No equivalent
غ	ɣ	Voiced uvular fricative	French 'r'
ف	f	Voiceless labiodental fricative	F an
ق	g	Voiced velar plosive	G ap
	q	Voiceless uvular plosive	No equivalent
ك	k	Voiceless velar plosive	C ar
ل	l	Voiced alveolar lateral	L amp
م	m	Voiced bilabial nasal	M an
ن	n	Voiced alveolar nasal	N et
هـ	h	Voiceless glottal fricative	H at
و	w	Voiced labial-velar approximant	W ater
ي	j	Voiced palatal approximant	Y es

Vowels

The table below includes a list of the vowel sounds using the IPA symbols, along with sound descriptions and approximate English equivalents of Arabic.

IPA Symbol	Sound Description	English Approximation
a:	Long open front unrounded	Father
a	Short open front unrounded	Far (but shorter)
i:	Long close front unrounded	Need
i	Short close front unrounded	Happy
u:	Long close back rounded	Food
u	Short close back rounded	To
ə	Mid-central (schwa)	About
eɪ	Diphthong	Face
aʊ	Diphthong	Mouth
əʊ	Diphthong	Goat

List of abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation
Mitigated disagreement	Mit.Dis
Aggravated disagreement	Agg.Dis
Unmodified disagreement	Un.Dis
Sociocultural hashtag	SOC
Political hashtag	POL
Main Tweet	MT
Initiation move	I-move
Response/initiation move	R/I-move
Response move	R-move
First interactional turn	T1
Frist/second interactional turn	T1/2
Second interactional turn	T2
Masculine form	M
Feminine form	F
Second person	2
Third person	3
Singular	SG
Plural	PL
Vocative	VOC
Community of practice	CoP
Initiation-Response-Follow up model	IRF
Saudi Arabic Twitter corpus	SAT

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Humans are naturally different; they differ in appearance, thoughts, languages, religions, beliefs, tendencies, views, etc. These differences are inevitable and might sometimes lead to disagreements. However, these disagreements should not always be regarded as negative, nor necessarily be perceived as problematic. Rather, the potential problem lies in the way these disagreements are managed within the discursive context. In classical theories of politeness, disagreement was seen to pose a potential threat to a harmonious existence between members of communities. Disagreement, despite its complications, cannot be overlooked and avoided as it is essential to human communication. Koczogh (2013) explains that the importance of studying disagreement comes from its versatile nature and frequent occurrence in everyday interactions, which make the management of disagreement complex. This complexity increases when disagreements are expressed online, particularly on platforms such as Twitter (now referred to as X), where interactions are fragmented, highly intertextual, and occur between different posters who might not know each other.

In the present study, I aim to explore disagreement and (im)politeness in Twitter communication in Saudi Arabia. Starting with this introductory chapter, I clarify the rationale for the study in Section 1.1. In Section 1.2, I illustrate the purpose of the study and present the research questions. In Section 1.3, I provide background on Saudi Arabia, covering the Saudi 2030 Vision and some examples of how Saudis use Twitter. Lastly, I show how the thesis is structured in Section 1.4.

1.1 The rationale for the study

The number of studies of disagreements in digitally-mediated communication (DMC)¹ has grown in the last two decades. Online disagreements have been examined in different online platforms; for instance, in a soap opera discussion group (Baym, 1996), ChurchList emails (Graham, 2007), *MailOnline* news comments (Langlotz and Locher, 2012), in personal/diary blogs (Bolander, 2012), in Chinese forums (Shum and Lee, 2013), in Spanish YouTube comments (Bou-Franch and Blitvich, 2014), and in Arabic Facebook discussions (Harb, 2016). However, disagreements on social media platforms like Twitter remain under studied (Fernández, 2013, p.20). Graham and Hardaker (2017) highlighted that, despite the prominent role Twitter plays on political and social levels, pragmatic

¹ Also known as computer-mediated communication (CMC).

research into Twitter remains thin compared to other DMC contexts, such as e-mails and blogs.

In addition, existing literature on Arabic speech acts and (im)politeness has paid little attention to cultural-linguistic behaviours in DMC. Thus, being myself a Saudi Twitter user and a researcher, one of the reasons behind the current study is my interest in examining online disagreement among Saudis on Twitter. Based on observation, Twitter in Saudi Arabia is a place where different opinions are expressed and negotiated hence creating a public space where disagreements are inevitable. The launch of the Saudi 2030 vision, see Section 1.3.3, provided an opportunity to examine Saudis' disagreements on Twitter at a time where the country is going through a transition. Also, from an insider's perspective, there seems to be a general assumption that Saudis' disagreements on Twitter tend to be unmitigated disagreements and can be culturally inappropriate as they reflect a little or complete disregard for sociocultural norms. Alghathami (2016, pp.19-20) points out in his book about Twitter culture that one of the apparent practices among Saudi Twitter users when disagreeing is the use of an unrestrained verbal exchange without consideration or discretion — this practice is commonly known as *قصف الجبهة* /*qasf a:l3abh/* literally translated as *shooting the forehead*. Therefore, the present study was formed to further investigate this assumption about the pervasiveness of unmitigated disagreements among Saudi Twitter users.

Moreover, when consulting the Arabic literature on disagreement and (im)politeness, it appears clear that the topic needs further study, especially in Saudi Arabic, compared to other speech acts such as requests, apologies, offers, and refusals. While there have been some studies that focused on speech acts and (im)politeness from an intra-cultural/intra-language perspective, such as Jordanian (Bataineh and Bataineh, 2006), Yemeni (Almarrani and Sazalie, 2010), and Saudi (Qari, 2017), the literature on Arabic speech acts has largely focused on cross-cultural investigations (e.g., Nelson et al., 2002; Alkahtani, 2005; Aladaileh, 2007; Umale, 2011; Alzumor, 2011; Khamam, 2012; Jasim, 2017; Almusallam, 2018). To my knowledge, there are only four recent studies on Arabic disagreement: Harb's (2016) study investigates Arabic disagreements on Facebook, in which he stresses the need for further research on disagreement in Arabic, especially in online communication. The second study conducted by Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq (2018) looks at disagreement strategies in Jordanian Arabic using data from a discourse completion task (DCT). Then Alzahrani (2021) examined verbal disagreements in casual conversations between groups of friends from a cross-cultural point of view. He compared

the similarities and differences in disagreement and (im)politeness realisations between Saudis and British participants. Alzahrani (2021) also suggested future research should examine Saudi disagreements on Twitter, as this area remains unexplored. In addition, following a cross-cultural approach to disagreements, another recent study focused on comparing politeness strategies used in expressing disagreements by American and Saudi teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) on Twitter. In her study, Alghamdi (2023) concentrated on investigating EFL teachers' disagreements in English as the target language. She was interested in the potential factors that influenced Saudi EFL teachers when expressing their disagreements in English, such as the influence of their first language, interaction with native speakers, and years of teaching experience. She emphasised the need for further studies on disagreement, particularly in Arabic, to enhance cultural understanding and enrich language textbooks with more adequate pragmatic knowledge, see Section 2.4.3 for a detailed discussion of these studies.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this lack of research on Arabic disagreement and (im)politeness, especially in DMC. It specifically aims to contribute to filling this gap in Arabic language research by investigating Saudis' production and evaluation of disagreements and (im)politeness on Twitter.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The study's main purpose is to provide a systematic account of Saudis' expressions of disagreement and (im)politeness on Twitter. This will be achieved by exploring the lexical and pragmatic features of these disagreements. The study also aims to provide insights into the discursive approach to disagreement and (im)politeness, particularly the applicability of the relational work model (Locher and Watts, 2005; 2008) and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2002; 2005) within the context of Twitter interaction. Theoretically speaking, the study intends to examine to what extent these frameworks help in understanding what is going on when disagreement occurs in online interaction. It also aims to explore the influence of the medium on the interactional order of disagreement and identify its target in a multi-participant and multimodal platform. In terms of the methodology, the study aims to examine the disagreement strategies and the mitigation and aggravation devices used with disagreement expressions as found in the corpus of tweets. Then, Saudi Twitter users were consulted to obtain their reactions and evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in some of the identified disagreements using online questionnaires and interviews. The study specifically attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key features of Saudis' Twitter disagreements identified in the corpus?
 - a. What are the disagreement types and strategies identified in the corpus of Saudis' tweets?
 - b. What are the mitigation and aggravation devices Saudis used to modify the structure of the disagreements?
2. How do Saudis conceptualise (im)politeness, particularly in relation to Twitter communication?
3. What are the main resources that Saudis draw on when performing (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements?
4. To what extent do the chosen frameworks (relational work and rapport management) help understand the discursive nature of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements?

The first question seeks to identify the types of disagreements found on Twitter; whether Saudis' Twitter disagreements are more mitigated (softened), showing an attempt to maintain social harmony; neither mitigated nor aggravated (unmodified); or aggravated (strengthened), thus reflecting some level of impoliteness. Answering this question will show whether observations such as Alghathami's claim that Saudis tend to express heated disagreements on Twitter are credible. By finding which type of disagreement is more common in the corpus of tweets, I will not only provide evidence for or against such observations but also seek to shed some light on why one type is more common than the other. Furthermore, the question aims to find any cultural-specific strategies of disagreement, mitigation devices, and aggravation devices compared to other strategies reported in the literature. The investigation of this question is based on analysing the corpus of tweets collected for this study and consulting previous taxonomies of disagreements and (im)politeness. It involves using qualitative and descriptive quantitative analyses, principally frequencies, to further our understanding of disagreement and (im)politeness in Saudi Arabic.

The second question aims to shed light on the influence of Twitter on Saudis' realisation and conceptualisation of disagreement and (im)politeness online. This question can be answered by examining data collected through online questionnaires and follow-up interviews to collect Saudis' evaluations and metapragmatic assessments of disagreement

and (im)politeness on Twitter. The analysis of the data here also involves using qualitative and descriptive quantitative analyses, mostly frequencies.

The third question seeks to determine some of the key resources that Saudi Twitter posters draw on when engaging in Twitter disagreements, particularly when performing aggravated disagreements. Also, it aims to find out how respondents to the online questionnaire evaluate the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of Twitter disagreements with regard to these resources. This question sheds light on how individuals creatively use the resources available to them when performing (im)politeness, and how the use of these resources might be constrained by their assessment of societal norms. Discursive approaches are concerned with analysing these resources to gain insight into the variability of (im)politeness understandings (van der Bom and Mills, 2015). Therefore, addressing this question will help unravel individuals' creativity in utilising the available resources to perform and evaluate (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements. This question is answered qualitatively, using examples from the corpus and supported by respondents' answers to the online questionnaire and the interviews.

The fourth question seeks to examine the applicability of the relational work model and rapport management to online data. This question primarily aims to determine what each model can offer to better account for (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements, especially given that the interactions on Twitter tend to be short, fragmented, and involve multiple participants from various social networks. This question is answered by providing a reflective discussion of how I used these models in analysing Twitter disagreements, focusing mainly on identifying the points of strength and weakness in each model, and what can be taken into consideration when using these models to analyse disagreements in online interaction.

1.3 Overview of Twitter in Saudi Arabia

The sections below focus on four main areas: Section 1.3.1 briefly introduces Twitter as one popular social media platform in Saudi Arabia. In Section 1.3.2, I present some examples of how Saudis use Twitter to organise collective efforts, address issues and discuss changes in the country. Then, in Section 1.3.3, I briefly explain the Saudi 2030 vision and its relevance to the study.

1.3.1 Twitter as a communication channel

Twitter (www.twitter.com) was launched in 2006 as a microblogging and social networking site available in more than 20 languages (Shapp, 2014).² Twitter allows users to publish short, primarily text-based messages known as tweets (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Twitter messages were limited to 140 characters, but in 2017 the length of tweets was doubled to 280 characters.³ Twitter users have the option to make their accounts public, giving access to everyone, even non-followers and non-users of Twitter. Alternatively, users can make their accounts private, thus restricting access to their pages to approved followers. Twitter provides its users with different communicative functions such as replying to other tweets, mentioning others in a tweet or tagging others in a tweet,⁴ liking, tweeting (posting), and retweeting (reposting) another tweet as it is or with the option of adding a comment to it. Moreover, users can attach a limited number of media to their tweets, such as photos, GIFs, and short clips; users also can use hashtags anywhere in a tweet.

In recent years, Twitter has attracted a lot of attention in linguistics, especially as a source for collecting naturally occurring data. In the wider literature, there are many studies in different linguistic subfields; for instance in political discourse analysis of tweets (e.g., Konnelly, 2015; Coesemans and De Cock, 2017), diffusion of linguistic innovations (e.g., Squires, 2014; Maybaum, 2013), gender and language in Twitter (e.g., Coats, 2017; Bamman et al., 2014), and dialectal variations (e.g., Russ, 2012). While most studies about Arabic social media are driven by non-linguistic interests and mostly focus on investigating the role of social media in online journalism, marketing, activism, politics, technology in education, and social change (e.g., Howard et al., 2011; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013; Aman and Jayroe, 2013; Aljenaibi, 2014; Alsaggaf and Simmons, 2015; Alotaibi, 2017; Aladsani, 2018; Almankory, 2019; Almutarie, 2019), there are a few linguistic Arabic studies that examined (im)politeness online. For instance, examining disagreement and (im)politeness on Facebook (Harb, 2016), abusive language on Arabic social media (Mubarak and Magdy, 2017), a comparative study of impoliteness strategies in Arabic and English Facebook comments (Hammod and Abdul-Rassul, 2017), impoliteness in Arabs negotiation of Islamic moral order on Twitter (Alzidjaly, 2019),

² In July 2023, Twitter was rebranded and is now called X. Throughout this study, Twitter is used in reference to the platform given the data collection phase occurred prior to this rebranding.

³ In late 2022, Twitter extended the characters limit to subscribers of Twitter Blue service up to 4000 characters.

⁴ Mentioning someone in a tweet is included in the characters count limit whereas tagging is not included.

intertextuality and (im)politeness in online Arabic newspaper comments (Badarneh, 2020), and politeness strategies in Saudi EFL teachers' Twitter disagreements (Alghamdi, 2023). This shows that examining (im)politeness in Twitter interaction, specifically in the Saudi context, requires further attention.

1.3.2 Twitter in Saudi Arabia

New technology has indeed offered societies great opportunities for self-expression that traditional media cannot accommodate. In the Arab world, although both new and traditional media are widely censored, social media platforms are less controlled than traditional media. In 2015, Major General Mansour Alturki said in a press conference that the Saudi Ministry of Interior does not closely monitor all activities on social media as these platforms are largely open spaces, can be used by anyone, and individuals can also create multiple accounts (Alanbar, 2015). He stressed that the surveillance of social media platforms focuses mainly on specific accounts that encourage hate crimes and publicise activities that are illegal according to the legal system in Saudi Arabia (Alliban, 2015). The difficulty in regulating and filtering social media platforms is claimed to be one of the reasons why Saudis have adopted these platforms in large numbers (Alsaggaf and Simmons, 2015). In the same way, Aljarallah (2017) states that Twitter allows users to express themselves in a less restricted online forum.

Twitter, in particular, has gained considerable recognition in the Gulf region, specifically among Saudis, making Saudi Arabia one of Twitter's biggest markets (Sreberny, 2015). Westall and McDowall (2016) report that in Saudi Arabia, Twitter is popular among young people between the ages of 18 to 24, followed closely by users in their late 20s to early 40s. They also state that around 55% of Saudis use Twitter and that Twitter usage is split fairly evenly between Saudi men and women. The majority of Twitter users access Twitter via mobile phones (Sreberny, 2015).

Twitter, more than any other social media platform, is the public platform used by many members of the Saudi royal family, politicians, academics, and clerics, among other influential individuals and groups. It is evident that Twitter hosts many world leaders, influencers, and policymakers both nationally, like King Salman (@KingSalman) and the previous minister of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (@AdelAljubeir), and internationally (e.g., @JoeBiden, @JustinTrudeau, @RishiSunak).

It is proposed by Alsaggaf and Simmons (2015) that authorities in Saudi Arabia appear to be paying close attention to what is happening online, and in some cases, authorities'

responses can be prompt. For example, in 2018, a man travelling with his family committed a traffic violation during Al-Hajj season. They were stopped by a police officer; however, the man and his family began insulting the officer while their young daughter recorded the incident. The officer issued the father with a traffic ticket and did not escalate the situation. A few hours later, the recorded video went viral on Twitter using the hashtag *#dugi:_ʕla_ʕmatk*, which means (*#call_your_aunt*), a phrase that the father used when addressing his daughter in the video. The hashtag was trending in Saudi Arabia, as many people were very supportive of the police officer and asked for the family to be punished for not complying with the law, being disrespectful to the cooperative officer, and causing a disturbance. It was not very long before authorities detained the family for further investigation.

In addition, Twitter has also been used in many online movements like the campaign for women's rights to drive cars in 2013 and 2016. Moreover, in 2016, Twitter was the main means of organising a boycott against the Saudi Telecom Company (STC) as the public was furious because of the company's restriction on internet data or what is also called *fair use*. Similarly, in 2018, Saudis organised another boycott against Almarai, one of the major dairy companies in the region. Saudis used the hashtag *#muqa:tʕat_almra:ʕi:* (*#boycott_Almarai*) to express their disappointment and anger following the company's imposition of a sudden price increase. In 2016, Twitter was effectively used alongside traditional media to introduce Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's 2030 Vision reform plans and, according to the France-based social media monitor SemioCast there were around 860,000 tweets, produced by 46% of Saudis discussing the Vision programme on Twitter (Westall and McDowall, 2016). These examples demonstrate that Twitter is certainly used for spreading awareness, sharing information, and having a public dialogue on social and political matters (Konnolly, 2015). Hence, it is indeed a rich source of naturally occurring data, and more importantly, it is a place where many disagreements undoubtedly occur.

1.3.3 Saudi Vision 2030

The Saudi 2030 Vision was launched in 2016; it generally represents a transformative and ambitious plan to create a diversified, innovative, and world-leading nation for the advantage of future generations. The 2030 Saudi Vision programme is considered a turning point for Saudi society; it is at a stage at which people's abilities to accept, adapt and even reject social changes have been tested, specifically in its initial stages. The data in this study were collected from the early years of this period, particularly between 2017

and 2018, shedding light on Saudis' different perspectives on sociocultural and political matters relevant to the changes happening in the country; see Section 4.2.1 for the hashtags covered in the corpus. This section provides a general summary of the Saudi 2030 Vision obtained from the official website at (<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/>).

The vision is built around three overarching themes: (1) a vibrant society, (2) a thriving economy and (3) an ambitious nation. The first theme focuses on three aspects of enriching society through (1.1) celebrating cultural and Islamic heritage and strengthening the Saudi national identity. Different projects are devised to achieve this, including increasing the capacity for welcoming and accommodating Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million every year, and registering more heritage sites with UNESCO. (1.2) Promoting the physical, psychological, and social well-being of citizens and residents; this is seen in the projects that aim to improve the quality of life in cities, preserve the environment, and develop sustainable resources. (1.3) Reinvigorate social development to build a strong and more productive society; projects serving the achievement of this goal aim to focus on improving and reshaping educational and health systems and providing families with all the necessary support to thrive.

The second theme primarily focuses on enriching the country's economy by creating an environment that increases business opportunities, expands economic sources, and creates jobs for all Saudis. Some of the main goals, for instance, are increasing women's participation in the workforce from 22% to 30% and lowering the rate of unemployment from 11.6% to 7%. The last theme is essentially about increasing the standard of performance, management, and accountability for the government and all organisations (private and public). It aims to empower citizens and organisations to take the initiative and participate in recognising opportunities for improvement. One of the significant goals of this theme is paying attention to the quality of government electronic services (e-government).

1.4 Thesis structure

Each chapter in this thesis starts with a brief overview describing the aim of the chapter and ends with a summary of what the chapter covered. The thesis is organised as follows: **Chapter 1** has provided an overview of the study, establishing the rationale behind the study, the research questions, and the purpose of doing the study. It also offered a general background on Twitter in Saudi Arabia. **Chapter 2** covers the literature on disagreement, how it is defined, and how it is treated within traditional literature, specifically in relation

to speech act theory and traditional Arabic literature. It also addresses previous studies on disagreement in online and offline communication and the status quo of disagreement studies in recent Arabic literature. The last section of the chapter outlines some of the key taxonomies of disagreement strategies reported in previous research. **Chapter 3** is dedicated to the literature on (im)politeness approaches, covering classical politeness theories and postmodern theories of (im)politeness. The chapter offers a detailed account of the relational work model (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005) and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2002; [2000] 2008). In addition, it provides background about mitigation and aggravation devices and Culpeper's work on impoliteness (e.g., Culpeper, 1996; 2011a). Overall, the chapter provides the theoretical framework for this study and the last sections were used along the disagreements taxonomies in building the coding framework followed in the current study.

Chapter 4 is designed to cover the process of the data collection and preparation. It also explains the coding framework and the analytical approach followed in this study. **Chapter 5** contains the quantitative analysis of the corpus of Twitter disagreements, online questionnaires and interviews. The qualitative analysis in the study is presented in two chapters; **Chapter 6** presents the qualitative analysis of disagreement types and strategies identified in the corpus. **Chapter 7** presents the qualitative analysis of (im)politeness evaluations of disagreements collected from respondents and interviewees. The discussion of the findings is then presented in **Chapter 8**, and lastly, **Chapter 9** provides the conclusion of the study, pointing out its contributions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 Overview of Disagreement Research

The focus of this chapter is to present an overview of the literature on disagreement. Section 2.1 shows how disagreement is related to other relevant terms, such as argument and conflict. Section 2.2 illustrates how disagreement is treated within speech act theory. Section 2.3 offers a summary of how disagreement has been approached in the broad Arabic literature; looking at how disagreement is generally defined and classified and the etiquette of disagreement. Then, Section 2.4 presents a focused discussion of the literature on disagreement studies; the first half of the section is divided into two subsections. Section 2.4.1 offers an overview of some disagreement studies in offline interaction, while Section 2.4.2 covers studies that examine disagreement in online interaction. Then, in Section 2.4.3, I review the status quo of disagreement in the recent studies in Arabic linguistics. Finally, in Section 2.4.4, I present a list of taxonomies derived from previous studies that inspired my analysis and coding of disagreement types and strategies, as will be clarified in Chapter 4.

2.1 Disagreement and other related concepts

When scrutinising the extensive literature on disagreement, it appears that disagreement has been approached from different angles. For example, disagreement has been studied in the area of conversation analysis (e.g., Pomerantz, 1984; Pearson, 1986), social psychological pragmatics (e.g., Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998), speech act theory (e.g., Sornig, 1977), early politeness theories (e.g., Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987), second language learning (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004), and in digitally-mediated communication (DMC) (e.g., Baym, 1996; Bou-Franch and Blitvich, 2014). It was noted by Koczogh (2013, p.211) that the literature on disagreement rather reveals a “terminological turmoil” as different terms are used to describe it, for instance, contradiction (e.g., Sornig, 1977), confrontation (e.g., Hutchby, 1992), argument (e.g., Schiffrin, 1984; 1985), conflict talk (e.g., Honda, 2002), and opposition (e.g., Kakavá, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury, 2004). The abundance of definitions for the term disagreement found in the literature highlights “a lack of a uniform definition and conceptualization of the notion” (Koczogh, 2013, p.211). Therefore, for clarity, my aim in the next sections (from 2.1.1 to 2.1.3) is to provide a brief account of some of the strongly interconnected concepts usually found in the literature of disagreement. This is followed by a more focused discussion of the term disagreement in Section 2.1.4 along with a justification of the definition of Twitter disagreement employed in this study.

2.1.1 Opposition or oppositional talk

One of the closely related notions to disagreement is opposition, which, according to Kakavá (2002), refers to “an oppositional stance (verbal or non-verbal) issued to an antecedent verbal (or non-verbal) action” (p.1538). She also notes that opposition can be expressed in silence, which can function as a means of opposition (i.e. withholding approval) in certain situations. Kakavá (2002) considers disagreement to fall under the wider category of opposition. Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004) state that the term oppositional talk is usually used in a broad sense as it includes “disagreements, challenges, denials, accusations, threats, and insults” (p.200). Therefore, disagreement here is understood to be one way of opposing a previous claim or proposition. Moreover, Kakavá (2002) asserts that disagreement always occupies the second conversational turn and that a long stretch of oppositional turns are no longer disagreement but rather a dispute or argument as will be explained below.

2.1.2 Conflict (talk) and confrontation

Another notion highly connected to disagreement is conflict. Honda (2002) refers to conflict as “a speech activity in which two parties attempt to *maintain* their own positions *by means of opposition*, that is, the manifestation of *negativity* against the other party’s position that is opposed to one’s own” (p.575) [emphasis added]. Conflict talk, according to Honda, includes not only a display of opposition but also “the whole process of inducement, initiations, development, and management of opposition” (p.575). Thus, it seems that in Honda’s view, conflict talk is not just about the oppositional moment but also includes what comes before and after it. This is similar to Bousfield’s (2008, p.183) argument that impoliteness does not occur “out of the blue”, but there are three essential components: beginnings (i.e. triggers), middles (i.e. a set of options available to the interlocutors in interaction) and ends (i.e. resolutions) (p.218-220). Hutchby (1992) also notes that negative attitudes towards the others’ position are also a key component in confrontations that are also described as aggravated oppositions. Both conflict and confrontation share the elements of negativity and strong opposition.

2.1.3 Dispute and argument

Unlike the terms mentioned above, Koczogh (2013) argues that the term ‘argument’ is complex as it has different distinct meanings based on the context. However, she identifies two significant meanings that are of relevance to the discussion here: (1) a methodological process of logical reasoning; and (2) a dispute involving strong disagreement. That is to say, in the first sense, argument is an illocutionary verb with the perlocutionary effect of convincing (Eemeren and Grootendorst, [1984] 2010). This effect of convincing is lost in the second sense. Kakavá (2002) describes dispute or argument as “the exchange of more than two oppositional turns” (p.1539). It is an activity where participants engage in an exchange of oppositional moves to challenge and/or offer support for a position. This definition is in accordance with Schiffrin’s (1987) definition; she defines an argument as “discourse through which speakers support disputable positions” (p.18). She asserts that the three key components of an argument are position, dispute, and support. An argument is an interaction which consists of persistent disagreement and competitive negotiation (Schiffrin, 1984).

Likewise, Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) propose that an argument is an interactive conversation that includes claims that cause disagreements that raise countering disagreements, and these disagreements are dealt with and resolved. Koczogh (2013) suggests that “argument is defined formally as an expansion of the speech act of disagreement, and functionally as a means of managing disagreement in interaction”. She also states that out of all the above terms, it seems that argument and disagreement are the most commonly used. However, the term argument is seen to be broader in scope than disagreement.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned accounts, the relationship between these concepts can be visualised in Figure 2-1. These notions are indeed interconnected but are neither interchangeable nor synonymous. Koczogh (2013) clarifies that the distinction between these notions can be drawn along the lines of attitudes (negative or positive) and dimensions (local or interactional). The focal point here is that disagreement appears to be the seed or at the core of these other terms.

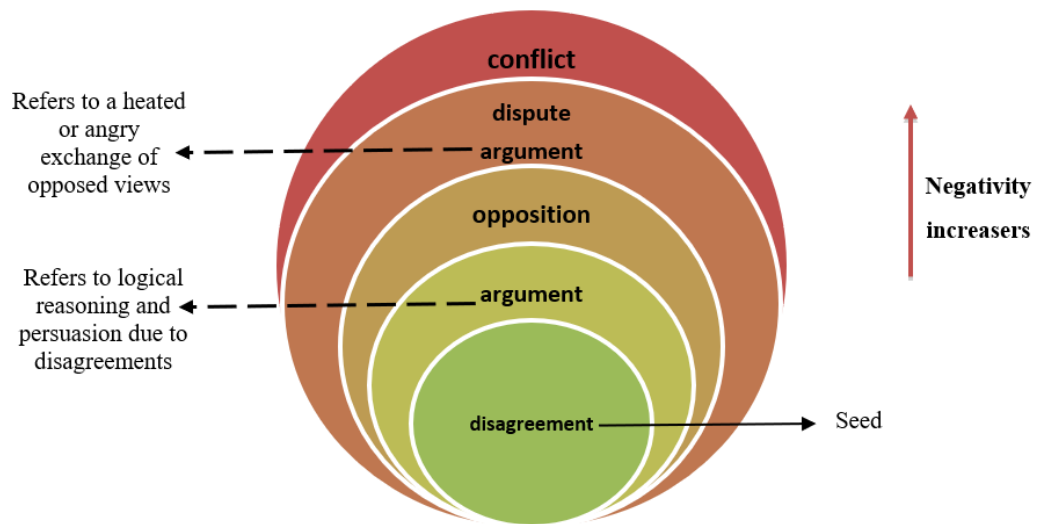


Figure 2-1: The relationship between disagreement and other related terms

2.1.4 On defining disagreement

The pervasive trend in examining disagreement has been more attentive to verbal disagreement in offline communication. Drawing upon the theory of speech acts, Sornig (1977) defines disagreement as “any utterance that comments upon a pre-text by questioning part of its semantic or pragmatic information (sometimes its formal structure as well), correcting or negating it (semantically or formally)” (p.363). This definition clearly shows that disagreement depends on a prior act, and thus, it must be analysed within its particular context (Koczogh, 2013). The act of disagreement has the basic characteristic of reflecting, perhaps implicitly, on a prior (speech) act, and this is why it is regarded as a reactive act (Sornig, 1977). Although Sornig’s definition of disagreement is detailed, it still neglects non-verbal disagreements (Koczogh, 2013; Harb, 2016).

Like Sornig’s (1977) view, Rees-Miller (2000) also considers disagreement a reactive act. She offers a more technical definition of disagreement by stating that “[a] speaker S disagrees when s/he considers untrue some Proposition P uttered or presumed to be espoused by an Addressee A and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is *Not P*” (p. 1088) [original italics]. The definition of disagreement provided by Rees-Miller (2000) clearly shows that disagreement can be expressed directly or indirectly as well as implicitly or explicitly (p.1089). She points out that her definition focuses only on verbal disagreement, excluding non-verbal disagreement. Also, the definition rules out non-serious verbal disagreements. For example, disagreeing for the purpose of joking or teasing. Moreover, her definition appears to be more concerned with the proposition’s truth value; however, disagreement does not occur only when a

previous proposition is considered untrue. For instance, one might disagree with a previous proposition because of the tone it was used or the wording of it.

Disagreement was also defined by Edstrom (2004) as the “communication of an opinion or belief contrary to the view expressed by another speaker, may involve actively defending one’s opinion, attacking another’s position, or quietly withholding approval” (p.1499). She also adds that “[e]xpressions of disagreement are not always statements; they can be voiced as questions, exclamations, or even narratives and at times are communicated more by tone of voice than lexical choice” (p.1505). Edstrom’s definition (2004) does not clearly address non-verbal disagreement as well as implicit disagreements, which are indeed difficult to analyse as they prevent access to the speaker’s beliefs and opinions alike. Her definition has been criticised by both Koczogh (2013) and Harb (2016) in two aspects. First, they state that analysing the speaker’s belief is usually hard, problematic, and even impossible to access. The second part of the criticism is that disagreement “does not always have to mirror the speaker’s belief, as it can be a joke or teasing the other and still count as an act of disagreement” (Koczogh, 2013, p.219). Edstrom’s (2004) definition of disagreement aligns with that of Rees-Miller (2000) in discounting non-serious disagreements from the definition because the social function of non-serious disagreement is different.

Furthermore, Sifianou (2012) defines disagreement as “the expression of a view that differs from that expressed by another speaker” (p.1554). Koczogh (2013) notes that Sifianou considers disagreement as a “different” view instead of an “opposite”; this use of “different” actually lessens the negative element that is usually attached to disagreement. Although it is possible to say that Sifianou’s definition generally allows for both verbal and non-verbal ways of expressing disagreement, Harb (2016) argues that her definition remains insufficient as she does not clearly acknowledge the indirectness and implicitness of disagreement. Inspired by Sifianou’s work on disagreement, which was focused on defining disagreement outside speech act theory, Koczogh (2013, p.220) proposes the following definition of disagreement:

A situated activity whose function is to express an opinion (or belief) the propositional content or illocutionary force of which is – or is intended to be – partly or fully inconsistent with that of a prior (non-verbal) utterance

Koczogh’s definition appears to be inclusive of both verbal and non-verbal utterances, and it also highlights that disagreement is an activity that involves having inconsistent

positions rather than necessarily opposing or conflicting, thus reducing the negativity surrounding disagreement.

From the above accounts, I here summarise key features of disagreement in (a) and forms of disagreement reported in the literature (e.g., Pomerantz, 1984; García, 1989) are stated in (b).

(a)

1. It is a reactive act because it is strongly connected to a prior (speech) act (Sornig, 1977; Rees-Miller, 2000).
2. It is a situated activity (Koczogh, 2013).
3. Disagreement *per se* is not considered a negative act (Tannen, 2002; Angouri and Tseliga, 2010).
4. Disagreements are not always statements. They can be expressed as questions, exclamations, or even narratives and can be communicated by tone rather than lexical choice (Edstrom, 2004) as well as silence, i.e. withholding approval (Kakavá, 2002).

(b)

1. Direct vs. indirect
2. Explicit vs. implicit
3. Full vs. partial
4. Mitigated vs. unmitigated
5. Verbal vs. non-verbal
6. Personal vs. impersonal

In this study, I propose the following definition for Twitter disagreement:

A textual post⁵ that is responding to the main tweet — either to the tweet as a whole or some parts of it, for instance, the shared media or the poster her/himself; or it could be a response to a prior reply or other posts in the main thread. This disagreeing post states or expresses a position that is incompatible with the main tweet or the previous tweet, but it does not necessarily need to express a direct contradiction or opposition.

The identification of disagreement on Twitter is focused on directly expressed written disagreement, thus eliminating disagreement expressed by images, videos, or GIFs. The main reason behind this decision is that even though the internet has enriched people's

⁵ Twitter is a multimodal platform, thus disagreements can be expressed multimodally, however, I am primarily interested in the written form of Twitter disagreements.

means of communication, text-based communication remains the most popular in DMC (Herring, 2015).

2.2 Disagreement in speech acts theory

The following two sections briefly shed light on how disagreement was approached and classified in speech act theory, mainly focusing on Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1976) classifications of speech acts.

2.2.1 Austin's speech act theory

Although the notion of speech acts was foreshadowed in Wittgenstein's philosophical concept of language games, the theory of speech acts is usually attributed to John L. Austin. Speech acts theory was first introduced in Austin's (1962) pioneering work *How to do things with Words*. Austin initially proposed a two-way dichotomy of utterances/sentences known as performatives/constatives. The first refers to sentences with a performative function, such as promising, apologising, requesting, etc., as seen in Example 2.1. These sentences cannot be assessed in terms of the truth and falsity conditions. The latter refers to statements or assertions about the world, sentences like those in Example 2.2; these sentences are strongly linked to truth and falsity conditions, thus called truth-bearing.

Example 2.1: performatives

- a. I promise to call you tonight. (explicit performative of promise)
- b. I'll call you tonight. (implicit performative of promise)

Example 2.2: constatives

- a. It is raining outside.
- b. She is a law student.

Not long after, Austin discarded his earlier distinction of performatives/constatives utterances in favour of a broader theory of speech acts. He explains that it is not the syntactic or semantic properties of the sentence that makes it performative, but rather the specific communicative force of the utterance. The general theory he presented offers a

threefold distinction among speech acts, as shown in the figure below (see Huang, 2007, p.102):

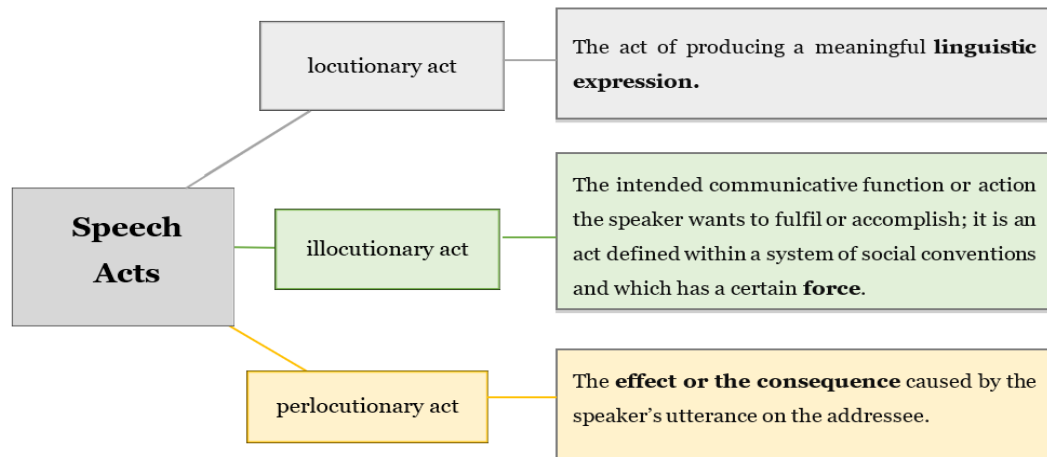


Figure 2-2: Austin's distinction of Speech Acts (1962)

For example, if A said to B, “*Don't you think it is very warm in here?*” (locutionary act) with the intention of requesting B to open the window (illocutionary force), if B actually opens the window, then the effect of the utterance has been achieved (perlocutionary effect). Huang (2007) notes that the same locutionary act can have different illocutionary forces in different contexts. He also states that in a narrow sense, a speech act, according to Austin, usually refers to the illocutionary act (p.103). Austin classifies speech acts into five groups based on their illocutionary force, which are: verdictives, exertives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives, see Figure 2-3.

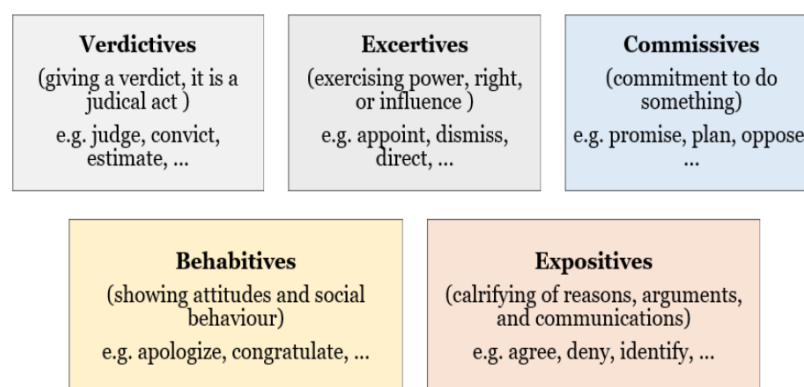


Figure 2-3: Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Acts (1962)

Austin (1962) states that “supporting, agreeing, disagreeing, maintaining, and defending, form another group of illocutions which seems to be both expositive and commissive” (p.158). However, the way Austin described the behabitives as a “*reaction to other people’s* behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and *expressions of attitudes to someone else’s* past conduct or imminent conduct” (p.159) [emphasis added] can also include disagreement within this group with other acts such as approve, challenge, criticise, etc. This cross-classification might reflect why this taxonomy is far from perfect, as Austin himself acknowledged, stating that “there are still wide possibilities of marginal and awkward cases, or of overlap” (p.151).

2.2.2 Searle’s Speech Acts Theory

There were several attempts to improve, extend and systemise Austin’s theory of speech acts; however, Searle’s contribution to refining Austin’s taxonomy of speech acts remains the most influential (Huang, 2007). Searle (1976) notes that Austin’s classification forms an excellent basis for analysing speech acts, but it is not a definitive one. Searle’s criticism of Austin’s theory of speech acts can be summarised in two key points. First, Austin’s taxonomy is a classification of *English* illocutionary verbs rather than illocutionary acts. It seems clear that “there is a persistent confusion between illocutionary acts and illocutionary verbs” (Searle, 1976, p.8). Second, the principles behind Austin’s categorisation of speech acts are ambiguous, thus leading to this evident overlap between the five categories as well as “a great deal of heterogeneity within some of the categories” (Searle, 1976, p.8). A detailed account of Searle’s argument can be found in (Searle, 1976; 1969; 1968; 1965).

A speech act, according to Searle (1969), consists of utterance act, propositional act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act, as shown in Figure 2-4. Utterance acts refer to the process of producing a string of words. Illocutionary and propositional acts refer to uttering words in sentences in a particular context, under particular conditions, and with particular intentions. Finally, perlocutionary acts refer to the effects or the consequences particular speech acts have on others.

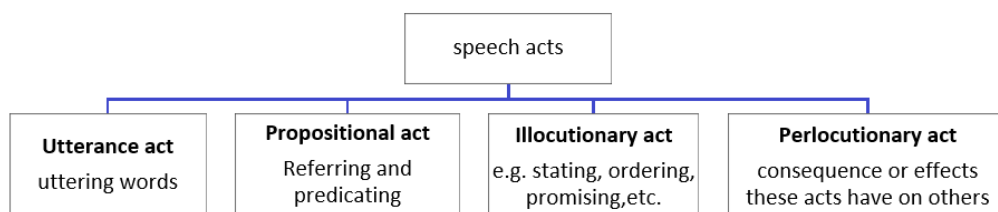


Figure 2-4: Searle's categories of Speech Acts

As for classifying illocutionary acts, Searle proposed five categories organised along three significant dimensions: the illocutionary point (i.e. purpose), the direction of fit, and the expressed psychological state. Table 2-1 displays Searle's classification.

Table 2-1: Searle's categorisation of illocutionary acts

Class of illocutionary act	Dimensions		
	Illocutionary point (purpose of the act)	Direction of fit	Psychological state (sincerity condition)
Representatives (or assertives)	S commits to the truth of the expressed P	word-to-world (↓)	Belief (that p)
Directives	S attempts to get H to do A	world-to-word (↑)	Want (or Wish or desire)
Commissives	Commits S to some future A	world-to-word (↑)	Intention
Expressives	S expresses attitudes, emotions, or states to H	No direction of fit (∅)	Variable (depending on the propositional content)
Declaratives	S's utterance affects change in some current state of affairs	word-to-world world-to-word (↕)	No sincerity condition (∅)

[Where is S = Speaker, H = Hearer, P = Proposition, and A = Act]

The speech act of disagreement can be counted as a member of the representatives (or assertives) class of illocutionary acts (Sornig, 1977; Koczogh, 2013). This is mainly because disagreement was described as a reaction act to a prior act, and through which the speaker represents what s/he believes to be the case (Sornig, 1977; Rees-Miller, 2000; Harb, 2016). Thus, in some cases, the speaker can express that a prior proposition is false by stating that it is *Not P* (Koczogh, 2013). However, it can be argued that disagreement could also be regarded as an expressive act where the speaker expresses emotions or attitudes towards a previous (speech) act.

The challenges in classifying disagreements in these classifications show why disagreement is considered a complex and polysemous speech act (e.g., Tannen, 2002; Sifianou, 2012). It also seems clear that the traditional literature of speech acts has given little attention to disagreement as a speech act (LoCastro, 1986), unlike other acts, for example, apology and request.

2.3 Disagreement in Arabic Literature

When consulting the Arabic literature, there appears to be limited research on disagreement in linguistics and (im)politeness studies. Instead, disagreement has been primarily approached from within the fields of Quranic and Islamic jurisprudence — particularly comparative jurisprudence. Scholars' disagreements on interpretations of specific verses or Islamic rulings were discussed in their work. However, these

discussions of and about disagreements were generally from an Islamic point of view. Overall, scholars seem to agree that disagreement is sometimes unavoidable given the fact that human beings naturally differ religiously, intellectually, emotionally, etc. Nevertheless, they all discourage disagreements that lead to dissent and division, affecting the unity and harmony of society (Alalwani, 1993 [2011]).

The Islamic Arabic literature contains numerous publications (i.e. sermons, articles, and books) on disagreement; for example, Alalwani (1993 [2011]) published his book *Ethics of Disagreement in Islam* around 1984, translated into English in 1993. Zidan (1988) also addressed the issue of disagreement from an Islamic perspective. Similarly, Awamah (1991) discussed disagreement between Islamic scholars on religious topics. There are other publications on disagreement, Islamic etiquette in disagreements, and disagreement in Islamic history and how the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) and his companions dealt with disagreements, to mention a few (Humaid, 1992), (Alsadlan, 1996), (Bazmul, 2004), and (Kamel, 2010).

The aforementioned confirms that disagreement was certainly discussed in the literature; however, these studies were heavily focused on accounting for disagreement mainly from a religious and historical point of view. Although these studies did not address disagreement and (im)politeness in the context of daily communication, they remain highly significant to further our understanding of the cultural conceptualisation of disagreement and (im)politeness in Islamic Arabic culture.

2.3.1 Definition of disagreement

The close Arabic equivalents of the word *disagreement* are *ʔixtila:f* and *xila:f*. A few scholars have attempted to distinguish between the two terms. For instance, Alabara (2017) stated that one of the ways that scholars used to differentiate between *ʔixtila:f* and *xila:f* is that the former is used to refer to the difference in means while the goal is the same, whereas the latter is used to refer to the difference in both means and the goal. Another proposed difference between the terms is that *ʔixtila:f* refers to differences based on evidence, while *xila:f* refers to differences that are not based on evidence. However, the majority of scholars have agreed that the two terms are not different in their general meaning (e.g., Zidan, 1988; Alabara, 2017). Generally, disagreement is defined as taking or adopting a different view or position than the other (Zidan, 1988; Alalwani, 1993

[2011]). It is argued that not every disagreement is an opposition, but every opposition is a disagreement (Alalwani, 1993 [2011]).⁶

2.3.2 Classification of disagreement

Islamic scholars (e.g., Alalwani, 1993 [2011]; Kamel, 2010; Bazmul, 2004) tend to differentiate between two major types of disagreement; *ʔixtila:f maḥmu:d* (positive/preferred disagreement), and *ʔixtila:f maḍmu:m* (negative/dispreferred disagreement). The former term is used to refer to disagreement originating from diversity and the existence of many different views, thoughts, methods, etc. This disagreement usually occurs in secondary matters rather than fundamental ones. This type is described as natural as it is seen to be caused by the general heterogeneity in religions, languages, human traits, etc. The second type of disagreement, *ʔixtila:f maḍmu:m*, originates from opposition and it is triggered by several reasons and motives such as self-centeredness, pride in one's opinion, cynicism and accusation without evidence, pursuing a desire, a position or recognition, lack of knowledge, prejudice and ideologies be they tribal, national, religious, political, etc. (Kamel, 2010).

Moreover, disagreement has been classified based on motives. The first type is disagreement driven by desire or inclination and thus perceived negatively. Here, disagreement is usually based on achieving a personal outcome, like showing off knowledge or superiority. The second type is disagreement that stems from holding different beliefs, where people seek to prove the righteousness of their beliefs. From an Islamic standpoint, this type of disagreement can be negative, depending on the situation. The third type of disagreement is driven by different views, and this type can be either positive or negative based on the circumstances and the matter of disagreement (Alalwani, 1993 [2011]; Alsadlan, 1996).

Alalwani (1993 [2011]) distinguishes between disagreement, dispute, argument, and discord, which I present in Figure 2-5 below to demonstrate the connection between these concepts. He states that disagreement might provoke and escalate to an argument or a dispute; this occurs when disagreement is not expressed with manners and etiquette. He emphasises that when disagreement is expressed with manners, it can be positive and

⁶ All definitions in this paragraph are my translation of the Arabic texts.

beneficial. The benefits of positive disagreement, as accounted for by Alalwani (1993 [2011]), can be summed up in two key points:

1. Positive disagreement is an exercise for the mind as it enriches one's knowledge and broadens his/her intellectual horizon (i.e. learning).
2. Positive disagreement could lead to discovering various options and solutions to the same matter (i.e. creativity).

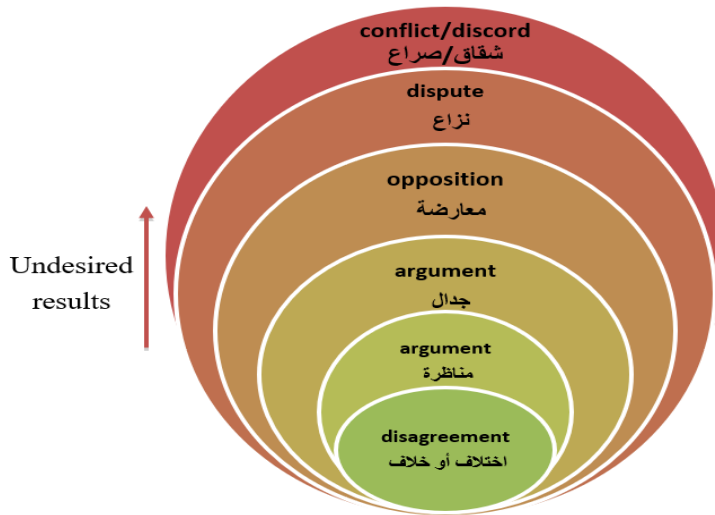


Figure 2-5: Disagreement relationship to other concepts in Arabic Literature

2.3.3 Etiquette in disagreements

Although Islamic scholars did not formulate theoretical frameworks for (im)politeness in disagreements, one can still recognise that they acknowledged the importance of politeness and etiquette in communication, particularly when disagreements arise. Islamic scholars discouraged disagreements that lead to division, as they can detrimentally impact harmony in both relationships and societies. They also stressed the crucial role of the language used in conversations, mainly when there are different or contrasting views. For example, Kamel (2010) provided a short summary of the manners interlocutors should abide by during disagreement:⁷

1. Start with shared agreements (establishing common ground).
2. Select the right words and avoid provoking or hurting the other.
3. Indirectness is preferred; avoid direct language such as ‘You are wrong!’ and ‘I will prove how ignorant you are!’
4. Praise the other.

⁷ My translation.

5. Avoid mockery.
6. Avoid vagueness.

Overall, the rules or guidelines about dealing with disagreements with others found in the Arabic literature generally bear some resemblance to early politeness theories covered in Section 3.1.1. These rules show that social harmony is emphasised and that damage to the other should be minimised.

2.4 Reflexive account of previous research on disagreement

In the previous sections, I provided a general background on how traditional literature defines and handles disagreements. The following sections aim to provide a more focused review of studies on disagreement, which I divided into two general categories; Section 2.4.1 includes studies that examined disagreement in offline communication (e.g., Sornig, 1977; Pomerantz, 1984; Rees-Miller, 2000; Kakavá, 2002; Netz, 2014). Then, Section 2.4.2 covers studies that looked at disagreement in online communication (e.g., Baym, 1996; Graham, 2007; Angouri and Tseliga, 2010; Shum and Lee, 2013). Section 2.4.3 provides insight into the status quo of Arabic studies on disagreement in both online and offline communication. The last section outlines the different taxonomies of disagreement types and strategies derived from previous studies; these taxonomies inspired the coding framework of my data presented in Chapter 4.

2.4.1 Disagreement in offline communication

Early studies on disagreement were concerned with identifying linguistic features of disagreements to demonstrate why disagreements are considered negative or dispreferred acts. For instance, Pomerantz (1984) looked at agreement and disagreement in what is referred to as second assessments: subsequent assessments referring to the same referent in the prior assessment (p.62). She stated that initial assessments could be structured in a way to invite one of the two next actions: a preferred-action turn shape that is mostly agreement or a dispreferred-action turn shape that is mostly disagreement.⁸ In her analysis of disagreement, she differentiates between weak disagreement and strong disagreement; weak disagreement is usually prefaced with an agreement token (i.e. partial agreement +

⁸ The concept of preference refers to a range of non-equivalent conversational structures/actions available to the participants; in certain contexts, some specific structures are preferred based on the expectations of that context. It is pointed out by Levinson (1984) that the notion of preference corresponds with the notion of linguistic markedness; see Kotthoff (1993).

partial disagreement). Weak disagreements can also be prefaced by delay devices such as hesitation/no talk gap (i.e. silence), requests for clarification, and hesitation markers like *well* and *uh* (p.75). On the other hand, strong disagreement is a direct contrastive evaluation; it includes only disagreement components.

Pomerantz (1984) further explained that the dispreferredness of disagreement in most situations comes from the likelihood it will make conversations uncomfortable, unpleasant, threatening, offensive, etc., thus making agreement more preferred to achieve solidarity and sociability. However, she asserts that in limited situations, support and sociability are accomplished by disagreement, focusing on the example of disagreement after a self-deprecating assessment is usually preferred over agreement (p.64, p.77). It seems that Pomerantz's (1984) view of disagreement is similar to the one found in the classical account of politeness theories (Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987); see Section 3.1.1. Early politeness theories consider disagreement unfavourable and better avoided to maintain harmonious interactions with others. Given that Pomerantz's (1984) study used conversation analysis as the main analytical approach, the effect of the situational context on disagreements was not at the core of the disagreement analysis.

Kotthoff (1993) examined disagreement in Anglo-American and German disputes taken from long stretches of dyadic discussions produced by 16 participants (students and professors). She stressed the importance of context in determining what is preferred or dispreferred; later studies like the ones covered below support this argument. She reported that in this academic context, disagreements become more preferred when an argument has been established than agreements, mainly because the expectation in this context is for one to defend their position (p.193). Therefore, concession or giving up one's position in these arguments might be interpreted as one being unable to develop an argument or being submissive (p.213). She acknowledged that disagreements are influenced by cultural and contextual expectations evoked in the interaction (p.201, p.203).

Kotthoff explained that interlocutors typically indicate how they orient themselves in the interaction so others can adjust their expectations. The signalling of disagreements shows the degree of these disagreements (strong or weak). These signals and cues can be interpreted differently, even within the same culture (p.199). Her study showed that disagreement could be aggravated by different devices such as word repetition, laughter, intonation, reluctance markers, and downgrading the topical relevance. On the other hand, disagreement can be mitigated by devices such as hesitation, downplaying, and partial agreement tokens. Kotthoff's study encourages the departure from taking the unmarked

structure as the preferred structure in interaction, especially considering cultural and contextual differences (p.196). Interestingly, she found that most of the disagreements in her data were not resolved but merely suspended (p.213).

Furthermore, one of the first studies that looked at the structural order of disagreement was that of Muntigl and Turnbull (1998). They looked at both the structure and the strategies of conversational disagreements — termed “arguing exchanges” (p.227) — as an interactional activity, which was proposed from the social-psychological pragmatics point of view. The structure of the disagreements they proposed is shown in the figure below (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998, p.227).

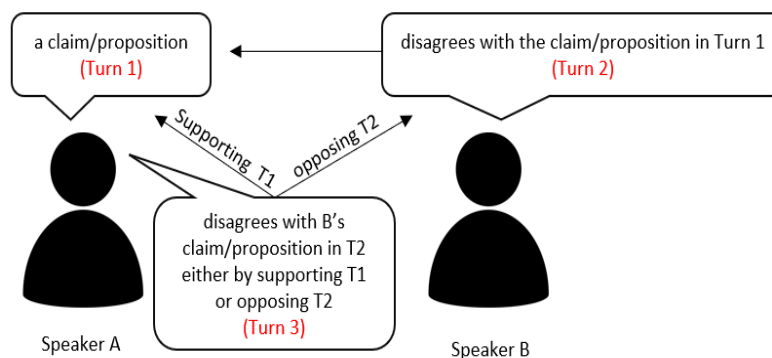


Figure 2-6: Conversational order of disagreement derived from Muntigl and Turnbull (1998)

Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) proposed five types of disagreement acts occurring in these turns. The types of disagreement they identified can occur with varying degrees of gravity:

1. Irrelevancy claim (IC): the prior claim is irrelevant to the discussion at hand.
2. Challenge (CH): questioning the prior claim and demanding more supportive evidence.
3. Contradiction (CT): contradicting the prior claim by expressing an opposite claim (the negated proposition of the prior claim).
4. Counterclaim (CC): proposing an alternative claim that does not necessarily contradict nor challenge the prior claim.
5. Act combination (AC): the use of two disagreement strategies and most frequently CT and CC

Although Muntigl and Turnbull’s account of the conversational turns of disagreement was based on dyadic face-to-face data, it was adapted to analyse online disagreement

(e.g., Langlotz and Locher, 2012; Harb, 2016). Langlotz and Locher (2012, p.1598) described Muntigl and Turnbull's (1998) tripartite turn-structure of disagreement as a sophisticated and helpful basis for systemising the discursive structure of disagreement; however, it requires a careful adjustment when applied to online disagreement; their study is presented in Section 2.4.2.

One of the studies that looked at the influence of specific contexts on disagreement strategies is Rees-Miller (2000). She examined disagreement in an American university setting. She focused on disagreement and its relation to the factors of power, severity (i.e. rank of imposition) and context. She observed the occurrences of verbal disagreements in classes and colloquia in three different directions: professors-students disagreements ($P \rightarrow S$), students-professors disagreements ($S \rightarrow P$), and peer disagreements. Her classification for disagreement is detailed in Table 2-2. Interestingly, she found that 72% of professors' disagreements with students were softened, while only 53% of students' disagreements with professors were softened. For instance, professors exclusively used positive comments when disagreeing with students, and they used humour and inclusive pronouns in their disagreements more than the students. This indicates that, at least in the academic context, the power parameter is not as significant as proposed by Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987). Professors' softened disagreement with the students is an effective and supportive teaching strategy mainly utilised to encourage participation and self-expression in class. Students' disagreements are taken as evidence of "an inquiring mind" reflecting active participation in the learning process; their disagreements are claimed to enhance the professors' positive face (p.1096).

Moreover, in Rees-Miller's (2000) study, aggravated disagreement has a low occurrence in the data, with one occurrence in professors' disagreements with students ($P \rightarrow S$) and six occurrences in students' disagreement with professors ($S \rightarrow P$). Aggravated disagreement mainly occurred between peers/those of equal status ($P \rightarrow P$) or ($S \rightarrow S$). Two-thirds (66%) of the instances of aggravated disagreement occurred in the history class when topics like cultural identity and racism were discussed — topics that affected participants personally. It is noteworthy, however, that she added that the low occurrence of professors' aggravated disagreements is difficult to generalise to other university professors due to their awareness of the study and its parameters. She concluded that certain factors like educational context, relationships between interlocutors, and topics are more influential than general factors such as power, rank of imposition, and gender. She stated that "a model of variables and patterns of politeness predicated from those

variables without reference to context does not adequately account for how disagreement is expressed” (Rees-Miller, 2000, p.1088).

Rees-Miller’s comment on the significance of context in disagreement goes in line with Sornig’s (1977) statement that “disagreement is not only sensitive to its co-text, but also to its whole (situational) context” (p.364). In the academic context, although the professors are relatively more powerful than students, they produced more mitigated disagreements and used more positive politeness. This is better explained by Locher’s statement (2004, p.31) that “high status is not always co-extensive with power”, meaning that in some contexts, “people with higher status can refrain from exercising power” while “interactants with lower status can decide to exercise power over people with relatively greater status”. Therefore, it can be said that the professors in the study likely deliberately exercised less power when disagreeing with students, probably mainly for educational purposes.

Some studies of disagreement took a cross-cultural approach for educational and pedagogical purposes, such as (Kreutel, 2007; Habib, 2008). Habib (2008) investigated the use of disagreement and humour, particularly teasing, as educational tools to strengthen relationships, raise cultural awareness, and assist the display of personal identity in cross-cultural communication. Habib’s (2008) study was based on three hours of audio-taped interactions among four female friends from different countries: Syria, Portugal, the United States, and Greece. In her data, she found that unmitigated disagreements among second language learners have high frequency, for instance, *not, no* and its repeated variants *no, no, no*. This high frequency of unmitigated disagreements might be the result of the close relationship between the participants (friends). Habib’s study shows that unmitigated disagreements are not straightforwardly labelled impolite or rude without consulting the whole context. It also shows that disagreement is an essential component of language learners’ pragmatic competence; as Kreutel (2007, p.19) argued, “lexico-grammatical proficiency does not imply pragmatic competence”; and that explicit pragmatic instruction is essential to for developing second language learners pragmatic competence.

Considering the discussion in Section 2.1, it is important to note that studies (e.g., Kotthoff, 1993; Habib, 2008) focused on examining disagreement over several conversational turns (i.e. long stretches of talk). Other studies (e.g., Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998; Kakavá, 2002) argued that disagreements usually occur in two or three interaction turns. Disagreement over a long stretch of oppositional turns is a dispute or argument

(Kakavá, 2002); this distinction is essential for the identification of disagreement in online interaction, as clarified in Section 2.4.2.

2.4.2 Disagreement in online communication

Online communication has facilitated exposure to opinions beyond the confines of persons' immediate social networks. In the last two decades, disagreement online has attracted significant attention; for instance, Graham (2007) examined disagreement and (im)politeness in conflict talk in close-knit email discussions in a *ChurchList*. Angouri and Tseliga (2010) analysed disagreement and (im)politeness drawn from two online communities of practice: Greek students and professional academics. Bolander (2012) looked at disagreements and agreements in personal/diary blogs, Shum and Lee (2013) investigated disagreement and (im)politeness in forum discussions in Hong Kong, and Harb (2016) looked at disagreement and (im)politeness among Arabic speakers on Facebook.

One of the earliest systematic studies of disagreement online was conducted by Baym (1996). She looked at disagreement and agreement in a predominantly female discussion group where participants talked about soap operas. She described online disagreement as a post that is “explicitly responsive” to other messages, stating an incompatible position with the previous message, not necessarily to be directly contradictory (p.14). She analysed disagreement and agreement in 524 messages, collected responses to two sets of open-ended surveys posted in the discussion group, and conducted interviews with the members of the discussion group. Out of the 524 messages, only 70 messages were coded as agreement and 51 as disagreement. She found that both agreement and disagreement were linked to a prior message mostly through the use of quotations followed by referencing others' posts.

In addition, Baym (1996) found that agreement and disagreement in written online communication have some shared strategic features like elaboration and reasoning. Also, some agreement instances contained mitigation markers, especially qualifiers like ‘I think that’ and ‘that’s only my opinion’; another feature commonly associated with disagreements.⁹ Moreover, she explained that disagreements in her data were expressed

⁹ Baym proposed that most of the differences between online agreement and disagreement and their offline counterparts are mainly due to the influence of the medium. For example, the use of elaboration in both agreement and disagreement was not previously reported as a common strategy in offline communication. Nonetheless, Baym (1996, p.33) revealed that elaboration is very pervasive in both

explicitly through the use of ‘disagree’ and its synonyms, disagreement tokens as ‘but’, and assessments which contradict the claim in the previous post. Also, disagreements were expressed implicitly in 18% of the instances; this implicitness was achieved through the utilisation of these strategies: (1) providing counter-examples as a way of elaborating one’s view, (2) contradicting the previous claim by reasoning, and (3) challenging the previous claim by posing questions. In addition, she noted that participants used different strategies to show affiliation as a way of mitigating disagreement; these strategies include partial agreement, acknowledging the other’s perspective, qualifiers, and naming (i.e. address terms) such as ‘my buddy’. However, Baym (1996, p.27) observed that naming is less frequent in disagreement than in agreement, and she suggested that using this strategy in disagreements “might create negative recognition, thus doing more of a disservice than service.”

Overall, Baym (1996, p.35) pointed out that online communication is often seen as encouraging competitive and hostile discourse — a phenomenon widely referred to as “flaming” (p.11). It has been postulated that flaming occurs due to a “lack of shared etiquette, by computer culture norms, or by the impersonal and text-only form of communication” (Kiesler et al., 1984, p.1130). However, she noted that the disagreements in the discussion group are “remarkably civil” since the members are focused on “differences in positions, rather than shifting to personal attacks”. The discussion group generally aims to create an emotionally welcoming space where members feel less threatened when expressing their thoughts. She suggested that the fact that the majority of the participants are females might have played a major role in the low occurrences of confrontation and hostility. Baym (1996) argued that although the influence of the medium on the expressions of agreements and disagreements is clear, other interrelated factors should not be ignored as they seem to affect the expression of agreement and disagreement online.

Furthermore, Langlotz and Locher (2012) investigated the links between disagreement, emotional stance and relational work in the online comment section of *MailOnline*. They used Muntigl and Turnbull’s (1998) framework in their approach; however, they modified the framework to match the nature of online communication, especially in terms of who is the target of disagreement (i.e. to whom the disagreement is oriented). They pointed

online agreement and disagreement, suggesting that it is used as “a way to increase a message’s interest value for a mass audience, meeting a wide readership’s needs while demonstrating one’s own competence at doing so.”

out that in online communication, the precise identification of the direction of disagreement and its target can be challenging and probably impossible in some cases. This difficulty is raised by the platform affordances and the nature of online communication, which is highly multimodal and intertextual with a multiparty frame of participation. They found that commenters use different linguistic and graphic means to index their emotions in disagreements, such as exclamations, sarcasm, irony, word play, name-calling, emotion words (e.g., pathetic), interjections and emoticons. They argue that examining emotional expressions is vital as they signal the commenter's orientation to the communication and their worldview; and that disagreements constitute an interesting testing ground to explore the use of various forms to index emotional stances (p.1604).

The relational work model was also used to analyse disagreement and (im)politeness in two online forums in Hong Kong (Shum and Lee, 2013). They used a triangulated methodology in investigating online disagreement involving a corpus analysis of 317 posts, two-part questionnaires given to 30 browsers (i.e. *lurkers*, which refers to individuals who browse the forums but do not often respond to the posted messages) of the forums, and follow-up interviews with 15 of the browsers. In the process of identifying disagreement strategies, they followed the taxonomy provided by Locher (2004) and the impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (1996) and Bousfield (2008), adjusting them when necessary to suit the online data. They identified 99 instances of disagreement in which 11 disagreement strategies were used, such as giving opposite opinions, negative comments, clarifying personal stances, etc. (see Table 2-2 below for a complete list of strategies). The respondents to the questionnaires were requested to complete a 5-point Likert scale to judge the identified disagreement strategies according to three parameters: politeness/impoliteness, appropriate/inappropriate, and positively/negatively marked.

In general, Shum and Lee (2013) found that the communicators in the two forums tend to disagree directly with no mitigation using strategies like negative comments, using short vulgar phrases, cursing, giving opposite opinions, and reprimanding. They found that most of the disagreement instances were politic, thus showing that disagreement is not always a face-threatening act (FTA). Regarding how respondents evaluated the strategies used to express disagreements, they reported that most respondents classified cursing and short vulgar phrases as impolite, inappropriate, and negatively marked. On the other hand, giving personal experiences and facts and making ironic statements are considered polite mainly because these strategies facilitate discussion and provide supporting ideas.

2.4.3 Disagreement in recent Arabic studies

The existing literature on speech acts and (im)politeness in Arabic reflects a lack of studies in the area of disagreement. To the best of my knowledge, there are four studies on disagreement in Arabic. Two studies examined disagreement in offline interaction (Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq, 2018; Alzahrani, 2021), while the other two examined disagreement in online interaction (Harb, 2016; Alghamdi, 2023).

Harb (2016) took an intralingual approach to examine disagreement and (im)politeness in Arabic speakers' Facebook communication. He also investigated the influence of topic and gender on disagreement strategies. The Facebook corpus he compiled contains 50,964 words collected from 19 Facebook pages/groups from 19 Arabic-speaking countries; however, the Gulf region altogether contributed only 3% of the data. In his study, Harb (2016) adopted the relational work model by Locher and Watts (2005). Based on this, he reported that 45% of disagreements in his data were unmarked (politic/appropriate), like the use of contradiction and supplication strategies. On the other hand, marked disagreement strategies were divided into two groups: 29% of those were negatively marked (impolite), such as the use of verbal attack or verbal irony, and 26% were positively marked (polite), including strategies like counterclaim and argument avoidance.

Harb (2016) showed that Arabic speakers tend to use ten strategies to express their disagreement online, some of which are found in other languages and cultures, but two were more culture-specific: supplication and mild-scolding. He argued that both strategies are classified as non-rude politic strategies based on the relational work model (Locher and Watts, 2005). Supplication, which occurred 5% in the corpus, refers to the exclusive use of religious language to indirectly express disagreement or disapproval of the prior claim. For example, the use of (al-*hawqalah*) لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله /*la: ĥawla wa la: quwata i?lla: bi'alla:h/* which could be translated in English as 'There is no power or might except by Allah'. The other strategy is mild-scolding was defined by Harb (2016) as the explicit use of (shame) عيب /*ʕajb/* to indicate that what someone is saying or doing contains a fault or a violation of common social or religious norms. The purpose of mild-scolding is to make the person who is seen as crossing the lines feel disgraced and embarrassed and push the individual to reconsider and correct his/her actions. Despite his claim that mild-scolding is culturally specific, Shum and Lee (2013) identified a similar disagreement strategy in Chinese online forums, which were referred to as reprimands

used when one points out the wrongdoing of the other mostly through stressing the feeling of shame.

With regard to mitigation devices, Harb (2016) showed that 1158 (82.7%) disagreements were unmitigated, while 242 (17.3%) were mitigated. More than half of the mitigated disagreement occurred in political topics, and 24.8% occurred in religious topics, with fewer occurrences in social topics. Harb (2016) suggested that mitigation is associated with the sensitivity and the controversy of the topics. He asserted that topic is a crucial factor in the way disagreement is expressed and evaluated. In his study, 44% of disagreements occurred in political topics, 31% in religious topics, and the lowest occurrences of disagreement were found in social topics, 25%. He stresses the strong correlation between the number of disagreements and the relative controversy of the topic. In a similar way, Rees-Miller (2000) agreed that topic is indeed an influential factor in how disagreement is expressed and assessed. She found that in the academic context, in particular, topic has a greater influence on disagreement than other factors such as power and gender; see 2.4.1 for an account of Rees-Miller's (2000) study.

Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq (2018) seek to account for the 'preferred' disagreement strategies in Jordanian Arabic, focusing on disagreement among students at Yarmouk University. The researchers were particularly interested in finding how the production of disagreement is influenced by Islamic and Arabic culture, particularly Jordanian culture. They claim that disagreement is not only about expressing contrasting ideas and opinions, but also revealing one's cultural background (p.423). Data were collected through the use of a discourse completion task (DCT), which was designed to include ten fictional situations focusing on two factors: social status and social distance. The respondents were asked to write what they would say in these situations to show their disagreements. The 217 respondents were asked to complete the DCT questionnaires, thus generating a total of 2,322 instances of disagreement.

Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq (2018) adopted the disagreement taxonomy proposed by Maíz-Arévalo (2014), dividing disagreement into strong (unmitigated) disagreement and weak (softened/mitigated) disagreement. Weak disagreement includes strategies such as partial disagreement, giving explanations, expressing regret, and expressions of uncertainty; these are usually used to minimise the face-threatening effect of disagreement. Strong disagreement can be expressed through strategies like bare negative forms, blunt statements of the opposite, insults, etc. Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq (2018) found that Jordanian students utilised 11 strategies when expressing disagreement. The

most frequently used strategies are giving explanations, bare negative forms, blunt statements of the opposite, and partial agreement/disagreement. Other strategies that are found in their study include expression of uncertainty, insults, negative judgment, request for information/clarification, and swearing.

In their study, swearing, also known as a “conversational oath” (Abdel-Jawad, 2000, p.218), refers to the use of God’s name (Allah) (Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq, 2018). According to Abdel-Jawad (2000), swearing has several functions; for instance, it is used to confirm a claim, emphasise a promise, intensify a threat or warning, deny an accusation, decline an offer, etc. (p.218). Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq (2018, p.433) claim that of the 11 strategies identified, swearing and giving advice are cultural-specific strategies that have not been reported in previous disagreement studies. Moreover, they state that Jordanians have a general tendency to mitigate their disagreement, and this predisposition is apparent in the frequent use of giving explanations and partial agreement. They explain that the frequency of these mitigated strategies is due to the face-threatening element of disagreements. However, the findings in their study do not necessarily reflect authentic disagreements in the 10 situations they included in their DCT. As Schneider (2018, p.67) highlighted, DCTs have been subject to extended criticism for many reasons; among these is that DCTs collect written data to gain insight into spoken discourse. Participants take their time to think about the situations, and their understanding of the instruction provided in these situations might vary. Also, they usually feel obliged to write something even though they might prefer to be silent in real situations. Overall, DCTs have been criticised for eliciting data that may not correspond to actual language use in the presented situations.

In the third study, Alzahrani (2021) took a cross-cultural approach, examining the similarities and differences in the realization of disagreement and (im)politeness in casual conversations in two groups of friends: Saudi Arabian and British. The conversation groups for each cultural set were divided into ten small groups of three participants; in each set, there were four groups of all males, four groups of all females, and two mixed. Participants were asked to discuss two topics: (1) planning a future trip, and (2) the advantages and disadvantages of the increased use of technology and social media. The study was mainly based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theoretical framework of politeness. The identification of disagreement strategies was data-driven; however, Alzahrani stated that he also referred to Rees-Miller’s (2000) and Walkinshaw’s (2009) disagreement taxonomies. In this study, Alzahrani focused on examining the influence of

three variables on the expression of verbal disagreement: cultural background, topic of discussion, and gender. The study revealed that 11 strategies were used to express disagreements, such as explanations, suggestions, and irony.

Alzahrani reported that the frequency of disagreement in the Saudi sample was higher than in the British sample. Some cultural similarities between the two samples were found; for instance, there were no disagreements expressed by personal attacks in the two groups. The two samples used strategies like giving reasons (i.e. explanations) and suggestions with relatively similar frequency. Overall, the majority of disagreements in the two samples were modified by politeness strategies. This finding goes in line with the traditional view that in the context of disagreement, politeness strategies should be used to minimise face-threat (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987). In terms of cultural differences, Saudis appear to employ irony more than their British counterparts, and they tend to use religious expressions to intensify their disagreements. Moreover, Saudis used humour and solidarity markers as positive politeness strategies more than the British participants.

Regarding the influence of the topic, it was found that disagreements on the second topic (opinions on technology and social media) were more frequent, which shows that disagreements can be influenced by the degree to which a topic is based on personal opinion. It was suggested that the hypothetical nature of the first topic (planning a trip) might have some effect on the participants' discussion. Furthermore, Alzahrani reported no significant difference in disagreement strategies between the all-female and all-male groups in both sets. However, unlike the British sample, Saudi mixed groups seem to produce fewer disagreements than the same-gender groups. Saudi males in the mixed groups produced more disagreements than the female participants. Therefore, it seems that gender in the mixed groups in the Saudi sample influences the frequency of disagreements, and the participants used more negative politeness strategies such as hedges and downtoners, indirect questions and apologies.

Overall, there were no instances of impolite disagreements in the study since the identified disagreements were judged as either very polite, polite, or appropriate. The study shows the importance of examining the local context when analysing disagreements. The study provided useful insight into disagreement and politeness in Saudi Arabia; however, the results are limited in applicability. The study was focused on examining disagreement among members of an intimate social network (friends), unlike, for example, Harb's (2016) study.

More recently, Alghamdi (2023) conducted a comparative study examining politeness strategies used by American and Saudi EFL teachers when expressing disagreement in English. The study essentially examined the disagreements of 20 EFL teachers (10 Saudis and 10 Americans) on Twitter. Alghamdi used multiple instruments in her study; she compiled a corpus of naturally occurring tweets extracted from the participants' accounts between 2018-2022, mainly observing their tweets when expressing disagreements, refusals, conflicts, or arguments. This step was taken to understand the participants' style and identify topics that might generate more disagreements. Alghamdi then initiated a hashtag (#ExpressYourOpinion) to elicit disagreements from the participants, regularly adding a different topic (16 in total) to the hashtag to ensure it remained active and produced enough data (pp.72-73). In addition, online questionnaires and follow-up interviews with the Saudi participants were employed to gain more information about the potential factors that influenced their choices of politeness strategies when expressing disagreements, such as teaching background, exposure to the target culture, English language proficiency, and the effect of communicating with native speakers.

Alghamdi's analytical framework was primarily built on Brown and Levinson's model ([1978] 1987), mainly focusing on analysing politeness strategies in disagreements, as well as referring to Rees-Miller's (2000) taxonomy of disagreements strategies and Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work. Alghamdi reported that Saudi EFL teachers employed 12 disagreement strategies, including act combination, raising rhetorical questions, challenges, complaints, and giving suggestions (p.91). One of the key findings in her study is that both Saudi and American EFL teachers employed mostly aggravated disagreements in the corpus of Tweets, and used neither mitigated nor aggravated disagreements when they participated in the hashtag #ExpressYourOpinion (p.231). This shows that the participants' naturally occurring disagreements in the compiled corpus tend to be more aggravated than the disagreements they posted while participating in the study (observation effect). Also, she found that when using mitigated disagreements, Saudi teachers employed positive and negative politeness strategies, while American teachers rarely used negative politeness strategies. Moreover, she found that the participants' professional identity and relationship with the other person had some influence on the participants' choices, leading them to use more positive politeness strategies. Overall, although Alghamdi's study stems from the need for more research into the role of pragmatic knowledge and its impact on the expression of disagreement

within the educational context, her study does provide some insight into the cultural aspects of politeness and disagreements performed by Saudis on Twitter.

2.4.4 Disagreement taxonomies in previous work

The literature offers different taxonomies for classifying disagreement types and strategies. Although these taxonomies share some similarities, they still lack uniformity, thus making comparing frequencies between studies very challenging (Netz, 2014). Table 2-2 lists some disagreement types and strategies reported in the literature, which provided a base for the data analysis in the current study. The list in the table is not exhaustive; some taxonomies have been proposed in the literature but are not presented here, such as those (Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Maíz-Arévalo, 2014). There are other taxonomies used to build other classifications of disagreements but not included in the table, such as (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998; Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli, 1996; Locher, 2004; Kreutel, 2007). The selection of the taxonomies in Table 2-2 below is based on: (1) the clear classification of the types of disagreements as in Rees-Miller's (2000) taxonomy, (2) the applicability of the classification to examining disagreement and (im)politeness in online communication as in (Shum and Lee, 2013; Harb, 2016), and (3) the description of online Arabic disagreement strategies as in (Harb, 2016).

Table 2-2: Disagreement taxonomies

Researcher(s)	Data collection	Approach & language(s)	Disagreement categorisation
Rees-Miller (2000)	Observations in a university setting. 50 participants are students & professors	Intralingual approach looking at American English native speakers and fluent non-native speakers	<p>Softened disagreement divided into:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Positive politeness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive comment - humour - inclusive of 1st person - partial agreement 2. <i>Negative politeness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questions - I think/ I don't know - Downtoners (maybe, sort of) - Verbs of uncertainty (seems) <p>Disagreement not softened or strengthened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contradictory statements - Verbal shadowing - Aggravated disagreement - Rhetorical questions - Intensifiers - Personal, accusatory you - Judgmental vocabulary
Shum and Lee (2013) Based on (Locher, 2004; Bousfield, 2008)	Online data taken from fora communication	Intralingual and intracultural approach looking at Cantonese disagreement in Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opposite Opinions - Negative Comments - Clarifying Personal Stance - Giving Personal Experience - Reprimands - Rhetorical Questions - Curse - Irony - Rewording - Factual Response - Short Vulgar Phrase
Harb (2016) Based on (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998)	Corpus of Facebook posts	Intralingual approach to Arabic disagreement online	<p>Positively marked (polite)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Argument avoidance - Counterclaim - Act combination <p>Unmarked (politic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contradiction - Challenges - Supplication - Exclamation - Mild scolding - Irrelevancy claim - Argument avoidance - Act combination <p>Negatively marked (impolite)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verbal attack - Verbal irony

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on disagreement, starting with addressing the terminological debate on how disagreement is defined and its relation to other concepts, such as opposition and argument. After that, attention was paid to defining disagreement and presenting my definition of Twitter disagreement. I then briefly covered the position of disagreement in classical literature, mainly speech act theory, and then presented how disagreement was defined in classical Arabic literature, which dealt with disagreement mostly from an Islamic point of view. After that, I provided an overview of disagreement studies in the literature, dividing these studies into two sections: studies on verbal (offline) disagreement and studies that examined disagreement in online communication. Most of these studies found that disagreements are not always negative. Disagreements can be expressed through various strategies, and there are at least three types of disagreement: mitigated, aggravated, and neither mitigated nor aggravated. The expressions and evaluations of disagreement were found to be influenced by several factors, such as topic, culture and medium of communication. Finally, I discussed some studies that examined disagreements and (im)politeness in Arabic. These studies revealed some cultural-specific strategies, like supplication, used by Arabic speakers.

The next chapter discusses the relevant (im)politeness theories and how disagreement has been approached in these theories. (Im)politeness theories can help explain the linguistic choices found in the collected corpus of Twitter disagreements and the respondents' evaluations of disagreement examples in this study.

Chapter 3 Overview of (Im)politeness Research

The main purpose of this chapter is to review previous research on (im)politeness in order to build a contextual background against which the present study stands. In Section 3.1, I start by briefly illustrating how politeness has been defined in the literature. This section is divided into two subsections; in Section 3.1.1 I cover the classical models of politeness (i.e. first-wave theories), such as Brown and Levinson's model ([1978] 1987). The following subsection covers the postmodern or discursive politeness theories (i.e. second-wave approaches), focusing mainly on relational work (Locher and Watts, 2005) and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Then, I focus on providing an overview of Culpeper's (1996; 2011a; 2016) approach to impoliteness, highlighting the impoliteness triggers, which are divided into conventional and implicational. This section is followed by an overview of the literature on mitigation and aggravation devices; these are linguistic devices used to modify the structure of the disagreements, either through softening or intensifying these disagreements.

3.1 Politeness theories

The broad literature on linguistic politeness offers a wealth of conceptual and empirical research. However, researchers seem inconsistent when defining and discussing politeness (e.g., Fraser, 1990). Watts ([1992] 2005) highlight the lack of agreement among researchers on how politeness is defined and analysed, given the complex nature of the phenomenon, despite an abundance of research on politeness. Similarly, Eelen (2001) points out that politeness has been given many different definitions and interpretations ranging from general principles of language use governing interactions, to the use of smaller, more specific linguistic forms. He notes that, in a general sense, politeness is not confined to language as it also includes non-verbal, non-linguistic behaviour, and what is important is how these forms of communication are evaluated (p.iv). One of the broad definitions that attempts to capture the phenomena was proposed by Culpeper (2011b, p.428):

Politeness involves (a) an attitude comprised of particular positive evaluative beliefs about particular behaviours in particular social contexts, (b) the activation of that attitude by those particular in-context-behaviours, and (c) the actual or potential description of those in-context-behaviours and/or the person who produced them as polite, courteous, considerate, etc. Linguistic politeness refers to linguistic or behavioural material that is used to trigger politeness attitudes. Politeness strategies (plans of action for achieving politeness effects) and formulae (linguistic/behavioural forms for achieving

politeness effects) are conventionally associated to some degree with contexts in which politeness attitudes are activated.

The definition captures some of the key aspects of what constitutes politeness, such as: (1) politeness can be manifested both linguistically and non-linguistically; (2) politeness is seen as an interpersonal attitude (as also seen in Haugh, 2007a); thus, accommodating the subjective as well as the evaluative nature of the phenomenon; (3) social context plays a significant role in the evaluation process of politeness. Overall, Culpeper (2011b) asserts that although the state of affairs in politeness literature reveals a lack of agreement in defining politeness, which might not be conducive to the advancement of some aspects of the field, all the work carried out to define and explore politeness can at least deepen one's appreciation of the notion.

Kádár and Haugh (2013) further comment on the issue of inconsistency and the variation in politeness definitions; they argue that these “multiple understandings of politeness” offer different insights, which are complementary at times. Politeness is therefore described by Kádár and Haugh (2013) as well as Mills (2011b) as a naturally contested phenomenon, or as Eelen (2001) puts it, “inherently argumentative” (p.37). Kádár and Haugh (2013) insist on the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to politeness, surpassing the boundaries of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics. They agree with Eelen (2001) that politeness “does not reside in particular behaviours or linguistic forms, but rather in *evaluations* of behaviours and linguistic forms” [original italics]. For instance, multimodal forms of online communication (e.g., emojis, GIFs, etc.) show that (im)politeness can manifest itself without the use of linguistic forms. In fact, (im)politeness is also incorporated in other non-linguistic aspects of communication, such as tone, gestures, facial expressions, etc. Therefore, it seems accurate to say that (im)politeness is very often multimodal in nature (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.60).

The two subsections below show how politeness has been approached and dealt with in earlier studies (Section 3.1.1), and how the approach to the phenomenon has changed in the later discursive approaches (Section 3.1.2).

3.1.1 Classical approaches to politeness

In an attempt to define the structure of politeness theories in the literature, Fraser (1990) distinguished between four general views of politeness under which most of the traditional theories of politeness fall. These are the social-norm view, conversational-maxim view, face-saving view, and conversational contract view (see Table 3-1).

Table 3-1: Fraser's (1990) organisation of politeness views

Social-norm view	Conversational-maxim view	Face-saving view	Conversational contract view
This view suggests that each society has a set of specific social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe social behaviour. Watts et al. (1992) state that this view has some advocates (e.g., Hill et al., 1985; Ide, 1989; and Ide et al., 1992).	Theories under this view are largely based on Grice's (1975) cooperative principle. The most notable examples are those of Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983).	Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is the most popular theory adopting this view. Their theory focuses more on the concept of face inspired by Goffman's work (1967).	This view is introduced by Fraser (1975) and Fraser and Nolen (1981). They state that participants' rights and obligations in any interaction vary greatly. Interactions are influenced by: general conventions, social and institutional conventions, and previous encounters or specific situations.

Yet, when talking about classical theories of politeness, what particularly comes to mind are the theories of Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987). These three theories are at the core of traditional accounts of politeness (Eelen, 2001). As Table 3-1 shows, Leech's theory (1983) is a maxim-based theory analogous to Lakoff's theory (1973), whereas Brown and Levinson's theory ([1978] 1987) is under the face-saving view of politeness. Fraser (1990) noted that out of these classical theories, the more influential as well as the most criticised theory is that of Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987), which remains in use in some recent research.

Despite their epistemological differences, these early politeness theories unanimously see politeness as a conflict-avoidance strategy (Kasper, 1990, p.194). Eelen (2001) points out that this notion of conflict-avoidance is evident in the work of Lakoff (1973) as well as others, but it has a more dominant presence in Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) as will become evident in the discussion in the following sections. The next sections are arranged as follows: Section 3.1.1.1 offers a short account of Lakoff's model (1973), Section 3.1.1.2 an overview of Leech's model and the key issues with the model, and Section 3.1.1.3 focuses on the model offered by Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987).

3.1.1.1 Lakoff's model (1973)

Lakoff was one of the first to examine politeness from a pragmatic perspective through her pioneering work *Logic of Politeness: Or, Minding Your P's and Q's* (1973). She defined politeness as “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by *minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation* inherent in all human interchange” (Lakoff, 1990, p.34)[emphasis added]. Lakoff based her theory on Grice's cooperative principle (CP), enhancing it by adding the politeness principle (PP).¹⁰ She argued that the CP is more geared to the information content of the communication, while the politeness rule attends to the social aspect of interaction (Eelen, 2001). In her model of politeness, Lakoff (1973) posits two rules of pragmatic competence in interaction:

1. Be clear.
2. Be polite.
 - a. Don't impose.
 - b. Give options.
 - c. Make *A* feel good.

The first of the two is essentially considered to be Grice's CP (Fraser, 1990; Watts, [1992] 2005). The second rule, the rule of politeness, is where Lakoff's contribution is situated. The second rule includes three sub-maxims, which involve different notions of politeness: “Don't impose” is based on formal/impersonal politeness (distance style), “Give options” on non-formal politeness (deference style), and “Make *A* feel good” is based on intimate politeness (camaraderie style) (Watts, [1992] 2005; Eelen, 2001). Watts (2003, p.60) argues that all the politeness models grounded on Grice's CP, most particularly Lakoff's model, have some flaws. As for Lakoff's model, it seems difficult for a speaker to be polite unless s/he violates at least one of the rules of conversation. He adds that Lakoff's model hardly constitutes a model of second-order politeness, or politeness₂,¹¹ and although it has inspired many politeness researchers, Lakoff's model is rarely applied to data (Watts, 2003, p.63). Therefore, I will not elaborate on her model and rather focus on reviewing Leech's (1983) and Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) models in the

¹⁰ The cooperative principle, also referred to as rules of conversation by Lakoff, consists of four maxims: (1) Quantity maxim which requires interlocutors to be appropriately informative, (2) Quality maxim requires interlocutors to be truthful, (3) Relevance maxim requires interlocutors to make their contributions relevant, and (4) Manner maxim requires interlocutors to be clear (Grice, 1975).

¹¹ Second-order politeness (politeness₂) is taken to refer to “a theoretical construct” that falls within a theory of social behaviour and languages use. It is an abstract theoretical term which refers to “a wide variety of social strategies for constructing and reproducing cooperative social interaction across cultures” (Watts, 2003, p.47), the term is discussed in Section 3.1.2.

following sections, as these two are the only traditional models that offer extensive examples of the linguistic forms realised as politeness strategies (Watts, 2003, p.63).

3.1.1.2 Leech's model (1983)

Leech's theory is another maxim-based view of politeness, similar to Lakoff's (1973), as it is also built on Grice's (1975) CP. In fact, Leech's model has been considered a grand elaborative adoption of the CP (Fraser, 1990, p.224; Watts, 2003, p.64). Leech proposes his model of politeness under what he calls "general pragmatics", which accounts for the general conditions of how language is used in communication (Leech, 1983). General pragmatics has two components, which are interpersonal rhetoric¹² and textual rhetoric.¹³ Leech approaches politeness from the basis of interpersonal rhetoric (Eelen, 2001), as shown in Figure 3-1.

Leech's model of politeness is not rule-governed but rather principle-controlled as it falls within the area of pragmatics — more precisely, rhetorical pragmatics¹⁴ (Fraser, 1990, p.224). Moreover, the model is generally described as regulative rather than constitutive, and arguably the PP has a higher regulative role than the CP (Leech, 1983, p.82). As displayed in Figure 3-1, Leech incorporates the CP in his schema of pragmatics on par with his two important principles: PP and irony principle (IP). He states that the PP, in particular, is a necessary complement for the CP, as it "rescues" the CP, which alone cannot properly account for real conversational data (Leech, 1983, p.80). For example, CP cannot explain why a speaker violates the maxims of Quantity and Manner when using an indirect question to make a request. In such cases, the PP can provide adequate explanations.

¹² Interpersonal rhetoric refers to the use of language to express one's attitudes and of one's relationship with the hearer — it has the function of coding and decoding the utterance ensuring that it is well-behaved in context (Eelen, 2001).

¹³ Textual rhetoric refers to the use of language as means of constructing a text (both spoken and written) — it has the function of coding and decoding the utterance in terms of purely linguistic aspects such as syntactic clarity (Eelen, 2001).

¹⁴ The study of effective use of language in communication (Leech, 1983, p.15).

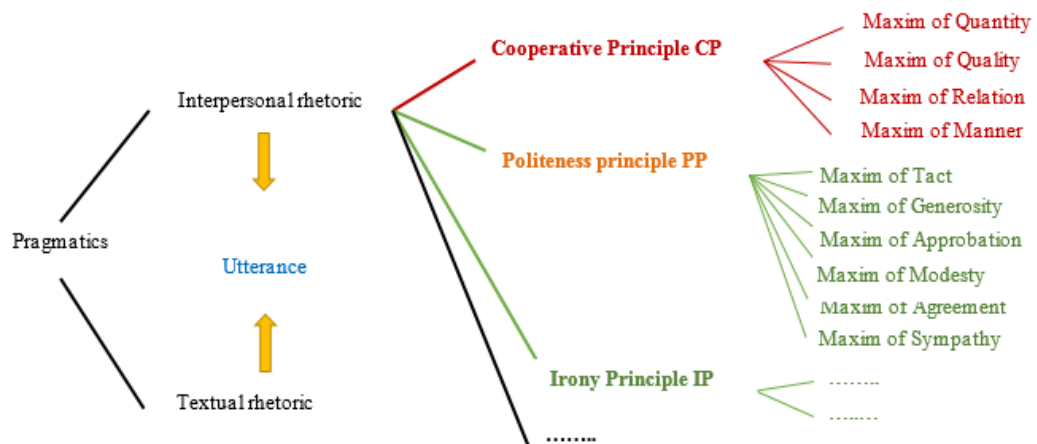


Figure 3-1 Leech's (1983) theoretical schema (*minus the textual rhetoric maxims*)

Leech (1983, pp.81-82) defines the PP as ↓ minimising the expression of impolite beliefs (which is unfavourable) and, less importantly, ↑ maximising the expression of polite beliefs (which is favourable). The PP's role is “to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place” (pp.81-82). The PP is divided into six maxims; each has two sub-maxims, the first to denote negative politeness and the second to positive politeness. Leech's definition of positive politeness (seeking concord) and negative politeness (avoiding discord) differs from that of Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987), illustrated in the next subsection. The maxims are as follows (Leech, 1983, pp.132-138):

1. Tact Maxim: (a) minimize cost to other, (b) maximize benefit to other.
2. Generosity Maxim: (a) minimize benefit to self, (b) maximize cost to self.
3. Approbation Maxim: (a) minimize dispraise of other, (b) maximize praise of other.
4. Modesty Maxim: (a) minimize praise of self, (b) maximizes dispraise of self.
5. Agreement Maxim: (a) minimize disagreement between self and other, (b) maximize agreement between self and other.
6. Sympathy Maxim: (a) minimize antipathy between self and other, (b) maximize sympathy between self and other.

The first two maxims address politeness based on a bipolar scale (cost-benefit), and the third and fourth maxims are based on a different bipolar scale (praise and dispraise). The last two are based on unipolar scales: agreement and sympathy, respectively (Leech, 1983). Leech (1983) explains that these maxims and their sub-maxims are not equally important, and they also vary across cultures, societies, and situations. Furthermore, he

clarifies that his model of politeness is “focused more strongly on *other* than on *self*” [original italics], maintaining, therefore, that his model is more focused on the hearer than the speaker (p.133).

Leech’s model has been subject to both praise and criticism; one of the positive aspects of Leech’s model is its usefulness in explaining culture-specific notions and motivations for politeness, particularly in British and American culture (Locher, 2004, p.66). However, the model has been criticised on many grounds, chief among which is that his definition of PP, which indicates (im)politeness in Leech’s model, is defined in terms of (un)favourableness to the hearer (Eelen, 2001, p.8). It seems clear that Leech’s PP is more focused on cooperative interaction; more precisely, it privileges politeness and considers impoliteness as “always socially aberrant”, ignoring the fact that impoliteness is ubiquitous in human communication and can be “quite-prevalent-to-centrally-important in many discourses” (Bousfield, 2008, p.51). Moreover, it is evident that Leech conceptualises politeness as analogous to cooperation; in this way, his approach appears to deem any non-cooperative interaction as impolite (Bousfield, 2008, pp.50-51). Therefore, as Bousfield (2008, p.52) asserts, Leech’s model is predominantly a social cooperation model rather than a model of linguistic (im)politeness. Additionally, some researchers have raised issues around the methodological stability of the model as the number of the maxims seems to be arbitrary and unrestricted (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987; Jucker, 1988; Thomas, 1995). The model has been criticised for being too theoretical and abstract to apply to actual data (Watts, [1992] 2005). This criticism has been recognised in Leech’ updated model (2014), in which he presents a developed version of his maxims of politeness model; the new model is named the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP), which includes ten maxims instead of the six found in his earlier model (pp.90-98). Leech notes that these maxims are of different degrees of importance, have variable constraining power and are likely to be culturally variable (p.98).

3.1.1.3 Brown and Levinson's model ([1978] 1987)

Brown and Levinson's model ([1978] 1987) is the most influential model under the face-saving view (Watts, [1992] 2005; Thomas, 1995). Bousfield (2008) argues that Brown and Levinson's model ([1978] 1987) is the “most academically popular of all the approaches to politeness” (p.44), and it is the “most investigated, commented upon, and critiqued of all the approaches” (p.55). Brown and Levinson's model (1987) is built on the notion of a universal Model Person — a fluent speaker with two qualities: rationality and face (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987, p.58). Rationality refers to the speaker's ability to reason and logically assess the nature of communication in a given situation. On the other hand, face,¹⁵ which is a modified adoption of Goffman's (1967) concept of face, refers to “the public self-image every member wants to claim for [her/him-self]” (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987, p.61). Brown and Levinson subdivide face into “positive face” and “negative face”. The former refers to one's desire (i.e. want) to be liked, approved of, appreciated, and respected by others; the latter refers to one's desire to be free and not imposed upon by others. They claim that face is dynamic as it can be “lost, maintained, or enhanced”; hence, it “must be constantly attended to in interaction” (p.61). Based on this view, face is considered to be naturally vulnerable, and it is in the interest of all interlocutors to minimise threat or damage to face (Watts, 2003, p.86). Such claims about the universality of these face wants have, however, been challenged in many studies that focused on Eastern cultures such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Persian. In these collectivistic cultures, it is argued that face operates on different values and has different meanings and functions (Haugh, 2007b; Mills, 2011b). Similarly, the conceptualisation of face in Arab cultures (e.g., Tunisian Arabic and Saudi Arabic) is usually included in the set of collectivistic cultures. It is argued that the conceptualisation of face in these Arab cultures is generally seen as personal and as an in-group property; however, the fulfilment of culture-specific values tends to override individualism (Labben, 2018, p.80; Almusallam, 2022, p.1).

Elaborating on the dynamism and vulnerability of face, Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987), like Leech (1983), claim that most speech acts have the potential to be face-threatening acts (FTA) as they threaten either the hearer's and/or the speaker's face-wants. For instance, requests threaten the addressee's negative face. Therefore, at the

¹⁵ Goffman defines face as the self-image of an individual obtained from and influenced by society, whereas Brown and Levinson's definition of face is based on individualistic psychological wants (Watts, 2003).

centre of their model, politeness is seen as a “redressive action taken to counterbalance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts (FTAs)” (Kasper, 1990, p.194). Undeniably, Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) regard politeness as a conflict-avoidance strategy (Eelen, 2001). Their model offers five possible strategies for the speaker when performing a potential FTA; see Figure 3-2. These strategies range from the most potentially threatening (i.e. worst case), “do the FTA baldly”, to the least threatening (i.e. best case), “don’t do the FTA” (Watts, 2003).

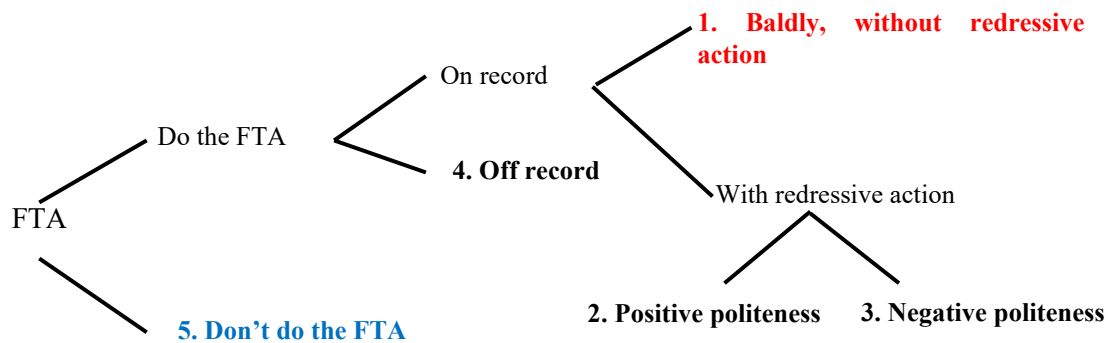


Figure 3-2: Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (taken from Bousfield, 2008)

If the speaker decides to do the FTA and go on record but not baldly, then s/he can soften the effect of the FTA through two types of redressive action (two types of politeness strategies). Considering the addressee’s positive face is referred to as *positive politeness*, itself comprised of fifteen strategies. Of these strategies, and the most important to this study, are two strategies used to claim common ground: *seeking agreement* and *avoiding disagreement*; the first includes using safe topics and repetition as means to achieve agreement while the second includes agreement token, pseudo-agreement, white lies, and hedging opinions as means to appear more in agreement with the addressee. The second option is considering the addressee’s negative face, referred to as *negative politeness*, which includes ten strategies such as: being indirect, minimising imposition, and being pessimistic (Bousfield, 2008, pp.57-58). In Brown and Levinson’s model, the amount and type of politeness applied to a certain speech act is calculated by the speaker depending on the weightiness of three social variables: power difference between the speaker and the hearer, social distance, and rank, which is the cultural ranking of the speech act imposition (i.e. how threatening it is within a specific culture) (Eelen, 2001).

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson's model ([1978] 1987), as well as Leech's model (1983)¹⁶, assumes a unidirectional association between indirectness and politeness, which many researchers have criticised (see: Blum-Kulka, 1987, p.131; Mills, 2009, p.1054; Grainger, 2011, p.178; Culpeper and Terkourafi, 2017, p.28). It is argued in such criticism that indirectness is not always positively perceived, nor is directness always negatively perceived; (in)directness is rather a scaled concept and multifunctional (Culpeper and Terkourafi, 2017, p.28). Several cross-cultural studies revealed that, at least in some cultures, directness is perceived more positively, such as Jewish (Blum-Kulka, 1990) and Greek (Tannen and Kakavá, 1992). While the relationship between (in)directness and (im)politeness in Arabic needs to be further researched, the results reported in some studies are inconsistent, as noted by Labben (2018, p.74). For example, directness was observed more in refusals expressed by Iraqis (Abdul Sattar et al., 2010) and Yemenis (Alghamdi and Alrefaee, 2020), while Jordanians tend to express more indirect refusals (Alissa, 1998).

3.1.1.4 Disagreement in Leech's and Brown and Levinson's models

Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) consider disagreement as having a strong potential to be a FTA because it negatively affects and weakens solidarity among interlocutors. In their model, disagreement belongs to those FTAs that threaten the addressee's positive face-wants, showing that the speaker is not considering or ignoring the addressee's feelings and wants, and that the speaker has a negative evaluation of some aspect of the addressee's positive face (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987, p.66). Similarly, Leech (1983, pp.104-105) classifies politeness into four categories depending on the illocutionary speech act used. In this classification, disagreement, like reprimanding and threatening, belongs to the conflictive category of illocutions, where the social goal (comity or equilibrium) conflicts with the illocutionary goal (disagreement). In this scenario, "politeness is out of the question, because conflictive illocutions are, by their nature, designed to cause offence" (Leech, 1983, p.105). This classification evidently shows that Leech considers politeness as "strategic conflict avoidance", with emphasis on consideration of others (Watts, 2003, p.50). Leech (1983) observes that "there is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc."; hence, he argued for the need for a Maxim of Agreement (p.138). Leech clearly indicates a general view of disagreement as

¹⁶ This said, Leech (1983, p.171) did note that indirectness can be sometimes impolite.

unfavourable in assigning agreement a whole maxim. Thomas (1995, p.165), supporting Leech, states that people tend to be more direct in expressing agreement and indirect when expressing disagreement; she considers direct disagreement as a failure or perhaps a refusal to consider others. However, she emphasises the vital role of the nature of the situation and the relationship between interlocutors when analysing disagreement. Almost two decades later, Leech (2007) still maintains that disagreement is dispreferred; he explains that in cases where a speaker has to disagree, this disagreement is unlikely to occur without mitigation devices such as indirectness or hedging — taking these mitigation strategies as a sign of the unfavourableness of disagreement.

3.1.2 Discursive approaches to politeness: a critique

The ground-breaking work of Eelen (2001) has advanced the move from the traditional approaches to politeness to the postmodern, better known as discursive approaches to (im)politeness.¹⁷ Discursive approaches such as relational work (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Locher, 2004) can be characterised as a reaction to the limitations of the traditional models, primarily aiming to offer more discursive and dynamic approaches to both politeness and impoliteness (Grainger, 2011, p.171; Mills, 2011b, p.21). This postmodern view of (im)politeness, informed by social theory, has paved the way for more theoretical and analytical models of (im)politeness to emerge, such as rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2002, 2005), the frame-based approach (Terkourafi, 2001, 2005), and the interactional approach (Arundale, 1999, 2006; Haugh, 2007a). While not all these researchers would categorise their work as discursive or postmodern, their models have some similarities. For instance, these models are unified in their critical view of classical speech act theory and Grice's framework (Mills, 2011b). Their approaches have also shifted the attention from politeness to (im)politeness, thus broadening the scope of the discipline.

One significant contribution of the discursive approaches is the distinction between what is referred to as politeness₁ (first-order politeness) and politeness₂ (second-order politeness). The distinction was first proposed in the introduction of *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice* by Watts ([1992] 2005), and it was later emphasised in Eelen's (2001) critique of politeness theories; after which the terms

¹⁷ Grainger (2011) divided the approaches to politeness into three waves: classical (Gricean), discursive, and sociological/interactional. The interactional approaches seem to take the best of the approaches in the first two waves aiming to bridge the gap between them.

started to gain more attention in the field of (im)politeness. Politeness₁ refers to laypersons' understandings of the phenomena, while politeness₂ is seen as the "scientific conceptualisation of the social phenomenon of politeness in the form of politeness₁" (Eelen, 2001, p.43). Politeness₂ is a scientific assessment after the event (Watts, 1991, p.257); it aims to assess and explain the functionality of politeness₁ as an evaluative activity (Eelen, 2001, p.44). Politeness₂ should represent the struggle over reality as observed in politeness₁ but not be entangled in this struggle (Eelen, 2001, p.46). Discursive approaches, particularly the relational work model, advocate for the importance of politeness₁ as they are more concerned with laypersons' negotiations and evaluations of (im)politeness. Locher and Watts (2008, p.79) clearly state that their framework strongly focuses on politeness₁, setting their work apart from others, especially classical theories of politeness, which were more concerned with developing a theory of politeness₂ thus prioritising the researcher's view of politeness.

The rationale behind making this distinction in the discursive approaches of politeness was motivated by the rare correspondence between laypersons' assessments of politeness for certain social behaviours and the definitions of politeness proposed in most of the established theories of politeness (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.15). To illustrate the problems of focusing solely on politeness₂, consider the two responses (B1) and (B2) in the example below:

- A: It is nice weather.
- B1: No, it is not. It is very windy.
- B2: Mm, it is sunny, but I think it is quite windy.

Politeness₂ models assume that (B2) would be perceived by native speakers as more polite than (B1). Such an assumption is totally oblivious to the fact that the social context will significantly influence the perceptions of politeness. For instance, if the two interlocutors have a close relationship, then (B1) might not be perceived as impolite but merely appropriate given the social context. Also, it is more likely that many native speakers would evaluate (B1) as direct but not necessarily impolite or rude. In a different social context, interlocutors might not find (B2) more polite than (B1) but rather find both responses equally appropriate. This brief example shows the weakness of associating indirectness with politeness, a claim persistently made in politeness₂ approaches such as Brown and Levinson's model. It also clarifies that (im)politeness evaluations are more likely to fluctuate over the various options within the relational work spectrum given in Figure 3-3. In addition, the example shows that there is no intrinsic/direct link between

(im)politeness and linguistic expression; rather, it is contingent on the interpretation of a given behaviour in the overall social interaction (Watts, 2003, p.8).

Another relevant contribution of the discursive approaches is the strong position they take in seeing (im)politeness as flexible, subject to discursive struggle in interaction, and the inability to represent it by single isolated utterances, but rather negotiated in longer stretches of discourse (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78; van der Bom and Mills, 2015, p.187). Discursive researchers argue against the notion that (im)politeness is naturally intrinsic in linguistic forms and realised merely in lexical and grammatical features, as assumed by traditional approaches (Eelen, 2001; Locher, 2006; Locher and Watts, 2008). Rather, it is strongly argued that “[t]here is ...no linguistic behaviour that is inherently polite or impolite (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78). (Im)politeness is “more than mere linguistic surface structures and deserves to be studied in their historical, social, and local context” (Locher, 2015, p.8); therefore, (im)politeness theory cannot be predictive. In their view, (im)politeness resides in participants’ situated and dynamic evaluations of (im)politeness in interaction, not shared or conventionalised (im)politeness forms or strategies (Culpeper, 2011a, p.122).

In discursive approaches, context plays a significant role in evaluating the discursive struggle over (im)politeness; it is the interlocutors’ judgements of utterances in context rather than the form of the utterances that is important (Locher, 2006). Therefore, the analyst’s role is to assess whether certain utterances might be considered polite, impolite, etc., depending on the identified norms of the community in question; there is no guarantee that a specific utterance will be evaluated the same way by all members of that community (Mills, 2011b, pp.45-46). Some researchers have criticised and questioned this over-reliance on (im)politeness₁ (e.g., Terkourafi, 2005; Haugh, 2007b; Grainger, 2011). Although they acknowledge the importance of context, these researchers (e.g., Terkourafi, 2005; Culpeper and Terkourafi, 2017) propose a different take on the role of the utterance form, arguing for differentiation between conventionalised and non-conventionalised forms. It can be seen that this view of (im)politeness is driven by the focus on politeness₁ in context as the ultimate object of (im)politeness research and the social struggle over it (Terkourafi, 2005, pp.241-242). Indeed, the distinction between (im)politeness₁ and (im)politeness₂ “has given a pivotal boost to the field”, but the simplistic opposition between the two is deemed unproductive and ignores the fact any approach to politeness necessitates the examination of multiple ways of understanding

politeness (lay and scientific) (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.42)¹⁸. It is argued that searching for a theory of one without the other is “destined to fail” because it fails to acknowledge the intimate intertwined relationship between the two notions (Terkourafi, 2011, p.180). Therefore, combining these notions can contribute to a holistic comprehension and rich analysis of (im)politeness (Grainger, 2011, p.184; Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.3).

Regarding this point, I do not claim that (im)politeness is predictive or inherent in utterance forms, nor do I undermine the role of context in the analysis of (im)politeness; however, in my Twitter data, my role as an analyst was focused on the linguistic forms of the disagreements due to the limited access to more contextual data. Therefore, my analytical approach carefully takes linguistic structure as a potential indicator of (im)politeness in the context of each thread where the disagreement was expressed. Moreover, the emphasis on examining (im)politeness in long stretches of discourse appears to be somewhat restrictive. For instance, in examining Twitter data, analysts are more often faced with short and fragmented stretches of discourse; disagreements in my data have a beginning but rarely have a middle or even an end, as I will show in Chapter 4. Twitter is one of those platforms where the context of discourse is rapidly de- and re-contextualised, affecting the interpretation of the tweets (Terkourafi et al., 2018).

Furthermore, discursive approaches consider (im)politeness as a social phenomenon and that evaluations and perceptions of (im)politeness are subject to variability among individuals, communities of practice, and broader culture (Mills and Kádár, 2011; van der Bom and Mills, 2015). This variability is caused by the various norms and expectations held by individuals and groups. Also, the different interactional positions (i.e. footings)¹⁹ held by participants in the interaction have some influence on how they relate to others

¹⁸ Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue that the distinction between politeness₁ and politeness₂ can be approached differently, they proposed 4 key loci for understanding politeness. The first two are first-order understandings and the last two are second-order understandings:

1. participant/metaparticipant understandings,
2. emic/etic conceptualisations,
3. analyst/lay-observer understandings,
4. theoretical/folk-theoretic conceptualisations.

¹⁹ The notion of footing was first introduced by Goffman (1979). Footing usually refers to the stance participants adopt towards other participants in the interaction (Watts, 2003, p.274). It models the different roles and responsibilities participants have in interaction through which they position themselves and relate to the other, thus affecting how they interpret what is said. Generally, footing is divided into production and reception footings, each involving a range of roles. Within the reception footing, the recipient’s footing involves an array of ratified and unratified recipients; ratified recipients are those expected to directly participate in the interaction and can be held accountable, while unratified recipients are those not expected to participate in the interaction. For an elaborated account, see Kádár and Haugh (2013, pp.125-129).

and how they interpret and evaluate the interaction. Therefore, in order to provide a rich and contextualised analysis of (im)politeness, discursive approaches advocate the incorporation of social theoretical notions such as Bourdieu's habitus (1991) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's community of practice (CoP) (1992). These notions assist the description of the dynamic ways through which individuals socialise and configure their relations in social group(s) (Mills, 2011b, p.31). Habitus is defined as "the set of dispositions to act in certain ways, which generates cognitive and bodily practices in the individual", and this set of predispositions is acquired through socialisation (Watts, 2003, p.149). Through socialisation, norms and expectations of what is (im)polite and (in)appropriate in societies are gained, ratified, and updated. It is suggested that "what is interpretable as (im)polite depends on the habitus of the individual and the linguistic capital that s/he is able to manipulate" (Watts, 2003, p.160).

Alternatively, Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue that (im)politeness evaluations appeal to the moral order, which they define as "a set of expectancies through which social actions and meanings are recognisable as such, and consequently are inevitably open to moral evaluation" (p.6). It is stated that evaluations of (im)politeness always appeal to a moral order perceived to be in common amongst two or more interlocutors by at least one of those interlocutors (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.67). This moral order is closely related to sociocultural groups and networks; they argue there are three reflexive layers of the moral order: localised norms, CoPs/organisation/group norms, and societal/cultural norms. Localised norms are embedded and interpreted relative to the set of expectations of the CoPs/organisation/group, which are themselves embedded relative to the more extensive societal/cultural set of expectations (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.95). They emphasise the relevance of all these layers of the moral order to understanding (im)politeness (p.95).

The notion of the CoP, on the other hand, refers to "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations — in short, practices — emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p.464). The incorporation of this notion in (im)politeness studies is seen as a move away from the universal view of Brown and Levinson ([1978], 1987); it prevents making generalised statements about languages and cultures (Mills, 2009). The focus on the CoP makes it possible for the analysts to examine how different communities follow different norms regarding what is (im)polite and (in)appropriate (Mills, 2011b, p.31). However, as noted by Davies (2005) and Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.46), while the notion of CoP has indeed created new

insights when examining how language and other behaviours index social identity and patterns of variation, there remain some practical challenges and limitations to applying the concepts in certain settings, such as identifying the nature of the shared practice and how much is shared. It is also argued that these CoPs do not operate in isolation since social forces such as class and institutional status have general and various effects on the norms of these CoPs; this general social influence is often ignored in (im)politeness research focused on CoPs (Mills, 2009; 2011a). In this sense, it is difficult to describe my Twitter data as representative of a specific CoP since the posters of the tweets are not jointly engaged in any specific identifiable activity or practice except their use of the platform.²⁰

In this respect, the notion of emergent/latent networks proposed by Watts (1991, 2003) is more accommodating for interactions where no apparent joint endeavour or task is involved (Haugh et al., 2011, p.10). Social networks²¹ can be close-knit, loose-knit, ego-centred or multiplex; they are divided into two related types of networks: emergent and latent. Emergent networks refer to the dynamic process in which interlocutors form social links during an interaction; these emergent relational networks are maintained, reactivated, or changed during interaction (Locher, 2004, p.49). Emergent networks are only observable during ongoing interaction; in these networks, “interactants can contest and negotiate their respective positions.” (Locher, 2004, p.28). On the other hand, latent networks refer to social links between interlocutors that have already been established in previous interactions (Locher, 2004, p.3). Latent networks constitute a social network that is treated as an objectified structure and mode of behaviour because it is not ‘*real*’ but rather an ‘*imagined*’ network, which may influence the construction of emergent networks (Watts, 2003, p.154). Locher (2004, p.29) clarifies that in the case of first encounters, interlocutors cannot refer back to any particular latent network between them; their first interaction constitutes both an emergent network, where interaction takes place, and a latent network to be referred to in future interaction. However, she argues that even interlocutors who do not know each other and interact for the first time will nevertheless

²⁰ Gruzd et al. (2011) argue that the notion of “imagined community” can be useful when thinking of Twitter. It is claimed that an individual has a need to belong to a community that includes other people who share sociability, support, and a sense of identity; even when people are in loosely bounded networks, they will often identify themselves as part of a more defined group or community.

²¹ Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.95) suggest using the term relational network. They argue this notion allows examining (im)politeness in more contextualised settings compared to CoP, and it helps in studying cultural practices.

have certain expectations about the other; these expectations are usually based on knowledge of the world and social experience.

To sum up, the discursive approaches to (im)politeness emphasise the heterogeneity of norms, practices, and perceptions within groups and cultures. The analyst's role is to examine the diverse interlocutors' perceptions and the social struggle over (im)politeness in the localised context rather than provide a universal theoretical view of (im)politeness. Although the discursive approaches have advanced the research in the field, some aspects of these approaches have attracted criticism, as illustrated above. In particular, the overemphasis on (im)politeness₁ appears to privilege the hearer's evaluations of the speaker's intention in the discursive approaches (Terkourafi, 2005, p.241; Haugh, 2007b, p.301). This shift is as problematic as the perceived overemphasis on the speakers' intention in traditional approaches; it is argued that the notion of 'participant's uptake' is important as it recognises the role of the hearer and acknowledges that meaning evolves as a result of the interplay between participants (Grainger, 2013, p.30; Haugh, 2007b, p.306). Also, Culpeper (2011a) argues that participants in communication very often use their understandings of intention as an explanatory and evaluative tool; see Section 8.6.4 on perceptions of intentions in (im)politeness evaluations. In addition, Haugh (2007b, pp.302-304; 2011, p.257) questions the analysts' role in discursive approaches, raising concerns about the validity of their interpretations of interactions. He highlights the issue of whether analysts adequately warrant their analyses of the participants' evaluations and to what extent the distinction between the analysts' and participants' perspectives can be distinctly drawn in the process of interpreting these evaluations. Haugh also contends that discursive approaches are often not discursive in the strict sense of the word, as analysts tend to draw from second-order concepts such as 'politic behaviour' in their analyses. Indeed, many discursive analyses make use of concepts such as face threat and mitigation as analytical tools (e.g., Locher, 2006; Langlotz and Locher, 2012; Chan et al., 2018). In this regard, Grainger (2011) argues for maintaining the technical terms of (im)politeness₂ while recognising the significance of (im)politeness₁ concepts in the analysis of (im)politeness; for further discussion of the criticism of discursive approaches see: Terkourafi (2005); Haugh (2007b, 2011); Mills (2011b); Grainger (2011; 2013); and van der Bom and Mills (2015).

In the following sections, I only review Locher and Watt's (2005) relational work model and Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005) rapport management in the following subsections, mainly because these two models form the basis for the analytical framework

followed in this study. At the end of Section 3.1.2.2, I outline the motivation behind using these two frameworks in my investigation of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements.

3.1.2.1 Relational Work model by Locher and Watts

One of the comprehensive discursive approaches to (im)politeness in the field was proposed by Locher and Watts (2005), who consider relational work a regular part of any communicative act (Culpeper, 2008, p.21). Locher and Watts claim that the relational work model belongs to the interpersonal level of communication, and accordingly, politeness must be seen as constituting a small part of relational work, coexisting with other types of interpersonal meaning (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.10). Relational work was defined as “the work people invest in negotiating their relationships in interaction” (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.10). One of the main contributions of the model is refusing a dichotomous classification of politeness and impoliteness and considering the two terms as components in the relational work spectrum. In this view, relational work covers “the entire continuum of verbal behaviour from direct, impolite, rude or aggressive interaction to polite interaction, encompassing both appropriate and inappropriate forms of social behaviour” (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.11). It seems clear that Locher and Watts paid more attention to verbal aspects of communication. However, their definition was revised later to make it more open and inclusive of “multi-modal strategies of relationship negotiations” (Locher, 2015, p.8). They now define relational work as “all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice” (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.96). Indeed, the updated version of the definition is more appropriate for examining relational work in both verbal and non-verbal communication and, more importantly, it accommodates the multimodal nature of online communication. In explaining why individuals behave a certain way in a certain situation, Locher and Watts, invoke the notion of frame²² as well as Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Essentially, both concepts are utilised to account for the construction and the existence of social norms that guide human interaction (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.11). They argue that whether an individual intends or perceives a message as polite, impolite, rude (among other labels) depends on their judgments during the ongoing interaction. These judgments are based

²² Frame refers to an organised set of specific knowledge that individuals construct through their own histories of social interaction over time, and these frames are constantly subject to change and variation (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78).

on norms and expectations acquired and constructed through socialising over time or drawn from others' experiences (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78). They claim that interlocutors' relational work does not always aim to maintain cooperation, harmony, and social equilibrium (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.11).

Relational work is also referred to as facework since interlocutors are seen to be involved in a negotiation of face. However, Locher and Watts (2005) express their preference for the term relational work to show that any relational work involves at least two interlocutors (Locher, 2004) and to avoid confusion with Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) model, which they consider to be a theory of facework. The concept of face is evidently central in the relational work model. Locher and Watts (2005) follow Goffman's (1967, p.5) definition of face, but not the modified version found in Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) work. Thus, their conception of face refers to "the positive social value a person effectively claims [her/him-self] by the line others assume [s/he] has taken during a particular contact". In their view, face is like a mask given to an individual during a particular interaction, implying that individuals can have an infinite number of different faces (i.e. masks) negotiated when they are constructing their identities in any interaction (Locher, 2004, p.52; Locher and Watts, 2005, p.12). Face is, therefore, not fixed but negotiated in the social practices that interlocutors engage in, and it is crucially dependent on the perceptions and the acceptance of others in the given interaction (Locher, 2011, p.188).

Watts ([1992] 2005, xliii) offers a diagram that fully maps the whole spectrum of relational work, reproduced below in Figure 3-3 (see also: Locher, 2004, p.90; Locher and Watts, 2005, p.12). In this perspective, relational work embraces the notion of markedness, focusing on whether behaviours in an interaction are marked or not. Markedness here is associated with the notion of appropriateness, and it implies that there are some shared social or cultural norms against which behaviours are judged (Locher, 2004, pp.85-86). Behaviours can be marked either positively or negatively. On the one hand, politeness is a positively marked behaviour corresponding with the perception of being polite/politic/appropriate. Based on this, polite behaviour is always politic/appropriate, while politic/appropriate behaviour can be non-polite (i.e. unmarked) but never impolite (i.e. negatively marked) (Locher, 2006, pp.255-256; Locher and Watts, 2005, p.12). Locher (2006, p.256) further clarifies that "politic behaviour entails politeness but cannot be equalled to it". On the other hand, negatively marked behaviours can be judged in two ways, either impolite/non-politic/inappropriate or over-polite/non-

politic/inappropriate, showing that over-politeness will roughly create a similar judgment to impoliteness (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.12) mainly because it often surpasses the boundaries between appropriateness and inappropriateness (Locher, 2004, p.90).

Conversely, as Locher and Watts (2005, p.11) argue, unmarked behaviour covers a great deal of the relational work performed; this unmarked behaviour (i.e. appropriate/politic) goes largely unnoticed. Politic behaviour is defined as a “behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e. as non-salient, should be called politic behaviour” (Watts, 2003, p.19), and it is neither polite nor impolite (Locher, 2006, p.255), the example below is provided in (Watts, 2003, p.186) as an illustration of politic behaviour. The response provided to the posed question bears no salient features that mark it as polite or impolite in that given context.

A: would you like some coffee?

B: yes, please.

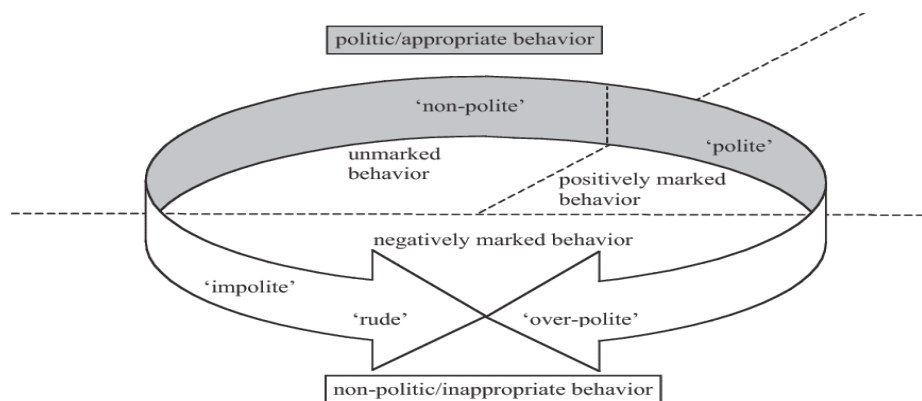


Figure 3-3: Relational work model (Watts, 2005, xliii)

Lastly, it is crucial to keep in mind that the distinction between markedness and unmarkedness is not rigid, allowing for individualistic variation in perceptions and understandings of norms, hence the different evaluations of (im)politeness. In fact, the boundaries between all the categories in the relational work spectrum are somewhat fuzzy — the dotted lines between the categories in Figure 3-3 represent the negotiable discursive nature of assessments within the relational work (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.12; Locher, 2006, pp.256-258).

3.1.2.2 Rapport management by Spencer-Oatey

Spencer-Oatey (2000) introduced the rapport management approach as an attempt to present a model that overcomes the weaknesses in the traditional approaches, particularly Brown and Levinson's model. Rapport refers to "the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people, and rapport management refers to the management (or mismanagement) of relations between people" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005a, p.96). Rapport management has three main components (i.e. factors): the *management of face*, *social rights and obligations*, and *interactional goals (or wants)*.

The management of face involves the management of face sensitivities (needs), Spencer-Oatey (2002, p.540; 2008, p.13) states that she follows Goffman's (1967) notion of face, which is the definition accepted by Locher and Watts in their relational work model. Spencer-Oatey underlines the significance of face in social relations primarily due to its associations with personal, social, and relational values. Face is concerned with "people's sense of worth, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on" (Spencer-Oatey, [2000] 2008, p.14). She proposes three interconnected aspects of face²³: (1) *quality face*, which is associated with a person's self-esteem (related to the person as an individual) and the value he/she claims for him/herself based on personal qualities like competence and abilities (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p.540). (2) *social identity face* (related to the person as a group member) refers to the "fundamental desire [that people have] for [others] to acknowledge and uphold [their] social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader" (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p.540). This aspect of face is associated with people's sense of public worth and the value that they effectively claim for themselves in the community. Lastly, (3) *relational face* (related to the self in relationship with others) which refers to the "fundamental desire [that people have] for others to evaluate them positively, and so they typically want others to acknowledge (explicitly or implicitly) their positive qualities" such as competence and abilities (Spencer-Oatey, [2000] 2008, p.14). This relational aspect of face is associated with a person's sense of self in relation to others in the group or community.

Culpeper (2011a, pp.29-30) observes that there seems to be an overlap between social identity face and relational face. This overlap is caused by the relational nature of all

²³ Spencer-Oatey (2007, p.644, 2008, p.14) argues that in cognitive terms, face and identity are similar in that both relate to the notion of self-image including: individual, relational, and collective interpretations of self (see Spencer-Oatey, 2007 for a detailed discussion of the interrelation between face and identity).

social phenomena in general. Inspired by the work of Chen et al. (2006), Culpeper clarifies that these two aspects of face can be differentiated in that the collective-self associated with social identity face generally involves shared features amongst in-group members; individuals' identities here might not be necessarily known. On the other hand, the relational-self associated with relational face is more concerned with the unique relations between individuals' whose identities are identifiable. Furthermore, he notes that Brown and Levinson's notions of positive and negative aspects of face are subsumed in rapport management: positive face overlaps with quality face, and negative face overlaps with equity rights (Culpeper, 2016, p.428).

Sociality rights and obligations refer to the "fundamental social *entitlements* that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others" (Spencer-Oatey, [2000] 2008, p.13). Sociality rights and obligations are concerned with social expectations and reflect people's concerns over fairness, considerations, and behavioural appropriateness. If these expectations are not satisfied, this dissatisfaction might affect interpersonal rapport (Spencer-Oatey, [2000] 2008, p.15). Sociality rights and obligations may stem from legal/contractual requirements, but more commonly they arise from normative or conventionalised behavior (Spencer-Oatey, 2015). There are two essential components of social rights: *equity* and *association*. The former refers to people's belief that they are entitled to personal consideration from others such that they are treated fairly, not to be disadvantaged or imposed upon. Equity rights can be linked to the independent perspective of self. There are two key elements of this aspect: first is the element of *cost-benefit* which means that people should not be exploited or disadvantaged; costs and benefits should be kept balanced through reciprocity. The second element is *autonomy-imposition*, which means that people should not be unduly controlled or imposed upon. The concept of cost-benefit is broader than the notion of autonomy; a costly interaction may affect not only people's autonomy but also their time, effort, convenience and so on (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p.532).

On the other hand, association rights refer to people's belief in their entitlement to social involvement with others. Unlike equity, association can be linked to the collective/interdependent perspective of self. There are two elements of association rights: first, the notion of *interactional involvement-detachment*, which refers to the extent to which we associate ourselves with, or dissociate ourselves from, other people; it is the type and amount of involvement we maintain when interacting with others. The second element is *affective involvement-detachment*, which refers to the appropriateness

of concerns, feelings and interests we share with others. Certainly, the appropriateness of the amount here is contingent on the nature of relationships, sociocultural norms, and personal preferences (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, pp.540-541; [2000] 2008, p.16; 2015, pp.2-3).

Interactional goals constitute the third factor that may influence rapport management, which Spencer-Oatey defines as specific goals or “wants” that people often, but not necessarily always, hold when interacting with others ([2000] 2008, p.17). These goals can be *transactional*, aiming to achieve specific tasks such as acquiring a recommendation letter, or *relational*, aiming to manage effective relationships with others, or a *mixture of both* goals (Spencer-Oatey, 2015). She clarifies that failure to achieve these goals may cause frustration or annoyance.

In addition, Spencer-Oatey ([2000] 2008, p.32) argues that a number of factors have an influence on people’s use of rapport management strategies, and she focuses on these three: rapport orientation, contextual variables, and pragmatic principles and conventions. Spencer-Oatey (2005, p.116) argues that these three factors and other factors, such as personality, personal preoccupations, and awareness of cultural differences, play a significant role in people’s perception of rapport in their interactions. To achieve effective rapport management, it is essential that people not only assess the consideration and fulfilment of their own face, wants, and expectations, but they also need to consider their interlocutor’s face, wants and expectations. She proposes that people in interactions make dynamic judgements about whether their rapport has been enhanced, maintained, neglected, or challenged, and they can hold any of the four rapport orientations outlined below. The motivations behind these orientations can vary and dynamically change during interactions.

1. Rapport enhancement orientation: a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors.
2. Rapport maintenance orientation: a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors.
3. Rapport neglect orientation: a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors (perhaps because of a focus on self).
4. Rapport challenge orientation: a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations between the interlocutors.

Also, people's choice of rapport management strategy is crucially influenced by contextual variables. Spencer-Oatey ([2000] 2008, p.34) discusses four significant variables: the *number of participants* in an interaction and how their relations are affected by power and distance as key dimensions;²⁴ *message content*, particularly in terms of cost-benefit considerations; *social/interactional roles*; and the *type of the communicative activity*. She argues that these contextual variables have both 'standing' and 'dynamic' roles in how they influence interaction. That is, people have pre-existing conceptions of these contextual variables derived from previous experiences, and during the interaction, these variables are assessed and changed dynamically, thus affecting how the interaction progresses. She clarifies, "[i]f the interaction is to be 'successful' in terms of rapport management, participants need to be very sensitive to these complex processes" (2008, pp.39-40).

Similar to the relational work emphasis on variability in (im)politeness evaluations, Spencer-Oatey ([2000] 2008, p.20) emphasises that rapport threat and enhancement are subjective evaluations. She argues that there are cultural and individual variations in the values attached to the principles that guide (non-)linguistic behaviours and the way relational work is managed in a given interaction. This variation is seen in the different possible outcomes perceived by different interlocutors and the possible mismatch between the initial orientation of the interaction and the outcome (p.43). Therefore, effective rapport management relies on mutual sensitivity and consideration of both self and the other to properly balance the different aspects of the interaction (p.41).

Based on the above, rapport management, unlike the relational work model, provides a broader account of face by identifying three aspects of it: quality face, social identity face, and relational face. It also provides an explanation of how face needs interact with the negotiation of relational work and allows analysis of interactions beyond face needs. Culpeper (2011a) argues that "face is not at the heart of all interactions", and the central issue often seems to be the breach of a social norm. Rapport has other essential components besides face: sociality rights and interactional goals. Moreover, rapport management provides an elaborated approach to analysing context and how different contextual variables influence people's behaviour in interaction and their perceptions of

²⁴ Spencer-Oatey (2008, p.34-36) provides an elaborated account of how power and distance may influence rapport management. Based on previous sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies, she identifies five bases of power, which are: reward, coercive, expert, legitimate, and referent. As for distance, she lists six possible components: social similarity/difference, frequency of contact, length of acquaintance, familiarity, like-mindedness, and positive/negative affect.

rapport. In contrast to the relational work model, which focuses on the perceptions of the addressee, rapport management emphasises the importance of the perception of all interlocutors in the interaction (i.e. speakers and hearers). Spencer-Oatey (2005b, pp.335-336) argues that her model seeks to explore the different “bases [that] affect the deliberations, conscious or otherwise, of both speakers and hearers (as speakers consider which linguistic strategies to use and their possible impact, and as hearers evaluate what they have heard).” It also can be argued that while the relational work model places more emphasis on politeness₁, rapport management appears to seek a balance between politeness₁ and politeness₂ approaches by considering laypersons’ perceptions and allowing theorisation of (im)politeness. Rapport management is seen as “one of the most comprehensive frameworks of context for politeness researchers developed to date, and indeed in its breadth anticipates much of the current discussion of politeness as situated (Haugh et al., 2011, p.5).

In this study, the choice of both relational work and rapport management is motivated by several factors. As covered above, the relational work model provides different (im)politeness classifications to code the disagreements in the online questionnaire, but it does not assist the process of interpreting what is going on, especially since Twitter interactions in my corpus are primarily short, and perceptions of posters are not accessible. Using rapport management can enrich the analysis of Twitter disagreements as it offers some concepts and a set of factors that allow the interpretation of what is going on in the corpus of Twitter disagreements. Further, using the relational work model in analysing (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Saudis’ Twitter disagreements allows assessment of the claim about the pervasiveness of aggravated disagreements on Twitter and how they are perceived by Saudis using the platform; see the first research question in Section 1.2. Examining posters’ orientations to the interaction can help explain their choices of disagreement strategies and the devices used to modify the structure of these disagreements in the specific context. Therefore, rapport management can assist in expanding the contextual analysis of Twitter disagreements. Lastly, these two models were used in previous (im)politeness studies in digitally-mediated communication (DMC); for example, relational work was used to examine (im)politeness and disagreement in discussion forums (e.g., Shum and Lee, 2013), and the connection between politeness, face and linguistic identity construction in Facebook and discussion boards (Locher et al., 2015). Rapport management was used to investigate the relationship between emojis and politeness in WhatsApp messages (Sampietro, 2019) and analyse

cross-cultural Skype interactions (Schmidt, 2020). The two frameworks were combined in analysing (im)politeness and disagreement in Facebook (e.g., Harb, 2016). The current study seeks to offer some insight into effectively using discursive approaches to analyse (im)politeness online by examining Saudis' disagreements on Twitter. This will enrich and improve the current stance of (im)politeness research, especially in Arabic online interaction.

3.2 Overview of Culpeper's framework of impoliteness

Impoliteness has been given different definitions in discursive approaches; nonetheless, Culpeper (2011a, pp.20-21) highlights that there are two notable commonalities among these definitions: (1) the concept of face, which plays a central role within the notion of impoliteness, but instead of talking about "face-threat", the focus is rather on "face-aggravating" (Bousfield and Locher, 2008, p.3) or "face-attack" (Culpeper, 1996); and (2) the notion of intentionality²⁵, which is essential in many of these definition. Culpeper (2011a, pp.19-24; 2011b) provides an overview of different impoliteness definitions.

Culpeper (2011a, p.23) offers a revised definition of impoliteness, similar to that of politeness but along contrary lines, noting that its enactment comprises substantial differences:

Impoliteness is a *negative attitude* towards specific behaviours occurring in *specific contexts*. It is sustained by *expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation*, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have *emotional consequences* for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are *presumed to cause offence*. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not. [emphasis added]

Culpeper (2011a, p.117) argues that context is important in the interpretation of impoliteness formulae; however, not everything is entirely based on contextual interpretations. He reasons that impoliteness formulae can vary based on three scales:

²⁵ Culpeper (2011a, p.49), building on Malle and Knobe's (1997) account of the folk concept of intentionality, explicates that it is essential to distinguish between intention and intentionality. Intention refers to the attribution that links an action to both desire for an outcome and belief that an action can achieve a certain outcome. Intentionality, on the other hand, refers to attribution that requires intention and also the skill or ability to bring about a certain outcome, and (minimal) awareness that intention is being fulfilled while performing the action. The notion of intentionality is the subject of much debate in (im)politeness studies.

conventionalisation, context-spanning or context-ties, and gravity of the offence (p.137). He argues that an impolite formula with a high offence gravity is less likely to be neutralised and is more likely to be context-spanning (i.e. considered offensive in a wide range of contexts), making it more likely to be a conventionalised impolite formula. Furthermore, Culpeper differentiates between conventionalised (i.e. pre-loaded) impoliteness and non-conventionalised (i.e. implicational) impoliteness. The former refers to behaviours consisting of conventionalised linguistic or verbal expressions that have acquired more conventional associations of the (im)politeness contexts in which they are regularly used (Culpeper, 2011a). The latter refers to “an impolite understanding that does not match the surface form or semantics of the utterance or the symbolic meaning of the behaviour” (Culpeper, 2011a, p.17). He proposes three types of implicational impoliteness: form-driven, context-driven, and convention-driven. The first group overlaps with conventionalised impoliteness as both rely on some kind of a marked surface form (see Culpeper, 2011, pp.155-156 for more details). Culpeper (2011a, 2016) introduces a list of what is called impoliteness formulae/triggers, as shown in Figure 3-4. Impoliteness formulae, like routines, vary between different communities. The same strategy could be viewed from different perspectives; for instance, in some contexts, an interruption might be seen as an imposition on the person talking, thus attacking that person’s negative face, or it could be seen as an attack on the positive face by implying that the opinion of the person talking is not valued (Culpeper, 2016, pp.427-428). This suggests that face-attack could have primary effects and maybe secondary effects targeting different aspects of face and sociality rights.

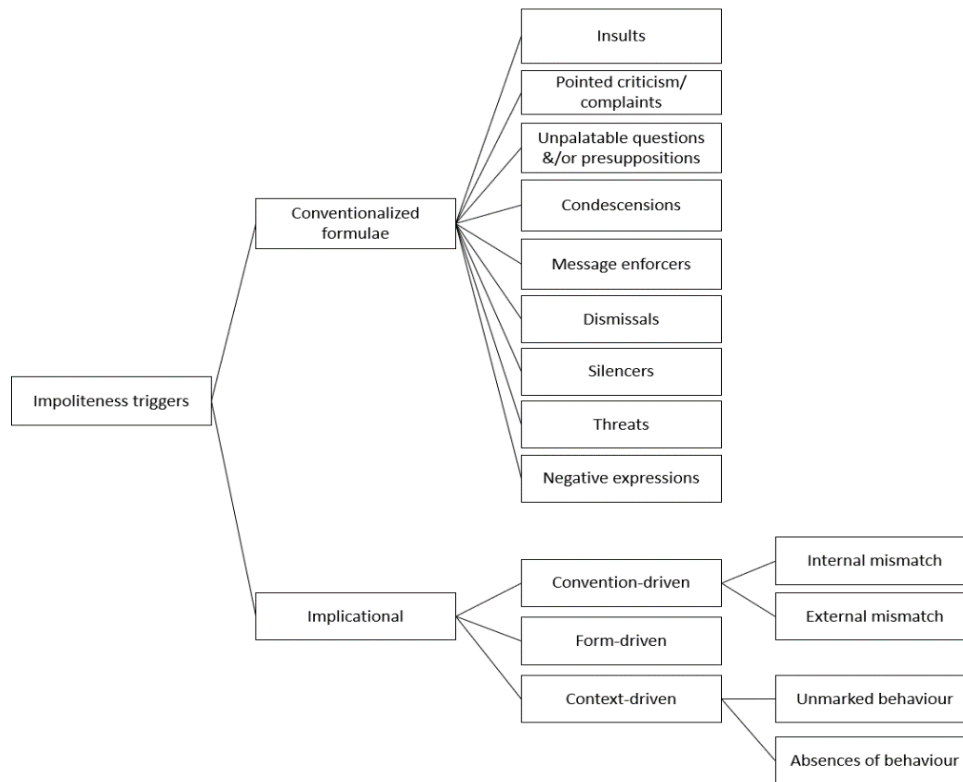


Figure 3-4: Impoliteness strategies/triggers (Culpeper, 2016, p.440)

One of the key arguments in Culpeper’s model of impoliteness is that impoliteness can be achieved by other non-linguistic means, such as body language and other non-verbal cues, and that their role is essential in the interpretation of (im)politeness. Culpeper (2011a) argues that “it is a mistake to assume that non-verbal cues are separable from other aspects of the communication ... Behaviour is a multimodal stream, with one modality interacting with other modalities to create a whole” (p.151). This argument also stands for using emojis and other multimodal means of expression in online communication. In my approach to coding (im)politeness in the corpus data, I mostly relied on identifying conventionalised formulae inspired by Culpeper’s model and by previous research on mitigation and aggravation devices in classifications of disagreements, particularly those incorporated in the coding framework (e.g., Rees-Miller, 2000; Kreutel, 2007; Harb, 2016) (for further details see the section below). However, my approach does not ignore the possibility of encountering instances where the impoliteness in the disagreement is not based on the structure of a disagreement, as seen, for instance, in the impoliteness interpretation of some of the disagreements expressed by verbal irony/sarcasm (see Sections 6.1.4 and 8.1).

3.3 Overview of mitigation and aggravation devices

Mitigation and aggravation are linguistic devices that modify the impact of the utterance either by mitigating (i.e. softening or reducing) or aggravating (i.e. intensifying or strengthening) its force (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The modification can be internal within the disagreement expression (i.e. head act or as the nucleus of the speech act of disagreement), as seen in using syntactic downgraders, or external, usually localised in the immediate context of the disagreement as seen in address terms (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). Some studies have attempted to differentiate between internal and external devices and how they differ in affecting the illocutionary force of the expressed speech act (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989); however, Harb (2016, p.97) pointed out the position of these devices in Arabic disagreements is flexible. He suggested that a disagreeing reply can come in different forms, for example:

1. Mitigation + disagreement
2. Disagreement + mitigation
3. Aggravation + disagreement + mitigation...etc.

This study treats these devices as potential indicators of the poster's (im)politeness orientation when expressing disagreement on Twitter. These devices modify the structure of disagreement either positively (mitigating/softening) or negatively (aggravating/strengthening), while the absence of these devices makes the disagreement neither mitigated nor aggravated (unmodified). The existence of mitigation or aggravation devices in the disagreement does not guarantee an interpretation of polite/appropriate or impolite/inappropriate since other contextual elements can override the effect of these devices; see Section 4.5 for further methodological elaboration.

3.3.1 Mitigation

Mitigation is also called softeners (e.g., Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Rees-Miller, 2000) or supportive facework (Watts, 2003). Locher and Watts (2005) argue that (im)politeness, in discursive approaches, cannot simply be equated with the mitigation of face-threat as usually found in early politeness theories (e.g., Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987). Rather, politeness is one possible effect of mitigation, but it is not always guaranteed (Caffi, 2013, p.265). Mitigation is described as a set of strategies or devices used to “ease the anticipated unwelcome effect” (Fraser, 1980, p.342). In other words, mitigation, as illustrated by Caffi (1999, p.881), is “a cover-term for a set of strategies, rooted in a metapragmatic awareness, by which people try to make their saying-doing more

effective”. It smooths interactional management (i.e. relational work) between interlocutors at various levels (Caffi, 1999, p.882). Therefore, mitigation is often a way of showing consideration and attempting to be polite or at least appropriate. However, in some contexts, mitigation can be perceived as impolite (Caffi, 2013). In other cases, it is argued that mitigation, especially when an utterance reaches the highest level of offensiveness, might make little or no difference in increasing the overall offence (Culpeper, 2011a).

In this study, I argue that in some cases, mitigation devices can be used in aggravated disagreements for different purposes, such as mockery or potentially intensifying insult, see Chapter 8. Similarly, Netz (2014, p.145) argues the same point; he noted that in his data, there were many occurrences of disagreements which involved both mitigation (e.g., lexical downgraders like *maybe*) and aggravation (e.g., attributive language as in *name-calling*) leading to the classification of these disagreements as highly aggravated despite the use of mitigation. Therefore, it is safe to claim that if a mitigation device is used in an aggravated disagreement, the aggravation is likely to overshadow the mitigation effect.

Consulting the literature reveals different categorisations of mitigation devices, such as those of Fraser (1980), Holmes (1984), Rees-Miller (2000), Caffi (1999; 2007), Kreutel (2007), and Harb (2016). For instance, Fraser (1980) classified mitigation devices into two main categories. The first is altruistic mitigation driven by caution to avoid causing damage to the other. The second category involves devices that appeal more to the self than the other; these are driven by caution towards implicating the self and reducing obligation and responsibility for the expressed disagreement; this is what Fraser referred to as self-serving mitigation. This group includes devices like hedges, personalised opinions, parenthetical and emotive verbs, and hesitation markers. However, Caffi (2013, p.199)²⁶ argued that a clear-cut distinction between the two types of mitigation seems to be difficult, mainly because saving the other’s face goes hand in hand with saving one’s own face.

²⁶ Caffi (2007, p.50) classifies mitigation devices into: (1) *bushes* operating on the proposition of the speech act seen as vagueness, (2) *hedges* operating on the illocutionary force of the speech act seen as indirectness, and finally (3) *deictic* origin of the speech act seen as a reduction for the responsibility of the utterance. Nonetheless, she stressed in different occasions that this classification of the scope of mitigation is only of “a heuristic value” since it is very difficult and practically challenging to separate the components of a speech act hence these scopes are usually interrelated (2007, p.50).

Another categorisation was proposed by Holmes (1984). This categorisation includes four classes for mitigation devices: (1) prosodic devices like the *fall-rise intonation*, (2) syntactic devices such as *tag questions*, (3) lexical devices such as *hedges*, and (4) discourse devices like *by the way*. Flores-Ferrán (2010, pp.1968-1969) provides a list of the mitigation devices found in English and Spanish. These mitigation devices include: (1) indirectness; (2) non-immediacy indicators, *e.g., the use of impersonal constructions*; (3) epistemic disclaimers, *e.g., if I am not wrong*; (4) tag questions, *e.g., you are ok with that; aren't you?*; (5) hedges, *e.g., technically*; (6) parenthetical verbs, *e.g., I suppose, and I think*; and (7) time deixis in verb mood, *e.g., the conditional*. Similarly, Harb (2016) reported that Arabic speakers disagreeing on Facebook used the following mitigation devices: address terms, hedging, in-group/solidarity markers, lexical downgraders (softeners), positive remarks, delayed negation, passive voice, lexical euphemized expressions, personalised opinions, agreement markers (*e.g., yes, true*) + coordinators (*e.g., but*), and a combination of these devices; Section 4.5.1.1 outlines how mitigation devices in Saudis' disagreements were coded.

3.3.2 Aggravation

Unlike mitigation, aggravation is employed to intensify the disagreement.²⁷ As noted in Section 3.2, Culpeper (2011a, pp.19-20) reviewed multiple definitions of impoliteness and noted that aggravation is a key concept; for example, Bousfield and Locher (2008, p.3) defined impoliteness itself as a “behaviour that is face-aggravating in particular contexts”. Similarly, Watts (2003) referred to face-threatening or face-damaging acts as aggressive facework, whereas Culpeper (2011a) uses face-attack as a synonym for face-aggravating. Hence, it seems that aggravation and impoliteness are strongly related concepts. Aggravation is seen as a manifestation of impoliteness, which is most likely deployed to aggravate face-threats (Culpeper et al., 2003). Moreover, this connection between aggravation and impoliteness is clear in Bousfield's (2008, pp.72, 262) definition of impoliteness as the “intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts which are purposefully performed unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or with deliberate aggression” thus maximising face-threat. Indeed,

²⁷ Bousfield (2008, p.75-97) gives a detailed critique in which he compares Lachenicht's model (1980) of aggravation and Culpeper's model (1996) of impoliteness. A short similar account can be found in Culpeper et al. (2003).

aggravation seems to be an essential element when defining impoliteness (Bousfield, 2008, p.75).²⁸

Culpeper (2011a) argued (im)politeness in some contexts can be socially normalised, legitimised, or neutralised (p.215). Normalisation and legitimisation work similarly as “both rely on an ideology that positively values impoliteness” (pp.215-216); the difference is that legitimisation is related to institutional structures that license such practices, such as in police interrogations and military training. In these contexts, using aggravators like name-calling and silencers is not perceived as impolite; however, this does not mean that the target will not take offence at the perceived face-attack (p.217). On the other hand, neutralisation refers to contexts where the aggravation appears as mock impoliteness (i.e. the impoliteness is not genuine); they do not reflect a negative attitude towards the target. This type of (im)politeness depends on some degree of mismatch between the context and the conventionalised impoliteness formulae used; additional signals, such as laughter, are employed to show that the impoliteness is not genuine (Culpeper, 2011a, p.219). Moreover, Culpeper (2011a, p.205) argued that reciprocal aggravation is not uncommon; he referred to it as counter-impoliteness. Counter-impoliteness (i.e. reactive impoliteness) can be motivated by different factors, for instance, blocking an attack and resorting one’s face. These instances of reactive impoliteness can sometimes be considered appropriate; this argument is elaborated upon further in the analysis (see Section 8.6.1).

My approach to aggravation devices in the study is inspired by Culpeper’s model covered above in Section 3.2 and the list of aggravation devices proposed in Harb’s (2016) study. In examining (im)politeness in Arabic speakers’ disagreements on Facebook, Harb (2016) reported that participants in his study used seven aggravating devices including: personality-related abusive language; family-related obscene language; invoking Allah; structural aggravating devices, *e.g.*, *repetition of negative marker ‘la:’*; paralinguistic cues, *e.g.*, *spitting*; and a combination of aggravators. Each group includes different specific devices; the coding framework of the aggravation devices is illustrated in Section 4.5.1.2.

²⁸ Another definition that highlights the role of intention in aggravation is provided by Meibauer (2016, p.154), in a translation of Bonacchi’s (2012) definition of verbal aggression, “[a]cts of verbal aggression are forms of language behaviour (verbal forms or accompanying nonverbal behaviour) with hostile intentions towards the addressee, or forms that could be interpreted as such.”

3.4 Summary

This chapter was a general overview of the literature on (im)politeness. In Section 3.1, I covered key theories and approaches in (im)politeness studies. In Section 3.1.1, I covered classical theories of politeness, including Lakoff's model (1973), Leech's model (1983), and Brown and Levinson's model ([1978], 1987). Then, I briefly shed some light on how disagreement as a speech act was treated in these theories, particularly the last two models. In Section 3.1.2, I covered the discursive approaches which shifted the attention from politeness to (im)politeness; I attempted to highlight the key contributions of discursive approaches, including the distinction between (im)politeness₁ and (im)politeness₂ and the incorporation of social theories such as CoP. The discussion then focused on the relational work model proposed by Locher and Watts (2005) and rapport management proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2000). The following section, 3.2, was dedicated to reviewing Culpeper's framework of impoliteness (2011) and outlining the literature on mitigation and aggravation devices.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This chapter shows in depth the methodological approach followed in this study. It starts with Section 4.1, in which I outline some of the research methods found in pragmatic and discourse analysis studies; this section aims to provide a theoretical background for the data collection instruments used in the study. Then, in Section 4.2, I clarify the procedures followed in collecting naturally occurring data from Twitter, and metalinguistic data using online questionnaires and interviews. In Section 4.3, I describe the respondents in online questionnaires and follow-up interviews. Then, in Section 4.4, I explain the process of preparing the corpus data by conducting an initial coding to filter two-turn Saudis' disagreements from the flow of collected tweets. The section also includes a description of how the responses to the online questionnaire were screened and prepared for the analysis, the process of transcribing the interview recordings, and the translation approach followed in presenting the examples and respondents' statements. Section 4.5 illustrates the coding framework and process followed in identifying and classifying disagreement types, mitigation and aggravation devices, and disagreement strategies in the corpus of tweets. Section 4.6 briefly covers the pilot study conducted to test the coding system on corpus data. Finally, I provide an overview of the quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches applied to analyse the data.

4.1 Mixed methods approach in pragmatic research

The purpose of this section is to review some of the methods used in pragmatic research. Each research method has its weaknesses and strengths; therefore, combining some of these methods is anticipated to allow the close capture of different aspects of the phenomena under investigation. Several researchers have advocated the mixed-methods approach in pragmatic research (e.g., Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.31). Mixed-methods approaches focus on integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve more multidimensional and accurate results (Dörnyei, 2007, p.44; Ivankova and Creswell, 2009, p.136). At the heart of such approaches is the presentation of well-validated findings, which are argued to be more robust and convincing for a larger audience than those produced by a monomethod investigation (Dörnyei, 2007, p.46). Therefore, in the current research, I followed a mixed methods approach using three methods: a corpus of authentic data, an online questionnaire, and a follow-up interview, which are outlined below.

4.1.1 Corpus of naturally occurring data

Schneider (2018, p.50) states that corpus data usually refers to (electronic machine-readable) collections of spoken and/or written language; the corpus method is increasingly being used to gather and investigate naturally occurring data. There are different large corpora that have been compiled for no particular research task, such as the British National Corpus (BNC), and smaller ones that are usually compiled for specific research purposes, like the corpus in my study. Corpus data have been used effectively in different pragmatic and discourse analysis studies; for instance, response tokens in British and Irish spoken interaction (O’Keeffe and Adolphs, 2008), hedges and boosters in English academic articles (Takimoto, 2015), (im)politeness metalinguistic labels (Culpeper, 2011a), and taboo language and impoliteness (Culpeper, 2018). Schneider (2018, pp.47,52) observes one of the key challenges in using corpus methods in pragmatic studies is that pragmatic corpus annotation is still in its infancy despite the advances in corpora research, making more automated pragmatics research of large quantities challenging. Therefore, a certain amount of manual examining is usually required in many corpus-based studies in pragmatics research (see also: Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.31).

Another challenge in gathering data and compiling a corpus is related to the ethical issue surrounding the nature of the collected data. For this study, the corpus of tweets was collected from non-private Twitter accounts. Data in the public domain are considered by many researchers (e.g., Pak and Paroubek, 2010; Langlotz and Locher, 2012; Draucker, 2013; Ott, 2017) to be ethically acceptable for scientific research, although some scholars argue that the mere characteristic of being available in a public domain is not enough. However, collecting publicly available online data from the internet and different social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter for the purpose of linguistic analysis has been considered appropriate in many studies (e.g., Angouri and Tseliga, 2010; Zappavigna, 2012; Shum and Lee, 2013; Harb, 2016). The Psychological Society’s Research Board (2017) highlights the main considerations when using online data, which can be summed as follows: respect for the autonomy, privacy, and dignity of individuals and communities, maximising benefits and minimising harm, social responsibility, and scientific integrity (p.5); ethical consideration are covered further in Appendix A.

In this study, I compiled a small corpus of publically available Saudi tweets (henceforth, Saudi Arabic Twitter corpus; SAT corpus) from 6 trending hashtags in 2017-2018; see Section 4.4.1 for more details on the collection and preparation process of the corpus.

4.1.2 Metalinguistic data

Besides naturally occurring data, this study uses other instruments to collect metapragmatic data from respondents. Online questionnaires and follow-up interviews are experimental methods frequently utilised to elicit language data in ethnographic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic research (Schneider, 2018); they are also classified as perception/comprehension based-methods (Kasper and Dahl, 1991). In pragmatic research, these instruments are employed to elicit metalinguistic data to get further insight into different cultural communities by investigating the members' awareness and conceptualisations of the phenomenon under study (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.193). Recent (im)politeness research promotes the use of metalinguistic data, which can be collected from lay observers²⁹ to access their understanding of a particular phenomenon and gain insight into its function in a given society. This is to say, the use of metalinguistic data allows access to a wide range of cultural judgments from language users and not only the analyst (Davies, 2011, p.194). The collected metalinguistic data aim to support and validate the analyst's interpretations of the data by revealing possible connections, factors, and orders. Therefore, in this study, I systematically investigate the responses of lay observers, here Saudi Twitter users, using both an online questionnaire and follow-up interviews to collect their evaluations of (im)politeness in Saudis' Twitter disagreements taken from the SAT corpus. The following two subsections offer a review of these two methods.

4.1.2.1 Online questionnaires

One frequently used rating scale in questionnaires is the Likert scale (Dörnyei, 2007, p.105), which usually consists of 5-point choices. It is used to elicit assessments of different aspects of utterances or situations, such as their correctness, appropriateness, politeness, etc. (Schneider, 2018, p.70). Questionnaires are typically used to support other methods employed in the research (Schneider, 2018, p.71). For instance, in examining (im)politeness perceptions of apologies cross-culturally (e.g., Chang and Haugh, 2011) and (im)politeness in Chinese forum disagreements (e.g., Shum and Lee, 2013). Both these studies used a 5-point Likert scale in their questionnaires and conducted follow-up interviews with the participants.

²⁹ Lay observers here refers to people with no specialised knowledge of the field under study, in this case the field of (im)politeness. Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.86) differentiate between two types of observers laypersons and analysts.

Dörnyei (2007) points out some key advantages of using questionnaires, particularly web-based questionnaires like the one used in this study. Section 4.2.2 describes the questionnaire I used to collect my data. The most notable benefits stated by Dörnyei (2007, p.121) are: (1) the reduced costs involved in setting up and running the instrument compared to traditional questionnaires, (2) the convenience of administration, (3) the automatic process of harvesting and importing the data, (4) the high level of anonymity, and (5) the superior access to a larger and more diverse sample. However, there are undeniably some drawbacks, particularly in relation to sampling. Dörnyei (2007, p.122) notes that it is difficult to follow a clear systematic sampling strategy; the researcher usually initiates a snowball sampling by contacting potential participants who are asked to resend the questionnaire to others. This strategy leads to a reliance on self-selected participants, which can influence the interpretation and generalisation of the findings. However, other researchers (e.g., Gosling et al., 2004, p.99; Wilson and Dewaele, 2010) argue that the issues of representativeness and self-selection sampling in online questionnaires do not automatically invalidate the analyses based on such methods, and this is generally contingent on the purpose of the study. Although not completely representative of the population, internet-based samples are more diverse than traditional samples with respect to age, gender, geographical location, socioeconomic status, and race; therefore, even small proportions of participants are represented in the data. Moreover, respondents who participate in online questionnaires, especially if there are no promised incentives, are likely to be interested in the topic and self-motivated to participate. All in all, it can be argued that there is no perfect method, and that each method has its weakness and strengths; hence the use of different methods in conducting research can optimise the quality of the collected data (Gosling et al., 2004, p.102).

4.1.2.2 Follow-up interviews

Interviews are another method widely employed in research to elicit language production. Interviews are particularly helpful in supporting researchers in collecting more in-depth data from respondents than questionnaires can (Dörnyei, 2007, p.105). In (im)politeness studies, interviews are usually used to elicit metalinguistic information from respondents by requesting them to clarify and elaborate on the reasoning for their categorisation of (im)politeness and to comment on certain politeness-related topics (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, pp.30, 268; Schneider, 2018, p.63). Hence, interviews are useful in analysing the social and moral norms underlying the respondents' evaluations obtained via questionnaires (Chang and Haugh, 2011).

In terms of format, Dörnyei (2007, p.136) argues that semi-structured interviews are the most common in linguistic research. These interviews are structured in the sense that the researcher prepares primarily open-ended questions and guides the interview by encouraging the interviewees to elaborate on any raised topics related to the objectives of the interview. Moreover, interviews can be post-event, for example, after respondents complete the questionnaire — post-event interviews are commonly used in pragmatic research (e.g., Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 2008; Chang and Haugh, 2011; Shum and Lee, 2013). See Section 4.2.3, where I clarify how follow-up interviews were conducted in this study.

4.2 Data collection procedures

Based on the review above, this study examines (im)politeness in Saudis' Twitter disagreements; it follows a mixed methods approach using three instruments. The next three subsections cover the procedures followed in the data collection phase. Section 4.2.1 illustrates how naturally occurring data from Twitter were collected to build the SAT corpus. Then, Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 cover the collection of metalinguistic data through online questionnaires and follow-up interviews.

4.2.1 Saudi Arabic Twitter corpus (SAT)

The corpus of tweets collected for this study consists of 12 main tweets (MTs) that have high engagement³⁰ within the specific hashtags; these 12 tweets were extracted from 6 hashtags that were trending in 2017 and 2018 in Saudi Arabia. Every MT had at least 50 replies (i.e. responsive posts), thus producing a total of 1556 posts. These hashtags were identified based on reports in local online news accounts on Twitter (such as @SaudiNews50, @sabqorgand, and @HashKSA) and were based on my observations as a Saudi Twitter user. The selected hashtags fall within the following categories: political (POL) and sociocultural (SOC), as these topics were judged to be more likely to provoke disagreement given the major political and social changes the country has been undergoing. Another category that is very much intertwined with the selected categories is religion; however, in the current study, I did not select any exclusively religious topics for the following reasons. First, religion in Saudi Arabia, which is usually Islam, is deeply integrated into the life of Saudis. Hence, it is difficult to separate it from other elements

³⁰ Khan (2017, p.237) states that engagement can be seen as an individual's interaction with a post, and it has two forms: active (participation) and passive (consumption).

of life, for example, politics or education. Therefore, the categories political and sociocultural are, in fact, not entirely religion-free. Second, religion as a topic is not limited to Saudi Arabia, which means the likelihood of more non-Saudi Twitter users participating in these religious topics would be high. Therefore, it would be more challenging to ensure the disagreement data was produced by Saudis. More importantly, in this study, the primary focus is on examining how Saudis express disagreement linguistically, independent of the specific topic of the hashtags.

After identifying the hashtags, I browsed each hashtag individually, and I chose the first two MTs with a high engagement level. Engagement here is measured by the number of replies or comments, which is seen as an indicator of active interaction. Based on this understanding of engagement, I decided that any MT with (≥ 50) replies is considered an engaging tweet. Next, Python code was used to extract Twitter data from the saved pages and download it into a spreadsheet for each MT and its replies; Table 4-1 lists all the MTs in the SAT corpus. The Python code collected the essential details about each tweet which were organised in different columns: (1) Date and time of the tweet, (2) Text of the main tweet, (3) User-Screen name, (4) Username (handle), (5) Location, (6) Bio (Profile info), (7) User-followers, (8) User-following, (9) Likes, (10) Retweets, (11) Replying-to, and (12) Hashtag.

Table 4-1: List of hashtags and the total number of tweets in the corpus

Category	Hashtag code	Hashtag	No. of replies	Shared media in the main tweet
SOC	SH1.1	#alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques	118	a short video
	SH1.2	#alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques	149	a short video
	SH2.1	#hijaz_identity	96	-
	SH2.2	#hijaz_identity	216	a short video
	SH3.1	#women_driving_cars	219	-
	SH3.2	#women_driving_cars	116	a short video
POL	PH1.1	#the_king_fights_corruption	85	-
	PH1.2	#the_king_fights_corruption	97	a short video
	PH2.1	#royal_decree	60	photo
	PH2.2	#royal_decree	202	-
	PH3.1	#gulf_crisis	128	-
	PH3.2	#gulf_crisis	70	a short video
Total	12		1556	

The 12 MTs in this corpus are presented here in full as they will be referred to throughout the thesis for contextual background for the replies used in the examples presented in the analysis. Five of these 12 MTs, particularly MT1, MT3, MT9, MT10, and MT11, were used in the online questionnaire.

 **MT1** <SOC, SH1.1, #alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques>


أحد جيران المسجد يدخل غاضباً بوسط محاضرة دينية.. ويطلب من المحاضر تخفيض صوت المكيفون.. وهو يردد له نبغي ننام.. هذا جزء من معاناة كثير من رفع صوت مكيفونات المساجد حتى في وقت المحاضرات والدروس الدينية
<https://bit.ly/2XzeqfV>

An angry neighbour enters the masjid (i.e. mosque) during a lecture.. requesting the lecturer to lower the loudspeakers' volume.. saying 'We want to sleep'.. this is part of the suffering with the masjids' loudspeakers, even during religious lectures and lessons
<https://bit.ly/2XzeqfV>³¹

 **MT2** <SOC, SH1.2, #alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques>

#وزارة_الثقافة_والاعلام تعلن رسمياً إيقاف الكاتب #محمد_السحيمي وإحالته للتحقيق أمام لجنة النظر في ضبط المخالفات الإعلامية في وزارة الثقافة والإعلام
 #السحيمي_يطالب_باغلاق_المساجد
 #إيقاف_السحيمي_وإحالته_للتحقيق

#The_Ministry_of_Culture_and_Information officially announces the suspension of the writer #Muhammed_Alsihaimi and his referral for investigation before the Committee to look into Media Violations in the Ministry of Culture and Information.
 #Alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques
 #Suspention_of_Alsihaimi_and_referring_him_for_investigation


 **MT3** <SOC, SH2.1, #hijaz_identity>

#اطردو_المتعنصرين
 دا الهاشقاك الانسب صراحه
 لانو لا حجازي ولا قبيلي يرضوا بالفئه دي
 شاركو فيه قبائل و حُجز خليههم يفهموا اننا بلد وحده ودين واحد

Honestly, #eject_the_racists is the most appropriate hashtag because neither Hijazi nor a tribal person would agree with those participating in the #hijaz_identity. Tribal or


³¹ The shared video shows a lecturer (probably the imam of the mosque, or another person who works for Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance) giving a short lecture inside the mosque after what is most likely to be one of the evening prayers. The lecture was broadcast through the external loudspeakers. A man approaches the lecturer and requests that he turn off the loudspeakers as the loudness of the broadcast is disturbing his sleep. The man is heard saying 'we prayed, we have done everything, we want to sleep'. The lecturer apologised saying 'I am sorry, and it is your right', then turned the speakers off. As the man was walking away, the lecturer faced the people attending the lecture, and who sat there watching the man talking to the lecturer, asking them to pray for the man by saying 'brothers, pray for him'. The man heard him, and turned back and said, 'why do you ask them to pray for me?', the lecturer replied 'because you are sick/tired'. The man strongly rejected this and asserted that 'I am not sick/tired, I just want to sleep' and then walked away. The lecturer then addressed the people by saying that 'leave him, do not say anything to him and do not slander him ...etc.', probably he noticed that some people were annoyed by the man's interruption and attitude.

Hijazi³², participate in #eject-the-racists to let them understand that we are one nation and one religion.

 MT4 <SOC, SH2.2, #hijaz_identity>

لَهجَة الحِجَاز لَيسَت كلَهجَة فؤاد فقط ❤️
#هويه_الحجاز <https://t.co/ad32cT058V>

The Hijazi dialect is not just like Fouad's dialect ❤️³³
#hijaz_identity <https://t.co/ad32cT058V>³⁴

 MT5 <SOC, SH3.1, # women_driving-cars >


علينا الاعتراف بأن #وطننا_مختطف من الأجنبي
إختطفوا #إعلامنا #هويتنا #لباسنا #فنوننا #لهجتنا #وظائفنا #أسواقنا
لم أستغرب إختطاف حتى #قيادة_المرأة للسيارة
فأصبحوا يتكلموا بإسم المرأة السعودية 🙄
#شرين_الرفاعي تدعى أنها إعلامية سعودية
وهذه لعبه إستخبارات الاعداء 🙄 <https://t.co/qJtFbG5TJO>

We have to admit that #our_country_is taken over by foreigners
They hijacked #our_media #our_identity #our_dress #our_arts #our_dialect #our_jobs
#our_markets
I was not surprised that even the #women_driving_cars was snatched
They started speaking on behalf of Saudi women 🙄
#Shireen_Alrifaie claims to be a Saudi journalist
This is the game of enemy intelligence 🙄 <https://t.co/qJtFbG5TJO>

³² The main poster used Hujiz instead of Hijazis which is more colloquial. The term Hijaz refers to the western part of Saudi Arabia and the term Hijazi refers to both the dialect(s) spoken in this area of Saudi Arabia and the people living there. Most of the population of Hijaz consists of different Arab tribes who have historical connections to that region and other non-tribal Saudis who live there.


³³ Fouad is a comic character portraying a Hijazi man played by actor Nasser Alqassabi in (Ta:f Ma: Ta:f) translated into “No Big Deal” in English. It is a popular Saudi Arabian satirical comedy that ran for 18 seasons from 1993 to 2011.

³⁴ The main poster shares a Snapchat video of him talking about the variety of dialects in the Hijaz region and how each dialect is beautiful in its own right, which make the variation of dialects in the region something to celebrate. Sharing this video in the hashtag #hijaz_identity aims to address the negative stereotypical association of the linguistic identity of the Hijaz region with the dialect spoken by the comic character Fouad, a man with a good heart but not very intelligent.

 **MT6** <SOC, SH3.2, #women_driving-cars>

#قيادة_المرأة_للسيارة تخيلوا معي هالمشهد حصه سعودية معها بكالوريوس أو ماجستير تشتغل في اوبر جاها طلب توصيل تكون العميلة سوسن وحده اجنبية الله أعلم إذا شهادتها صحيحة أو لا ولكن موظفة منصب كبير في شركه بس سيارتها تعطلت طال عمرها وتستلم راتب مبلغ وقدره ميري ياحصه برافو عليك انك تشتغلي سواقة 😊

#women_driving_cars imagine with me this scene. Hesah is a Saudi woman with a Bachelor's or Master's degree working at Uber. She gets a request; the client Sawsan is a foreigner, Allah knows if her certificate is authentic or not. She (Sawsan) has a senior position in a company, and her highness receives a high salary, but her car stopped working [that is why she requested an Uber]. Bravo, Hesah, you are working as a driver 😊

 **MT7** <POL, PH1.1, #the king_fights_corruption>

كم تساوي ال 10%، التي أشار لها الأمير #محمد_بن_سلمان في حديثه لثوماس فريدمان من صحيفة نيويورك تايمز؟
 ترليون وثلاثمائة وتسع وثمانون مليار وسبعمائة وواحد وأربعون مليون ريال عربي سعودي.
 رقماً:
 1,389,741,000,000 ريال
 #الملك_يحارب_الفساد


What is the value of the 10%, which Prince #Muhammed_bin_Salman referred to in his interview with Thomas Friedman of the New York Times?

One trillion three hundred and eighty-nine billion seven hundred and forty-one million Saudi Arabian riyals.

In numbers:

1,389,741,000,000 riyals

#the king_fights_corruption

 **MT8** <POL, PH1.2, #the king_fights_corruption>

فيديو
 #وزير_الخارجية
 #عادل_الجبير:
 تم إحضار المتهمين في قضايا #الفساد وعددهم 208 أشخاص وعُرضت عليهم الأدلة وتم إبلاغهم بإعادة الأموال التي نهبوها أو ستتم إحالتهم للقضاء.
 #الملك_يحارب_الفساد

 **Video**

#Foreign_Minister

#Adel_Aljubeir:

The 208 defendants in corruption cases were shown evidence, and they were told to return the money they had looted or they would be referred to the court.

#the king_fights_corruption

 **MT9** <POL, PH2.1, #royal_decrees>

السعودية الجديدة لا تتعامل كالسابق في مدة مجلس الوزراء العشر سنوات .. 4 سنوات وبعدها التقييم الشامل وتجديد الحقائق

The new Saudi Arabia no longer supports the ten-year term of the Council of Ministers..4 years after which there will be a comprehensive evaluation and reshuffling

 **MT10** <POL, PH2.2, #royal_decrees>

#أوامر_ملكية
 نبي
 (١) الغاء هيئته الترفيه
 (٢) الغاء سواقه المراه
 (٣) الغاء دخول النساء الملاعب
 (٤) الغاء الحفلات الغنائيه
 (٥) عوده الهيئه
 (٦) تثبيت المتعاقدين بالعقود
 (٧) ارجاع الاسعار السابقه للبنزين والكهرباء
 (٨) الغاء القيمه المضافه بخصوص شراء العقارات لسهوله امتلاك المنازل للمواطنين

#royal-decrees

We want

- 1) Cancelling the general entertainment authority
- 2) Nullifying the law allowing women to drive
- 3) Nullifying the law allowing women's entrance to football stadiums
- 4) Calling off all concerts
- 5) Restoring the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice
- 6) Tenure employees on contracts
- 7) Restore the previous prices of gas and electricity
- 8) Remove the added value tax on purchasing properties to facilitate citizens' home ownership

 **MT11** <POL, PH3.1, #gulf_crisis>

قبل #الازمة_الخليجية كانت #السعودية على تويتر مصدر الحسابات الأرقى والأجمل (علم-فقه-ثقافه-سياسة-وأدب) اما اليوم أصبحت مصدر للحسابات الأكثر تفاهة وحقارة وبذاءة وبلاهة وقلة أدب والمصيبه أنهم يعتقدون ان هذا التغيير هو (القوة الناعمة) #جهل

Before the #gulf_crisis, #Saudi Arabia was on Twitter, a source of the finest and most interesting accounts in (science - jurisprudence - culture - politics - and literature). Today, however, it has become a source of the most insignificant, sordid, dirty, stupid, and bad-mannered accounts. The misfortune is that they believe that this change is (soft power) #ignorance.

 MT12 <POL, PH3.2, #gulf_crisis>

أنور عشقي المستشار السعودي لا يحب أن تظل إسرائيل معزولة في المنطقة ويدعو لإقامة علاقة مشتركة
بينما يتم #حصار_قطر و #حماس وقطع العلاقة معها! <https://t.co/c8etBN24GK>

Anwar Eshki, the Saudi advisor, does not like Israel remaining isolated in the region and calls for the establishment of a joint relationship while Qatar and Hamas are besieged and the relationship with them cut off! <https://t.co/c8etBN24GK>

4.2.2 Online questionnaires

After the corpus analysis, I used online questionnaires to collect metalinguistic data, particularly lay observers' evaluations of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements. This step is taken to gain more insight into how Saudi Twitter users, who are not involved in the production of the disagreements in the SAT corpus, would evaluate (im)politeness in these disagreements. Although the respondents in this study are not insiders in the interactions where these disagreements are expressed, they are considered cultural insiders (Davies, 2018, p.125); as such, their position as lay observers does not diminish the value of their metapragmatic comments, and their comments can provide more insight into presumed shared social/cultural norms and how violations of these norms are perceived. As shown in Section 3.1.2, Kádár and Haugh (2013, pp.85, 94) argued that there are fundamentally two different perspectives to the moral order; these are the insider (emic) and the outsider (etic) perspectives. The insider here is a member (whether an individual or group of individuals) of the cultural group who assumes or claims an insider perspective on the norms and expectations that constitute the social moral order. This social moral order is what members refer to when holding both themselves and others accountable.

The questionnaire was designed and distributed through JISC online surveys (see Appendix B and C).³⁵ It was divided into four parts; the first part briefly introduces the study and the participation consent form. The second part involves general questions to collect demographic information such as age, gender, educational level, and spoken dialects. It also contained questions about Twitter's popularity among Saudis and how the respondents use the platform. The questions were multiple choice, with the opportunity to write a different answer in a blank box. The questions concerned: regularity of using Twitter; the purpose(s) of using Twitter; for example, following the

³⁵ <https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/>

news and keeping in touch with friends; the type of activities carried out such as liking, replying and retweeting; and the type of the relationships between the respondents and the people in their following/followers lists. The last question in this part was an open-ended question that asked the respondents to write their thoughts on the following question: *Do you believe that Twitter has influenced how Saudis express their opinions and how they view other different views?*

The third part of the questionnaire was focused on collecting the respondents' evaluations of disagreement instances taken from the corpus. The section included five MTs with two replies each. Respondents were asked to decide whether the reply to the MT expressed a disagreement or not. If they found the reply to express a disagreement, then they were given two scaled-response questions to evaluate the (im)politeness and the (in)appropriateness of the reply. (Im)politeness was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "very impolite", "impolite", "neither polite nor impolite", "polite", to "very polite". (In)appropriateness ranged from "very appropriate", "appropriate", "neither appropriate nor inappropriate", "inappropriate", to "very inappropriate".³⁶ After each reply, respondents were encouraged to write an explanation for their classification in the designated box. The explanations they provide are crucial to the analysis as they give an indication of the rationale behind the selected classifications.

The last section of the questionnaire was a call for participation in a follow-up interview to talk more about the participant's answers to the questionnaire and other questions about disagreement and (im)politeness on Twitter. The respondents were asked to leave their contact details to arrange the interview. Respondents who were not interested in the interview were directed to submit their responses without the need to fill in this last part.

4.2.3 Follow-up interviews

Interviews were the second instrument used in the study to collect further metalinguistic data from the respondents of the online questionnaire. These interviews were necessary to gain more in-depth information about why certain judgments were made. Conducting interviews added more valuable metapragmatic information in answering the second and third research questions. Given the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online using different calling apps: *Facetime*, *Google Duo*, and *imo*,

³⁶ In the questionnaire I did not provide a definition for these terms as I did not want to impose a specific definition on the respondents since the point of the tool was to collect data regarding laypersons' understanding of these terms.

depending on the interviewee's preference and internet connection. I managed to interview 20 respondents, ten males and ten females. The interviews were semi-structured, and some questions were driven by the participants' answers on the online questionnaire and some other prepared questions; however, the questions and topics discussed varied depending on the flow of the conversation and the participant's engagement and willingness to talk more.

The interview length ranged from 20 minutes to almost an hour, yielding a total of 11 hours of recorded conversation. These interviews were imported into MAXQDA, software used in qualitative and mixed-methods research. Unlike other software (e.g., NVivo), MAXQDA makes transcribing and coding Arabic data much more feasible as it can accommodate right-to-left languages. Once imported, each interview was given a label linking it to the interviewee's response to the online questionnaire. Although transcribing the interviews was a time-consuming task, it was an excellent way to familiarise myself with the data before starting the coding process and identifying the themes.

4.3 Participants

The call for participation in the online questionnaires was posted on Twitter to ensure that it attracted Saudi respondents who are Twitter users. However, the number of respondents (82) was less than the set target number of 200. Therefore, I contacted some friends and acquaintances on Twitter using private messages asking them to circulate the call for participation among their social circles, which helped increase the number of respondents to 232. I excluded one response mainly because the respondent indicated that she does not use Twitter and that her response is based on her observation of her husband's use of Twitter. Table 4-2 provides information about the respondents in the online questionnaire: gender, age, education, and spoken dialects.

Table 4-2: Demographic information about respondents in the online questionnaire (before the exclusion of incomplete or irrelevant responses)

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	125	54.1%
Male	106	45.9%
Total	231	100 %
Age group		
16-19	3	1.3%
20-29	67	29.0%
30-39	89	38.5%
40-49	51	22.1%
50 and older	21	9.1%
Total	231	100%
Educational level		
Middle school	1	0.4%
GCE (high school)	21	9.1%
Diploma	9	3.9%
Bachelor's	98	42.4%
Master's	69	29.9%
Doctorate	33	14.3%
Total	231	100%
Spoken dialect		
Hijazi dialects	91	39.4%
Najdi dialects	65	28.1%
Southern dialects	27	11.7%
Northern dialects	17	7.4%
Eastern dialects	13	5.6%
Qassimi dialects	11	4.8%
Other	7	3.0%
Total	231	100%

After looking at the participants' responses, I emailed and texted 20 respondents to arrange for the interviews at their convenience. Table 4-3 provides information about each interviewee: the number of informants, gender, age, education, and spoken dialect. The number of respondents who expressed their willingness to be interviewed was 46, and the selection of the 20 interviewees was mostly motivated by their answers in the questionnaire and their immediate response to arrange for the interview when contacted.

Table 4-3: Interviewees' demographic information

No.	Code	Pseudonym	Age group	Education	Spoken dialect
Female					
1	FP1	Nora	30-39	Master's	Najdi
2	FP2	Fatimah	20-29	Master's	Southern
3	FP3	Maha	20-29	PhD	Najdi
4	FP4	Abeer	20-29	Master's	Hijazi
5	FP5	Shahad	20-29	Master's	Hijazi
6	FP6	Amani	20-29	Bachelor's	Hijazi
7	FP7	Khulud	40-49	Master's	Najdi
8	FP8	Sarah	50 & older	Bachelor's	Hijazi
9	FP9	Manal	30-39	PhD	Hijazi
10	FP10	Sumaia	30-39	Bachelor's	Hijazi
Male					
1	MP1	Ali	40-49	Master's	Najdi
2	MP2	Faisal	20-29	Bachelor's	Northern
3	MP3	Ahmed	30-39	Bachelor's	Qassimi
4	MP4	Khalid	30-39	Master's	Southern
5	MP5	Nawaf	20-29	Master's	Najdi
6	MP6	Bader	40-49	Master's	Najdi
7	MP7	Muath	40-49	Master's	Other (Hafar Al-Batin)
8	MP8	Muhamad	30-39	Master's	Hijazi
9	MP9	Yusef	30-39	PhD	Hijazi
10	MP10	Malek	30-39	PhD	Northern

4.4 Data preparation and theoretical considerations

In the following sections, I aim to explain the initial coding carried out in order to prepare the corpus data for further quantitative and qualitative analysis. In Section 4.4.1.1, I examined the corpus of tweets to identify the replies that expressed disagreement and excluded non-disagreement replies. As stated in Section 4.2.1, the Python code extracted the poster's location, but there were cases where the poster's location was unclear; therefore, I had to examine the poster's profile manually by looking at the linguistic code and other indicators to ensure that the disagreement was most likely posted by a Saudi, see Section 4.4.1.1. The next step was to look at the interactional turn that the identified disagreements occupied in the thread of replies under each MT, see Section 4.4.1.2. In Section 4.4.1.3, I focused on identifying the target(s) of the disagreements. The initial coding was executed in Excel, and then the processed data were imported into MAXQDA. This step was important in expediting the process of analysing mitigation and aggravation

devices, disagreements types and strategies in MAXQDA. In Section 4.4.2, I describe the preparation of online questionnaire responses and interview recordings using MAXQDA.

4.4.1 Preparation of the SAT corpus

Analysing the tweets in the SAT corpus required preparation and some preliminary coding to facilitate the examination of Saudis' disagreements on Twitter. Therefore, this section covers this process and gives more insight into how the data were initially approached. All these initial codes are individually discussed below, and the examples taken from the corpus are annotated as follows <category of the hashtag, hashtag code and MT number in the hashtag, type of disagreement>, for instance, <SOC, SH1.1, Mit.Dis> and the row number in the spreadsheet is used to mark the poster in the following format: <poster-row number-interactional turn number>, for instance, Poster-115-T2. Also, I used (...) to indicate that part of the reply was omitted; the ellipsis was employed when the identified feature was illustrated, and the omitted part would not affect the analysis.

4.4.1.1 Identification of Saudis' disagreements

The SAT corpus was compiled specifically to examine disagreement and (im)politeness in Saudi Twitter users' posts within political and sociocultural hashtags. At the stage of data collection, it was impossible to completely exclude all tweets from outside the geographical boundaries of Saudi Arabia. Given the nature of the economic, political, religious, cultural, and familial ties between Arab countries, it was very likely that some of the collected tweets would be posted by non-Saudis. This is despite the selected hashtags being about internal, sociocultural, or political affairs, with the exception of the hashtag *#gulf-crisis*. In cases where the location clearly shows that the poster is non-Saudi, the tweet was excluded; however, the location of each poster is not always clearly shared. Therefore, I relied on a closer manual examination of the individual accounts to identify the account holders' exact Arabic nationality and dialect, which is not always easy, especially when clear indications (e.g., location, local dialect, etc.) are absent. This is one of the challenges faced in online communication; however, several experimental studies suggest that digitally-mediated communication (DMC) can be generally described as containing high levels of self-disclosure since individuals' social identity in current modern society consists of both online and offline components (Hancock, 2007, p.239; Zhao et al., 2008). By investigating individuals' interactional style and message content, it is possible to identify some information about them, such as their gender (Herring and

Stoerger, 2014, p.12). Hence, in this study, I consider that people who willingly share information about their location, dialect, countries, etc., are doing so truthfully, thus representing some elements of their overall social identity online. Those who are not openly sharing information about themselves will, it is held, eventually reveal parts of their identity inadvertently.

The initial coding and preparation stage aims to identify disagreements in the corpus of tweets and exclude non-disagreement tweets. An important step towards identifying disagreements on Twitter was to decide on a working definition to follow, which is defined here as:

A textual post³⁷ that is responding to the main tweet — either to the tweet as a whole or other parts of it, for instance, the shared media; or it could be a response to a prior reply or other posts in the main thread. This disagreeing post states or expresses a position that is incompatible with the main tweet or the previous tweet, but it does not necessarily need to express a direct contradiction or opposition.

I examined the thread of replies for each MT to tease out disagreement replies from other non-disagreement replies. Every reply was classified under one of these three categories: Disagreement (Dis), Agreement (Agr), or Unclassified (U). The unclassified category encompasses all replies that are off-topic, irrelevant, and/or unlikely to be an agreement or a disagreement; see Figure 4-1.

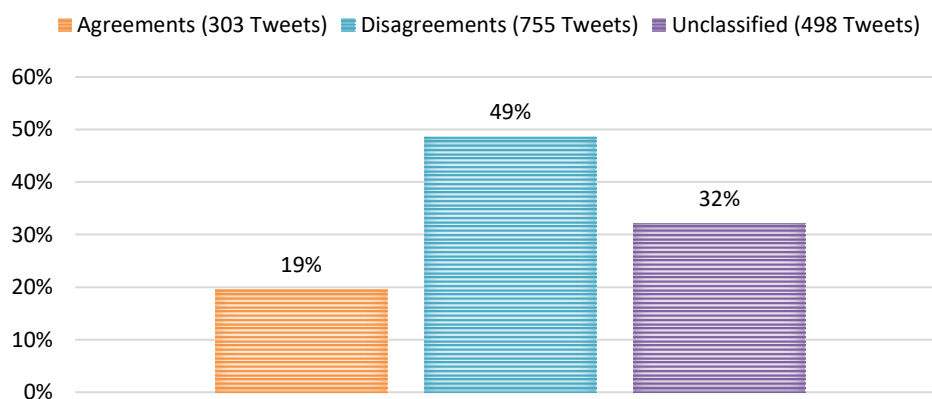


Figure 4-1: Classification of replies in the SAT corpus into three categories

³⁷ Twitter is a multimodal platform, thus disagreements can be expressed multimodally, however, I am primarily interested in the written form of Twitter disagreements. A full multimodal analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, but presents an avenue for further investigation.

Once the disagreements were identified and the other non-disagreement posts were excluded, I focused on scrutinising the 755 disagreements to filter disagreements posted by non-Saudis or unidentified accounts. Out of the 755 disagreements in the SAT corpus, 624 (82.7%) were posted by Saudis, while non-Saudis produced around 67 (8.9%) of the disagreements, and 64 (8.5%) of the disagreement instances were expressed by posters whose location and national/regional affiliation could not be identified.

In the process of identifying a poster's national/regional affiliation, I searched for indicators of the poster's background in their liked posts and shared media. However, there were some instances when a poster might select Saudi Arabia (KSA) as their current physical location but would identify with another place — usually their home country. For example, an Egyptian working in Jeddah, a city in Saudi Arabia, would select KSA as their location and would often (but not always) reveal in their profile that s/he is Egyptian. In other cases, a clear identification seemed difficult (e.g., when the account has very few tweets). In addition, I assessed the linguistic variant(s) (i.e. linguistic code) used by the posters in their tweets, a supporting element of the exclusion process of disagreements that were most likely posted by non-Saudis. One key challenge here was the use of non-dialectal variants of Arabic, which made the national/regional identity of the poster less identifiable. Arabic is generally divided into two main variants, which are: Fus^ḥā: (FUS), recognized as the High variant and Ṣammijah (ṢAM), recognized as the Low variant, as described in Ferguson's study (1959). The former includes both Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), whereas Ṣammijah refers to the different Arabic vernaculars (i.e. dialects).³⁸ Fus^ḥā: is usually described as the standard form mostly used in official communication, formal media, and in religious as well as some literary contexts. On the other hand, Ṣammijah is the non-standard form mostly used in informal (spoken) communication. Fus^ḥā: is not naturally acquired but rather learned, unlike dialects that are naturally acquired (Habash, 2010). It has been argued that Arabic speakers tend to use a mix of both Fus^ḥā: and Ṣammijah not just in speech but also in

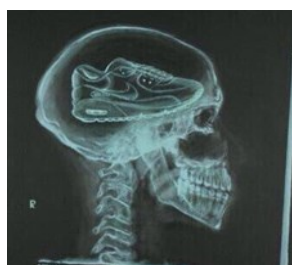
³⁸ Arabic dialects can be broken down into six regional groups (Ferguson, 1959; Habash, 2010; Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2014):

- (1) Gulf Arabic, which includes dialects in Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia — although Saudi Arabia has a wide range of dialects (e.g. Hijazi, Jizani) that differ from other Gulf dialects.
- (2) Yemenite Arabic, which is spoken in Yemen.
- (3) Omani Arabic, although sometimes this is included with other Gulf dialects (Habash, 2010).
- (4) Egyptian Arabic, which includes dialects in Egypt and Sudan.
- (5) Levantine Arabic covers the dialects in Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon.
- (6) North African or Maghrebi Arabic, which includes the dialects spoken in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya.

writing; this form is referred to as mixed Arabic (Mix). In fact, it is argued that mixed Arabic is the true native use of Arabic and the most dominant style used among Arabic speakers (Khalil, 2018, p.1). With new technology and especially social media, it became apparent that dialects and mixed Arabic are increasingly being used in written communication (Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2014). The initial coding of the linguistic variant revealed that disagreements could also sometimes be expressed via other non-linguistic means, such as GIFs, pictures, and links, see Example 4.1. These instances were excluded from the analysis as they require a broader multimodal approach, which is outside the scope of this study.

Example 4.1 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-49-T2 <POL, PH2.2>



4.4.1.2 Structural order of Twitter disagreements

As pointed out in Section 2.4, Muntigl and Turnbull's approach to the structural order of disagreement was adopted in the analysis of online disagreement; however, Langlotz and Locher (2012) pointed out that the application of this approach to online data requires careful adjustment based on the participation framework and the affordances of the platform, see Section 4.4.1.3. They noted that the target of a disagreement is usually the triggering element that stimulates other posters to post their disagreement. Understanding the interactional order of the online platform is indeed essential when investigating online disagreement, especially since there are potentially multiple participants and targets. These targets may not be always present in these interactions and even when the target is present this does not guarantee a response from the target as discussed in both this section and the following section.

In this study, I modified Muntigl and Turnbull's model by using concepts from the Initiation-Response-Follow up (IRF) model.³⁹ The IRF model identifies a chain of nested units: transactions, exchanges, turns, moves, and acts. The types of moves, particularly those in second turns, offered by the model were useful in differentiating replies that generated sub-threads (i.e. side-conversations) from replies that did not. In this study, a turn refers to the textual response⁴⁰ posted in the main thread by clicking on the reply button on the MT. A turn could contain one or more moves.⁴¹ Initiation (I),⁴² Response (R), or Response/Initiation (R/I).⁴³ While turns containing R/I tend to support the flow of the interactional exchange, turns consisting only of R-moves typically interrupt or terminate the interaction (Benson, 2017, p.86).

Based on the above, and as shown in Table 4-4, I treated each of the 12 MTs collected from the six trending hashtags employed in the study as an I-move to occupying the first interactional turn (T1), mainly because the posting of these MTs initiated the responses (i.e. opened the floor for replies) found in the main thread of replies. It is also critical to note that these MTs may contain more than one potentially triggering element, and the situation becomes more complicated if the MT contains multimodal content. The replies in the main thread of replies were coded as T2 if they responded to the MT. These replies in T2 can contain either an R-move or an R/I-move. A reply is coded as T1/2 only when it responds to the MT and generates a sub-thread of replies in which other posters engage in a conversation, either relevant or irrelevant to the topic addressed in the MT. T1/2 turns are response moves with regard to the MT, thus occupying second turns, and are initiation moves with relation to the sub-thread, thus occupying T1 within the sub-thread. Table 4-4 presents different possible scenarios of a three-turn disagreement interaction on Twitter.

³⁹ It was first introduced as an Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model by Sinclair and Coulthard in 1975, then it was revised in 1992. It was originally based on spoken classroom interaction; however, it was later used in analysing written digital interactions, for instance, tutor-student email interaction (Giordan, 2003) and YouTube comments (Benson, 2015, 2017).

⁴⁰ Responses on Twitter can be expressed in different multimodal modes e.g., short clips, memes, and links to other resources; however, in this study the focus is placed on written disagreements (text).

⁴¹ A move here refers to what is done in a turn (or part of a turn) in order to start, continue, or end the exchange.

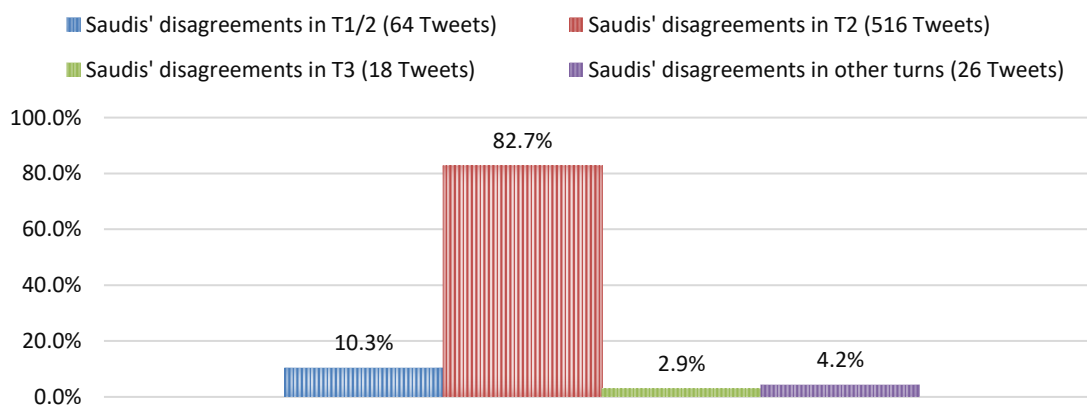
⁴² Initiation move begins an exchange and elicits, predicts, or constrains the following move, which will normally be a response (R) (Benson, 2017, p.86).

⁴³ See Benson (2015, p.90-91) on differentiating between R/I and R+I moves; the study does not examine the difference between the two as they do not bear relevance to the research questions.

Table 4-4: Structural order of disagreement on Twitter

		Interactional turn	Participant	Move type	
Main tweet		T1	Main poster	Initiation (I-move)	
Main thread of replies	Reply 1	T2	Poster 1	Response (R-move), Response/Initiation (R/I-move)	
	Reply 2	T2	Poster 2		
	End of exchange				
	Sub-thread 1	Reply 1	T2	Poster 3	R/I-move
		Reply 2	T3	Main poster	R-move
	The exchange could either terminate here with R-move in T3 or continue if T3 contained R/I-move. (Note: other posters may join the interaction)				
	Sub-thread 2	Reply 1	T1/2	Poster 4	R/I-move
		Reply 2	T2	Poster 5	R/I-move
		Reply 3	T3	Poster 4/Poster 5	R-move or R/I-move
	The exchange could either terminate here with R-move in T3 or continue if T3 contained R/I-move. (Note: other posters may join the interaction)				

The corpus analysis reveals that most Saudis' disagreements occurred in T2, as shown in Figure 4-2; these replies contained R-moves or R/I-moves. It is important to note that the existence of an initiation move in a reply does not guarantee that a response will be provided. As Benson (2017, p.91) noted when analysing YouTube comments, the tendency for an exchange to "hang" following an I-move shows a significant difference between online and face-to-face interaction. This goes in line with the claims made in previous studies that online disagreements are mostly identified in two-turn interactions, and third-turns are rare (Shum and Lee, 2013; Harb, 2016).

**Figure 4-2: Saudis' disagreements based on the interactional turns**

It is essential to highlight that the analysis of disagreements in the following chapters focuses on the 580 Saudis' disagreements in T1/2 and T2. In cases where replies in T3 are essential to shed more light on the context of the interaction, I will show this in the analysis. The exclusion of disagreements in the other interactional turns was based on the taxonomies I follow and the discussion in Chapter 2, which show that disagreements in longer stretches should be treated as arguments. The difference between arguments and disagreements is that disagreements are seeds of arguments that extend beyond T2 or T3.

4.4.1.3 Disagreement orientation in multiparty online communication

As pointed out by Langlotz and Locher (2012), in online communication, the precise identification of the direction of disagreement and its target (i.e. to whom the disagreement is oriented) can be challenging and is probably impossible in some cases. This difficulty is raised by the platform's affordances and the nature of online communication, which is highly multimodal and intertextual with a multiparty frame of participation. Hence, in my analysis of Saudis' disagreement on Twitter, I focused on the explicit linkage between disagreements and their preceding MT and replies. Previous studies (e.g., Baym, 1996; Bolander, 2012; Langlotz and Locher, 2012) emphasised that the connection between disagreement and the previous posts is essential in identifying the target of the disagreement. Moreover, in this study, the attention was placed on disagreement elements of replies, not taking into consideration whether they agree with other tweets. On Twitter, a reply, for instance, could be classified as a disagreement with the MT, but at the same time, it could be classified as an agreement with another reply. This is consistent with the notion that messages are multifunctional and that one message could perform multiple communicative activities (Baym, 1996, p.15) depending on how it is approached. Multimodal media shared in the MT or the replies make the analysis more challenging. For instance, the poster of the MT can share any type of digital media (e.g., animated pictures, short videos, hyperlinks, and audio recordings) in the post; then a poster can reply expressing disagreement directed to the shared media but not the main poster or the textual content of the MT. In some cases, the reply seems to be in disagreement with the textual content of MT, but the poster of the reply is more interested in expressing approval of the content of the shared media as seen Example 4.2.

Example 4.2 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-4-T1/2 (R/I) <SOC, SH1.1>**

عجبني اسلوب واخلاق الإمام

ʕʕabni: uslu:b wa ʔxla:q ʔlima:m

I liked the imam's manner and morals.

Poster-5- T2 (R/I) <SOC, SH1.1, Mit.Dis >

اعجبني بالبداية لكن لما قال (ادعوله) حسسني ان يخاطب انسان مريض..ثانياً الشخص كلمك بعيد عن المايك ترد عليه بالمايك ليش!؟

ʔʕʕabni: bilbida:jah lakin lma: ga:l (erdʕu: lah) ʕsasni: ʔin jxa:tʕb ʔnsa:n mari:dʕ .. ʕa:njan əlfaxsʕ kalamk bʕjd ʕn alma:jk trid ʕaleh bilma:k leʕʔ!

I liked it at first but when he said (pray for him) he made me feel that he is talking to an ill person.. Secondly the man talked to you away from the microphone (you) respond to him using the microphone why?!

The main poster shared a video of an incident inside a masjid and commented on it, stating that people living near masjids suffer from the masjids' loudspeakers, particularly during religious lectures. Poster-4 responded to the MT expressing approval of the imam's behaviour; Poster-4 reacted to the video but not the main poster's comment on the video. Poster-4's reply was coded as T1/2 mainly because it responded to the MT and generated a sub-thread. In this sub-thread, Poster-5 expressed a disagreement with the prior reply, stating why they felt that the imam's behaviour was not acceptable. The disagreement here was not triggered by the main poster's comment on the shared video but rather by the prior reply, which was the I-move to which Poster-5 reacted.

Looking at the target of these disagreements in T1/2 and T2, I decided to classify the orientation of these disagreements into three general categories; the first category contains disagreements oriented toward one or more elements of the MT, for example, the textual content of the MT, the main poster, and/or the shared media. The second category includes disagreements oriented to one or more elements of the prior reply, for instance, the textual content of the prior reply, the poster of the prior reply, and/or the shared media, if there are any. The last category contains disagreements generally oriented to other replies or posters in the main thread. Figure 4-3 shows that most replies were directed to one or more elements of the MT.



Figure 4-3: Orientation of T1/2 and T2 disagreement as identified in the corpus

Given that 82.7% of Saudis' replies occurred in T2, as shown in Figure 4-6, it is deduced that most disagreements were oriented towards one or more elements in the MT; these replies consist of R-moves without initiating any further interaction.

4.4.2 Preparation of online questionnaires and interviews

As stated in Section 4.3, the total number of responses to the online questionnaire was 231. These responses were imported into MAXQDA, where the analysis was conducted. While analysing and coding the responses in part three (the section about (im)politeness evaluations of the disagreements), I decided to exclude responses that failed to evaluate at least four out of the ten replies presented in the questionnaire and responses that selected the same answer for all ten questions; this led to the exclusion of 22.9% of the responses. This exclusion was based on how the behaviour of these respondents reflected a lack of interest in finishing the questionnaire or putting effort into answering the questions. Based on this, the analysis of part two of the questionnaire focused on 231 responses, whereas part three focused on 178 responses.

As for interview recordings, the 20 recordings were also imported into MAXQDA. As shown in Section 4.2.3, the transcript of each interview was given a code that linked it to the interviewee's questionnaire response. This process facilitated coding and analysing interviewees' answers to further understand their questionnaire responses and provide more comprehensive discussion of the findings.

4.4.3 Translation approach

In this study, I present the main tweets in the corpus using Arabic and English, see Section 4.2.1, the translations in this section mainly aim to show the context in which the disagreements were expressed. However, in presenting the examples of Twitter disagreements directed to these MTs, I included the Arabic text followed by a transliteration line based on the phonetic symbols outlined at the beginning of the thesis. For some examples, I added morphological glossing lines to highlight some of the morphological features of the disagreement that are essential to the analysis, such as using in-group/solidarity markers to mitigate the disagreements. For the examples of disagreements, I aimed to make the English translations reflective of the Arabic text, mainly how the posters used the punctuation markers because these markers, in some examples, are used as a paralinguistic cue to aggravate the disagreements. Therefore, the English translations of the disagreement examples replicate the posters' writing style, which in some cases may make the punctuation in the English translation appear arbitrary or completely missing.

In addition, in presenting respondents' statements from the online questionnaires and interviews, I only presented a translated version without the Arabic text because the purpose of these statements is to show the respondents' reasoning and justifications offered to support their answers rather than focusing on the structure of their answers. These decisions were made to maintain a clear organisation for the discussion and minimize extraneous information.

4.5 Coding framework for Saudis' Twitter disagreements

My methodological approach to coding disagreement types and strategies, and the mitigation and aggravation devices was a mix of a thorough examination of the data and consultation of previous disagreement and (im)politeness taxonomies covered in Sections 2.4.4, 3.2 and 3.3. Some of these features were observed while doing the initial coding and preparation of the data; however, a closer examination of the data was necessary to precisely describe the main linguistic features of disagreements and (im)politeness among Saudis in Twitter communication. It is essential to highlight that since the coding process was dynamic, the generation of codes did not strictly follow the reference frameworks, as some codes were either renamed, merged, or omitted because no instances were found in the corpus. Figure 4-4 at the end of this section summarises the coding framework of disagreements in the corpus.

Since the study concerns written online disagreement, much of its focus is on the linguistic aspect of the phenomena in question. Therefore, the categorisation of disagreement types is primarily based on how they were modified by mitigation and aggravation devices within the context; see Section 4.5.1. Then, Section 4.5.2 describes the disagreement strategies that are used in coding Saudis' disagreements in the SAT corpus. As for the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness classification, Table 4-5 shows the different classifications found in the online questionnaire and how these classifications can reflect respondents' perceptions of the evaluated disagreements.

Table 4-5: Respondents' classifications with reference to the relational work model

Classifications of polite evaluations
(very) polite + (very) appropriate
(very) polite + neither appropriate nor inappropriate
Classifications of politic evaluations
(very) polite + (very) inappropriate ⁴⁴
Neither polite nor impolite + neither appropriate nor inappropriate
Neither polite nor impolite + (very) appropriate
Classifications of impolite evaluations
Neither polite nor impolite + (very) inappropriate ⁴⁵
(very) impolite + (very) inappropriate
(very) impolite + (very) appropriate
(very) impolite + neither appropriate nor inappropriate

Respondents in the online questionnaire can choose any one category in each of the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness scales. The selection of polite and appropriate classification is referred to as aligned classification, and the selection of polite and very appropriate is unaligned; see Figure 5-14 and Figure 5-15 in Section 5.2.2 for further explanation. The table here provides a general guide to approaching the classifications; however, the justifications respondents provide are more crucial to understanding their perception of the disagreement and their reasoning; see Chapter 7. The inclusion of 'very (im)polite' and 'very (in)appropriate' as separate categories from '(im)polite' and '(in)appropriate' on the 5-point Likert scale was deliberate, aiming to comprehensively capture the range of respondents' perceptions and it allows for a finer granularity in

⁴⁴ This particular politic evaluation occurred when respondents found the disagreement to be (very)polite; however, in the given context, the reply is either weak compared to the main tweet, as in Example 7.1 or irrelevant to the main tweet, as in Example 7.2.

⁴⁵ Respondents who chose this classification tend to provide justifications that are similar to the other impolite classifications, see Examples 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9. However, in Examples 7.1 and 7.2 respondents provided justifications similar to those selected in politic classifications; see Section 8.4 for further discussion of the inconsistency of classifications.

understanding their nuanced perceptions. This addition is also aims to reduce potential confusion or hesitation among respondents and encourage them to provide more accurate and honest responses. The 5-point Likert is commonly used in studies that seek to examine participants' perceptions or attitudes (e.g., Wilson and Dewaele, 2010; Chang and Haugh, 2011; Almusallam, 2018).

4.5.1 Disagreement types

As stated in Section 3.3, the structure of the disagreement can be modified by mitigation or aggravation devices, which, to some degree, reflect the poster's orientation to the interaction. The position of these devices in Arabic disagreements is flexible (Harb, 2016, p.97), as they can appear at the beginning, middle or end of the disagreement tweet. Based on how these devices were employed, the disagreements were classified into three types (1) mitigated disagreement (Mit.Dis) are those softened by one or more mitigation devices, either linguistic or non-linguistic, such as emojis; (2) aggravated disagreement (Agg.Dis) are those strengthened by one or more aggravation devices, either linguistic or non-linguistic, such as emojis and punctuation; and (3) unmodified disagreement (Un.Dis) are those that are neither mitigated nor aggravated as there is no identifiable linguistic devices in these disagreements.

In this study, I take the linguistic structure of the disagreement as an indication of the posters' orientation to the interaction and having the potential to trigger different (im)politeness evaluations. Therefore, in the corpus analysis, Saudis' disagreements were examined and coded based on how these disagreements were linguistically modified and how the modification might be interpreted in the context of the main thread. My approach expects posters who orient themselves towards rapport enhancement or maintenance will tend to make their disagreements reflect this orientation in some way. This is to say, they will tend to show some consideration of face sensitivities and/or sociality rights and obligations signalled in their employment of mitigation devices. On the other hand, posters who orient themselves towards rapport neglect or challenge will tend to make their disagreements reflect this orientation in some way. Their disagreements will show some disregard for face sensitivities and/or sociality rights and obligations, as seen in their employment of aggravation devices. Lastly, disagreements that are neither mitigated nor aggravated (i.e. unmodified disagreements) are more challenging as they do not contain any devices that might linguistically index the poster's orientation towards the interaction, which shows that context is indeed very crucial in evaluating (im)politeness.

It is significant to emphasise that the identified mitigation and aggravation devices in the following sections should not be taken as an exhaustive list of the devices used with disagreements. Moreover, although these devices are not all equally sensitive to context, the identification of these devices should not be taken as a guarantee of the performance of (im)politeness without consideration of the context (see: Culpeper, 2016, p.434 and Section 3.2). For instance, in some contexts, address terms can be used to mitigate disagreements, while in other contexts, they can be used metaphorically, insincerely, or with other aggravators to aggravate disagreements. Therefore, it is worth noting that there is sometimes an overlap between the categorisation of mitigation and aggravation, and the classification depends on how the devices were employed to modify the disagreement in context; see ‘insulting language’ in Section 4.5.1.2. It is important to note that in presenting the examples throughout the thesis, I used <> to mark the mitigation and aggravation devices in the disagreements.

4.5.1.1 Mitigation

In coding and analysing mitigation devices, I followed taxonomies that are covered in the literature such as (Rees-Miller, 2000; Caffi, 2007; Kreutel, 2007; Harb, 2016); these taxonomies provided a fundamental ground for the coding of the data with some adjustments to accommodate for data at hand. I mainly focused on identifying six major devices, explained below with examples from the SAT corpus.

1. Hedging

Hedges⁴⁶ are employed to reduce the speaker’s commitment to the utterance, create a sense of vagueness, avoid complete precision, and weaken the force of the illocution. With disagreements, hedges are used to weaken the illocutionary force of disagreement and maintain a level of social harmony between interlocutors (Harb, 2016, p.103). In this study, hedging was achieved by a variety of means: personalised wishes and opinions, or what are referred to as “subjectivizers” (Caffi, 2007, p.268); uncertainty or hesitation markers; and lexical and syntactic downgraders. Hedges, as shown in the analysis in Chapter 5, are used to reduce and soften the potential negative or undesired effect of the

⁴⁶ The literature on hedging offers many classifications (e.g., Lakoff, 1973; Fraser, 1980; Prince et al., 1982; Caffi, 1999, 2013), these classifications tend to display some differences mainly because they are based on different underlying principles. However, as pointed by Gribanova and Gaidukova (2019, p.97) there seems to be an agreement between these classification that hedges do contribute to politeness, precision, and attenuating the force of illocutions.

disagreement for both the poster of the disagreement and the target. The examples below illustrate examples of each means of hedging.

- **Personalised opinions and wishes** are used to highlight the subjectivity of the disagreement, thus appealing to the other's autonomy in rejecting the claim of the disagreement, for instance:

• (... <مجرد رأي> (...)

(...) <muʒard raʔj>
 (...) <this is just an opinion>

• <ما أحس> فيها غلط (...)

<ma ʔahs> fi:ha ʔalatʕ (...)
I do not feel there is something wrong in (...)

- **Uncertainty or hesitation** is used to highlight cautiousness and unassertiveness in expressing the disagreement, usually due to doubt in one's knowledge of the topic, for instance:

• (... <والله اعلم> (...)

(...) <wa-allah ʔaʕlam>
 (...) <and Allah (God) is most knowing>

• <لأعلم عن> حجم المبلغ لكني (...)

<la ʔaʕlam ʕan> ḥaʒm almablay alkini: ʔ (...)
 <I do not know about> the amount but I (...)

- **Downgraders**, mostly adverbs, verbs, or prepositional phrases such as those in the examples below, are usually used to minimise or tone down the illocutionary force of the disagreement, for instance:

• ربما الرجل خانة التعبير (...)

<rubama:> alrazul xanuh altaʕbjr (...)
 The man <might have> misspoke (...)

• <كان بإمكانه> ان يكلمه بطريقه افضل الرجل متضرر (...)

<kan beimkanh> an ukalimuh bitʕarjqah ʔfdʕal alrazul mutadʕrir
 <was in-ability-him> to talk-him in-way better the-man harmed
 He <could have> spoken to him in a better way the man is harmed (...)

2. Positive remarks

Positive remarks⁴⁷ as a mitigation device are considered a favourable feature to accompany disagreement (Kreutel, 2007). They are used to explicitly signal cooperation and the effort to maintain social harmony by expressing respect, gratitude, compliments, and blessings (Harb, 2016). Positive remarks are structurally flexible and do not require the use of contrasting conjunctions, as found in partial agreement:

- **Blessings** are expressions, usually influenced by religion, that are used to compliment the other's manners, behaviours, or knowledge, for example:

• <بوركت > أهل الحجاز هم قبائل عربية أصيلة (...)

<bu:rikt> ?ahl alhidzaz hum qaba:ʔl ʕarabeih ʔsʕeih

<Bless you>,⁴⁸ the people of Hijaz are the original Arab tribes (...)

• الشيخ <حفظه الله> كان مثال للرجل المتدين (...)

alfeix <hafiðʕh allah> kan miθal lilrazul almutadem (...)

The sheikh, <may Allah protect him>, was an example of the religious man (...)

- **Expressions of respect or gratitude** are expressions that explicitly show positive emotions towards the other, for example:

• الحجز هم ابناء القبائل في الحجاز من قبل ما تجي ، <وانا احبك في الله> (...)

alhidziz hum ʔbnaʔ alqaba:ʔl fi: alhidzaz min gabil ma tidzi: , <wa-ʔna ʔhibak fi: illah> (...)

The Hijazis are the sons of the tribes in the Hijaz from before you came, <and I love you for the sake of Allah> (...)

• <احترم وجهة نظرك> وماقال هاالكلام الا <عاقل> بس (...)

<ahtarim wizhat naðʕark> wa-ma qal h-alkala:m ila <ʕaqil> bas (...)

<I respect your perspective> and these are the words of <a rational person> but (...)

The poster of the second example used two positive expressions; the first to show respect to the target, and the second to compliment the target on what was written in the MT before expressing disagreement.

⁴⁷ Some researchers consider positive remarks and partial agreement to have the same mitigation function, they argue that the two can be combined together (e.g., Kreutel, 2007, Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq, 2018, Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli, 1996).

⁴⁸ The blessing prefacing the disagreement is a short version of the expression 'may Allah bless you', and it serves as a compliment as well as a prayer for the target.

3. Address terms

In some studies, address terms are classified as a mitigation device (e.g., Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli, 1996; Harb, 2016). Address terms such as titles, terms of endearment/intimacy, terms of kinship and teknonyms⁴⁹ are mostly used to show formality, respect, or propinquity between the interlocutors. These terms can be sensitive to sociocultural factors such as power and status. In the analysis of these devices, there was no instance of terms of endearment/intimacy as a mitigation device as, in my corpus it was rather used in aggravated disagreement; see insulting language in Section 4.5.1.2.

- **Titles** are deferential address terms that reflect the poster's awareness of the difference in relative power and the social distance between the poster and the target, for example:

• بل يجب مصادرة أموالهم والتحفظ عليها وتحويلهم للقضاء <يا سيادة الوزير> (...)

Bal jazib mus^ʕadrat ʔmwalahum wa-altaḥafuḏ^ʕ ʕalaiha wa-taḥwi:lahum lilqad^ʕa:ʔ <ja: sija:dat alwazi:r> (...)

Their money should be confiscated and seized, and they should be sent to the court <Mr. Minister> (...)

- **Terms of kinship** are very common in Arabic and Muslim cultures as they are rooted in religion;⁵⁰ the most commonly used kinship terms are 'brother' and 'sister'. These address terms usually used to reflect deference and create a sense of camaraderie between the interlocutors, for example;

⁴⁹ According to Khalil and Larina (2018, p.304), the term Teknonym was coined by Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of cultural anthropology. They suggested that teknonyms should be divided into two types: true teknonym and fictive teknonym

⁵⁰ The concept of brotherhood among the believers of Islam is a recurring one in the Quran as seen in Verse 10 of Chapter 49 (*The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy*) <https://quran.com/49?startingVerse=10>. Similarly, it is found in the hadith (i.e. narratives) of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, as seen in "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over to an oppressor. Whoever fulfilled the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfil his needs; whoever brought his brother out of a discomfort, Allah will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever screened a Muslim, Allah will screen him on the Day of Resurrection" (Sahih al-Bukhari vol. 3, Book 43, Hadith 622).

- <اخوي> (اسم المغرد) هناك قبائل حجازيه عريقة جداً ضاربة في عمق التاريخ (...)
<ʔxu:ji> (first name of the main poster) huna:k qaba:ʔl ħidzazi:ah
ʕari:qah dʕa:ribah fi: ʕu:mq alta:ri:x (...)
<brother-my> (first name of the main poster).VOC there tribes hijazi very-old
rooted in depth the-history (...)
<My brother> (first name of the main poster) there are deeply-rooted Hijazi tribes
with a long history (...)

- **Teknonyms** are address terms that involve the use of children's names to refer to the person; it is known in Arabic as (Kunya). These address terms are used to show respect and, sometimes, formality, but signify a closer social distance as they reflect a sense of familiarity.

- ياالله <يا ابو (اسم الابن)> تغريده جعلت كل من في السعودية مصدر للتفاهة (...)
ja:-allah <ja: a:bu (name of the main poster's child)> tayri:dah dʒaʕalt
ku:l man fi: alsuʕu:di:ah masʕdar litafa:ha (...)
O Allah [God], <father of (name of the main poster's child)>, a tweet that describes
everyone in Saudi Arabia as a source of silliness (...)

4. Partial agreement

Partial agreement as a mitigation device is used to boost solidarity with the other and imply that there is some shared common ground despite the disagreement (Rees-Miller, 2000, p.1094). This mitigation device is also called a token agreement and agreement marker (Harb, 2016, p.110). Partial agreements usually have a fixed structural position that prefaces disagreement, and they are always followed by contrasting conjunctions like *but* and *however*. However, as shown in Example 6.9, it is possible to see a partial agreement marker occur at the end of the disagreement. It seems that in prefacing the partial agreement, commonality is foregrounded more. In the SAT corpus, there were different ways through which partial agreement was expressed, for example:

- <صحيح ولكن> اعتقد ان الامير محمد بن سلمان كان يقصد (...)
<sʕaħi:h wa-lakn> aʕtaqid a:n ala:mi:r muhammad bin salman ka:n jaqsʕid (...)
<True, but> I think prince Muhammad bin Salman was referring to (...)
- <كلامك جميل جداً بس> ماشوف فيه رابط بين (...)
<kala:mak jami:l zida:n bas> ma:-ʕu:f fi:h ra:bitʕ bai:n (...)
<Very well said but> I do not see a connection between (...)

5. Solidarity/in-group markers

This mitigation device is also used to establish common ground with the other and evoke a sense of commonality through the use of inclusive pronouns (Harb, 2016, p.103). In the context of disagreement, these devices generally emphasise the shared values between the interlocutors as members of the same broader sociocultural group, thus accentuating the collective identity over the individualistic identity. This can be seen in the use of plural subject pronouns, plural object pronouns, or a combination of independent singular and plural pronouns in the form (you and me) or (YOU.PL and us).

- **Plural subject pronouns and plural object pronouns** refer to attaching the prefix -na (we) at the beginning of the verbs, the possessive suffix -na: (our) or the object suffix -na: (us) at the end of nouns. The use of these inclusive pronouns can create a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility or accountability. In the example below, the use of inclusive pronouns in the last part of the disagreement shows that fighting corruption is not just the government's responsibility but also the responsibility of all members of society.

• العدد 208 قليل من كثير! العدد الفعلي مضاعفات هذا العدد... <لنقضي> على الفساد الذي اعاق نهضت <بلادنا> (...)

alʕadad 208 qali:l min kathi:r! alʕadad alfiʕli: mudʕa:ʕafa:t
 haða alʕadad... <linaqdʕi: ʕala alfasa:d> allaði: a:ʕaq nahdʕat
 <bila:dna> (...)

the-number 208 few from many! The-number the-actual multiplications of-this number... <for-we-eradicate> on the-corruption that hindered rise <country-our> (...)

208 is just a small number! The actual number is multiples of this number...
 <let's eradicate> the corruption that has hindered the rise of our country (...)

- **Independent singular or plural pronouns** are used in the form *you and me* (singular) *you and us* (plural), or plural first-person subject pronoun *we*. The example below shows that the use of (for me and you) in the supplication at the end of the disagreement gives an inclusive sense that both the target and the poster need Allah's guidance. However, it is worth highlighting that these separate pronouns can also be used in aggravation, particularly in othering and dissociating from the other interlocutor; see aggravation devices in Section 4.5.1.2.

- السعودية مثلها مثل أي بلد فيه الخير وفيه غيره > اسأل الله الهداية لي ولك < ولكل من ولغ في صحن الفتنة هذه

alsuʕu:di:ah miθlaha: miθl ʔi: balad fi:h alxeir wi-fi:h ʔerrh <ʔsʔl
allah alhi:da:ih li: wa-lak> wa-liku:l man walay fi: sʕaħn alfitnah haðih

the-Saudi like-it like any country there-is the-good and-there-it other
<I-ask Allah the-guidance for-me and for-you.SG.M> and for-all who defile in the-
plate the-sedition this

Saudi Arabia is just like any other country where there is the good and the other <I
ask for Allah's guidance for me and you and for everyone> who drank from this
bowl of sedition

6. Paralinguistic cues

Paralinguistic cues such as emojis, unconventional spelling, and punctuation markers are used in online communication to substitute to some degree the non-verbal elements of Face-to-Face communication (F2F), such as intonation, facial expressions, and gestures. These paralinguistic cues have different functions, which involve conveying an emotional state and communicating a tone that aims to manage interpersonal relationships and mitigate face-threat (e.g., Harb, 2016, p.61; Aldunate and González-Ibáñez, 2017, p.3; Alrashdi, 2018, p.118). In the SAT corpus, only emojis seem to be used as mitigation devices. These emojis included the heart (❤️) and shaking hands (🤝) and were used to show solidarity, approval, sympathy and love.

- الحجز هم ابناء القبائل في الحجاز من قبل ما تجي ، وانا احبك في الله > ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ <

alhıdziz hum ʔbnaʔ alqabaʔl fi: alhıdzaz min gabil ma tidzi: , wa-ʔna
ʔhibak fi: illah <❤️ ❤️ ❤️ >

the-hijazis them sons the-tribe in the-hijaz from before not you-come, and I love-
you in Allah <❤️ ❤️ ❤️ >

The Hijazis are the sons of the tribes in the Hijaz from before you came, and I love
you for the sake of Allah <❤️ ❤️ ❤️ >

4.5.1.2 Aggravation

In the coding of aggravation devices, I classified the aggravation devices found in the SAT corpus into five main devices. The classification is derived from taxonomies that are covered in the literature, mainly the work of Culpeper (1996; 2011a; 2016), Rees-Miller (2000), and Harb (2016); the devices were modified based on the data in my corpus. It is important to note that the distinction between the categorisation of these devices is not clear-cut, and therefore, there may be an overlap between the identified devices. In general, these aggravation devices target the other's face or sociality rights or both; for

instance, Culpeper (2011, p.227) argues that insulting language is mostly seen as an attack on face, primarily quality face or social identity face, and only secondarily realigns the equity rights between the interlocutors. Also, dismissing/dissociating from the other mostly attacks sociality rights, but face could also be threatened, particularly relational face.

1. Insulting language

Insults generally involve attributing a negative characteristic to the target by debasing their appearance, personality, actions, mental ability, beliefs and/or familial and social relations (Dynel and Poppi, 2020, p.59). In this study, insulting language as an aggravator is mainly used to direct a mostly personalised attack towards the target; it appears in different forms, such as calling the other names and using inappropriate references, as seen in the use of slurs and comparing the target to animals as shown in the examples below. In addition, posters can insult the target by degrading, belittling, and being condescending to the target. These aggravators reflect the poster's superior attitude with respect to the target (Culpeper, 1996; 2005).

- **Calling the target's names and using inappropriate references** to refer to the target's character, appearance, family etc. This aggravator also includes slurs (ethnic/social terms used as insults) and comparing the target to animals, for example:

● <ياثور> كل يراء الناس والسعودية بلد الحرمين (...)
 <ja: θu:r> ku:l jara:ʔalna:s wa-alsuʔu:djah balad alḥamein (...)
 <(You) ox>, everyone sees people and Saudi Arabia is the land of the Two Holy Mosques (...)

● لو لم تكونوا <منافقين> لاخترتم عقيدكم ودينكم وتركتموا ايران (...)
 lau lam taku:nu <muna:fiqi:n> la-ixtartum ʕaqidatkuḥ wa-di:nakuḥ wa-taraktu: Iran (...)

If not you-were <hypocrites> for-you-chose creed-your and-religion-your and-left-you.PL Iran (...)

If you were not <hypocrites>, you would have chosen your creed and your religion and abandoned Iran (...)

- **Degrading, belittling, and being condescending to the target** through the use of diminutive and demeaning expressions that aim to make the target feel small or otherwise inferior.

• حنا بلد واحد ودين واحد <من قبل لا نعرف من انت> الحجازي هو القبيلي (...)
 ĥina: balad wa:ħd w-di:n wa:ħd <min gabil la: niħrif min iħnt> alħidħazi: hu: algabili: (...)

We land-one and religion-one < from before not we-know who you> the-Hijazi is the-tribal (...)

We are one nation and one religion <and even before we know who you are> the Hijazi is the tribal (...)

• (...) وتقول ان الحجاز لكم <ولهجتكم المكسرة> هي لهجة أهل الحجاز
 (...) w-tugu:l in alħidħaz lukum <w-lahħatkum almķasarah> hi:
 lahħat ħhal alħidħaz

(...) and you say that Hijaz belongs to you and <your broken dialect> is the dialect of Hijaz

The belittling or condescending implication in the first example comes from undermining the main poster's statement at the end of the MT (let them understand that we are one nation and one region). Using <before we know who you are>, the poster here indicates that people do not need the main poster to highlight what is already known. It is a way of devaluing someone's statement by claiming they have nothing to add. In the second example, the use of <your broken dialect> reflects prejudice against other Hijazis from non-Arabic backgrounds (e.g., Turkish, Indian). It is used here to emphasise the sense of foreignness of the target by indicating that they still cannot speak like a true Hijazi person.

- **Terms of endearment/intimacy** are terms that usually used to reduce the social distance between the interlocutors, thus reflecting a more intimate bond between them. In some cases, it is also used to show formality and deference, as seen in formal messages, for example, service providers addressing customers and schools addressing parents. However, there was no instance in the corpus of this use, as the identified device was used to aggravate the expressed disagreement, as shown in Example 7.6 where the term of endearment عزيزي (my dear.SG.M) was used to patronise the target.

2. Dismissing the other/dissociating from the other

This device includes impoliteness strategies that are used to aggravate the disagreement, such as dismissals, disregarding the other's views, feelings, etc. (Culpeper, 1996; 2005; 2016) and silencing the other. The use of this device makes the poster's disagreement come across as hostile, thus hindering the other from continuing the interaction. The employment of this device can show that the poster is unwilling to engage in further interaction with the target, for example:

• (...) نحن بفضل الله مرتاحين وعاجبنا الوضع <خلك وراء الشبك> <ولا تكثر كلام حتى اشعار
اخر>
naħan bi-fadʕl allah mirta:ħi:n w-ʕa:zibna: alwadʕaʕ <xalak
waraʔ alʕabk> <w-la: tkaθir kala:m ħata: iʕʕa:r a:xr>

we in-thanks allah we-comfortable and-we-like the-situation <stay-you
behind the-fence> <and-not you-more talk until notice other>

(...) we thanks to Allah are comfortable and satisfied with the situation <Stay
behind the fence> <and do not talk anymore until further notice>

The poster in the example above used a dismissal followed by a silencer; the aggravation in this disagreement strongly reflects the poster's unwillingness to engage in discussion with the target (the main poster).

3. Invoking Allah against others

This aggravation marker is culture-specific, or more precisely religion-specific, which involves asking Allah to punish, curse, destroy, etc., the target. The prayer against others can be directed to the target him/herself or the target's family or other valuable things, e.g., their country (Harb, 2016, p.118). This device is usually employed when the poster strongly disagrees with the target or feels wronged or insulted by the target. Although invoking Allah against others is discouraged religiously and socially, it is still used by some people to display strong negative emotions towards the target (i.e. triggering event), for example:

• (...) لن تستطيعوا ابداً <قبحكم الله>
(...) lan tasttʕiʕu: a:bada:n <qabaħakum allah>
(...) you will never achieve that <May you be made wretched by Allah>

In the above example, the poster aggravated the disagreement by invoking Allah against those who ask to limit mosques' call to prayer to speakers inside the building and halting

its broadcast through external loudspeakers. Using this aggravator seems to reveal the poster's intense reaction to the matter.

4. Judgmental language

This device was inspired by the taxonomy proposed by Rees-Miller (2000, pp.1094-1095). Here, it refers to devices that are used to intensify the disapproving nature of the disagreement by using judgmental vocabulary that associates the target with a negative aspect or trait. A key feature of this device is the generalised categorisation and labelling that indirectly incorporates the target in that judgment. In the examples below, the posters' disagreements appear to be critical and judgmental in a conclusive manner. The poster of the first example labels anyone who believes that Fouad's dialect is spoken by normal people as <a fool>, thus criticising their intellectual abilities. Similarly, the poster of the second example labels people who ask for limiting the use of mosques' loudspeakers as <the trumpets of hypocrites and secularists>, thus criticising their faith and religious affiliation.

• اصلا ما في احد طبيعي يتكلم زي فؤاد <والغبي هو الي يصدق دا الشيء!> (...)

as^sla:n ma: fi: a:ħd t^sabiʃ jtkalam zeɪ Fuʔad <wa-alyabi: huwa illi: js^sadiq da: alferʔ > (...)

in-reality no there one normal speak like Fouad <and-the-stupid who that believe this thing

There is no normal person who talks like Fouad <and only a fool would believe this!> (...)

• لماذا في هذا الوقت بالذات تخرج لنا <أبواق المنافقين والعلمانيين> (...)

limaða: fi: haða: alwaqt bi-alða:t taxruz lana <ʔbwa:q almuna:fiqi:n wa alfilma:ni:in> (...)

Why at this particular time do we hear <the trumpets of hypocrites and secularists> (...)

5. Paralinguistic cues

As mentioned above, in addition to using paralinguistic cues to mitigate disagreements, paralinguistic cues can also be used to aggravate disagreements, mainly by expressing different emotions like shock, disgust, and disappointment, as well as adding a sarcastic tone and intensifying the face attack. The paralinguistic cues which were used in the SAT corpus as aggravators involved multiple punctuation, unconventional spelling, emojis and

emotive interjections. The interpretation of these cues as aggravation is sensitive to context, and they are usually used to magnify the emotional aspect of the disagreement.

- **Multiple punctuations** refers to the occurrence of two or more punctuation marks such as !!, ??, or !!! . I did not code a single occurrence such as !, ?, or even ?! as aggravation devices. The number here matters because this is taken as a reflection of the intensity of tone or emotions.
- **Unconventional spelling** mainly refers to using vowel lengthening to represent high or long intonation or letter spacing to represent short and stressed tone.

• يا لله والله عجبت من تغريداتكم <وأعجبيبيبي> (...)

ja: allah wa-allah ʕazibt min tayri:datikum <w-ʕazibbbbbb> (...)

O allah and-allah I-wondered from your-tweets and-I-am-wondering (...)

O Allah and by Allah I was astonished by your tweets and I am still <astoniished> (...)

- **Emojis like** (👊, 🤩, 🐷) and emotive interjections such as laughter /haha/ and spitting /tfu:/. The quantification of emojis was based on their existence in tweets, regardless of how many emojis were actually used. For instances:

• و أنتم من قبل و من بعد مصدر التأمرو العقوق و النذاله <ي 🐷 🐷 >

wa ʔntum min gabil wa min baʕd masʕdar altʔmur wa alʕuqu:q waalnaða:lah <ja: 🐷 🐷 >

And you.PL from before and from after source conspiracy and disobedience and villainy <O 🐷 🐷 >

And you before and after (the crisis) are the source of conspiracy and disobedience and villainy < O 🐷 🐷 >⁵¹

In this example, the poster used the pig emoji to refer to the target (the main poster: Qatari journalist and the people of Qatar). It shows the poster's negative emotions (mostly disgust) towards the target, who is described as the source of 'conspiracy, disobedience and villainy'. The word 'pig' has negative cultural connotations, especially when used as an insult, as it usually symbolises impurity, ugliness, and disgust.

⁵¹ In this particular example the use of two emojis can be seen as a way of representing the plural form of pigs because the poster used the pronoun you.PL. In terms of coding, the emoji in this example was counted as one occurrence even though there are two in the reply.

4.5.2 Disagreement strategies

In approaching the corpus data, I closely examined the disagreements following the taxonomies discussed in Chapter 2 in Section 2.4 and listed in Section 2.4.4. The strategies identified in the SAT corpus are illustrated and defined below with supporting examples from the corpus. The codes for the strategies were adopted from the aforementioned taxonomies with some modifications or omissions depending on how these codes fit my Twitter data. However, it is important to note that the disagreement strategy *argument avoidance* identified in Harb's study (2016, p.191) was not included in the taxonomy mainly because it has a single occurrence in the corpus; this single occurrence of this strategy is further discussed in Chapter 7 in the qualitative analysis of the online questionnaire and interviews.

4.5.2.1 Contrary statements

A contrary statements strategy refers to explicit and implicit contradictions that are directed at the claim in the MT or a prior reply. This strategy is based on two strategies proposed by Muntigl and Turnbull (1998): contraction and counterclaim, and used in other taxonomies such as that of Harb (2016). They argued that the two strategies do occur alone, but also they occur together (p.233). They define counterclaims as statements that do not directly contradict or challenge the prior claim. I believe that the word "directly" here is important as it suggests counterclaims can have implicit contrary meanings. Within the aforementioned taxonomies, it appears that both contradiction and counterclaim are essentially about presenting a contrary view to the targeted prior claim with varying degrees of explicitness. Hence, I decided to include both contradiction and counterclaims under one strategy. Consequently, the strategy of contrary statements here encompasses both explicit (i.e. direct) contradictions as well as implicit (i.e. indirect) contradictions that can be expressed through counterclaims.

In my data, explicit contrary statements are those that overtly contradict the prior claim either by negation or affirmation, depending on the proposition of the targeted claim. Therefore, explicit contradiction can be seen in Example 4.3, which briefly but clearly negates the claim made in the targeted MT; this is also referred to as a '*flat no*' (Harb, 2016) or '*blunt statement of the opposite*' (Kreutel, 2007). In Example 4.4, the contrary statement is made explicitly through affirmation, which contradicts the claim in the MT.

Example 4.3 [see MT5 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-159-T2 (R)** <SOC, SH3.1, Agg.Dis>

(Aggravation device in angled brackets: insulting language aiming to belittle the target)

لا طبعا <تخسي>

la: tʰabʕa:n <txasi:>

Of course not <loser>

Example 4.4 [see MT11 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-2-T2 (R)** <POL, PH3.1, Agg.Dis>

(Aggravation device in angled brackets: insulting language targeting the target's character)

وستبقى كذلك مصدر للعلم والثقافة والأدب <وإعاده تربيته جار السوء ومرتزفته>

wa-stabqa: kaðalik masʕdar lilʕilm wa-alθqafah wa-alʔdab <wa-
iʕa:dat tarbi:at ʒa:r alsu:ʔ wa-murtaziqatu-uh>

And it (Saudi Arabia) will remain a source of knowledge and culture and literature as well as <re-educating the terrible neighbour and his mercenaries>

Moreover, contrary statements can also be expressed implicitly by posing an alternative or a different claim that does not directly contradict the prior claim; this implicit contrary statement is claimed to give more room for negotiation. In Example 4.5, the disagreement is expressed through an alternative claim that indirectly contradicts the proposition in the MT that corruption cases are solved in court.

Example 4.5 [see MT8 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-36- T2 (R)** <POL, PH1.2, Un.Dis>

اكثر قضايا الفساد سببها القضاء

ʔkθar qadʕaja: alfasa:d sababha: alqadʕaʔ

Most corruption cases are because of the judicial system.

4.5.2.2 Explanation

Explanation as a disagreement strategy refers to providing either a short or detailed account offering reasons, answers, or examples showing *why* the targeted claim is rejected. Koczogh (2012, p.83) stated that explanation is an “umbrella term” that performs different functions, such as giving or asking for reasons or examples showing that the previous proposition is not accepted as it is, or as Kreutel (2007, p.19) put it “explanation

is a speech act necessary to fulfil a number of additional communicative purposes”. Explanations are used to clarify the posters’ stance and show why they find the claim in the main post or prior reply (i.e. the target) unacceptable. This type of explanation can take the form of commentary, especially when the MT shares some digital media (e.g., a short clip), as in Example 4.6. Kreutel (2007, p.4) pointed out that explanations can be “personally and emotionally coloured”; this is likely to be true for accounts of personal stance. Moreover, explanations can provide answers or clarifications, as in Example 4.7.

Example 4.6 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-30- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Agg.Dis>

(Aggravation device in angled brackets: insulting language targeting the target’s character)

يوم قال المطوع ادعوله عرفت ان <المطوع مريض> يمكن الشخص هذا صلى معهم في المسجد ورجع يبي يكمل نومته والمطوع رافع المكبرات في ناس عنده السمع الف يعني (...)

ju:m qa:l almutawiŋ idŋu:-lah ŋaraft in <almutawiŋ mari:dŋ>
 jmkin alfaxsʕ haða: sʕala: maŋhum fi: almasʒid w-rizaŋ jabi:
 jkamil nu:mtah w-almutawiŋ rafiŋ almukabira:t fi: na:s ŋindah
 alsamŋ a:lŋ jaŋni: (...)

When the lecturer said pray for him I knew that <the lecturer is sick> the man probably finished praying with them in the masjid and returned home to sleep and the lecturer increased the volume there are people with good hearing which means (...)

Example 4.7 [see MT7 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-8- T2 (R) <POL, PH1.1, Mit.Dis>

(Mitigation device is angled brackets: kinship address terms)

<ياخوان>.. <الاخ> يقصد حديث ابو سلمان لما قال خلال السنوات الطويلة السابقة واللي فاتت تم هدر حوال ١٠ ٪ من ميزانيات الدولة.. وليس المبالغ اللي اختلسوها القابعين بالريتز.. المقصد على عقود طويلة مضت

<ja: ʔxwa:n> .. <alʔx> jaqsʕd ħadi:θ a:bu: salma:n lma: qa:l xila:l
 alsanawa:t altʕawi:lah alsabiqaħ w-ili: fa:tat tam hadir ħawa:l 10%
 min miza:nija:t aldawlah.. wa-lai:sa almaba:liy illi: ixtalasu:ha: alqa:biŋi:n
 bi-alritz .. almqsʕad ŋla ŋuqu:d tʕawi:lah madʕat

<O brothers>..<the brother> is referring to Abu Salman’s speech when he said about 10% of the state budget had been wasted during the past years.. and not the sums of money embezzled by those at the Ritz Hotel.. the point is the past long decades

4.5.2.3 Supplication

This disagreement strategy was proposed by Harb (2016) as one of the culturally specific strategies used by Arabic speakers when disagreeing indirectly. Supplication refers to the use of strictly religious language wherein the speaker expresses his/her disagreement or disapproval of the proposition made in the MT or a prior reply. These religious expressions are taken from the Quran or Hadith and referred to as *ḍikr*, which literally means *remembrance* of Allah. *ḍikr* is a form of worship that can be done at specific times, like after prayers or any other time, by saying and repeating these religious expressions with different purposes, such as praising and glorifying Allah as well as asking Allah's mercy and forgiveness. However, some of these religious expressions are multifunctional as they are used to serve other nonreligious pragmatic functions⁵² in various contexts; in this study, for example, some religious expressions, such as the one in Example 4.8, are used to imply objection, disapproval, and deny association or common ground with the person with whom one disagrees. These supplications are mostly conventionalised and are interpreted differently based on the context. In this study, supplications are used to signal disagreement without further elaboration on the reasons behind the disagreement, as seen in Example 4.8.

Example 4.8 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-69-T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.2, Un.Dis>

حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

ḥasbu-na: allah wa-niʿm alwaki:l

suffice-us allah and-best the-disposer of affairs

Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Through supplication, Poster-69 disapproves of what Alsihaimi, the author being interviewed in the video attached to the MT, is saying about how the loud sounds of the calls to prayer from all the mosques are spreading fear and terror in the community, particularly among children. Poster-69's employment of a religious expression in this context expresses not only a disagreement but also astonishment or disbelief at the author's claim that the calls to prayer are causing fear. Therefore, religious expressions

⁵² Alrojaie (2021) argues that supplications can be used to express emotions, signal the end of conversation, express humour and sarcasm, persuade, mitigate, seek protection from the evil eye, convey scepticism and ambiguity, etc.

are used to express different emotional responses and reactions, such as contempt for perceived violations of religious and social norms (Alrojaie, 2021,p.15).

4.5.2.4 Reprimand

This strategy is used to signal disapproval, fault, or unsoundness in the others' claim, making the other feel ashamed or disgraced by that claim, as it is considered false or unacceptable (Shum and Lee, 2013, p.58; Harb, 2016, p.187).⁵³ In other words, reprimand refers to pointing out the other's wrongdoing either directly or indirectly, and in a few words, demanding the other to correct his/her behaviour. Reprimand, here, is used to encompass different communicative functions, particularly correcting the other by presenting factual information, as in Example 4.9 and requesting a change of behaviour, as in Example 4.10.⁵⁴ Unlike giving advice, a reprimand is not primarily focused on benefiting the target who is being reprimanded.

Example 4.9 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-98-T2 (R) <POL, PH2.2, Mit.Dis> (correcting the other)

(Mitigation device in angled brackets: positive remark)

<من حقك تطلب الي تبغاه بس> لا تساوي سواقة المرأة بالحفلات ودخول الملاعب شتان بين الترف
والحاجة

<min haqa-k tt^hlb illi: tibya:h bas> la: tisa:wi: suwa:ga:t almar?ah
bi-alhafla:t wa-duxu:l almala:ʕib ʃata:n bai:n altaraf wa-alha:zah

<You have the right to ask for whatever you want but> do not equate women driving to concerts and entering football stadium there is a difference between luxury and necessity

Example 4.10 [see MT11 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-28-T2 (R) <POL, PH3.1, Agg.Dis> (requesting a change of behaviour)

(Aggravation device in angled brackets: insulting language targeting the character of the target)

<مشكلتك أنك لا ترتاد الينابيع الصافية بل تتبع التافهين فقط> عدل مسارك وسوف تجد ما يثريك فكرياً
وثقافياً

<muʃkilat-k ?nak la: tarta:d aljna:bi:ʕ als^ha:fi:ah bal tatbaʕ alta:fihi:n faqat^h>
ʕadil masa:r-k wa-sawfa tazid ma: juθri:-k fikri:an wa-θqa:fi:an

<Your problem is that you do not follow genuine accounts but only trivial ones> mend your ways and you will find what adds to you intellectually and culturally

⁵³ In relation to this strategy, Harb (2016) used the term mild-scolding in his taxonomy.

⁵⁴ Besides the functions found in my corpus, García (1996, p.670-671) reported that reprimands can be used for other functions such as warning, moralising, and giving statements of obligations and/or expectations.

4.5.2.5 Giving advice

Advice as a speech act involves making a proposition that appeals to the target to change their behaviour, which the poster sees as morally or socially unacceptable. This change is usually seen to benefit the target rather than the poster posting advice. Giving advice is more like telling the other person what is best for them.⁵⁵ Giving advice can be a way to offer a valuable opinion to the other or show that one's opinion is above the other; therefore, giving advice can be “a double-edged sword” (Leech, 2014, p.102). The potential risk involved in giving advice stems from the possibility of coming across as opinionated, thus imposing on the other (p.204). Looking at the advice given in Example 4.11 and Example 4.12, it appears that giving advice functions mostly as a moral reminder. The given advice seems to be more for the benefit of the target than the poster posting the advice.

Example 4.11 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-190- T2 (R) <POL, PH2.2, Mit.Dis>

(Mitigation device in angled brackets: emoji)

كُلُّ شَخْصٍ عِنْدَهُ رَأْيٌ تَقْبَلُ رَأْيَهُمْ وَرَدِّ بَكْلِ اسْلُوبٍ لَطِيفٍ <❤️>
 kul ʃaxsʕ ʕinduh raʔi taqabal raʔihum wa-rud bi-kul
 uslu:b latʕi:f <❤️>

Everyone has an opinion accept their opinion and reply to them nicely <❤️>

Example 4.12 [see MT4 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-95- T2 (R) <SOC, SH2.2, Un.Dis>

(Mitigation device in angled brackets: emoji)

يا ناس خلو عنكم الناس يا ناس
 اجتنبو الغيبة وهرج التميمة
 ما من وراء الثنتين غير الإفلاس
 وعقوبة اللي يرتكبها عظيمة
 ja: na:s xalu: ʕna-kumalna:s ja: na:s
 iʒtanibu: alyi:bah w-harʒ alnami:mah

m: min wara:ʔ alθintem ja: yeyr aliʔfla:s
 wa-ʕuqubat illi: jirtikibha: ʕaḏʕi:mah

⁵⁵ Leech (2014, p.204) explains that advice is unlike other directives such as requests mainly because the proposed action is supposed to be for the benefit of the addressee rather than at a cost to them.

O people leave other people (o people)
Stay away from backstabbing and gossiping

These two lead to impoverishment
Whoever does them is going to be punished

4.5.2.6 Exclamation

Exclamations are structurally versatile and pragmatically multifunctional as they express different emotions based on their context. In the context of disagreements, exclamations can be used to express one's disbelief, surprise, astonishment, and wonder at the prior claim/proposition.⁵⁶ Exclamations in Arabic can be formed in different ways;⁵⁷ one way is by using formulaic expressions that are conventionally utilised to convey surprise or astonishment, such as *subḥa:n Allah!* (Glory to Allah!) as in Example 4.13. In addition, interrogative structures can be employed to express exclamations and this exclamatory interpretation is usually inferred from the context (Alghalayini, 1993) as the case of Example 4.14 — this is known in Arabic as *iʔstifha:m taʕjubi:* (exclamatory questions) — see rhetorical challenges below. Moreover, exclamation can be expressed by what is referred to as “verbal shadowing”, see Example 4.15. Verbal shadowing is when the poster repeats the words of the target; this repetition can be word for word or with some altered words to indicate one's disagreement (Rees-Miller, 2000, p.1094).⁵⁸

Example 4.13 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-115- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.2, Un.Dis>

<سبحان الله> اصبح صوت الاذان وذكر الله مفزع للناس والأطفال...

<subḥa:n allah> a:s^ʕbaḥ s^ʕaut alʔða:n wa-ðikr allah mufziʕ li-na:s wa-alʔt^ʕfa:l ...

<Glory to Allah> the sound of *Athan* (call to prayer) and *ðikr* Allah (the remembrance of Allah) became terrifying to people and children...

⁵⁶ Exclamations are usually emotionally loaded reactions (Langlotz and Locher, 2012; Harb, 2016, p.163, p.186).

⁵⁷ One of the ways to form exclamations in Arabic is by the interrogative pronoun *ma:* followed by the exclamatory form verb IV, known as “adjectival verbs” or “verbs of surprise or admiration” (Ryding, 2005, p.518-9). This was not included above due to its absence in my data.

⁵⁸ Verbal shadowing can also be used in verbal irony/sarcasm as shown in Example 4.19.

Example 4.14 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-89- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Agg.Dis>

(Aggravation device in angled brackets: repeated punctuation marks)

اشققت عن قلبه<!!>

ʔjaqaqta ʔan qalbih<!!>

Have you uncovered what is in his heart<!!>

Example 4.15 [see MT8 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-87- T2 (R) <POL, PH1.2, Agg.Dis>

(Aggravation device in angled brackets: repeated punctuation marks)

عليهم أن يعيدوا الأموال التي نهبوا <!!!> وكان الدولة تنتظر موافقتهم على إعادة الأموال ولا تستطيع
استعادة المبالغ منهم ومعاقبتهم؟

ʕalei-hum ʔn juʕi:du: alʔmwa:l alti: nahabu:ha: <!!!> wa-ka:n aldawlah
tantaðʕir muwa:faqat-hum ʕla iʔʕa:dt alʔmwa:l wa-la: tastati:ʕ istiʕa:dt
almaba:liy min-hum wa-muʕa:qabat-hum?

They have to return the money they stole<!!!> As if the state is waiting for their approval to return the money and is unable to recover it and punish them?

The poster in Example 4.15 used verbal shadowing to repeat part of what was said in the video attached to the MT, followed by multiple exclamation marks to show strong disbelief and shock.

4.5.2.7 Challenge

The challenge strategy can be defined as the act of asking the target a challenging question, critically questioning their position, stance, beliefs, assumed power, obligations, rights, previous actions, etc.; this definition is based on Bousfield's account of challenges (2008, pp.240-244).⁵⁹ There are two types of challenges; the first is rhetorical challenges, which refer to questions that do not require answers but are used to activate and direct the mind of the addressees to what the actual answer is, or vent emotions. In this study, and based on my data, I included this type under exclamations mainly because they seem to fit the same purpose as exclamations, as both exclamations and rhetorical challenges are

⁵⁹ I used Bousfield's account of challenges (2008) as it more detailed in comparison to the accounts in the disagreements taxonomies I consulted.

used to express a wide range of emotions depending on the context, such as astonishment, anger, frustration etc., see Example 4.14.

The other type of challenge is what Bousfield (2008) referred to as response-seeking challenges; these questions require, invite, or even force specific answers from the addressee; hence, they can be seen as an imposition on the target. These response-seeking challenges are divided into two subtypes (p.243): The first is response-seeking challenges that allow the addressee to offer an account or explanation to support, clarify, or defend their position, see Example 4.16. Poster-7's questions in Example 4.16 were answered by the target, who was the main poster of the MT. The interaction in the sub-thread ended when Poster-7's challenges achieved a response that provided clarification.

Example 4.16 [see MT7 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-7-T1/T2 (R/I) <POL, PH1.1, Un.Dis> (*response-seeking challenges type 1*)

من وين الرقم؟
النائب العام اعلن انها ماتتجاوز ال ١٠٠ مليار دولار
يعني ماتجي حتى ٤٠٠ مليار ريال
كيف ترليون؟

min wein alraqm?
alna:ʔib alʕa:m aʕlan anaha: ma: tataza:waz al 100 milja:r dula:r
jaʔni: ma: tiʒi: ħata: 400 milja:r rijal
keif tiril əun?

From where [did you get] this number?

The Attorney General announced that it does not exceed 100 billion dollars
which means that it won't reach 400 billion riyals, so how does it become a trillion?

The second type of response-seeking challenges are those that function as “verbal traps” since responding to these challenges can cause self-inflicted face damage (Bousfield, 2008, p. 243); see Example 4.17. Unlike the first type of response-seeking challenge (used to gain more information from the addressee), this type is more about targeting or cornering the addressee, hence the name “verbal traps”. In Example 4.17, Poster-21's challenge is more likely to be a “verbal trap” because the main poster's answer to the question would either contradict his statement in the MT in which he classified Hijazi and tribal as two separate identities of people in Hijaz, which would then probably force him to admit his fault and offer an apology; or defend his stance and probably attract more disagreements and criticism.

Example 4.17 [see MT3 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-21-T2 (R) <SOC, SH2.1, Mit.Dis> (*response-seeking challenges type 2*)

(Mitigation device in angled brackets: partial agreement marker)

<والله تغريدة (اسم المغرد) اتفق معها قليلا..> لكن دخلت معرفة لقيته كاتب حجازنا حقنا..حق مين لو
تشرح

<wa-allah tayri:dat (first name of the main poster) atafiq maʕa-ha: qali:la:n>
lakin daxalt muʕarifah liget-ah ka:tib hidʒa:zna: haqana: .. haq
mi:n lau tijrah

<by-allah tweet-his (first name of the main poster) i-agree with-it little> but
i-entered account-his i-found-him wrote hijaz-our for-us .. for whom if
you-explain

<By Allah I agree with (first name of the main poster)'s tweet a little>.. but I saw that
he wrote in his bio our Hijaz is for us.. for whom if you can explain

It is essential to point out that there is a difference between these two types of challenges (rhetorical and response-seeking). This difference, however, cannot be clearly distinguished based on the content of two-turn interactions. An accurate interpretation of these challenges can only be made when the target (i.e. the poster to whom the challenge is directed) responds — the response shows whether the target perceived the challenge positively or negatively (Bousfield, 2008, p.244).

4.5.2.8 Verbal attack

This strategy is solely composed of insulting and abusive language used to express disagreement, and it mainly aims to attack the other's face and/or sociality rights with an explicit disregard for the negative impact of the attack. In differentiating this strategy from the aggravation devices, I followed Harb's (2016) approach: aggravators are devices used in the vicinity of other disagreement strategies to intensify the disagreement, whereas verbal attacks refer to the independent use of insulting and abusive language without the need for other strategies. Disagreements expressed in verbal attacks are classified as aggravated disagreement strategies, as the purpose of employing them is primarily to attack and cause damage to the target. Verbal attacks are usually emotional, reflecting the poster's anger, frustrations, and strong rejection of what is perceived as unacceptable or intolerable.⁶⁰ The verbal attack in Example 4.18 consists of calling the target names that mainly attack his character, "wicked man who is far behind the pure

⁶⁰ Allan and Burrige (2006, p.249) point out that the use of swearing, cursing, taboo and other insulting language is identified with emotional release, lack of control, aggravation, and intolerance.

ride”, and invoking Allah against the target by wishing the target to live through unbearable misery. Verbal attacks, like the one in Example 4.18, show that the posters using this strategy are not interested or willing to engage in a discussion but rather more focused on launching an attack on the target.

Example 4.18 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-59- T1/2 (R/I) <SOC, SH1.2, Agg.Dis>

اسأل الله ان يبلاك في نفسك ببلاً لاتستطيع عليه صبراً ايه الفاجر المتأخر جداً عن الركب الطاهر
 a:sʔl allah an jabla:-k fi: nafsa-k bi-balʔ la: tastati:ʕ ʕaleh sʕabra:n
 ʔeuh alfa:zir almutʔxir zida:n ʕan alrakib altʕa:hir

I pray to Allah that you live in a difficult situation you cannot handle you are an immoral man who is unable to keep up with the righteous

4.5.2.9 Verbal irony/ sarcasm

The relationship between irony and sarcasm is complex, with little agreement on how the two are distinguished. Attardo (2000, p.795) stated, “there is no consensus on whether irony and sarcasm are essentially the same thing ... or if they differ significantly”.⁶¹ This complicated relationship between the two concepts is also found in Arabic research (Abu Farha and Magdy, 2020, p.33), thus showing the need for further in-depth investigation to understand the extent to which the two concepts are similar or different in Arabic from both first-order and second-order perspectives.⁶² In this study, I did not distinguish between irony and sarcasm in the analysis of my data mainly because the two terms in Arabic seem to be treated similarly, and because an understanding of the relationship between the two terms requires more focused research on the phenomena.

In this study, irony/sarcasm is defined as saying something apparently serious, but implicitly, it is not, like complimenting someone to ridicule them or praising someone to belittle them. It also involves belittling and making fun of a person or their words or

⁶¹ Taylor (2017, p.212) explains that the lack of agreement among researchers has created different approaches in dealing with irony and sarcasm; some researchers would treat the two terms interchangeably (e.g., Attardo et al., 2003), while others (e.g.; Lee and Katz, 1998) treat irony and sarcasm as subtypes of figurative language or treat sarcasm as a subtype of irony (e.g., Kovaz et al., 2013, p.599; Alba-Juez and Attardo, 2014, p.112; Harb, 2016, p.176). However, there are some studies that argue that irony and sarcasm are distinct, but overlapping, phenomena; the overlapping of the two generates what is referred to as sarcastic irony (Dynel, 2014, p. 634; 2016).

⁶² The difficulty in clearly distinguishing the two concepts, according to Attardo (2013, p.40), seems to stem from the fact that concepts such as irony, sarcasm, and humour are folk-concepts, and this is where the slippage between first-order and second-order conceptualisation sits (Taylor, 2017, p.211).

actions (Mohammed and Abbas, 2015). Irony/sarcasm does not necessarily contain any profanity or insults to be hurtful. Nonetheless, the impolite evaluation of ironic or sarcastic utterances is argued to be dependent on the context, as these utterances are not necessarily always offensive (Bousfield, 2008, pp.119-121).

In the examples below, the poster in Example 4.19 is overtly mocking and ridiculing the female interviewer by sarcastically repeating or echoing what she said in the video attached to the MT; see Example 6.10. In addition to echoing the target words, the exaggerated statement “we must demand moving the masjid to *“alrubʿ alxali:”* (the Empty Quarter)⁶³ and the use of emojis amplifies the ironic/sarcastic interpretation of the reply.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Poster-73 in Example 4.20 employs ‘mock politeness’ (Leech, 2014), which involves using a conventionalised politeness formulae that, in this context, cannot be interpreted as sincere. The poster in Example 4.20 seems to use politeness to make fun of the target, which can be perceived as impolite; see also Example 6.11. This example fits Leech’s account of irony and sarcasm, which is saying “something that is superficially interpretable as polite, but it is more indirectly or ‘deeply’ interpreted as a face-attack—as impolite” (2014, p.232).

Example 4.19 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-32- T2 (R) <SOC,SH1.2, Agg.Dis, Mix>

معقولة المساجد في اماكن مأهولة بالسكان 🤪🤪🤪 لازم نطالب بنقل المساجد للربع الخالي حسب كلام المذيعة 😊

mʕqu:lah almsa:ʒid fi: a:ma:kin maʔhu:lah bi-alsuka:n 🤪🤪🤪
la:zim... nitʔa:lib bi-naqil almsa:ʒid li-rubʕ alxa:li: ḥasab
kala:m .almuḏi:ʕah 😊

reasonable the-mosques in places inhibited by-inhabitants 🤪🤪🤪
must...we-demand for-transfer the-mosques to-quarter the-empty based-on
talk the-interviewer.SG.F 😊

Unbelievable that there are Masjid in inhabited places 🤪🤪🤪 According to the interviewer we must demand moving the masjid to alrubʿ alxali 😊

⁶³ The Empty Quarter is a sand desert encompassing most of the southern third of the Arabian Peninsula. The desert covers some 650,000 km² including parts of Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. It is part of the larger Arabian Desert.

⁶⁴ Some studies refer to sarcasm as aggressive humour or sarcastic humour, see for example (Dynel, 2014, 2016, p.229).

Example 4.20 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-73- T1/T2 (R/I) <POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

أوامر ثانية طال عمرك

ʔwa:mir θa:njah tʕa:l ʕumrak

demands other increase age-you.SG.M

Any other demands may you live long (your highness)⁶⁵

4.5.2.10 Act combination

This strategy refers to the use of a combination of disagreement strategies identified above, except verbal attacks. This act combination could contain two or more strategies used to express a disagreement. For instance, the poster in Example 4.21 used giving advice (single underline) followed by supplication (double underline). Poster-19 expresses a mitigated disagreement directed towards other posters in the thread of replies attacking Alsihaimi, the writer in the video attached to the MT. The disagreement begins with advice that praying for Alsihaimi, or anyone who did wrong, to be guided by Allah is better and should be enough. This advice is followed by a supplication containing two mitigation devices, as shown below. The supplication indicates that no one, including the poster, is infallible, and everyone needs Allah's protection from temptations.

Example 4.21 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-19- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.2, Mit.Dis> (Giving Advice and supplication)

(Mitigation devices in angled brackets: kinship address term and solidarity/in-group marker)

ادعوله بالهدايه هو وغيره واكتفوا بذلك والله بحاسب كل واحد بما قال وبما عمل واسأل الله ان <يكفيننا>
الفتن <يا اخوان> و<حسينا> الله وكفا

idʕu:-lah bi-lhida:jah hu: w-ʔerh w-iktafu: bi-ða:lik
w-allah bi-jħasib kul wa:hð bi-ma: qa:l wa-bi-ma: ʕamil
wa- a:sʔl allah an <jakfi:-na:> alfitan <ja: ʔxwa:n.PL> wa
<hasbu-na:> allah wa-kafa:

parry-for-him to-the-guidance him and-other-him and-enough-you by-that
and-allah will-account every one by-what said and-by-what did
and-i-ask allah to <protect-us> the-temptation < O brothers> and
<suffice-us> allah and-enough

⁶⁵ tʕa:l ʕumrak when addressing the person directly, while tʕawjl alʕumr when referring to the person.

Pray for him and others to be guided (by Allah) and that is enough and Allah will hold everyone accountable for what they said and did and I ask Allah to <protect us> <brothers> from temptations and Allah is <sufficient for us>

The poster in Example 4.22 expressed a disagreement that begins with an explanation (single underline) and ends with a reprimand (double underline). The disagreement is unmodified as the disagreement does not contain any mitigation or aggravation devices identified in Section 4.5.1. Poster-102's disagreement is directed at the main poster, who, according to Poster-102, is manipulating the situation by confusing two different issues. The explanation clarifies what is seen to be wrong in the main poster's tweet: lowering the volume of mosques' loudspeakers and Alsihaim's talk about reducing the number of mosques. After explaining, Poster-102 curtly demands that the main poster not confuse the two issues.

Example 4.22 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-102- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Un.Dis> (Explanation and Reprimand)

هذا ما دعى اليه الشيخ ابن عثيمين وهو مطلب لجميع المجاورين القريبين للمساجد ومن حق اي جار مطالبة امام او مؤذن اي مسجد في اخفاض صوت الميكرفون ، لكن مايريده السحيمي ومن بسانده هو كتم صوت المساجد واغلاق معظمها من الحارات فيما يسميها بمساجد الضرار لا تخلط بالموضوع

haða: ma: daða: iller-h the-feix ibn uthaymeen w-hu: mat'lab li-zami:ŝ
almuza:wiri:n alqaribi:n li-lmsa:zid wa-min haq ?i: za:r mut'a:labt
ima:m ?w mu?ðin ?i: maszid fi: ixfa:d' s'aut almeikrufu:n, lakin ma:-
juri:d-uh alsihaimi wa-man jusa:nid-uh hu:a katm s'aut almsa:zid
wa-iy-la:q muŝð'am-ha: min alha:ra:t fi:ma: jusami:-ha: bi-msa:zid
ald'ira:r la: tixlit' bi-lm aud'u:ŝ

This is what Sheikh ibn Uthaymeen called for and it is a demand for all those close to mosques and it is the right of any neighbour to demand that the imam or mu?ðin⁶⁶ of any mosque to lower the volume of the microphone, but what Alsihaimi and those supporting him advocating for is silencing the sound of mosques and closing most of them in the neighbourhoods calling these masa:jid al-dirar⁶⁷ so do not (you) confuse the issue

⁶⁶ The person who performs the calls to prayer.

⁶⁷ The story of masjid al dirar, mosque of dissent, was mentioned in the Quran verse 107 of chapter 9 (*And as for those who put up a Masjid by way of harm and disbelief and to disunite the believers and as an outpost for those who warred against Allah and His Messenger aforesaid, they will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good. Allah bears witness that they are certainly liars.*); for a detailed account of see the exegesis of Ibn-Kathir <https://www.alim.org/quran/tafsir/ibn-kathir/surah/9/107>

In Example 4.23, Poster-58 expresses an aggravated disagreement starting with an exclamation (single underline). The exclamation is formulated as a rhetorical question primarily used to show Poster-58's astonishment or disbelief at the prior poster's comment on the video attached to the MT, see Section 4.5.2.7. The prior poster commented that the man was audacious for approaching the imam like that during the lecture. The exclamation is followed by an explanation (double underline), showing that the poster was not seeking an answer from the previous poster. The explanation shows that Poster-58 sees the imam's actions and words to be (rude); this negative judgement of the imam is further intensified by the second aggravation device at the end, which reflects Poster-58's ill wish towards the target (i.e. the imam).

Example 4.23 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-58- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Agg.Dis> (Exclamation and Explanation)

(Aggravation devices in angled brackets: judgmental language and invoking Allah against the other)

من الذي تجرأ على من؟ الجرأة أتت من الإمام وليس العكس. تجرأ ورفع صوت المكبرات حتى اقتحم كل البيوت المحيطة. <وبوقاحة> برد على الشاكي (ادعوا له يا اخوان) و (الدين ما يزعل). <على الإمام من الله ما يستحق!>

man allaði: tazar? ʕla man ? alzurʔah ʔtat min alima:m wa-lai:sa alʕaks. tazarʔ wa-rafaʕ sʕaut almukabira:t ħata: iqtaham kul albuju:t almuħi:tʕah. wa-bi-waqa:ħah jurd ʕla alʕa:ki: (idʕu:-lah ja: ʔxwa:n) wa (aldi:n ma: jzaʕl). <ʕla alima:m min allah ma: jastaħq!>

who that dared on who? the-audacity came from the-imam and-not the-reverse. he-dared and-raised sound the-loudspeakers until penetrated all the-houses the-surrounding. and-by-rudeness he-reply to the-complainant (pray-for-him O brothers) and (the-religion not upset). < on the-imam from allah what he-deserves>

Who dared whom? The audacity came from the Imam not the other way around. He dared to raise the sound of the loudspeakers until (his voice) stormed all the surrounding houses. And he responds to the complainant <rudely> (brothers pray for him) and (religion does not upset). <On the Imam what he deserves from Allah!>

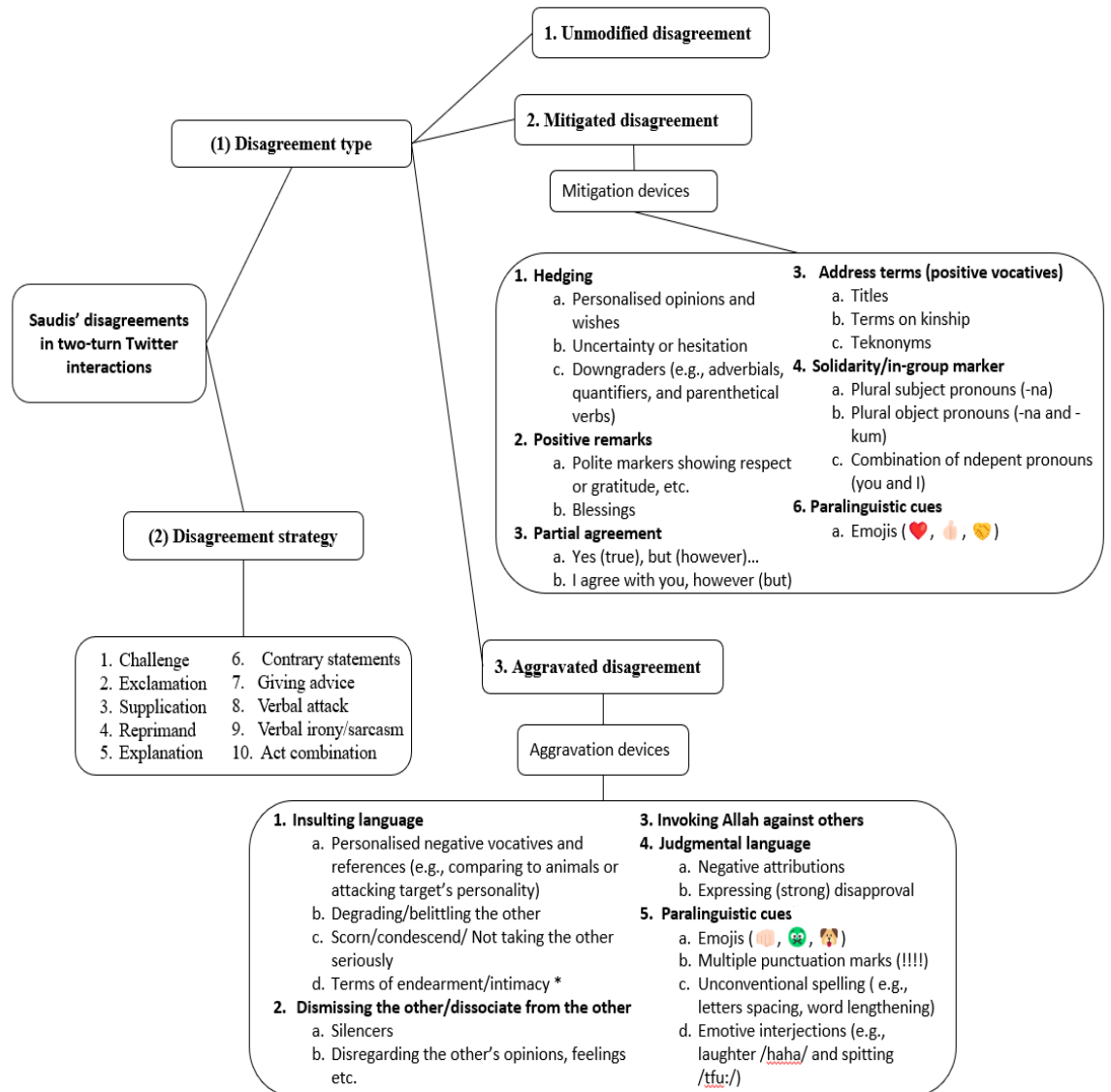


Figure 4-4: Coding framework for Saudis' Twitter disagreements in two-turn interaction (**usually used as a mitigation device but not in the SAT corpus*)

4.6 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted after the data collection approach was decided. The pilot study's main aim was to assess the feasibility of the methodological and theoretical framework to be employed in the study. After compiling the Twitter corpus, I worked on coding the data in Excel. The pilot study revealed that software other than Excel was necessary to closely and effectively code smaller units of the data, such as mitigation devices, and link the generated codes whenever required. Thus, I decided to work with MAXQDA to analyse my corpus data. The software was also used to code and analyse online questionnaires and interviews. After coding the corpus and validating the coding system, I checked with another researcher⁶⁸ all the generated codes used in classifying disagreement strategies, types, and the categorisation of mitigation and aggravation devices.

The online questionnaire was also tested with five respondents from different educational backgrounds: one has a diploma, two have a Bachelor's, and two have a Master's. Moreover, two of these respondents were males in their 20s, one female in her 20s, and the other two were females in their early 30s. The questionnaire was tested between July 30, 2020, and August 15, 2020. The test of the online questionnaire was important to highlight any shortcomings in it and identify any unanticipated difficulties, relating to such as the wording and format. No major changes were made to the online questionnaire in light of this testing, except for rephrasing a couple of questions for clarity.

4.7 Analysis of data

The data analysis in this study was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods; this practice of mixing methods is widely encouraged in linguistics and social sciences (Dörnyei, 2007, p.44; Ivankova and Creswell, 2009, p.136); see Section 4.1. The next two sections illustrate the process I followed in analysing the data quantitatively and qualitatively.

⁶⁸ A Saudi PhD researcher in Arabic-English translation at the University of Leeds.

4.7.1 Quantitative analysis

The current study primarily uses descriptive statistics of some aspects of discourse analysis, focusing mainly on mitigation, aggravation devices, and disagreement strategies to further explore the discursive struggle over (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements. In analysing the corpus, the quantitative analysis provides absolute numbers, relative frequencies, and percentages. Adopting this approach was motivated by claims that aggressive verbal exchanges seem to be common practice among many Saudi Twitter users in disagreements (Alghathami, 2016). The quantitative analysis seeks to identify the dominant type of disagreements, the strategies and the devices used by Saudis in expressing their disagreements in the SAT corpus, see Section 5.1.

In analysing the online questionnaire, the quantitative analysis mainly provides the frequency and percentage of the respondents' answers to understand the general use of Twitter among Saudis; see the analysis in Section 5.2. Also, in part three of the questionnaire, frequencies and percentages are primarily used to understand the relationship between the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness scales when classifying Twitter disagreements, specifically looking at the (un)alignment between the categories in the two scales; see Section 5.2.2. This (un)alignment between the categories is then presented in the form of relationship maps in Chapter 7. This analysis sheds light on whether the respondents' (im)politeness evaluations of Twitter disagreements reflect a variation in the perceptions. It was suggested that people are much more likely to agree with a negative evaluation of forms of behaviour that they might consider impolite, rude, inappropriate, etc. than they are on the positive evaluation of the same behaviour (Watts, 2003, p.17-18).

The corpus data, online questionnaires, and interviews were imported, coded, and analysed using MAXQDA. MAXQDA provides different approaches to analyse the coded data statistically. I also used SPSS, mainly to test the correlation between the categories in (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness scales in respondents' evaluations of each reply.

4.7.2 Qualitative analysis

The analysis of disagreement types and strategies in the corpus of tweets was based on previous classifications of disagreement (Rees-Miller, 2000; Shum and Lee, 2013; Harb, 2016). In addition, mitigation and aggravation devices were analysed based on the impoliteness model designed by Culpeper (1996; 2011a), along with the work of Harb (2016) on mitigation and aggravation devices in Arabic (see Section 4.5 for a detailed explanation of the corpus coding process). The analysis of the corpus of tweets (naturally occurring data) was supported by the metalinguistic data collected from online questionnaires and interviews. The qualitative analysis of the disagreements in the corpus was primarily from a researcher's perspective, as I contextually analysed identified disagreements using concepts such as sociality rights taken from the framework of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2002; 2005a; [2000] 2008). The concepts from rapport management made it possible to explain the poster's orientation to the interaction and target(s) of the disagreement.

Moreover, in analysing the metapragmatic data provided in the online questionnaire and the interviews, respondents' answers and interview transcriptions were analysed to examine their perceptions and evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements. In approaching the data, I followed a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012; 2017; 2022), which is a "method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes" (Clarke and Braun, 2022, p.4). It is an interpretative approach that aims to identify themes; a theme is described as a shared multi-faceted meaning encapsulating several related insights unified by a central concept or idea (p.296). Accordingly, I imported the data into MAXQDA, organised the responses, coded the data by assigning labels to related data sections and examined the relationships between the codes. The primary aim of this analysis is to supplement the corpus analysis and provide evidence that sheds more light on Saudis' conceptualisation of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness, their perceptions of Twitter disagreements, the factors that affected their classifications, and the cultural norms they refer to when evaluating (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the methodological approach followed in analysing Saudis' disagreements on Twitter and the perceptions of (im)politeness in a sample of these disagreements. It began by introducing the data collection process, both natural data and metalinguistic data, using three different methods: (1) collecting publicly available tweets to compile a corpus; (2) collecting responses from Saudi Twitter users to investigate their evaluations of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreement; and finally (3) to gather more in-depth insight about users evaluations and conceptualisation of (im)politeness on Twitter through conducting follow-up interviews. The chapter also covered the data screening and preparation process for the SAT corpus and the metalinguistic data. In addition, it discussed the theoretical considerations, the coding framework inspired by previous research, and the modifications made to capture disagreements on a multimodal and multi-participant platform like Twitter. Based on what has been explained here, the next chapter focuses on the quantitative analysis of the data.

Chapter 5 Quantitative Analysis

In the previous chapter, I presented my coding framework for the corpus data, outlining the linguistic and paralinguistic features that I look for in identifying mitigated, aggravated, and unmodified disagreements; this identification takes into account the context in which these disagreements were expressed. I also covered how the online questionnaires and interviews were analytically approached. In this chapter, I present the findings of the quantitative analysis of the corpus coding and online questionnaire. Section 5.1 deals with the examination of the corpus data, identifying: (1) the types of disagreements found in Saudis' Twitter communication, and the categorisation of these types was based on; (2) the linguistic devices employed to mitigate or aggravate disagreements, and lastly; (3) the strategies used by Saudis to express disagreement. The analysis here is based on the 580 Saudis' disagreement instances in T1/2 and T2 turns in the SAT corpus; see Section 4.4 for a detailed explanation of the filtering process of the corpus data.

As laid out in Section 4.4.2, the analysis of the online questionnaire responses was divided as follows: the analysis in Section 5.2.1 is based on 231 responses; it presents the quantitative analysis of Saudis' responses to general questions about Twitter popularity and usage. Section 5.2.2 is based on 178 responses; it reports the quantitative analysis of Saudis' (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness classifications of the ten disagreements in the questionnaire, which is covered in further detail in Chapter 7, where their justifications for their classification are investigated in depth.

5.1 Quantitative analysis of SAT corpus

5.1.1 Types of disagreements found in the corpus

As stated in Section 4.5.1, the existence of mitigation devices with disagreement does not always guarantee that these devices achieved a mitigating effect. In the current study, it was noted that some replies in the corpus contained both mitigation and aggravation devices; however, it seems that these mitigation devices have little influence on softening disagreement in these contexts. This is to say that an aggravator used in the same disagreement can have a stronger impact on the realisation of disagreement (see Netz, 2014); this point is further discussed in Section 8.1.3. Examining Saudis' Twitter disagreements in T1/2 and T2 reveals an interesting, but not totally unexpected, result that seems to support the observation made by Alghathami (2016), presented in Section

1.1. He noted that Saudi Twitter users seem to engage in aggravated verbal exchanges without consideration or discretion. The findings generally seem to coincide with Alghathami's statement, particularly that aggravated disagreement has the highest occurrence in the SAT corpus, as shown in Figure 5-1.

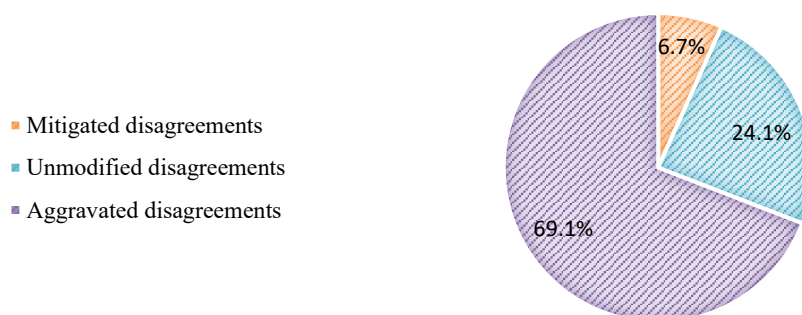


Figure 5-1: Total percentage of each disagreement type in the corpus

It is crucial to highlight that the pervasiveness of verbal aggression and impoliteness has been reported as a general issue in online communication. Indeed, in a recent study, Alghamdi (2023) found that Saudis and American EFL teachers were similar in their tendency to express more aggravated disagreements on Twitter. People use different platforms for different purposes; among these platforms, Twitter is generally used more to share thoughts, opinions and fast news (Hughes et al., 2012). Nonetheless, Twitter is also maliciously utilised to spread rumours, fake news, hate speech, etc. (Chetty and Alathur, 2018). Researchers working on, for instance, cyberbullying and hate speech are seeking to understand the different reasons behind this phenomenon: how aggression differs between the different platforms (Oz et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2012), how to develop systems to detect and control online verbal aggression (Mubarak and Magdy, 2017; Chen et al., 2020), and how policymakers can contribute to solving this issue without compromising freedom of speech. Therefore, in the next chapters, I investigate the possible motivations behind this high percentage of aggravated disagreements in the SAT corpus and shed light on what Saudi Twitter users think of aggravated disagreements in terms of (im)politeness.

Moreover, a Chi-square test was conducted to find out if there is a significant association between disagreement types and the topic genre in the hashtags (political and sociocultural). The results suggest that there is no association between the disagreement types and the hashtags in the SAT corpus $\chi^2(2, N=580) = 3.11$, $p\text{-value} = 0.211$, which is > 0.05). One way to interpret the result here is that since 2016, the time the Saudi 2030 Vision was launched, Saudi Arabia has been going through many social, economic, and political changes (see Section 1.3.3). These changes might have affected the level of controversy in all the topics across both political and sociocultural hashtags. It can be argued that these changes might have some effect on beliefs regarding topics in the sociocultural category, thus affecting the level of controversy in these topics; see the discussion in Section 8.5.

Table 5-1: Occurrence of disagreement types in sociocultural and political hashtags

Disagreement type	SOC			POL			Total	
	AF	%	RF	AF	%	RF	AF	%
Mitigated disagreements	24	61.54%	41.38	15	38.46%	25.86	39	100%
Unmodified disagreements	89	63.57%	153.45	51	36.43%	87.93	140	100%
Aggravated disagreements	222	55.36%	382.76	179	44.64%	308.62	401	100%

* Absolute frequency (AF) - Relative frequency (RF) normalised per 1000 tweets

Another way to look at the data is by examining each MT in the hashtags, as presented in Figure 5-2.

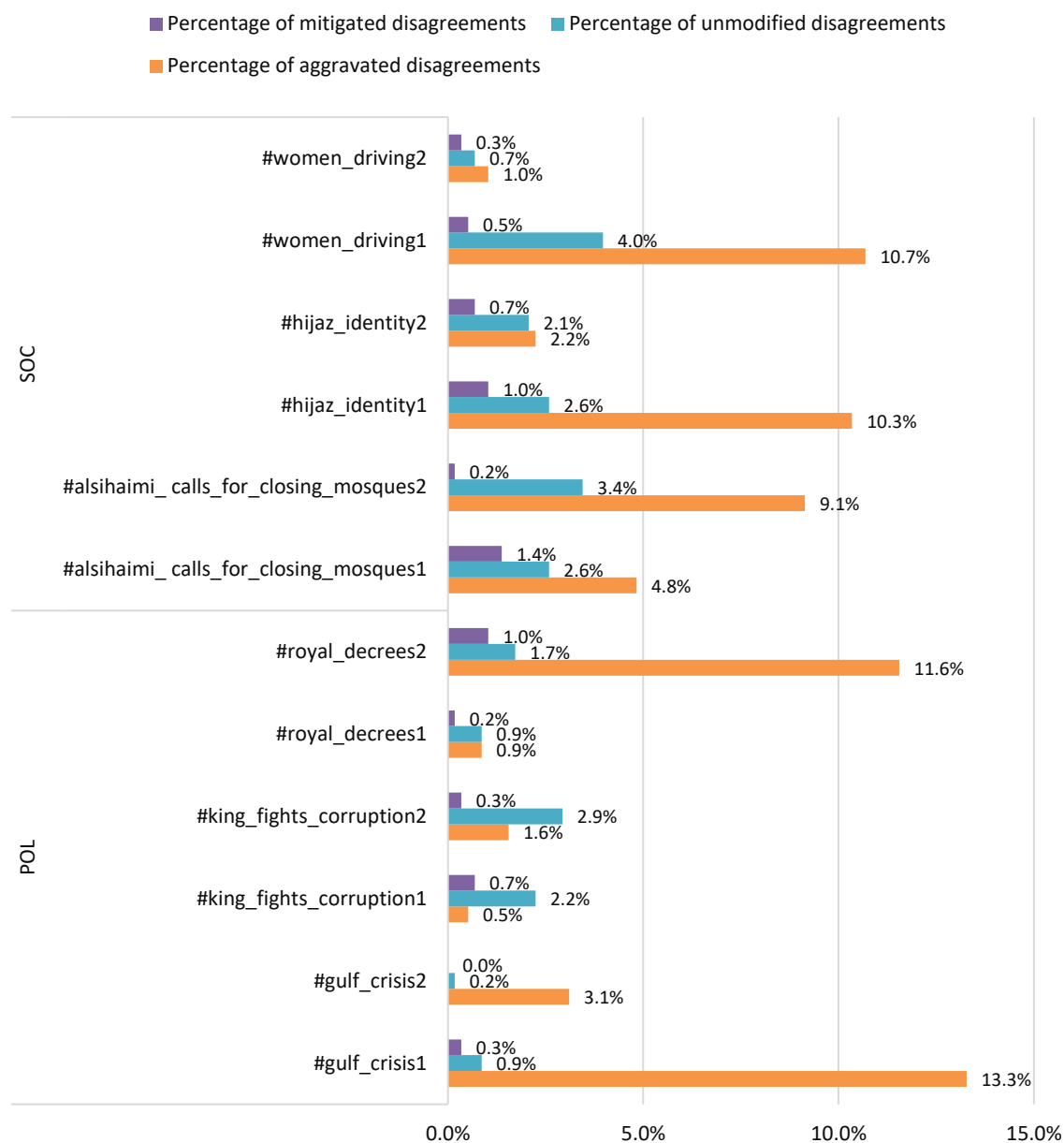


Figure 5-2: Occurrence of each disagreement type in the thread of replies for each MT

The figure shows that aggravated disagreements consistently occurred more frequently in the thread of replies for every MT in the sociocultural hashtags; however, this is not the case in the political ones. Aggravated disagreements in the political hashtags appear to be differently distributed between the MTs as they only dominate the thread of replies for three MTs. A possible reason for this distribution is how the MT was formulated, i.e. how the poster of the MT presented the topic has some influence on the generation of disagreements in the thread of replies. Housley et al. (2017, p.587), in their study of

celebrity antagonistic tweets, found that there is a link between how the tweet is ‘crafted’ and the generation of a response. For example, the MT in #royal-decrees1 was posted as a report of a new law, whereas the MT in #royal-decrees2 was posted as a rejection of some of the new changes in the country, such as the establishment of the General Entertainment Authority; this point is discussed further in Section 8.5.

5.1.2 Mitigation and aggravation devices

5.1.2.1 Mitigation used by Saudis in the SAT corpus

The high frequency of aggravated disagreements compared to the low frequency of mitigated disagreements indicates that mitigation devices in the corpus have a lower occurrence than aggravation devices. Table 5-2 presents the six identified mitigation devices in the corpus; it appears that hedging and positive remarks were the devices most used to soften disagreement, while solidarity or in-group markers and emojis were the least used mitigation devices. It is worth noting that there were 34 mitigation devices identified in the corpus but not included in the table primarily because these devices were used in aggravated disagreements and had no mitigating effect on the disagreement as a whole; see discussion in Section 8.1.3.1.

Table 5-2: Mitigation devices found in the SAT corpus

Mitigation device	Frequency	Percentage
Hedging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalised opinions or wishes Uncertainty/hesitation markers Downgraders Parenthetical and emotive verbs 	21	33.9%
Positive remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blessings Polite markers showing respect, gratitude, etc. 	16	25.8%
Partial agreement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> True but I agree with you on all except 	8	12.9%
Solidarity/in-group markers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plural subject pronoun (-na) Plural object pronoun (-na, us) <i>You and I</i> construction 	7	11.3%
Address terms (positive vocatives): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Titles Terms of kinship Teknonyms 	6	9.7%
Paralinguistic cues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emojis 	4	6.5%
Total	62	100%

As pointed out in the coding framework in Section 4.5.1, mitigation and aggravation devices can appear in different positions in the disagreeing reply. However, in the SAT corpus, some of these devices seem to occur much more at the beginning of the reply: 66.7% of address terms and 87.5% of partial agreements, which was not unexpected given that these devices are usually used to attract or appeal to the target of the disagreement. Address terms are used to establish a specific social bond with the target, as seen in the use of “brother” in Example 6.17. Regarding partial agreements, the analysis here supports the findings of earlier studies (e.g., LoCastro, 1986; Kreutel, 2007) that partial agreements usually appear at the beginning of disagreements, as seen in the extracts in Example 5.1. The use of this device at the beginning of a disagreeing reply generally indicates that the poster foregrounds commonality with the target before expressing the disagreement. In the SAT corpus, there was one occurrence of partial agreement at the end of the disagreement, which is discussed in Example 6.8. Overall, positive remarks appear somewhat more at the beginning of the disagreeing reply (43.8%) but are also found at the end (37.5%). Positive remarks are also used to appeal to the target; however, this positive appeal can be foregrounded to attract the target, as seen in Example 4.9, or expressed at the end of the disagreement reply to leave a positive effect, as seen in Example 6.23.

Solidarity markers appear more in the middle (28.6%) and at the end (71.4%) of the disagreement replies; see Example 5.1. Similarly, hedging, which includes both syntactic constructions and lexical devices, appears more in the middle (57.1%) and the end (23.8%) of the disagreeing reply, as seen in the extracts in Example 5.1. Lastly, all paralinguistic cues in the SAT corpus tend to be used at the end of the tweet, as seen in Example 4.11 and the one in Section 4.5.1.1. The emojis used are 👍, ❤️, and 🤝. These emojis seem to be used to emphasise the friendly tone and commonality in the disagreement.

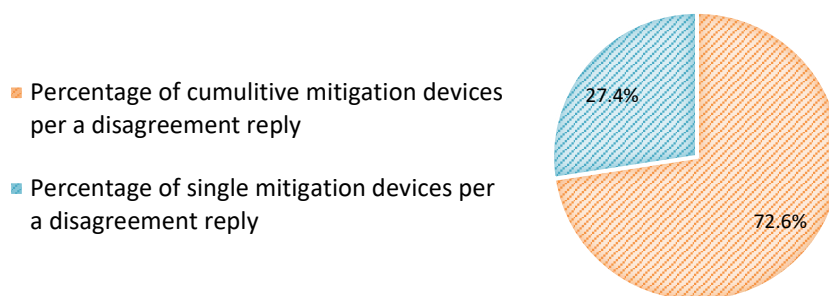


Figure 5-3: Cumulative vs single occurrences of mitigation devices in mitigated disagreements

Moreover, the analysis of these mitigation devices reveals that 70% of these devices were used cumulatively (i.e. in combination) more than occurring alone in a disagreement, as shown in Figure 5-3. Using multiple mitigation devices creates what Caffi (2013, p.241) called “synergetic reinforcements of mitigation”, which demonstrate the poster’s effort to maintain or enhance the interaction, see Example 5.1.

Example 5.1 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-112-T2 <SOC, SH1.1. Mit.Dis>

قد اتفق نوعاً ما في موضوع المحاضرات او الدروس العلمية ، ولكن في الاذان وإقامة الصلاة إرى انه شي محمود و بالعكس شي مميز لنا في حفاظاً ع عادات دينية تميزنا عن غيرنا

qad a:tafiq nawʕa:n ma: fi: mawdʕu:ʕ almuħa:ðʕra:t ʔw alduru:s
alʕilmi:ah, wa-lakin fi: alʔða:n wa iʔqa:mat alsʕala:t ʔra:
ʔnahu ʕei maħmu:d wa bi-lʕaks ʕei mumeijaz la-na: fi:
ħifa:ðʕa:n ʕa ʕa:da:t di:nijah tmajaz-na: ʕan ʕeir-na:

might i-agree kind of in subject the-lectures or the-lessons the-scientific, but in the-call-for-prayer and calling-for the-prayer I-see it-is something good and by-the-opposite something unique for-us in maintaing of customs religious distingusih-us form other-us

I might agree sort of on the subject of lectures or scientific lessons, but regarding the call to prayer and the Iqamah (the second call to prayer) I think that it is a good thing and and on the contrary something special for us in preserving religious customs that distinguish us from others

In Example 5.1, Poster-112 appears to be cautious in expressing the disagreement as multiple mitigation devices were employed in the reply. The poster used several hedges: uncertainty markers (might) and downgraders (sort of), which both reduce the poster’s commitment to the claim made in the disagreement. Also, the poster utilised personalised opinion, or what is referred to as “subjectivizers” (Caffi, 2007, p.268), as seen in the

poster's use of (I think). These subjectivizers aim to highlight that the utterance is a subjective opinion (Caffi, 2007, p.268) which can be accepted or rejected. In addition, Poster-112 seems to be mindful of the target's social rights, which is reflected in the use of the hedged partial agreement (agree, sort of, ... but) and solidarity marker (plural object pronoun -na) to highlight shared values. Using these devices shows that the mitigation here serves both the poster and the target, which appears to support Caffi's point mentioned in Section 3.3.1 that saving one's face entails saving the other's face. These devices seem to reflect the poster's orientation toward rapport enhancement despite having a different view on the topic presented in the MT.

5.1.2.2 Aggravation used by Saudis in the corpus

In Saudis' Twitter disagreements, the posters used five aggravation devices, presented in Table 5-3. These devices are insulting language, judgemental language, paralinguistic cues, dismissing the other or dissociating from the other, and invoking Allah against the other. As pointed out in Section 4.5.1.2, the overlap between these devices is sometimes inevitable. The classification of silencers as a dismissive device does not preclude the target from perceiving it as an insult. Therefore, I attempted to focus on the function of the devices in the context of the disagreement rather than the effects they might have on the target.

Table 5-3: Aggravation devices found in the SAT corpus

Aggravation device	Frequency	Percentage
Insulting language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inappropriate (cultural, religious, political) negative vocatives/references/slurs - Attacking the other's personality or appearance - Comparing to animals - Degrading/belittling the other (scorn, condescend, ridicule) - Swearing and profanity 	100	33.9%
Judgmental language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Associating with negative aspects, traits or attributions 	86	29.2%
Paralinguistic cues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unconventional spelling - Emojis - Punctuations - Other paralinguistic cues 	57	19.3%
Dismissing the other/dissociating from the other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Silencers - Dismissing the other's opinion or emotion - Dissociating from the other 	34	11.5%
Invoking Allah against the other	18	6.1%
Total	295	100%

Similar to address terms and partial agreements in mitigation devices, it seems that around 51% of insulting language tends to occur at the beginning of the disagreeing tweet and 31% at the end. The insulting language device involves name-calling and inappropriate references, and this type of insulting language tends to be used at the beginning to reflect the negative poster's attitude towards that target from the start of the disagreeing reply. It can be argued that posters who aggravate their disagreements by name-calling and inappropriate references likely aim to offend the target; they are not orientating towards enhancing or maintaining the rapport with the target, as seen in Example 5.2. Other devices, particularly judgmental language (51.16%), dismissing the other (52.94%), and paralinguistic cues (57.89%), seem to occur more in the middle of the disagreeing reply. These devices also appear at the end of the reply: judgmental language (30.23%), dismissing the other (26.47%) and paralinguistic cues (36.84%). Example 7.7 shows how judgemental language is used at the end of the reply to aggravate the disagreement, and Example 4.23 in Section 4.5.2.10 shows how judgemental language can be employed in the middle of the disagreeing reply. As for dismissing the other, Example 6.16 shows how it similarly may be used in the middle of the disagreeing tweet, and the example in Section 4.5.1.2 shows how it can be used at the end. Paralinguistic cues in aggravation involve emojis, unconventional spelling, and punctuations; therefore, is it expected to find these more in the middle or at the end of the disagreeing reply, as in Example 5.2. Lastly, the device invoking Allah against the other seems to occur more at the end of the disagreeing reply (66.67%), as seen in Example 6.14, although they can also appear at the beginning of the disagreeing reply (22.22%), as seen in Example 6.9.

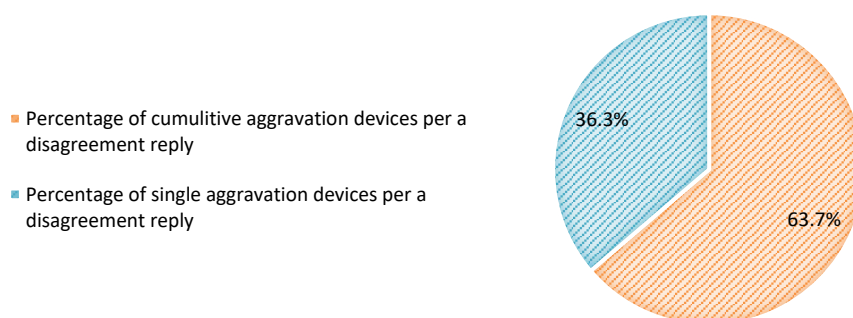


Figure 5-4: Cumulative vs single occurrences of aggravation devices in aggravated disagreements

Moreover, it appears that aggravation devices in the SAT corpus were also used in combination rather than using one device in the disagreeing reply. The use of multiple devices seems to intensify the aggravation of the disagreement, as seen in Example 5.2.

Example 5.2 [see MT5 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-225-T2 (R) <SOC, SH3.1, Agg.Dis>

هالعفنه والخمه اللي معها جاين من دبي وانتظروا لآخر الليل عشان يصورون 🤔🤔... اللي اعرفه ان تصوير القنوات لازم بتصريح من @media_ksa هل هالقناة والطاقم الاجنبي معه تصريح تصوير بشوارع السعوديه؟؟ ننتظر الافاده!!??

ha-alʕifnah wa-alxamah illi: maʕa-ha: za:jin min dubai: w-intaðʕru: li-ʔxir alleil ʕaʕa:n jisʕawiru:n 🤔🤔... illi: ʔ-ʕrifah in tasʕawi:r alqanawa:t la:zim bi-tasʕri:h min @media_ksa hal ha-alqana:h wa-altʕa:qam alaznabi: mʕah tasʕri:h tasʕawi:r bi-fawa:riʕ alsuʕu:djah?? na-ntaðʕir alifa:dah!!??

This rotten (reporter/woman) and the screwed up (team) with her came from Dubai and waited until late at night to film 🤔🤔... as far as I know TV channels must obtain a permit from @media_ksa do this channel and the foreign staff have a permit to film in the streets of Saudi Arabia ?? we are waiting for clarification!!??

In this reply, Poster-225 starts the disagreement by insulting the target, the female reporter and her team by referring to them as <this rotten (reporter) and the screwed up (team) with her>. The laughing emoji following the insult is very likely to be used to intensify the condescending attitude towards the target. The poster also ends the disagreement with multiple question marks and exclamation marks, which reflect a strong condemnation of the content of the video attached to the MT. Therefore, it can be argued that the “synergetic reinforcement” effect proposed by Caffi (2013, p.241) can also be extended to aggravation devices. The intensification of the impoliteness is “more than optional extra; it is part of what makes impolite formula attitudinally extreme, less equivocal and more likely to cause the target to take offence” (Culpeper, 2011a, pp.153-154).

5.1.3 Disagreement strategies

The corpus analysis reveals that Saudis used ten disagreement strategies to express their Twitter disagreements (see Section 4.5.2 for an explanation of the coding framework). Figure 5-5 provides a general picture of the strategies Saudis used in expressing their Twitter disagreements. The figure shows the total percentage of the occurrence of each strategy in the SAT corpus. Act combination is the most used strategy in the SAT corpus, which aligns with previous research (Harb, 2016). Overall, the strategies can be split into three groups based on their frequencies: the first group contains act combination and

verbal attacks, the second group contains contrary statements, explanations and verbal irony/sarcasm, and the last group contains the less frequent strategies: exclamation, reprimand, challenge, supplication, and giving advice.

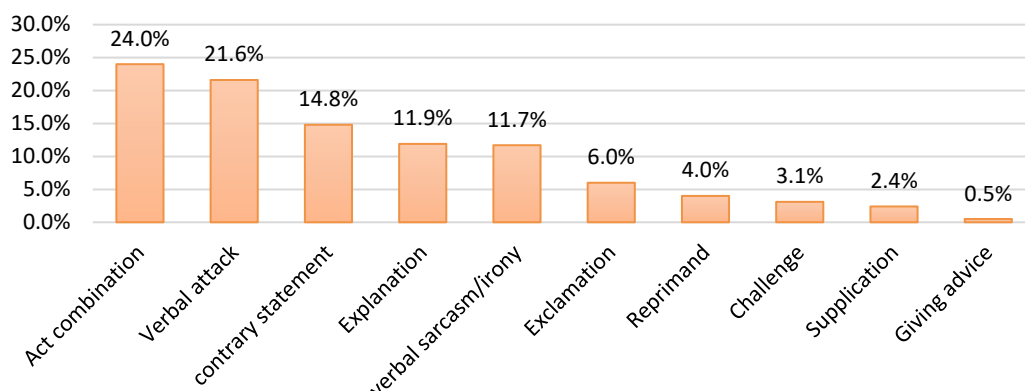


Figure 5-5: Disagreement strategies used by Saudis in T1/2 and T2

Figure 5-5, in isolation, does not show how each strategy was used in terms of linguistic modification; that is, if each strategy was used with or without mitigation and aggravation devices. Therefore, Figure 5-6 displays the percentage use of each disagreement strategy in relation to the use of mitigation and aggravation devices in the corpus.

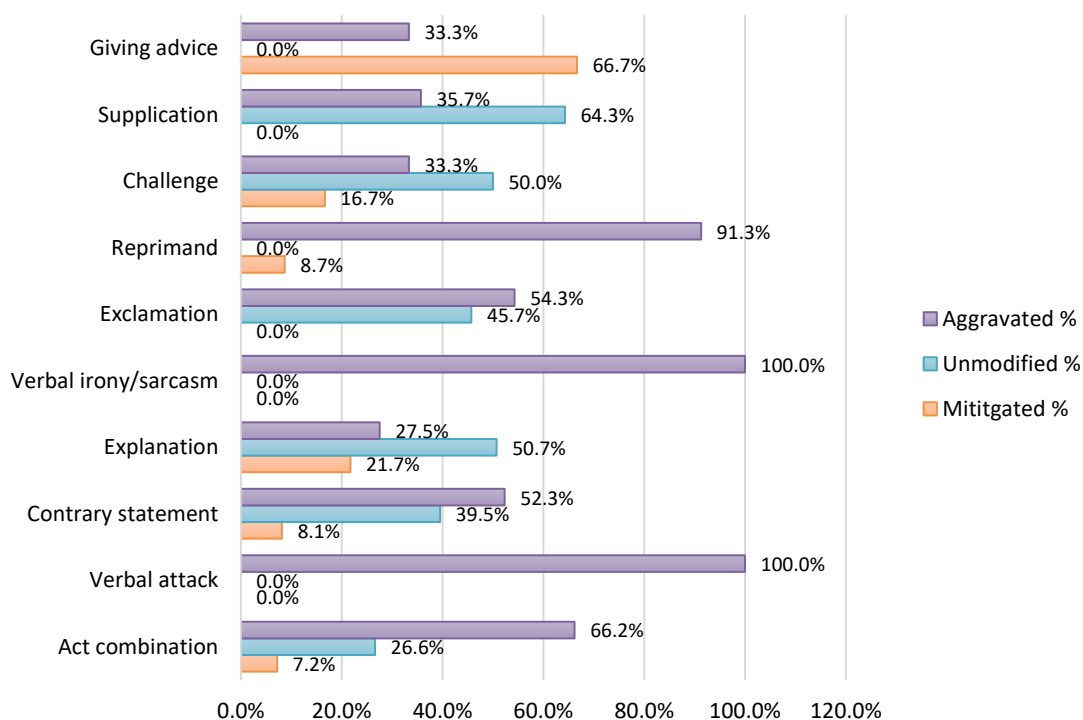


Figure 5-6: Percentage of disagreement strategies in each disagreement type

The results presented in Figure 5-6 indicate that a straightforward classification of disagreement strategies as polite (positively marked), politic (unmarked), and impolite (negatively marked), as found in Harb's (2016) taxonomy, is rather problematic since these strategies can be expressed with different effects based on the use of mitigation and aggravation devices. This variability in modification seems to indicate a variability in perception. For example, in the case of verbal attacks and verbal irony/sarcasm, although these strategies were always used to express aggravated disagreements in the corpus, it remains challenging to judge whether they would always be negatively marked or evaluated as impolite, especially in the context of Twitter. In Chapter 6, I present examples from the corpus for those disagreement strategies expressing mitigated, unmodified, and aggravated disagreements. Then, in Chapter 7, I present respondents' evaluations of some of these strategies to support this argument.

5.2 Quantitative analysis of online questionnaire

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Section 4.2.2, the online questionnaire consisted of four parts: part one collects demographic data about the respondents, part two obtains more insight into the popularity of Twitter among Saudis and how the respondents use the platform, part three focuses on collecting the respondents' evaluations of the ten disagreements taken from the SAT corpus, and the fourth and final part invites respondents to take part in a follow-up interview. Respondents' demographic data were reported in the previous chapter in Section 4.3. The following sections report the findings of the quantitative analysis of parts two and three of the online questionnaire. As pointed out in Section 4.4.2, the analysis of part two is based on the answers of 231 respondents, while part three is based on 178 respondents.

5.2.1 Analysis of part two of the questionnaire

5.2.1.1 The popularity of Twitter and its usage among Saudis

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the following statement: *Among the different social media platforms, Twitter is the most popular platform used by Saudis to discuss political and sociocultural topics.*

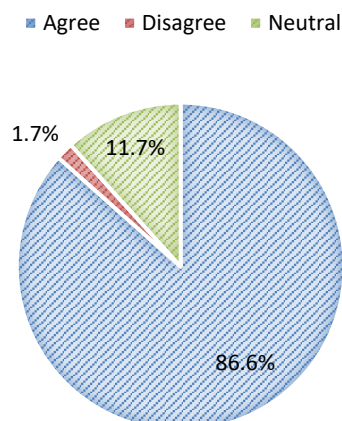


Figure 5-7: Twitter is the most popular social media platform among Saudis when discussing political and sociocultural issues

Figure 5-7 shows that most respondents (200 out of 231) agreed with the statement. Twitter is indeed a platform that has provided Saudis with an open public space in which to participate in discussions on different political and sociocultural topics, which makes Twitter a rich resource for collecting authentic data.

5.2.1.2 Frequency of using Twitter

Respondents were asked about how frequently they use Twitter, and as shown in Figure 5-8, around 65% of respondents, that is 150, said that they use Twitter more than once a day. Other respondents use the platform less frequently for different reasons; for instance, one of the female respondents who selected *other* stated that her usage of Twitter depends on her daily priorities. It can be argued that Twitter seems to be a platform that 80% of the respondents use daily to connect to the world as it is used to keep up with recent updates in politics, sports, etc., as seen in the following two sections.

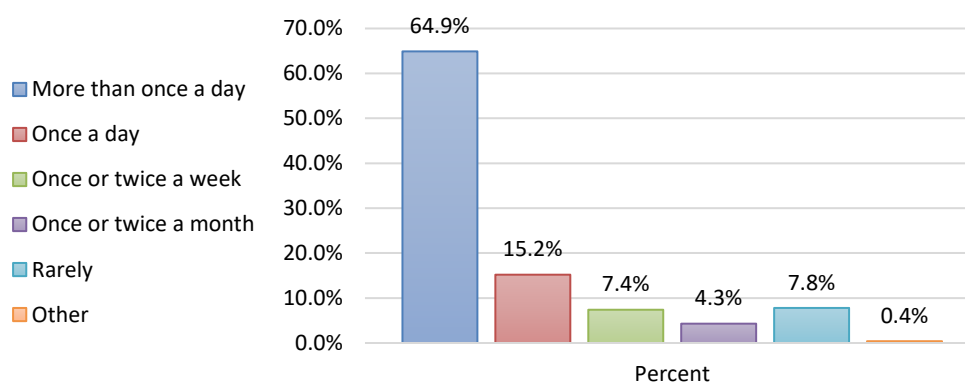


Figure 5-8: Frequency of Twitter usage as reported by Saudi respondents

5.2.1.3 Purposes of using Twitter

Respondents were asked to select from a list of options of possible motivations or reasons for using Twitter. They were allowed to select multiple options or write their own reasons.

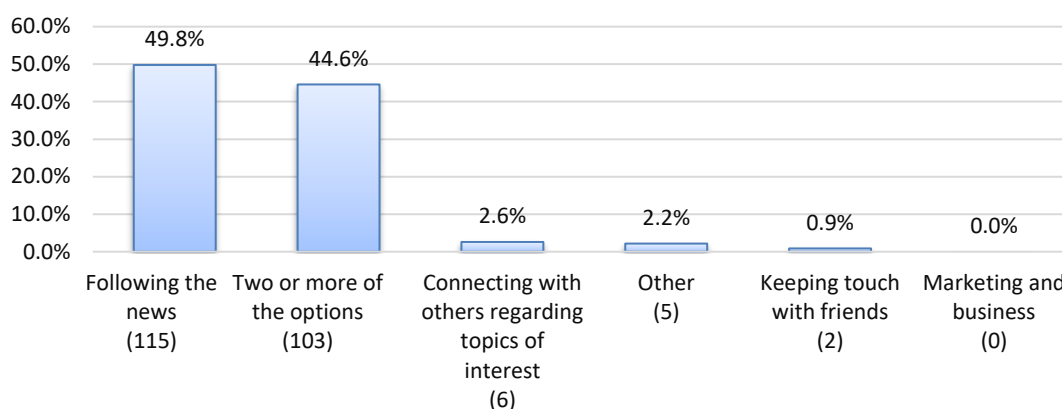


Figure 5-9: Purposes of using Twitter as reported by Saudi respondents

Figure 5-9 reveals that 115 respondents chose following the news as the only reason for using Twitter, while connecting with friends was chosen by two respondents. This indicates that half of the respondents mainly use Twitter to follow what is happening locally and globally. Unsurprisingly, Twitter is also commonly used for more than one reason, as seen in the responses of 44.6% of respondents. Some respondents provided various other reasons, such as looking for promotion codes for online shopping, accessing Twitter links sent to them via other platforms, connecting with people/groups sharing similar hobbies or activities (e.g., cycling groups), finding quotes, venting personal emotions, and sharing daily updates (i.e. treating Twitter as a journal), maintaining a professional network by following colleagues and others in the same work/study field and finally, using Twitter for learning and personal development.

5.2.1.4 Type of Twitter activity

As discussed in Section 4.2.1, the number of replies to a tweet is one way to measure a tweet's engagement level. Twitter active engagement is seen in the number of replies, retweets, likes, etc., while passive engagement primarily refers to browsing and checking what is going on in the platform without actively engaging with the tweets. In the online questionnaire, respondents were given a table of five Twitter activities: tweeting, retweeting, liking, replying, and browsing/following the news. They then were asked to select the type of activity that described their engagement on Twitter and the regularity of that activity. Respondents were also given the freedom not to select any activity. As expected, most respondents chose 'browsing' as their most frequent activity, which was

selected by 160 (69%) respondents, as shown in Figure 5-10. ‘Liking’ tweets was the most frequent activity for only 68 (29%) respondents and near equally a usual activity for 67 (29%) respondents.

Similarly, ‘retweeting’ was selected as a usual activity by 73 (32%) respondents, the most frequent activity for 53 (23%) respondents, and equally a rare activity for 53 (23%) respondents. Interestingly, more respondents chose ‘tweeting’ as their least frequent activity on Twitter, which was selected by 83 (36%), followed closely by replying to others, which 68 (29%) respondents selected. This finding seems to support Benson’s (2017, p.91) statement that online interactions generally tend to be left unfinished (i.e. to hang); see Section 4.4.1.2.

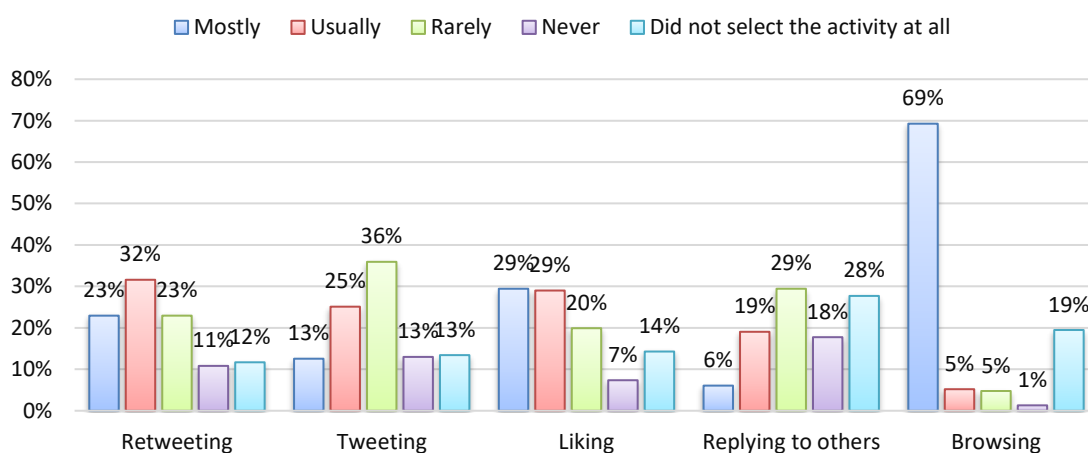


Figure 5-10: Frequency and type of Twitter activity that Saudi respondents do

5.2.1.5 Types of relationships on Twitter

Respondents were given five different options that describe their relationship with others on Twitter. Figure 5-11 shows that 48.9% of the respondents indicate that they only know some or a few people in their following/follower list. In contrast, those who state they personally know all the people in their follower/following list constitute only 1.7%. This finding suggests that Twitter users are more likely to know relatively few people in their follower/following list on a personal level, which seems to support the claim that interaction on Twitter tends to be more between weak-tie networks; see Chapter 8 for further discussion. To some users, it seems that Twitter is simply used to publish their thoughts to a broader audience, while for others, it is used to create a sense of community and belonging.

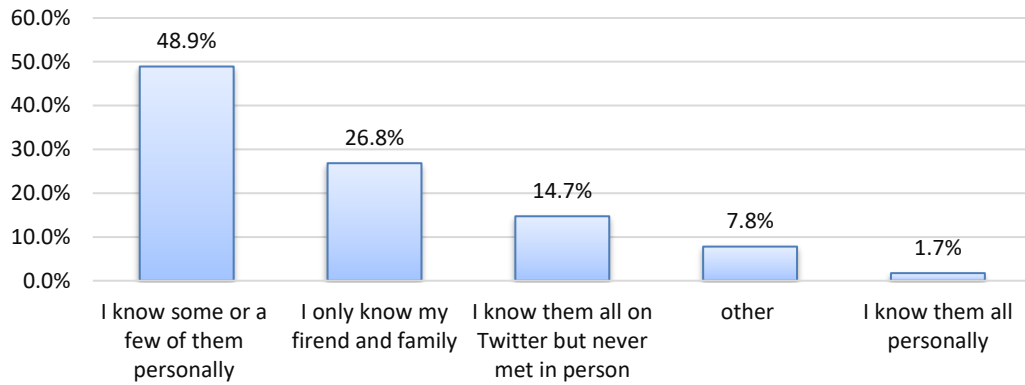


Figure 5-11: Respondents' relationships with others on Twitter

5.2.1.6 Potential platform influence on the expressions and perceptions of disagreements

Respondents were invited to express their thoughts on whether Twitter influences how one expresses their views and how they perceive others' different views. As the question was optional and open-ended, 21.6% of respondents did not answer the question, and the rest provided various responses ranging from elaborated answers to yes/no answers, as shown in Figure 5-12. For instance, Twitter has become a source for many different conversational topics; as Female-45 stated, "Some people tend to quote tweets in most of their conversations; the discussions on Twitter influence how people accept the rapid changes happening in Saudi society." Also, Twitter has facilitated expressing opinions to a larger audience and how the number of followers might affect these opinions; as Female-86 stated,

Based on my experience on Twitter since 2008, I witnessed the impact of Twitter on Saudi society, as it opened the horizons for freedom of expression, and completely changed how opinions are communicated. No matter how odd and different your opinion is on Twitter, you will not be alone. There are supporters for every opinion, whether it is positive or negative. So, Twitter has provided freedom of expression and support, especially if you have a large number of followers.

It is suggested that some people might not express their *'real'* thoughts because they are mindful of losing some of their followers. Also, Male-32 stated, "Now, many Saudis, when embarking on a new thing in their life, whether academic or business, they go on Twitter and see others' opinions, and then make a decision." More of these responses are covered and discussed in Chapter 8.

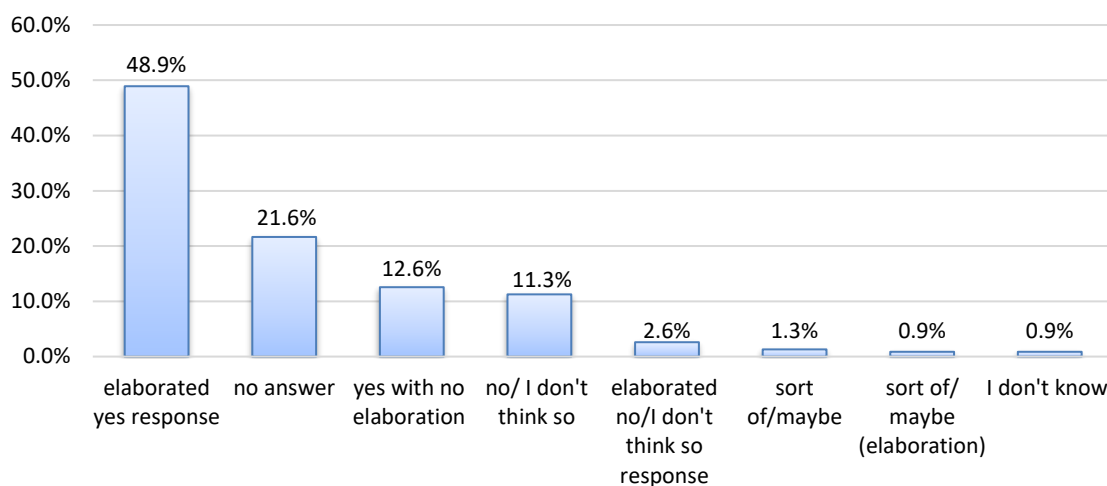


Figure 5-12: Twitter has influenced how Saudis express their opinions and how they view others' different views

5.2.2 Analysis of part three of the questionnaire

As stated in Section 4.2.2, the third part of the online questionnaire involves a set of five MTs with two replies for each. Following the relational work model (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005), respondents were asked to judge whether each of the ten replies disagreed with the relevant MT. If the reply was identified as a disagreement, respondents were then asked to evaluate the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of each disagreement using the 5-point Likert scale: the (im)politeness scale includes “very polite”, “polite”, “neither polite nor impolite”, “impolite”, and “very impolite”. The (in)appropriateness scale includes “very appropriate”, “appropriate”, “neither appropriate nor inappropriate”, “inappropriate”, and “very inappropriate”. Then, respondents were invited to write their justification explaining the reason(s) behind their classifications. These justifications are essential to access the respondents’ understanding of the moral order underlying their evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in these disagreements. Respondents’ justifications or “rationales” represent the argumentative link between metapragmatic behaviour and some underlying conception of the moral order; respondents’ rationales offer insights into the differing conceptions of the social order (Davies, 2018). However, as shown in Figure 5-13, not all the respondents who identified the reply as a disagreement and classified the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness provided justifications for their classifications, further discussed in Chapter 8. For example, the number of respondents who classified the MT1-R2 is 160; out of them, only 86 provided justifications for their classifications.

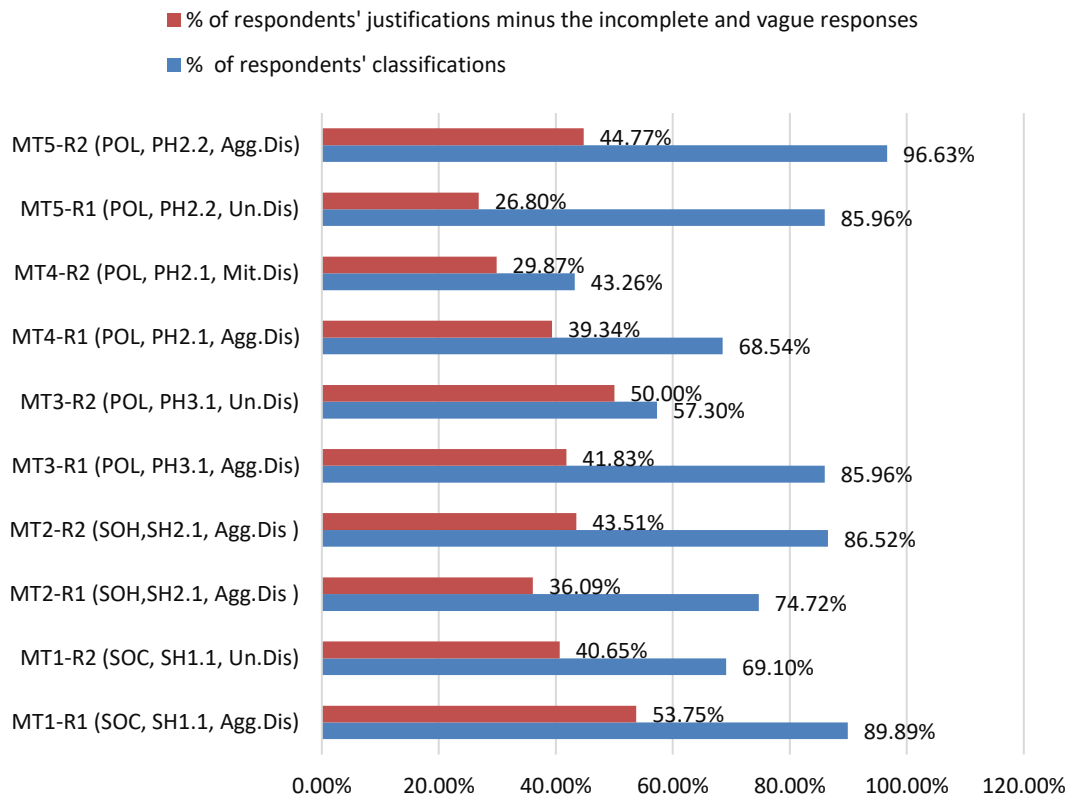


Figure 5-13: Respondents' responses to the questions in the third part of the questionnaire

Moreover, analysing respondents' classifications of the ten replies revealed that there is variation in how each reply was classified in terms of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. For instance, the first reply to the first MT was classified as displayed in Figure 5-14; the evaluations of the ten replies are presented and analysed in Chapter 7. The variability in classification reflects the subjective nature of the relational work, which is subject to discursive dispute as to what is considered polite, appropriate, impolite, etc. behaviour in the interaction. This variability in evaluations shows that evaluations are open to discursive renegotiation (Haugh, 2010, p.26). Also, it can be argued that this variability might indicate that evaluative terms such as 'impolite', 'appropriate' and 'impolite' are too subject to discursive dispute, see the discussion in Section 8.2.

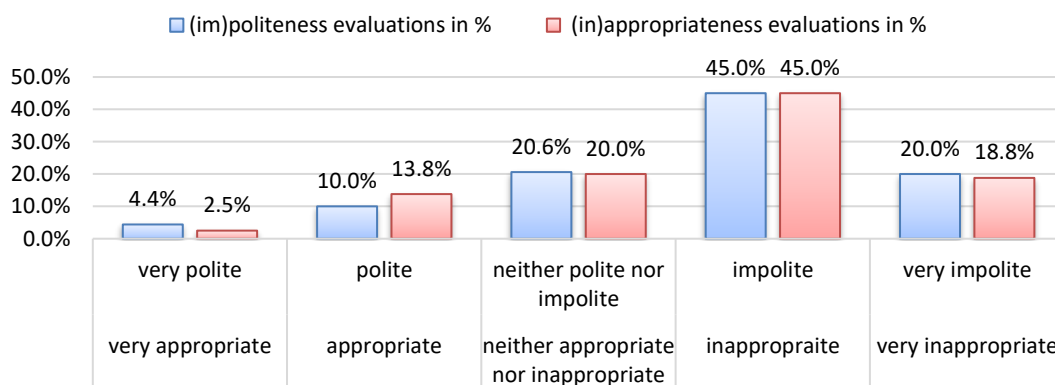


Figure 5-14: Respondents' classifications of Reply 1 to MT1

In addition, the analysis revealed classifications between the two scales would often align; for example, if a respondent classifies a reply as “very polite”, the reply is very likely to be also classified as “very appropriate”. However, some respondents provided unaligned classifications, for example, classifying the reply as “neither polite nor impolite” and “appropriate”, see Figure 5-15. Therefore, there seems to be a relationship between the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness scales. To understand this relationship between the two scales, I used the Spearman’s rank correlation⁶⁹ to measure the correlation between (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness. The results showed that there is a significant positive correlation between the two scales (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness ($r_s(178) = .90$, $p = .00$), r_s is very close to +1. This means that the two scales are strongly related; in other words, it means that it is strongly likely that whenever respondents selected, for example, the “very polite” classification in the first scale, they select the “very appropriate” classification in the second scale. The variability between the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness was calculated and showed 81% shared variability between the two scales.

⁶⁹ The normality distribution test showed that the data violates the normality distribution assumption, and based on this, non-parametric Spearman correlation instead of Pearson's correlation was used to test the data.

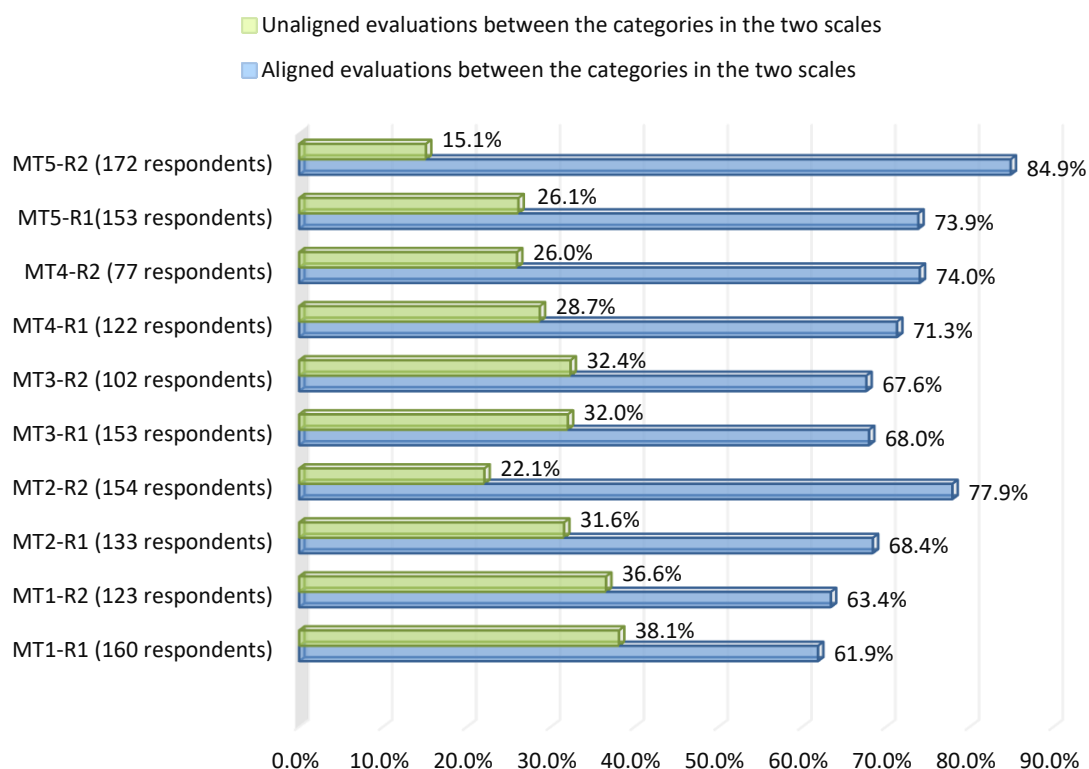


Figure 5-15: Respondents' aligned vs unaligned classifications of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness

5.3 Summary

The main aim of this chapter was to explore Saudis' disagreement strategies in the SAT corpus; the identification of these strategies was inspired by previous taxonomies of disagreement, which were modified as shown in Chapter 4. The analysis of the corpus data involved two levels, namely analysing the disagreement strategies used and the mitigation and aggravation devices used to modify these disagreements, according to which these disagreements were classified into mitigated, unmodified, and aggravated disagreements. The analysis showed that ten disagreement strategies were used by Saudis in the SAT corpus; the two most frequently used strategies are act combination and verbal attacks, whereas giving advice is the least used in the SAT corpus. It also showed that Saudis used six mitigation devices in mitigating their disagreements, mostly hedging and positive remarks. They also used five aggravating devices to aggravate their disagreements, mostly insulting language and judgmental language.

In addition, the results revealed that Saudis used more aggravated disagreements in the SAT corpus, while mitigated disagreements were used the least in the corpus. Although not specific to Saudis, this finding here supports the observation that Saudis' Twitter disagreements tend to be more aggravated than mitigated. However, this finding does not

say much about the possible reasons for the pervasiveness of aggravated disagreements in the SAT corpus. The analysis in Chapter 6 aims to shed more light on how each disagreement type is performed, and Chapter 7 aims to explore how the respondents evaluated some of these disagreements in terms of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. Therefore, the analysis in the following two chapters seeks to find out more about the potential reasons behind the pervasiveness of aggravated disagreements in the SAT corpus.

This chapter also provided the results of the analysis of the online questionnaires. The second part of the online questionnaire revealed that Twitter can indeed be a rich resource for gaining more insight into Saudis' views on different topics; it provides a public space where disagreements can be observed and analysed. However, Twitter interactions are likely to be fragmented and left unfinished, which means disagreements on Twitter can be left unresolved. Also, the analysis showed that Twitter users are more likely to know very few people on their Twitter social network at a personal level. Lastly, the analysis in part three of the questionnaire revealed that the realisation of disagreements on Twitter varied between respondents; some replies were identified as disagreements while others were not. The variability in responses was also seen in Saudis' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the identified disagreements. This variability reflects the inherent discursivity in evaluations of (im)politeness, which is discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 6 Qualitative Analysis of Corpus Data

As stated in Section 5.1.1, the SAT corpus contains three types of disagreements: aggravated, mitigated, and unmodified (i.e. no mitigation or aggravation devices were used). This chapter focuses on presenting and analysing the corpus data covering the ten identified disagreement strategies by showing how each strategy was used. The analysis also aims to show how mitigation and aggravation devices were used to modify the expressed disagreements, see Section 6.1. As stated in Chapter 4 and Section 3.3, my approach examines the possible (im)politeness interpretations of the linguistic forms in the context of the thread of replies. The analysis sheds light on how (im)politeness in Saudis' Twitter disagreements might be triggered and performed; the analysis is predominantly from the researcher's perspective. In analysing these disagreements, I primarily borrow concepts from rapport management introduced by Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2005, 2008): face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligations, and rapport goals and orientations. Therefore, the qualitative analysis of the corpus data presented in the following sections does not involve a discussion of individuals' evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. Individuals' evaluations are discussed in the next chapter covering the qualitative analysis of online questionnaire responses and interviews. In the examples below, angle brackets < > are used to identify the mitigation and aggravation devices in the disagreements. In examples of the act combination strategy, I used a single underline to identify the first strategy and a double underline to identify the second strategy. In each section, I start by presenting an unmodified instance of the discussed disagreement strategy, followed by a mitigated instance and then an aggravated one (dependent on their occurrence in the SAT corpus). As stated in Section 4.4.3, the English translations try to follow the structure of the Arabic text, particularly with respect to how posters use punctuation markers since, in some cases, these markers are used as a paralinguistic cue to aggravate the disagreements.

6.1 Disagreement strategies

This section presents the disagreement strategies identified in the SAT corpus. It mainly focuses on the linguistic modification of these strategies, showing how each strategy can be mitigated, aggravated, or neither (unmodified); see Section 4.5. In the previous chapter, Figure 5-6 in Section 5.1.3 revealed that all disagreement strategies had some aggravated occurrences, some strategies had some unmodified occurrences, and a few strategies had mitigated occurrences. The following subsections aim to provide a

discursive analysis of the disagreement strategies with examples taken from the SAT corpus. The discussion of these strategies is arranged based on their frequency in the corpus; however, the strategy of act combination, which is the most frequent in the corpus, is presented later. Act combination, as the name suggests, is a combination of at least two of the other nine strategies; hence, it will be presented after discussing the other strategies.

6.1.1 Verbal attack

The strategy of verbal attack is the second most frequent in the SAT corpus, with 21.6% occurrence. This strategy is used to express a strong disagreement. As the definition in Section 4.5.2.8 indicates, the strategy is primarily utilised to attack the target (i.e. triggering event), be it a *person*, such as the main poster, the poster of a prior reply, or the *content* of the targeted tweets. It can be argued that when a poster employs verbal attacks to express a disagreement, these verbal attacks reflect the poster's orientation to neglect or challenge rapport with the target by threatening their face or sociality rights, as shown in the examples below. Moreover, using this strategy greatly reflects the poster's negative emotional attitude towards the target since it mainly consists of aggravators (Harb, 2016). On Twitter, it is most likely that this strategy would trigger negative judgments (e.g., impolite/inappropriate) due to the overt aggravation of the disagreements; see respondents' evaluations of examples of this strategy in Section 7.4. It is important to note that displaying emotions such as anger and contempt is not impolite in itself. However, how they are expressed in public plays a role in inappropriate or impolite interpretations within the specific context (Culpeper, 2011a, p.60).

Based on the corpus data, verbal attacks used by Saudis can be divided into:

1. Verbal attacks that mainly involve invoking Allah against the target, such as the one in Example 6.1.
2. Verbal attacks that mainly involve language that aims to insult the target(s), their family, or their country, as in Example 6.2. These verbal attacks ranged from devaluing the target's intellect, faith, and standards and belittling the target by comparing them to animals (primarily dogs, pigs, and donkeys), as will be seen in Example 6.3.
3. Verbal attacks that mainly involve dismissing or silencing the target, as in Example 6.3.

Example 6.1 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-90- T2 (R)** <SOC, SH1.2, Agg.Dis>

الله يلعنه ويلعن اشكاله

allah jilʕan-h w-jilʕan ʔʃka:l-h

May Allah damn him and damn those like him

Poster-90's reply consists of a response move (R-move) without initiating further interaction (no retweets or likes). The disagreement is directed towards the writer, Muhammad Alsihaimi, who is the main focus of the MT, which reports Alsihaimi's suspension and referral for investigation due to some media violations. The suspension was after what he suggested in an interview on MBC1⁷⁰ about reducing the number of mosques and stopping the use of external loudspeakers to broadcast prayers and lectures taking place inside the mosques. Poster-90's disagreement with Alsihaimi is expressed through a single aggravator: invoking Allah against the other. The verbal attack on Alsihaimi shows that Poster-90 has no consideration of the writer's face, especially his social identity face since he was on TV speaking publicly as a writer. Also, it can be argued that Poster-90 is disassociating from the writer, since the poster used the phrase "damn those like him", thus implying that Alsihaimi and those like him are people with whom the poster does not associate. This dissociation seems to reflect Poster-90's deliberate disregard for association rights. Poster-90 detaches him/herself from the writer and others like him. The verbal attack in this example is a blatant breach of the conventionalised Islamic norms that prohibit damning someone, and it is culturally frowned upon as it is considered inappropriate or rude.⁷¹ Damning usually results from having a negative attitude or emotion towards the damned target, signalling anger, irritation, or annoyance with the other.

⁷⁰ Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC). The MBC Group operates over 17 free-to-air satellite TV channels and is a Saudi media television network operating in various locations around the world. It was launched in London in 1991, later moved its headquarters to Dubai in 2002, and in 2021 the headquarters moved to Riyadh

⁷¹ One of the known hadiths (i.e. narrations of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him) is "Those who indulge in cursing will not be intercessors or witnesses on the Day of Resurrection" (Sahih Muslim, Hadith no. 2595).

Example 6.2 [see MT5 in 4.2.1]**Poster-75- T2 (R)** <SOC, SH3.1, Agg.Dis>

حقيره ولا تمثل الا نفسها واهلها اللي ربوها هالتربيه القدره

ḥāqi:rah w-la: timaθil illa: nafsaha: wa-a:hlaha: illi: rabu:ha: haltarbjah alqaḏirah

[She is] despicable and only represents herself and her family who brought her up in such a dirty way

Poster-75's reply consists of an R-move without initiating further interaction (no retweets or likes). The disagreement in this reply is directed towards the female reporter seen in the video⁷² attached to the MT. The female reporter was wearing a white open-front abaya⁷³ showing what she was wearing underneath⁷⁴ and partially covering her hair. The female reporter was standing beside some cars in the street at night while reporting on lifting the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia. The video caused a heated debate online; many people were angered by what the reporter was wearing, while others, like the main poster, were also angered because they believed that the reporter was not a Saudi national and, therefore, she should not be speaking on behalf of Saudi women.⁷⁵ The disagreement here is expressed through the use of aggravators only, mainly the use of insulting language to attack the female reporter and her family. The foregrounding of "despicable" emphasises Poster-75's resentment towards the reporter. This sense of resentment is extended to the reporter's family, demeaning their daughter's upbringing and describing it as "dirty". Therefore, Poster-75's attack targets both the reporter's social identity face, and her family's quality face as reflected in the devaluation of the way that they have raised their daughter. This verbal attack represents Poster-75's negative judgement of the reporter and her family. Moreover, Poster-75 dissociates from the reporter and her family; this dissociation is seen in the use of the phrase "only represents herself and her family". This dissociation is a rejection of considering the reporter a

⁷² Her report caused a controversy and a heated a debate online that eventually led the General Commission for Audiovisual Media to announce that the reporter would be investigated for wearing immodest clothes and breaking regulations.

⁷³ An abaya is a loose fitting over garment that may variously be described as a robe-like dress or long cloak, originating in the Arabian Peninsula.

⁷⁴ She was wearing a white v-neck crop top and white skinny jeans.

⁷⁵ Based on her official Twitter account and on one of her interviews, the reporter stated that she is a Saudi national who works and lives in the United Arab Emirates. The cause of confusion about the reporter's national identity is that her last name (Alrifaie) is the name of a tribe/clan that exists in Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries. This shows that national identity is one of the resources that Saudis use to perform impoliteness on Twitter, especially seen in how this identity is selectively activated to perform (im)politeness; see Section 8.6.2.

representative of Saudi women and thus delegitimises her reportage; it seems that Poster-75 denies the reporter association rights to Saudi womanhood despite her statements that she is a Saudi woman.

Example 6.3 [see MT10 in 4.2.1]

Poster-165- T2 (R) <POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

اقول لا يكثر انت و الحمير الي مسوين لك ريتويت

?qu:l la: jikθar i?nt wa alħami:r illi: misawi:n lak ritwi:t

I say don't say [anything] no more you and the donkeys who are retweeting your tweet

Poster-165's reply consists of an R-move without initiating further interaction (no retweets or likes). The main poster tweeted a list of demands using the hashtag #royal-decrees, including cancelling the General Entertainment Authority, nullifying the law allowing women to drive and enter football stadiums, etc. Poster-165's verbal attack explicitly dismisses the main poster and insults everyone who retweeted the MT because they are seen as supporters of the listed demands. In Arabic culture, donkey as an insult is usually used to refer to someone who is ignorant, stupid, and stubborn. These supporters are called "donkeys", which reflects that Poster-165 has no respect for the main poster and his supporters. The dismissal and insult in Poster-165's reply show no consideration for face sensitivities or sociality rights to either the main poster or their supporters. To tell someone to "don't say anything no more" in the context of disagreement, and on a platform that is open for everyone to express their views, is a way of devaluing that person's voice, which can be seen as an insult and imposition on one's freedom of expression. The verbal attack here also seems to show that Poster-165 seems to regard the voice of difference, especially a voice that rejects and resists some of the social, cultural, and economic changes happening in the country, as a voice that should not be supported.

6.1.2 Contrary Statement

The third most frequently used disagreement strategy in the SAT corpus is contrary statements, as shown in Figure 5-6 in Chapter 5. Around 52% were aggravated, while 39.5% were unmodified, and the remaining instances were mitigated. Posters use contrary statements to express different positions to the ones proposed by the targets. Based on how this strategy was defined in Section 4.5.2.1, contrary statements can be explicit, as seen in Example 6.4, in which the contrary statement directly negates the claim made in

the targeted MT. Contrary statements can also be expressed implicitly, as seen in Example 6.5, where they do not directly negate or contradict the proposition made by the target. Lastly, contrary statements can be expressed by contradicting the presentation of a given claim, as seen in Example 6.6, in which the poster does not contradict or negate the claim made by the target but rather disagrees with how the issue is presented.

Example 6.4 [see MT5 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-49-T1/T2 (R/I) <SOC, SH3.1, Un.Dis>

(لم) يختطف فُدم لهم على طبق من ذهب أموال وسيارات واستعراض وأضواء وشهرة

lam juxtataf qudim lahum fīa tʿabaq min ḏahab ʔmwa:l wa-seia:ra:t wa-istiʿra:dʿ wa-ʔdʿwa:ʔ wa-ʃuhrah

[our media was not] abducted, but it was given to them on a golden plate, money, cars, parades, and fame

Poster-49's reply consists of a response/initiation move (R/I-move) as it attracted another poster to post an agreeing reply. Poster-49's reply received one like and two retweets. Poster-49 expresses a disagreement directed at the claim made by the main poster; see Example 6.2 for more context. The MT claimed non-Saudis, particularly those living in the country, are hijacking and stealing opportunities from Saudis. Poster-49 contradicts the main poster's claim by stating that the spotlight was not hijacked or stolen but rather handed to them on a golden plate. Poster-49's contrary statement explicitly negates the main claim, stating that it is not the foreigners' fault. Poster-49 shifts the blame and suggests that we (mostly people with power) willingly give these opportunities and incentives to non-Saudis to take the spotlight. The contrary statement in this reply is unmodified since the poster did not employ any mitigation or aggravation devices. In the context of the main thread, the unmodified form of the disagreement does not provide much information about the poster's orientation to the interaction; however, it seems that Poster-49's disagreement does not aim to challenge or neglect the rapport between themselves and the main poster. The target response to the reply would have helped analyse the disagreement in this reply further; however, the main poster did not respond.

Example 6.5 [see MT7 in 4.2.1]**Poster-14- T1/T2 (R/I) <POL, PH1.1, Mit.Dis>**

<لأعلم> عن حجم المبلغ لكني <اعتقد> ان النسبه تفوق 10%

<la: ʔʕlam> ʕan ḥazim almablay lakini: <aʕtaqid> an alnisbah tafu:q 10%

<I don't know> about the amount, but <I think> it is more than 10%.

Poster-14 expresses a disagreement directed at the MT, consisting of an R/I-move, as it starts a short thread of replies. This reply received three likes and one retweet; see Example 6.18 for more context. Poster-14's disagreement is directed to the MT in which the main poster attempted to explain how much the 10% that Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman was talking about in an interview with Thomas Friedman.⁷⁶ It mainly focuses on one part of the Crown Prince's statement: *According to our experts, nearly 10% of all government spending was sucked up because of corruption, from top to bottom.* Poster-14 disagrees with the claim that the amount of money embezzled by corruption is just 10%; the poster seems to believe it is more. Poster-14's disagreement contains two hedging devices: Poster-14 starts the disagreement with an uncertainty marker, <I do not know>. Then uses the parenthetical verb <I think>, which is a subjectivizer (Caffi, 2007, p.268). The two mitigation devices imply that the disagreement is not based on complete knowledge of the subject. The mitigation here seems to reflect Poster-14's concern about shielding their quality face from potentially being wrong and corrected in a public space. Moreover, the double mitigation might reflect Poster-14's cautiousness given the nature of the topic; it is an attempt to minimise the conflictive tone of the reply regarding the statement made by the Crown Prince.

Poster-14's reply prompted the main poster to respond and confirm that the percentage is indeed 10%, according to what Crown Prince Muhammad said in the interview. By responding to Poster-14, the main poster seeks to clear the doubt surrounding the amount mentioned in the MT. The main poster's reply to confirm the percentage received a reply from Poster-14, expressing an agreement. It is possible that Poster-14 did not see the interview before replying, and after the main poster replied, they might have watched the interview and checked the information hence responding in agreement without further discussion. From this short interaction, it seems that the main poster did not perceive Poster-14's disagreement negatively, but rather as an opportunity to clarify and confirm

⁷⁶ New York Times journalist who interviewed Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman in 2017.

their statement not only to Poster-14 but also to other posters in the main thread who disagreed with the content of the MT as those in Examples 4.7 and 6.18.

Example 6.6 [see MT5 in 4.2.1]

Poster-53-T2 (R) <POL, PH3.1, Agg.Dis>

كذلك انتم و قنواتكم
<وللاسف> اصبحتم <اذناااب لا اكثر للحوثي>
في الازمات تشوف كل شي على حقيقة.

kaðalik ʔntum wa qanawa:tukum
<wa-lilʔsaf> as'baħtum <ʔðnaaaab la: akθar li-lħuθi:>
fi: ala:za:mat tʃu:f kul fei ʔla ħaқи:qth

and you and channels-your
and-unfortunately became-you.PL tails no more for-Alhouthi
in crisis you-see everything on true-its

The same as you and your media
<unfortunately> <you became no more than taaaiils [tails] for Alhouthi>⁷⁷
in crisis everything is seen for what it really is.

Poster-53's reply consists of an R-move only, which received no likes or retweets. The disagreement targets the main poster, a Qatari journalist; see the MT and Examples 7.1 and 7.10 for more context. Poster-53's disagreement was expressed by countering the main poster's claim, reversing the claim back at the main poster, as well as the people and media of Qatar. The contrary statement is aggravated through the use of insulting language that aims to degrade and belittle the target, as seen in <you became no more than taaaiils [tails] for Alhouthi>. Also, the insulting reference "tails" is emphasised by word lengthening as a paralinguistic cue. By "tails", Poster-53 states that Qataris, including the main poster and the Qatari media, are inferior subordinates (i.e. lackies) to Alhouthi (the Houthi movement), and the determiner "no more than" before tails seems to amplify this belittling attitude. The word lengthening appears to emphasise Poster-53's negative attitude toward the MT and its poster.

The negative attitude is also noticed in the adverb <unfortunately>, which is usually classified as a hedging device oriented to minimise cost to the addressee (Wilamova,

⁷⁷ The Houthi movement, also known as Ansar Allah [Supporters of God], is a political movement that emerged from Saada in north Yemen in the 1990s. The movement is said to be supported by Iran and this is causing more tension in the region (Glenn, 2015).

2005, pp.91-92). However, in some contexts, this adverb can be an attitude marker⁷⁸ (Hyland, 2005, p.53), which is used here to highlight the poster's negative attitude toward the target. In the reply above, Poster-53 does not seem to aim at minimising the effect of the disagreement on the target but rather emphasises the negative attitude toward the main poster. The aggravation devices used in this disagreement reveal that Poster-53 disregards not only the main poster's social identity face but also Qatari media, and the country as a whole. However, it can be argued that the aggravation in Poster-53's reply is triggered by the aggravation in the MT. The main poster's tweet seems to set the threshold for the level of aggravation and impoliteness in the replies; see the discussion of these Examples 7.1 and 7.10 and Section 8.6.1.

6.1.3 Explanation

The fourth most frequently used disagreement strategy in the SAT corpus is explanations. As shown in Figure 5-6 in the previous chapter, 50.7% of explanations were unmodified, while 27.5% were aggravated, and the remaining instances were mitigated. This result shows that explanations in disagreement contexts can be "personally and emotionally coloured" (Kreutel, 2007, p.4). Based on how explanation as a strategy was defined in Section 4.5.2.2, in the SAT corpus, explanations can be short statements providing a brief answer, as seen in Example 6.7. Explanations can also be short and self-contained statements, usually clarifying a personal position, as seen in Examples 6.8 and 6.9.

Example 6.7 [see MT4 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-200- T2 (R) <SOC, SH2.2, Un.Dis>

لها اصل لغوي تسمى الكسكسه كما يوجد الكشكشه وغيرها فيه مبالغه في نطقها لكن تظل لهجات عربيه
فصيحه

laha: as'il layawi: tusama alkaskasah kama: ju:zad alkaʃkaʃah wa-yeirha fi:h
muba:layah fi: nutʃqaha lakin taðʃal lahaza ʃarabeih fas'i:ħah

It has a linguistic origin called /Kaskasah/and there is also /kaʃkaʃah/ and others there is an exaggeration in their pronunciation but they remain authentic Arabic dialects

Poster-200's reply consists of an R-move with no further interaction initiated, and it received no likes or retweets. The disagreement here is unmodified and directed at a prior

⁷⁸ Hyland (2005, p.53) argues that attitude markers convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so on. Attitudes can be signalled in different ways, for instance, by attitude verbs (e.g., agree, prefer), sentence adverbs (unfortunately, hopefully) and adjectives (appropriate, logical, remarkable).

reply. The prior reply posted by Poster-199 expressed approval of what the main poster said in the short video attached to the MT. In the video, the main poster talks about the variety of dialects spoken in the Hijaz region in Saudi Arabia. Besides the video, the MT included the following statement, *'The Hijazi dialect is not just Fouad's dialect ♥ #hijaz_identity'*. After expressing their approval, Poster-199 asked the main poster what he thinks of the dialects spoken in other regions in which the 2nd person pronoun /k/ is switched to /s/⁷⁹. For example, *haða: liki*_{SG.F} switches into *haða: lis*_{SG.F} [this is for you], which Poster-199 describes as “a major linguistic error”. The main poster did not reply; instead, Poster-200 responded to express a disagreement with the description of this linguistic feature as a linguistic error. The disagreement is expressed through an explanation clarifying and correcting Poster-199’s misconception about these dialects. Poster-200’s explanation shows that these are documented linguistic features, and some dialects might tend to have different, probably “exaggerated” pronunciations. Nonetheless, the poster emphasised these dialects are authentic Arabic. Therefore, the disagreement here highlights that these different dialects cannot be described as an error. In the context of the main thread, Poster-200’s disagreement mainly aims to highlight factual information; therefore, it is unlikely that this reply would be perceived as impolite or inappropriate despite the target’s absent response.

⁷⁹ This is one of the recognisable linguistic features of some Najdi dialects, spoken in the central region of Saudi Arabia.

Example 6.8 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-181- T2 (R)** <POL, PH2.2, Mit.Dis>

الترفيه عن الشعب بدلا من البحث عنها في دول اخرى ، ف معظم الشعب شاب <وانا وانت> نحتاج للترفيه ، قيادة المرأه افضل من اجنبي يقود بها وقد تتعرض للتحرش ، دخول المراه الملاعب لا ضير فيه ان كان هنالك رقابه ومتابعه فهم <بشر مثلنا>،الهيئه جهاز امني يخدم الدوله واستغنت عنه <والباقي انا معك>.

altarfi:h fan alfaʕb badala:n min albaħ fanha: fi: duwal uxra: fa-muʕðʕam
alfaʕb ja:b <wa-ʔna wa-iʔnt > niħta:ʒ li-ltarfi:h , qija:dat almarʔah afdʕal min
aʒnabi: juqu:d biha: wa-qad tataʕardʕ li-taħaruʕ , duxu:l almarʔah almala:ʕib la:
dʕeir fi:h in ka:n huna:lik rqa:bah wa-muta:bʕah fahum <baʕar miθlana:> , alheiʔh
ziha:z amni: jaxdim aldawlah wa-istaynat fanh <wa-akba:qi: -ʔna maʕak>

Entertaining the people instead of then looking for it in other countries, most of the people are young and <you and I> need entertainment, women driving cars is better than foreigners [chauffeurs] driving them, and they might be harassed, women going to stadiums is fine if there is surveillance because they are <humans like us>, the Hajiʔh [Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice] is a security service that serves The state and the state reduced its service, <as for the rest I am with you>.

The reply in this example consists of an R-move without initiating further interaction, and it received no retweets or likes. Poster-181 expresses a mitigated disagreement through an elaborated explanation in which three mitigation devices were employed. The disagreement is directed at the main post in which the main poster shares a list of demands addressed to the King; see Examples 6.3, 6.12 and 7.5 for more context. In this disagreement, Poster-181 uses the solidarity/in-group marker <you and I>, which signals an attempt to connect with the main poster by showing consideration for equity and association rights. Poster-181 explains that entertainment is something that he and the main poster both need as young men. Another solidarity/in-group marker was used in how Poster-181 refers to women: <they are humans like us>. Here, Poster-181 explains why he disagrees with the demands regarding women driving and entering football stadiums. The use of “human” and “like us” shows Poster-181’s focus on highlighting the human relationship between the two genders (association rights) and that women should be treated equally to men (equity rights). In addition to these two mitigation devices, a third is used at the end of the reply. Poster-181 used a partial agreement marker, <as for the rest I am with you>. As such, Poster-181 disagrees with four of the eight demands posted by the main poster. This partial agreement marker seems to accentuate the sense of solidarity and camaraderie between Poster-181 and the main poster, again reflecting Poster-181’s attentiveness to sociality rights and his orientation towards rapport enhancement, despite the disagreement with the main poster. Given the overt positive

modification of Poster-181's disagreement and the level of aggravation seen in other replies in the main thread, as seen in Examples 6.3, 6.11 and 6.16, it is very likely this disagreement would be perceived as polite or appropriate.

Example 6.9 [see MT2 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-29- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.2, Agg.Dis>

<قطع الله لسانه> قبل أن يقول إن المساجد ضارر, الآذان يريح القلب ويشرح الصدر حتى لو كثر ففيه من السعادة التي لاتذكر الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم قال ارحنا بالصلاة يا بلال

<qataʕ allah lisa:nah> qabil ʔn jaqu:l iʔn almsa:ʒid dʕira:r , alʔða:n juri:h alqalb wa-ja frah alsʕadr ĥata: lau kaθur fa-fi:h min alsʕa:dah alti: la: tuðkar alrasu:l sʕala: allah ʕaleth wa-salam qa:l ariħna: bi-alsʕala:t ja: bila:l

<May Allah cut out his tongue> for saying that mosques are causing harm, the call to prayer calms and relieves the heart even if there are many calls to prayer they are a source of indescribable happiness the Prophet peace be upon him said O Bilal, comfort us with the call to prayer

Poster-29's reply consists of an R-move without initiating further interaction; it received one like and one retweet. The disagreement targets the writer, Alsihaimi; see Examples 6.1 and 6.14 for more context. The poster on the MT reports Alsihaimi's suspension and referral for investigation due to some media violations. The MT shared a snippet of the interview in which Alsihaimi talked about reducing the number of mosques in neighbourhoods, saying that they are becoming a source of annoyance and fear to the people living close by, mainly because of the loud sounds coming from all these mosques at the same time. He called these mosques *masa:jid al-dirar.PL* [mosques of dissent].⁸⁰

Poster-29 strongly disagrees with Alsihaimi and explains that, despite the abundance of the mosques, the calls to prayer coming from these mosques carry within them a tremendous sense of relief and contentment. Poster-29 goes on to mention how the prophet used to ask Bilal bin Rabah⁸¹ to make calls to prayer by saying, "O Bilal, comfort us with the call to prayer", to show that calls to prayer are a source of comfort. It can be argued that Poster-29 seems to consider Alsihaimi's statement as a violation of a religious norm, hence employing intertextuality to legitimise the disagreement; see Section 8.6.3

⁸⁰ The story of masjid al dirar, mosque of dissent, was mentioned in the Quran Verse 107 of Chapter 9 (*And as for those who put up a Masjid by way of harm and disbelief and to disunite the believers and as an outpost for those who warred against Allah and His Messenger aforesaid, they will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good. Allah bears witness that they are certainly liars.*); for a detailed account of this, see the exegesis of Ibn-Kathir.

⁸¹ One of the most trusted and loyal companions of Prophet Muhammad. He is the first /muʔðn/ [the person who officially makes calls to prayer] in Islamic history.

for a discussion of intertextuality and (im)politeness. The disagreement posted by Poster-29 is aggravated by invoking Allah against the other seen in <May Allah cut out his tongue>. The foregrounding of the aggravator may indicate Poster-29's anger and disapproval of what the writer said. This anger is also signalled in Poster-29's wish that Alsihaimi's tongue be cut before uttering these words. Poster-29 employment of aggravation in this reply reveals a disregard for both the writer's social identity face and the equity rights, reflected in Poster-29's wish for the writer to receive a divine punishment. Poster-29's disagreement might be considered impolite and inappropriate given the level of aggravation employed by the poster; however, the reply received a like and retweet, which might indicate that despite the aggravation, the disagreement might not be evaluated negatively by some Twitter users engaging with the main thread (particularly those agreeing with Poster-29).

6.1.4 Verbal irony/sarcasm

The fifth most frequently used disagreement strategy in the SAT corpus is verbal irony/sarcasm. As shown in Figure 5-6, all instances of this strategy in the SAT corpus were aggravated. Based on the definition of this strategy in Section 4.5.2.9, the aggravation in these disagreements usually comes from a negative attitude that aims to ridicule and poke fun at the target, which can be clearly signalled by paralinguistic cues and belittling language, as seen in Example 6.10. In addition to using paralinguistic cues to signal irony/sarcasm, posters expressing disagreements can employ polite formulae insincerely (i.e. mock politeness), which cannot be inferred as true in the context, as seen in Example 6.11. Similarly, the mismatch between the utterance and the context, as seen in Example 6.12, rules out a literal interpretation, making the disagreements understood as verbal irony/sarcasm. Disagreements expressed through irony/sarcasm vary in explicitness, overt untruthfulness, and humour, affecting the level of inference involved in reaching a sarcastic or ironic interpretation. Analysing (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements expressed by verbal irony/sarcasm can be challenging because such disagreements can encode an insult creatively in humour, as seen in Example 6.11.

highlights that Poster-9 disapproves of the categorisation ‘Hijazi’ and ‘tribal people’ and seems to consider it absurd. This laughter is more likely “laughter of mockery” (Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006, p.40).

Moreover, Poster-9 aggravates the disagreement by using name-calling to belittle the main poster. Poster-9 employed the conventional endearing term “ja: hljlak” followed by the patronizing term “ja: altʿurf”, thus intensifying the aggravation. Poster-9’s disagreement seems more focused on attacking the main poster rather than correcting or refuting the inaccuracy in the wording of “Hijazi and tribal people”. In this reply, Poster-9 targets the main poster’s social identity face since the main poster is a recognised social media influencer and the social identity face of his family, mainly his Saudi/Turkish family. Poster-9’s reply reflects a sense of superiority over the main poster, which seems to show a disregard for the main poster’s sociality rights as a fellow citizen. Although some posters might find the main poster’s categorisation to be an insult to the identity of Hijazi tribal people, thus justifying the aggravation of their disagreements. The use of the aggravation device in this reply to insult the target is very likely to be perceived as (very) impolite/(very) inappropriate, given its derogatory meaning. Offensive references and name-calling violate religious norms, which prohibit such behaviour.⁸⁶

Example 6.11 [see MT10 in 4.2.1]

Poster-148- T2 (R) <POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

الحين ادق على طويل العمر ينفذ كل الاوامر انت بس امر تدلل 😊
 alhi:n a:dig ʕla tʿawi:l alʕumur jinafið kul alʔwa:mir iʔnt bas ʕamir tidalal 😊

I will call his highness right now to tell him to carry out all your demands you just name what you want 😊

The reply in this example consists of an R-move, and it did not receive any retweets or likes. Poster-148 expresses a disagreement with the MT through verbal irony/sarcasm. The reply is overtly untruthful, due to its absurdity. The exaggeration in Poster-148’s reply signals the ironic/sarcastic tone of the reply; exaggeration and understatements have been reported to be one of the ways to signal the ironic or sarcastic tone of the utterance

⁸⁶ For example, in the Quran Verse 11 of Chapter 49 (*O believers! Do not let some ‘men’ ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let ‘some’ women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the ‘true’ wrongdoers.*) <https://quran.com/en/al-hujurat/11>

(Kreuz, 2020, p.122). In this example, Poster-148's sarcastic disagreement targets the poster of the MT. The disagreement is understood from the implicature, which might read something along the lines of *Your list is very absurd, and you are in no place to make such demands*. The reply in this example is similar to the one in Example 4.20 in Chapter 4; the difference is that Poster-148 reinforces the sarcastic attitude with the laughing emoji '😂' at the end of the reply. Laughter in interaction can clarify what is being communicated, add another sense to it, or contradict it (Partington, 2007, p.1558). Laughter here seems to reflect the poster's unserious attitude and the orientation towards poking fun at the main poster. The conventionalised expression "name what you want" is usually used to address someone the speaker cares about pleasing; however, in some situations like this one, it can be used disingenuously to tease or mock the addressee. It is a way to signal that what is being asked is unreasonable or even absurd. Poster-148 uses the phrase to underline the absurdity of the main poster's list of demands and to show a rejection to approve such demands. Although Poster-148 did not deny the main poster's right to express his view, the reply shows Poster-148's rejection to associate with the main poster seen in the attempt to ridicule the main poster and his list of demands.

Example 6.12 [see MT10 in 4.2.1]

Poster-183- T2 (R) <POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

• هذا اللي ناقصك ٩) الرجوع الى عام ١٨٧٠

haða: illi: na:qsʻak 9) alruzu:f iʔla: ʕa:m 1870

This is what you are missing 9) returning to 1870

In this example, Poster-183's reply consists of an R-move without further interaction, and it did not receive any retweets or likes. This verbal irony/sarcasm here does not contain any conventional politeness formulae or paralinguistic cues, such as emojis and laughter, as in Examples 6.10 and 6.11. However, the sarcastic interpretation is inferred from the context as a literal and factual interpretation of the poster's utterance is very unlikely. Poster-183, like many posters in the thread of replies, seems to consider the main poster's list of demands an absurd rejection of progression in the country. Instead of directly calling the main poster regressive or backward, Poster-183 disagrees by expressing an ironic/sarcastic statement, telling the main poster that the list is missing a ninth demand,

which is returning in time to the year 1870.⁸⁷ In this context, the overt seriousness of Poster-183's absurd proposition shows that Poster-183 is likely poking fun at the main poster and ridiculing the posted demands.

6.1.5 Exclamation

The sixth disagreement strategy used by Saudis in the SAT corpus is exclamations. As Figure 5-6 displays, exclamations in the corpus are either aggravated (54.3%) or unmodified (45.7%) – there are no mitigated explanations. The existence of aggravated exclamations in the data seems to support the link between emotions and exclamations, as proposed by Kreutel (2007, pp.14-16); she pointed out that exclamations in disagreement can be used in a way that may cause a threat to the other's positive face as it signals rejection. The definition in Section 4.4.2.6 illustrates that exclamations can express a range of emotions, such as disbelief, surprise, astonishment, and wonder. The analysis of exclamations in my corpus revealed that Saudis used different conventionalised markers, which occurred mostly at the beginning of the exclamations; see the use of *subḥā:n Allah!* [Glory to Allah!] in Example 6.13. Other similar expressions are presented in Table 6-1. Exclamations can also be expressed by using integrative structures or vocatives, as seen in 2 and 6 in the table below. The exclamatory interpretation of integrative structures is usually elucidated from the context (Alghalayini, 1993); see also Example 6.15. In addition, some posters use exclamatory words such as wonder and strange to explicitly portray their feelings of disbelief or shock, see Example 6.14.

⁸⁷ The Second Saudi State (i.e. Emirate of Najd), consisting of regions of Riyadh and Ha'il, existed between 1824 and 1891. During that period, many internal conflicts prevented the unification of the regions. The poster's choice of the year 1870 is probably a way to symbolise a difficult time in the history of the country, a time of less progress and prosperity.

Table 6-1: Conventional exclamatory markers used by Saudis in the SAT corpus

Expressions	1	سلامات يالطيب (...)	sala:mat ja: alt'ai:b (...) You ok good man (...)
	2	خيررر وش بيصير (...)	xerrr wif bi:s'i:r (...) Goodness, what is going to happen (...)
	3	ياالله (...)	ja: allah (...) O Allah (...)
	4	الله يالدينيا..اصبح (...)	allah ja: aldinja: .. a:s'baħa (...) O Allah what a life .. it has become
	5	استغفر الله (...)	astayfir allah (...) Allah forgiveness/ good grief (...)
Exclamatory vocatives	6	يارجل (...)	ja: rajul (...) O man (...) ⁸⁸
Explicit words to show shock, astonishment, or disbelief	7	عجيب!!!	ʕagijb!!! amazing! /(how) wonderful!!!
	8	والله عجبت من تغريداتكم وأعجيبببب (...)	ja: allah wa-allah ʕaʕibt min tayri:datikum w- ʕaʕibbbbbb (...) by Allah, I am <u>astonished</u> by your tweets, and I continue to be <u>astonished</u>

Example 6.13 [see MT1 in 4.2.1]

Poster-99- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Un.Dis>

سبحان الله انتقلنا من موضوع السحيمي الى موضوع اخذ حقه من التعاميم و دخل التنفيذ.

subħa:n allah intaqalna min mawd^u:ʕ alsihaimi iʔla: mawd^u:ʕ a:xað ħaqah min altaħa:mi:m wa daxal altanfi:ð

Glory to Allah, we moved from Alsihaim's issue to another about which a resolution has been passed, circulated, and taken effect.

Poster-99's reply consists of an R-move without leading to further interaction, and the reply received no likes or retweets. The disagreement is unmodified since Poster-99 did not use any mitigation or aggravation devices identified in Section 4.5.1. The disagreement is directed to the MT, which used the hashtag #alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques to highlight the issue of using mosques' external loudspeakers to broadcast prayers and religious lectures; see the MT in Section 4.2.1 for more context. The main poster describes the incident in the video attached to the MT as part of the suffering claimed to result from mosques' external loudspeakers, even during religious lectures and lessons. Poster-99 seems bothered by how the main poster and other

⁸⁸ It is usually used to indicate that someone has gone too far.

posters confuse two different issues: Alsihaimi calling to reduce the number of mosques and the debate about using external loudspeakers to broadcast lectures and prayers. Poster-99 wonders why Alsihaimi's issue shifted to another topic that has already been addressed, and regulations had been issued. At that time, Alsihaimi had just been suspended after being investigated for media violation. As for the regulations about mosques' external loudspeakers, in 2017,⁸⁹ a circular was passed to all mosques instructing them to limit using the external loudspeakers to broadcast only the calls to prayer and *iqa:mah*.⁹⁰

The phrase "glory to Allah" is used in different contexts with different meanings; for instance, upon hearing thunder, and in prayers as a way to show admiration for Allah and his creations (Alghalayini, 1993, p.65). In this context, it is used to show surprise, astonishment, or shock caused by the MT in which the issue of Alsihaimi is connected to the subject of limiting the use of loudspeakers. This connection seems unacceptable and rather astonishing to Poster-99 as connecting the two issues appears to be used to inflame public opinion. In expressing the exclamation, Poster-99 omitted the exclamation mark at the end of the reply; however, the exclamation is understood even without the exclamation mark.

Example 6.14 [see MT2 in 4.2.1]

Poster-36- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.2, Agg.Dis>

اصبحنا في زمن غريب حتى <الرويبضه> يعتلي المنابر ويتحدث عن امور الدين <الله ينزل الرعب والخوف في جوفك>

as'baḥ-na: fi: zaman yari:b ḥata: <alruwabiḍ'ah> jaʕtali: almana:bir wa-jataḥadaθ
ʕan umu:r aldi:n <allah jinazil alruʕb wa-alxu:f fi: zu:fak>

We are in a strange time in which <the insignificant > stand on the pulpits and talks about matters of religion <may Allah send terror and fear into your heart>

Poster-36's reply consists of an R-move only, and it received one like but no retweet. The poster of the reply expresses a disagreement directed towards Alsihaimi and what he said in the interview about reducing the number of mosques; see Examples 6.1 and 6.9 for

⁸⁹ In 2017, instructions were passed to all mosques but there were no follow-up checks to ensure the implementation of these instructions. In May 2021, the Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dr. Abdullatif Alsheikh, issued a circular to all branches of the ministry, directing mosque employees to limit the use of external loudspeakers to raising the call to prayer and iqamah only, and that the volume should not exceed one-third of the maximum volume of the loudspeaker, and legal action would be taken against any violations.

⁹⁰ Is the second call to prayer, broadcast immediately before prayer begins.

more context. Poster-36 seems to be astonished and enraged by what the writer said, which is clearly mirrored in Poster-36's use of "We are in a strange time". The aggravation devices used with the exclamation reflect the poster's negative emotions towards the target. Poster-36 uses insulting language by referring to the writer as <*alruwabid'ah*>, a diminutive form of *ra:bid'ah*.⁹¹ This negative reference is borrowed from a prophetic *hadjθ*,⁹² which means insignificant or incompetent man. Poster-36 resorts to intertextuality to aggravate the reply and insult the target; this function of intertextuality is discussed further in Section 8.6.3. By referring to the writer as insignificant, Poster-36 is attacking both the writer's quality face and social identity face. The writer is considered inferior and unqualified to speak publicly, especially in terms of giving opinions about religious matters. The aggravation is further intensified by another device: invoking Allah against the other, seen in the use of <may Allah send terror and fear into your heart>. The second aggravation device reveals Poster-36's strong negative emotions towards the writer for presenting his particular view regarding the reduction of mosques and the fear caused by the loud calls to prayer. Because of the apparent aggravation, especially given Poster-36 used an inappropriate reference and expressed ill wishes towards the target, this disagreement might be seen as (very) impolite/(very) inappropriate; however, this disagreement received one like, which may also be an indication that other people following the thread of replies might not negatively evaluate this aggravated disagreement.

⁹¹ It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the prophet peace be upon him said: "There will come to the people years of treachery, when the liar will be regarded as honest, and the honest man will be regarded as a liar; the traitor will be regarded as faithful, and the faithful man will be regarded as a traitor; and the *alruwabid'ah* will decide matters. The prophet was asked: "what is the *alruwabid'ah*?" He said: the vile or incompetent (in other records: wicked) man speaking on the affairs of the public." (Sunan ibn Majah 4036, Vol. 5, Book 36, Hadith 4036). This saying was about the signs of the end of time.

⁹² It means report, account, or narrative. Here, it specifically refers to the record of the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad as transferred by chains of trusted narrators.

Example 6.15 [see MT3 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-69- T2 (R)** <SOC, SH2.1, Agg.Dis>

موكافي انو الناس اخذت فكرة مغلوطة ان الحجازيين كلهم لما يتكلموا يبدلوا ال ذ بحرف ال د و ال ز و تراثنا
يتغير وينسب لغيرنا <!!>

mu: ka:fi: inu:alna:s ʔxaðat fikrah maylu:tʕah in alhidʒazi:n kulhum lama:
jitkalamu: jibadilu: al ð bi-ħarf al d wa al z wa <tura: θ ana: jityajar wa junsab li-yeir-
na:> <!!>

is-not enough that people took idea wrong that Hijazis all when they-speak they-change
the- ð by-letter the-d or the-z and our-heritage changes and attributed to-other-than-us

Is it not enough that people have the wrong idea that all Hijazis switch the letter ð into
/z/ or /d/ when they speak and that <our heritage is being changed and credited to
others> <!!>

Poster-69's reply consists of an R-move that does not lead to further interaction, but the reply received two likes and three retweets. Poster-69 expresses an aggravated disagreement with the main poster's tweet through an exclamation; see Examples 6.10, 6.17 and 6.19 for more context. The poster here seems to be appalled and shocked by the main poster's statement, "Tribal people and Hijazis", which implies that Hijazis and tribal people are not the same. This categorisation might have been taken as a threat to the Hijazi identity of the tribes belonging to the Hijaz region. The use of a rhetorical question, double exclamation marks and "us" and "others" highlights the poster's frustration and disappointment. Poster-69 seems to protest against the main poster tweet by pointing out that people outside the region already have the wrong impression about how Hijazi people speak; the poster wonders if this misconception is not damaging enough to the region's identity.⁹³ To Poster-69, the linguistic identity of Hijaz has been manipulated, and now the region's cultural identity is being influenced, changed, and credited to others. The poster probably suggests that the people who immigrated to the region long ago are changing the region's identity and attributing the heritage to them, thus gradually removing the Hijazi identity from the original tribes. Although the poster acknowledges that some Hijazis speak in that way, the use of "our heritage" and "others" at the end of

⁹³ There are different dialects spoken in the region; these dialects have some specific phonological features such as the one mentioned in the reply. The poster of the reply is focused on one particular dialectal feature, that is the tendency to substitute the /ð/ sound either by /z/ or /d/; for example, the demonstrative pronoun (this) in Fusha and some other dialects is pronounced and written as *haða*, but some speakers of certain varieties of Hijazi dialect pronounce and write (this) as *ha:da* or *da* (singular. Masculine) or *ha:di* or *di* (singular.feminine) as seen in the main poster's tweet. These phonological features have gained more attention and claimed representativeness mainly due to its strong presence in media, specifically comedy shows and dramas.

the reply may indicate that Poster-69 ignores equity rights. The denial of equity rights is seen in excluding the main poster, a Saudi of Turkish descent, and the families that immigrated and lived in the Hijaz for generations, from being part of the region's heritage.

6.1.6 Reprimand

Reprimand is the seventh most used disagreement strategy in the SAT corpus, and as Figure 5-6 displays, 91.3% of the instances of reprimand were aggravated, while the remaining instances were mitigated. As shown in Section 4.5.2.4, reprimands involve telling the other that his/her behaviour is causing displeasure, irritation, or is otherwise unacceptable to the poster expressing the disagreement. Reprimands do not necessarily serve to benefit the target, unlike, for example, giving advice, which is discussed in Section 6.1.9. From the examples below, it seems that reprimand is typically performed by imperative sentences, in both affirmed and negated constructions. These imperatives are employed by posters to request or demand the target correct what is seen as wrong or unacceptable, as seen in Example 6.16. Reprimands can also be used to ask the targets to refrain from doing something and reflect on their behaviour, as in Example 6.17. The posters that use reprimands requesting the target to change or reflect on their behaviour seem to provide brief justification, as seen in Examples 6.16 and 6.17.

Example 6.16 [see MT10 in 4.2.1]

Poster-128-T2 (R) <POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

قل ابي ولا تقل نبي <تكلم بلسانك وليس بلسان الشعب> وبكل تأكيد ما راح تعجبك كل القرارات ولاكن اخذ الي بيعجبك منها و اترك الي ما راح يعجبك ..

qil a:bi: wa-la: tiql nibi: < tikalām bi-lisa:nak wa-lai:sa bil-lisa:n alfaʕb> wa-bkul
jʔki:d ma: ra:h taʕzibk kul alqara:ra:t wa-lakin ixið illi: bi-jaʕzibk minha: wa itrik illi:
ma: ra:hjaʕzibk

Say I-want and do-not say we-want speak with-your-tongue and not with-tongue-of-the-people and of course not will you-like all decrees but you-take what you-will-like from them and you-leave what you-will-not-like ..

Say I want not we want < speak for yourself not for the people > of course you won't like every decision but take what suits you and leave what does not suit you..

Poster-128's reply consists of an R-move without leading to further interaction, and the reply did not receive any likes or retweets. In the reply, Poster-128 reprimands the main poster for posting a list of demands using the hashtag #royal-decrees; see Examples 6.3 and 6.8 for more context. Like other posters in the main thread of replies, Poster-128 seems to find the list of demands in the MT unacceptable, which has driven Poster-128

to reprimand the main poster. Poster-128 tells the main poster that one does not have to like all the royal decrees and the new changes in the country, and that the main poster has the option to refrain from doing what he does not like in these new changes. The reprimand is aggravated by the dismissal device, which is seen in the personalised statement < speak for yourself not for the people >, which creates some distance between Poster-128 and the main poster. Poster-128 seems to highlight that the main poster had crossed the line when he spoke for the people; this overstepping of the line warranted the use of the dismissal device to show the main poster that he has no right to speak for everyone in the country. The dismissal device used in the reply seems to target the main poster's social identity face, especially how he is categorised as a person who is opposing the social and economic progress the country is experiencing. It also neglects the association rights with the poster; it seems that Poster-128 does not want to associate with the main poster's negative views of the changes in the country.

Example 6.17 [see MT3 in 4.2.1]

Poster-98-T2 (R) <SOC, SH2.1, Mit.Dis>

<اخوي (اسم المغرد)> هناك قبائل حجازيه عريقة جداً ضاربة في عمق التاريخ، <رجاء> لا تخرج الحجازي من كونه قبيلي

<ʔxu:ji> (first name of the main poster) huna:k qaba:ʔl hidʒazi:ah ʕari:qah
dʕa:ri:ba:h fi: ʕu:mq alta:ri:x , <raʒa:ʔn > la: tuxriʒ alhidʒazi: min kaunh algabili:

<My brother (first name)> there are deeply-rooted Hijazi tribes with a long history, so <please> do not exclude tribal people from being Hijazi

Poster-98's reply consists of an R-move, only expressing a disagreement directed to the main poster; see Examples 6.10 and 6.15 for more context. The disagreement in this reply is mitigated by two devices; the first is the vocative <ʔxwʒ> "my brother" followed by the main poster's first name. The use of the kinship address term "my brother" indicates that despite the disagreement with the main poster, Poster-98 aims to acknowledge the presence of some social connection with the main poster. Kinship address terms, particularly *brother(s)* and *sister(s)*, are commonly used in Muslim communities; this practice is rooted in the religious discourse (see footnote 50 in Chapter 4 Section 4.5.1.1). It is worth noting that Poster-98 employed a colloquial form instead of the standard form of brother (*ʔx*), which seems to convey a sense of familiarity compared to the standard form, which conveys a sense of formality. Therefore, the kinship address term seems to reflect Poster-98's consideration for association rights. This goes in line with what Larina and Khalil (2018, p.302) reported in their study that the use of kinship address terms is a

common practice not only within the family circle but also with acquaintances and strangers, and it usually signals respect and familiarity.

Moreover, Poster-98 employed another mitigation device seen in the use of <please> to hedge the reprimand in the negative imperative “do not exclude tribal people from being Hijazi”. The double mitigation devices “my brother” and “please” signal Poster-98’s awareness of sociality rights and face sensitivities. It can be argued that the use of these mitigation devices might reflect an attempt by Poster-98 to mitigate the reprimand to minimise the impact of the reprimand on the main poster’s social identity face since he is a social media influencer.

6.1.7 Challenge

This strategy is the eighth most used strategy in the SAT corpus, and as Figure 5-6 shows, about 50% of the occurrences were unmodified, and 33.3% were aggravated. Based on the definition provided in Section 4.5.2.7, this strategy involves asking the target challenging questions indicating that posters are either positively or negatively critical of the target’s behaviour. As Bousfield (2008, pp.132-133) proposed, some challenges are response-seeking; these challenges require, invite, or even force specific answers from the addressee. Hence, they might be perceived as imposition or face-threatening depending on the context. These response-seeking challenges are divided into two subtypes: the first is response-seeking challenges that allow the addressee to offer an account or explanation, as seen in Example 6.18. The second is response-seeking challenges that function as *verbal traps*, in which case the target response might cause self-inflicted face damage, as seen in Example 6.19. Similarly, challenges sometimes are mainly used to provoke or undermine the other, as seen in Example 6.20. As noted in Section 4.5.2.7, the difference between the categories of response-seeking and verbal trap challenges is not always clear, although it may be possible to infer from the context and/or when the addressee provides a response.

Example 6.18 [see MT7 in 4.2.1]**Poster-7-T1/T2 (R/I)** <POL, PH1.1, Un.Dis>

من وين الرقم؟
 النائب العام اعلن انها ماتتجاوز ال ١٠٠ مليار دولار
 يعني ماتجي حتى ٤٠٠ مليار ريال كيف ترليون؟

min wein alraqm?
 alna:ʔib alʕa:m aʕlan anaha: ma: tataza:waz al 100 milja:r
 dula:r jaʔni: ma: tiʒi: ʕata: 400 milja:r rijal kef tiril əun?

From where [did you get] this number?

The Attorney General announced that it does not exceed 100 billion dollars
 which means that it won't reach 400 billion riyals, so how does it become a trillion?

Poster-7's reply consists of an R/I-move, which created a sub-thread of three turns. Poster-7's reply is unmodified since the disagreement has no mitigation or aggravation devices. The main poster attempted to deconstruct the amount of money wasted due to corruption, as stated by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman in his interview with Thomas Friedman; see Example 6.5 for more context. Poster-7 does not agree with the main poster about the exact number and challenges him to clarify how he came up with the number stated in the MT. By challenging the main poster, Poster-7 seems to seek an explanation and further clarification. Starting and ending the reply with questions may show that the MT does not convince Poster-7 and is asking the main poster to provide a more convincing explanation. The questions in this reply drew the attention of another poster, Poster-8, who responded by explaining how the main poster broke down the 10% in the main post. This interaction prompted the main poster to respond to Poster-8's reply confirming and approving his explanation regarding Poster-7's questions; that is how the interaction ended. The interaction between the three posters highlights that the challenges in the Poster-7 reply were perceived as response-seeking challenges.

Example 6.19 [see MT3 in 4.2.1]**Poster-21-T2 (R)** <SOC, SH2.1, Mit.Dis>

والله تغريدة (اسم المغرد) <اتفق معها قليلا.. لكن> دخلت معرفة لقيته كاتب حجازنا حقنا.. حق مين لو
 تشرح

<wa-allah tayri:dat (first name of the main poster) atafiq maʕa-ha: qali:la:n>
 lakin daxalt muʕarifah ligit-ah ka:tib ʕidza:zna: ʕaqana: .. ʕaq
 mi:n lau tiʕraḥ

<I agree with> (first name of the main poster)'s tweet <a little.. but> I saw that he wrote
 in his bio our Hijaz is for us,..for whom if you can explain

Poster-21's reply contains an R-move only, and it received one retweet. Poster-21 expresses a mitigated disagreement with the MT; see Examples 6.10, 6.15 and 6.17 for more context. The disagreement is mitigated by using the partial agreement marker <I agree with...but>. However, this agreement was minimised by using the quantifier "little". Poster-21 checked the main poster's bio and saw this statement on the bio "Our Hijaz is for us", which made Poster-21 respond to the MT with a challenging question "For whom if you can explain". The question here seems to be what Bousfield (2008) has termed a 'verbal trap'. Poster-21 demands that the main poster clarify what is meant by "our Hijaz is for us". Since the reply did not receive any response and no further interaction occurred, it seems difficult to assess whether Poster-21 intended the challenging question as a trap or as a genuine query. However, the broad context of the MT where the main poster emphasises the idea of "one nation and one religion" seems at odds with the inclusive message in the main poster's bio "for us". This suggests that the question is likely a trap because whatever answer he provided would likely put the main poster in a difficult position: either admitting the mistake and offering a public apology or defending what he wrote in the MT and bio, thus opening himself up to a further negative response. The main poster did respond to the disagreeing replies in the main thread; however, he changed his bio and removed the statement 'our Hijaz is for us' to dilute the disagreements. This change represents the perlocutionary effect of the disagreements; it represents the main poster's reaction to the disagreement he received.

Example 6.20 [see MT3 in 4.2.1]

Poster-39-T2 (R) <SOC, SH2.1, Agg.Dis>

<يا (اسم عائلة المغرد)> اتحداك تجيب اسم (شخص له نفس اسم عائلة المغرد) واحد كان موجود بالحجاز قبل ٣٠٠ سنة حتى مراح اقول الف سنة <يا وافد>

<ja: (last name of the main poster)> a:ṯhada:k tji:b isim (having the same family name as the main poster) wa:ḥid ka:n mawaḡu:d bi-alḥidzaz qabil 300 sanah ḥata: mara:ḥ ʔqu:l a:l f sanah <ja: wa:fid>

<O (last name of the main poster)> I dare you to name one person (having the same family name as the main poster) who was present in Hijaz 300 years ago I won't say a thousand years <O immigrant >

Poster-39's reply consists of an R-move, and it received one retweet only. The reply contains an aggravated challenge targeting the main poster; see Examples 6.15, 6.17 and 6.19 for more context. Poster-39's challenge is evident in the used verb *aṯhada:k* [I dare/challenge you]; this challenge is more likely aimed to provoke and insult the main

poster, a Saudi from a Turkish background. Poster-39 asks the main poster to name one person with the same family name as him who existed in the Hijaz region 300 years ago. Poster-39 invokes the long history of the tribes in the region to highlight their right to claiming regional identity, thus denying the regional identity of more recent immigrant families in the region. Poster-39's negative attitude is reflected in the insult, which is signalled by name-calling in the vocative at the beginning of the reply, calling the main poster by his last name to highlight his foreign origin. It is not always the case that calling someone by their last name would be meant as an insult, but in the context of the main thread here, where the poster emphasises the outsider status of the main poster, it can only be seen as an insult. Poster-39 intensifies the aggravated disagreement by using name-calling again, seen in the second vocative, <o immigrant> at the end of the reply. By calling the main poster an "immigrant", Poster-39 belittles the origin of the main poster. Poster-39 draws a clear boundary for the main poster by showing him that although he has lived in Saudi Arabia all his life, he is still not ethnically Hijazi. The aggravation in this disagreement shows Poster-39's disregard for the main poster's social identity face and his equity and association rights by ignoring his national identity and treating him as an outsider.

6.1.8 Supplication

Supplication is the ninth most used strategy in the SAT corpus, which Figure 5-6 shows that 67.3% of the occurrences were unmodified and 35.7% were aggravated. There were no mitigated supplications. As illustrated in Section 4.5.2.3, supplication as a disagreement strategy involves using religious expressions to express disapproval or rejection of the targeted claim or behaviour without stating specifically one's views on the topic.

Example 6.21 [see MT2 in 4.2.1]

Poster-69-T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.2, Un.Dis>

حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

Hasbu-na: allah wa-niṣm alwaki:l

suffice-us allah and-best the-disposer of affairs

Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Poster-69's reply consists of an R-move only, and it received no likes or retweets. The reply expresses an unmodified disagreement directed at the writer, Alsihaimi, and what

he said in the interview about reducing the number of mosques and limiting the use of external loudspeakers; see Examples 6.1, 6.9, and 6.14 for more context. Instead of expressing their view and why they disagree with the target, Poster-69 resorts to supplication using a conventionalised religious expression, Allah is enough for us, and he is the best disposer of affairs (i.e. protector), which can be used in certain contexts to signal disagreement or discontent. It is worth noting that the same supplication could also be formulated as *Allah is enough for me, and he is the best disposer of affairs*, in which the first person singular object pronoun *-i:* is used instead of using the first person plural object pronoun *-na:*. The use of the first-person plural object pronoun *-na:* does not have any mitigation effect since the expression is formulaic and conventionally used whether the person is talking about themselves solely or as part of a group.

Example 6.22 [see MT5 in 4.2.1]

Poster-44-T2 (R) <SOC, SH3.1, Agg.Dis>

<عليها من الله ما تستحق> حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

<ʕaleihal min allah ma: tastaḥiq> ḥasbu-na: allah wa-niʕm alwaki:l

suffice-us allah and-best the-disposer of affairs

<May Allah punish her as she deserves> Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best disposer of affairs

Poster-44's reply consists of an R-move only, and it received no likes or retweets. The reply expresses a disagreement directed at the female reporter in the video attached to the MT; see Examples 6.2 and 6.4 for more context. The supplication in this reply is the same supplication used in Example 6.21; however, Poster-44 aggravates the disagreement in this reply. Poster-44 uses the aggravation device invoking Allah against the other <May Allah punish her as she deserves>. The aggravation reflects Poster-44 negative attitude towards the female reporter, mirrored in the ill wish for her to receive a divine punishment for what Poster-44 perceives as completely unacceptable and probably immoral behaviour. In the supplication, Poster-44 seeks Allah's protection for him/herself and others, but at the same time, seeks Allah's punishment for the female reporter. There is a contrast between the aggravation and the supplication in this reply. By seeking protection for self and seeking punishment for the target, Poster-44 does not seem concerned about the equity rights of the female reporter. This contrast in wishes might also reflect that Poster-44 is ignoring the female reporter's sociality rights, the right to be treated fairly and to be given the benefit of the doubt.

6.1.9 Giving advice

The least used disagreement strategy in the SAT corpus is giving advice. Figure 5-6 shows that 66.7% of the instances of this strategy were mitigated, such as the one in Example 6.23, and there was one occurrence in which the advice was unmodified, which is presented in Example 6.24. As illustrated in Section 4.5.2.5, the communicative goal of giving advice is to encourage the target to carry out or consider a specific action or thought because it would be better and more beneficial to them. Culturally and religiously, giving advice is seen as a good deed: it is one of the ways that someone can express love and care to others, especially when the advice is genuine and selfless. It seems that the overall low frequency of giving advice in the SAT corpus could be because advising others, especially when the target has not asked for the advice (i.e. unsolicited advice), is not common because it might be perceived negatively even if the merit of the advice is good.⁹⁴

Example 6.23 [see MT1 in 4.2.1]

Poster-110- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Mit.Dis>

لاتدعين عليه . بل ادعي له. <جزاك الله خير>

La: tid ʕi:n ʕaleh. bal idʕi: lah. <ʒaza:k allah xer>

Do not pray against him. But pray for him. <May Allah reward you>

Poster-110's reply consists of an R-move and received no likes or retweets. Poster-110 expresses a disagreement directed at the poster of the prior reply. Poster-109 expressed an aggravated disagreement directed at the man in the video attached to the MT. Poster-109's disagreement was expressed through a verbal attack that mainly consisted of invoking Allah against the other. Poster-110 seems to find the verbal attack excessive, which motivated them to respond to Poster-109 by giving advice. Poster-110's advice seems to be religiously motivated because the advice is focused on encouraging the poster of the prior reply to pray for the man in the video instead of wishing him harm. Poster-110's advice is mitigated by using the positive remark <May Allah reward you>, which seems to be used here as a reminder that the rewards for good prayers are worth more than invoking Allah against someone. Poster-110's mitigated advice seems to reflect the

⁹⁴ As a Twitter user myself, I came across some tweets that claim that the abundance of advice on Twitter make these pieces of advice hollow, ineffective, or even cause inconvenience. Saudis' attitudes towards advice in online communication, whether solicited or unsolicited, is worth further investigation.

poster's awareness of how advice, especially in public space, might be considered an imposition on one's freedom to express their thoughts and views in a public space.

Example 6.24 [see MT4 in 4.2.1]

Poster-95- T2 (R) <SOC, SH2.2, Un.Dis>

يا ناس خلو عنكم الناس يا ناس
اجتنبو الغيبة وهرج النميمة

ما من وراء الثنتين غير الإفلاس
وعقوبة اللي يرتكبها عظيمه

ja: na:s xalu: ʕna-kumalna:s ja: na:s
iʒtanibu: alyi:bahw-harʒalnamimah

m: min wara:ʔ alθintem yeir aliʔfla:s
wa-ʕuqubat illi: jirtikibha: ʕaḏʕi:mah

O people leave other people (o people)
Stay away from backstabbing and gossiping

These two lead to impoverishment
Whoever does them is going to be punished.

Poster-95's reply consists of an R-move, and it received one like. Poster-95 expresses a disagreement directed to other posters in the main thread of the replies; see Example 6.7 for more context. The disagreement here is unmodified since Poster-95 did not use any of the mitigation or aggravation devices identified in Section 4.5.1. The reply contains general advice to posters in the thread, asking them to refrain from talking ill of other people and reminding them that backstabbing and gossiping are religiously punishable sins. The common belief is that these sins wash away a person's good deeds; Poster-95 describes engaging in these sins as going into a business that leads to bankruptcy. Some posters in the thread of replies expressed negative views of some dialects spoken by groups of people in the Hijaz region; for example, some posters described these dialects as broken dialects or dialects of immigrants. Poster-95 seems to evaluate these replies commenting on people's dialects and origins as unnecessary and harmful in the same way as backstabbing and gossiping. Poster-95's advice aims to remind other posters to refrain from engaging in hurtful talk and protect their good deeds. Interestingly, Poster-95 attempted to formulate the advice as a poem, which may reflect Poster-95's styling effort to make the advice attractive and thus resonate more with other posters.

6.1.10 Act combination

As shown in the previous chapter, Figure 5-5 act combination is the most used strategy in the SAT corpus. Based on Figure 5-6, 66.2% of the occurrences were aggravated, while 26.6% were unmodified. Act combinations in the SAT corpus are usually formed by using two strategies, as seen in the examples below. In the examples below, I use a single underline to identify the first strategy and a double underline to identify the second strategy.

Example 6.25 [see MT4 in 4.2.1]

Poster-57- T2 (R) <SOC, SH3.1, Un.Dis>

لا حول ولا قوة الا بالله
اين صنع القرار من هذا؟ اين الضوابط الشرعيه؟ وماهي اصلاً الضوابط التي وضعت . لم نجد اي ضوابط
ذكرت او جزاءات.

la: ĥawla wa-la: quwata i?lla: bi-alla:h
?jn s^una:ʕ alqara:r min haða: ? ?jn alð^uwa:bit^u alfarʕi:ah? wa-ma: hi:a a:s^ula:n
alð^uwa:bit^u alti: wud^uiʕat. lam naʕid ?i: ð^uwa:bit^u ðukirat ?w zaza?a:t

There is no might and no power except by Allah
Where are the decision makers for this? Where are the legal [religious] regulations?
And what are the regulations that were originally set. We did not find any regulations
or punishment mentioned.

Poster-57's reply consists of an R-move only and received one like and two retweets. The disagreement here is unmodified since the poster did not use any of the mitigation or aggravation devices identified in the study. The two strategies used in the disagreement are supplication (single underlined) and exclamation (double underlined); see Examples 6.2, 6.4 and 6.22 for more context. Poster-57 used the invocation "There is no might and no power except by Allah", known as *ħawqalah*; this supplication is usually used when someone is facing a difficult situation or is going through a hard time and feeling helpless. In the context of disagreement, it is employed to signal frustration and distress that is caused by a person's behaviour or situation. Here, Poster-57 is most likely upset because of the female reporter's clothing and behaviour in the video attached to the MT. This frustration is further seen in the chain of exclamatory questions that expresses Poster-57 astonishment as to why the regulators in the General Authority for Audiovisual Media granted permission to the female reporter and her team and allowed the filming of the report. The poster further wonders about the regulations in force to manage such behaviours, especially during this period of change in the country, and whether such regulations, rules or punishments exist because the poster claims that none could be

found. Although Poster-57 disagrees with the content of the video attached to the MT, Poster-57 does not attack the female reporter. Instead, the focus was on the observed lack of regulations and rules to manage the changes.

Example 6.26 [see MT1 in 4.2.1]

Poster-43- T2 (R) <SOC, SH1.1, Mit.Dis>

<أتمنى> ان ينظر في هذا الموضوع من الناحية الشرعية بغض النظر عن الشخص اللي يطالب ، بن عثمان لما تكلم عن هذا الموضوع محد دخل في نيته ، <انا شايف> كثير بسبون السحيمي ((((((وكانه كافر))))))
(بن عثمان) قال الصلاة بالمكريفون ممكن تؤذي المساجد القريه والمرضى والأطفال

?tman: a:n junð^sar fi: haða: almawd^su:ʕ minalna:hi:ah alfarʕi:ah biyad^s alnað^sar ʕan alfaxs^s illi: jit^sa:lib, bin ʕiθemi:n lama: tikalam ʕan haða: almawd^su:ʕ maħad daxal fi: nijat-h , <?na fa:jif> kathi:r jisibu:n alsihaimi ((((((wa-ka:nah ka:fir))))))
(bin ʕiθemi:n) ga:l als^sala:t bi-almakri:fu:n mumkin tuʔði: almsa:ʕid alqari:bah wa-almard^sa: wa-alat^sfa:l

<I hope>that this issue will be looked into from the Islamic perspective regardless of the person who is making the request. ibn Uthaymeen⁹⁵, when he spoke about this subject, no one doubted his intention. It <seems to me>that many (posters) are insulting Alsihaimi ((((((as if he is an infidel))))))
(ibn Uthaymeen) did say that praying with a microphone can disturb nearby mosques, the sick, and children

Poster-43's reply consists of an R-move only without initiating further interaction; the reply received one retweet. Poster-43 used two strategies in expressing the disagreement: explanation (single underlined) and exclamation (double underlined); see Examples 6.13 and 6.23 for more context. The disagreement here is directed to other posters participating in the thread of replies to attack the writer, Alsihaimi, with whom they disagree. The attack on the writer was triggered by what he said in an interview on MBC1. He talked about reducing the number of mosques saying that they are becoming a source of annoyance and fear to the people close by, mainly because of the loudness of the sounds coming from these mosques simultaneously. He described these mosques as *masa:ʕid al-dirar* (plural), meaning *mosques of dissent*, which many posters consider a misuse of a specific historical reference. The MT supports the writer's statements about limiting the use of external loudspeakers, particularly during lectures and religious lessons. The main

⁹⁵ Muhammad ibn Saalih Al Uthaymeen, also known as ibn Uthaymeen (March 9, 1925 – January 10, 2001), was an Islamic scholar in Saudi Arabia. He is considered to be one of the greatest Faqīh (Islamic jurist, an expert Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic Law) of the modern era.

poster states that external loudspeakers are affecting the quality of life of people living nearby.

In this reply, it can be inferred that Poster-43 is not disagreeing with the main poster but rather with the other posters in the main thread of replies. In expressing the disagreement, Poster-43 employed two hedging devices in the explanation of their position on the matter. The first hedging device is the wishing clause, “<I hope >that this issue will be looked into from the Islamic perspective regardless of the person who is making the request” at the beginning of the reply, which is expressed in the passive voice. This wishing clause contains a general call for a more judicious way to look at the issue without focusing on the person making the request. The second mitigation device is the use of a personalised opinion, <I see that> in the exclamation, which Poster-43 employed to express their astonishment at the attack on the writer seen in the main thread. Poster-43’s mitigated disagreement seems to be a recognition of the subjectivity of the view expressed, thus giving room for more discussion, correction, or rejection.

Poster-43 expresses a great disappointment or astonishment at how others are talking about Alsihaimi, especially their misjudgement of his intention. Poster-43 seems to think that other posters were extreme in their responses to what the writer stated and treated him as if he was “an infidel”. The use of multiple round brackets in “(((((*as if he is an infidel*))))))” seems to index Poster-43’s intense emotional reaction and shock caused by what others posted about the writer. On the other hand, the use of single parentheses “(even though ibn Uthaymeen)” seems to be an attempt to highlight or emphasise the point that Poster-43 attempts to make. Poster-43 points out that several years ago when ibn Uthaymeen, a prominent Saudi scholar, advised that mosques should use external loudspeakers for broadcasting calls to prayer, but not the prayers themselves or lectures, people did not react negatively towards his scholarly opinion. Poster-43 seems to consider Alsihaimi’s opinion to reflect in part the (tacitly) accepted views of ibn Uthaymeen, and hence consider the aggravated disagreements in the thread of replies as personal attacks on the writer rather than an objective consideration of the situation. Poster-43’s disagreement seems to reflect an attempt to defend the writer’s social identity face and equity rights, particularly the writer’s right to fair and unbiased treatment.

Example 6.27 [see MT1 in 4.2.1]

Poster-9- T2 (R/I) <SOC, SH1.1, Agg.Dis>

<أخطأ من اعتقد بأن المحاضر كان لبقاً في ردوده.. فجملة (الدين ما يضايق احد) هي كلمة حق اريد بها (الترقية) على الجار حيث صورته وكأنه لا يريد الدين. بمعنى اخر الامتناع عن سماع المحاضرة ليست من الدين في شيء. وختمه بداعوا له باخوان>وقاحة!

<?xtʕaʔ man iʕtaqid> bi-ʔna almuħadʕir ka:n labiqa:n fi: rudu:dih .. fa-zumlat (aldi:n ma: jisʕa:iq a:ħad) hi: kalimat ħaq uri:da biha: (altarjaqah) ʕla alza:r ħeiθ sʕawrh wa-kaʔnah la: juri:d aldi:n . bi-mʕna: ʔxar alimti:na:ʕ ʕan sama:ʕ almuħadʕarh lai:sat min aldi:n fi: ʕeiʔ . wa-xatmuh bi(idʕu:-lah ja: ʔxwa:n) <waqa:ħah>

<Whoever thought that the lecturer was tactful in his responses is wrong>.. The sentence (religion does not bother anyone) is a truthful word by which (mockery) of the neighbour is intended as he portrays him as if he does not want religion. In other words refraining from listening to the lecture is not being religious at all. And he concluded it with (brothers pray for him) <rude>!

Poster-9's reply consists of an R/I-move, generating a sub-thread of 6 turns. The sub-thread is an interaction between Poster-9 and Poster-10, who agrees with Poster-9's evaluation of the situation in the video. Poster-9's disagreement is expressed through a contrary statement (single underline) and explanation (double underline). It is directed towards the lecturer in the video and some of the posters in the main thread, particularly those praising the lecturer's handling of the argument with the man who interrupted the lecture; see Examples 6.13, 6.23 and 6.26. Poster-9's disagreement is aggravated by the use of judgmental language at the beginning of the reply, seen in the statement <whoever thought that the lecturer was tactful in his responses is wrong>, and at the end of the reply in <rude>. Poster-9 contradicts those posters who approve of the lecturer's behaviour; Poster-9 points out that the lecturer's statement that "religion does not bother anyone" is meant to mock the man instead of consoling him. Similar to what is seen in Example 6.26 above, Poster-9 uses single parentheses to highlight the point they make that "(religion does not bother anyone)" was used in that situation for mockery; this is how Poster-9 interprets the lecturer's words. Poster-9 explains that in the lecturer's view, it seems that refusal to listen to religious lectures reflects improper behaviour. Again, Poster-9 quotes what the lecturer said in the video "Pray for him, brothers" to show that, in his opinion, the lecturer's behaviour is meant to mock the man, despite what the posters in the main thread seem to think. Overall, Poster-9 seems to be astonished that other posters do not recognise the lecturer's behaviour as being rude towards the man, and it is not worth praising.

This reply is interesting for two reasons; it shows the discursive struggle in evaluating (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the disagreement context. In this disagreement, Poster-9 attempts to clarify to other posters how the lecturer's behaviour in the video can be interpreted differently. It also shows that what Poster-9 observes as marked behaviour, particularly the intention behind some of the lecturer's statements, is not seen as marked by other posters in the main thread of replies. This example clearly reflects the variation in evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness, and that markedness can be subjective.

6.2 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented some examples from the SAT corpus to show how disagreement strategies can be linguistically modified by mitigation and aggravation devices or unmodified by any of these devices. The variation in modification seen in almost all of the disagreement strategies in the SAT corpus shows that disagreement strategies cannot be easily classified as polite, politic or impolite, as seen in Harb's study (2016). The linguistic modification of the disagreement and how that modification can be interpreted in the context of the main thread can, to some extent, provide an indication of how (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in these disagreements might be interpreted. However, examining my corpus data from an analyst's point of view shows that discursive analysis of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements is challenging, especially since the disagreements in the SAT corpus are mostly left unresolved. There are very few responses from the target to these disagreements, which prevents seeing the disagreements unfold in interaction.

Although the contextualised analysis of mitigation and aggravation devices used by the posters in these disagreements can assist the analytical investigation of their approaches to face sensitivities and sociality rights and obligations on Twitter, the task remains challenging. For example, the disagreement in Example 6.18 was linguistically unmodified; evaluating this disagreement based on its unmodified structure provides little information as to how it might be evaluated in terms of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. One possible way to assess the perception of unmodified Twitter disagreements is through the target's response, which can indicate how the unmodified disagreement was perceived in that specific thread of replies. This challenge in analysing (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements provides evidence that to achieve a clearer picture of the phenomena, a collaboration between (im)politeness₁ and (im)politeness₂ approaches is necessary. Therefore, in the next chapter, I aim to examine

Saudi Twitter users' evaluations of disagreements in order to gain more insight into their understandings of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the disagreement examples. The analysis of respondents' evaluations aims to reveal more about their views and expectations about the assumed shared social order when evaluating (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements.

Chapter 7 Discursive Analysis of Saudis' Twitter Disagreements

This chapter focuses on the qualitative analysis of the ten tweets evaluated by respondents in the online questionnaire, and the comments from the 20 interviewees who agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. The presentation and examination of respondents' evaluations are arranged as follows: first, I describe how each reply was coded and analysed in the corpus. The corpus analysis of the replies is reflected in the headings of this chapter; for example, replies that contained unmodified disagreements are covered under the unmodified disagreements heading and so on. Second, I present how the respondents classified the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the ten replies included in the online questionnaire. The classifications are grouped into aligned or unaligned classifications based on how the five categories in each of the two scales are selected, see Table 4-5. Thirdly, after presenting the classifications, I analyse respondents' justifications for the classifications they have selected, referring to responses from both the online questionnaire and the interviews. Respondents' classifications are displayed through a relations map for each reply. However, some classifications were not covered in the analysis mainly because the respondents who selected these classifications did not provide any justifications to account for or explain the rationale behind their classification. The analysis of respondents' evaluations in this chapter aims to shed more light on the claim that politeness is not a matter of doing what is merely appropriate because appropriateness is larger in scope, covering the entire relational work continuum, as well as that inappropriateness is not always an essential feature of impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011a, pp.96-97). Moreover, it aims to show how respondents' evaluations can provide more insight into their understanding of the moral order against which they evaluated the disagreements.

7.1 Disagreement types and strategies

The analysis of the ten replies in the following sections is organised based on the linguistic modification of the disagreement strategies employed to express the disagreement; see Sections 4.5. The analysis of Figure 5-1 in Chapter 5 Section 5.1.1 shows that the majority of the identified disagreement strategies in the corpus were aggravated, a few were unmodified and even fewer were mitigated. Section 7.2 covers three replies that were coded as unmodified disagreement strategies in the corpus and shows how these replies were evaluated in the online questionnaire. Then, Section 7.3 covers one reply that was coded as a positively modified disagreement strategy and how respondents evaluated this

reply. The other six replies, which were identified as aggravated disagreement strategies in the corpus, are presented in Section 7.4, including how these replies were evaluated in the online questionnaire.

7.2 Unmodified disagreements

As shown in Chapters 5 and 6, this type of disagreement is usually identified through the absence of mitigation or aggravation devices, thus rendering the disagreement linguistically unmodified. The analysis here shows that despite being linguistically unmodified, respondents provided different (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness classifications of these disagreements. This indicates that respondents' understanding of the contexts of these disagreements plays an essential role in how they evaluated the disagreements; see Figure 2 in Appendix E for an overview of these classifications based on Table 4-5.

As the corpus analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 6 revealed, six of the identified disagreement strategies were occasionally used without any modification. The strategies covered here are act combination in Example 7.2, explanation in Example 7.3, and argument avoidance in Example 7.1, which occurred only once in the SAT corpus. This strategy of argument avoidance was not included in the taxonomy, as stated in Section 4.5.2. The reason for this was its singular instance in the SAT corpus. Also, in online communication, argument avoidance could take different forms, such as the complete absence of a reply; therefore, it is difficult to measure and examine — at least in the context of this study. The motivation behind including this example in the present analysis was mainly to show the challenges in measuring what counts as a disagreement avoidance strategy in online interaction. Also, to show how interpreting expressions such as “no comment” does not necessarily indicate that the person is avoiding disagreement, as seen in the respondents' justifications below; see Section 8.1.2.

7.2.1 Unmodified disagreement 1: Argument avoidance

Example 7.1 [see MT11 in 4.2.1]

Poster-109-T2 (R) <POL, PH3.1, Un.Dis>

لا تعليق

la: taflī:q

No comment

Poster-109's reply consists of an R-move only with no further interactional turns, and the reply did not receive any likes or retweets; see Examples 6.6 and 7.10 for more context. The disagreement here is unmodified, as there is no use of mitigation or aggravation devices. The disagreement is expressed through argument avoidance, a strategy not included in the coding framework (see the section above). As shown in Figure 5-13 (MT3-R2), out of the 178 respondents, 102 (57.30%) identified this comment as a disagreement, while 42.70% did not find the reply to express a disagreement. It appears that respondents were almost split in half based on their interpretation of the reply as a disagreement. Respondents who identified the reply as a disagreement provided different classifications. In the follow-up interviews, I was able to ask some of the 42.70% of respondents who did not identify the reply as a disagreement for their justification:⁹⁶

(1) FP7-Khulud⁹⁷

I think this poster did not want to say anything clear but wanted to comment; maybe the poster wanted to say this is true but was hesitant to say so.

(2) MP3-Ahmed

For me, the poster of the reply agrees with the main tweet. It is possible that the poster disagrees but does not want to argue. However, because the main tweet contains an attack and overgeneralisation, the response should be something like *this is not true or there is nothing worthy of arguing here*. So, for me, using "no comment" as a reply is most likely an agreement because it is too weak. It is like someone sitting in the corner agreeing with you but does not know how to express it.

⁹⁶ Respondents' comments were provided in Arabic, and I have translated them into English.

⁹⁷ Respondents who were interviewed are presented by their code in the online questionnaire and their interview code too.

(3) MP2-Faisal

This is not a disagreement; the main tweet is clear, and the “no comment” reply verifies the main tweet.

(4) MP1-Ali

I do not know if the poster of the reply agrees or disagrees; it could be just a way to signal a presence no more or less.

From these responses, it seems that identifying this reply as a disagreement is problematic or challenging for some of the respondents, mainly due to the vagueness of the poster’s stance on the content of the MT. This difficulty in assessment is briefly described by these four interviewees, who seem to agree that the “no comment” reply does not, in essence, express a disagreement. Interestingly, they seem to have slightly different interpretations of what it means. These interviewees see the “no comment” as a sign of hesitation in expressing a clear view, and it is too weak to be interpreted as a disagreeing opinion. This invokes the notion of matching the degree of (im)politeness in the triggering event (i.e. the main tweet), which is also mentioned below and is discussed further in Section 8.6.1. Additionally, Ali’s comment shows that replies in online communication do not necessarily aim to engage and add to an interaction; replies like the one here, according to him, can be a way of signalling one’s presence in the interaction.

On the other hand, respondents who identified the reply as a disagreement provided different evaluations of the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the reply, as shown in Figure 7-1 below. In general, it appears that 67.6% of respondents chose aligned classifications between the categories in the two scales, whereas 32.4% selected unaligned (i.e. mixed) classifications between the categories.

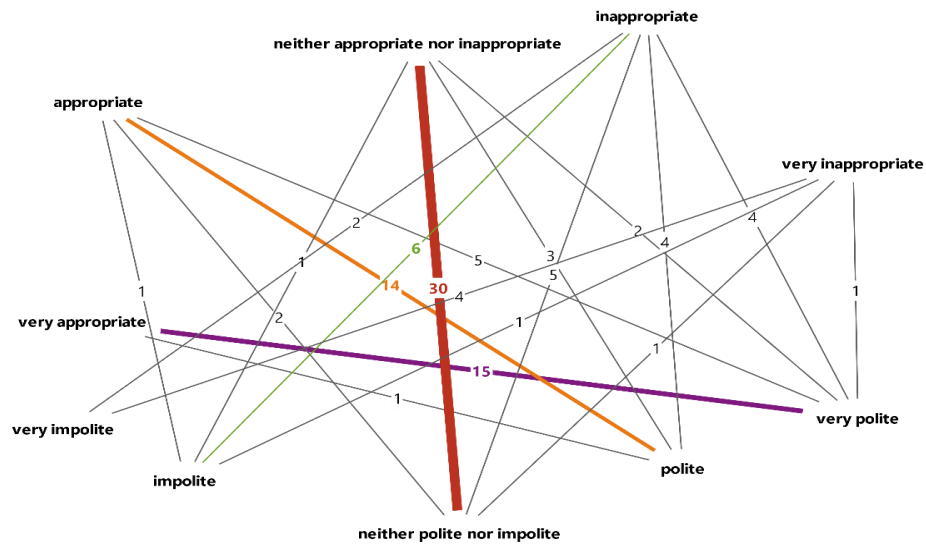


Figure 7-1: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 2 — MT3

As Figure 7-1 reveals, 30 out of the 102 respondents classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*. Looking at the provided justifications depicted in Figure 7-1, it seems that some of these respondents, such as the ones in (5) and (6), appear to provide similar justifications to those stated above, particularly those in (1) and (4). The politic classification of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness stems from the vagueness of the poster's position since, to these respondents, the "no comment" reply does not communicate much except marking a presence in the thread of replies. These respondents are unsure of the poster's position and find the contextual evidence insufficient to evaluate the reply. The respondents' justification here indicates that judgments about (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness can be suspended until more evidence reveals what is more likely to have been intended (Terkourafi, 2008, p.45). The other justifications for this classification focused on the point that "no comment" is a common, respectful, and sufficient way to signal an avoidance of unnecessary arguments, as stated by the respondent in (7). It is also a comment used to avoid making any self-incriminating statements.

(5) Male-32 (MP5-Nawaf)

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The reply can be interpreted in two ways, either an agreement or a disagreement. There are few details to judge what is meant, so I evaluated the reply as neutral.

(6) Male-55 (MP10-Malek)

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

As they say, “I cannot talk because there is water in my mouth”. I do not know if the poster is agreeing or disagreeing because the reply could mean either. The poster could have explained what was wrong; otherwise, some people might see the reply as an agreement.

(7) Female-93

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

This is a respectable way of avoiding a fruitless argument and an indirect way of expressing a disagreement.

Other respondents also classified the reply as *(very) polite and (very) appropriate*, as shown in Figure 7-1. The justifications provided for both classifications, like the ones in (8), (9) and (10), are similar and centre around one major point that is related to the respondent’s view in (7). These respondents stated that argument avoidance is the “best” or “appropriate” way to avoid getting oneself into thorny arguments; it is a way of showing “self-respect”. To these respondents, the “no comment” seems to be a conventionalised expression used to signal disengagement in arguments or unwelcome interactions. Respondents who classified the reply as *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* did not provide any justification.

(8) Male-10

(very polite and very appropriate)

“No comment” is the best comment, it indicates that the topic is very irritating or stupid, and the poster does not want to waste time arguing.

(9) Female-123

(very polite and very appropriate)

The reply reflects self-respect and refraining from getting into quarrels and strife.

(10) Female-84

(polite and appropriate)

This expression is usually used to express disagreement and, at the same time, refrain from responding.

In addition to the aligned classifications, other unaligned classifications are provided by respondents, as shown in Figure 7-1. Although there are different classifications here, the provided justifications seem similar. For instance, respondents who classified the reply as: *polite and very appropriate, very polite and appropriate, very polite and neither*

appropriate nor inappropriate, as well as *polite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate* provided justifications that are similar to those in (8), (9), and (10).

(11) Female-113 *(very polite and appropriate)*

Sometimes silence and not commenting are better than responding to offensive and rude language.

(12) Female-29 *(polite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

The poster does not want to argue with an ignorant person.

(13) Female-78 *(polite and very appropriate)*

Avoiding commenting on tweets that do not suit you is better than starting an argument.

The respondents who classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and (very) inappropriate*, and *very polite and (very) inappropriate* seem to find the reply politic. In this context and as a response to the MT, the reply seems not impolite, but it is considered as (very) inappropriate. The respondents' justifications, like those in (14) and (16), agree that the reply should have expressed a clear and strong opinion. This emphasis on expressing a strong reply seems to be the result of the perceived power imbalance between the reply and the MT, which these respondents perceive as insulting. The inappropriateness of the reply comes from its perceived vagueness and weakness compared to the MT, which is considered offensive. The respondents' comments here appear to fit the notion that the level of impoliteness in a prior post (i.e. the triggering post) sets the threshold at which others might be expected to engage — a kind of tit-for-tat; nonetheless, this is culturally and contextually sensitive (Culpeper, 2011a, p.205). This notion is elaborated upon in the next chapter in Section 8.6.1.

(14) Female-1 (FP8-Samar) *(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)*

If you have no opinion when responding to a tweet that insults your country, then it is better not to respond at all.

(15) Male-57 (MP8-Muhammad) *(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)*

The reply should match the level of the main tweet; responding with “no comment” is ignoring the point which should have been argued.

(16) Female-63*(very polite and inappropriate)*

The reply does not express a strong argument, and the main tweet deserves a strong reply.

(17) Male-40*(very polite and very inappropriate)*

The reply is very polite, but it shows that Saudis do not understand these political matters, and this obliterates the true power of the Saudi people.

The expectation of responding with a strong reply is also emphasised in the justifications offered by respondents who classified the reply as *very impolite and inappropriate*, *impolite and very inappropriate*, and *impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, see (18) and (19).

(18) Male-50*(impolite and very inappropriate)*

There should be no lenience when defending your country.

(19) Male-105*(impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

This is absurd; it is natural that a person will defend himself and his country.

To these respondents in (18) and (19), the MT is seen as an attack on their country's social identity face (Spencer-Oatey, 2002); more precisely, an attack on every Saudi's social identity face. Hence, defending the face of their country and its people is a priority. This connection between a country and its nationals was concisely described by Magistro (2011, p.234) as "nationals of a country possess a national esteem, a public national image which commensurate to the sense of reputation that they attribute to their country and they want others to appreciate ...and ...respect". It is worth noting that feelings of national pride and belonging may greatly vary between different national communities and even within the same national community (p.249), see Section 8.6.2 for further discussion.

7.2.2 Unmodified disagreement 2: Act combination

Example 7.2 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-18- T1/2 (R/I) <SOC, SH1.1, Un.Dis>

جزء من معاناة الكثير؟ تسمى هذي معاناة؟
المعاناة ان تكون في مشكلة وتعاني منها ولا تجد لها حلا .. هذا دخل غاضب باسلوب فظ وغير لائق وطلب
اقفال المكبرات وماذا كانت النتيجة؟ اعتذر له المحاضر ووقف المكبرات
فاين المعاناة؟
لم يحتج الى الشرطة ولا الى محكمة ولا غيرها بدقيقة انتهى الموضوع....

dʒuz min muʕa:na:t alkathi:r? tisami: haði: muʕa:na:t?
almuʕa:na:t a:n taku:n fi: muʕkilahwa-tuʕa:ni: minha: wa-la: tazid laha: hala:n .. haða:
daxal ʔa:dʕib bi-islu:b faðʕ wa-ʔeir la:ʔiq wa-tʕalab iqfa:l almukabira:t wa-ma:ða:
ka:nat alnati:zah? iʕtaðar lah almuħadʕir wa-a:wqaf almukabira:t
fa-ʔjn almuʕa:na:t?
lam jaħtaʔ iʔla: alʕurtʕah wa-la: iʔla: maħkamh wa-la: ʔeirha bi-daqi:qah intaha:
almawdʕu:ʕ

Part of the suffering for many? You call this suffering?

Suffering is struggling with a problem without finding a solution ..This man angrily entered the masjid and rudely and inappropriately demanded the loudspeakers be turned off and what was the result? The lecturer apologised to him and switched off the speakers

So where is the suffering?

He did not need the police or the court or anything else as the situation was over in a minute....]

This reply consists of an R/I-move that created a sub-thread of three turns; see Examples 6.13, 6.23, 6.27, and 7.7 for more context. The next poster replied to support and express an agreement with Poster-18's reply to the MT. Poster-18 then replied to thank Poster-19 for their supportive response. The disagreement in this example is unmodified as it does not contain any of the identified mitigation or aggravation devices that were presented in Section 4.5.1. The disagreement is expressed through the use of an act combination strategy: exclamation (single underline) and explanation (double underline). Poster-18 started the reply with an exclamation⁹⁸ highlighting their astonishment at the main poster's description of the situation in the attached video as "part of the suffering for many people". The exclamation is also seen in the several rhetorical questions, each followed by an explanation (i.e. answers). Poster-18 used these rhetorical questions as signposts leading to the explanation. The provided answers seem to corroborate that the rhetorical

⁹⁸ It is noted that some posters seem to use a question mark without an exclamation mark when expressing exclamatory questions or even expressing an exclamatory statement like the one in this example.

questions are used by Poster-18 to vent their frustration or astonishment and to lead the readers of the reply in a specific direction.

Examining how the respondents evaluated this reply in the online questionnaire was shown in Figure 5-13 (MT1-R2). Of the 178 respondents, 123 (69.10%) identified the reply as a disagreement with different classifications, as displayed in Figure 7-2. In the follow-up interviews, I was able to ask three of the interviewees who did not identify the reply as a disagreement what their reasoning was. Their responses were similar in that they thought the reply was just a description of the incident in the video attached to the MT, and they did not connect the reply to the content of the MT. This challenge in identifying the target of a disagreement in online communication, especially on a platform where there are potentially multiple targets, was covered in Sections 4.4.1.3.

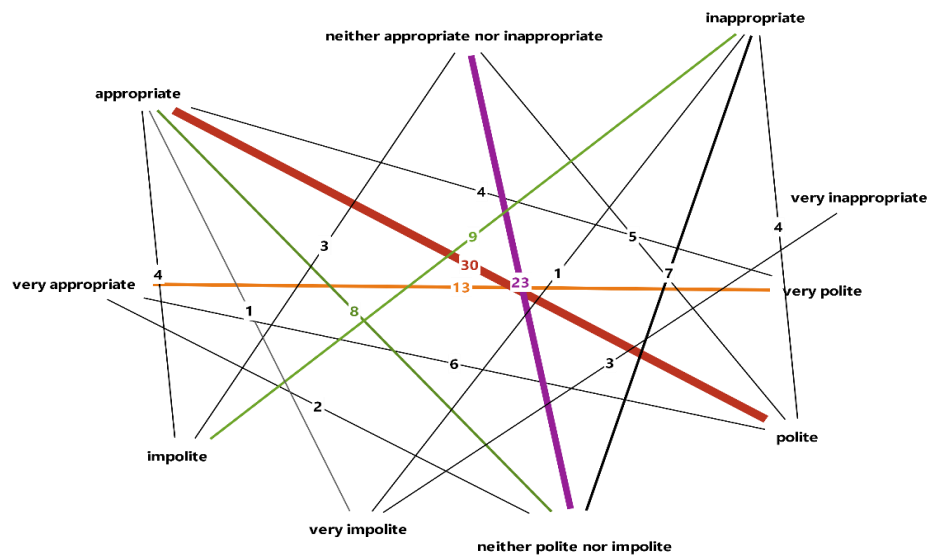


Figure 7-2: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 2 — MT1

The analysis revealed that 63.4% of the 123 respondents selected aligned classifications for the reply. Respondents who classified the disagreement as *(very) polite and (very) appropriate* provided similar justifications. The justifications for these classifications mostly revolved around the absence of insulting language and specifying the point or source of disagreement, that is, the use of “suffering” as seen in the respondents’ statements in (20) to (22). Similarly, the 23 respondents who evaluated the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and neither inappropriate nor appropriate* provided analogous justifications to those mentioned in (20), (21) and (22).

(20) Female-107*(polite and appropriate)*

The poster of the reply expressed a disagreement with one specific point, which is the main poster's use of the word 'suffering' to describe the situation, and the disagreement did not personally attack anyone.

(21) Male-31 (MP5-Nawaf)*(polite and appropriate)*

The poster did not accuse or belittle the person's faith but rather looked at the situation rationally.

(22) Female-91*(very polite and very appropriate)*

The poster's comment referred to a specific part of the tweet, which is the use of 'suffering'. It seems that the poster does not see it as suffering, or maybe because the poster thinks that the main poster was exaggerating.

(23) Female-33 (FP4-Abeer)*(neither polite nor impolite and neither inappropriate nor appropriate)*

The reply does not contain offensive words or personalised comments about others, and it addresses the main topic presented in the main tweet.

(24) Male-55 (MP10-Malek)*(neither polite nor impolite and neither inappropriate nor appropriate)*

I do not like this style of emotional exploitation; using questions is a good way to gain more information and inspire others to think, but it can sometimes be used in an irritating way.

Some respondents observed that the reply seems to be somehow emotional, as seen in (24). MP10-Malek's comment shows there are different uses for questions, and one of these uses is emotional talk. Questions, particularly rhetorical ones as seen in this reply, can be used to vent frustration and express irritation. Similarly, MP5-Nawaf, whose justification is presented in (21), stated in the interview that "the poster's use of multiple questions shows that the poster is possibly emotionally charged; however, this emotional response is not necessarily inappropriate. This style can be used to direct others' minds in a certain direction". These respondents seem to recognise the emotional aspect of the reply, which shows how emotions are crucial in evaluating impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011a, pp.59-60). Another interviewee, FP8-Samar, pointed out that the use of several questions might be a way to undermine the main poster's perceived exaggeration of how many people are suffering due to the high volume of mosques with external loudspeakers. Poster-18's use of these rhetorical questions seems to be an attempt to clarify and probably convince the main poster that what he claims is causing suffering is, in fact, not.

The last aligned sets of categories selected by 12 respondents were *(very) impolite* and *(very) inappropriate*, as shown in (25) and (26); these respondents offered similar justifications for these two classifications. The justifications provided here seem to appeal to equity rights — that everyone has the right to identify, describe, and talk about what makes them suffer without being judged, belittled, or denied speaking rights. It is worth noting that these respondents mentioned a sense of “belittling” invoked by the reply even though it does not contain any of the aggravation devices identified in the study. This could be the result of using multiple rhetorical questions in the reply, which might not always be perceived positively. This also shows that markedness can be subjective and does not always depend on the surface structure of the utterance; see Example 6.27.

(25) Female-89 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The poster of the reply belittles the suffering of others. Not all mosques have the same imam/lecturer who will react in a good way, like the one in the video, and this is a mistake.

(26) Female-102 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

The poster has no right to deny others from expressing and talking about what annoys them and makes them suffer.

Shifting the focus to the unaligned classifications between the categories as represented in Figure 7-2, 36.6% of respondents chose different unaligned classifications for the reply. Given the similarity of the justifications provided, I grouped these classifications: *neither polite nor impolite and (very) appropriate*, *polite and very appropriate*, as well as *polite and neither inappropriate nor inappropriate*. The justifications provided by the respondents here focused on the absence of offensive language and how the poster did not make the disagreement personal since it addresses the main poster’s use of the word “suffering” without insulting the main poster.

(27) Female-51 *(neither polite nor impolite and appropriate)*

The poster of the reply explained and clarified his/her point of view without using offensive words, provocation or allusions.

(28) Male-56 *(polite and very appropriate)*

The poster directly addressed the issue presented in the main tweet without insulting or personalising the disagreement.

Other respondents who classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate*, as well as *polite and inappropriate*, as seen in (29) and (30), do not find it

impolite but rather inappropriate. The justifications revealed that the inappropriateness of the reply comes from its narrow focus on the use of the word “suffering” while ignoring the central issue, which is the inconvenience caused by loudspeakers to people who live near the mosques. The focus on the word “suffering” is seen to be based on a personal standard that disregards the views of others. It is argued here that the idea of suffering is subjective and not measured in the same way by different individuals.

(29) Female-80

(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)

The poster measured and defined the suffering based on personal standards without considering the other person’s point of view.

(30) Female-35

(polite and inappropriate)

This reply is unrelated to the main issue. The poster took one word out of the main tweet and focused on it without addressing the real issue.

The last unaligned classification, which is *impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, was selected by three respondents and justified by only one.

(31) Female-63

(impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The poster of the reply seems to be a bit agitated.

The offered justification pointed out how the poster seems emotionally triggered by the MT; this observation is similar to the one in (24). The respondent here appears to be judging the emotional state of the poster by describing the poster as “agitated”. This agitation is probably mirrored in the use of multiple rhetorical questions. To these respondents, Poster-18’s public display of emotions in this context is perceived to be inappropriate or impolite because, in this emotional response, the poster ignored that main issue and focused solely on lexical choice.

7.2.3 Unmodified disagreement 3: Explanation

Example 7.3 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-27- T1/2 (R/I) <POL, PH2.2, Un.Dis>

الترفيه وقيادة المرأة ودخول الملاعب كلها أشياء مباحة حولها الإخوانية والصحويين إلى أشياء محرمة والهدف تشويه الدين وجعل الناس ينظرون للإسلام على أنه دين تشدد وتطرف

altarfi:h wa-qija:dat almarʔah wa- duxu:l almala:ʕib kulaha: a:ʕja:ʔ muba:ħah
hawalu:ha: aliʔxwanzi:ah wa-alsʕaħawji:n iʔla: a:ʕja:ʔ muħaramah wa-alhadaf
tafwi:h aldi:n wa-zaʕl alna:s janðʕuru:n li-liʔsla:m ʕla ʔnah di:n tafadud wa-
tatʕaruf

Entertainment and women driving and going to stadiums are all permissible things which the aliʔxwanzi:ah [members of Brotherhood]⁹⁹ and sʕaħawi:n [members of Sahwa movement]¹⁰⁰ prohibited aiming to distort the religion and make people see Islam as a strict and extreme religion

The reply consists of an R/I-move which created a short thread of three tweets but received no likes or retweets; see Examples 6.3, 6.8, 6.12, and 7.5 for more context. The poster's disagreement explains why some of the points in the MT, particularly those related to women driving and entertainment, are not religiously prohibited, and attributes their prohibition to the ideologies of the Brotherhood organisation and Sahwa movement. The next poster disagreed with Poster-27's explanation, especially the claim about the Brotherhood, which the poster argues has no presence in Saudi Arabia. Poster-27 responded by stating that some individuals were wearing religious cloaks and had been loyal to the leaders of the Brotherhood outside Saudi Arabia, but thankfully, these individuals were identified and placed under arrest.¹⁰¹ In the corpus analysis, this reply was identified as an unmodified disagreement expressed through explanation as it does not contain any mitigation or aggravation devices identified in this study; see Section 4.5.1. Despite being linguistically unmodified, respondents to the online questionnaire classified the reply in different ways, as shown in Figure 7-3.

⁹⁹ Also known as the Muslim Brotherhood, this term refers to the organisation founded in Egypt by Islamic scholar and Hassan al-Banna in 1928, which has some influence on some political parties.

¹⁰⁰ Also translated as 'Awakening movement', it refers to as an Islamic political and social movement in Saudi Arabia from 1960–1980.

¹⁰¹ In 2014, a royal decree declared the Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation and that Saudi Arabia would not tolerate any activities supporting the organisation.

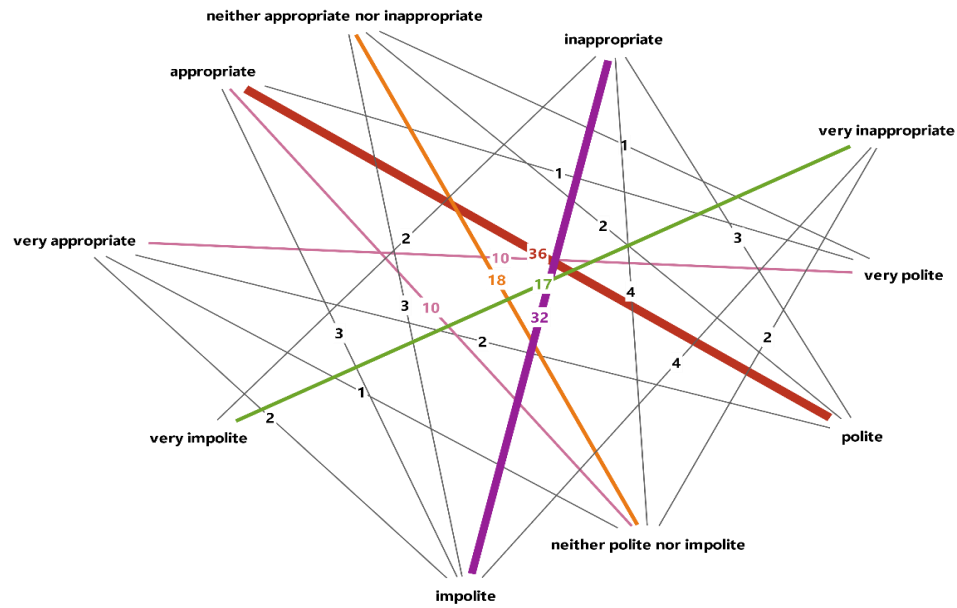


Figure 7-3: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 1 — MT5

The reply was identified as a disagreement by 86% (153) of the 178 respondents, as presented in Figure 5-13 (M5-R1). All the 20 interviewees identified the reply as a disagreement; hence it was not possible to investigate the reasoning behind why some respondents did not identify the reply in this way. Examining respondents' classifications, it appears that around 73.9% of the 153 respondents chose aligned classifications between the categories of the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness scales, while 26.1% chose unaligned classifications. The analysis reveals that respondents who chose the aligned classifications (*very*) *polite* and (*very*) *appropriate*, and *neither polite nor impolite* and *neither appropriate nor inappropriate* provided various, yet similar, justifications for these classifications; see the justifications in (32) to (35). The reasons offered mostly focused on how the reply did not attack, insult, belittle, or offend the main poster. The reply is impersonal and mainly explains Poster-27's perspective. Despite these polite, appropriate, and politic classifications, some respondents highlighted their discontent with Poster-27's use of labels such as 'ali?xwanzi:ah' (members of the Brotherhood group) and 'als'aḥawji:n'(members of the Awakening movement). The categorisation of people in this reply seems to reveal something about the poster's ideological reception of others who find entertainment, women driving cars and attending football matches, to be religiously unacceptable.

(32) Male-61*(polite and appropriate)*

The poster explained why these points are permissible, but he is wrong for classifying whoever is asking for these demands as being influenced by the Brotherhood or Sahwa, because probably the person asking for these demands is just from a conservative family and has no connection to the Brotherhood organisation.

(33) Female-44 (FP3-Maha)*(polite and appropriate)*

The poster did not insult anyone, and the reply was not personalised. The poster used the term ‘ixwangijah’, not ‘mit^ʿa:wṣah’,¹⁰² and it is known that we have political disagreements with the Brotherhood organisation. So, the poster is connecting the issue to politics, not religion. Saudi Arabia [the government] had talked about the danger of this organisation and banned their publications, so, as a Saudi, one should be against the ideologies of the Brotherhood organisation.

(34) Male- 38*(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

The poster did not offend the main poster, but he classified the people who differ from him.

(35) Female-107*(very polite and very appropriate)*

The poster explained his position and did not personally insult the main poster; the poster just stated that certain groups had affected some people’s views.

FP3-Maha’s justification in (33) referred to the religious and political aspects of the claim in the reply. She seems to think that the appropriateness of the reply comes from its compatibility with the country’s position against these ideologies. Her justification shows how the religious and political aspects of the Saudi identity overlap, see Section 8.6.2 for further discussion.

On the other hand, respondents who have more of a negative perception of the reply selected the aligned classifications *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate*; these respondents offered various and somewhat homogeneous justifications. These justifications centred around how the reply was short-sighted and narrow in its focus, making it seem prejudiced. This perceived prejudice is probably caused by the political/religious categorisation of people’s orientation in the reply, which some of these

¹⁰² *mit^ʿa:wṣah* is a colloquial term used to generally refer to religious conservative people whereas *ixwanjah* is a term used to refer to a very conservative political group.

respondents saw as an “attack”, “accusation”, or “stabbing”. To them, Poster-27 seems to implicitly connect the ideology of the main poster and others agreeing with him to the ideology of two groups that are seen as a threat, and, in the case of the Brotherhood, it is classified as a terrorist group. The idea of categorising and labelling others purely because they are not on the same side or have different views could be seen as a personalised attack, targeting particularly individuals’ autonomy. What is also notable here is the invocation of the general overarching religious-identity in (38) in contrast to the national-religious aspect of identity as pointed out in (33); this is discussed further in Section 8.6.2.

(36) Female-93

(impolite and inappropriate)

The reply is based on inaccuracies and lacks objectivity and fairness. This is why I do not like replies like this one.

(37) Male-53 (MP1-Ali)

(impolite and inappropriate)

The reply puts people into categories based on (the poster’s) political whims.

(38) Female-10

(impolite and inappropriate)

Tweets like this should not be responded to or commented on because of the clear bias and inappropriate overgeneralisation that any Muslim should avoid, Saudi or non-Saudi.

(39) Male-79

(very impolite and very inappropriate)

The reply contains accusations, stereotyping and pushing people into categories.

The justifications provided in support of the unaligned classifications of this reply tell a similar story. Respondents who classified the reply as: *polite and very appropriate* and *neither polite nor impolite and (very) appropriate*, provided justifications that are similar to the ones in the aligned classifications seen in (32) to (35). These justifications focused on the absence of cursing and offensive words and how the poster explained the points of disagreement in the MT. Other respondents who chose *polite and inappropriate* provided justification similar to (34) that the reply did not insult the main poster, but it presented a limited view and contained a negative association, which are considered inappropriate. Moreover, the justification for the *neither polite nor impolite and (very) inappropriate* classifications pointed out that the reply is a divergence from the issue in the MT. Additionally, respondents who classified the reply as: *impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, *impolite and very inappropriate*, and *very impolite and inappropriate*

offered similar justifications to those presented in (36) to (39). Respondents' justifications for these unaligned classifications concentrated on the alleged overgeneralisation and accusation seen in the categorisation of others who find entertainment, women driving and going to football stadiums to be incompatible with Islamic teaching. Interestingly, respondents' classification of this disagreement appears to lean towards both ends of the (im)politeness spectrum. It can be argued respondents who chose polite or politic classifications seem to focus more on the part of the argument that women driving and entertainment are essentially permissible in religious terms, but find the categorisation somehow problematic given its negative political-religious connotation. These respondents reflected their agreement in their classifications but pointed out their reservations about the labels used in the reply. On the other hand, respondents who provided negative classifications (i.e. impolite) were more focused on the negative connotations of the categorisation; their strong reaction was reflected in both their classification and justification. There seems to be a connection between such labels and positioning people as either for or against some of the changes happening in the country.

7.3 Mitigated disagreements

Positively modified disagreement, as shown in Chapters 5 and 6, is usually identified based on the existence of mitigation devices, thus rendering the disagreement linguistically positively modified. However, as the analysis in this section reveals, this positive linguistic modification does not necessarily mean that mitigated disagreements will always be judged by all respondents as polite or even politic. Given the overall low frequency of mitigated disagreements in the SAT corpus, this section covers only one example that was classified and evaluated by respondents in the online questionnaire. Example 7.4 shows how the disagreement strategy act combination, which is the most used strategy in the corpus, was used to express a mitigated disagreement and how respondents to the online questionnaire evaluated this mitigated disagreement.

7.3.1 Mitigated disagreement 1: Act combination

Example 7.4 [see MT9 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-4- T2 (R) <POL, PH2.1, Mit.Dis>

لكن في وزراء ما ينفع يكملون 4 سنوات، يعني مثلاً منصب وزير العمل والتجارة والاستثمار والإسكان والإعلام
، هذولي عليهم مسؤولية كبيرة وصعب تنتظر 4 سنوات لين يطلع منه شيء ، ولكن بالمقابل اذا النتائج كانت
ممتازة يستمر لفترة أطول <"مجرد رأي">

lakin fi: wəuza:raʔ ma: jinfaʃ jikamilu:n 4 sanawa:t , jaʔni: maθala:n mansʕib
wazi:r alʕamal wa-altiʒa:rah wa-alistiθma:r wa-aliʔska:n wa-aliʔʕla:m , haðu:li: ʕalei-
hum masuʔu:li:h kibi:rah wa-sʕaʕib tintiðʕir 4 sanawa:t lein jitʕlaʕ minah feiʔ , wa-
lakin bi-lmauqa:bil iða: alnata:ʔʒ ka:nat mumta:zah jistimr li-fatrah ʔtʕwal
<"muzarad rʔi:">

<But> some ministers are not fit to stay 4 years, for example the position of Minister of Commerce and Minister of Labour and Social Development and Minister of Housing and Minister of Media Information, they have a great responsibility and it is difficult to wait 4 years to see what they can achieve, but in return if the results of their work are excellent they can stay longer < “just an opinion.”>

Poster-4's reply consists of an R-move only without initiating any further interaction, but the reply received one like and one retweet, see Example 7.8 for more context. The disagreement is expressed through act combination: a contrary statement (single underlined) and explanation (double underlined). In the corpus analysis, this reply was classified as a mitigated disagreement because of the hedging at the end of the reply, “just an opinion”. Poster-4 used the mitigation to highlight that what has been stated is just a personal opinion, which can be accepted or rejected. The hedging device here is similar to the one discussed in Example 6.5 in the previous chapter. This personalised mitigation is what Caffi (2007, p.268) referred to as “subjectivizers”; the mitigation here aims to protect the poster from fully committing to the presented claim and giving others some room to reject the claim. It can be argued that Poster-4 is trying to protect their quality face from the possibility of being wrong and corrected in a public space, and at the same time, the poster is showing awareness of others' autonomy by not sounding forceful in presenting a personal opinion, thus avoiding imposition.

In addition to the hedging at the end of the reply, there seems to be another mitigation device at the beginning of the reply, seen in the use of “but”, which may imply an implicit partial agreement. It could be that the “but” here is a short form of the partial agreement marker ‘yes, but’. However, in this context, it is most likely just a way to mark the contrary statement. Interestingly, one of the interviewees, FP3-Maha, noted in the

interview that the disagreement here was easily identified because of the ‘but’ at the beginning of the reply. Therefore, using ‘but’ at the beginning of the reply seems to signal Poster-4’s focus on highlighting the disagreement more than expressing an explicit partial agreement with the main poster. In general, it can be argued that the use of the mitigation device at the end of the reply aims to soften the disagreement by reflecting Poster-4’s consideration of equity rights, particularly autonomy-control, which assumes that people should not be unduly controlled or imposed upon (Spencer-Oatey, 2005a; [2000] 2008). Taking into consideration the respondents’ comments below on how Poster-4 was respectful in disagreeing with the main poster, it can also be argued that Poster-4 also shows consideration of association rights, particularly showing appropriate respect to others (Spencer-Oatey, 2005a; [2000] 2008). Poster-4’s reply seems to aim to achieve some degree of balance between a personal want to express a different opinion and the want of the main poster to be respected and not imposed upon.

Only 77 (43.3%) of 178 respondents in the online questionnaire identified the reply as a disagreement; see Figure 5-13 (MT4-R2). Four of the interviewees did not judge the reply as a disagreement, and in the interviews, they provided similar explanations. For these four interviewees, it seems that the use of explanations and providing examples did not make the reply come across as a disagreement. This is seen in MP3-Ahmed’s statement: “There might be a minor disagreement, but it seems to me that the reply is adding or giving more detail, and that is why I could not say it is a disagreement. This is a good reply, and I wish that people respond as such, meaning I see this reply as very polite and appropriate”.

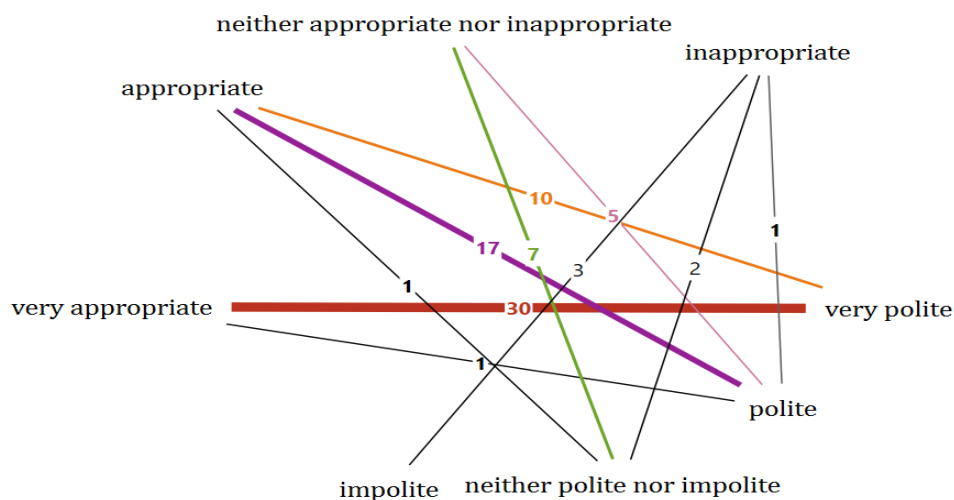


Figure 7-4: Online respondents’ classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 2 — MT4

Overall, when examining respondents' classifications of this reply, as displayed in Figure 7-4, it seems evident that most respondents have a positive perception of the reply, as reflected in the use of mostly positive classifications. Around 61% of the respondents' aligned classifications involve the two classifications *(very) polite and (very) appropriate*, as seen in (40) and (41). The respondents offered various yet homogenous justifications that mostly revolved around the absence of insults or attacks on the other, showing respect, explaining and clarifying a personal view logically, and ending the tweet with "just an opinion". Respondents who classified the tweet as *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, as well as *impolite and inappropriate*, did not provide any justification for their classifications. There were no instances of the *very impolite and very inappropriate* classifications, as displayed in Figure 7-4.

(40) Male-47 *(polite and appropriate)*

The poster clearly stated at the end of the reply this is just an opinion.

(41) Female-35 (FP6-Amani) *(very polite and very appropriate)*

The poster wrote his opinion politely without crossing the lines, showing respect to the main poster, and did not use insulting words to support his opinion.

The unaligned classifications in this example were minimal and also appeared to be positive. Looking at the justifications for the following classifications: *polite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, *polite and very appropriate*, as well as *very polite and appropriate*, they seem similar to the justifications offered by those who classified the reply as *(very) polite and (very) appropriate*.

(42) Male74 *(very polite and appropriate)*

The poster explained and clarified his/her point of view without insulting the main poster and then stated that it was just an opinion.

For the respondents who chose other unaligned classifications, such as *neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate*, as well as *polite and inappropriate*, the justifications provided for both classifications pointed out that the reply was inappropriate mainly because it reflected a lack of knowledge about the legal process of assigning ministers.

(43) Male-22 (MP6-Bander) *(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)*

This poster made me feel like he is the king deciding who to assign or remove. The poster should have looked at the policies, and the legal system followed in assigning ministers and read more about the process.

Even though some of the respondents thought the reply was inappropriate, they did not seem to consider the reply impolite. The overall positive perception of the reply (i.e. polite/politic) is most likely due to the poster's orientation to maintain/enhance the interaction with the target as reflected in the use of the mitigation device at the end of the explanation. The justifications provided for the classifications in this reply may indicate that to some respondents, appropriateness is strongly associated with being factually correct, unlike politeness. Some comments produced by the interviewees made a similar observation to this argument. For instance, MP4- Khalid stated that "politeness is more advanced in tactfulness; it is when we embellish and enhance what we say while appropriateness is brief and plain"; see Section 8.2 for the discussion on the relation between (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness.

7.4 Aggravated disagreements

As shown in Chapter 5 (see Figure 5-6), negatively modified disagreements are usually identified based on the presence of aggravation devices in the disagreement strategy, or the use of disagreement strategies that are always aggravated (verbal attacks and verbal irony/sarcasm), see also the analysis in Chapter 6. In this section, I present and discuss the aggravated disagreement examples in the online questionnaire and how the respondents evaluated the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of these examples. The examples here include the following disagreement strategies: verbal attack (Example 7.5 and Example 7.6), supplication (Example 7.7), contrary statement (Example 7.8 and Example 7.10), and act combination (Example 7.9). The analysis of respondents' evaluations reveals that many respondents perceived these disagreements negatively, except for the disagreement in Example 7.9, which mostly was perceived positively; see the classification table in Table 4-5.

7.4.1 Aggravated disagreements 1: Verbal attack

Example 7.5 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-4-T2 (R/I) <POL,PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

<الله يلغيك ي شيخ> <ع كيف اهلك الغاء> <روح موت وانت الغي نفسك من الوجود واجد افضل>

<allah jilyi:k ja ſeix> <ʕa keif a:halak ilya:ʔ> <ru:h mu:t wa-iʔnt ilyi: nafsak min alwuzu:d wa:ʒid afdʕal >

<May Allah cancel you> <it is not up to your family to demand cancelling> <you go die and cancel yourself from existence that would be much better>

Poster-4's reply expresses an aggravated disagreement directed at the main poster, who posted a list of demands using the hashtag #royal-decrees; see Examples 6.3, 6.8, 6.16, and 7.3 for more context. Poster-4's disagreement generated a thread of replies extending over 8 interactional turns that contained a back-and-forth conversation between Poster-4 and the main poster, and this reply received three likes and two retweets. The main poster listed a set of demands that included nullifying some women's rights, such as driving cars and attending football matches. Poster-4 seems to be triggered by the main poster's list of demands, which leads to launching a verbal attack on him.¹⁰³ The verbal attack contains a combination of aggravation devices, starting by invoking Allah against the other <May Allah cancel you>; Poster-4 employed the same word that the main poster used in the list of demands which is "cancel". In the context of Poster-4's invocation of Allah, the word *cancel* can either mean that Poster-4 wishes for the main poster to perish, or be punished and cancelled from the platform so that he cannot express such views. This was followed by belittling devices <it is not up to your family to demand cancelling>, which is a way of emphasising that the main poster is not in a position that gives him the right to make such demands. Then Poster-4 used a dissociating/dismissing device through the statement: <you go die and cancel yourself from existence that would be much better>. The third device makes it obvious that Poster-4 wishes death upon the main poster and not just being cancelled from the platform. The attack provoked the main poster, who responded by attacking Poster-4; see the entire interaction in Appendix D.

Investigating the thread of replies under the MT reveals that initially, the main poster was active in responding to the replies that expressed disagreements with him. However, the main poster stopped responding to these replies, perhaps because it was time-consuming to respond to these many replies, but most likely because some of his supporters were asking him not to respond and lower himself to the level of those disagreeing and attacking him. For instance, in the interaction between the main poster and Poster-4, another poster posted this reply to the main poster's tweet after T8: "O Prince, do not bother yourself with her, you are in the right".

The interaction between the main poster and Poster-4 seems to offer an instance where neither interlocutors are concerned with maintaining or enhancing rapport. From the beginning, it seems that both interlocutors are impairing the interaction and damaging

¹⁰³ For context, the main poster is a male with over 25 thousand followers while Poster-4 is a female with a little over 120 followers.

each other (rapport challenge orientation). The interaction shows that both interlocutors disregard entirely different aspects of face as well as sociality rights and obligations. In response to Poster-4's personal attack, the main poster responded most likely to defend himself, but such an aggravated defence was not necessarily perceived positively, at least by some of the main poster's supporters who thought that using impoliteness had a negative effect on the image of the main poster and accordingly affected the impact of his MT; see Sections 8.5 and 8.7 for further discussion.

Returning to Poster-4's first reply, only 6 out of the 178 respondents to the online questionnaire found the reply not to express a disagreement, see Figure 5-13 (MT5-R2). None of these respondents were willing to be interviewed, so their reasoning could not be investigated. The other 172 respondents who found the reply to express a disagreement provided different evaluations of the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of the reply; see Figure 7-5. The majority (84.88%) of the respondents chose aligned classifications between the two scales, while the rest chose unaligned classifications. For the group who selected aligned classification, it appears that 97.26% have a negative perception of the reply and classified the reply as *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate*, and around 1.37% thought the reply was *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate* and a similar percentage thought the reply was *polite and appropriate*.

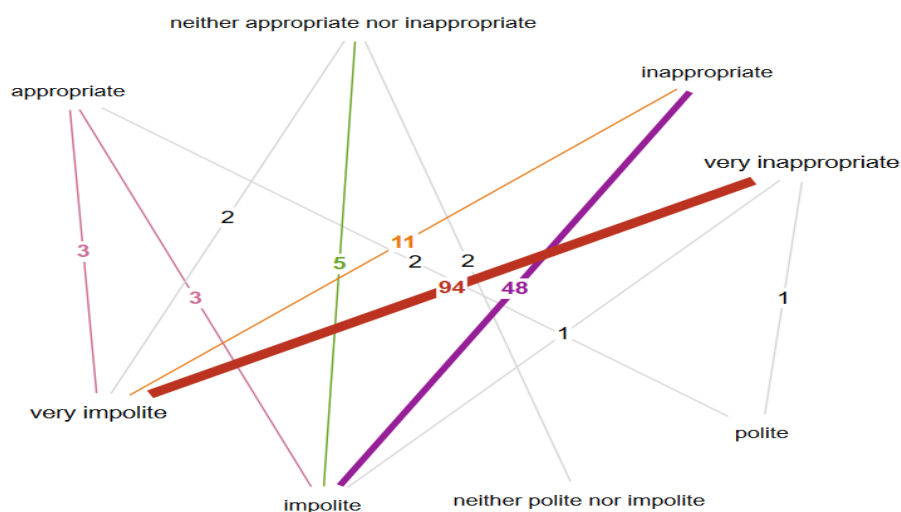


Figure 7-5: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 2 — MT5

Respondents who chose the aligned classifications *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* for the reply provided analogous justifications, as seen below in (44) to (49). Most of these justifications revolved around the notion that invoking Allah against

the other should not be taken lightly, even in the context of disagreements; the personalisation of the aggravation in the reply is perceived as harsh and unacceptable given that the main poster has not personally attacked anyone. To these respondents, targeting the main poster, not the content of the MT, seems to be an issue, especially given how emotionally charged the reply is; see Example 7.2. In addition, respondents seem to find the reply to be encouraging verbal violence and excluding others' voices, which is a feature of what is referred to as 'cancel culture'; see Section 8.7 for a discussion of aggravation on Twitter. Cancel culture, from a social justice perspective, is generally seen as the withdrawal of any kind of support for anyone who is assessed to have said or done something unacceptable or highly problematic (Ng, 2020, p.623).¹⁰⁴

(44) Female-35 (FP6-Amani) *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

To me, it is very disrespectful when someone invokes Allah against the other, especially from behind the screen. Even if there is a disagreement praying against others should not be easily done.

(45) Female-71 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

The reply is very offensive and cancels out the other's voice.

(46) Female-81 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

The reply does not express an exact point, and it seems that the poster is very agitated.

(47) Female-44 (FP3-Maha) *(impolite and inappropriate)*

I am on the side of the poster of the reply, but I find the invocation of Allah against the main poster like this is very aggressive. It does show that the poster strongly rejects the main tweet by attacking the person, not the idea.

(48) Male-66 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

Attacking the main poster without discussing the content of the main tweet or providing a convincing argument.

(49) Male-51 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

Invoking Allah against the main poster is very aggressive.

¹⁰⁴ In other words, cancel culture is described as the "act of withdrawing from someone whose expression whether political, artistic, or otherwise – was once welcome or at least tolerated, but no longer is" (Bromwich, 2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/style/is-it-canceled.html>

On the other hand, respondents who classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, as well as *polite and appropriate*, provided similar justifications as seen in (50) and (51). These justifications reveal that these respondents are more understanding or lenient regarding the poster's aggravated disagreement, mainly because the MT is perceived as a threat to social cohesion, particularly the main poster's views on removing women's rights to have more social freedom. These respondents seem to sanction or approve of Poster-4's impoliteness in replying to the main poster's provocative tweet. In some contexts, like the one here, some interlocutors would find using impoliteness to be legitimate; see Section 8.6.1 for further discussion.

(50) Female-102

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The poster has the right to use strong language when responding to someone who is requesting the cancellation of other people's rights.

(51) Male-33 (MP9-Yusef)

(polite and appropriate)

The goal of the main tweet is to stir up discord. Topics like religion, women's rights, and football are sensitive topics in our society that usually divide people into left or right, and it is impossible not to see clashing views. When someone expresses a point of view that differs from the mainstream mindset, that person chooses to be in that situation, so an attack should be anticipated. At first, the person can be polite over and over again, but then that person will involuntarily move to aggressive defence as well.

As for the justifications provided by respondents who chose unaligned classifications such as *very impolite and inappropriate*, *impolite and very inappropriate*, and *very impolite and appropriate*, it appears that these justifications are similar to the ones presented above in (44) to (49), even the cases of the respondent in (53) who classified the reply as *very impolite and appropriate*. Respondents who chose other classifications were either unclear in their justifications or did not justify their classifications.

(52) Female-1 (FP8- Samar)

(impolite and very inappropriate)

The poster insulted the main poster and did not discuss the content of the main tweet.

(53) Male-39

(very impolite and appropriate)

Invoking Allah against others is unacceptable.

7.4.2 Aggravated disagreements 2: Verbal attack

Example 7.6 [see MT3 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-8-T2 (R) <SOH,SH2.1, Agg.Dis> (verbal attack)

<ما تحاول تظهر إنك منصف تقياً عنصرية>، <انت يا عزيزي الدخيل و ليس القبيلي>، <تقدر تقول "لا حجازي ولا <مستوطن" يرضى بالفئة اللي مثلك>

<Ma: tiħa:wil tið^siħir nafsak mus^snif tataqja? ġuns^siri:h> , < int ja: ġazizi: aldazi:l wa lai:sa algabili: > , tiqdar tugu:l < “ la: ħidġazi: wa-la: mustawt^sin ġird^sa: bi-lfiħ illi: miħilk>

< Don't try to look fair, you spew racism>, <You my dear the intruder not tribal people,> you can say < “no Hijazi nor a settler” accept people like you>

Poster-8 expresses an aggravated disagreement through a verbal attack. The reply consists of an R-move without initiating any further interaction, but it received two likes and six retweets; see Examples 6.10, 6.15, 6.17, and 7.9 for more context. Poster-8 essentially aims to attack the main poster mainly because of the main poster's choice of words, specifically “Hijazi and tribal people participate in the hashtag”. The verbal attack involves several aggravation devices: (1) judgmental language, seen in < *Don't try to look fair, you spew racism*>; (2) personalised insulting language, seen in < *You are, my dear, the intruder, not tribal people*>; and (3) the dissociating/dismissing device, seen in < *no Hijazi nor a settler' accept people like you*>. The combination of these aggravation devices aims to belittle and disparage the main poster; it is an obvious violation of the main poster's face, particularly his social identity face. It also shows a disregard for the main poster's equity and association rights since Poster-8 considers the main poster to be an intruder and not a fellow citizen. The insult in Poster-8's reply is also extended to other Saudis whose families migrated to Saudi Arabia by describing them as < *settlers*>. The disparagement of the main poster is further intensified by stating that he is not accepted not only by the tribal people but even those referred to as settlers, which shows that Poster-8 is dissociating from the main poster and positioning them as an outcast.

As shown in Figure 5-13 (MT2-R2), 154 (86.5%) out of the 178 respondents identified the reply as a disagreement. Around 77.92% of these respondents chose different yet aligned classifications between the scales of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness, while the remaining 22.08% selected different unaligned classifications, as displayed in Figure 7-6. The majority of these respondents found the reply to be (very) *impolite* and (very) *inappropriate* for mostly the same justifications. Only two respondents classified the

reply as *(very) polite and (very) appropriate*, as shown in Figure 7-6, and neither of them provided any justifications or took part in the follow-up interview.

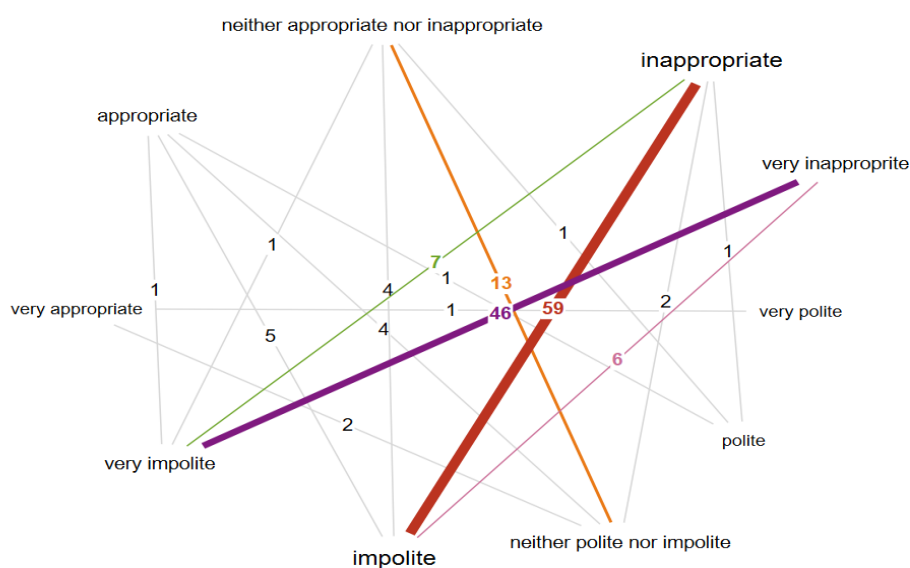


Figure 7-6: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 2 — MT2

The main justifications provided by the respondents who chose *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* classifications were mainly triggered by the personalised, “hurtful”, “belittling”, “racist/tribalist”, and “barbaric” attack on the main poster, see justifications in (54) to (59). These respondents found the reply to be ignoring the main point of the MT and unjustifiably employing racism to launch a direct aggravated attack on the main poster. The aggravation in the reply is considered a breach of religious norms¹⁰⁵ and a violation of social civility. This is an example of intergroup conflict that involves two Saudis: the issue reflects a struggle over identity; see Section 8.6.2 for further discussion. Another significant claim is seen in (55): this respondent pointed out that this aggressively impolite statement is unlikely to be uttered in face-to-face communication. Some

¹⁰⁵ This known as *ʿasʿabijah*, which Islam strongly condemns. It basically refers to the pride one takes in being part of a specific tribe, clan, race, etc and feelings of superiority over others who are not in the same group leading to treating others differently. For example, in Sahih Muslim, Book 45, Hadith 81, it was reported that Prophet Muhammad and his companions were on a journey and they heard a man from the Muha:girjin (meaning immigrant and it refers to people who followed the Prophet’s order to leave Makkah and find refuge in Madinah at the early days of Islam) pushed a man from the Ansʿa:r (people of Madinah who welcomed the immigrant and supported them). In the argument, the man from the Ansʿa:r called out: O Ansʿa:r!, in a way to ask for help from the other Ansʿa:r, and the other man called out O Muhagirjin! Upon hearing that, the Prophet Muhammad said “What are these proclamations of the Days of Ignorance? Leave it (refrain from it), it is rotten”. There are other different religious statements from the Quran and Hadith that condemn *ʿasʿabijah* in all its forms.

respondents seem to believe that things would be said online but not in face-to-face interaction; see Section 8.5 for more discussion. In addition, the perceived misjudgement of the main poster's intention motivated the respondent in (79) to negatively evaluate the disagreement; see Section 8.6.4 for a discussion of intention and (im)politeness.

(54) Female-35 (FP6-Amani) *(impolite and inappropriate)*

I have no problem with the poster's opinion; to each their own views. It was unnecessary to insult the main poster. I think we have a huge problem when we express our opinions; after we say what we think, we go on to insult the other person, 'those like you'.

(55) Female-33 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The reply is racist and twists the topic of the discussion to attack the main poster himself. Opinions like this one probably would not be expressed face to face.

(56) Female-79 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The poster misjudged the main poster and based their reply on what they thought/assumed the main poster's intention was.

(57) Male-49 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

The poster's attitude is very uncivilised, barbaric and ignorant. You would hope that people like this poster cease to exist. What is the point of being a tribal person with no morals?

(58) Male-58 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

The word 'settler' is racist, and it attacks the main poster's national identity.

(59) Male-7 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

This reply encourages racism, which is forbidden in our religion as well as in other religions/societies.

Respondents who selected unaligned classifications provided justifications that are mostly similar to the ones presented above as in (60) and (61), with the exception seen in the justifications of respondents who classified the reply as *impolite and appropriate* or *very impolite and appropriate*, as seen in (62). These respondents acknowledge the level of impoliteness in the reply but still find it appropriate, mainly because they find it matches the level of impoliteness in the MT. For other unaligned classifications, such as *polite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, *polite and inappropriate*, and *polite and appropriate*, the respondents who chose these classifications did not provide any

justifications in their responses and were not interviewed as they had not agreed to participate in the follow-up interviews.

(60) Male-68 *(impolite and very inappropriate)*

The main tweet advocates against racism, and on the contrary, the reply is racist and horribly written.

(61) Male-10 *(impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

The reply is unnecessarily reckless and aggressive. Instead, the poster could have clarified his/her point and advised the main poster.

(62) Female-99 *(impolite and appropriate)*

The main tweet is infuriating, and the reply is on the same level of infuriation.

7.4.3 Aggravated disagreements 3: Supplication

Example 7.7 [see MT1 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-81-T2 (R) <SOC,SH1.1, Agg.Dis>

سبحان الله ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله العلي العظيم <في قلوبهم مرض فزادهم الله مرضا>

subḥā:n allah wa-la: ḥawla wa-la: quwata iʔlla: bi-alla:h alʕli: alʕḏʕi:m <fi: qulu:bihim mardʕ faza:dahum allah mardʕa:>

Glory be to Allah and there is no might or power except with Allah the Most High and Great < there is a disease [spiritual turmoil/lack of faith] in their hearts so Allah added to their disease>

Poster-81 expresses an aggravated disagreement in an R-move only, and the reply did not receive any likes or retweets; see Examples 6.13, 6.26, and 7.2 for more context. The disagreement is expressed through the supplication strategy as Poster-81 employed solely religious expressions. The religious expression “Glory to Allah”, as shown in Example 6.13, can be used religiously to remember Allah as a form of worship, and pragmatically to signal different exclamatory emotional reactions ranging from surprise, shock, astonishment, or admiration depending on the context. Then Poster-81 used “there is no might or power except with Allah”, which is one way to remember Allah, and it can be used in some contexts to express frustration and disappointment. It is most likely that Poster-81 is expressing a disagreement by highlighting their astonishment and disappointment with the MT and its content. The supplication is aggravated by the use of judgmental language at the end of the reply. The judgmental device consists of the

intertextual use of a part verse quoted from the Quran;¹⁰⁶ the verse was used to pass a negative judgment probably of the man in the video attached to the MT. It targets the man's faith since he requested the lecturer to turn off the external loudspeakers because he was trying to sleep. It might also target the main poster, who seems to sympathise and align with the man in the video. Using the verse here to judge the targets' faith is a good example of how religious texts can be used intertextually to aggravate and accentuate impoliteness; see Section 8.6.3 for further discussion. The use of religious texts in this reply can be seen as a way to legitimise the impoliteness/inappropriateness of the disagreement directed at the target; the religious text is used to sanction the impoliteness (Alzidjaly, 2019, p.1052).

Looking at how respondents evaluated this reply, it appears that 160 (89.9%) out of 178 respondents found the reply to express a disagreement, see Figure 5-13 (MT1-R1). None of the 18 respondents who did not identify the reply as a disagreement were further questioned about their reasoning because none of them agreed to be interviewed. As for the other 160 respondents who found the reply to express a disagreement, they provided different classifications for the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the reply, as displayed in Figure 7-7. Overall, 61.9% of these respondents chose aligned classifications, while 38.1% provided unaligned classifications.

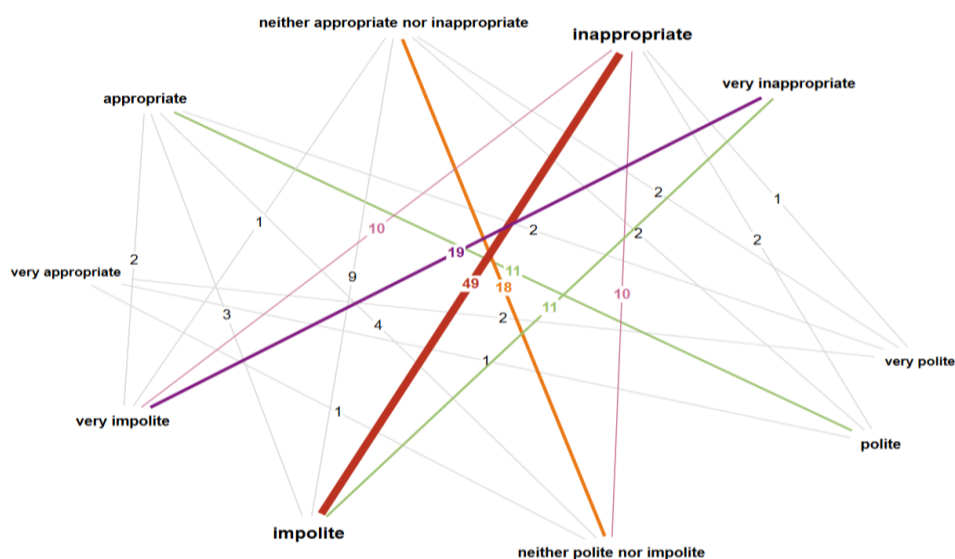


Figure 7-7: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 1 — MT1

¹⁰⁶ The complete verse is: *(There is sickness in their hearts, and Allah only lets their sickness increase. They will suffer a painful punishment for their lies)* Al-Baqarah, Chapter 2, Verse 10, Translation by Dr. Mustafa Khattab: <https://quran.com/2>

Respondents who chose the aligned classifications *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* presented similar justifications that primarily focused on how the reply was very judgmental and cast doubt on the target's faith without knowing them or knowing the circumstances of the incident. The intertextual use of the Quranic verse to express a judgmental disagreement is seen as an aggravated and unfair accusation. This unfairness is probably the result of the belief that judging someone's faith is not considered a human responsibility, but rather a divine one.

(63) Female-89

(impolite and inappropriate)

The poster judged the man's religious commitment and accused him of lacking faith by saying that he suffers from a heart illness [suffering spiritual turmoil]. The poster does not know the man and his circumstances and what caused him to behave this way. The poster unfairly judges the man without trying to be in his shoes.

(64) Female-1

(impolite and inappropriate)

The poster judged the man's faith by saying he suffers from spiritual turmoil; no one has the right to judge one's faith except Allah.

(65) Male-22

(very impolite and very inappropriate)

The poster began the reply with supplication and then used a verse taken from Surat Al-Baqarah, which essentially describes hypocrites. This is a serious accusation, and it is not acceptable. Also, the poster focused on the man but never commented on the lecturer's mistake.

(66) Female-102

(very impolite and very inappropriate)

No one has the right to accuse others of suffering spiritual turmoil just because they disagree with them.

On the other hand, respondents who classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate* explained that they preferred not to evaluate the reply, mainly because of the religious nature of the topic. The other reason is that the reply did not contain insulting and offensive language, and the Quranic verse was used indirectly; hence it was not perceived as impolite or inappropriate.

(67) Male-95

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

This topic is very religious and I would like to stay neutral in my opinion.

(68) Female-93

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The poster did not use swear words or insults and only used a Quranic verse indirectly.

In addition, the justifications provided by respondents who chose the aligned classifications *(very) polite and (very) appropriate* offered similar reasons to the ones presented in (68), mainly concentrated on the absence of direct insults and offensive words. Also, some of these respondents claim that the use of religious text in expressing a disagreement does not render the disagreement impolite/inappropriate. It seems that the sacred status of the source text is given more value than its intertextual use in the context of this disagreement; this is discussed further in Section 8.6.3.

(69) Female-91

(polite and appropriate)

The disagreement is expressed succinctly and eloquently in a religious manner.

(70) Female-98

(very polite and very appropriate)

The poster used the word of Allah to express disagreement.

Examining the unaligned classifications, it appears that respondents who have more of a negative perception of the reply chose classifications such as: *neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate; very impolite and inappropriate; impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate; and very impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*. Their justifications generally seem to be similar to those in (63) to (66). Respondents pointed out the misuse of religious text to pass unfair judgments on others, particularly judging someone's faith or intention. These respondents find the reply to be violating sociality rights, especially the man's freedom to ask the lecturer to lower the volume of the loudspeakers during a religious lecture so that he can sleep at his home without disruption.

(71) Female-99

(very impolite and inappropriate)

Mainly the reply categorises others and judges their intention.

(72) Male-31(MP5-Nawaf)

(impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The Quranic verse refers to something very specific, and the poster seems to be using the verse to describe the man in the video as someone who lacks faith and it judges his intention. So, the reply contains an accusation, judgment of others' intentions, and misinterpretation and misuse of the Quran.

(73) Male-21*(very impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

The man asked for one of his rights, and the reply is an infringement on the man's rights. Also, the reply exploits the Quranic verse to serve the poster's whims.

(74) Male-30(MP4-Khalid)*(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)*

I do not find the behaviour in the video proper, but the reply is irrelevant to the content of the main tweet.

Other unaligned classifications, such as *neither polite nor impolite and appropriate*, *very polite and appropriate*, and *polite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, have an overall more positive or politic perception of the reply. The respondents who chose these classifications provided justifications that are similar to those in (67) to (70). The focus is on the absence of direct insults and offensive language and the use of Allah's words to express disagreements.

(75) Female-85*(very polite and appropriate)*

The reply did not contain offensive words or attack the man; it only mentioned Allah.

(76) Female-66*(neither polite nor impolite and appropriate)*

The use of *alḥawqalah*¹⁰⁷ is good in such situations.

7.4.4 Aggravated disagreements 4: Contrary statement**Example 7.8** [see MT9 in Section 4.2.1]**Poster-47-T2 (R)** <POL, PH2.1, Agg.Dis >

معروف من زمان ان دورة مجلس الوزراء ٤ سنوات ، هذا من النظام الاساسي للحكم ما تغير ، <بس لازم
الفلسفة ف حسابكم>

maʕru:f min zama:n in dawrat maʕzlis alwəuza:ra? 4 sanawa:t , haða: min alniðʕa:m
ala:sa:si: li-lḥukm ma: tyajar , < bas la:zim alfalsafah fi ḥisa:bkum >

It has been known for a long time that the cabinet session is 4 years, this is the fundamental system of the government and it has not changed, <But your account has to get philosophical>

Poster-47 expressed an aggravated disagreement through a contrary statement consisting of an R-move, and it received no likes or retweets; see Example 7.4 for more context.

¹⁰⁷ See Example 6.25.

Poster-47's reply negates the claim in the MT by asserting that the alleged new legislative law is already known and that nothing has changed regarding the period ministers can stay in their positions. Poster-47's contrary statement is followed by a dismissive device <your account has to get philosophical>, which aims to humiliate the account holder for trying to appear knowledgeable or informative. The MT was reporting on one of the new royal decrees announced in late 2018 that involved new legislation regarding the length of term for the Council of Ministers. Ministers used to serve 10 years on the council, but the new law reduced it to a 4-year term.

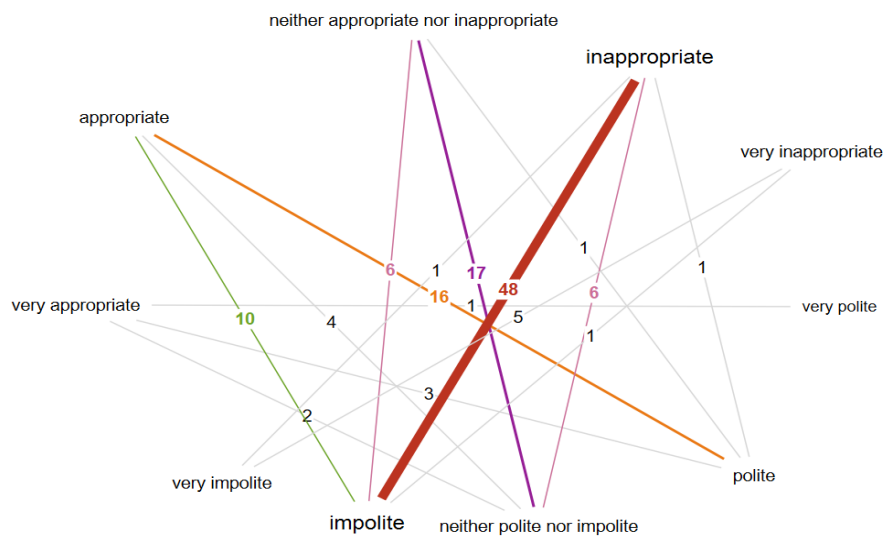


Figure 7-8: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 1 — MT4

Looking at how the reply was classified and evaluated by the respondents, Figure 5-13 (MT4-R1) reveals that 68.5% of respondents, that is 122 out of 178, identified the reply as a disagreement. I was able to ask two of the interviewees who did not identify the reply as a disagreement about their reasoning, and they provided similar explanations. They referred to the fact that both posters (the main poster and the poster of the reply) stated that ministers are given a 4-year term in their positions. It seems that some of these respondents were more focused on both posters mentioning the same number of years without paying full attention to the whole context. In fact, one of these two interviewees, MP-9 Yusef, stated: "Now that I think about it, it does sound like a disagreement, and the last part is slightly inappropriate compared to the <it is not up to you> in the other example", he is referring to Example 7.9 below.

The examination of the classifications chosen for this reply shows that 71.31% of the respondents who identified the reply as a disagreement selected aligned classification,

while 28.69% selected unaligned classifications, see Figure 7-8. Respondents who chose the two aligned classifications *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* essentially focused on how the poster of the reply aimed to mock or ridicule the main poster, which is perceived negatively even if the poster was trying to share what is considered the correct information.

(77) Female-89 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The poster could have explained and clarified the point without belittling the main poster.

(78) Male-79 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The poster could have clarified and corrected the information without adding unnecessary words at the end of the reply.

(79) Male-22(MP6-Muath) *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

Ridiculing others like this cannot be acceptable.

(80) Male-72 *very impolite and very inappropriate*

The poster is attempting to mock the main poster.

On the other hand, respondents who chose these aligned classifications *(very) polite and (very) appropriate* were focused on how the reply aimed to correct what is perceived as incorrect information. Some of these respondents seem to overlook the existence of the dismissive device and find that using aggravation in responding to some accounts is necessary to prevent others from being misled, and think this is one of the ways that should be used to debunk misinformation.

(81) Male-63 *(polite and appropriate)*

The poster corrected the main poster and told the truth so that no one is misinformed.

(82) Female-103 *(very polite and very appropriate)*

Some accounts deserve this type of good silencing.

Moreover, respondents who classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate* recognised the poster's attempt to correct what is seen as misinformation, but because of the poster's use of *<But your account has to get*

philosophical>, respondents seemed to find it difficult to choose a polite classification for the reply, such as *polite and appropriate*.

(83) Male-49

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The reply was good but the phrase 'get philosophical' made me choose neutral.

In addition, respondents who chose unaligned classifications such as *neither polite nor impolite and (very) appropriate* as well as *polite and very appropriate* have a positive perception of the reply, as shown in (81) and (82). These respondents were focused on the act of refuting what is seen as misinformation while ignoring or underestimating the existence of the dismissive device.

(84) Male-31 (MP5-Nawaf)

(neither polite nor impolite and appropriate)

There is a slight harshness in the reply, but it is acceptable since it is not a personalised insult.

Some of the respondents who had more of a negative perception of the reply chose other unaligned classifications such as *very impolite and inappropriate*, and *neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate*. To these respondents, it seems that the poster of the reply is expressing a disagreement as a way to validate that they have a voice, even when they are not adding valuable information.

(85) Male-7

(very impolite and inappropriate)

The poster did not discuss the point but instead commented mostly to ridicule the main poster.

(86) Female-80

(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)

The poster's reply is a disagreement just for the sake of expressing a disagreement.

7.4.5 Aggravated disagreements 5: Act combination

Example 7.9 [see MT3 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-44-T2 (R) <SOH,SH2.1, Agg.Dis>

والله اني امقت العنصرية و اشوف الكل يمثل نفسه بدينه و خلقه <بس للحق مو كيفك> تصنف حجز و
قبائل كأن الحجاز ماهي قبائل<!!>

wa-allah ini: a:mqut alʕunsʕiri:h wa-a:fu:f alkul jimaθil nafsah bi-di:nah wa xuluquh <bas li-
lhaq mu: kerfak> tisʕanif hidziz wa qaba:jil wa-ka?: alhidzaz ma: hi: qaba:ʔl <!!>

By God, I detest racism, and I see everyone represent themselves with their religion and
morals,< but for the sake of truth it is not up to you> to classify people into Hijazi and tribes,
as if there are no Hijazi tribes<!!>

Poster-44 expresses an aggravated disagreement through the use of act combination: explanation and exclamation. The disagreement consists of an R-move without initiating any further interaction, but the reply received three retweets; see Examples 6.10, 6.15, 6.17, 6.19, and 7.6 for more context. Poster-44 starts with a short explanation to clarify their position towards racism in general and stresses that one’s moral and religious behaviours are reflections of oneself. Probably this to say that those participating in the #hijaz-identity hashtag and expressing racist and patronising views are only speaking for themselves, not the whole population. The explanation further shows that the poster believes that the main poster was wrong in his categorisation of people into “Hijazi and tribal people”. The explanation of personal stance is followed by an exclamation that clearly shows the poster’s astonishment and rejection of the main poster’s choice of words. The explanation was aggravated by the use of a judgmental device <but for the sake of truth it is not up to you>, which reflects Poster-44’s negative perception of separating the Hijazi and tribal aspects of identity, thus stripping the Hijazi identity away from tribal people from the Hijaz region. The exclamation in the reply is aggravated by the use of paralinguistic cues — the double exclamation marks — that may depict the poster’s intensified sense of astonishment or his strong rejection of the main poster’s categorisation.

Turning the focus to how respondents evaluated this disagreement in the online questionnaire, Figure 5-13 (MT2-R1) shows that the reply received different classifications from 133 respondents who identified the reply as a disagreement. Generally, looking at these classifications as displayed in Figure 7-9, it appears that 68.42% are aligned classifications, whereas 31.57% are unaligned classifications.

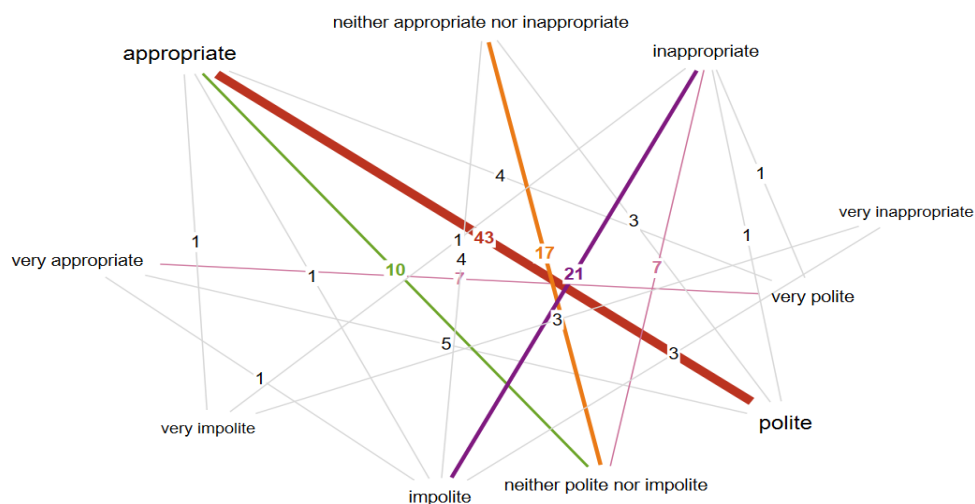


Figure 7-9: Online respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 1—MT2

The justifications provided for the aligned classifications *(very) polite and (very) appropriate*, are similar in their focus. These respondents centred on the absence of offensive words and personalised attacks directed at the main poster. Some of these respondents pointed out that the reply would have been better if the expression <it is not up to you> was not used, but using it here did not reduce the reply to being seen as impolite/inappropriate; see justifications in (87) to (90). In addition, some of these respondents were focused on how the reply was logical and matched the level or tone of the MT.

(87) Female-35

(polite and appropriate)

There is no accusation directed at anyone and there are no offensive words used. The poster expressed his opinion honestly.

(88) Male-49

(polite and appropriate)

It is an appropriate reply, but it would have been better if the poster avoided using <it is not up to you>, and instead clarified that Hijaz contains both tribal people */qabali/* and non-tribal families */had^sari/*.

(89) Female-37

(very polite and very appropriate)

The reply fairly and logically responded to the issue in the main tweet.

(90) Male-72

(very polite and very appropriate)

The poster is polite because he/she did not use hurtful language.

Likewise, respondents who classified the reply as *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate* pointed out that the disagreement started well but ended inappropriately or impolitely because of the use of <it is not up to you>. It seems that the use of the aggravation devices at the end of the reply made it challenging for these respondents to classify the reply positively, so they leaned towards classifying it as politic.

(91) Female-133

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

I think the poster attempted to be polite at first, then kind of got irritated by the main poster's words, especially his separation between Hijazi and tribal.

(92) Male-50

(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The poster expressed their loathing of racism but then scoffed at the main poster.

On the other hand, respondents who chose the aligned classifications *impolite and inappropriate* mainly focused on how the expression <it is not up to you> is disrespectful and aggressive. These respondents were more focused on how the poster had the option to be "nice" and "respectful" but chose the opposite. Respondents who selected that last aligned classification, which is *very impolite and very inappropriate*, did not offer any justifications.

(93) Male-22 (MP6-Bader)

(impolite and inappropriate)

The expression 'it is not up to you' is disrespectful. The poster could have politely and respectfully stated that the people of Hijaz refer to both the tribes and the other families.

(94) Female-82

(impolite and inappropriate)

The poster could have been nicer and avoided using 'it is not up to you'.

Furthermore, the analysis of unaligned classifications reveals that the respondents who selected classifications such as *polite and very appropriate* and *very polite and appropriate* generally positively perceived the reply and provided analogous justifications to those in (87) to (90). Interestingly, the respondent in (95) appears to be trying to have good faith in the poster's good intention and assuming that the expression "it is not up to you" is an unintended mistake mainly because the reply is generally perceived to be positive; see Section 8.6.4.

(95) Female-1 (FP8-Samar)*(polite and very appropriate)*

The reply is not attacking or belittling anyone; the only issue with it is the use of 'it is not up to you', which probably is a misspoken/miswritten expression mainly because the reply is generally good and aims to notify the main poster of his mistake.

(96) Female-86*(very polite and appropriate)*

The poster did not offend or insult the main poster and only expressed a polite disagreement with the way Hijazi and tribal are separated.

Other respondents who have more of a negative perception of the reply chose classifications such as *neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate*, as well as *impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, and *impolite and very inappropriate*. These justifications are similar to the ones in (91) to (94). The respondents here seem to find a contradiction in the poster's reply. The poster pointed out their rejection of racism/tribalism but then seemed to be trying to clarify what is the proper categorisation. Moreover, some respondents commented on how the reply seems to miss the key point of the MT, which is the call for being united, as seen at the end of the MT, "one nation, and one religion".

(97) Female- 81*(neither polite nor impolite and inappropriate)*

The reply is self-contradictory as it talks about despising racism but then goes on to stress the importance of the right categorisation of Hijazi tribal and Hijazi non-tribal and such categorisation is racist in itself.

(98) Female-106*(impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

The poster could have asked for clarification in a better way without being racist, which they claim is something that they despise. The use of 'it is not up to you' in the disagreement made the poster fall into the trap of being patronising. The poster could have chosen not to respond because the main poster's tweet was clear.

(99) Male-79*(impolite and very inappropriate)*

The reply is off-topic, in fact, the main poster is not advocating racism.

7.4.6 Aggravated disagreements 6: Contrary statement

Example 7.10 [see MT11 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-26-T2 (R) <POL,PH3.1, Agg.Dis,>

وعين الرضا عن كل عيب كذيلة
ولكن عين السخط تبدي المساويا
<اللي تافهين وحقيرين ومخربين انتم كنتم ومازلتم> واما السعوديين سند العرب والمسلمين وعونهم في كل
ملمة فكانوا ولازالو وسيظلون الأفضل <وخير منكم ياناشرين الخراب والدمار في كل الوطن العربي>

wa-ʕem alridʕa: ʕan kul ʕerb kali:lah
wa-lakin ʕem alsuxtʕ tubdi: almasa:wja:
<illi: ta:fhi:n wa-ħaqiri:n wa-mixaribi:n ʔntum kuntum wa-ma:ziltum> wa-ʔma:
alsuʕu:dii:n sanad alʕarab wa-almuslimi:n wa-ʕawnuhum fi: kul mulimmah fa-ka:nu:
wa-la:za:lu: wa-sajaðʕalu:n alʔfdʕal <wa-xeir minkum ja: na:ʕiri:n alxara:b wa-
aldama:r fi: kul alwatʕan alʕarabi:>

A content eye is blind to every flaw
but a discontent eye sees every flaw
<You were and still are insignificant and sordid and destructive> but the Saudis were
are and will remain the supporters of Arabs and Muslims in every crisis and they will
remain the best <and better than you> <you spreaders of ruin and destruction to all the
Arab world>

Poster-26 expresses an aggravated disagreement with the MT; the reply consists of an R-remove without initiating any further interaction. The reply received one like and one retweet; see Examples 6.6 and 7.1 for more context. The disagreement is expressed through a contrary statement that begins with a couplet from a well-known classical poem by Imam Alshafi'ee.¹⁰⁸ These first two lines of the poem describe how a satisfied and happy person tends not to observe the flaws of others, but once the person is dissatisfied and unhappy, they tend to find the tiniest flaws. Most likely Poster-26 is implying that because of the political issue between the two neighbouring countries (Saudi Arabia and Qatar) at that time, the Qatari main poster seems to be looking for flaws in what Saudis write on Twitter. The aggravation in the reply above is seen in the use of intensified insulting and patronising language in <insignificant, sordid, and destructive> and <you spreaders of ruin and destruction> as well as the dissociation from the others in <and better than you>. The aggravation here shows a deviation from the generally advocated

¹⁰⁸ Imam Muhammad ibn Idrees Alshafi'ee (767 C.E – 820 C.E) was a theologian, writer, and scholar, who was one of the first contributors to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. He was also the founder of one of the four schools of jurisprudence in Islam, known as Shafi'ee School.

social norms seen in mottos such as “our Gulf is one”¹⁰⁹ and how the conflict between the two countries was considered to be “a fight between brothers”.¹¹⁰

Examining how the reply was classified and evaluated by the respondents, Figure 5-13 (MT3-R1) revealed that the reply was identified as a disagreement by 153 respondents, while 25 did not find the reply to express a disagreement. I was not able to investigate this further because none of these 25 respondents was willing to be interviewed. As for the respondents who identified the reply as a disagreement, they provided different classifications of the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of the reply, as displayed in Figure 7-10. Around 67.97% of the respondents chose aligned classifications, whereas 32.03% of them chose unaligned classifications.

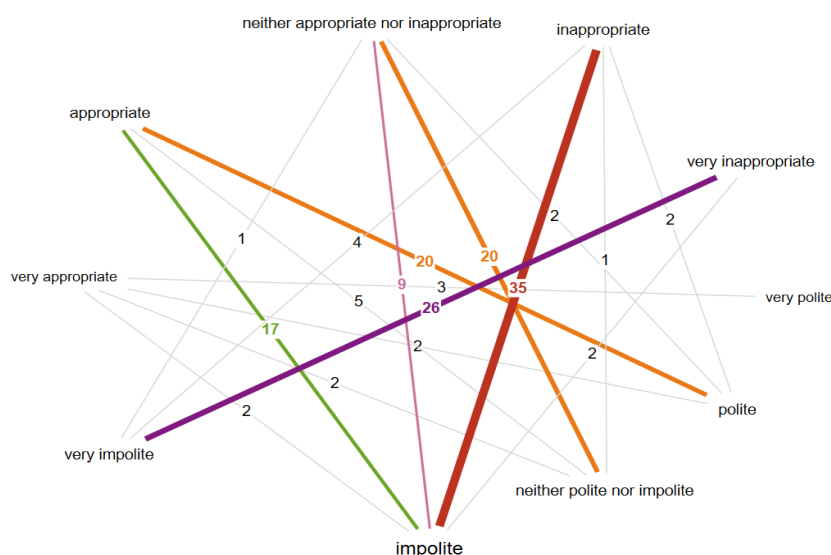


Figure 7-10: Online respondents’ classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Reply 1 — MT3

Respondents who perceived the reply negatively and chose the aligned classifications *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* provided similar justifications. These justifications focused on how the impoliteness/inappropriateness of the MT simply prompted the impoliteness and inappropriateness in the reply. However, they still seem to find responding to impoliteness with impoliteness as “uncivilised” and unacceptable

¹⁰⁹ The motto is inspired by an iconic song that was written by the Kuwaiti poet Abdulateef Albanai in 1984 celebrating the 5th meeting of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) that took place in Kuwait. The GCC members are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

¹¹⁰ This phrase was used by the Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman in an interview with Graeme Wood in The Atlantic, see: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/04/mohammed-bin-salman-saudi-arabia-palace-interview/622822/>

behaviour, even when impoliteness seems to be used as a defence. Other respondents pointed out that the reply is irrelevant, accusatory in its tone, and that it overgeneralises the accusations.

(100) Male-31 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The main poster was impolite, even though one should not respond to an offence with another offence.

(101) Male-101 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

The reply is impolite and irrelevant, but it is not odd since the main tweet itself is impolite.

(102) Female-81 *(impolite and inappropriate)*

Although the main poster lacks politeness, his opinion was limited to Saudis who are Twitter users and did not say much about the political aspects of the issue that he should be attacked in this way.

(103) Female-12 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

I think the poster's reply and the language used in defending the country are very uncivilised.

(104) Female-51 *(very impolite and very inappropriate)*

The reply is filled with accusations and terrible overgeneralisation.

Moreover, respondents who chose the aligned classifications *neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate* appear to be focused on two main lines of reasoning. The first is that the impoliteness of the MT makes it impossible to respond without being impolite; these respondents seem to find it challenging to evaluate the reply as impolite/inappropriate since the MT is also seen as impolite/inappropriate. The second reason is that respondents who chose this classification did so to avoid evaluating the reply, given their perception of the sensitivity of the issue.

(105) Female-82 *(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

The main tweet contains offensive language, and it is impossible to respond to it without being offensive.

(106) Male-51 (MP7-Muath) *(neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)*

To be honest, this is a very sensitive topic!

In addition, respondents who classified the reply as *(very) polite and (very) appropriate* seem to have a more positive perception of the reply. In fact, these respondents are aware of the impoliteness in the reply but find it justifiable because it is used as a defence. Overall, these respondents overlook the impoliteness of the reply given its nature as a counter offence. The MT had set a high threshold for impoliteness, hence making the impoliteness of the reply be perceived as polite and appropriate by some respondents, as seen below in (107) to (109). This finding falls in line with the argument about how the threshold of impoliteness influences the perception and reciprocity of impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011a, p.206); see Section 8.6.1.

(107) Male-66 *(polite and appropriate)*

The reply has to be strong and hurtful just like the main poster's tweet.

(108) Male-45 *(polite and appropriate)*

The reply is polite and appropriate because it classifies the poster's position and how they defend their country.

(109) Female-63 *(very polite and very appropriate)*

The way the reply is written matches the level of the main tweet. This is how you respond to this type of people.

Respondents who chose other unaligned classifications, such as *very impolite and inappropriate*, provided similar justifications as those in (100) to (104). The argument here is that the impoliteness of the main poster cannot justify the use of impoliteness and inappropriateness in the reply.

(110) Female-35 (FP6-Amani) *(very impolite and inappropriate)*

I do not understand this heinous offensive attack! The poster could have defended the country differently. To me, this is a very rude reply.

In contrast, those respondents who perceived the reply more positively chose other unaligned classifications, such as *polite and very appropriate* and *neither polite nor impolite and very appropriate*.

(111) Male-50 *(polite and very appropriate)*

When the target is your homeland, then there is no room for courtesy.

(112) Male-11

(neither polite nor impolite and very appropriate)

The main poster used ignorant language when he overgeneralised, and the poster of the reply responded in a style matching that level. Indeed, we are not perfect, and I do not like it when people think that the people of their country are flawless and do no wrong.

Others who acknowledged the level of impoliteness in the reply but also perceived it positively chose classifications such as, *impolite and appropriate*; *impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate*; as well as *impolite and very appropriate*. Overall, they have similar reasons to those expressed in (105) and (107) to (109), which focused on how the poster was defending their country and their people as well as matching the level of impoliteness/inappropriateness of the MT. Some of these respondents appear to flag the impoliteness in their classifications of the reply. However, given the level of impoliteness and aggravation in the MT, they still find the reply appropriate. This shows that in some contexts, reactive impoliteness or aggravation can be considered appropriate by some individuals (Culpeper, 2011a, p.206).

(113) Male-34

(impolite and appropriate)

The impoliteness of the reply goes in line with the main tweet.

(114) Male-79

(impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate)

The main poster launched an attack, so the poster has to reply in the same manner.

7.5 Summary and conclusion

As this study follows a discursive approach to (im)politeness in Twitter disagreement, in this chapter, I primarily focused on examining Saudi respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the ten Twitter disagreements presented in the online questionnaire. The respondents' evaluations were supplemented by the comments obtained from those who participated in the follow-up interview. The evaluations of these participants, who are lay observers of Twitter disagreements, provided insight into their understandings of the social order from which they derive their expectations of what is perceived to be (im)polite/(in)appropriate in Twitter disagreements in this cultural context.

The analysis in this chapter has illustrated that the realisation of Twitter disagreements was not always straightforward. The ten replies in this chapter were identified as disagreements in the corpus; however, some respondents in the online questionnaire did not recognise these replies as disagreements. Respondents' realisations of Twitter disagreement seem to vary based on their understanding of the context of each MT and how they related the replies to the MT and the identity of the target. Also, respondents' perceptions of the disagreements in terms of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness seem to be affected by what they notice, and how they judge the formulation of the reply within its context. For example, the disagreements in Examples 7.8 and 7.9 were recognised by some respondents as linguistically negatively modified disagreements because of the aggravation devices used, but respondents' treatment of this modification differed based on how they understood the context. The influence of context on respondents' recognition of linguistic modification can also be seen in the disagreements in Examples 7.1 and 7.2, which were linguistically unmodified as there were no mitigation or aggravation devices in these two disagreements. In Example 7.2, for instance, some respondents found the reply to be excessively emotional, which they perceived negatively in the given context. This shows that the linguistic structure of the disagreement can provide some indicators that seem to assist respondents in evaluating (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. Nonetheless, context plays a crucial part in how these modified and unmodified disagreements are perceived; this is discussed further in the next chapter.

Moreover, the analysis revealed a variability in respondents' classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the ten Twitter disagreements; this variability, according to discursive approaches like the relational work model, is expected. Interestingly, examining respondents' classifications (aligned and unaligned) uncovered that even when respondents choose different classifications, the justifications (i.e. rationales) they provided can be similar — for instance, the disagreement in Example 7.5 is a negatively modified disagreement, which respondents classified differently. However, the justifications provided by respondents who classified the reply as polite/politic by choosing *neither polite nor impolite* and *neither appropriate nor inappropriate*, as well as *polite and appropriate*, provided similar justifications. The justifications provided by respondents who classified the reply as impolite by choosing *very impolite and inappropriate*, *impolite and very inappropriate*, and *very impolite and appropriate* were not that different from the justifications provided for the classifications *(very) impolite and (very) inappropriate* see Table 4-5. Therefore, there appears to be no

one-to-one relationship between respondents' classifications and their justifications; it is respondents' justifications that reveal more about the ideological process through which they reach such evaluations.

Chapter 8 Discussion

This study offers both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of disagreement as social behaviour in Twitter communication among Saudis. The quantitative analysis in Chapter 5 explored the types of disagreement and strategies used to express disagreements on Twitter, and the linguistic devices used to mitigate or aggravate these disagreements. The qualitative analysis investigated the discursive struggle over (im)politeness in Saudis' disagreements from a researcher's perspective, seen in the corpus analysis in Chapter 6, and from lay observers' perspective, seen in the analysis of respondents' metapragmatic comments on the examples of Twitter disagreements in Chapter 7.

This chapter starts by summarising the main findings of the corpus analysis, as shown in Table 8-1. The discussion in Section 8.1 aims to address the first research question, focusing on the key features of Twitter disagreements in the SAT corpus. This section is divided into four subsections: Section 8.1.1 discusses the three types of disagreements identified in the corpus based on the linguistic modification of the disagreement structures. Section 8.1.2 covers the main findings regarding the disagreement strategies used by Saudis and how labelling these strategies as polite, impolite, and politic has proven to be challenging. Section 8.1.3 focuses on the role of mitigation and aggravation devices in categorising disagreements. In this section, I also addressed how mitigation devices can sometimes perform different pragmatic functions, such as amplifying the mocking tone of a disagreement or attempting to repair the damage caused by aggravation. Section 8.1.4 addresses the lack of responses to disagreements in my data realised in the limited occurrences of T3 replies.

The discussion from Section 8.2 to Section 8.5 aims to address the second research question, which seeks to find out more about Saudis' conceptualisation of (im)politeness, particularly in relation to Twitter communication. In Section 8.2, I looked at Saudis' conceptualisations of (im)politeness and its connection to (in)appropriateness. This motivates the discussion in Section 8.3, where I look at some of the metapragmatic labels that were used in the online questionnaire. Moreover, in addressing the second research question, I discussed the variability in respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the Twitter disagreements, and how sometimes there seems to be inconsistency in these evaluations (Section 8.4). The analysis also led to examining the potential factors that might have impacted the respondents' evaluations in Section 8.5.

Additionally, the discussion in Section 8.6 aims to address the third research question by identifying some of the key resources that Saudis made use of when performing (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements. Section 8.6 is divided into four subsections, each covering one of the four resources: the level of (im)politeness in the targeted post (i.e. triggering event); different identity constructions; using authoritative texts (i.e. intertextuality); and the role of intention perception. The discussion in Section 8.7 is motivated by the discussions in the previous sections that aim to find out more about the potential causes for the observed level of aggravation in Twitter disagreements. Finally, the discussion in Section 8.8 addresses the last research question, which focuses on providing a reflective account of the applicability of relational work and rapport management in analysing (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements.

8.1 What are the key features of Saudis' Twitter disagreements identified in the corpus?

Based on the coding framework illustrated in Section 4.5, Table 8-1 summarises the findings of the corpus analysis reported in Chapter 5. The results reported in the table are discussed in the following sections accordingly: disagreement types, disagreement strategies, mitigations and aggravation devices, and lastly, the structural order of Twitter disagreements.

Table 8-1: Key features of Saudis' Twitter disagreements identified in the corpus

| Features of Twitter disagreements | | Total | % |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------|--------|
| Disagreement type | Unmodified disagreements | 140 | 24.14% |
| | Mitigated disagreements | 39 | 6.72% |
| | Aggravated disagreements | 401 | 69.14% |
| | Total | 580 | 100% |
| Disagreement strategy | Act combination | 139 | 24.0% |
| | Verbal attacks | 125 | 21.6% |
| | Contrary statements | 86 | 14.8% |
| | Explanation | 69 | 11.9% |
| | Verbal irony/sarcasm | 68 | 11.7% |
| | Exclamation | 35 | 6.0% |
| | Reprimand | 23 | 4.0% |
| | Challenge | 18 | 3.10% |
| | Supplication | 14 | 2.40% |
| | Giving advice | 3 | 0.50% |
| | Total | 580 | 100% |
| Aggravation devices | Insulting language | 100 | 33.9% |
| | Judgmental language | 86 | 29.2% |
| | Paralinguistic cues | 57 | 19.3% |
| | Dismissing the other/dissociating from the other | 34 | 11.5% |
| | Invoking Allah against the other | 18 | 6.1% |
| | Total | 295 | 100% |

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Mitigation devices | Hedging | 21 | 33.9% |
| | Positive remarks | 16 | 25.8% |
| | Partial agreement | 8 | 12.9% |
| | Solidarity/ in-group markers | 7 | 11.3% |
| | Address terms (positive vocatives) | 6 | 9.7% |
| | Paralinguistic cues | 4 | 6.5% |
| | Total | 62 | 100% |
| Structural order | Response/Initiation move (T1/2) | 64 | 11.03% |
| | Response move (T2) | 516 | 88.97% |
| | Total | 580 | 100% |

8.1.1 Disagreement types

The analysis revealed that aggravated disagreements were the most frequent category of disagreement type in the corpus of Saudis' replies on Twitter, as seen in Table 8-1. More than half of the corpus of disagreements consisted of aggravated strategies. The potential factors that might have played a role in this high frequency of aggravated Twitter disagreements in the corpus are discussed in Section 8.7.

As explained in Chapter 4, the categorisation of disagreements into three types was primarily based on the linguistic modification of the disagreement reflected in the use of mitigation or aggravation devices and how this modification might trigger (im)politeness evaluations within the context, see Section 8.1.3 for further discussion. This approach was primarily motivated by Culpeper's (2011, p.114) description of conventionalised (im)politeness formulae. Conventionalised (im)politeness formulae can be performed by linguistic forms, expressions, and/or other non-verbal devices. However, the analysis showed that it is indeed not only a matter of linguistic structure because (im)politeness can be driven by context or conventions (i.e. implicational impoliteness); see Section 3.2. In this study, implicational impoliteness was primarily encountered in disagreements expressed through verbal irony/sarcasm, as shown in Example 6.12. The impoliteness and appropriateness in verbal irony/sarcasm disagreements were usually interpreted from the context more than the structure of the disagreement. The analysis revealed that identifying disagreements based on their form can be helpful in anticipating what possibly triggers (im)politeness evaluations. However, relying on the disagreement form is not always sufficient because (im)politeness can be triggered by how the respondents interpret the context of the disagreement. It was observed that some respondents were more sensitive to the mitigation and aggravation devices, while others were less sensitive. For instance, in Examples 7.8 and 7.9, some respondents were triggered by the aggravation devices

<your account has to get philosophical> and <it is not up to you>, and therefore considered the reply to be impolite and inappropriate. In contrast, the same devices did not trigger other respondents in the same way. This aligns with Terkourafi's argument (Terkourafi, 2011, p.162) that participants frequently justify their interpretations of others' behaviour with reference to their utterances or social norms.

In addition, the analysis showed that in the context of disagreement, even those aggravated disagreements such as verbal attack, which, according to Harb (2016), is a negatively marked strategy (impolite) among Arabic speakers on Facebook, can be seen as politic by some individuals depending on their perception of the context in which the verbal attack was expressed, see Example 7.5 and 7.6. This indicates that the markedness of a behaviour can be subjective; in fact, the relationship between markedness and (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness remains unclear (Culpeper, 2008, p.23). The relational work model generally acknowledges the complexity of the relationship between markedness and politeness/appropriateness evaluations of behaviours. Locher and Watts (2005, p. 12) do not claim that the markedness is a guaranteeing feature for (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness evaluations. For instance, in Example 7.10, some respondents acknowledge the level of impoliteness but still find the reply appropriate within its context. This also highlights Haugh's (2007b, p.300) criticism of discursive approaches, particularly relational work. He argued that the notion of positively and negatively marked behaviours is unclear, especially in identifying in what sense a behaviour can be marked.

8.1.2 Disagreement strategies

The analysis showed that aggravated strategies such as verbal attacks and verbal irony/sarcasm are among the top five most frequent strategies in the corpus, as seen in Table 8-1. In addition to these two, other strategies, such as act combination and contrary statements, are also in the top five and were more frequently used to express aggravated disagreements, see Figure 5-6. As shown in Table 2-2 and discussed in Section 5.1.3, Harb's study (2016, p.83) provided a taxonomy of disagreement strategies used by Arabic speakers on Facebook, summarised here:

- 1- Unmarked (politic), including explanation, supplication, and challenges.
- 2- Negatively marked (impolite), including verbal attacks and verbal irony.
- 3- Positively marked (polite), including other strategies like counterclaim and disagreement avoidance.

The strategies were classified as positively or negatively marked based on how they attended to the addressee's face in the context of the disagreement. The unmarked strategies are those unlikely to cause offence to the addressee in the context of disagreement (Harb, 2016, p.83). It is important to note that Harb's approach to these Facebook disagreements was from a researcher's perspective. Therefore, the notion of markedness and the assigned (im)politeness evaluations do not necessarily reflect the perceptions of the participants in these disagreements. As argued in the previous section, negative or positive markedness of behaviours does not guarantee a specific (im)politeness evaluation. Therefore, based on my analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, I would argue that a taxonomy of disagreement strategies should avoid labelling these strategies as marked/unmarked or impolite/polite as these notions in the discursive approaches are influenced by the perceptions of the participants and the norms in these interactions.

In addition, some of the disagreement strategies identified in Harb's study were either modified or excluded based on my Twitter data. For instance, in this study, I combined counterclaim and contradiction under one strategy called contrary statements; see Section 4.5.2.1. This combination was mainly due to the overlap between the two, given my aim of reducing such overlaps between the categorisations in my taxonomy. Also, in Harb's study, the strategy of argument avoidance was identified based on expressions such "no comment" and "I don't want to comment to avoid imprisonment"; the second expression represents an apparent argument avoidance, or rather an avoidance of self-incrimination, while the first is more complicated. In my data, I did not include this strategy in the taxonomy due to low frequency; nonetheless, I addressed the single occurrence of this strategy in Example 7.1. The illustration of argument avoidance was important as it showed the challenge of interpreting the meaning of the "no comment" statement as a disagreement avoidance strategy. Respondents were divided in their perception of the 'no comment' reply as an expression of disagreement. 58.95% of the respondents considered the reply as a disagreement, while 41.04% did not see the reply as a disagreement. The latter group pointed out that the vagueness of the response made it difficult for them to be confident of the poster's position. On the other hand, the former group seemed to be focused on the most likely meaning of the reply, based on its localised context. To these respondents, it might be that the *no comment* expression conventionally encodes a disagreement avoidance. This difference in perception can be explained by Kádár and Haugh's statement (2013, p.140) that "[a] certain linguistic form and behaviour becomes schematic for a group of people if it used and used again, and so in this sense also becomes

a social practice”. Given the variation in judgement and classification of the ‘no comment’ reply in Example 7.1, it appears that sometimes even seemingly undisputed conventional forms may have different interpretations across the different groups within a society (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.143), see Section 8.4 on the inconsistency of classifications and evaluations.

Moreover, one of the identified disagreement strategies strongly connected to the concept of conventionalisation is supplication, which, according to Harb (2016), is one of the culturally specific strategies used by Arabic speakers when expressing a disagreement. In fact, religious expressions in this study play different roles in communication because they can be used as a supplication (strategy) to express disagreements, as seen in Example 6.21. Also, religious expressions are used to aggravate disagreements (aggravation device), especially seen in the practice of invoking Allah against the other, as in Example 6.22. On other occasions, religious expressions can be used to positively modify disagreements (mitigation device), as in Example 6.23. Religious expressions can be used intertextually as a direct quotation or modified and integrated with the disagreement form; such use reflects the creativity through which individuals can use religious expressions to perform (im)politeness; see discussion in Section 8.6.3.

8.1.3 Mitigation and aggravation devices

The quantitative analysis in Section 5.1.2 showed that the use of mitigation devices in the corpus was lower than aggravation devices. Primarily, mitigation devices were employed to soften the disagreements. However, there were cases in which mitigation devices were utilised to exacerbate the impoliteness and inappropriateness of the disagreement; see the discussion in Section 8.1.3.1. The analysis revealed that both mitigation and aggravation devices tend to occur cumulatively. The utilisation of more than one mitigation device in a disagreement created what Caffi (2013, p.241) called synergistic reinforcement of mitigation, which I argue to be a reflection of the poster’s orientation towards rapport enhancement/maintenance (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) by trying to avoid the expression of a disagreement impairing the interaction with the target. Similarly, using more than one aggravation device reinforces the aggravation effect and reflects the poster’s orientation towards rapport neglect/challenge (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). It can be argued that posters of Twitter disagreements, as discussed in Section 8.5, have the option to contemplate what they write before posting, delete the reply, and repost again. Therefore, employing cumulative mitigation or aggravation devices might, in some cases, reflect some degree of intentionality in using these devices, considering that intentionality is a scalar concept

(Culpeper, 2011a, p.52). However, my analysis does not show to what extent the number of these devices affects respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. In other words, future work needs to explore whether there is a relationship between the number of devices in the disagreement and their effect on how respondents evaluated the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of the disagreements.

8.1.3.1 What are the likely pragmatic functions of using mitigation and aggravation devices in the same disagreement?

In Section 5.1.2.1, I reported that 34 mitigation devices were not included in the list of mitigation devices in Table 5-2, mainly because these devices were used alongside aggravation devices. In the contexts where these devices occurred, the mitigation devices in these combinations had no mitigation effect on the disagreements directed at the target. Rather, it seems that these mitigation devices intensified the level of impoliteness/inappropriateness in the reply. In these disagreements, there is an apparent internal mismatch or verbal formula mismatch, as termed by Culpeper (2011a, p.174). He suggests that these mismatches are created by using a conventionalised politeness formula in the context of either a conventionalised impoliteness formula or other impolite behaviours (Culpeper, 2011a, p.174). For instance, the poster in Example 8.1 used conventionalised politeness formulae such as the positive address term <my brother> and the positive remark <bless you> along with the historical reference <Seljuk>, which I coded in this context as an aggravation device employed to attack the target.

The three examples below exemplify the mismatch in effects between the used mitigation device and the aggravation device. In my data, the combination of mitigation and aggravation devices in disagreements was most likely deliberate and served different communicative purposes: mockery, an attempt to repair or address different targets in the reply. Despite the existence of mitigation devices in these examples, I classified these disagreements as aggravated disagreements mainly due to how the aggravation devices employed seem to overshadow or hinder the effect of the mitigation devices in the disagreeing replies.

1. Mockery

The poster in Example 8.1 used a combination of mitigation and aggravation devices to mock the target of the disagreement. Notably, the poster used a positive address term and a negative reference followed by a positive remark; see also the use of the endearment term “my dear” with insulting language in Example 7.6. This mix of devices seems to be

deliberate, aiming to add a sarcastic tone to the disagreement and magnify the aggravation.¹¹¹

Example 8.1 [see MT3 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-35- T2 <SOC, SH2.1, Agg.Dis>

<اخي> <السلجوقي> <بورك فيك>
معلومة

الحجاز هي مدن جبال الحجاز من المدينة إلى ابها
اما جدة ومكة فهي تهامة
لعلكم في طريزون لاتعلمون!

<ʔx-i:> <alsalzu:qi:> <bu:rika fi:-k>
maʕlu:mah
alhidʒaz hi: mudun ʒiba:l alhidʒaz min almadi:nah iʔla: abha:
ama: ʒidah wa makah fa-hi: tuha:mah
la-ʕal-kum fi: tʕrabzu:n la: taʕlam-u:n!

<My Seljuk¹¹² brother> <bless you>

Information

The Hijaz refers to the cities of the Hijaz mountains from Medina to Abha

As for Jeddah and Makkah they are in Tihamah¹¹³

Possibly you do not know (this) in Trabzon!

Poster-35's reply consists of an R/I-move, generating a short sub-thread of two turns. The next poster responded by agreeing with Poster-35's tweet. Poster-35's disagreement was directed at the main poster; for more context, see other replies to the same MT, such as Examples 6.10 and 7.6. Poster-35 expressed the disagreement through act combination: explanation (single underline) and exclamation (double underline). The disagreement is coded as aggravated even though Poster-35 employed two mitigation devices: the kinship address term <my brother> and the positive remark <bless you>. The address term preceded the inappropriate historical reference <Seljuk> to address the main poster and was followed by the positive remark. The inappropriate historical reference is employed

¹¹¹ Kotthof (1993, p.204) found that the use of positive words (i.e. upgraders such as *wonderful* or *you are absolutely right*) within a debate context can be perceived negatively due to the ironic effect of these words in that specific context.

¹¹² The Seljuk dynasty, also known as Seljuk Turks. This was a Turkish dynasty of mediaeval Islam which peaked in power during the 5th-6th/11th-12th centuries, and ruled over a wide area of Western Asia, east to Anatolia, Syria and the Hijaz in the west. The Seljuk empire was founded in 1037 by Tughril and it began to decline in the 1140s (see entry for Saldjūkids in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2012, Second Edition, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1119)

¹¹³ This is a historical area that is one of the five geographical regions of the Arabian Peninsula, which is the coastal plain adjacent to the Red Sea between the regions of Hejaz and Yemen in the west of the Arabian Peninsula.

to insult the main poster as it alludes to his Turkish origin. To call the target “my brother” and then insult them is both patronising and paradoxical as it highlights status inequality based on lineage. The disingenuous use of mitigation devices adds a sarcastic tone to the disagreement. Poster-35 seems to neglect the impact of the aggravator on the main poster’s social identity face since he is a social media influencer, or perhaps intentionally aimed to target his social identity face. Because the target is a social media influencer, the target visibility seems to be exploited by poster-35 who utilised what is known about the target to make the expressed aggravated disagreements more personalised; see Section 8.8.2. Poster-35 is snubbing the social status of the main poster by talking to him as an ignorant outsider (i.e. someone originally from Trabzon, Turkey and not the Hijaz). Moreover, despite calling the main poster “my brother”, Poster-35’s reply reveals a disregard for equity and association rights since the main poster is not treated in a brotherly way. There is a clear distancing from the main poster as well as an undermining of his Saudi national identity. This example shows that in cases where the targets of the disagreement are known individuals, their face and sociality rights can become the focal point of the attack; see Section 8.8.2.

In addition, the sarcasm in this example is further signalled by the exclamation at the end of the reply. The exclamation heightens the condescending attitude towards the main poster by reemphasising the main poster’s Turkish origin. The particle *laʕalla* (perhaps) in Arabic can be used to express wonder or an exclamatory question. When interrogative *laʕalla* is used, as seen here, the question could have different implications, such as a wish, doubt, denial, and exclamation (Alajiri, 2020, p.354). Poster-35 sarcastically wondered why the main poster seemed unaware of this fact; this exclamation aims to undermine the main poster’s position. The main poster’s family is originally from Trabzon, a Turkish city, which is postulated to be why he does not know about the history of Hijaz, especially its geographical boundaries.

2. Attempt to repair

Example 8.2 [see MT5 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-100- T2 <SOC, SH3.1, Agg.Dis>

<هذه مجرد مطيه للاستخدام ويتم رميها زي غيرها من العواهر
وسؤالى هو من اللي دخل أو سمح أو صور >لمثل هذه الحشرات < يتكلمون باسم السعوديات
>المعذره ع بعض الألفاظ < لكن لكل مقام وصف يستحقه

<haðih muzard mat'i:ah lil-istixdam wa-jatim ramjuha zei ʔeirha min
alʔawa:hir>
wa-suʔa:li: hu: min illi: daxal ʔw samaħ ʔw <li-miθl haðih alħafara:t> bi-isim
alsuʔu:di:ja:t
<almaðirah ʔa baʔdʔ alʔta:ðʔ> li-kul mqa:m waf jastaħiquh

<She is just a mount for use and will be discarded just like other sluts>
My question is who gave <these insects> the permission to enter or film speaking on
behalf of Saudi women
<Excuse my language> But for every situation there is a proper saying

Poster-100's reply consists of an R-move without generating any further interaction except receiving one like; for more context, see other replies to the same MT, such as Examples 6.2, 6.4, and 6.22. Poster-100's disagreement is expressed through act combination: challenge (single underline) and a short explanation (double underline). The aggravated challenge draws attention to the female reporter in the video attached to the MT and the individuals (i.e. licensing entities) who provided her and her team with a permit to film. The video is about lifting the ban on Saudi women driving cars. The aggravation in this disagreement is seen in the insulting and belittling language, which describes the female reporter as a <mount> and <slut>. The poster portrays the female reporter as something to be exploited and later discarded because it has lost its value due to overuse. This explicit attack is directed at the female reporter's social identity face and quality face. The attack generally devalues her worth as a human being and particularly degrades her honour and social status as a woman. The attack was also extended to the filming crew, whom the poster called <these insects>. The inappropriate reference indicates the poster's condescending and demeaning attitude toward everyone involved in producing the video (both in front and behind the camera).

The aggravated challenge is followed by a short explanation that essentially aims to justify the aggravation in the reply. The justification provided by the poster is a formulaic expression that is "for every situation, there is a proper saying", which is usually used to indicate that a given situation necessitates a specific action. This justification reflects the

poster's attitude and belief that the female reporter and the team put themselves in a position that warrants this aggravated language. The poster is aware of the insulting nature of the aggravation utilised in the disagreement; this awareness is reflected in the mitigation device used before the formulaic justification. The positive remark used expresses an apology to others who might see the reply and get offended by the language of the reply. As noted in Sections 4.5.1.1 and 5.1.2.1, the overlap between the categories of the devices in some cases is inevitable, and the same device can be employed for two purposes. In this example, the use of apology can be seen as a positive remark that mainly focuses on softening the blow of the aggravation on others who might be insulted by reading the reply. It can also function as a hedging device through which the poster creates a distance between the self and the aggravation used in the disagreement. The poster seems to indicate that the content of the video is responsible for this use of aggravating language rather than him/herself. Hence, through apologising, the poster shows that this language is not necessarily representative of him/herself.

3. Different targets

In Twitter disagreements, as shown in Section 4.4.1.3, there is more than one potential target. In Example 8.3, Poster-65 addresses the main poster supporting his position but disagrees with the way the main poster engages with other posters in the thread of replies.

Example 8.3 [see MT10 in Section 4.2.1]

Poster-65- T2 <POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis>

<ياسيدي> لاتناقش <المترديه والنطيحه والخرفان والديوثيين>!!! <<ترفع عنهم وما نقول> الا حسبنا الله
ونعم الوكيل

<ja: sajadi:> la: tina:qif almutaradi:ah wa-alnt^{fi}:hah wa-alxirfa:n
wa-aldaju: θi:n <!!!> tiraf^f ṣan-hum wa-ma: naqu:l ila:
ḥasbu-na: allah wa-niṣm alwaki:l

O sir-my do-not respond-to the-degenerated and-the-delinquent and- the-
sheep, and-the-pimps !!! refrain from-them and-do-not we-say except
sufficient-for-us Allah and-the-best disposer-of-affairs

[<My Sir> do not respond to <the degenerated and the delinquent and the sheep and
the pimps>!!!> Refrain from going down to their level and all <we can say> is
Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best disposer of affairs]

Poster-65's reply consists of an R-move only without initiating any further interaction. It only received two likes; for more context, see other replies to the same MT, such as Examples 6.3, 6.8, 7.3, and 7.5. Poster-65's disagreement is expressed through act

combination: giving advice (single underline) and supplication (double underline). Poster-65 advises the main poster, and begins with a positive address term <my sir> in a show of respect. Poster-65 supports the main poster but does not agree with how the main poster was engaging in arguments with other posters who disagree with him. The supporters of the main poster seem to think that the aggravated responses posted by the main poster in response to other posters disagreeing with him are ruining the merit of the MT. Poster-65's advice contains both mitigation and aggravation devices. The mitigation device <my sir> aims to positively appeal to the main poster (the target to whom the disagreement is directed).

The positive appeal is further seen in the mitigation device solidarity/in-group marker (the plural subject pronoun *-na* in <all *we* can say>) preceding the supplication, showing that Poster-65 aimed to emphasise the connection with the main poster through solidarity. By using <all we can say>, Poster-65 categorises the main poster and his supporters, including him/herself in the (we) group, while other posters who disagree with the main poster are in the (them) group. The posters in the *them-group* are described as dead (in a grisly sense) and weak animals (sheep) as well as shameless or immoral people. The use of insulting language to refer to these other posters is further aggravated by the triple exclamation marks <!!!>. The paralinguistic cue <!!!> is positioned directly after the name-calling and the inappropriate references; such use of exclamation marks might reflect Poster-65's negative emotion towards the posters in the *them-group*. The example shows that mitigation and aggravation devices can be used to address/refer to different targets in the same reply; here, it was employed to serve the poster's association purpose with the main poster and dissociation from others in the *them-group*. It can be argued that by insulting those disagreeing with the main poster, Poster-65 is trying to show the main poster that the advice is from someone who cares about him, thus validating the worth of his advice.

8.1.3.2 How do Saudis perceive the use of mitigation devices in aggravated disagreements?

Mitigation has a "paradoxical core" in that it can give the opposite effect (Caffi, 2007, p.129). As shown in the above examples, sometimes mitigation devices are used in aggravated disagreements; however, their use does not usually achieve a softening effect. Interviewees were asked what they think of the mitigation devices used in aggravated disagreements, as found in Example 8.1. Their responses to this question could be classified into two categories. The first group seems to believe that the mitigation devices

used here *failed* to soften the effect of the used aggravation device(s). To these respondents, mitigation devices in these aggravated disagreements are pointless/ineffective/useless as the level of impoliteness/inappropriateness has not been reduced. The other group involves those who think that the mitigation devices used seem to intensify the level of impoliteness/inappropriateness in the aggravated disagreement. Interviewees' reactions to the combination of aggravation and mitigation devices in disagreements, particularly of the type presented in Example 8.1, include the following interpretations: patronising, ridiculing, belittling, and provoking.

Interviewees belonging to the first group, like Male-31 (MP5-Nawaf) and Female-12 (FP2-Fatimah) below, seem to consider this mix of mitigation and aggravation devices as a sign of the poster's attempt to soften the disagreement despite being unsuccessful. Hence, it seems that interviewees take the combination of mitigation and aggravation devices in disagreements at face value in a way that reduces the effect of the combination on the interpretation of (im)politeness. MP5-Nawaf mentioned another interesting point: this mix of mitigation and aggravation devices may be a trademark of the poster. He provided an example of a known sports commentator¹¹⁴ on Twitter who is famous for his aggressive style in responding to others, usually starting and/or ending his replies with mitigation devices, for instance, "with all due respect" and ending "with my love 🌹". Nawaf asserted that the commentator is not impolite in his responses; this statement appears to be based on the fact that the commentator's style of responding is well-established and influenced by the genre (sports) where the threshold of impoliteness is probably high,¹¹⁵ see Section 8.6.1. Also, Nawaf's assertion shows that the perception of intentionality is weaker in the author's responding style due to what Culpeper's referred to as "foreseeability" (2011a, p.52). Based on people's knowledge about the author (especially his followers), his response style may be predictable and likely to be perceived less negatively.

Male-31 (MP5-Nawaf): It seems to me that sometimes someone tries to convince himself to be less aggressive. However, it is possible that when he begins writing the reply, he might lose control of his nerves, or because of his excitement in responding, he ends up losing his cool.

¹¹⁴ The sports commentator has more than 350 thousand followers.

¹¹⁵ A few male respondents pointed out that impoliteness in sports tweets is higher based on their observations where an affiliation and dissociation (i.e. us vs them) discourse dominates.

Female-12 (FP2-Fatimah): I feel this is someone who is half polite; the poster tried to use nice words but could not finish. He tried to soften the disagreement, but it did not work. I agree some people might find it sarcastic or think this made the disagreement worse, but I do not think like that.

On the other hand, the interviewees in the second group seem to consider that mitigation is intentionally used to make the aggravated disagreement somewhat more demeaning and condescending. Interviewees' negative perception of the mitigation in the aggravated disagreement generally pointed out that the intention behind using mitigation is most likely for mockery. It also shows the poster has access to politeness resources but decides not to act politely/appropriately. Consider these statements:

Male-30 (MP4-Khalid): It made it worse; it feels like the poster is taking the other poster for a fool. It is like extending one hand for a handshake and using the other to slap the person.¹¹⁶

Male-33 (MP9-Yusef): If I use an algorithm to assign a positive value (+1) to the positive words and a negative value (-1) to the aggravator, the final output of the statement, in this case, would be positive. However, I think the negative word in this example seems to obliterate the effect of the positive words; it sounds demeaning.

Female-61 (FP1-Nora): It made the disagreement more impolite because it suggests that I am the opposite of what I am called. One negative word can overshadow twenty positive ones.¹¹⁷

In sum, the difference between the two groups' perceptions of the use of mitigation devices in aggravated disagreements might suggest that the first group does not seem to find this blending fully intentional, whereas the second group seem to think it involves a high level of intentionality. This aligns with Culpeper's view that intentionality is one of the notions by which people try to interpret others' words and behaviours and evaluate (im)politeness (2011a, p.69); see Section 8.6.4. It also shows that people within the same cultural/language group might use and value resources of (im)politeness differently (Mills and Kádár, 2011, p.42); see Section 8.6.

¹¹⁶ Another interviewee, FP6-Amani, described "it is like making rose water and urinating in it."

¹¹⁷ Nora and other interviewees, like (MP7-Muath), pointed out some conventionalised address terms particularly vocatives such as *my son*, *my friend*, *my dear*, *my love*, *my lady*, and *your highness* can be used to perform impoliteness in some contexts.

8.1.4 Structural order of disagreement on Twitter and the lack of responses in T3

Section 4.4.1.2 reported that previous studies (e.g., Shum and Lee, 2013; Harb, 2016) found third-turn responses in online disagreement to be rare. Similarly, my data contained few T3 replies, as shown in Figure 4-2. Moreover, the majority of these T3 replies were posted by other posters and rarely by the main posters (e.g., Housley et al., 2017, p.574 reported a lack of response by the main poster in their study). This lack of response in my data seems to go in line with Benson's statement (2017, p.91) that there is a high tendency for online interaction to be left "hanging".

Based on the responses to the online questionnaire reported in Section 5.2.1 and interviews, it seems that Twitter is not usually used for lengthy interactions. Also, these interactions are generally between strangers or acquaintances. Therefore, the social obligation to continue an interaction seems weak, especially when there is a disagreement. In fact, some posters might use platform affordances such as the Twitter mute function¹¹⁸ to silence notifications from a specific tweet receiving many replies and creating a stir. Posters also have the option to block accounts that might express disagreements with them instead of responding to every disagreeing reply.¹¹⁹ This shows that platform affordances such as muting and blocking give posters some degree of control to reduce the visibility of disagreements in their timeline, reducing the chance of replies.¹²⁰

Moreover, this lack of responses in Twitter disagreements could also be driven by caution regarding potential consequences, especially for posters using their real identity. For these posters, a clear separation between online and offline identity seems to be blurred; see

¹¹⁸ The Twitter mute function was introduced in 2014, it allows user to mute an account without unfollowing or blocking them, and the muted account will not be aware of being muted. It also allows users to mute notifications regarding a specific tweet, so they do not see replies to this specific tweet. See: <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-mute>

¹¹⁹ One interviewee mentioned a Saudi poet on Twitter who has more than 510 thousand followers. The poet is so well-known for blocking people that it became his trademark; his motto for blocking people was posted in a tweet in 2019 in which he wrote 'blocking is not an escape or weakness, it is a literal translation for the verse (*and turn away from those who act ignorantly*). The complete verse is: (Be gracious, enjoin what is right, and turn away from those who act ignorantly) Al-A'raf, Chapter 7, verse 199, Translation by Dr Mustafa Khattab: <https://quran.com/7?startingVerse=198>. In an interview with him in 2019, he explained that he tries to overlook some replies and ignore them, but sometimes, some replies cannot be ignored especially if these replies are irrational and pointless, so by blocking these accounts he limits the undesired noise in his notifications.

¹²⁰ More functions were introduced after the data collection phase of this study. For instance, in late 2019 Twitter introduced the function of hide replies, which enable the main poster to hide unwelcome or irrelevant replies from the thread of replies. In mid-2020, Twitter introduced another function which give original posters control of who can reply to their tweets, see: <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-conversations>

Yusef's statement in footnote 138 in Section 8.7. In fact, Bolander and Locher (2020) noted that studies on digital discourse suggest that many internet users typically do not view online and offline communication as entirely distinct spheres.

Based on the respondents' comments, it appears that for those in professional roles and seeking more visibility and recognition in their fields, Twitter is used to promote their persona and probably gain higher social capital. Responding to disagreements might not benefit these Twitter users, especially if it does not fit their brand.¹²¹ Page (2012, pp.181-182) argued that Twitter is a "linguistic marketplace" in which users construct their identities as "products to be consumed by others"; those others are treated as a fandom to be increased and maintained for social and economic profits, see Male-11's statement. Hence, if involvement in disagreements in an open public space might damage their self-image (i.e. brand), then posters are more likely to choose not to respond. This idea of protecting one's image also appears in Female-93's statement, in which she used "honour" as something that needs protection from bullies and harassers on Twitter who use foul language in their replies. Based on this, the lack of replies to disagreements on Twitter, especially by the main posters, seems to be a strategy to avoid damaging one's public image by not getting involved in undesirable interactions.

Male-11: Some people might change their opinion because, in general, they do not want to lose followers or certain followers, so they keep their real views to themselves and avoid posting online. They might follow the opinion of other specific individuals to polish their image in front of others.

Female-93: Whoever wants to save their honour should avoid Twitter disagreements because some opposers will use foul and insulting language.

8.2 (Im)politeness vs. (in)appropriateness

The analysis in Chapters 5 and 7 revealed that respondents provided different aligned and unaligned classifications of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness for each disagreement in the online questionnaire. The analysis also revealed that aligned classifications between the two scales occurred more in my data; see Figure 5-15. The aligned classifications highlight the apparent positive correlation between the two scales; there is a tendency to classify an impolite disagreement as inappropriate and a polite disagreement as appropriate.

¹²¹ Page (2012, p.181) "self-branding and micro-celebrity are forms of labour undertaken by both elite and ordinary persons in order to achieve the visibility and influence deemed necessary to achieve status or fame in the offline world."

Moreover, the interviews uncovered that almost all interviewees believe the concepts (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness are strongly connected but not interchangeable, as seen in the statements below. The interviews showed that (im)politeness, unlike (in)appropriateness, invokes judgments of the other's morals, as seen in FP7-Khulud's and MP8-Muhammad's statements. According to Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.67), "an evaluation of politeness or impoliteness thus always involves an implicit appeal to the moral order... an appeal to a moral order perceived to be common amongst two or more participants by at least one of those participants". Although Kádár and Haugh suggested that moral order is open to different appropriate/inappropriate, good/bad, and polite/impolite evaluations, the interviews revealed that the last set of evaluations is more attached to the moral aspect of social practice.

FP9-Manal: Politeness, as I see it, is in a higher position than appropriateness; it has more consideration and delicacy, while appropriateness is about being balanced, so if someone says something irrelevant to the topic, it is inappropriate but not impolite, whereas impoliteness means that a line has been crossed as seen in using taboo and hurtful language.

MP8-Muhammad: Appropriateness is more about technicality, but politeness is more about morals; I could behave appropriately but still have not overstepped the general moral frame.

MP3-Ahmed: Appropriateness can sometimes be responding by nothing more or less; politeness is responding in a kinder, gentler, and more pleasing way. Inappropriate behaviour can be either polite or impolite.

FP7-Khulud: The word impolite is very strong, and I generally prefer to use the word inappropriate, especially when telling my kids off. Saying that this is impolite is hurtful because it seems as if I am saying something is wrong with their morals.

These statements highlight that subjective judgments are made by interlocutors about social appropriateness (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p.97; Watts, 2008, p.77). It can be argued that the two concepts are both concerned with behaviours in social interaction but differ in their scope of judgements. (In)appropriateness seems to be a broad concept as it encompasses both unmarked and marked behaviours. Unlike (im)politeness, it seems that (in)appropriateness does not invoke moral or sentimental judgments; see Section 8.3.

8.3 What are other metalinguistic terms used by respondents to discuss (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness?

The discussion here was inspired by respondents such as FP7-Khulud's statement above and Male-47's statement. Male-47 wrote in his response to MT1-R1 (the disagreement in Example 7.7), "I do not like the use of the words polite and impolite, and it would be better to use words like harsh and lenient or other gentler expressions." This response shows that metapragmatic labels, especially those in the (im)politeness parameter, seem adverse to some respondents who might avoid or prefer not to use them. The classification labels provided in the online questionnaire were direct translations of the relational work model using an English-Arabic dictionary (see Appendix C Arabic questionnaire)

In light of these responses, I decided to look for other words respondents used in their justifications. I found that respondents used various terms such as *cultured*, *elegant*, *rude*, and *respectful*, see Table 8-2. As noted in Culpeper's work on metalinguistic labels related to impoliteness (2011, p.78), *rude* was at the top of the list of labels in his data, but *not suitable* was not on that list. Also, the adjectival form of these labels was more common than the nominal form; for instance, in my data, *rude* as an adjective was mentioned nine times, while *rudeness*, as in *there is some rudeness in the reply*, was mentioned three times.

Table 8-2: Metalinguistic terms used by respondents to talk about (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness

| Labels in Arabic | Translation | Frequency |
|--|------------------------|-----------|
| Impoliteness/inappropriateness Labels | | |
| غير لائق | not suitable | 10 |
| وقح | rude | 9 |
| غير محترم | disrespectful | 5 |
| غير مهذب | not polite | 4 |
| غير راقى | not elegant | 2 |
| غير حضارى | uncivilised | 2 |
| هجمى | savage | 1 |
| فظ | crude | 1 |
| سئى | bad | 1 |
| مؤذى | hurtful | 1 |
| قلة ذوق | not tasteful | 1 |
| تهجمى | attacking, savage | 1 |
| Politeness/appropriateness Labels | | |
| مهذب | polite | 4 |
| محترم | respectful | 4 |
| راقى | elegant, sophisticated | 3 |
| لائق | suitable | 2 |
| لىق | tactful | 2 |
| جمىل | beautiful | 2 |
| حضارى | civilised | 1 |
| ذوق | tasteful | 1 |
| Total | | 57 |

Also, I noticed that respondents who used the label *rude* in their justifications chose a combination of (very) impolite and (very) inappropriate classifications. Using *rude* with these classifications indicates a strong connection between rudeness, impoliteness, and inappropriateness at the extremes. This observation seems to concur with Culpeper's finding in his examination of (im)politeness metalinguistic terms used in English, which revealed that terms like *impolite*, *rude*, and *inappropriate* – although they are not exact synonyms – do have a close relationship (Culpeper, 2017, p.142).

A full examination of these metapragmatic labels, their similarities and differences, and how respondents conceptualise each term in relation to the other terms is beyond the scope of this study. However, in the interviews, I found out that some respondents do believe that everyone knows the meaning of all these labels (words) because they are familiar evaluators (i.e. descriptors), but what is different is how these words are employed across individuals. Other respondents, like MP5-Nawaf, seem to think that a precise differentiation between these labels might be difficult for some people; hence, they use these words as synonyms. One of the key points mentioned in the interviews is

the influence of frequency or habitual use of these words, which affects the ability to recall these words quicker when needed.

MP5-Nawaf: Probably, the habit of using these words plays a role, but I think not everyone can precisely differentiate between these words and how to use them properly. I think *uncivilised* is less strong than *rude* or *savage*, but sometimes people would use these words like synonyms as long as they serve the purpose they are using them for.

FP6-Amani: I think it depends on one's habitual use. If I use the word *respectful* a lot in my daily life, then I will likely use it more in the questionnaire.

The discussion here invites further investigation of the types of metapragmatic labels used by Saudis when referring to aggravated or face-threatening behaviours. The collection of words in the table shows that words are not defined in isolation but usually in relation to other related words (i.e. words that fall within the same semantic field; see Haugh, 2016, p.49). Based on this, it seems that not all concepts will necessarily be reflected in individuals' lexicons in the same way (Majid, 2015, p.376). In other words, individuals' mappings of how these terms should be profiled against the broad concept of (in)appropriate behaviour are very likely to differ (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.98). The importance of further investigation of Saudis' understandings of (im)politeness and the evaluators they use when talking about the phenomena lies in the usefulness of such investigations in comparative studies and teasing out the insider's (i.e. emic) worldviews from the outsider (i.e. etic) worldviews. For a detailed account of emic/etic understandings of the moral order, see (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, pp.93-97).

8.4 Inconsistency of classifications and respondents' evaluations

As shown in Chapter 7, respondents' classifications of the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements varied, although, in some cases, they provided similar justifications for their classifications. It was also noted that variations do occur within the same person's evaluations at different times; for instance, MP8-Muhammad initially evaluated the reply in Example 7.1 as *very impolite* and *inappropriate*; however, during the interview, which took place days later, he changed the evaluation into *neither polite nor impolite* and *inappropriate*. Therefore, it appears that there is no one-to-one relationship between respondents' classifications and justifications, and that variability in classifications and evaluations is not unexpected (Kádár and Haugh, 2013; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár, 2016, p.74). There are different reasons that might explain such variability and inconsistency in evaluations.

First, the relational work model used in this study was helpful in providing respondents with a set of categories to classify the (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in the disagreements they were evaluating; however, what seems to be clear now is that the borders between these classifications are indeed fuzzy (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.12; Locher, 2006, pp.256-258). This fuzziness is observed in respondents' classifications of the disagreements in the online questionnaire, presented in Chapter 7. Also, the variability in classifications illustrates the complexity of the discursive struggle over (im)politeness; it shows how (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness evaluations of social behaviour are subject to constant negotiation (Watts, 2003, p.25). It can be argued here that these classifications appear to be based on various differential values and evaluative beliefs informed by the respondents' own history of social interaction with others. Despite this apparent variability, some similarities exist in the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness classifications, and this is in accord with Kádár and Haugh's (2013, p.95) statement that evaluative beliefs between individuals are very likely to be similar but can never be exactly the same.

Second, as pointed out above, individuals' evaluations are usually influenced by the experiences and expectations they built and categorised cognitively through their personal social histories (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78). This invokes the notion of schemata, or what is termed *frames* or *scripts* (Culpeper, 2011a, p.14). People's knowledge of behaviour is acquired during socialising; people use this knowledge to make judgments of behaviour against the norms and expectations contained in that knowledge (Locher, 2011, p.192). This knowledge is structured in what is called a *frame*; frames form the structures of individuals' expectations based on their past experiences. These frames seem to be influenced by the constant renegotiation of norms within the emergent/latent social networks against which individuals judge behaviours as polite or impolite (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78; Locher, 2011, p.193). Even in cases where individuals encounter for the first time and cannot refer back to a personal latent network, they still have expectations about others, which are usually based on the current context and the presumed shared knowledge (Locher, 2004, p.29). In Twitter interactions, social networks can be small or large and involve people who do not necessarily know each other; see Figure 5-11. These social networks are dynamic and evolve over time, and as mentioned in Section 3.1.2, the posters of the disagreements and the respondents in this

study, although they belong to the same national culture,¹²² do not necessarily affiliate with the same social networks. Considering that a national culture is usually made up of many cultures (Culpeper, 2011a, p.142), it seems that the variation and similarities observed are indeed expected.

In addition, as pointed out by Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.238), examining (im)politeness in discourse at a societal/cultural level reveals that there are various understandings of norms and different sets of (im)politeness expectations within a culture. This variability is expected due to the existence of different social networks or groups with which individuals might identify. Based on the above, and as shown in Section 4.2.2, the respondents in this study are providing evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness as cultural insiders in that their evaluations reflect their understanding of the shared social/moral order on the cultural level.

Lastly, the variability in understanding and classifying (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness is subjective depending on the individuals' understanding of the behaviours in the social context (Culpeper, 2011a, p.67). Expressions of disagreement and evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in these disagreements can be influenced by the norms of the different social networks the person is affiliated with, the individual personality, personal norms, or traits that affect what one says, does and perceives (Culpeper, 2011a, p.54); see Section 8.7. For example, some people might avoid disagreements, particularly on Twitter, because they think it is a waste of time or prefer not to become a target of others; see, for example, Female-51 (FP7-Khulud).

Female-51 (FP7-Khulud): I do not like disagreements, and as soon as I see a topic being argued on Twitter, I am done, and I will not even follow the topic because there is a lot of bullying and distortion in these disagreements. They twist things, put words in your mouth, and interpret your words in ways you never thought of yourself.

¹²² National culture is viewed here roughly as the loose layer of culture that connects different regional, tribal, and social groups under one umbrella.

8.5 What other factors might affect Saudi respondents' perceptions and evaluations of Twitter disagreements?

The interviewees' responses in this study uncovered the influence of some critical factors that might have impacted the respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in the Twitter disagreements in the online questionnaire. These factors are: the mode of communication, medium affordances (particularly anonymity and vagueness of social factors such as age), and lastly, the topic of the interaction. The discussion here elaborates on these factors, which were not addressed in the relational work framework; also see Section 8.7, which covers the influence of the pervasiveness of weak-tie relationships, longevity of interaction history, and self-awareness and personal traits. Respondents mentioned these as potential factors for the aggravation of Twitter disagreements. For instance:

MP9-Yusef: When reading a text, I can't see *facial expressions* or hear the *tone*, so I am just reading plain words, and this affects how I read it.

FP4-Abeer: In hashtags where people target, for example, women and attack them, I believe if the interaction was *face-to-face*, those posters would not be able to say what they say on Twitter. If they *knew the person (target) or their family*, they would not dare to say these things...and it feels different *when the person is in front of you, and you can see their reaction*.

FP-6 Amani: You can simply write a word, and the other person would get into an argument with you, and probably if you said the same word face-to-face, that person might laugh with you. This happens a lot among my group of friends. Sometimes, they get hurt because of what was written, but if we were sitting and talking together, that would probably not have happened, and if it did, the issue would have been resolved at the exact moment.

As FP4-Abeer and MP9-Yusef allude, although disagreements on Twitter can be multimodal, the focus of this study was almost exclusively on verbal (i.e. textual) forms of disagreements and some paralinguistic cues (i.e. emojis and punctuation marks), see Section 4.4.1.1. Therefore, respondents mostly have no access to other non-linguistic cues such as voice and body language, which can be crucial in decoding meanings of disagreements such as tone and emotion. As argued by Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.60), (im)politeness evaluations are not only based on what is said but also very often on prosody, facial expressions, gestures and so on. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding in written communication can occur even between interlocutors with close relationships; see FP6-Amani's statement. In Twitter disagreements, the probability of misinterpretations and misunderstandings is higher, most likely due to the lack of shared

relational history between posters, see FP4-Abeer's statement, and the fragmented context. Twitter communication is an excellent example of what is called *context collapse*; that is, when diverse contexts and audiences overlap, forming one large context. This new context makes it challenging for people to engage in negotiations that are necessary to manage impression and face sensitivities (Marwick and Boyd, 2011, p.123). Previous research has shown that multi-party interactions tend to be fragmented and broken into smaller conversations, usually between a smaller number of interlocutors (Ermida, 2017, p.209). These Twitter interactions tend to be between posters with no or little shared relational history. Shared history seems to play a significant role in reducing uncertainty in the interpretation of linguistic (im)politeness; this shared history invokes pre-existing ways of communicating and interpreting (im)politeness (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.7). In my data, there was little interaction between main posters and other posters, and even between posters in the thread of replies, which resulted in fewer interactional turns limiting the discursive negotiations of disagreements. The situation would probably be different if the Twitter disagreements collected were extracted from interactions between posters with a relational history.

Moreover, some interviewees have pointed out that in writing a tweet, a poster probably takes their time to think, check, and draft a reply, giving them more control over their thoughts and immediate impulses.¹²³ Nevertheless, other interviewees pointed out that when writing a tweet, some posters might feel more comfortable, less nervous, and probably braver and daring in expressing things they might not be able to say in face-to-face interaction, see statements made by FP7-Khulud and FP8-Samar.

FP7-Khulud: In spoken interaction, there is more space for different expressions, signals, and gestures, but on Twitter, you are limited to a number of characters per tweet, so you have to be brief. Also, in spoken interaction, there are considerations to be respectful which makes one more careful...

FP8-Samar: ... sometimes one finds freedom in writing, especially when talking to people you do not know, but if disagreements were in direct spoken interaction, one might be worried about getting into confrontations, so one might prefer to avoid them. Also, disagreements usually affect the persons involved; this effect in written communication is not as in spoken interaction, which one might remember longer.

¹²³ One interviewee, MP7-Muath, mentioned that he has around 300 drafts, all are tweets that he had written while agitated or triggered but he never posted them. He also pointed out that in the draft he can write more characters than he could post which helps him put down all his thoughts.

This reliance on the linguistic structure alone without access to other social-communicative aspects is seen to be restrictive; for instance, see MP8-Muhammad's and MP4-Khalid's statements. The importance of social factors and how they affect social interaction could be one of the motives behind the self-declaration of educational background, job titles, and personal photos seen in Twitter bios. Many Saudi Twitter users, particularly those interested in establishing their brand like professionals, tend to share more about themselves.

MP8-Muhammad: Knowing who you are communicating with, their age and education helps you understand more and reduces the chance of disagreement.

MP4-Khalid: ...in written interaction, like Twitter, I think the inaccessibility to social factors such as age, status, and educational background creates some tension.

Furthermore, topics of discussion reported in previous studies, for instance (Sifianou, 2012; Harb, 2016), play an essential role in how disagreements are expressed and perceived. In my study, interviewees pointed out topics such as #alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques, #women_driving, and #hijaz_idenity are regularly debated topics where people are usually divided into opposing sides. In fact, it was pointed out that social topics such as those in my corpus can become quite political depending on how they are approached; see FP1-Nora's statement and FP3-Maha below. Perhaps the public discussion of these divisive topics stimulates the expression of strong ideological positions, which turns the interaction into a political one. Figure 5-2 showed that aggravated disagreements dominated all three of these sociocultural hashtags. These hashtags are focused on some of the societal changes that are taking place in Saudi Arabia and how people are reacting towards these rapid developments. The country is going through what has been called "nation rebranding" (Alsaaidi, 2020, p.6), and because of this rebranding, some respondents believe that many of the topics being discussed in the country are being politicised. Indeed, any society that is going through social, political, economic and technological changes; will likely undergo changes in interactional practices as a result of these various transformations (Grainger et al., 2010, p.2160).

FP1-Nora: ...when we talk about women driving, this topic has become political. Also, in the questionnaire, you have some tweets about mosques, which I also think is not exclusively a religious topic but rather a political-religious topic; probably now, many of the topics in Saudi Arabia cannot be separated from politics.

FP3-Maha: ...social topics, such as the issue of begging,¹²⁴ are generally easier to talk about, but topics related to women are more controversial, and political topics that involve foreign policies are less controversial. So yes, the topic does affect how one expresses disagreement.

MP1-Ali: There are topics that are considered a violation of cultural norms, traditions, and religion, and in the discussion of these topics, people tend to have strong disagreements defending their side. Also, political topics that target our country would generate many aggravated disagreements.

On the other hand, topics discussed in the political hashtags are different, and this difference is realised in FP3-Maha's and MP1-Ali's statements. Figure 5-2 showed that disagreements, particularly aggravated ones, occurred more in the topics #gulf_crisis and #royal_decree, whereas #the_king_fights_corruption has the least disagreements, see Section 5.1.1. It appears that how posters position themselves in relation to the topic and how the topic is presented have some effects on the expression and evaluations of disagreements.

Lastly, many respondents stated that they believe anonymity does affect how posters express disagreements and how the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in these disagreements is evaluated. Anonymity enables posters to remove or conceal social factors such as age, gender, and level of education, thus blurring their identity; see the discussion in Section 8.7 of how anonymity is linked to aggravation on Twitter. Although unknown identities might play a significant role, respondents seem to agree that unknown identities are not always the determining factor in the high level of aggravated disagreements or impolite/inappropriate behaviours generally; see the statements below. Interestingly, two respondents, like FP3-Maha, mentioned that anonymity could be an excellent vehicle for expressing one's authentic or true self since it gives more freedom from social restrictions.

¹²⁴ The Saudi government has been fighting against begging which is considered an illegal offence in the country. Begging is considered a destructive act both for the individual doing it and for society. Beggars put themselves in vulnerable and humiliating situations; and begging affects the safety and security of the public as it allows random free access to money which might not be used properly, for example, money used for supporting illegal activities. People in need are encouraged to seek support from non-profit (private and public) organisations. In 2021, the anti-begging law was updated, to include online begging and to outline the strict penalties such as 50-100 thousand SR fines and a 6-month to 1-year prison sentence.

FP3-Maha: Being anonymous sometimes gives you the freedom to say what is in your mind without being restricted by your background, and so it makes your thoughts more authentic.

MP8-Muhammad: It is not always true that anonymous posters are rude because sometimes we see known posters who are rude.

FP7-Khulud: Unknown posters usually are not fearful; they do not represent a specific person, family, or institution, so they do not care about the consequences of their words. However, there are some posters that are not anonymous, and they use an antagonistic style in their responses.

8.6 Key resources identified in the analysis of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in Saudis' Twitter disagreements

The discussion in the following sections focuses on four essential resources that Saudi posters in the SAT corpus seem to draw on when expressing Twitter disagreements (im)politely. As van der Bom and Mills (2015) argue, these resources are not fixed but rather flexible, which the discussion below supports. The discussion here endorses Mills and Kádár's (2011, p.42) argument that people within the same language/cultural group will use and value these resources differently. The first two resources are somewhat connected to what is called “defensive impoliteness” (Culpeper, 2011). The first resource covers how reciprocity norms can be used to perform (im)politeness by matching or mismatching the level of impoliteness and how the respondents perceive exploiting such resources in expressing a disagreement. The second resource covers the connection between identity constructions and (im)politeness. The other two resources cover other concepts that are generally related to the influence of religion on how disagreements are expressed and evaluated — mainly when using religious texts to aggravate disagreements and perform impoliteness — and the role of producer (i.e. speaker) intention in (im)politeness evaluations.

8.6.1 Matching vs mismatching the level of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness

One of the key (im)politeness recourses identified in the analysis revolves around the notion of matching or mismatching the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the MT or a prior reply (i.e. target). It focuses on how the threshold placed by the MT or a prior tweet influences the posters replying to these tweets. Culpeper (2011a, p.204) argued that the (im)politeness threshold and reciprocity norm¹²⁵ seem to be driven by people's tendency to match others' behaviours in social interactions. Based on this, it means that posters in the thread of replies implicitly evaluate the level of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in the targeted post and then choose to respond in a way that matches or mismatches that level.¹²⁶ Posters' responses then update the threshold of (im)politeness in the interaction. Examining respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the online questionnaire showed that the notions of reciprocity norm and (im)politeness threshold do play a role in how respondents evaluated the replies.

For instance, the main poster of MT11, based on respondents' evaluations, seems to have raised the threshold for (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the main post, thus influencing how posters replied in the thread. The MT, posted by a Qatari journalist, was seen by many respondents as an impolite/inappropriate tweet. This negative assessment is caused by the aggravated attack, which targeted the quality face of Saudi Twitter users and the social identity face of Saudi Arabia as a country. The attack devalued Saudi Twitter users' intellects and morals during the Saudi Arabia-Qatar diplomatic conflict. In the questionnaire, the respondents evaluated two replies to this MT. The first reply is in Example 7.1; the poster of the reply avoided expressing a clear disagreement and opted for the "no comment" reply. This reply does not match the level of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in the MT; this mismatch overlooked the reciprocity norm. The poster's reply lowers the threshold of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in the interaction.

¹²⁵ The term Culpeper used is based on Goulnder's work (1960). The motivation behind the reciprocation of impoliteness/inappropriateness, as proposed by Culpeper (2011, p.205), can be a way to restore face and/or a way to express a strong state of emotional arousal.

¹²⁶ This seems to indicate some intentionality in how a poster decides to match or mismatch the threshold of (im)politeness; however, it is probably not always an intentional choice as some posters might respond without giving the reply much thought while others might draft a response and revise it before posting, see Footnote 123 in Section 8.5.

Now, looking at respondents' evaluations of the disagreement in this reply, 29.41% of them considered the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness to be politic and 28.43% (very) polite and (very) appropriate (aligned classification). Although some respondents who classified the reply as politic thought the reply was vague, see the analysis in Chapter 7. Other respondents considered a "no comment" reply as a conventionalised polite/appropriate expression of disagreement, as shown in Female-93's justification in (7) in Section 7.2.¹²⁷ Conventional expressions like the one here appear to be used in situations where one is cautious of consequences; as Male-11 puts it, "It seems that the poster is expressing a disagreement but unwilling to be entangled in this argument". This conventionalised expression might also be a way to show self-respect/control and rise above the situation, as seen in Female-50's statement, "The poster expressed disagreement but chose not to interact with insignificant people".

Furthermore, it might be a way of closing the argument and not giving the other a chance to attack you; as Female-96 explained, "The poster did not get in an argument with the main poster and did not allow him to get back at him/her". The poster of the reply may be trying to reflect a higher moral awareness and probably more self-control by not engaging in this interaction.¹²⁸ It appears that (im)politeness is indeed a social practice, and as argued by Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.73), it involves implicit appeals to the moral order. Therefore, all the posters in the thread carry an implied moral evaluation of the target, influencing their reactions.

On the other hand, the poster of the second reply in Example 7.10 seems to match the threshold of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in the MT. The poster used an aggravated contrary statement attacking the main poster's quality face as well as the social identity face of Qatar. Observing the aligned classification, around 39.86% of the respondents evaluated the aggravated disagreement as impolite. In comparison, 28.10% thought the reply was politic or polite. The poster followed the reciprocity norm and aimed to match the threshold by using what is referred to as counter-impoliteness or reactive impoliteness; impolite behaviours upholding the reciprocity norm can be perceived as less impolite in some contexts (Culpeper, 2011a, p.206). Culpeper argued that if the initial impolite behaviour (the trigger) is licensed (e.g., in a courtroom), the reactive impoliteness might be perceived negatively. For the reply in Example 7.10, the

¹²⁷ Male-51 also states, "This is usually a response to express opposition in neutral way."

¹²⁸ Male-10 pointed out that a *no comment* reply could indicate that the topic is very frustrating and stupid to the point that you do not want to discuss it and thus save time.

respondents who evaluated it as politic or polite justified their somewhat positive classifications by stating that the impoliteness in the poster's reply was mainly reactive and used to defend his country. This defence was likely motivated by a strong sense of belonging and affiliation to one's country. An attack on one's country is considered an attack on one's national identity, which can be taken personally by some posters who will feel the need to protect that part of their identity; see Section 8.6.2.2 for further discussion on national identity and (im)politeness.

Similarly, other respondents who selected unaligned classifications such as (very) impolite and (very) appropriate pointed out that the impoliteness in the MT licenses the impoliteness in the reply. However, what set these respondents apart from those above is how they differentiated between (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in their classifications. They find the reply negatively marked, but this markedness seems appropriate in this particular context, thus confirming that counter-impoliteness can be considered appropriate sometimes (Culpeper, 2011a, p.206). Also, the respondents' justifications here support Culpeper's argument that being inappropriate should not be part of the definition of impoliteness, see Section 8.2.

Lastly, respondents who evaluated the reply as (very) impolite and (very) inappropriate find reciprocating and matching the threshold of impoliteness in the MT a violation of a broad social norm derived from religion. In Saudi Arabia, religion is one of the sources from which people draw their societal/cultural norms, which constitute part of their moral order. Reciprocating impoliteness and offence is religiously discouraged, and people are encouraged to seek Allah's reward for opting for forgiveness and rising above the offence.¹²⁹ Therefore, these respondents seem to lean toward forgiveness instead of reciprocating impoliteness. Overall, reciprocation of (im)politeness can be a resource to justify matching the level of (im)politeness for some but not for others; see Section 8.4 for further discussion on the inconsistency of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness evaluations.

¹²⁹ For example, one of the Quranic verses that usually used as a reference to justify not reciprocating offensive behaviours is Verse 40 of Chapter 4/Fussilat (*Good and evil cannot be equal. Respond 'to evil' with what is best, then the one you are in a feud with will be like a close friend.*). Translation by Dr. Mustafa Khattab: <https://quran.com/2>

8.6.2 Identity constructions and (im)politeness

Through disagreements, one can express different identity-confirming functions and negotiate relationships. Therefore, generally, there is a link between identity construction in disagreements and (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness (Angouri and Locher, 2012, p.1550). Disagreements as a social practice can be used to show power, solidarity, or both (Sifianou, 2012, p.1559). Identity construction is one of the resources that posters draw on when expressing Twitter disagreements, as seen in replies such as Example 7.1, Example 7.6, Example 7.9, and Example 7.10. These examples show how impoliteness in defending identity can sometimes be justified and thus deemed acceptable by some of the respondents in this study.

According to Alshiqair (2020), there are five identities with varying degrees of visibility in Saudi Arabia: religious identity, national identity, regional identity, tribal identity, and individual identity.¹³⁰ The relative importance of each of these identities in the context of a particular disagreement might affect how these disagreements can be expressed. Given the internal and external developments in the country, for some people, one or two of these identities can be activated and be more prominent than the other in a particular context, which in disagreements might restrict the space for the coexistence of different views. This kind of selective identity activation can be seen in the disagreement expressed by a verbal attack in Example 7.6. There is one prominent identity that seems to take over the interaction, and that is tribal identity. The main poster, a Saudi Hijazi social media influencer, does not have a tribal affiliation because of his Turkish background. In the MT, the poster categorised the people of Hijaz into tribal and Hijazi, thus separating the regional identity from the tribal identity for many Hijazi tribal people, thus making the Hijazi identity exclusive to the non-tribal Hijazis. The main poster's categorisations "tribal" and "hujiz" (i.e. Hijazis) can be interpreted in two ways.

In the first case, the categorisation was unintentional. By referring to Hijazi non-tribal families in the region as "hujiz" and Hijazi tribal people as "tribal", the main poster seems to have inadvertently foregrounded tribal affiliation of Hijazi tribal people while foregrounding regional affiliation for non-tribal families; hence causing a misunderstanding making his tweet come across as if he is negating the regional identity of Hijazi tribal people. In the second, the categorisation could be intentional, which seems

¹³⁰ Alenizi (2019) proposed that there are seven identities in Saudi Arabia: religious, ethnic (Arab), regional, tribal, national, social class, gender.

to be what many posters expressing disagreements in the main thread believe it is. Thus, the negation of regional identity would be a deliberate act. Therefore, how one interprets the main poster's intention behind the categorisation affects the interpretation of how posters expressed their disagreements and how respondents evaluated the reply. The perceived intentionality in the main poster's categorisation seems to reinforce the offence taken by some of the posters in the main thread; however, it should be highlighted that even in situations where intentionality is weakly involved, people may take offence (Culpeper, 2011a, p.69); see Section 8.6.4 about intention in (im)politeness evaluations.

8.6.2.1 Tribal and regional identity

The poster of the reply in Example 7.6 appears to believe that the main poster deliberately made this categorisation. Based on this perceived intentionality, the poster of the reply resorted to attacking the main poster by calling him "racist", "intruder", and "settler", thus reflecting a strong contempt and dissociation from the main poster. The main poster is perceived as a threat from within, whose ideology about the Hijaz identity is misleading and discriminatory. This attack targeted the main poster's social identity face, and it denied his equity and association rights as a Saudi non-tribal person. Activation of tribal identity in this way to attack another non-tribal Saudi poster could be taken as evidence that identities can be construed differently within the same society, which might lead to higher levels of aggravation, particularly in disagreements. Respondents' evaluations of the reply show that this activation of tribalism to attack another non-tribal citizen is mainly perceived as (very) impolite and (very) inappropriate (aligned classification) as selected by 68.18% of the respondents, see respondents' justifications in (54) to (59) in Chapter 7. These evaluations argued that the poster of the reply misinterpreted and misjudged the main poster's intention, and they found the level of impoliteness/inappropriateness in the reply unjustifiable and unacceptable. The key difference between the poster of the reply and these respondents seems to be their perception of intentionality. The poster of the reply assumes the main poster's categorisation (hujiz and tribal) to be intentional, whereas these respondents seem to believe that the main poster made a mistake on the basis that the premise of the MT is generally against racism.

8.6.2.2 National and religious identity

In the other example, the reply in Example 7.10, the poster of the reply expressed an aggravated disagreement directed at the main poster, who is a Qatari journalist. The MT is considered an attack on Saudi Twitter users' quality face and Saudi Arabia's social identity face. This attack appears to target Saudi individuals' national face. Magistro (2011, p.234) stated that the national face is an equal projection of national identity. She further explained that national image is part of the individual's social image, which is probably why the MT seems to be taken as a personal attack triggering the personalised aggravation in this reply. This example also shows that face and identity are closely interconnected concepts. However, it seems that there is a variation in respondents' views of how national identity was activated to express the disagreement in this reply.

Respondents' evaluations of the reply in Example 7.10 in Chapter 7 reveal that around 39.86% of respondents classified the reply as (very) impolite and (very) inappropriate, while 21.69% (very) polite and (very) appropriate and 13.07% neither polite nor impolite and neither appropriate nor inappropriate (aligned classifications). Respondents who classified the reply positively seem to find the impoliteness/inappropriateness in the reply to be justifiable because it matches the level found in the MT (reciprocation) and is employed to defend one's country (defensive impoliteness). On the other hand, most of the respondents who perceived the reply negatively considered both the MT and the reply negatively marked. These respondents find reciprocating impoliteness to defend one's country unacceptable. The defensive impoliteness in the reply reflects poorly on the country's national image because, for these respondents, it is far from the civilised national image the country and its people aim to live by and embrace. The difference between respondents in their views of how national identity is used to perform impoliteness/inappropriateness might reveal that people do not necessarily share the same sense of national identity, which probably influences the means through which they choose to defend their country. It is argued that feelings of national belonging and pride might differ from one community to another and even within the same nation (Magistro, 2011, p.249; Culpeper, 2011a, p.13). In this reply, it can be seen that for some of the respondents, reactive impoliteness in defending national identity is legitimate, while for other respondents, this defensive impoliteness/inappropriateness causes more damage than good.

A different identity was activated in Example 7.3; the poster in this example drew on religious identity.¹³¹ The poster expressed an unmodified disagreement as it contains no mitigation/aggravation devices identified in this study. Around 43.11% of the respondents thought the reply was (very) impolite and (very) inappropriate (aligned classification), mainly due to the categorisation of people in the reply. To these respondents, this categorisation is ideologically based, politically motivated and overgeneralised. It excludes others, specifically conservatives, thus restricting space for their views to be shared without being politically labelled. Respondents who negatively evaluated the reply judge using religion to categorise people, as the poster did in this reply, to be unacceptable. To them, their shared religious identity means that Muslims should avoid using political labels when referring to each other.

On the other hand, around 42.53% of respondents classified the reply as (very) polite and (very) appropriate. The same political/religious categorisation of people was perceived positively by some of these respondents; see, for example, FP3-Maha's response in (33) in Example 7.3. She argues that the categorisation is essentially political, not purely religious, and shows how the ideologies of these groups do not necessarily represent Islam as a religion. Also, the ideologies of these groups do not align with the country's orientation to religion. This explanation supports Alshiqair's (2020, p.31) statement; he argues for the importance of differentiating between religion as a faith and the way in which religion can be used by groups to serve their ideological goals. In some contexts, such as the one here, it appears that national identity can be evoked when religious identity is activated. The example shows that religion is an integral part of this national identity; and that individuals might differ in how they balance the two.

Based on the discussions above, it can be seen that identities can be selectively activated to perform impoliteness/inappropriateness. In the present Saudi context, national identity seems to have gained more influence. This apparent influence of national identity is most likely a result of the recent changes in the country. Since its establishment, the Saudi state has aimed to create a national identity that embraces and unites the people of the land despite their differences. Until recently,¹³² the focus was on the religious identity of the

¹³¹ Alshiqair (2020, p.31) argues that religious identity gained its power from the powerful position of religion, this religious identity was the melting pot for all other identities.

¹³² This devotion for national identity did not come out of nowhere. It was built on policies that were initiated in the era of King Abdullah (2005-2015) that provided the foundation for this new national narrative, for example, King Abdullah was the first to make the national day a public holiday back in 2005, which was considered unacceptable by religious scholars (Alhoussein, 2019, p.3).

state, which dominated the national narrative. However, with the Saudi 2030 vision, the national identity has become a focal element that seeks to embrace the land's Islamic and pre-Islamic history and culture (Alhussein, 2019, pp.2-3). Thus, national identity has become a uniting force that brings Saudi people together and celebrates their diversity under one overarching yet unique identity. This national identity aims to achieve greater benefits for the nation and its people by unifying citizens and reinforcing their sense of belonging. This national identity is crucial as it empowers and protects the country in an unstable region, especially since targeting national identity has become one of the ways to attack a country's stability (Alshiqair, 2020, p.28). In other words, "a strengthened Saudi nationalism was partly an antidote" in the face of regional worries (Alhussein, 2019, p.5). It is important to note the focus on a Saudi national identity does not reduce the value of religion, which remains an integral part of this national identity.

8.6.3 Intertextuality and (im)politeness

Intertextuality as a linguistic phenomenon is "a ubiquitous Arabic cultural practice and a prominent communicative strategy" (Badarneh, 2020, p.1). Analysing impoliteness in online comments, Badarneh listed five categories of intertextual references, which are differentiated based on the nature of the source texts. These are Quranic references as in Example 7.7, references to prophetic traditions as in Example 6.14, poetic references as in Example 7.10, proverbial references as in Example 8.2, and historical references as in Example 8.1. In the present study, intertextuality was employed by Saudi posters mostly to aggravate the disagreement and perform impoliteness. Posters creatively borrow other texts to perform impoliteness; the intertextual references could be a direct quotation or a modified version of the source text. The first two sources the posters draw on, the Quran and Hadith, are referred to as authoritative texts, described as "unquestioned texts" (Alzidjaly, 2017, p.169). This unquestionable status is based on the holiness of these texts, which, as shown in Example 7.7, created two different approaches in evaluating the intertextual use of the sacred text to aggravate the disagreement.

The intertextual use of religious text to aggravate disagreements created what Alzidjaly (2019, p.1052) refers to as "a moral dilemma". Some respondents chose polite/politic classifications for the disagreement in Example 7.7 because they found classifying the reply negatively to be, in some way, a judgment on the original text, which is the Quran in this example. Hence, avoiding the selection of a negative classification seems to be their way of avoiding disrespect of the sacred text. Respondents' justifications, such as the ones in (75) and (76), reveal that negative classifications of the reply (e.g., impolite

or inappropriate) were not selected because the poster used “Allah’s words”. On the other hand, respondents who classified the reply negatively seem to approach the intertextual use of the sacred text differently. To these respondents, the negative classification focused on the poster’s “misuse” of the reference, or more precisely, how the sacred text was abused to accentuate the aggravation in the reply. This misuse of the Quranic verse is considered an exploitation of the sacred text; see respondents’ justifications such as (73) and (74). To these respondents, the impoliteness and inappropriateness evaluations of this reply seem to come from the accusation directed at the target. It also comes from exploiting the sacred text to accuse the target, especially since the poster quoted only half of the verse in a way that ignored the context of that verse.

Unlike Example 7.7, a moral dilemma was not observed in the respondents’ justifications for the intertextual use of poetry in Example 7.10. Respondents did not mention the use of the poem in their justifications. This is most likely because the source text does not hold a sacred status like religious texts. Further, poetry has been traditionally used in Arabic literature as a powerful device to offend and attack rivals (Badarneh, 2020, p.19). Although respondents did not specify that the use of the poem is one of the sources for the impolite or inappropriate classifications, the effect of the couplet in aggravating the disagreement, despite not being pointed out, cannot be ruled out. In fact, the intertextual poetic reference in the disagreement could reflect the poster’s sense of intellectual superiority over the target and attract others’ attention to one’s reply (Badarneh, 2020, pp.22-23). Badarneh (2020) argued that using intertextuality in aggravation and performing impoliteness reflects how impoliteness can be creatively formulated. This creativity usually aims to achieve attacks that give the speaker superiority (see Culpeper, 2011a on creativity in impoliteness). Furthermore, the use of intertextuality, particularly religious texts, seems to lend authority and legitimacy to the poster’s impoliteness and inappropriateness (Badarneh, 2020).

8.6.4 Perceptions of intention in evaluations of (im)politeness

As pointed out in the above sections, intention and intentionality seem to play a role in how respondents interpret and evaluate (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements. The concept of intention and its connection to (im)politeness has been debated in previous works (e.g., Haugh, 2008b, p.102, 2009, p.93; Locher, 2011, p.194; Culpeper, 2011a, p.48; Grainger, 2013, pp.29-30). Based on the analysis presented here, it seems clear that interpreting others’ intentions is one of the tools or resources that people utilise to understand and evaluate others’ behaviours/words. Notably, it is argued

that aggressive behaviours perceived as intentional are considered severe and more likely to generate strong responses (Culpeper, 2011a, p.50). Also, it is claimed that the conceptualisation of intention may vary across cultures (Haugh, 2008b, p.101; Mateo and Yus, 2013, p.110). Given that Islam strongly influences the Saudi culture, the conceptualisation of intention may have a religious connotation, but not necessarily in all actions and contexts.¹³³ The common belief in Islam is that intention is placed in the figurative heart; it is a spiritual deed of the heart.¹³⁴ With this in mind, I find Culpeper's (2011a, p.49) definition of intention as "an attribution that links desire and belief to an action" a practical description. Culpeper (2011, p.49) differentiated between intention and intentionality. The latter is described as "an attribution that requires intention, ability, and awareness"; it shows that intention is one of its components.¹³⁵

Moreover, the analysis revealed that intention, as argued by Culpeper (2011a, p.49), could be a *post facto* notion that participants in interaction often use as a tool to explain and evaluate others' behaviours. In my data, post-facto data were observed in:

1. Intention explicitly topicalised in the posters' disagreements, as seen in Example 6.26.
2. Intention explicitly topicalised in respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness in the disagreements, as seen in Examples 7.6 and 7.7.

In Example 6.26, covered in Chapter 6, Poster-43 expressed their disagreement and astonishment at how other posters in the main thread were talking about Alsihaimi (the target of most disagreements in the main thread of replies). Poster-43 criticised other posters for intentionally attacking the target based on their interpretations of the intention behind his words. Alsihaimi's intention here became a topic of discussion, thus showing that intention can be a post facto notion that posters talk about and dispute (Haugh, 2008a,

¹³³ One of Prophet Muhammad's hadiths (i.e. narratives) states, "Deeds are to be judged by intentions, and a man will have only what he intended" (Bukhari and Muslim, Mishkat al-Masabih 1, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:1>). It is argued that intention has two senses: the first is used to differentiate an act of worship from other habitual or ordinary acts. The second is to distinguish the purpose or aim of acts, which is usually connected to sincerity and its consequences. Scholars have debated the meanings and connections between *intention*, *purpose*, *will*, *desire* and *want*. Moreover, it is stated that intention is the purpose of the heart, and therefore scholars argued whether it is necessary to express one intention verbally or not, with the majority saying that it is not necessary and some disapprove of expressing these intentions verbally, particularly for any act of worship (see ibn Rajab, [1986] 2007).

¹³⁴ Other scholars argued that intention is in the mind, while others say it is placed in both mind and heart (see *Al Ashqar, O. S. 1981. The Book of Intentions for Worshipers of Allah. Kuwait Al Falah Publisher*).

¹³⁵ This was motivated by work on folk notions of intentionality and intention by Malle and Knobe (1997) who reported that when people were asked about intentionality, they mentioned 5 components: desire, belief, intention, awareness, and skill.

p.202; Culpeper, 2011a, p.49). Poster-43 seems to find it unacceptable that other posters are negatively interpreting Alsihaimi's statement and judging his intention. Poster-43 seems to find that Alsihaimi's statement is not different from ibn Uthaymeen's fatwa (i.e. Islamic advisory view); Poster-43 finds the two views to essentially argue for reducing the volume of the external loudspeakers for the comfort of the people living nearby. To Poster-43, given that Alsihaimi's statement aligns to some extent with the opinion of a prominent cleric, it should not be categorically treated as an extreme view warranting such a negative reaction. It can be argued that the difference between Poster-43 and the other posters in interpreting Alsihaimi's words/intention is reflected in how they positioned themselves in the interaction, either supporting or opposing Alsihaimi. This shows that the interpretation of others' intentions in an interaction can influence evaluations of (im)politeness.

Similarly, intention as a *post facto* notion was seen in respondents' evaluations of the replies in Example 7.6 and Example 7.7. In these examples, respondents in the online questionnaire commented on how they perceived the intentions of the posters reflected in the perceived intentionality of the aggravation; see responses such as (56), (72), and (73) in Section 7.4. In Example 7.7, the poster used supplication to express disagreement directed at the man in the video attached to the MT; this supplication was aggravated by the use of judgmental language realised in the intertextual use of the Quranic verse at the end of the reply. The disagreement in this reply was classified and evaluated negatively; for instance, 42.5% of the respondents chose the aligned classifications (very) impolite and (very) inappropriate. According to the respondents, the poster of this disagreement breached a societal norm by judging the man's intention and ascribing his interruption of the lecture as an act of low faith. Although the poster's judgment was not stated explicitly, the use of the Quranic verse was taken to reflect the poster's intentional judgement of the man in the video; see, for example, the justification in (73) in Section 7.4. Generally, talking about other people's intentions — specifically attributing negative intentions to their behaviours without reliable knowledge — is socially discouraged based on Islamic guidance. Interestingly, it seems that even in contexts where people have no prior or little relational history, people still debate the intentions of others primarily based on their personal assumptions and subjective perception.

8.7 Potential causes for the high level of aggravation in Twitter disagreements

In this section, I address the possible reasons behind the high levels of aggravation in Saudis' disagreements on Twitter, as found in the SAT corpus. Some of the key causes identified in this study involve individualism, personality, and awareness of self-representation in a public space. Other causes are more related to platform affordances and restrictions, such as weak-tie social networks, longevity and regularity of interaction and anonymity.

I start the discussion by cautiously arguing that aggravation on Twitter could be due to the increasing sense of individualism in what has traditionally been a collectivist society. In a report looking at the changes in tribe and family ties in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Tunisia, Alterman (2019, p.37) found that individualism is rising in the region. He attributed this increase in individualism to factors such as education, the information revolution, urbanisation, and how people increasingly think of their interests and ambitions in personal terms. Similarly, in an interview¹³⁶ with Almudaifir, a Saudi physician and psychotherapist, he pointed out that the rise in individualism is not only happening in Saudi Arabia but also globally. Almudaifir especially highlights how individualism can encourage an egocentric view of life and feeds narcissism. He suggests that the increase in individualism is connected to accessibility and dependency on social media, which seem to make individuals more self-centred (Khalejia, 2020). However, further research is needed to examine how individualism is conceptualised in the Saudi community and how it connects to other notions, namely privacy, independence, and personal identity.

In addition, some interviewees mentioned the effects of personality on the expression of disagreement and its perception, as seen in FP3-Maha's statement, and how this is connected to the person's awareness¹³⁷ of self-representation in a public space (i.e. caring about one's public image), as seen in MP6-Amani.

¹³⁶ The interview was in 2020 on the TV channel RotanaKhalejia. In this episode, different topics were discussed, such as mental health during the pandemic, the effects of technologies on parenting and family dynamics, and the increase in individualistic views of life. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saDpgSBtm1s>

¹³⁷ Self-awareness requires conscious reflexivity regarding one's behaviour, which requires deliberate self-reflection and evaluation.

MP6-Amani: ... on Twitter, I am using my name [real identity]; therefore, I cannot comment on anything freely because I am worried that people who know me might see my tweets, so I usually think like that.

FP7-Khulud: ...my Twitter profile shows my first and last name and job, and many people are following me, so I have to be mindful of what I post.

FP3-Maha: I think this depends on the person's personality and how one would like to depict themselves on Twitter, so I do not think it is a matter of how strong/deep your relationship with the other person is. I am especially talking about when one is using their real name on Twitter. Your name makes you polite more than if you were anonymous. This way, the online and offline persona are interdependent; this is my view.

MP9-Yusef: In general, I think the nature of relationships affects the interaction, and on social media, interactions can be built on personal benefits. For example, if a poster has 10,000 followers probably, my interaction with this person, especially when expressing a different view, would not be the same as my interaction with a poster who has only 300 followers. And for the sake of argument here, let's assume that I work in a university, and the other person also works in the same university; if we disagreed on Twitter and my disagreement was aggravated, I would become an opponent. So, what is the point of creating hostile relationships that would affect me in the real world?¹³⁸

MP8-Muhammad: Probably weak relationships on Twitter play a role, but I think the person's expertise, age and maturity on Twitter are more important...

A person's awareness of others witnessing their behaviour might influence how they express themselves and how they evaluate (im)politeness in others' disagreements (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.186). This lends some support to Alghamdi's finding on the role of observation effect on the production of disagreements; she reported that the level of aggravation in the collected corpus of the participants' naturally occurring Twitter disagreements was higher than their Twitter disagreements produced when participating in the study; see Section 2.4.3. These notions are also connected to one's ability to consider the potential consequences of online behaviour on the offline aspect of life, as illustrated by MP9-Yusef. Sifianou (2012, p.1558) argued that personality traits are one of the key factors influencing individuals' linguistic behaviours when expressing disagreements and their reactions and judgements of others' disagreements. When posters are not concerned about the consequences of their words, they might not filter what they

¹³⁸ Yusef shared an experience; he stated, "Four years ago, an incident happened with a man in my city, and we [occasionally] meet in King Fahad Mosque. [One day] he posted a strange point of view on Twitter, and I politely disagreed with evidence. He has a lot of followers, and many people participated and supported my view more than his view. We met at the mosque [again], and he said to me 'O brother why did you reply to me on Twitter like that' and I said to him, 'I talked about the topic you talked about in a different way' I said, 'this is my opinion' and he did not like that."

say to the same extent. The awareness of self-representation and the consequences of one's online behaviour are connected to how visible a poster's identity is, especially how much is known about the poster regarding social factors such as age, education and affiliations to social network(s), as seen in MP8-Muhammad. Some interviewees, like MP6-Amani, believe that their visible identity can be restrictive or, more precisely, a constant reminder of what their post reflects on them. These statements seem to show that people who are visible and self-aware of their image online tend to believe that their online behaviour might influence their offline life. For instance, MP9-Yusef strongly believes that despite the difference between online and offline worlds, a complete separation between a person's personality in two the worlds is impossible.¹³⁹

Moreover, the high levels of aggravated disagreements on Twitter might result from the platform's influence since most users on Twitter do not necessarily have a personal connection with each other, and the relationship does not have to be reciprocated; there seems to be a lack of interpersonal interactional histories between the posters, which might be the norm for Twitter users. As shown in Figure 5-11, many respondents claim they know only a few individuals in their following/followers lists on a personal level. Therefore, on Twitter, there might be less pressure to maintain social harmony when disagreeing with others. Squires (2015, p.247) argues two things about Twitter and Facebook. First, she notes that there is a clear distinction between the focus of the two platforms: "Facebook is about connecting with friends while Twitter is more about finding out what is happening". Also, Twitter is more about reaching a broader audience and communicating with people one would not usually connect with. Also, Oz et al. (2018, p.3402) stated that communication on Twitter generally involves strangers or weak-tie acquaintances, while on Facebook, it usually involves pre-existing relationships. However, some studies (e.g., Leung, 2013; Hayes et al., 2015) suggest that there seem to be some generational differences in patterns of using social media platforms. It was also highlighted that the evolving nature of technologies and the ageing cohort might have some effect on the analysis of generational differences in using social media (Miller et

¹³⁹ Some respondents and interviewees pointed out that some people depict what can be called a *double personality*, that is, a person's offline personality does not align with their online personality. A sarcastic video that was posted on Twitter was shared with me, some time after my data collection. The title of the video is "we are so dramatic on Twitter"; it was created by a young man named Muhammad Saaif. The video put the spotlight on how some individuals post things like "I am too sad and can't smile today" while in reality the person was out with his friends. It focused on how Twitter is used as outlet for exaggerated emotions and struggles to seek attention and validation from others. The video highlights the idea of a double personality, an interesting topic that could be looked at in future research.

al., 2016). The generational difference in expressing views and disagreeing on Twitter was pointed out in the interviews, as seen in Ali's statement below, which shows the generational difference in using Twitter in Saudi Arabia requires further study.

Male-53 (MP1-Ali): I think the new generation is more forceful and impulsive when expressing their opinion compared to the old generation. The new generation, I mean those aged 25 and under, while those over 30, you find them less snappy when expressing their different views. I believe the 80s generation is more accepting of the old culture, while the new generation is more accepting of changes like women's freedom.

Additionally, Oz et al. (2018) reported that the level of impoliteness on Facebook and Twitter seems to be different, especially in morally loaded or sensitive topics, with Twitter discussions tending to be more impolite. Similarly, Alsaggaf and Simmons (2015) noted that disagreements in sensitive topics among Facebook users in Saudi Arabia were not aggravated as users did not engage in flaming, sarcasm, or attacking the other. They described the interaction on Facebook as "peaceful", while YouTube comments, on the other hand, included more aggravated communication (Alsaggaf and Simmons, 2015, p.10). They postulated that longevity¹⁴⁰ and regularity of interaction among Facebook users might have influenced the relationships and allowed genuine relationships to develop over time; with regular communication, strangers can become online friends. Based on my data, I would also argue that the length of the message might impact how disagreements are handled on Twitter, as seen in the statements made by FP6-Amani, MP2-Faisel, and MP10-Malek. Twitter limits its users to 280 characters¹⁴¹ per post but does not limit the number of tweets a user can post—in fact, a user can use a thread of replies to write more. However, the corpus analysis shows that most Twitter disagreements occurred as one post in the second conversational turn, T2. Therefore, this might indicate that Twitter users are generally more interested in expressing their views rather than engaging in back-and-forth interaction.

¹⁴⁰ The point of longevity and frequency of interaction was mentioned in the interviews as a relational force that drives one to work to maintain social harmony. Based on MP1-Ali's statement, it seems that regular interaction on Twitter might lead to individuals meeting up, which transforms the online relationship into an offline one. Such relationships are developed and maintained through the frequency of the interaction and the commonality between the interlocutors.

¹⁴¹ See Section 1.3.1 about length of Twitter post.

FP6-Amani: I think online aggression is not just a Saudi issue but a global one. I also think that this is because when the person is hiding behind the screen and is unknown to others, this person would say things freely without caring about the judgement of others. This is different from when the individuals are in a place where they are known and care about their image.

MP2-Faisal: People on Twitter tend to say whatever comes to their mind because it is a brief interaction, usually with someone they do not know personally. So they are not bothered if the other gets upset. This is not the same as talking with someone they know on Twitter or WhatsApp.

MP10-Malek: Twitter is about one's opinion and the opinion of others, following news to share with others because it is a platform for sharing breaking news, and sometimes it is faster than official news media. On Twitter, many people follow you, and you follow them without actually knowing each other. Twitter is a free space, and people post whatever they want in this space. Twitter is also a space of opportunity; for example, I could tweet Elon Musk, but I could never contact him using WhatsApp.

Lastly, as seen in many of the responses mentioned so far, it appears that the high level of (im)politeness and aggravation on Twitter is connected to anonymity and how some posters utilised it. For Upadhyay (2010, p.124), anonymity in online interactions is considered a crucial factor in the high level of (im)politeness, which makes disregarding social norms less difficult. Also, I believe that anonymity intensifies the interpersonal gap between the posters, thus making detachment from the other easier. It reduces the sense of social/moral responsibility and the awkwardness that posters should feel to rethink their actions or words. However, building on the notions of individualism and self-branding mentioned earlier, it seems that aggravation and impoliteness do not necessarily need the concealment provided by anonymity. Some interviewees pointed out that using real identity does not prevent some Twitter users from being aggressive or antagonistic. Some individuals would take an antagonistic and aggressive approach as a trademark to attract more attention, followers, views, etc. This claim requires further investigation, which is beyond the scope of this study.

8.8 To what extent do the relational work and rapport management account for Twitter disagreements?

The relational work model (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; 2008, p.78) seems to provide a useful framework for analysing (im)politeness on Twitter as it allows for analysing a range of (im)polite and (in)appropriate behaviours and offers categories for classifying these behaviours. However, in practice, the relational work model seems to have some shortcomings. Despite the importance of the notions of face and contextual

norms for relational work, the framework does not provide a sufficient guide to account for these notions, especially in interactions where the interlocutors have little or no shared interpersonal histories, as in my Twitter data. Locher and Watts (2008, p.96) acknowledge that given the intersubjective nature of relational work, and how the individuals' conceptualisations are connected to the conceptualisations of others, the individual level is crucially connected to the social one. Yet, the framework does not sufficiently provide a means to account for the conceptualisations of (im)politeness at the cultural level, which is undeniably challenging (Mills and Kádár, 2011). Moreover, although the framework emphasises the variability in norms, expectations, and evaluations of (im)politeness, the framework does not provide an elaborated approach for analysing how and why a particular behaviour is classified and evaluated a certain way. In order to overcome some of these shortcomings, I borrowed some concepts from Spencer-Oatey (2000; 2002; 2005a), such as face sensitivities and sociality rights and obligations, to better explain the contextual implications of the identified Twitter disagreements in the corpus and to interpret how (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness evaluations might be triggered by the manner in which these disagreements are modified in their context. This section addresses how the selected frameworks accounted for (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements.

The classification categories provided by the relational work model were helpful to some degree in assisting respondents in classifying the disagreements in the online questionnaire, see Table 4-5. These categories provided a shared terminology that might simplify the analysis of people's judgements of (im)polite behaviour. However, (1) the analysis showed that providing classification categories does not always make the analytical task simple; in Chapter 7, I demonstrated that respondents sometimes assigned different (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness categories to the same disagreement, despite providing similar justifications. (2) Moreover, as illustrated in Section 8.3, metalinguistic evaluators (i.e. categorisation labels) seem to carry different connotations; some respondents asserted that they would prefer to use different metalinguistic labels than the suggested ones. (3) In addition, the correlation test in Chapter 5 and the interviewees' responses revealed that (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness variables are positively connected but not identical. The relational work model does not sufficiently explain the relationship between (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness, and to what extent the relational work categorisation can reflect the respondents' perceptions of the (un)markedness of the evaluated behaviour.

Looking at Locher and Watts' (2008, pp.79, 96) account of negatively marked behaviour, they argue that a negatively marked behaviour will evoke judgements of impoliteness, but it is also likely to evoke a wide range of other possible responses ranging from the relatively neutral 'impolite' through 'rude' to 'aggressive', 'insulting' and other negative judgments. This indicates that a negatively marked behaviour cannot be seen as politic. A good example of this can be seen in the disagreement (verbal attack) in Example 7.5, which was negatively perceived by most respondents based on their aligned and unaligned impolite classifications and the justifications they provided. However, for a few respondents who chose politic/polite classifications, their justifications reveal that they acknowledge the level of impoliteness in the reply but still find it appropriate, mainly because they believe the main tweet to be disrupting social cohesion and stirring up public opinion regarding the changes in the country. Similarly, in cases where impoliteness was used to counter what is perceived as an attack on national identity, this impoliteness in the aggravated disagreement was perceived as a polite response by some respondents, see Example 7.10. Indeed, this reveals that the notion of (un)markedness requires further exploration (Haugh, 2007b, p.300).

The variability in respondents' classifications ascribed to the same disagreement showed that the classification labels themselves do not reveal much about the reasoning behind the selected classification. This finding aligns with Davies' argument (2018, p.123); it is not the classification per se but rather the rationale underlying these classifications that tell us more about the ideological process through which respondents reach such evaluations. She explained that evaluations of (im)politeness are better treated as having three components: classifications like *polite*, *impolite*, *appropriate*, etc.; assessment of a person, which is often implied based on how the person's associated traits are evaluated as negative or positive; and the rationale, which is the argumentative link that connects the classification to the moral order. This argumentative link reveals more about the norms and expectations from which respondents draw their evaluations. As stated above, respondents provided similar justifications for their different classifications of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness of the disagreement. The justifications provided were more helpful in grouping the responses and offering insight into the respondents' emic views of the moral order at the societal level, as presented in Chapter 7.

Moreover, relational work argues for the importance of social norms and the individuals' frames of expectations constructed through social practices in accounting for (im)polite/(in)appropriate behaviour in a given context (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.78).

They argued that norms of appropriateness in an interaction are negotiable and that judgements about relational work can vary across social practices (Locher and Watts, 2008, p.81). However, the framework does not provide clear guidance on identifying and accounting for the dominant norms in a particular context. Locher and Watts (2005, p.11) also argued that a great deal of the relational work carried out is unmarked (i.e. politic); however, this statement might not be applicable across all contexts and requires further quantitative analysis to back it up. In Chapter 5, the quantitative analysis reveals that the frequency of aggravated disagreements in my Saudi Twitter corpus is higher than their mitigated and unmodified counterparts, which might suggest that it is a politic behaviour on Twitter. However, the respondents' evaluations of some of these disagreements in Chapter 7 and the interviewees' comments in Section 8.7 reveal that aggravated disagreements are noticed by Saudis on Twitter, and generally seem to be perceived negatively. Therefore, quantitative analysis in future research can offer a clearer picture of what is seen as an expected behaviour (i.e. norm) in Twitter disagreements among Saudis. Besides social norms and individuals' frames of expectations, perceptions of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness are influenced by the relationships between the interlocutors (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.15); however, the relational work model does not sufficiently address cases where there is no relational history between the interlocutors. The absence of interpersonal relationships with others may have affected how respondents perceive (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. In their examination of relational work on Facebook, Locher et al. (2015, p.9) emphasised that norms and expectations derived from offline (i.e. non-computer mediated communication) contexts do have some influence on online interaction and that a clear separation can be difficult. Therefore, I think further research on (im)politeness in Saudis' disagreements online on Twitter and other platforms can help identify salient patterns that can shed more light on the various dominant norms in online interaction, which can then be compared to patterns in offline interactions.

8.8.1 Social and cultural norms

As stated earlier, rapport management was used to supplement the relational work model in analysing (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2002; [2000] 2008). Like the relational work model, the rapport management framework stresses the importance of participants' evaluations, but it also accounts for the use of language to enhance, maintain, or threaten harmonious social interaction. The rapport management framework not only focuses on face sensitivities but also includes sociality rights and

obligations, social expectations, and interactional goals; see Section 3.1.2.2. Rapport management generally suggests that what counts as appropriate in an interaction depends on socio-cultural norms, the nature of the relationship between interlocutors and personal preferences (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p.541). In (im)politeness evaluations, socio-cultural norms and expectations play a central role (Spencer-Oatey and Kádár, 2016). The analysis in this study has shown that people assume that certain norms and expectations should be followed in expressing disagreement on Twitter. These expectations were apparent in respondents' evaluations and during the interviews. Respondents and interviewees usually referred to adequate norms in social behaviour or "red lines" that should not be crossed. Consider the statement below:

Female-35 (FP6- Amani): There are red lines everyone is expected not to cross. I honestly do not know what to tell you, but for example, defaming someone is a red line, a line that no one is supposed to cross. To me, defamation and slandering are extremely impolite. After that, swearing and offending; and lastly, I think ridiculing, these behaviours are not accepted in our society.

Female-82 (FP9-Manal): I feel people on Twitter are more daring, which means that politeness is out of control, especially when the account holder is anonymous, where anonymity is used as a mask to hide and abuse freedom by insulting, humiliating, and cursing others and transgressing the limits...

As discussed in Sections 3.1.2 and 8.4, people build their moral order and construct their understanding of norms and expectations based on their experiences and the experiences of others around them. These individual norms and expectations are influenced by other socio-cultural norms; based on this, the moral order can be conceptualised as a combination of localised norms, communities of practice/organisations/group norms, and societal/cultural norms (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.95). As seen in the above statements, the analysis revealed that respondents seem to refer to an unspecified set of social norms and expectations that they refer to when evaluating others' behaviours. These norms and expectations are derived from different sources (Spencer-Oatey, 2007); for example, the interviewees pointed out that their position in the relationship plays a role in how they express themselves as well as the topic of the discussion. There is also an awareness that these social norms and expectations might be violated on Twitter for different reasons, for example, to attract reactions from others or stand out as being different; see the example of the sports commentator in Section 8.1.3.2 and the discussion in Sections 8.5 and 8.7. Moreover, given the nature of the dynamic participation framework on Twitter, discussed in Section 4.4.1.3, other posters can intervene in other conversations and affect the interaction between two posters communicating their views. This shows that

expectations in these interactions can shift easily;¹⁴² Locher and Watts (2005, p.15) highlighted that any shift in the context of the social interaction could lead to significant shifts in the perception of (im)politeness.

Furthermore, examining respondents' evaluations in the study revealed that there is some level of (subconscious) awareness that the norms of polite and appropriate behaviour change from one situation to another and that these norms undergo variation across different situations. They seem to adapt their evaluations of Twitter disagreement in response to contextual considerations. For example, respondents who evaluated the reply in Example 7.1 as (very) polite and (very) inappropriate stated that they know that the response is generally acceptable, but given the context where it was expressed, they find it inappropriate because the context requires the poster either to express a clear and strong opinion or not respond at all. Also, the disagreement in Example 7.10 was evaluated by some respondents as (very) polite and (very) appropriate; these respondents acknowledged their awareness of the impoliteness in the reply. However, given its nature as a counter offence, they overlooked the impoliteness of the reply.

The interplay between localised norms and cultural norms is reflected in the variations of classifications and justifications provided by the respondents (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.95). Overall, respondents' evaluations seem to be anchored to their cumulative knowledge gained through online and offline socialising. This shows that a clear separation between the norms and expectations in offline and online interactions can be challenging (Locher et al., 2015). It also reveals that generalisations about cultural groups do not accurately reflect that members of these cultural groups might not all share the same norms and expectations. It also supports the discursive research view that we have to move away from making generalisations about (im)politeness at the cultural level and focus on understanding how people negotiate meaning in social interaction (Locher and Watts, 2005; Mills, 2009). In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of (im)politeness, it is essential to consider not only the perspectives of participants but also include perspectives derived from different participation footings (such as observers or side participants) (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.220).

¹⁴² Graham (2008) reported that (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness expectations were observed to shift during email communication among members of the same community of practice (members in the same Churchlist).

8.8.2 Social identity face in Twitter disagreements

Social identity face appears to play a crucial role in Twitter disagreements, especially when these disagreements are directed at a public figure. Spencer-Oatey refers to social identity face as the “fundamental desire [that people have] for [others] to acknowledge and uphold [their] social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader” (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p.540). The disagreements directed at these targets: the writer Alsihaimi in #alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques (MT1 and MT2), the Qatari journalist in #gulf_crisis (MT11), the social media influencer in #hijaz_idenity (MT3), and the female reporter in #women_driving (MT5), primarily targeted their social identity face. Posters who aggravated their disagreements when targeting these individuals are probably aware of how their aggravated disagreements might affect these targets even when they do not directly respond to these disagreements. The use of aggravation in the disagreements directed at these targets might be deliberate, aiming to inflict pain and heighten the face damage (Bousfield, 2008, p.72). For instance, the use of verbal attack in Example 6.2 to express a disagreement directed at the female reporter in the video attached to MT5 appears to be aimed at tarnishing her role as a Saudi female reporter. The attack in this example was extended to her family, specifically attacking her parents’ quality face by insulting their daughter's upbringing. Spencer-Oatey (2002, p.540) argued that quality face is associated with a person’s self-esteem (i.e. related to the person as an individual) and the value he/she claims for him/herself based on personal qualities like competence and abilities. Parents usually take pride in how they raise their children, especially if their children are working hard to build their future.

In this study, the influence of disagreements on the targets cannot be measured; however, it is impossible to deny that these disagreements probably had some impact on the targets. For example, the female reporter posted on Twitter weeks after the incident:

Unintentional mistakes are inevitable in media coverage, and I have taken responsibility for what happened and followed the authorities' decision. My heart is open to any constructive criticism or advice. However, for those who slandered my patriotism, faith, and honour, I will meet them before Allah. I will also take them to court. I have delegated someone to work on this and start the procedures.

On the other hand, posters who mitigated their disagreements when targeting these individuals seem to show some consideration towards their social identity face and aim to reduce the threat to their faces. Hence, they expressed mitigated disagreements, as seen in Example 6.17 and Example 6.27. In addition, as seen in Examples 6.5 and 7.4, it seems

that these posters used mitigated disagreements, not only because they were concerned about the target but also their own quality face (i.e. self-image) in the public space. This can illustrate that mitigation in interaction goes both ways, meaning that saving the other's face goes hand in hand with saving one's own face (Caffi, 2013, p.199); see Section 3.3.1. This also relates to the notion of cost-benefit, which is an element of association rights consideration; see the following section. The analysis also indicates that the posters can potentially utilise the targets' visibility on Twitter when expressing their disagreements, often reflected in the degree of personalisation in the expressed disagreement; see Section 9.5 for future research suggestions.

8.8.3 Sociality rights on Twitter disagreements

In the analysis of Twitter disagreements in the SAT corpus, it appears that sociality rights also play a significant role when posters express one of the three types of disagreements (unmodified, mitigated, and aggravated). Examining posters' language use in these disagreements can reveal, to some extent, their orientations towards the interactions and their considerations of sociality rights. As shown in the previous chapters, it is evident that posters orienting towards maintaining or enhancing the interaction tend to use mitigated or unmodified disagreements. However, mitigated disagreements reveal more about the posters' attempt to maintain or enhance the interaction with the target and how they are attempting to preserve equity and association rights — for instance, the mitigated disagreement in Example 7.4 reflects the poster's concerns over equity rights related to autonomy–imposition. The poster used “just an opinion” in an attempt to show awareness of others' autonomy by not sounding forceful in presenting a personal opinion, thus avoiding imposition. It can be argued here how posters formulate their disagreement may be affected by their anticipation of the disagreement ‘cost’ on the target (e.g., the degree of imposition and inconvenience), which Spencer-Oatey argues that to achieve effective rapport management costs and benefits should be kept “fair” and roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity balance (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p.16; 2005, p.100).

Moreover, mitigated disagreements were observed to reflect posters' considerations of association rights, particularly respectfulness and involvement. Respectfulness was observed in the use of mitigation devices that reflect the poster's positive attitude towards the target. For instance, in Example 6.23, the poster used the positive remark “May Allah reward you” while advising the target. In Example 6.17, the poster used “please” to hedge and soften the reprimand. Involvement considerations were reflected in how posters used solidarity/in-group markers such as “you and I”, partial agreement markers such as “as

for the rest, I am with you”, and address terms such as the kinship address term “my brother”, see Examples 6.8, 4.6, 4.21 and 6.17. Apparently, Saudi posters expressing mitigated disagreements in the SAT corpus tend to appeal to a shared social bond/membership with the targets. This shared membership is based chiefly on two broad connections: nationality and religion; see Section 8.6.2. In general, association rights seem to take precedence when looking at Saudis’ mitigated disagreements in the SAT corpus.

On the other hand, Saudi posters in the SAT corpus who oriented themselves to neglect or challenge the rapport with the target, tend to express aggravated disagreements. In these aggravated disagreements, equity and association rights concerns were generally overlooked or not prioritised. This exploitation seems to be utilised to serve different purposes. For instance, equity rights related to autonomy–imposition were exploited in aggravated disagreements that seek to dispute or attack the target, as observed in these Examples: 6.20 (challenge), 6.16 (reprimand), and 7.5 (verbal attack). The targets of these disagreements might feel imposed upon; however, due to a lack of responses from the poster to the disagreements in the corpus, this imposition is challenging to assess. Exceptionally, the main poster responded to the disagreement in Example 7.5; see Appendix D. The main poster’s response suggests that he felt the aggravated disagreement was imposing and unfair. Spencer-Oatey (2002, p.532) argues “that ‘costly’ messages may not only limit people’s autonomy but may also involve time, effort, inconvenience, risk and so on,” this can be seen in the interactions produced by the aggravated disagreement in Example 7.5. She, therefore, asserts that cost–benefit considerations incorporate the notion of autonomy.

Moreover, the corpus analysis also revealed Saudis exploiting association rights to aggravate disagreements in order to express their disrespect of the target as seen, for instance, in Example 6.3; the aggravated disagreement reflects that the poster has no respect for the main poster and his supporters as reflected in the use of verbal attack containing a dismissal “don’t say anything no more” and the inappropriate reference “donkeys”. Moreover, association rights were exploited to dissociate from the target. In these disagreements, the shared social bond/membership evoked in the examples of mitigated disagreements no longer holds. This social detachment is seen clearly in many examples, such as Examples 6.2, 6.10, 7.5, and 7.6. It is apparent that both equity and association rights are utilised to express aggravated disagreements; however, the analysis seems to indicate that association rights appear to take precedence.

In arguing whether the posters are exploiting interactional or affective involvement-detachment considerations, it is plausible to suggest that when posters respond and express disagreements publicly, they are actively engaging with the target, even when they have the choice not to engage. Simultaneously, by expressing their disagreements, they are conveying their emotions, concerns and views to a broader audience. Disagreements, particularly aggravated ones, depict strong negative emotions, as seen in Examples 6.2, 7.5, and 7.6. This is in accordance with Culpeper's (2011a, p.69) observation that (im)politeness behaviour is connected to moral emotions, including anger and contempt; see Section 9.3 suggestion for future work on the connections between emotion and disagreements.

Overall, it is evident that rapport management helped analyse Saudis' disagreements in the SAT corpus by unpacking posters' orientations and contextually analysing their linguistic choices when expressing these disagreements. Nevertheless, it appears that the depth of the analysis using rapport management can be influenced by how much of the contextual variables are accessible to the researcher. In the analysis of my Twitter corpus, many of these variables were not accessible, such as the influence of power relations and the distance between the posters and targets, social/interactional roles and other contextual factors. Spencer-Oatey (2000, p.39) argues that these contextual variables can be 'standing' (i.e. pre-existence conceptions) and a 'dynamic' (i.e. assessment of variables in interaction); both can play a role in influencing language use in interaction. It remains unclear to what extent posters' pre-existing conceptions, for example, about cost/benefit, rights and obligation of people in interaction, have affected how they expressed disagreements on Twitter and whether these conceptions were changed when they engaged with the thread of replies. Spencer-Oatey (2000, p.39) argues that individuals' initial conceptions not only influence the interaction but are also influenced during these interactions; however, her framework does not clarify the specific mechanisms by which these pre-existing and dynamic variables are established and maintained. Haugh et al. (2011, p.4) argue that many of these considerations are left "to reason-based assumptions". They also noted that although rapport management is "one of the most comprehensive frameworks of context for politeness researchers developed to date", seeking to understand language use in its social and pragmatic context, the framework remains fundamentally structuralist in its orientation (Haugh et al., 2011, p.5).

8.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have covered and discussed the results of the analysis reported in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The discussion of the analysis suggests that the taxonomies of disagreement strategies should not classify strategies as positively marked (polite) or negatively marked (impolite), as seen in Harb 2016. This analysis showed that these strategies can be linguistically modified (mitigated or aggravated) or unmodified (no linguistic devices are used). This means that the same strategies can express disagreement with different effects, except for verbal attacks and verbal irony/sarcasm, which are only used to express aggravated disagreements in the SAT corpus. The modified structure of the disagreements can provide an indication of how these disagreements might trigger (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness evaluations within their context; however, the reliance on the linguistic modification of the disagreements does not provide sufficient evidence of how these disagreements might actually be evaluated by laypersons. The challenge is apparent in how respondents provided various classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of the ten disagreements in Chapter 7. Also, the chapter covered some key resources that posters and respondents seem to utilise when performing or evaluating (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements, such as the reciprocity norm in matching and mismatching the threshold of (im)politeness, different identity constructions motivated by excluding others and defending self, and employing authoritative and literary texts to legitimise impoliteness. Additionally, the chapter highlighted some of the potential factors that play a role in the high level of aggravated disagreements on Twitter, such as personality traits, awareness of self-presentation and the consequences of expressing (aggravated) disagreements, nature of the topic, and anonymity and lack of interpersonal interactional histories between posters.

Furthermore, in this chapter I discussed some of the different metapragmatic labels that respondents employed in their evaluations of the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of the disagreements in the online questionnaire instead of the labels in the two scales. In addition, respondents selected different aligned and unaligned classifications of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. Examining these classifications alone does not provide clear explanations for these selections. Respondents' understandings of the moral order against which they judged and classified the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of these disagreements were more accessible through the justifications they provided in their responses. Therefore, the analysis reveals that metapragmatic data involves different

components that are essential to refine our comprehension of the evaluation process of (im)politeness. It also highlighted the variability of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness evaluations among members of the same culture.

In the following chapter, I conclude this study by presenting the key findings, highlighting its contribution to the field and some of its limitations, which can be addressed in future research.

Chapter 9

In this study, I attempted to examine Saudis' disagreements and (im)politeness in Twitter communication, focusing on the strategies used to express their disagreements and the devices used to modify them, either by mitigation or aggravation. These devices serve as potential triggers for (im)politeness evaluations and shed light on posters' orientations to the interaction. The study followed a mixed-methods approach involving discourse analysis of corpus data collected from six trending political and sociocultural hashtags between 2017 and 2018 (a total of 12 MTs and 1556 replies). After the data cleaning and preparation, the analysis was focused on 580 tweets; these are the identified Saudis' disagreements in the corpus, specifically those occupying the first two interactional turns in the (sub)thread of replies under each MT. The study also focused on analysing metalinguistic data collected from 231 Saudi Twitter users (i.e. lay observers) via online questionnaires. Then, 20 of these respondents were asked to do follow-up interviews: ten males and ten females. The data were analysed according to the coding framework outlined in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I begin by briefly summarising the findings; I then discuss the study's main contributions, implications, and limitations. The chapter ends with some suggestions for future research.

9.1 Summary of the main findings

This section summarises the study's findings and addresses the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The first question sought to identify the linguistic features of the Saudis' disagreements on Twitter. This involved looking at the disagreement strategies, types, and linguistic devices used to mitigate and aggravate the effects of the disagreements. Research questions 2 and 3 aimed to explore different aspects of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Saudis' Twitter disagreements. This included exploring Saudis' conceptualisation of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness, the factors that may affect their perception of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements, and determining some of the key resources that Saudis used to draw on when expressing their Twitter disagreements (im)politely. The last research question aims to enhance our understanding of relational work and (im)politeness in disagreement within a different cultural context and medium of interaction.

To answer the first question and its two subquestions, "*What are the key linguistic features of Saudis' Twitter disagreements identified in the corpus?*"; the first subquestion focuses on identifying disagreement types and strategies on Twitter, while the second

seeks to identify the different mitigation and aggravation devices used to modify these disagreements. In answering these questions, I analysed a corpus of 580 disagreements posted as replies to 12 MTs taken from six trending hashtags (three political and three sociocultural listed in Table 4-1). The corpus data were coded based on the modified taxonomy inspired by previous taxonomies; see Section 4.5. In the quantitative analysis of the corpus presented in Chapter 5, I looked at the frequency distribution of the disagreement strategies Saudis used to express disagreements and whether these disagreements were mitigated, aggravated, or unmodified, which involved looking at the linguistic devices Saudis used to soften or strengthen their disagreements. The corpus analysis revealed that Saudis used ten disagreement strategies; eight of these strategies occurred either linguistically positively or negatively modified or linguistically unmodified (without any mitigation or aggravation devices). The other two strategies, verbal attacks and verbal irony/sarcasm, were always used to express aggravated disagreement in the SAT corpus; see the analysis of disagreement strategies in Chapter 6. The analysis also shows that examining the linguistic structure of the disagreements can be a helpful approach but is not sufficient in itself. As a researcher with insider knowledge of the cultural background, I found that analysing the corpus of Twitter disagreements based on identifying linguistic modification is helpful for systematically approaching, classifying and presenting the data. Linguistic modification can provide some indicators of the potential perceptions of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness of the identified disagreement within its context. However, in my analysis, I argued that relying on one person's understanding (i.e. my understanding as a researcher) does not provide much insight into the social order; therefore, examining lay observers' evaluations can provide further insight into the social order, as becomes more evident in the analysis of respondents' (im)politeness evaluations presented in Chapter 7.

Moreover, the corpus analysis revealed that Saudis used six mitigation devices to soften their disagreements, such as positive remarks and solidarity/in-group markers, see Table 5-2. In comparison, they used five aggravation devices to strengthen their disagreements, such as invoking Allah against the other and insulting language, see Table 5-3. Also, the analysis of mitigation and aggravation devices revealed that both mitigation and aggravation devices tend to occur cumulatively. The use of more than one mitigation device in a disagreement created what Caffi (2013, p.241) called synergistic reinforcement of mitigation, which seems to reflect the poster's orientation towards rapport enhancement/maintenance (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) by not making the

disagreement impair the interaction with the target. Similarly, aggravation devices were also used cumulatively, strengthening the aggravation effect and reflecting the poster's orientation towards rapport neglect/challenge (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). In addition, the analysis showed that, in some cases, mitigation and aggravation devices were used together in the disagreement, which signifies an internal mismatch in the verbal formula of the disagreement (Culpeper, 2011a, p.174). This is seen clearly in disagreements where conventionalised politeness formulas were used with either a conventionalised impoliteness formula or other impolite behaviours. In this study, the combination of both mitigation and aggravating devices in disagreements was observed in cases where disagreements aimed to mock the target (Example 8.1), repair the damage the aggravated disagreement might have caused (Example 8.2), and address different targets in the same post (Example 8.3). This mixing across device types, as seen in Example 8.1, was further explored in the interviews; interviewees pointed out that the mitigation in this aggravated disagreement was patronizing, ridiculing, belittling and provoking. More importantly, some interviewees seem to believe that using mitigation in aggravated disagreements is reflective of the poster's intentional impoliteness/inappropriateness in the disagreement, see Section 8.1.3.

In addition, the corpus analysis revealed that Saudis' aggravated disagreements occurred more in the corpus than their mitigated or unmodified counterparts, see Figure 5-1. Looking at the distribution of these aggravated disagreements across the 12 MTs in the six hashtags revealed that aggravated disagreements dominated all six threads of the sociocultural MTs while it dominated only three threads of the six political MTs, see Figure 5-2. This distribution seems to be influenced by how the topic in the MT is presented and who posted it, as seen in the MTs in #royal_decrees (the MT was posted as a rejection of some of the changes in the country) and #gulf-crisis (the MT was posted by a Qatari journalist during a period of political tension between Qatar and Saudi Arabia). This was explored further in the online questionnaire and interviews, which revealed that given the major social, political and economic changes that Saudi Arabia is going through, respondents seem to think that many of the topics in the six hashtags are being politicised, which have some effect on the interactional practices of Saudis who express their views on these topics; see Section 8.5. Moreover, the interviewees pointed out several other potential factors that appear to be playing a role in the high occurrence of aggravated disagreements on Twitter such as platform affordances (e.g., anonymity) and weak-tie social networks as well as longevity and regularity of interaction. Other factors that are

not related to the platform affordances are individualism tendencies, personality, and awareness of self-representation in a public space; see Section 8.7.

To answer the second research question, “*How do Saudis conceptualise (im)politeness, particularly in relation to Twitter communication?*”, the conclusion of the quantitative analysis of respondents’ (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness evaluations of the ten examples in the online questionnaire revealed a significant positive correlation between the two scales. This means that it is very likely when respondents classify a disagreement as very impolite, they also classify it as very inappropriate (aligned classification), see Section 5.2.2. The interviews also showed that almost all interviewees believed that (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness are related concepts but not interchangeable; that (im)politeness involves moral judgments of the other, unlike (in)appropriateness (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.67). That politeness involves more consideration, for example, being kinder and gentler in expressing disagreements, while impoliteness in disagreements is seen in using hurtful language and overstepping moral boundaries. On the other hand, appropriateness is seen, for example, as technicality or formality, while inappropriateness is seen, for example, as expressing something irrelevant. These descriptions of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness show the subjective nature of these judgments (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p.97). This subjectivity is reflected in the variability of respondents’ classifications for the same disagreement; see the analysis in Chapter 7. This variability in (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness classifications, even among members of the same cultural group, is not unexpected but still relatively underexplored (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.243; Spencer-Oatey and Kádár, 2016, p.74); see Section 8.4.

The third research question, “*What are the main resources which Saudis draw on when performing (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements?*”, was designed to provide more theoretical insight into the investigation of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Twitter disagreements. The analysis of the SAT corpus and responses to the online questionnaire highlighted four resources that Saudis draw on when performing and evaluating (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness on Twitter. The first is the reciprocity norm seen in reacting to what is perceived as impolite/inappropriate in the same manner; this reciprocation is observed in performing defensive impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011a, p.204); see Section 8.6.1. Defensive impoliteness is also seen in the second resource Saudis draw on when expressing their disagreements on Twitter; the utilisation of different identity constructions to exclude and attack the target. For example, the use of tribal identity in Example 7.6 to attack the main

poster, a non-tribal Saudi citizen, see Section 8.6.2. The third resource highlights the creativity in performing impoliteness, as seen in the use of intertextuality to aggravate disagreements. Creativity in performing impoliteness/inappropriateness is one of the ways to achieve superiority over the target (Culpeper, 2011a, p.234); see the use of a Quranic reference in Example 7.7 and the use of the poem in Example 7.10. The use of a religious text specifically to aggravate disagreements created what Alzidjaly (2019, p.1052) referred to as ‘a moral dilemma’, which was reflected in respondents’ evaluations of Example 7.7; see Section 8.6.3. The last resource that Saudis draw on is the concept of intention and its influence on the perception of other words or behaviours. The conceptualisation of intention in Saudi culture has some religious connotation, at least in some contexts. The analysis showed that how people interpret the intentions of others plays a role in how they position themselves in the interaction and evaluate (im)politeness. It also showed that even in a context where people have no prior or little relational history, they still debate the intention of others mainly based on their subjective assumptions, see Section 8.6.4.

Concerning the fourth research question, *“To what extent do the chosen frameworks (relational work and rapport management) help understand the discursive nature of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements?”*. This question was designed to provide a reflective account of the applicability of the selected frameworks in discursively analysing the (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in Saudis’ Twitter disagreements. The analysis revealed that using the relational work model in analysing Twitter data has some limitations that require further attention. Despite the importance of the notions of face and contextual norms for relational work, the framework does not provide a sufficient guide to account for these notions, especially in interactions where the interlocutors have little or no shared interpersonal histories. Moreover, the analysis of online questionnaire responses and the interviews revealed that people generally assume that certain norms and expectations should be followed when expressing disagreement on Twitter. However, given the nature of the dynamic participation framework on Twitter, expectations in Twitter interactions can shift easily, leading to significant shifts in the perception of (im)politeness (Locher and Watts, 2005, p.15); see a detailed discussion in Section 8.8.

Furthermore, employing the rapport management framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2002; 2008) helped analyse (im)politeness in Saudis’ Twitter disagreements, particularly by using these three analytical concepts: rapport orientations, face sensitivities and sociality rights. Examining how posters orient themselves in the interaction involved

looking at how the disagreements they expressed aimed to maintain, enhance, neglect or challenge the relational work with the target. These orientations can sometimes be accessed by examining the posters' choices of disagreement strategies and the devices they use to modify their disagreements in the specific context. It showed that Saudi posters in the SAT corpus often employ aggravated disagreements when their orientations to the interaction with the target reflect a lack of interest or concern with how their disagreements might be perceived by the target. For instance, posters expressing aggravated disagreements can exploit the cost-benefit element of equity rights by expressing a verbal attack at the target's expense, see Example 7.5. This exploitation contradicts "the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p.16). She asserted that restoring the balance between cost-benefit considerations is fundamental in interaction; however, the analysis revealed that balance between the two is not always what posters seek to achieve, particularly when expressing aggravated disagreements on Twitter; see Sections 8.8.1, 8.8.2 and 8.8.3 for detailed discussion.

9.2 Implications of the study

The study has revealed a number of theoretical and practical implications for (im)politeness in online communication pragmatics. Firstly, it encourages using relational work with other frameworks, such as rapport management, because the relational work model alone cannot explain what is going on in the short and fragmented Twitter interactions. Adopting the rapport management framework in this study helped, to some extent, in analysing the data and addressing the limitations of the relational work model. Concepts such as sociality rights and face sensitivities provided more insight into the social concerns or violations regarding the posters' treatment of the targets of their disagreements. The second suggestion is that (im)politeness research should foster combining the theories of (im)politeness with other approaches from other linguistic research areas, such as discourse analysis and multimodal analysis. In this study, I used some aspects of discourse analysis to look at linguistic devices used to modify the structure of Twitter disagreements. The issue of non-linguistic means of performing (im)politeness in disagreements, especially when it comes to analysing emotions in disagreements, has been highlighted by Langlotz and Locher (2012). Therefore, using multimodal approaches to analyse (im)politeness in online interactions can strengthen our understanding of the various means people use to signal their stances, attitudes and emotions.

The current study continues the debate regarding the method of data collection in pragmatic research. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of using a mixed-methods approach. Without using online questionnaires in this study, it would have been impossible for me as a researcher to identify the variability in (im)politeness evaluations of the disagreements in the corpus. Also, using interview data helped analyse the online questionnaire responses and gain deeper insight into why certain disagreements in the online questionnaire were not identified as disagreements and the possible factors that might have influenced respondents' evaluations leading to this observed variability. Therefore, I believe that (im)politeness research needs both natural and metalinguistic data in the exploration of social practices. This approach can deepen our understanding of (im)politeness in context.

In addition, the study supports the argument that (im)politeness research should go beyond the simple speaker-addressee framework of participation (e.g., Kádár and Haugh, 2013) to accommodate the complex participation roles, particularly in online interactions, which is an underexplored area (Graham and Hardaker, 2017, p.793). As shown in Sections 4.4.1.2 and 4.4.1.3, the corpus of Twitter disagreements mostly consisted of posters responding to the MTs, creating sub-threads within the main thread, and responses from the main posters are rare. Also, the disagreements in the corpus were directed to different targets (e.g., the main poster, a prior poster or all posters in the thread). Social media platforms like Twitter make it easy for any user with an active account to switch from an observer to a participant unless the main poster limits who can respond to the tweet although this feature was not yet available during the data collection. This study, therefore, highlights the importance of expanding the area for investigating relational work by considering all the evaluative reactions of all recipients ratified (e.g., participants) and unrated (e.g., observers).

The study also have some implications for researchers working on media studies, particularly how people express their opinions on public platform and how they react to different views. The disagreement taxonomy developed in this study can be utilised to examine how these different views are expressed (i.e. disagreement strategies) and how the linguistic modifications can, to some degree, provide insight into the posters' attitudes towards the target(s) of these disagreements. This taxonomy could also be used in comparative research examining disagreements and (im)politeness on different platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, see Section 9.5. Moreover, the taxonomy of disagreement strategies and the different linguistic devices used to modify these

disagreements could be used to develop the Arabic language curriculum, providing Arabic learners with authentic pragmatic knowledge of (im)politeness in online disagreements. This pragmatic knowledge is crucial to avoid misunderstandings (Alghamdi, 2023, p.279).

Finally, the study results also have some social implications, particularly raising social awareness about the different perceptions of (im)politeness within the same cultural/language group. The study revealed some degree of variability in (im)politeness perceptions among Saudi respondents evaluating Twitter disagreements. This variability suggests that there is a pragmatic variation within the same cultural/language group, which shows that an emphasis on homogeneity when it comes to social norms and expectations at the cultural level is rather an idealistic view of representing society (Mills and Kádár, 2011, p.22). Also, given the changes happening in Saudi Arabia, these changes undoubtedly had some influence on all levels of social order (i.e. cultural and individual), which might have affected the perceptions of (im)politeness, thus showing that social order is subject to change (Mills and Kádár, 2011, p.22).

9.3 Contribution of the study

The study makes a number of contributions to research on (im)politeness in online communication. These contributions evolve around the novelty of the data used in this study and the analytical approach followed in analysing the data, which included building a coding framework for Saudis' disagreement strategies in Twitter interaction and using a mixed-methods approach to further explore (im)politeness in these disagreements.

One of the study's main contributions lies in using a corpus of naturally occurring tweets as the main source of data, so it can be said the data used and the study's findings reflect actual disagreements by Saudis on Twitter. The natural data used in this study allowed the examination of disagreements in asynchronous and short interactions, showing that analysing (im)politeness in interaction does not have to be focused on long stretches of discourse. People's interactions can be brief and not always completely resolved, especially in online interaction, so not all interactions have a beginning, middle and end to see how (im)politeness unfolds in these interactions. Also, by remaining in the public space, these online interactions are open to the observations of others who might engage with these interactions in different ways (e.g., posting, sharing, or talking about it with others). Observers of Twitter disagreements, like the respondents in this study, may have evaluative reactions to some of these disagreements; whether they post it on Twitter or

not, their perceptions can provide valuable insight into different (im)politeness understandings. Therefore, studies of relational work should consider (im)politeness evaluative reactions beyond the simple speaker-addressee framework, in line with (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, pp.87-93).

In this study, the analysis of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements was based on a combination of analytical approaches to investigate multiple layers of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreement (see Chapters 3 and 4). I used two postmodern approaches (i.e. relational work and rapport management) to explore Saudi Twitter users' (im)politeness practices when expressing disagreements and how other Saudi Twitter users view these practices. I also built a modified taxonomy to identify the different strategies Saudis used to express their disagreements on Twitter and to identify some of the linguistic and non-linguistic features of these disagreements. In this exploration, I used quantitative methods in order to provide a more in-depth approach to disagreements on Twitter. Overall, these approaches allowed me to explain what is going on in Saudi Twitter disagreements with supportive evidence, and by adopting these different approaches, it is hoped that this study adds to the existing research on (im)politeness in Arabic online interaction.

The study did not only explore (im)politeness from a researcher's perspective but also from lay observers' perspectives, thus combining two emic views about (im)politeness in Saudi Twitter disagreements. Using corpus analysis alone cannot sufficiently unveil the range of perceptions of a given disagreement and does not provide deeper insight into the social order. Therefore, using online questionnaires and interview data provided the researcher with further information that may not have been captured in the corpus analysis. The study reflects the importance of employing a mixed-methods approach in analysing (im)politeness. It also underscores the importance of integrating perspectives from (im)politeness₁ and (im)politeness₂ approaches. The combination of different perspectives in these two approaches can help unpack different layers of (im)politeness in social interactions. In fact, some researchers (e.g., Haugh, 2007b; Grainger, 2011) have been advocating a move towards an approach that achieves some middle ground between politeness₁ and politeness₂.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of examining disagreement practices and (im)politeness understandings among members of the same cultural group, an area that requires more attention mainly because (im)politeness among social groups within the same culture can have different interpretations (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, pp.243, 246). For instance, the analysis showed that aggravated disagreements in the corpus were

sometimes used as a defence, see Example 7.10. Some respondents accepted and sanctioned this defensive impoliteness in the expressed disagreement, while others completely rejected it. Overall, the variability observed in respondents' evaluations of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements generally signals that there is more to unravel about (im)politeness in disagreements among Saudis and that understanding the internal sociopragmatic variation can provide a clear picture and guidance for any future comparative research (e.g., cross-cultural studies).

9.4 Limitations of the study

This exploratory study aimed to discover more about the social practice of disagreement on Twitter and some of the metapragmatic views of these disagreements within the Saudi context. Like other studies, my study has some limitations, which are highlighted here so that they may be considered in future research. Limitations of the Twitter data and the measurements taken to filter and control the data were covered in Section 4.4.1. These limitations include excluding non-verbal means of expressing disagreements, such as GIFs and clips, which require a broader multimodal approach. Also, the study mainly focused on analysing the first two interactional turns in the thread of replies, where disagreements usually occur (e.g., Shum and Lee, 2013; Harb, 2016). This means that this study did not examine how disagreements progress into arguments and how these arguments unfold on Twitter; see Example 7.5. Below, I discuss additional limitations that were not addressed in the previous chapters.

The first limitation relates to the relatively small number of respondents and interviewees since the study essentially aimed to gain a general sense of what is going on in Saudis' Twitter disagreements. Therefore, generalisation of the results to the cultural group is impossible at this stage, and more studies are needed to unravel more about the role of different sociocultural factors such as age, gender and education. For example, even though aggravated disagreements appear to be the dominant type of disagreement in the SAT corpus, more evidence is needed to claim that such behaviour is typical of Saudi Twitter users. However, despite this limitation with respect to the generalisability of the study, I believe the study has provided insights into Saudi tendencies when expressing disagreements on Twitter, particularly in sociocultural and political hashtags during a period of significant social, political, and economic changes in the country.

The second limitation is connected to what has been discussed in Section 4.2.2. This limitation stems from the fact that respondents in the online questionnaire and

interviewees are insiders to the Saudi culture but not to the specific interactions in the SAT corpus from which the disagreement was gathered. Although laypersons' perspectives can provide different and insightful understandings of (im)politeness through their observation of the evaluative moments (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.98), nonetheless, their participation position (i.e. being observers) limit the usefulness of their insight as it represents (im)politeness perceptions from one locus, see Section 3.1.2 regarding the proposed four loci for understanding (im)politeness. For example, the respondents in this study cannot provide insight into the uptake of the disagreements, particularly aggravated ones, and whether offence was taken or not. Therefore, whether the metapragmatic findings of this study can be extended to the posters of the disagreements in the SAT corpus, including their perceptions of the level of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness in these disagreements, remains under question.¹⁴³

Another limitation of this study lies in the use of pre-defined scales to classify (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness, which might have affected the respondents' evaluations, pushing them to think within the predetermined metalinguistic evaluators, see Section 8.3. It is possible that these evaluators constrained how the respondents were conceptualising (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness as social practice on Twitter. As the discussion in 8.3 revealed, the provided evaluators might not be what some respondents would prefer to use when evaluating the replies. Different labels could have been used for evaluating disagreements that do not necessarily fall into these specific labels (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.63). Additionally, respondents may not recognise the division between these metalinguistic labels in the same way, as argued by Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.63); these metalinguistic evaluators might not be consistently valenced. Therefore, it perhaps would have been better if respondents were the ones who provided the metalinguistic evaluators, which would more closely reflect their conceptualised emic views of (im)politeness in Twitter disagreements (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.188).

¹⁴³ Culpeper (2011a, pp.55-56) points out the 'actor-observer effect', which means that those who produced the disagreements may perceive the (im)politeness in their replies differently from their targets or even those who just observe the replies.

9.5 Suggestions for future research

The study has highlighted some areas that require further investigation, some of which address the above limitations. One area that can expand our knowledge of Saudi disagreement practices online is to carry out similar research on different platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, which some interviewees mentioned in the interviews. Conducting a similar study using data from other platforms may shed more light on (im)politeness in Saudis' online disagreements and indicate whether these practices differ across platforms. Also, for future research focusing on disagreements on Twitter, examining disagreements among posters belonging to the same social network (e.g., the social network of Saudi translators on Twitter) can provide further insight into the influence of some factors such as relational histories, social visibility and identity.

The study has integrated quantitative methods to investigate disagreement strategies and the linguistic devices used to either negatively or positively modify these disagreements to provide an in-depth analysis of (im)politeness practices in Saudis' Twitter disagreement. Further research is needed to test the coding framework used in this study and examine the feasibility of extending it to other platforms—specifically, the connection between the identification of the disagreement and the realisation of the disagreement strategy used to express it. For example, in Example 7.4, some respondents did not identify the reply as a disagreement because the poster provided an explanation, and that addition seemed to prevent it from being construed as a disagreement for these respondents. Also, further testing of the influence of the linguistic modification of disagreements is needed to explore more deeply how these modifications can affect the perception of (im)politeness. This study showed that respondents' evaluations varied for all three types of disagreements (mitigated, aggravated and unmodified). For example, participants in future research could be asked to evaluate the disagreements by identifying how linguistically positively and negatively the disagreement is modified and showing how the linguistic structure of the disagreement affected their perception; it is important to address this while also taking into account the influence of other contextual factors (e.g., the topic of discussion). This investigation might reveal more about the conventionality of some linguistic expressions when expressing disagreements politely or impolitely, and highlight the role of linguistic expressions on (im)politeness perception in online interaction. Relative to this suggestion, and given the limitations of the online questionnaire as pointed out in the previous section, future research could allow respondents to use their own evaluative labels when classifying

(im)politeness/(in)appropriateness. As shown in Section 8.3, these evaluative labels respondents use can provide the researcher more access to the individuals' conceptualisation of (im)politeness.

Finally, the study has pointed out some areas that require further multidisciplinary research, particularly from a socio-psychological standpoint. The analysis showed that how disagreements are expressed online is believed to be influenced by factors such as emotional state and personality traits, which was beyond the scope of this present research. Also, further research is needed to highlight the influence of social, political, and economic changes happening in Saudi Arabia and how these changes may be influencing negotiations of relational work and the expression of disagreements. This is in line with Kádár and Haugh's (2013) argument about the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to (im)politeness, surpassing the boundaries of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

9.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter highlighted the conclusions of this study, including the study's implications, limitations, recommendations and contribution to the field of (im)politeness in digitally-mediated communication. Despite the limitations highlighted above, the study presented some important findings that shed light on Saudis' disagreement practices on Twitter and expanded the body of (im)politeness research in the Saudi context. From a theoretical standpoint, it is hoped that the study has provided some insights into the applicability of postmodern approaches to online data, particularly relational work and rapport management. The study followed an approach that integrated quantitative methods to identify and analyse different types of disagreements based on linguistic modification and test the claim about the pervasiveness of Saudis' aggravated disagreements on Twitter. It contributes to (im)politeness research in Saudi Arabic, in particular in identifying what makes a Twitter disagreement (im)polite and (in)appropriate. From a practical and empirical standpoint, the study helps understand some culturally specific resources that Saudi Twitter users draw on when performing (im)politeness when expressing their disagreements. It also shows the importance of being aware of the different norms and expectations that Twitter users bring into the threads of replies; this awareness plays an essential role in improving communication with others. The focused discursive analysis of Saudi respondents' evaluations of Twitter disagreements is useful in developing a better understanding of the pragmatic variation within the same cultural group. It extends

the field by using naturally occurring data from social media platforms in pragmatic variation studies, particularly in Arabic.

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Appendix A Ethical consideration

Different kinds of linguistic research raise different ethical issues depending on how, whom, and what the research is focusing on. Schneider (2018) argues that the development of research ethics can be seen as “an ongoing process of increasing awareness and sensitivity”; however, there are well-established ethical standards and practices any kind of research should abide by, “and this includes in particular scientific integrity and academic rigour” (p.74). In addition to these general principles, there are more specific ethical principles involving the considerations of welfare, autonomy, privacy, and justice (p.75).

For this study, I obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds before the call for participation was out (application reference number: FAHC 19-086, date of approval: 31/07/2020). The study strictly followed the guidelines provided by the Ethics Committee; this involves:

1. **Information sheet and consent:** the call for participation was posted to invite Saudis Twitter users to take part in the study by filling out the online questionnaire. At the beginning of the online questionnaire, participants were provided with a detailed information sheet written in Arabic (i.e. the native language of the target group) to ensure their full understanding. The information sheet clarifies the title of the project; the purpose of the study; what participation in the research entails; the potential risk or inconvenience that may arise; the procedures followed in managing and protecting data; how the data would be used; and ensuring their freedom of withdrawal at any time before the start of data analysis (deadline stated was 01/10/2020). Participants were given the researcher’s contact details in case they had any questions. Moreover, the information sheet explained how the questionnaire is divided, what each section contains and how long it might take to finish the questionnaire. The information sheet also highlighted that submitting the response is taken as consent to everything outlined in the information sheet (see Appendix E). As for participation in the follow-up interviews, participants were given the option to opt-out by skipping the last section of the questionnaire and submitting their responses. Participants who agreed to be interviewed were asked to leave their contact details (see Appendix B/C), and in the interview, their consent was recorded again verbally.
2. **Conditionality:** participants were assured that their data would remain confidential and no one other than the researcher and the supervisors would have access to the data at any stage of this study. They were also made aware that their identities would be anonymised and pseudonyms would be used in case their responses were used and quoted in the research.
3. **Data management and protection:** following the guidelines, the online questionnaire was designed and distributed using JISC online surveys, which save data on the server within the UK. Then, participants’ responses were downloaded and stored in a password-protected file (Research data, Online questionnaire) on my work laptop. As for the interviews, they were recorded directly using the voice recorder software on my work laptop and then stored in a password-protected file (Research data, interview recordings). Participants were assured that recordings would be deleted after the end of the study.

Appendix B Online questionnaire (English)

Part 1: Information sheet and consent form

You are invited to participate in this research titled *Saudis' Disagreements on Twitter*. The research is carried out by Sarah Almutairi, a PhD researcher from the University of Leeds.

The purpose of this study is to generally examine how Saudis disagree on Twitter by looking at how these disagreements are expressed and how Twitter influences the production and the perception of these disagreements. The questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study as long as you inform the researcher of your decision before the anonymization of the data and the beginning of the analysis; this means that withdrawal after 01/10/2020 cannot be granted. If you decide to withdraw before the stated date, you can do so without the need to provide reasons for your withdrawal.

No known risks are associated with this research study; however, as with any online activity, the risk of a breach is always possible. To the best of my ability, your participation in this study will be stored safely and will not be accessible to others except my supervisors. Also, please be aware that I may quote your response for explanation and clarification purposes but be assured that these quotations will be anonymized to prevent identification. I will minimize any risks by removing any personal identifiers, and pseudonyms will be used instead. Further information is available via the University of Leeds Privacy Notice here: <https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2019/02/Research-Privacy-Notice.pdf>.

In addition, please be informed that the results of this research will be shared publicly in conference presentations and peer-journal articles; however, be assured that your identity will not be revealed as data will be shared anonymously.

Note: By submitting your response, you have agreed to the stated consent above.

Introduction:

The questionnaire is divided into four main parts:

1. The first part of the questionnaire aims to collect general demographic data.
2. The second part of the questionnaire asks general questions about your usage of Twitter in Saudi Arabia.
3. The third part of the questionnaire contains an evaluation task through which you are asked to evaluate some tweets based on a given scale.
4. The fourth part of the questionnaire invites you to state if you would like to take part in an online interview with the researcher.

Thank you for taking the time to participate. Your time and effort are very much appreciated.

Part 2: General Questions

Tell the researcher about yourself. This information will help in the analysis of the data. Also, be assured that your information will be kept private and will not be revealed to anyone who is not involved in the research.

Your gender is *Required*

- female
- male

Your age group is *Required*

- 15 and younger
- 16-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- older than 50

Your educational background *Required*

- Middle school
- High school
- Bachelor degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree
- Other

Which dialect(s) do you speak? *Required*

- Hijazi (This includes all dialects spoken in Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah, etc.)
- Najdi (This includes all dialects spoken in Riyadh, Alkarjh, Ad Dilam, etc.)
- Qassimi (This includes all dialects spoken in Buraydah, Unayzah, Ar Rass, etc.)
- Southern (This includes all dialects spoken in Khamis Mushait, Abha, Najran, etc.)
- Northern (This includes all dialects spoken in Ha'il, Tabuk, etc.)
- Eastern (This includes all dialects spoken in Dammam, Al-Hasa, Khafji, etc.)
- Other

Where are your family from? Give the name of the country or region.

(For example, my family is from the Hijazi part of Saudi Arabia, specifically from Jeddah and Madinah) *Required*

Write your answer here

How often do you use Twitter? *Required*

- More than once a day
- Once a day
- Once or twice a week
- Once or twice a month
- Rarely
- Other

How do you use Twitter? Please choose only what describes your activity, e.g. rarely posting and replying, mostly just observing. (Note: you do not need to fill every column) *Required*

| | Tweeting | Retweeting | Replying | Liking | Browsing the news |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Mostly | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Usually | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Rarely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Never | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Among the different social media platforms, Twitter is the most popular in Saudi Arabia, especially when discussing political and sociocultural issues *Required*

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Why do you use Twitter? (You can select more than one answer) *Required*

- To connect with friends
- To communicate with other about topics that interest me
- To keep updated with the latest news
- For business and marketing
- Other

Do you usually know/ or have personal relationships with your followers/following? *Required*

- I know them all in person
- I know them all online, but never met in person
- I know some/few of them in person
- I only know my friend and family
- Other

Do you believe that Twitter has influenced how Saudis express their opinions and how they view other different views? If yes, then how?

Write your answer here

Part 3: Disagreements and (Im)politeness on Twitter

Please read the 5 main tweets and the two replies under each one, then choose whether the reply can be understood as a disagreement or not concerning the main tweet and its content. Based on your answer, you will either be asked to evaluate the disagreement as polite, impolite, etc., or move to the next reply to choose whether it is a disagreement or not. In general, there are 5 main tweets and 2 replies for each main tweet.

Main Tweet 1

أحد جيران المسجد يدخل غاضبا بوسط محاضرة دينية.. ويطلب من المحاضر تخفيض صوت المكيف فون.. وهو يردد له نبغي ننام.. هذا جزء من معاناة كثير من رفع صوت مكيف فونات المساجد حتى في وقت المحاضرات والدروس الدينية <https://bit.ly/2Xzefv>

Reply 1:

Required سبحان الله ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله العلي العظيم في قلوبهم مرض فزادهم الله مرضا

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Reply 2:

جزء من معاناة الكثير؟ تسمى هذي معاناة؟ المعاناة ان تكون في مشكلة وتعاني منها ولا تجد لها حلا.. هذا دخل غاضب بأسلوب فظ وغير لائق وطلب افعال المكبرات وماذا كانت النتيجة؟ اعتذر له المحاضر ووقف المكبرات فاين المعاناة؟ لم يحتج الى الشرطة ولا الى محكمة ولا غيرها بدقة انتهى الموضوع *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Main Tweet 2

اطرردو_المتعنصرين
دا الهاشتاق الانسب صراحه
لانو لا حجازي ولا قبيلي يرضا بالفئه دي
شاركو فيه قبايل و حُجز خليهم يفهمو اننا بلد وحده ودين واحد

Reply 1:

والله اني امقت العنصرية و اشوف الكل يمثل نفسه بدينه و خلقه بس للحق مو كيفك تصنف حجز و قبايل كأن الحجاز ماهي قبايل *Required* !!

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Reply 2:

ما تحاول تظهر إنك منصف تنقياً عنصرية، انت يا عزيزي الدخيل و ليس القبيلي، تقدر تقول "لا حجازي ولا مستوطن" يرضى بالفئة اللي مثلك *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Main Tweet 3

قبل #الازمة_الخليجية كانت #السعودية على تويتر مصدر الحسابات الأرقى والأجمل (علم-فقه-ثقافة-سياسة-وأدب) أما اليوم أصبحت مصدر للحسابات الأكثر تفاهة وحقارة وبذاءة وبلاهة وقلة أدب والمصيبة أنهم يعتقدون ان هذا التغيير هو (القوة الناعمة) #جهل

Reply 1:

وعين الرضا عن كل عيب كليلية
ولكن عين السخط تبدي المساويا
اللي تافهين وحقيرين ومخربين انتم كنتم ومازلتم واما السعوديين سند العرب والمسلمين وعونهم في كل ملة فكانوا ولازالو
وسيطلون افضل وخير منكم ياناشرين الخراب والدمار في كل الوطن العربي وسيبقى الكرام ال سعود وشعبهم عمى
لعيونكم *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Reply 2:

لا تعليق *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Main Tweet 4

السعودية الجديدة لا تتعامل كالسابق في مدة مجلس الوزراء العشر سنوات .. 4 سنوات وبعدها التقييم الشامل وتجديد الحقائب

Reply 1:

معروف من زمان ان دورة مجلس الوزراء 4 سنوات ، هذا من النظام الاساسي للحكم ما يتغير ، بس لازم الفلسفة ف

حسابكم *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Reply 2:

لكن في وزراء ما ينفع يكملون 4 سنوات، يعني مثلاً منصب وزير العمل والتجارة والاستثمار والإسكان والإعلام ، هنولي عليهم مسؤولية كبيرة وصعب تنتظر 4 سنوات لين يطلع منه شيء ، ولكن بالمقابل اذا النتائج كانت ممتازة يستمر لفترة اطول، "مجرد رأي" *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Main Tweet 5

#اوامر_ملكيه
نبي
١ (الغاء هيئة الترفيه)
٢ (الغاء سواقه المراه)
٣ (الغاء دخول النساء الملاعب)
٤ (الغاء الحفلات الغنائيه)
٥ (عوده الهيئه)
٦ (تثبيت المتعاقدين بالعقود)
٧ (ارجاع الاسعار السابقه للبنزين والكهرباء)
٨ (الغاء القيمه المضافه بخصوص شراء العقارات لسهوله امتلاك المنازل للمواطنين)

Reply 1:

الله يلغيك ي شيخ ع كيف اهلك الغاء روح موت وانت الغي نفسك من الوجود واجد افضل *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Reply 2:

الترفيه وقيادة المرأة ودخول الملاعب كلها أشياء مباحة حولها الإخونجية والصحويين إلى أشياء محرمة والهدف تشويه الدين وجعل الناس ينظرون للإسلام على أنه دين تشدد وتطرف *Required*

- Disagreement
- Not a Disagreement

How would you evaluate the politeness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very polite | polite | neither polite nor impolite | impolite | very impolite |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How would you evaluate the appropriateness of this reply on Twitter? *Required*

| very appropriate | appropriate | neither appropriate nor inappropriate | inappropriate | very inappropriate |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Part 4: Follow-up Interview

Before submitting your response, please take the time to consider participating in an interview with the researcher, which would be very helpful in analysing your response. The interview is going to be short; the researcher will ask you a few questions about disagreement and (im)politeness on Twitter. The interview can be conducted online via Skype, Google Duo or any other way that is more convenient to you.

So, if you are willing to do the interview, please select 'yes' to the question below, then in Section 6 type your contact details. If you select 'no' that will be the end of your participation in the research, and thank you for taking the time to fill the questionnaire.

Note: Please be assured that your information and contact details will be confidential during the research process, and by the end of the research, your details will be discarded and no longer accessible to anyone.

I am willing to do the interview:

- Yes
- No

Section 6: Interviewee contact details

Write your contact details here

Appendix C Online questionnaire (Arabic)

1. مقدمة الاستبانة واستمارة الموافقة على المشاركة

أتمنى منك المشاركة في بحثي والذي يهدف لدراسة الأدب في اختلاف الآراء بين السعوديين على منصة تويتر من منظور تداولي اجتماعي، تستغرق الاستبانة من 15 إلى 20 دقيقة

أود التنبيه على أنه قد يتم اقتباس بعض المشاركات من أجل التوضيح والتدليل أثناء مناقشة بعض النقاط في البحث، وعند اقتباس أي مشاركة سيتم ذلك بسرية تامة ولن يكون من الممكن التعرف على هويتك من خلال الاقتباس لأنه سيتم استخدام أسماء مستعارة وإزالة أي دلالات شخصية، كما سيتم تخزين وحفظ بياناتك بطريقة آمنة ولن يتمكن من الاطلاع عليها سوى الباحثة، وفي حال الرغبة بسحب الإجابات بعد التسليم الرجاء إبلاغي قبل 1 أكتوبر 2020، وللإطلاع على سياسة الخصوصية المتبعة في جامعة ليدز يرجى زيارة الرابط التالي

<https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/individual-rights/>

تتكون الإستبانة من 4 أجزاء: أسئلة عامة، أسئلة حول استخدام منصة تويتر، أسئلة لتقييم عدد من الردود على بعض التغريدات، وأخيراً تسجيل بياناتك لعمل مقابلة مع الباحثة في حال لديك الرغبة بالمشاركة

شاكركم ومقدرة لك تعاونكم ووقتكم

ساره المطيري - جامعة ليدز

ستحتسب المشاركة في الاستبانة موافقة على ما ذكر أعلاه

2. أسئلة عامة

الرجاء منك الإجابة على هذه الأسئلة العامة

1 إلى أي جنس تنتمي

- أنثى
 ذكر

2 إلى أي فئة عمرية تنتمي

- من 15 وأصغر
 16-19
 20-29

Show all (6)

3 ماهو مستواك التعليمي

- تعليم متوسط
 تعليم ثانوي
 دبلوم

Show all (7)

a في حال اختيارك (أخرى) الرجاء التحديد هنا

4 ماهي اللهجة التي تتحدث بها

- اللهجات الحجازية - وهذا يشمل اللهجات المتحدّث بها في مكة المكرمة، المدينة المنورة، جدة ... إلخ
 اللهجات النجدية - وهذا يشمل اللهجات المتحدّث بها في الرياض، الخرج، الدلم... إلخ
 اللهجات القصيمية - وهذا يشمل اللهجات المتحدّث بها في بريدة، عنيزة، الرس ... إلخ

Show all (7)

a في حال اختيارك (أخرى) الرجاء التحديد هنا

5 من أي دولة أو منطقة في المملكة ترجع عائلتك؟ (مثال : عائلي من الحجاز تحديداً من المدينة المنورة لكن أعيش في منطقة الرياض)

6 كم عدد مرات استخدامك لمنصة تويتر؟

- مره في اليوم
- أكثر من مره في اليوم
- مره أو مرتين في الأسبوع

Show all (6)

a في حال اختيارك (أخرى) الرجاء التحديد هنا

7 كيف هي طريقة استخدامك لمنصة تويتر، الرجاء اختيار ما يصف طبيعة نشاطك على تويتر - الرجاء تحديد خانة واحدة في كل

عمود

| متابعة الأحداث | الرد على الآخرين | إعادة التغريد | التفضيل | التغريد |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | غالباً <input type="radio"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | أحياناً <input type="radio"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | نادراً <input type="radio"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | أبداً <input type="radio"/> |

8 من بين وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي المختلفة، يُعد تويتر الأكثر شهرة واستخداماً في المملكة العربية السعودية خاصة في نقاش

ومتابعة الأخبار السياسية والاجتماعية

- أوافق
- محايد
- لا أوافق

9 ما الأسباب أو الدوافع التي من أجلها تستخدم تويتر - يمكن اختيار أكثر من إجابة

- البقاء على اتصال مع الأصدقاء
- التواصل مع الآخرين في مواضيع تهمني
- الاطلاع على آخر الأخبار

Show all (5)

a في حال اختيارك (أخرى) الرجاء التحديد هنا

10 ما نوع علاقتك بالأشخاص - المتابعين و المتابعون - على منصة تويتر؟ إجابة واحدة

- أعرفهم جميعاً معرفة شخصية
- أعرفهم جميعاً في تويتر ولكن لم نتقابل شخصياً
- أعرف البعض أو القليل منهم شخصياً

Show all (5)

a في حال اختيارك (أخرى) الرجاء التحديد هنا

11 برأيك هل تويتر كمنصة تواصل اجتماعي أثرت على أسلوب السعوديين في التعبير عن آرائهم المخالفة للآخرين وتقييمهم للآراء

المختلفة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة نعم يرجى التوضيح في الخانة المخصصة

4. أدب الإختلاف في تويتر

الرجاء قراءة التغريدات الرئيسية والردود عليها ومن ثم اختيار ما إذا كان الرد على التغريدة ومحتواها يعبر عن رأي مخالف أم لا، إذا كان الرد يعبر عن رأي مخالف عندها سيطلب منك تقييم الرد من ناحية مستوى الأدب ومستوى الملائمة (بمعنى التناسب في

الاسلوب) بين الرد والتغريدة الرئيسية

المطلوب رأيك وانطباعك عن الأدب والمناسبة في الردود على التغريدات الرئيسية وليس الرد عليها أو شرحها

التغريدة الأولى

أحد جيران المسجد يدخل غاضباً بوسط محاضرة دينية.. ويطلب من المحاضر تخفيض صوت المكيفون.. وهو يردد له نبغي ننام.. هذا جزء من معاناة كثير من رفع صوت مكيفونات المساجد حتى في وقت المحاضرات والدروس الدينية

يمكنك مشاهدة مقطع الفيديو المرفق في التغريدة هنا

<https://bit.ly/2XzeqfV>

12 الرد الأول: سبحان الله ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله العظيم في قلوبهم مرض فزادهم الله مرضا

- يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------|------|-------|----------|----------------|
| الأدب | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
|----------|------------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------------|
| الملاءمة | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

13 الرد الثاني: جزء من معاناة الكثير؟ تسمي هذي معاناة؟ المعاناة ان تكون في مشكلة وتعاني منها ولا تجد لها حلا.. هذا دخل غاضب باسلوب فظ وغير لائق وطلب اقفال المكبرات وماذا كانت النتيجة؟ اعتذر له المحاضر واقف المكبرات فاين المعاناة؟ لم يحتج الى الشرطة ولا الى محكمة ولا غيرها بدقة انتهى الموضوع

- يعبر عن اختلاف(أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف(أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------|------|-------|----------|----------------|
| الأدب | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
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| الملاءمة | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

التغريدة الثانية

#اطردو_المتعنصرين

دا الهاشتاق الانسب صراحه

لانو لا حجازي ولا قبيلي يرضوا بالفئه دي

شاركو فيه قبائل و حُجز خليلهم يفهمو اننا بلد وحده ودين واحد

14 الرد الأول: !! والله اني امقت العنصرية و اشوف الكل يمثل نفسه بدينه و خلقه بس للحق مو كيفك تصنف حجز و قبائل كأن

الحجاز ماهي قبائل

- يعبر عن اختلاف(أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف(أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

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|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الأدب | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الملاءمة | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

15 الرد الثاني: ما تحاول تظهير إنك منصف تتقياً عنصرية، انت يا عزيزي الدخيل و ليس القبيلي، تقدر تقول "لا حجازي ولا مستوطن" يرضى بالفئة اللي مثلك

- يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
 لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الأدب | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

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|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الملاءمة | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

التغريدة الثالثة

قبل #الازمة_الخليجية كانت #السعودية على تويتر مصدر الحسابات الأرقى والأجمل (علم-فقه-ثقافه-سياسة-وأدب) اما اليوم أصبحت مصدر للحسابات الأكثر تفاهة وحقارة وبذاءة وبلاهة وقلة أدب والمصيبة أنهم يعتقدون ان هذا التغيير هو (القوة الناعمة) #جهل

16 الرد الأول: وعين الرضا عن كل عيب كليله ولكن عين السخط تبدي المساويا اللي تافهين وحقيرين ومخربين انتم كنتم ومازلتم واما السعوديين سند العرب والمسلمين وعونهم في كل ملمة فكانوا ولازالو وسيظلون افضل وخير منكم ياناشرين الخراب والدمار في كل الوطن العربي وسيبقى الكرام ال سعود وشعبهم عمى لعيونكم

- يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
 لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الأدب | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الملاءمة | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

17 الرد الثاني: لاتعليق

- يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الأدب | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الملاءمة | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

التغريدة الرابعة

السعودية الجديدة لا تتعامل كالسابق في مدة مجلس الوزراء العشر سنوات .. 4 سنوات وبعدها التقييم الشامل وتجديد الحقائق

18 الرد الأول: معروف من زمان ان دورة مجلس الوزراء ٤ سنوات ، هذا من النظام الاساسي للحكم ما يتغير، بس لازم الفلسفة

ف حسابكم

- يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
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| الأدب | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

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|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الملاءمة | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

19 الرد الثاني: لكن في وزراء ما ينفع يكملون 4 سنوات، يعني مثلاً منصب وزير العمل والتجارة والاستثمار والإسكان والإعلام ، هذولي عليهم مسؤولية كبيرة وصعب تنتظر 4 سنوات لين يطلع منه شيء ، ولكن بالمقابل اذا النتائج كانت ممتازة يستمر لفترة اطول، "مجرد رأي"

- يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)
○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الأدب | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

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|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| الملاءمة | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

التغريدة الخامسة

#اوامر_ملكيه

ني

١ (الغاء هيئته الترفيه)

٢ (الغاء سواقه المراه)

٣ (الغاء دخول النساء الملاعب)

٤ (الغاء الحفلات الغنائيه)

٥ (عوده الهيئه)

٦ (تثبيت المتعاقدين بالعقود)

٧ (ارجاع الاسعار السابقه للبينزين والكهرباء)

٨ (الغاء القيمه المضافه بخصوص شراء العقارات لسهوله امتلاك المنازل للمواطنين)

20 الرد الأول: الترفيه وقيادة المرأة ودخول الملاعب كلها أشياء مباحة حولها الإخوانية والصحيين إلى أشياء محرمة والهدف تشويه الدين وجعل الناس ينظرون للإسلام على أنه دين تشدد وتطرف

يعبر عن

اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)

○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------|------|-------|----------|----------------|
| الأدب | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
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| الملاءمة | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

21 الرد الثاني: الله يلغيك ي شيخ ع كيف اهلك الغاء روح موت وانت الغي نفسك من الوجود واجد افضل

○ يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتعارض مع التغريدة)

○ لا يعبر عن اختلاف (أي يتوافق مع التغريدة)

a ماهو تقييمك لمستوى الأدب في الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية - إجابة واحدة

| | مؤدب جداً | مؤدب | محايد | غير مؤدب | غير مؤدب أبداً |
|-------|-----------|------|-------|----------|----------------|
| الأدب | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

b ماهو تقييمك لمستوى ملائمة الرد على التغريدة الرئيسية (تناسب اسلوب الرد مع التغريدة) - إجابة واحدة

| | مناسب جداً | مناسب | محايد | غير مناسب | غير مناسب أبداً |
|----------|------------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------------|
| الملاءمة | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

c ما السبب (أو الأسباب) التي دفعتك لتقييم الرد بهذه الطريقة؟ الرجاء كتابة سبب واحد على الأقل

4 . المشاركة في مقابلة مع الباحثة

ختاماً، أتمنى منك المشاركة في مقابلة هاتفية معي لمناقشة بعض الأسئلة حول موضوع البحث، مشاركتك في المقابلة ستساعدني كثيراً في تحليل البيانات والوصول لنتائج أفضل
في حال عدم رغبتك بالمشاركة في المقابلة يمكنك تسليم إجابتك الآن بالضغط على إنهاء، و شكراً جزيلاً على مشاركتك في هذه الاستبانة، وقتك وجهدك محل تقدير وإمتنان.

أما في حال موافقتك لعمل المقابلة الرجاء كتابة بيانات التواصل الخاصة بك في الخانة المخصصة وسيتم التواصل معك قريباً لتحديد الوقت المناسب للمقابلة، ستكون المقابلة الهاتفية باستخدام أحد برامج التواصل مثل الفيس تايم أو مايكروسوفت تيم أو أي برنامج آخر يناسبك

ملاحظة: تأكد/ي أن بياناتك ستُحفظ بسرية تامة ولن يطلع عليها سوى الباحثة وسيتم حذفها نهائياً بعد الانتهاء من البحث

الرجاء كتابة بيانات التواصل معك (الاسم، رقم التواصل، وطريقة التواصل المفضلة)

في حال كان لديك أي استفسار أو ملاحظة الرجاء التواصل معي على هذا الإيميل
mlssa@leeds.ac.uk

Appendix D Translation of the exchange in Example 7.5 in Section 7.4

T2-Main poster: And you do not cancel your tweet, praying to Allah against me and dragging my family into this, and humiliate another human being... and they will pull you from your ear.. and I will claim my right... Thanks to Allah, I am asking my king, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, may Allah protect him.

Why are you sticking your nose in my request from the king and insulting my family and me?

Leave your tweet

T3-Poster-4: You are one of those extremists who are supposed to be pulled by their ears, and Mohammed bin Salman is fighting extremism and extremists, so these are my tweets, and I am not going to delete them 😊 you can also take screenshots

T4- Main poster: By God, from the number of your followers who seem like gat'ah [a cost -effective way, it involves dividing the total cost of something among a group of people (e.g., friends). Here, it is mostly used to make fun of poster-4's small number of followers] 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

You are one of those misguided mercenaries in this country, and thanks to Allah, there is good in this country, and my tweet got what it deserves [support /attention].

I don't care about you and your words, and those like you

Take 📷 📱 🌿 to complete your face and show me your back, you ugly.... And look out for 🦷 to not hit your face..

T5-Poster-4: Don't show your face in front of me 😡 Because I am a busy woman and I do not have time for people whose minds are shoes

T6-Main poster: The shoes are those who birthed you and do not come to my tweets, you despicable..

T7-Poster-4: Everyone sees people based on how they see themselves [i.e. a thief believes everybody steals] because you are a shoe and those who birthed you, even though it is not their fault, have to deal with the misfortunate they have, because you are despicable, you see people as despicable, off you go 😊

T8-Main poster: The eye does not see dirt like you

A ruined bunch whose mouth and face deserve to be stepped on. You and those like you are not worth talking and responding to.

May Allah curse you and those like you, you dirty

Appendix E Combinations of the aligned and unaligned classification in Table 4-5

The figure shows the total frequency and percentage of all the classification combinations (aligned and unaligned) as represented in Table 4-5.

