Compliments and Compliment Responses in Facebook Posts of Jordanian Users
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Compliment speech acts are culturally universal, yet they vary from one society to another. Many studies have been conducted on compliments and compliment responses in everyday speech in western cultures (Pomerantz, 1978; Manes, 1983; Wolfson, 1983; Holmes, 1986; Herbert, 1991; Golato, 2002; Tang and Zhang, 2009; among others) compared to non-western cultures (Nelson et al., 1993; Nelson et al., 1996; Farghal and Al-Khatib, 2001; Sharifian, 2005; Migdadi and Jarbou, 2007; among others). Despite computer-mediated communication (CMC) becoming increasingly prevalent, no study has investigated the compliment behaviour in the Facebook mode of discourse in Romanized Jordanian Arabic. This study examines compliments and compliment responses in Facebook posts of Jordanian users. The importance of the current study is twofold. It is the first study to tackle this phenomenon in such a mode of discourse as used by Jordanians. Moreover, the findings of this study contribute to the literature on CMC.

Methodology
The corpus consisted of 200 compliments and compliment responses (if present) accessible through a network of twenty-nine Jordanian Facebook "friends" after obtaining consent from them electronically. The posts contained in the corpus were status updates, photo, and wall or timeline comments. I analyzed the organizational structure, compliment topics, compliment strategies, types of compliment responses, and emoticons used.

Results and Conclusions
Results show that there is a slight tendency towards compliments without a response rather than compliments with a response (53% vs. 47%). This reveals the effect of the Facebook mode of communication on the linguistic behaviour of its users. It seems that there is less pressure to respond to compliments since Facebook posts are characterised as asynchronous where the interlocutors are online at different times and places. The results also show that compliments by Jordanian Facebook users mainly focus on children and appearance. This reflects the importance placed in Jordanian culture on having children and considering this an achievement. In addition, Jordanian Facebook users tend to opt for more explicit strategies than implicit ones (98.5% vs. 1.5%) due to the desire to stress the solidarity function of compliments since communication is via Facebook and not through face-to-face. Furthermore, they utilize compliments as a supportive strategy with appreciation tokens accounting for almost two thirds of the responses to maintain and increase solidarity with the community. As for the emoticons used, results show that they are used more in compliments than in responses (75% vs. 25%) to strengthen the function of compliment as a positive politeness strategy. Also, smileys are used more than hearts in both compliments and responses (68% vs. 32%) due to the socio-cultural practices within the community; smileys are more appropriate to be used compared to hearts which are related to intimate relationships.

I compare the studied compliment behaviour exhibited on Facebook to published results in spoken discourse (Farghal and Al-Khatib, 2001, and Migdadi and Jarbou, 2007) demonstrating that the Facebook mode of discourse affects the linguistic behaviour exhibited by its users. Finally, since language is a product and a reflection of culture, I show how Jordanian socio-cultural practices explain other differences in compliment behaviour.
References


