ATTENDING TO FACE IN FACELESS COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION:
(IM)POLITENESS IN ONLINE DISAGREEMENTS AMONG ARABIC SPEAKERS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA
DECEMBER 2016
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OCTOBER 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise is due to Allah the Almighty, Lord of the Universe and May peace and blessings be upon His messenger Mohammad, Peace Be upon Him. I, first and foremost, thank Allah the Almighty for having given me the strength and endurance to complete this dissertation. It was (and still is) due to His guidance and mercy upon me that I never let go of my dream. It was (and still is) due to His guidance and mercy upon me that I never gave up on my aspirations. It was (and still is) due to His unconditional love that helped learn from my own mistakes.

The completion of this exploratory work could not have been accomplished without the generous help of many kind and knowledgeable individuals. I wish to express my eternal and genuine gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Elizabeth Riddle, who wholeheartedly encouraged me to pursue this research. Her unwavering support, high motivation, unparalleled guidance and most significantly her endless confidence in me and my capabilities have stimulated original thinking and initiative in me. I also owe lots of gratitude to the other committee members, Dr. Megumi Hamada and Dr. Lynne Stallings, for their insightful feedback, support and continuous encouragement throughout this journey. I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Muhammad Maqbool for his helpful comments, constructive feedback, kindness and support. I also wish to express my genuine appreciation for Dr. Omar Okasha for his invaluable input and feedback on the Arabic materials. I also wish to thank Dr. Kianre Eouanzou for his help with the statistics used in this study. Any gaps, omissions, errors, or any other infelicities in this study are my responsibility alone.

I owe tons of appreciation and deepest gratitude to my kind wife and life partner, Stephanie, who has been very supportive of my studies over the years. Stephanie has been very patient with me and very much understanding of my needs and of the many obstacles that I faced down the thorny road of my success. She had always assured me of the light at the end of the tunnel. Her smile and endless motivation had always given me hope for the future after a long and difficult time. I am also in debt to my daughter, Rhianna, for her great patience with me, enduring ‘lots of boring’ trips to the library. I will make it up to you, my sweet little duckling!

It goes without saying that I owe much gratitude to my family, who always encouraged me to pursue my passion in education. I am particularly thankful to my sisters, for their emotional support through times of frustration and hardship. I am also grateful to my brothers for their encouragement and belief in me.
DEDICATION

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor.

Chapter (17) surat l-isrā (The Night Journey)

I ACCORDingly DEDICATE THIS WORK

TO MY FATHER’S SOUL

I WISH YOU WERE STILL ALIVE TO WITNESS MY MOMENT OF SUCCESS, OF WHICH YOU AND I HAD ALWAYS DREAMED. AS YOU REQUESTED OF ME, I WILL VISIT YOUR IMMACULATE GRAVE AND WILL TELL YOU THAT I EARNED MY DOCTORATE. MAY ALLAH REST YOUR BLESSED SOUL IN PEACE, O’ MY GREAT FATHER!

TO MY MOTHER’S SOUL

I WISH YOU WERE STILL ALIVE TO WITNESS MY DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND BE PROUD OF ME – MAY ALLAH REST YOUR BLESSED SOUL IN PEACE, O’ MY KIND MOTHER!

AND ADDITIONALLY

TO MY WIFE, STEPHANIE & TO OUR DAUGHTER, RHIANNA

IT IS BEYOND DESCRIPTION TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU. MAY ALLAH KEEP YOU BY MY SIDE TILL THE VERY LAST DAY OF MY LIFE!

I ETERNALLY LOVE YOU AND YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY SWEET LITTLE DUCKLING. MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY ENLIGHTEN YOUR PATHWAY AND PROTECT YOU FROM ALL HARM!

MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY ENLIGHTEN YOUR PATHWAY AND PROTECT YOU FROM ALL HARM!
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ABSTRACT

This work, at its heart, is an exploratory attempt to investigate the complex nature of the pervasive, yet underexplored act of disagreement among Arabic speakers in Computer-Mediated Communication. It provides (i) an account of the semantics and pragmatics of the act of disagreement, as performed by Arabic speakers, (ii) a sociolinguistic look into gender differences between Arab males and females in their expression of disagreement and (iii) an examination of the effect of discourse topic on disagreement.

The study drew on a corpus of approximately fifty thousand words in the form of naturally occurring comments/posts compiled over a period of ninety days from a wide array of Arabic Facebook Pages and Groups from three topic areas: (i) religion (REL), (ii) politics (POL) and (iii) society (SOC). The collected data were sorted out to identify examples of disagreement and exclude others, particularly, agreements and off-topic comments. Following a significantly modified version of the taxonomy of disagreement proposed by Muntigl and Turnbull (1998), 10 major strategies were uncovered and proposed as underlying patterns or themes, governing the pragmatic realization of disagreement among Arabic speakers. A descriptive analysis (i.e., SPSS Cross-tabulations and Chi-Square Tests) was then run to determine which disagreement strategy (or set of strategies) has the highest/lowest statistical frequency in terms of linguistic choices (i.e., lexical categories and syntactic constructions, among others), gender (i.e., male vs. female), and topic (i.e., most controversial, less controversial and least controversial).

The results of this study showed that Computer-Mediated Communication delivered by Arabic speakers is replete with disagreements of various grammatical categories and syntactic constructions. In addition to the four strategies proposed by Muntigl and Turnbull (i.e., IRRELEVANCY CLAIM, CONTRADICTION, COUNTERCLAIM, and CHALLENGE),
Arabic speakers utilize six additional discursive strategies to express their disagreements in Computer-Mediated Communication: EXCLAMATION, VERBAL IRONY, ARGUMENT AVIODANCE, MILD SCOLDING, SUPPLICATION, VERBAL ATTACK.

The identified examples of disagreement embody both elements of politeness and impoliteness. Arabic speakers do use both politeness and impoliteness strategies in voicing their disagreement. However, the majority of the strategies were neither polite nor impolite, but rather appropriate (i.e., politic) in the context of disagreement. Statistically significant results were obtained in term of the social variables of gender and topic. Gender was shown to have influenced the subscribers’ level of aggravation, syntax and strategy, but no significant relationship was found between gender and mitigation. Topic was also found to affect the subscribers’ level of mitigation and aggravation as well as choice of disagreement strategy.

The study contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics in identifying the social and cultural norms and beliefs that inform speech act realization and (im)politeness in the Arabic speech community. It adds to existing scholarship on speech act research by providing empirical data on the realization of disagreements by Arabic speakers in online communication, and it contributes a baseline on Arabic for future contrastive work with other languages to help understand issues in cross-cultural communication, which is significant given the international status of the Arabic language. The study also contributes to speech act and politeness research through the exploration of naturally occurring disagreements carried out by Arabic speakers in Computer-Mediated Communication. Finally, the study proposes two modifications to the theoretical framework of Locher and Watts’ Relational Model by expanding the concept of ‘politic’ behavior and pointing out which of the pragmatic strategies identified can be regarded as polite, politic and impolite/overpolite.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Disagreements are significant speech acts in human interaction, yet they have received the least amount of attention in Arabic speech act research, in spite of the common saying, ‘Arabs have agreed to disagree.’ This statement is so deeply ingrained in the minds of Arabic speakers that it is heard in every corner of the Arab World. No two Arab people would even disagree (or dispute) on the truthfulness of the above-italic statement due to its pervasiveness, especially in modern times. Nonetheless, I have discovered no studies conducted on the topic of disagreement by Arab researchers and scholars. This could be in part due to the fact that disagreements have received a bad reputation in the literature, for they draw a thin line between politeness and impoliteness, with a greater possibility of the latter. This state of affairs has probably made Arab researchers shun away from exploring disagreements, as no researcher possibly desires to expose the elements of impoliteness in his/her culture and/or present their own people as prone to disagreement. Additionally, most people tend to camouflage their opposing views, not necessarily to lessen the amount of face damage caused to the addressee but rather to avoid looking and sounding disagreeable themselves. This renders the task of collecting natural disagreement data representative of actual disagreement behaviors much more difficult to obtain and challenging to analyze on the part of the researcher.

Accordingly, the act of disagreement remains understudied, but the speech acts of apology and request have been the most frequently researched in Arabic (e.g., Al-Hami, 1993; Al-Shalawi, 1997; Bataineh, 2004; El-Shazly, 1993; Nureddeen (2008), Tawalbeh & Al-Oqaily, 2012; Harb, 2015, inter alia). Other speech acts investigated in Arabic include compliments (e.g., Farghal & Haggan, 2006; Migdadi, 2003; Nelson, Al-Batal & Echols, 1996), compliment responses (Farghal and Al-Khatib, 2001), giving directions (Taylor-Hamilton; 2002), swearing
(Abdel Jawad, 2000), expressing gratitude (e.g., Al-Khawaldeh, 2014), and refusals (e.g., Al-Issa, 1998; Al-Eryani, 2007; Nelson et al, 2002; Stevens, 1993).

This study examined asynchronous computer-mediated expressions of disagreement as produced by Arabic speakers in online communication, particularly, Facebook Pages and Groups in the area topics of politics, religion and society. It aimed to achieve three objectives. First, it attempted to account for the linguistic and pragmatic behavior of the speech act of disagreement as performed by Arabic speakers in online communication. The second goal was to determine if there are any differences between Arab males and females in their expressions of disagreement. Third, it examined whether the group/page topic has any effect on the type of disagreement employed by group members or page fans.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

This study was first sparked off by the observations of the researcher regarding the linguistic and pragmatic devices Arabic speakers utilize in voicing their disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication on such social networking websites as Facebook, Twitter and so on. One cannot help, but notice that Arabic Facebook pages and groups are pervasive with disagreements that are of various linguistic forms and serve a variety of pragmatic functions. As an avid student of linguistics, I often noticed that Arabic speakers exhibit their disagreement in manners that may be considered inappropriate (or perhaps too direct) if examined by an outside observer or through the lens of Western theories of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Versed in both Arabic and English and most importantly acquainted with the sociocultural norms of some Arabic and English societies with more knowledge of the former, I can fully appreciate Arabic speakers’ inclinations in (over)choosing certain linguistic devices, when communicating their disagreements on the various forums of online communication. Such realizations do not
regularly correspond to Western patterns of disagreement and as such may sometimes be perceived as either rude, uncooperative or (to unbiased observers) simply contrary to the realizations of disagreement in other languages such as English. Therefore, it is significant to research the speech act of disagreement cross-linguistically to bridge any gaps in intercultural communication among speakers of different linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds.

Compared to other speech acts such as requests, apologies, compliments, invitations, the speech act of disagreement in Arabic has not been extensively studied. This could be in part because most people do not express their disagreement directly, but tend to camouflage their opposing views indirectly, not necessarily to lessen the amount of face damage caused to the addressee but rather to avoid looking and sounding disagreeable. This state of affairs renders the task of collecting natural disagreement data much more difficult to obtain and challenging to analyze on the part of the researcher. Given that Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) data provide naturally occurring examples of disagreement, this researcher’s curiosity was aroused and saw the feasibility of utilizing CMC data for exploring the topic of disagreement so as to provide deeper insights into intercultural communication, pragmatics and interlanguage research.

Arabic is the fourth most frequently used language in the world, ranked immediately below English. According the most recent technical report released by the Modern Language Association of America (2010), interest in studying foreign languages has significantly augmented with an overall growth of 19.5% over a span of seven years: 12.9% and 6.6% from 2002 to 2006 and from 2006 to 2009, respectively totaling 1.4 million students learning at least one foreign language. Of the top-ten foreign languages pursued by American college students, Arabic is ranked eight after Spanish, French, German, ASL, Italian, Japanese and Chinese with
the first three languages being regarded as the most studied. Arabic is ranked first for having accrued the most significant levels of increase for the above-reported periods. From 2002 to 2006, the total number of American learners of Arabic increased from 10,584 to 23,974 with an actual increase of 126.5%, followed by another 46.3% \( (N = 35,083) \) from 2006 to 2009. Although Spanish is ranked first – being the most studied language –, the percentage of change is minimal when compared to Arabic (Cf. 10.3% and 5.1% for the same periods). As such, research on the pragmatics of this important world language is needed and further substantiates the drive behind this academic endeavor.

1.2.1 Arabic Language History and Current State of Diglossia

Arabic is a central Semitic language that genetically belongs to the Afro-asiatic family of languages spoken predominantly in the Middle East, North Africa and Horn of Africa. Of the living Afro-asiatic languages (e.g., Hebrew, Aramaic, Amharic, among others), Arabic is the most widely spoken language with approximately 585 million speakers worldwide. As a first language (L1), Arabic is spoken by 295 million people in 22 countries that make up the political entity known as the Arab World – a geographical area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in the southeast. The remaining 290 million people speak Arabic as their second language (L2) mainly in parts of Africa and Asia (Ethnologue, 2016).

Ryding (2005) reports that Arabic has undergone several stages of development: Old Arabic, Early Arabic, Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. Old Arabic dates back to the 7th century BC until approximately the 3rd century AD primarily in the form of rock inscriptions and graffiti. Throughout the 4th and 5th centuries, Early Arabic evolved into “a closer semblance of Classical Arabic” (p. 2). While little known about the first two periods, extensive
evidence was established to mark the start of the Classical Arabic (CA) era, attested as early as the 6th century in the form of greatly eloquent poetic language of high diction and sophisticated rhythm. Reinforced by the revelation of the Holy Book of Qur’an in the 7th century, CA continued to flourish and remained the dominant language of poetic power and eloquence throughout the 12th century all the way to the 18th century, the end of which, however, marked the emergence of what Western linguists often refer to as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

Zughoul (1980) notes that MSA lexicon along with its grammatical structure is a modernized version of CA. Similar at the syntactic level (e.g., case and inflection), CA and MSA, however, differ greatly in the areas of style and vocabulary (Ryding, 2005, p. 4). From the 18th century to present times, MSA has become the official medium of instruction, communication, education and the various forms of written and spoken media (e.g., TV, magazines, newspapers, etc.) in the 22 countries of the Arab World. Additionally, MSA has occupied a special status at international congregations such as the United Nations and the International Court of Justice being one of their officially recognized languages.

Today’s Arabic presents a prime example of what Ferguson (1959) characterized as the linguistic phenomenon of “diglossia”, where two varieties of the same language coexist side by side. Like Greek, the Haitian Creole, and Swiss German, Arabic has two varieties: High (H) and Low (L). The H variety is well-defined and prestigious, while the L variety is not. The former is represented in MSA and the latter in the various local vernaculars spoken in the Arab World1. Due to geographical boundaries, Arabic speakers across the Arab World have developed their own distinctive vernaculars. These local vernaculars are “grammatically and lexically complex … and enjoy fluctuating degrees of intelligibility with both MSA and one another” (Horn, 2015,

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1 It is worth mentioning the linguistic phenomena of diglossia and bilingualism are two separate terms that do not represent the same thing. The former refers to the coexistence of two varieties of the same language, while the latter refers to the coexistence of two (or more) totally different languages.
Despite the fact that MSA seems absent from day-to-day communication (e.g., among friends, at home, etc.), it still occupies a special status in the minds (and hearts) of Arabic speakers (myself included) who insist on regarding their own local vernaculars as impure or more succinctly deformed versions of “the Arabic Language”, but nonetheless fail to use it or pass it on to their children. This state of affairs represents a prime case of what I like to characterize as “Linguistic Schizophrenia”, which will be tackled and further investigated in a different research.

Computer-Mediated Communication manifests the diglossiac situation of the Arabic language and provides viable data to capture the complex and discursive nature of the speech act of disagreement, which is the main thrust of this dissertation. This study adopts the term *Modern Standard Arabic* (MSA) to represent the H variety as a modernized version of the language found in the Holy Book of Qur’an (i.e., Classical Arabic) and the term *Vernacular* (VER) to denote the L varieties spoken across the Arab World. Although falling outside the scope of this study, I attempted, to the best of my ability as a native speaker of Arabic, to expose differences between MSA and the many local VERs, whenever possible and suitable to the discussion.

### 1.3 Disagreements in Computer-Mediated Communication

The advent of the computer coupled with the global system of the Internet has led to major changes in our communication styles. People from geographically distinct regions no longer need to handwrite letters or travel thousands of miles to communicate and collaborate with one another. Instead, a plethora of technological innovations (e.g., e-mail, weblogs, and Internet forums, among others) have cut down the distance and opened up many avenues for faceless communication regardless of time, distance and location. This state of affairs has paved the road for the emergence of the so-called Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC is
defined as “text-based interactive communication via the Internet, websites and other multimodal formats, and mobile communication” (Herring, Stein & Virtanen, 2013). More succinctly, CMC refers to any human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices (McQuail, 2005). CMC is primarily of two types: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous tools of communication (e.g., audio/video conferencing, instant messaging, chat, etc.) enable real-time communication and collaboration in a “same time-different place” mode, whereas a “different time-different place” mode is done through the latter type, for example, email and weblogs (McQuail, 2005).

CMC has become an indispensable part of human communication, especially in the Western hemisphere, to which most technological advances are accredited. Social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, among others) are some of the best and most accessible manifestations of CMC in modern times. They not only engage people either synchronously or asynchronously, but also give them room to express their opinions (agreements and disagreements), share experiences, raise questions, and so on. Synchronously, a Facebook user, for example, can use the instant messenger\(^2\) to connect with others at a single point in time and receive replies immediately. Asynchronously, Facebook and Twitter users can post comments and update their online status at a single point in time and receive responses and comments over a period of time at each person’s own convenience and schedule.

Both modes of CMC are of great value to language research, especially for pragmatics. CMC provides real interaction instances in the form of naturally occurring apologies, compliments, compliment responses, expressions of gratitude and so forth. Most relevant to this study is the fact that CMC provides natural examples for analyzing online disagreements

\(^2\) The Facebook messenger is “an instant messaging service and software application which provides text and voice” (Tsukayama, 2013).
produced by Arabic speakers. Until recently, pragmatic investigations couched from within the perspective of CMC seem to have been primarily restricted to the English language (Herring, 2010). This is probably due to the fact that the Internet has the United States as its birthplace (Herring, 2013). This ethnocentrism was noted early on by Wierzbicka (1985), who emphasized the necessity of including non-western cultures in speech act studies. Language-oriented CMC research has been carried out in Western cultures such as France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) and is starting in China, Japan (Herring, 2013). Nonetheless, language-oriented CMC research is slowly making its way to Arabic-speaking countries with respect to pragmatic research in general, and speech act research specifically.

In fact, the vast majority of Arabic speech act studies seem to have adopted discourse completion tasks (DCTs) as the primary tool of data collection. A few studies (e.g., Ghawi, 1993) have used role-plays supplemented by interviewing or some other sort of naturally occurring data. Nevertheless, no study, to the best of this researcher’s knowledge, has implemented a CMC-oriented approach for investigating disagreements in Arabic. Responding to Herring’s (2010, 2013) call for the need of studies focusing on CMC research in other languages and cultural contexts as well as Locher, Bolander and Hoehn’s (2015) call to work with standard and non-standard form of language use (p. 13), the current study, therefore, sets out to address this gap by couching its investigation from within the perspective of language-oriented CMC research.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Despite the ever-increasing expansion of the field of pragmatics, disagreement has received the least scholarly attention among researchers (LoCastro, 1987) and continues to be
neglected (Kreutel, 2007 & Lawson, 2009). A few studies, however, have been conducted to explore disagreements, the majority of which revolve around British or American English in comparison to other languages/cultures, such as Japanese (e.g., Pearson, 1986; Beebe and Takahashi, 1989 & Lawson, 2009), Latin American Spanish (e.g., García, 1989 & Edstrom, 2004), Greek (e.g., Georgakopoulou, 2001 & Koutsantoni, 2005). Obviously, further research is needed in the area of disagreements, especially in Arabic, which is the focus of this dissertation. Although these studies have contributed to the overall understanding of the speech act of disagreement, none seems to have been conducted from within the framework of language-driven CMC research.

As for Arabic, as noted above, there exists a plethora of studies on other speech acts, especially apologies and requests, but none on disagreements. These studies have enriched our understanding of different speech acts in Arabic; they, nonetheless, suffer from a number of limitations in at least two aspects. First, they are methodologically weaker studies due to heavy reliance on artificial data collection methods, chiefly discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and role-plays, neither of which elicits instances of language in natural interaction. Second, even the most recent studies are mostly restricted to the theoretical framework of Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]). With the exception of Al-Khawaldeh’s (2014) illuminating cross-cultural study on gratitude expressions, no study has been couched through the lens of more recent approaches to (im)politeness. This is not to say that Brown and Levinson’s model is of no value, nor is it the purpose of this study to argue for or against it. Rather, the data are considered in light of more recently developed frameworks of (im)politeness as well as that of Brown and Levinson.

In short, this study differs from previously conducted research in Arabic on speech acts in that: (i) it investigates disagreement among Arabic speakers for the first time and (ii) it uses
natural data from CMC. It is hoped that this study will spark further studies to examine the speech act of disagreement (or other speech acts) among Arabic speakers and encourage other researchers to adopt language-oriented CMC research in Arabic.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is a significant endeavor in better understanding interactional linguistic behavior. It contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics, as it should have an important role in identifying the social and cultural norms and beliefs that inform speech act realization and (im)politeness in the Arabic speech community. It adds to existing scholarship on speech act research by providing empirical data on the realization of disagreements by Arabic speakers in online communication, and it contributes a baseline on Arabic for contrastive work with other languages to help understand issues in cross-cultural communication.

The study also contributes to sociolinguistics in examining the role of the social factor of gender. The study has potential pedagogical significance for both ESL/EFL teachers of Arabic speakers and teachers of Arabic as a foreign/second language in that it will provide them with objective information on how Arabic speakers perform the speech act of disagreement. Finally, and most importantly, the current study is couched in a CMC-oriented approach, which makes it a steppingstone for further research in Arabic, whether investigating speech acts or other pragmatics-related issues.

1.6 Research Questions

The current study will address the following questions:

1. How do Arabic speakers express the speech act of disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)?

1.1 How are word choice and sentence structure used in the expressions of disagreement?
1.2 How are mitigators and aggravators used in the expressions of disagreement?

2. Are there any differences between Arab males and females in their CMC-oriented realization of the speech act of disagreement?

3. Does topic affect the type of disagreement among speakers of Arabic?

1.7 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured as follows. **Chapter One** briefly introduces the topic of investigation, highlights its significance to the field, and finally lists the research questions sought to be answered in this academic endeavor. In **Chapter Two**, I furnish a detailed literature review on the subject of disagreement, including terminological issues, a relatively brief account of the Speech Act Theory (SAT), groundbreaking politeness theories and most crucially a comprehensive overview of disagreement studies. **Chapter Three** describes the methodology implemented in this dissertation by first listing the research questions tackled in this work, followed by a description of the corpus along with a detailed account of the analysis procedures and techniques. **Chapter Four** reports and discusses the results of this academic investigation. **Chapter Five** provides conclusions, implications, limitations and a set of recommendations for further research into the field.

1.8 Transliteration Conventions, Gloss Lines and Illustrative Examples

1.8.1 Transliteration Conventions

All examples of disagreements are given ‘as is’ whether in MSA or the local vernaculars (e.g., Jordanian, Egyptian, etc.) recognized in the corpus. No orthographic changes are made. These appear in bold. The original examples will be transliterated, using Romanized letters. In transliterating the consonants and vowels of MSA, I have adopted a slightly modified version of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) laid out in Table 1 below. The modification relates to the four emphatic consonants of MSA (No. 14 through 17), which are produced with the root of
the tongue retracted toward the pharyngeal wall (Amayreh & Dyson, 1998). Similarly, I have adopted the IPA conventions for transliterating the vowels of MSA and the vernacular varieties as outlined in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: *The International Phonetic Alphabet for MSA Consonants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Arabic Letter</th>
<th>IPA Symbol</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Arabic Letter</th>
<th>IPA Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ء</td>
<td>/ʔ/</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>ض</td>
<td>/Z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ب</td>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>ط</td>
<td>/T/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ت</td>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>ظ</td>
<td>/DH/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ج</td>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>ع</td>
<td>/S/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>/dʒ/</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>غ</td>
<td>/ɣ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ه</td>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>ف</td>
<td>/f/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>د</td>
<td>/x/</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>ق</td>
<td>/q/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ح</td>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ك</td>
<td>/k/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ز</td>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>ل</td>
<td>/l/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ر</td>
<td>/r/</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>م</td>
<td>/m/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ز</td>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>/n/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>س</td>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>ه</td>
<td>/h/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>ص</td>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>و</td>
<td>/w/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>ص</td>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>ي</td>
<td>/j/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The symbols /T/, /D/, /S/, and /DH/ reflect emphatic consonants. According to IPA guidelines, these emphatic consonants are transcribed as /tˁ/, /dˁ/, /sˁ/, /ðˁ/.*

Table 2: *The International Phonetic Alphabet for MSA vowels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Arabic Letter/Vowel</th>
<th>IPA Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>َ</td>
<td>/a/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ا</td>
<td>/a:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>/i/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ي</td>
<td>/i:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>/u/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>و</td>
<td>/u:/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front Unrounded</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back Rounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>High</em></td>
<td>i (i:)</td>
<td></td>
<td>u (u:)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mid</em></td>
<td>e (e:)</td>
<td></td>
<td>o (o:)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Low</em></td>
<td>a (a:)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mid vowels are dialectal and do not appear in MSA.*
The IPA system is used because of its practicality and efficiency. To minimize the volume of symbols used and avoid ambiguity for the reader, I have adopted the conventions of the broad transcription as opposed to the narrow version of the IPA transcription. Unless otherwise indicated, the same IPA conventions are used for transliterating dialectal consonants of the different vernaculars of the Arabic language.

1.8.2 Gloss & Translation Lines

Gloss lines are placed directly under the transliterated Arabic words, followed by a fourth line, which is a close, idiomatic English translation, enclosed in single quotation marks. The translation may (or may not) correspond to the grammatical structure included in the gloss lines. Only when necessary, morpho-syntactic information is included. If used, upper case letters will refer to grammatical functions, while lower-case letters will stand for word meaning. The source of an illustrative example is given at the end in a special format, explained in 1.8.3 below.

1.8.3 Examples

Given that the current corpus has three topic areas (i.e., political, religious, and social), gender variation (male and female), users from different Arabic-speaking countries and dialectal variation (MSA vs. VER), a special system of data presentation has been developed for ease of reference. Example (1) below presents the architecture of this system:

# 23 [POL.F.JO.MSA.PG]

The example above represents the format used throughout this dissertation for examples. The # symbol along with the Arabic numerals indicates the original number of the example, as extracted from the corpus for illustration purposes. The four variables are separated by periods, where POL stands for the political category, F stands for females, JO stands for Jordan, MSA for
Modern Standard Arabic and *PG* for page as opposed to *GP* for group. These parameters are enclosed in square brackets to indicate variability. That is, *POL* could be replaced by either *REL* (religious) or *SOC* (social); *F* can be replaced by *M* (male); *JO* can be replaced by any other Arabic-speaking country (e.g., SA for Saudi Arabia), *MSA* can be substituted by the respective local vernacular varieties of Arabic (e.g., Jordanian, Saudi, Egyptian, etc.) and *PG* can be replaced by *GP* for group. Following this proposed system of data presentation, example (1) is to be read as follows: “example (1) is the 23rd identified instance of disagreement extracted from the political category of the corpus, which was performed by a Jordanian female in Modern Standard Arabic from a Facebook page.” Similarly, ‘# 14 [REL.M.SA.VER.GP]’ should be understood as “the 14th identified example of disagreement extracted from the religious category of the corpus, which was delivered by a Saudi male in the vernacular variety from a Facebook group.”

### 1.9 List of Abbreviations

The following list of abbreviations has been used in this dissertation and is presented here in an alphabetical order. All appear in upper-case letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>ACT COMBINATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCU</td>
<td>Accusative (case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Active Participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BH</td>
<td>Bahrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>COUNTERCLAIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>CHALLENGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>Computer-Mediated Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>CONTRADICTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>Dative (case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL</td>
<td>Dual (grammatical number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Frequency of Occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM</td>
<td>Feminine (grammatical gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>IRRELEVANCY CLAIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IPA</strong></td>
<td>International Phonetic Alphabet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IQ</strong></td>
<td>Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JO</strong></td>
<td>Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KT</strong></td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEB</strong></td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIB</strong></td>
<td>Libya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASC</strong></td>
<td>Masculine (grammatical gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MO</strong></td>
<td>Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MT</strong></td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>Noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOM</strong></td>
<td>Nominative (case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OM</strong></td>
<td>Oman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PA</strong></td>
<td>Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAS</strong></td>
<td>Passive (voice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PASS</strong></td>
<td>Passive Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PL</strong></td>
<td>Plural (grammatical number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POL</strong></td>
<td>Political Category of the Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSS</strong></td>
<td>Possessive (case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRO</strong></td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QT</strong></td>
<td>Qatar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REL</strong></td>
<td>Religious Category of the Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA</strong></td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAT</strong></td>
<td>Speech Act Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SG</strong></td>
<td>Singular (grammatical number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SO</strong></td>
<td>Somalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOC</strong></td>
<td>Social Category of the Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SY</strong></td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TN</strong></td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UAE</strong></td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V</strong></td>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VER</strong></td>
<td>Vernacular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YM</strong></td>
<td>Yemen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.10 List of Diacritics and Other Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boldface words</th>
<th><strong>Boldface words</strong></th>
<th>Original Words in Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>:</code></td>
<td>Colons</td>
<td>Long Vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>- (or .)</code></td>
<td>Hyphen (or Period)</td>
<td>Syllable Boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>/</code></td>
<td>Forward Slash</td>
<td>IPA Transcription Enclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>[]</code></td>
<td>Square Brackets</td>
<td>Lexical Roots in Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>¹ &amp; ²</code></td>
<td>Super-Scripted 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>A Clause Split into Two Parts for Ease of Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>#</code></td>
<td>Pound Sign (or Hashtag)</td>
<td>Serial Number of Example from the Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>%</code></td>
<td>Percentage Sign</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Probably unlike other speech acts (e.g., complimenting, apologizing, agreeing, etc.), the act of disagreeing has acquired a bad reputation (Myers, 2004) in the literature for being regarded as a “kind of failure between interactants” (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1555). Pearson (1986) reports that agreements occur more frequently than disagreements in natural conversations, where speakers seem to have a general proclivity to agree (Kuo, 1994; Kotthoff, 1993), but exhibit reluctance and hesitance to express disagreement (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). For Waldron and Applegate (1994), disagreement is a “form of conflict”. Under Conversation Analysis (CA) from within the theoretical framework of Preference Theory, disagreements, unlike agreements being preferred speech acts, have been labeled as “dispreferred” second responses (1987 [1973]) and as “dispreferred” next actions (Pomerantz, 1984, p. 63), as they do not meet the expectations of the hearer. Likewise, in early accounts of politeness (Lakoff, 1975; Leech, 1983, Brown & Levinson, 1987 [1978]), disagreements have been seen as face-threatening acts (FTAs) because they verge on impoliteness and should thus be avoided and/or mitigated in the interest of interlocutors’ face (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1554).

However, several classic and recent investigations have found that disagreements should not be seen as ‘dispreferred’ responses or ‘FTAs’, but rather as preferred acts highly influenced by such factors as context and culture. Schiffrin (1984) and Tannen & Kavaka (1992) have shown that disagreements in Greek among friends and family members do not constitute a breach of politeness, but rather signal sociability and intimacy. Along similar lines, Georgakopoulou (2001) found that disagreements, in informal conversations among young female Greeks talking about the future, are products of contextual exigency, and as such they do not impair interlocutors’ relationships but rather enhance relationships, as the objective is to
reach a solution beneficial to the addressee. This is in line with Chiu (2008), who claims that polite disagreements help support social relationships. In the interactional context of gifted classes, Netz (2013) argues that disagreement “is not inherently face-threatening, but rather needs to be contextualized” as it does not “undermine solidarity among interactants [gifted students and teachers]” (p. 157-158). In the area of CMC-oriented research, Angouri and Tseliga (2010) report that disagreements in two online forums (or fora) are the norm, given the highly controversial nature of the topics discussed. Echoing Locher (2004), Sifianou (2012: 1561) acknowledges that Brown and Lenvinson’s (1987) positive politeness strategies ‘Seek agreement’ and ‘Avoid disagreement’ may be “useful to use with strangers …” but she maintains that they “are rather inadequate to sustain rapport and solidarity.” In this view, Sifianou (2012) argues that disagreements “are not necessarily impolite acts that should be avoided” (p. 1561).

Thus far, I have presented a very brief synopsis of how the act of disagreement has been viewed in existing scholarship. In what follows, I will present a detailed account of the act of disagreement. This section will be divided six sections. Section 2.2 will be dedicated to reviewing definitional issues pertinent to the term disagreement. Section 2.3 situates the speech act of disagreement into Speech Act Theory. Section 2.4 will furnish a thorough account of (im)politeness research, including both traditional and modern views. Next, Section 2.5 will provide a selection of empirical studies (intracultural, intralingual, intercultural and CMC studies) carried out on the act of disagreement. Section 2.6 presents a list of selected previously established taxonomies of disagreement. The last section of the chapter will offer a summary of the findings to substantiate the drive behind this study.
2.2 On Defining Disagreement

The term *disagreement* has been defined variously in the literature. Several terms have been used including, among others, *contradiction* (Sornig, 1977), *argument* (Schiffrin, 1984, 1985; Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998), *confrontation* (Brown, 1980), *dispute* (Sprott, 1992; Kotthoff, 1993), *opposition* (Kavaka, 2002), *oppositional talk* (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004), *conflict talk* (Eisenberg and Garvery, 1981; Lueng, 2005), and *evaluations* (Long, 2003). Although they are closely related, these terms can possibly still be distinguished on the basis of (i) positive/negative attitude and (ii) local/interactional dimensions. In other words, while the term *argument* may be used in neutral and positive senses, the term *disagreement* is generally “associated with the act of disagreeing and has a rather negative connotation” (Koczogh, 2013, p. 216).

Given this much variation in the literature, several definitions have been proposed. Drawing upon Speech Act Theory, Sornig (1977: 363) defines the term *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).” This definition limits disagreements to only verbal expressions, excluding all other non-verbal means of expressing disagreement. Similarly, Wierzbicka (1987: 128) sees the act of disagreement as a dual act: (i) an act of saying 'what one [Speaker 1] thinks' and (ii) an act of indicating 'that one [Speaker 2] doesn't think the same as the earlier speaker'. It is what speaker 2 says that constitutes the speech act of disagreement and as such it is much more important than the prior (i.e., Speaker’s 1 utterance).

According to Edstrom (2004), disagreement is “the communication of an opinion or belief contrary to the view expressed by the previous speaker” (p. 1505). This definition may be
broader in scope, as the word *communication* may entail both verbal and non-verbal expressions. Yet, it may be problematic in two aspects: (a) “it is hard [to analyze speaker’s beliefs], or in some cases, even impossible to access” (Koczogh, 2013, p. 219) and (b) it suggests that disagreement entails an opposite view and consequently conflict.

Sifianou (2012:1554) regards disagreement as “the expression of a view” that basically “differs from that expressed by another speaker”. This definition leaves out the possibility that disagreement can be expressed indirectly. A more technical definition is provided in Rees-Miller (2000:1088). To her, disagreement is defined as “[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 $P$” [original italics]. This definition makes clear that disagreement can be expressed either directly or indirectly, i.e., via implicature (Grice, 1975). Similarly, but more succinctly, Kavaka (2002) defines disagreement as “the negation of a stated or implied proposition” (1538).

In line with Koczogh’s (2013: 211) observation, there is “a lack of a uniform definition and conceptualization” of the term. To remedy this, she proposes that disagreement be defined as: “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.” Although it seems more capable of capturing the complex nature of disagreement, Koczogh’s definition, nonetheless, does not to take into account that disagreement can nowadays be expressed electronically (i.e., CMC). As such, I propose the following definition:

*Disagreement is the negated expression of a stated or implied proposition either partially or fully in oral or written communication.*
2.3 Disagreement in Speech Act Theory
2.3.1 Austin’s Speech Act Theory

The Speech Act Theory was first introduced by the philosopher John L. Austin (1962) in his seminal work *How to do things with language*. Austin argues that language users’ sentences (or phrases) are not just empty utterances that solely say or describe something but rather denote doing something as well; that is, the performance of which would not normally be described as just “saying” or “describing” something (p. 5). Austin points out that these utterances have consequential effects on the hearer(s), i.e., “upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience or of the speaker, or other person …” (p. 101). For example, “I am sorry” is an example of the speech act of apology, in which the offender (apologizer) expresses his/her regret to the offended (apologizee). Austin (1962) suggests that speech acts be analyzed on three levels: (1) locutionary (2) illocutionary and (3) perlocutionary. Based on their illocutionary force, Austin (1962) proposes the following classes of verbs:

![Austin's Illocutionary Acts](image_url)

*Figure 1. Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Acts (1962).*
As Figure 1 above shows, the speech act of disagreement is not listed under any category, although closely related verbs (e.g., argue, object to, deny, etc.) are mentioned. The verb ‘agree’ is classified as both a commissive and an expositive. Nonetheless, Austin (1962: 158) notes that “supporting, agreeing, disagreeing, maintaining, and defending form another group of illocutions which seem to be both expositive and commissive” [emphasis is mine]. Austin acknowledges that he is “far from equally happy about all of them [the proposed classes of verbs]” (p. 151).

### 2.3.2 Searle’s Speech Act Theory

Austin’s notion of speech acts was adopted, refined, expanded and further systematized by the American philosopher John Searle (1969). Searle criticizes Austin’s classification system on the following grounds. First, Austin’s taxonomy is a mere classification of English illocutionary verbs, not illocutionary acts. Searle points out that some verbs are not even illocutionary (e.g., sympathize, regard, shall, etc.). Second, Searle notes that there is an obvious overlap between Austin’s proposed classes and “a great deal of heterogeneity within some of the categories” (p. 8). For instance, the verb ‘agree’ is listed as both a commissive and an expositive. Third, many of the verbs listed in the categories do not satisfy the definition given (by Austin) for the category.

Searle’s counterproposal is manifested in a newly reformulated classification scheme based on clear principles of distinction: (1) illocutionary point, (2) direction of fit and (3) expressed psychological state \(^3\). He proposes five categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. Table 1 below presents Searle’s five categories along with defining criteria:

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\(^3\) For a complete list of criteria along with detailed definitions, please see Searle (1969: 4-7).
Table 3: Searle’s Speech Acts & Defining Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Illocutionary point (purpose of the act)</th>
<th>Direction of fit (World → words; words → world)</th>
<th>Psychological State (sincerity condition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>S commits to the truth of an expressed proposition</td>
<td>words → world</td>
<td>Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>S tries to get H to do A.</td>
<td>world → words</td>
<td>Want (wish &amp; desire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>S commits to some future action A.</td>
<td>world → words</td>
<td>Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressives</td>
<td>S expresses attitudes/emotions for H</td>
<td>∅ (null)</td>
<td>Variable contingent upon the propositional content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarations</td>
<td>words change the world</td>
<td>words → world</td>
<td>∅ (null)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**[Where S = Speaker; H = Hearer & A = Act.]**

In Searle’s taxonomy, the speech act of disagreement belongs to the category of representatives (or assertives) in which S commits to the truth (or falsity) of the expressed proposition. Unlike a directive or a commissive, disagreement is reactive in that it requires a prior utterance from an interlocutor (Sornig, 1977: 367). It can be successfully delivered if (and only if) the following conditions are met (pp. 354-361):

A. Preparatory Condition:
   
   S1 has asserted or implied or is believed to have asserted or implied \( P \);
   
   S2 understands the propositional content of \( P \) and there is no need for further information.

B. Propositional Condition:
   
   S2 asserts or implies different from \( P \) [– that is] \( \text{Not } P \).

C. Sincerity Condition:
   
   S2 believes that S1 has asserted \( P \);
   
   S2 believes that S1 considers \( P \) to be true
   
   S2 wants to inform S1 that S2 is of a different opinion and, therefore, agreement is not possible.

D. Essential Condition:
Either or both S1 and S2 count the act as an act of disagreement.

\[ S = \text{speaker}; \ P = \text{Proposition} \]

### 2.4 Politeness Research

Politeness in speech acts (e.g., disagreement) to date has been approached from one of three views: (1) the traditional/classical view based on Grice’s Cooperative Principle (CP) and the concept of face/facework (Goffman, 1967, Lakoff, 1973, Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987); (2) the “postmodern view” encompassing discursive and interactional approaches such as relational work (Watts, 2003, Locher, 2004; Locher & Watts, 2005), relational practice (Holmes & Schnuur, 2005), rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2005), and (3) frame-based view (Terkourafi, 2003, 2005).

#### 2.4.1 Traditional Accounts of Politeness

The traditional view is labeled so “for no other reason than because theories in this vein have achieved the status of ‘classics’ in the field” (Terkourafi, 2005, p. 237). Scholars in this trend tend to view politeness as a set of rules (or norms) that speakers should employ to achieve social harmony and ensure cooperation among the interlocutors. They focus on the individual and pay little attention to the process of interaction among interactants. As Terkourafi (2005) notes, “politeness then becomes a matter of using particular linguistic devices/strategies according to universalizing rules/principles” (p. 238). Consonant with Terkourafi, Elen (2001) comments that the traditional views of politeness seem to regard politeness as a “system of such absolute norms” (p. 187). Below is a brief account of each and how the speech act of disagreement fits into the model.
2.4.1.1 Leech (1983)

Leech (1983) developed the Politeness Principle (PP) as a complement to the Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP). Leech argues that the PP keeps the social balance and the friendship and relationships, which allow one to presuppose that the interlocutors are being cooperative (p. 82). The PP has six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Of relevance here is the Agreement Maxim (in assertives), which seeks to (a) “minimize disagreement between self and other” and “maximize agreement between self and other” (ibid: 132). In assigning a whole maxim to agreement, Leech clearly considers disagreement to be undesirable (or dispreferred: Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987 [1973]). He observes, “there is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc.” (p. 132).

In agreement with Leech, Levinson (1983) argues that agreement is preferred to disagreement basically because preferred utterances (agreement) are simpler to construct than dispreferred utterances (disagreement). Dispreferred utterances are more complex requiring more efforts on the part of the speaker, i.e., are more marked and less expected. Kreutel (2007) reports that speakers often exhibit reluctance and hesitation in voicing their disagreement and as such they need to “bridge the gap between their desire to express their opinion and the presumption that this will be an undesired action” (p. 3). Locher (2004) observes that Leech’s Approbation Maxim (minimize dispraise of others) and Tact Maxim (minimize cost to other) are applicable because if “speakers choose to follow these maxims, they will try to redress the intended disagreement” (p. 96). Even after over two decades have elapsed, Leech (2007) maintains that disagreement is dispreferred, while agreement is preferred for increasing the hearer’s positive
face. In sum, agreement should be maximized, while disagreement is dispreferred and should be minimized.

Leech’s model has been criticized on several grounds; chief among them is that the number of maxims can be expanded *ad infinitum* (Brown & Levinson 1987; Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Dimitrova-Galaczi, 2005, among others) and the model lacks of empirical substantiation (Gu, 1990; Jautz, 2013).

2.4.1.2 Brown and Levinson (1987)

Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (1987) is one of the earliest attempts to account for politeness phenomena. They claim that politeness is a universal phenomenon employed by speakers of different languages and cultures (p. 100). They base their model on the notion of a Model Person (MP). The MP is assumed to be a fluent speaker equipped with two qualities: rationality and face (p. 58). Rationality refers to the person’s ability to engage in means-ends analysis. Based on Goffman’s concept of face (1967), Brown and Levinson define face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (p. 61).

Face (and consequently politeness) is of two types: positive (i.e., one’s desire to be appreciated and/or approved of by other members of his/her society) and negative (i.e., one’s desire to be free from imposition). Brown and Levinson claim that face is not static; it can be “lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (p. 61) because it is constantly vulnerable to linguistic formulas, surfacing as face-threatening acts (FTAs). In this view, they consider that all speech acts as face-threatening activities (FTAs), i.e., “activities that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker” (p. 70). To minimize the degree of offense, FTAs should be “counterbalanced by appropriate doses of
politeness” (Kasper, 1994: 3207), considering three social and contextual parameters: power (P), social distance (D) and absolute ranking of imposition (R).

Similar to Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987: 66) consider disagreement to be a face-threatening act because it weakens solidarity among the interlocutors. It belongs to “those acts that threaten the positive-face want by indicating (potentially) that the speaker does not care about the addressee’s feelings, wants, etc. – that in some important respect he doesn’t want H’s wants.” This is in line with Heritage (1984), who found that disagreement and refusal as dispreferred format responses are “largely destructive of social solidarity” (p. 269). For Fraser (1990: 229), disagreement belongs to those SAs (such as complaining, criticizing, etc.) labeled as FTAs because they inherently threaten the H’s desire for appreciation and approval.

Under the broad mechanism of the positive politeness strategy ‘claim common ground’, Brown and Levinson propose two sub-categories: Strategy 5 ‘Seek agreement’ and Strategy 6 ‘Avoid disagreement’. Seek agreement may be achieved through (i) ‘safe topics’ allowing “S to stress his agreement with H and therefore to satisfy H’s desire to be ‘right’, or to be corroborated in his opinions” or ‘repetition’ which is “used to stress emotional agreement with the utterance (or stress interest and surprise)” (p. 112). Avoid disagreement can be accomplished through (i) ‘token agreement’, ‘pseudo agreement’, ‘white lies’ and ‘hedging opinions’, all of which help soften the FTA of disagreement. In line with Sack’s American data (1973 [1987]), Brown and Levinson (p. 114) found “similar ‘preference for agreement’ over disagreement in their British English data. Locher (2004), however, considers strategies 5 & 6 to “represent relational work in general, in this case attending to the involvement aspect of face, rather than as an output of politeness” (p. 97). In brief, disagreement is considered an FTA for the possibility of
jeopardizing the solidarity among the interlocutors, which should be avoided or at least mitigated via hedging, partial agreement and the like.

Although Brown and Levinson’s Theory of Politeness has spawned an enormous number of studies, it has nonetheless received a considerable amount of scholarly criticism. Chiefly, researchers have cast doubt on its cross-cultural applicability (Matsumoto, 1988; Kasper, 1990; Mao, 1994; among others). Emphasizing the parameter of culture, Schiffrin (1984), Kavaka (1993) and Tannen & Kavaka (1992) have shown that disagreement in Greek enhances solidarity between interactants. In terms of context, Georgakopoulou (2001) found that disagreements in informal conversations among young female Greeks are products of contextual exigency. This is in line with Chiu (2008) who claims that polite disagreement in solving group activities “might support both social relationships and micro-creativity” (p. 386). In the interactional context of gifted classes, Netz (2013) argues that disagreement “is not inherently face-threatening, but rather needs to be contextualized” as it does not “undermine solidarity among interactants [gifted students and teachers]” (p. 157-158).

2.4.1.3 Summary

The traditional views on politeness have been pioneered by Leech (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1978 [1987]). Leech is the best-known proponent of the conversational-maxim view of politeness. He proposed the Politeness Principle as a complement to Grice’s Cooperative Principle (1975). Leech’s account on politeness has been criticized on several grounds including lack of empirical substantiation (Jautz, 2013), and potential for generating an infinite number of maxims (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Jucker, 1988, inter alia). Brown and Levinson are well known for the face-saving view of politeness. They divided politeness into positive and negative based on the concept of face claimed to be universal. They suggested that certain speech acts
(e.g., disagreement) are face-threatening acts (FTAs), which should be avoided or mitigated to accomplish politeness. Although highly influential for over three decades, Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness has been extensively criticized especially in regards to its cross-cultural applicability (e.g., Matsumoto, 1988; Gu, 1990; Sifianou, 1992, Mao, 1994, among others). Both views seem to reduce politeness to a set of rules and/or maxims, the performance of which is claimed to achieve politeness and save interlocutors’ face(s). Due to the many deficiencies in the traditional views on politeness, a new generation of politeness theories has emerged (e.g., Eelen 2001, Mills 2003, Watts 2003). In what follows, I will present a brief account of the post-modern views of politeness.

### 2.4.2 Post-Modern Accounts of Politeness

Post-modern views on politeness deviate from traditional views (see Section 2.4.1) in their pursuit of “a more dynamic approach to politeness” best manifested in a shift from speaker’s intentions to listener’s interpretations (Murata, 2008, p. 7). According to Terkourafi (2005: 240), post-modern theories of politeness share two principles. First, they distinguish between first-order and second-order politeness (i.e., politeness1 and politeness2). The former refers to the common sense of politeness, i.e., how politeness is understood and interpreted by lay people, while the latter is more concerned with the scholars’ understanding and theorizing of the concept, i.e., “how politeness is talked about in pragmatics textbooks” (ibid: 240). Second, post-modern views incorporate social-theoretical insights, particularly, Bourdieu’s (1977, 1991) notion of *habitus* defined as “the set of dispositions to behave in a manner which is appropriate to the social structures objectified by an individual through her/his experience of social

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interaction” (Watts 2003: 274). As Watts et al. (2005) note, post-modern scholars of politeness have taken:

A shift in emphasis from the attempt to construct a model of politeness which can be used to predict when polite behavior can be expected to explain post-factum why it has been produced and towards the need to pay closer attention to how participants in social interaction perceive politeness (xix).

In what follows, I present a brief summary of each theory proposed under postmodernist views of politeness.

2.4.2.1 The Emergence of Relational Work: Locher & Watts

This approach proposes that politeness is best understood as relational work rather than facework or FTA-mitigation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) define relational work as “the work individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others” (p. 9). Unlike traditional accounts of politeness neglecting the concept of impoliteness and rather restricting it to facework, relational work is much broader, as it “includes impolite as well as polite, or merely appropriate behavior [which] is a useful concept to help investigate the discursive struggle over politeness” (p. 9). In this perspective, relational work is not always necessarily geared towards the maintenance of social harmony, cooperation and equilibrium, but is rather centered on “the discursive struggle over politeness1” (Watts, 2003, p. 142). That is, it should be over “the ways in which (im)polite behavior is evaluated and commented on by lay members” (Watts, 2003, p. 9). This approach clearly puts less emphasis on politeness1 in favor of second-order politeness (i.e., politeness2).

Watts (2003) introduces the concept of politic behavior (i.e., appropriate/polite). He defines it as “that behavior, linguistic or non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being
appropriate to the ongoing social interaction” (p. 144). It is consistent with the dispositions of the habitus\(^5\) in accordance with the social features of the situational context. Conversely, what is considered inappropriate by interactants will be regarded/interpreted as impolite. Most crucially, politic behavior is always negotiable during “the interaction, despite the expectations that participants [speakers and hearers] might bring to it” (ibid: 20). In other words, interlocutors will adjust their behavior as needed in the interaction. It follows that utterances (or more accurately linguistic behaviors) should not be labeled as intrinsically polite or impolite because it is up to the participants’ assessment to decide on the appropriateness of the behavior, i.e., polite or impolite (Watts, 2003; Locher, 2006).

Locher (2004) expands on the notion of *habitus* (or the set of socially accepted norms that govern social interactions). She argues, “norms … are not as static rules, but in a flux, shaped, altered and maintained by these same members of society” (p. 85). They can be negotiated and contested. In his investigation of disagreement in a computer-mediated community, Graham (2007) has shown that (im)politeness is attributed to differing interpretations of participants, but “the (active) negotiation of norms of politeness [polite/politic behavior] in this community of practice… give[s] group members an opportunity to (re)negotiate the group identity” (p. 743). Focusing on disagreement in two communities on Japanese bulletin board systems (BBS), Nishimura (2010) argues that (im)politeness has different effects on interactions, depending on the community's implicit norms and the forms in which impoliteness is communicated. Angouri and Tseliga (2010) report that disagreement in two online forums is constructed differently due to different norms. Darics (2010) demonstrates how norms emerge in a workplace community of practice that meets only by means of CMC (from telephone, video

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\(^5\) Habitus is Bourdieu’s (1977, 1991) concept of “the set of dispositions [norms] to act in certain ways, which generates cognitive and bodily practices in the individual … which is acquired through socialization” (Watts, 2003, p. 149).
conferencing, email, message boards, to instant messaging interactions). Bolander (2013) argues that disagreement in personal blogs is decisively shaped by (new) media norms and affordances about types and roles of participation. Drawing on Watts (2003), Shum and Lee (2013) have found that disagreement in two Hong Kong discussion forums reflect participants’ “understanding and evaluation of the posted messages and the interlocutors’ conduct” (p. 71).

Although it has developed to meet the drawbacks of the traditional accounts of politeness, this approach is not without problems. Xie, He & Lin (2005: 445) point out that “Watts’ distinction between politic behaviour and polite behaviour is not clear.” Along these lines, Murata (2008) contends, “it cannot be used for macro level analysis of a whole discourse because its focus is limited to only detail parts of interaction” (p. 9).

As far as the current study, Locher and Watts’ Model of Relational Work was helpful in accounting for the data elicited, it, nonetheless, failed to include non-rude behaviors or forms under the concept of ‘politic’ behavior. Therefore, I argue that the concept of ‘politic’ behavior can be expanded in the current study to include common, non-rude aggressive forms of scolding, embracing advice overtones and implications that the person being scolded should know better.

2.4.2.2 Beyond the Micro-Level: Terkourafi’s Frame-Based Model

Terkourafi (2005: 246) argues that “[p]ost-modern theories of politeness have arisen out of a deep-seated dissatisfaction with traditional theories … by [a] importing insights from social theory into pragmatics, or rather, [b] exporting politeness into the realm of social theory.” Contrary to the traditional and post-modern views, Terkourafi’s model of politeness is data-driven in two aspects: (1) it is grounded in the analysis of a large corpus (approximately 60,000 words) of naturally occurring Cypriot Greek interactional exchanges and (2) it acknowledges norms to the extent that these can be empirically observed and quantitatively analyzed “to
establish regularities of co-occurrence between linguistic expressions and their extra-linguistic contexts of use” (ibid, 2005, p. 247).

Taking a middle ground, Terkourafi proposes a frame-based model of politeness (i.e., politeness2). She defines the notion of “frame” as “the psychological real implementation of habitus” (p. 253) or as Tannen (1993) succinctly puts it “structures of expectation” (p. 15). These structures do not occur in a vacuum, but are rather constructed through personal experiences, which one uses “to predict interpretations and relationships regarding new information, events and experiences” (Tannen, 1993, p. 16). When applied to politeness, “[f]rame-based politeness occurs when an expression is used in a context with which it regularly co-occurs, i.e., when a frame is instantiated” (Terkourafi, 2005, p. 251). In other words, identifying a behavior as (im)polite requires analyzing how certain linguistic behaviors co-occur within a certain context and furthermore recognizing how such norms of politeness are dynamically constructed. In this perspective, politeness is associated with regularity and has two principles: (a) face-constituting and (b) rationality, both of which are seen as individual constructs in Brown and Levinson (1987). However, Terkourafi (2005: 250) sees them as pre-conditioned by societal rationality and she further adds:

They [face-constituting and rationality] are responsible for gearing behavior toward the generation and re-enactment of norms (or, if you prefer, habits) of polite behavior. From this point on, politeness is a matter not of rational calculation, but of habit, and frames (which aim to capture polite “habits”) may be thought of as implementing the Bourdieuan habitus. [emphasis is mine]

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6 A frame is also referred to in the literature as a schema, script, etc. (Tannen, 1993). It is to be noted that the concept of “frame” is not original to Terkourafi. It was long proposed by many other researchers such as Charles J. Fillmore in his seminal work Frame Semantics and the Nature of Language (1976).
In brief, Terkourafi does not conceive of (im)politeness as a property of linguistic expressions but as “regularities in the co-occurrence of linguistic expressions and components extra-linguistic context, which are represented holistically as “frame” (Geyer, 2008, p. 43).

Although it occupies a middle ground between the traditional and the post-modern views of politeness, Terkourafi’s frame-based model has nonetheless been criticized by Culpeper (2010), who casts doubt on its applicability and compatibility to account for impoliteness phenomena. He states:

[I]ndirect experience of impoliteness, especially via metadiscourse, does much to shape what counts as impolite and thus what may be conventionalized as impolite. Such impoliteness metadiscourse is driven not only by the salience of impoliteness, but by the social dynamics of impoliteness itself” (p. 3232).

2.4.2.3 Spencer-Oatey’s Rapport Management Theory of Politeness

In an attempt to offset the Western ethnocentric bias in the aforementioned models, Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002, 2005, 2008) proposes that (im)politeness be addressed in terms of rapport and rapport management, i.e., “the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relationships in interaction” (2000, p. 3) or for short “the management of harmony-disharmony among people” (2002, p. 13). Rather than using face management, she uses the term ‘rapport management’ because “the term ‘face’ seems to focus on concerns for self, whereas rapport management suggests more of a balance between self and other” (ibid: 12). In addition to the management of face, her model has two other components: the management of sociality rights and the management of interactional goals, each of which can be threatened

Following Goffman (1967), Spencer-Oatey defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [herself] by the line others assume he [she] has taken
during a particular contact” (p. 5). It comprises three types: quality face, relational face, and social identify face. Quality face refers to people’s desire to be evaluated positively in terms of personal qualities such as competence (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p. 540), social identity face stands for people’s desire to “acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer…” (ibid) whereas relational face is defined as one’s desire to be evaluated in relation to others (2007, p. 647).

Rejecting Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of negative face, she develops the concept of sociality rights, defined as “fundamental personal [equity rights]/social entitlements [association rights] that individuals effectively claims for themselves in their interactions with others” (2000, p. 14). Interactional goals are of two types: relational and transactional (i.e., task-focused). Spencer-Oatey (2008) argues that these goals “can significantly affect … perceptions of rapport because any failure to achieve them can frustration and annoyance” (p. 17).

As noted above, threats to rapport management can be related to each of the above-discussed components. Unlike Brown and Levinson (1987), threats need not be counterbalanced. Rather, she suggests that interlocutors can have four orientations, which are dynamically negotiated by participants in the interaction (2008: 32): (1) rapport enhancement orientation, i.e., to enhance relationships, (2) rapport maintenance orientation, i.e., to maintain or protect relations, (3) rapport neglect orientation, i.e., to show lack of interest, and (4) rapport challenge orientation, i.e., to impair relations. Choice of each rapport orientation depends on four contextual parameters: interlocutors’ relations, social/interactional roles, activity type and message content. In sum, Spencer-Oatey’s account of politeness is “based on behavioral conventions, norms and protocols” (Spencer-Oatey, 2005:99). She conceives of (im)politeness as “a question of appropriateness” (2000, p. 3). Unlike some of the other approaches, her model
takes into account “cultural differences in ways of managing rapport (2000, p. 41).

Culpeper (2011) contests the suitability of this theory in capturing impoliteness phenomena. Nonetheless, rapport management has been widely quoted and supported in politeness and cross-cultural studies. For instance, López (2008) has shown that the social psychological bases of rapport (face, rights and obligations, interactional goals) are motivating forces for sociocultural behavior and pragmalinguistic choices in the context of medical consultations in Spain and Britain. In L2, Lopez and Cruz (2012) report that learners of English studying tourism do not seem to have serious problems when managing rapport in their interlanguage. Other empirical studies that support the theory of rapport management include Esbensen (2009).

2.4.2.4 Summary

Unlike the traditional views of politeness (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987), postmodern theorists of politeness reject the Gricean framework and consequently emphasize rapport management, “which is at the heart of politeness practices” (Terkourafi, 2005: 241). They reject the premises of speech act theory (Mills 2003: 38), which reduces politeness to single utterances rather than being negotiated over several encounters, and most crucially take politeness1 (rather than politeness2) as their legitimate subject of investigation.

2.5 Disagreement Studies

Compared to other speech acts (e.g., apologies and requests), disagreement has been understudied. Nonetheless, several studies have still been carried out. For ease of exposition, the bulk of research on disagreement will be presented as follows: sub-section (2.5.1) will be dedicated to intracultural studies along with an account of intralingual studies; sub-section (2.5.2) will present an account of intercultural/interlanguage studies on disagreement; and the
final subsection will provide a detailed account of disagreement studies couched from within the perspective of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

2.5.1 Intra-cultural & Intra-lingual Studies

As noted earlier, disagreement has acquired a bad reputation (Myers, 2004) in the literature for being regarded as a “kind of failure between interactants” (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1555). This bad name may have developed due to earlier studies (Saks, 1987 [1973] & Pomerantz, 1984) couched within the perspective of Conversation Analysis (CA). In CA terms, agreeing is a preferred action, while disagreeing is a dispreferred action. In his examination of sequential organization, Sacks (1987) observed a tendency among participants to agree, which he termed as a ‘preference for agreement and contiguity’ (p. 58). ‘Preference for agreement’ refers to participants’ tendency to provide an answer (a second-pair part) that aligns with the projected question (a first-pair part). ‘Preference for contiguity’ means that the second-pair part (i.e., answer) is sequentially placed as soon as possible.

Similarly, Pomerantz (1984) looked at agreeing and disagreeing with assessments, with emphasis on turn shapes. She distinguishes between preferred-action turn shape and dispreferred-action turn shape. The former is structured to display and “maximize occurrences of stated agreement” (p. 64), hence preferred. The latter, however, is dispreferred for being structured to minimize occurrences of stated disagreement” (p. 64), as such requiring the use of mitigation techniques. Based on sequential grounds, agreement, as a preferred action, can be upgraded (e.g., evaluative terms and intensifiers), or evaluated similarly (e.g., “too”). Disagreement, as a dispreferred action, tends to be “delayed or withheld from early positioning
within turns and sequences” (p. 70), prefaced with partial agreement (i.e., token agreement) and/or downgraded via weakened agreement (e.g., *yes … but* kind of structure).

Likewise, in early accounts of politeness (Leech, 1983, Brown & Levinson, 1987 [1978]), disagreements have been seen as face-threatening acts (FTAs) because they are considered to verge on impoliteness and should thus be avoided and/or mitigated in the interest of interlocutors’ face (Sifianou, 2012, p. 1554). The findings of the above-discussed studies have found support in several works. Pearson (1986) reports that agreements occur more frequently than disagreements in naturally taped conversations, where speakers seem to have a general proclivity to agree (Kuo, 1994; Kotthoff, 1993), but still exhibit reluctance and hesitance to express disagreement (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). However, several classic and recent investigations have found that disagreement should not be seen as ‘dispreferred’ or ‘face-threatening’, but may be the norm (to disagree rather than agree) under certain circumstances, which may be highly influenced by such factors as culture and context, as described below.

2.5.1.1 Disagreement & Cultural Context

Work on oral (dis)agreement has also shown that it may be the norm for the participants in a given context. In her examination of conversational styles among New Yorkers of East European background, Tannen\(^7\) (1981) found that it was rather normal for participants to argue, oppose one another and further intensify their opposing behavior. She suggests that the conversational style of Jewish New Yorkers – characterized by fast pace and overlap (two voices talking at the same time) – is used cooperatively as a “way of showing enthusiasm and interest” (p. 138) and further serves the need for involvement. She implies that lack of opposing behavior may be perceived as “evidence of lack of attention” (p. 138).

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\(^7\) See also Tannen’s (2012 [1998]) *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue* for further discussion of her views on conflict and disagreement.
In a similar study of lower-middle class Jewish speakers in Philadelphia, Schiffrin (1984) also reports a preference for disagreement characterized by confrontation, persistent fights for the floor, addition of intensifiers, among others. She contends that arguing and disagreeing serve sociable functions, hence argument as sociability. She defines sociable argument as “a speech activity in which a polarizing form has a ratificatory meaning” (p. 331), which is a defining characteristic of this Jewish community. In sociable arguments, it is not uncommon for interlocutors in this community to contradict, deny and negatively evaluate each other. Although this may be perceived as aggressive by the outsider, she points out those sociable arguments “do not seem to have the serious substance of argument” (p. 329). Speakers do not argue to reach common ground but rather to keep the conversation going. In this sense, disagreement is a preferred vehicle for maintaining solidarity, sociability and intimacy. Schiffrin’s findings are in line with Simmel (1961), who maintains that disagreement/conflict can be a sign of closeness and stable relationships. Schiffrin’s finding support Spencers-Oatey’s concept of sociality rights, defined as “fundamental personal [equity rights]/social entitlements [association rights] that individuals effectively claims for themselves in their interactions with others” (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p. 14).

Further evidence supporting the positive view of disagreement comes from studies conducted in other cultures/languages. Tannen & Kavaka (1992) examined naturally occurring conversations between men and women in Modern Greek. In addition to expressing power, they argue that disagreement creates solidarity among participants through the use of linguistic markers such as address terms, kinship terms, diminutives, and personal analogies. These markers, among others, offset the effects of disagreement. In line with Schiffrin (1984), they point out that taking oppositional stances can be a means of creating involvement “especially if
the opposition is ritual than literal” (p. 31), which is typical of the Greek culture. In a latter publication, Tannen and Kavaka (1993b) show that disagreement in Greek among friends and family members does not necessarily constitute a breach of politeness, but rather signal sociability and intimacy. Investigation opposition in three different contexts, Kavaka (2002) suggests that disagreement constitutes “a social practice that is pervasive and ‘preferred’ because it is expected and ‘allowed’” (p. 1538). Along similar lines, Georgakopoulou (2001) found that disagreements, in informal conversations among young female Greeks talking about the future, are products of contextual exigency and as such they do not wreck interlocutors’ relationships but rather enhance relationships, as the objective is to reach a solution beneficial to the addressee.

In Japanese conversations, Jones (1990) examined three types of discourse: a TV debate show, a casual conversation in a private home, and a conversation by three teachers discussing job-related issues. Contrary to common stereotyping of Japanese interactions, she demonstrates that Japanese interactions display a tendency for disagreement marked by explicit expressions of conflict, and little compromise. However, she notes that the participants rarely exhibited anger. To continue the conversation, the participants either shifted the topic if it became too hotly debated or reframed it as joking.

2.5.1.2 Disagreement & Situational Context

In his analysis of British television news interviews, Greatbatch (1992) has found that disagreements are preferred. This is in tune with Atkins and Drew (1979) who reported that it is rather normal for participants in courtroom settings to respond to accusations with unmitigated denials. In these institutional situations, disagreement is preferred, for agreement might be understood as acceptance of guilt on the part of the accused. Chiu (2008) claims that polite
disagreement in solving group activities “might support both social relationships and micro-creativity” (p. 386).

Couched from within the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics, Angouri (2012) discusses problem solving (PbS) as a major business activity. Drawing her data from a corpus of 45 hours of recording in two different workplaces, she argues that disagreement is rather natural (i.e., unmarked) and is not rapport threatening in either workplace. Contrary to personal attacks (i.e., negatively marked), disagreement in PbS is unmarked as a regular, daily activity in need of the participants’ evaluation to reach a solution or consensus. Reinforced by follow-up interviews and ethnographic observations, she reports that disagreement is further perceived as a normal part of negotiating opposing views and “… nobody seems to perceive the interactions as rapport threatening” (p. 1571). She concludes that disagreements in a PbS meeting “are not only ‘acceptable’ but also typically form an inherent part of any negotiation process … and task oriented event” (p. 1576).

Disagreement has also been studied in various pedagogical contexts. Kotthoff (1993) provides counter-evidence to the negative view of disagreement as a dispreferred action. In her study of German and Anglo-American disputes⁸ (n = 16 dyadic student-lecturer discussions), she finds a preference for disagreement, specifically, once an argument has started, signaled by a first-dissent turn. This increasing level of aggravation, in turn, drives a shift in expectations from saving the addressee’s face to disagreeing and remaining oppositional, for “giving up a position … can also be face-threatening, because it could be interpreted as submissiveness.” (p. 213).

Rees-Miller (2000) examined naturally occurring expressions of disagreement in U.S. university settings. She proposes a classification system of three categories: (1) softened

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⁸ Data were also collected from Chinese learners of German at a Chinese university.
disagreement sub-categorized as (i) positive politeness (e.g., humor, partial agreement) and (ii) negative politeness (e.g., questions, downtoners); (2) disagreement not softened or strengthened (e.g., contradictory statements), and (3) aggravated disagreement (e.g., rhetorical questions, intensifiers). Sixty-two percent of disagreement expressions in the data were softened interestingly by professors to (P→S), rather than by students (S→P), indicating that the parameter of power (P) is not as significant as proposed by Brown and Levinson nor is students’ lack of softened disagreement perceived as face threatening on the part of professors. Severity of disagreement (i.e., rank of imposition [R]) was also found to be less significant as well. Rees-Miller stresses the significance of the pedagogical context in determining the type of strategy selected for expressing disagreement over P and R. She contends that disagreement serves a pedagogical function: professors use it as teaching tool in the elicitation sequence used “to check students’ knowledge or to encourage participation” (p. 1107). As such, the pedagogical context is more significant than face concerns.

Similar patterns are detected in the interactional context of gifted classes in Virginia, USA. Drawing his data from a corpus of 15 hours of naturally occurring interactions, Netz (2013) argues that disagreement “is not inherently face-threatening, but rather needs to be contextualized” (p. 158). He proposes a 5-level scale of categorization: highly mitigated, mitigated, neither mitigated nor aggravated, aggravated and highly aggravated. He finds that the majority of disagreements (75.5%) were initiated by the gifted students. of these, 49% were aggravated and 14 % were highly aggravated, compared to the low frequency of mitigated/highly mitigated speech (18% and 13%, respectively). This constitutes evidence that disagreements are not avoided and also need not be mitigated. He concludes that disagreement does not “undermine solidarity among the interactants [students and teachers]” (p. 157) as indicated by recurrent
laughter, joking and use of endearment terms (e.g., dude). Netz’s findings are in line with Rees-Miller (2000).

2.5.2 Intercultural (Cross-Cultural) Studies

Beebe and Takahashi (1989a, 1989b) compared 15 Americans to 15 Japanese in their realization of disagreement. Supplemented by natural observations, data were collected via a written discourse-completion task compromising several hypothetical situations. The major semantic formulas examined were criticism, suggestion, positive remarks, gratitude, empathy and token agreement. Contrary to common stereotyping, they report that the Japanese participants are more direct and explicit than the Americans when disagreeing with a lower-status person. Unlike the Americans using more positive remarks and fewer explicit criticisms with higher status individuals, the Japanese are reported to use less mitigated speech. The findings of this study were seen as a blow to common stereotypes about Japanese and Americans by demonstrating that the “Japanese do not always avoid disagreement” (p. 215).

Focusing on the relative impact of status and power in the workplace, Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisili (1996) compare Turkish speakers (n = 80) to American English speakers (n = 14) in terms of discourse strategies (semantic and syntactic) used for expressing disagreement. Data were collected via a written discourse completion task supplemented by natural observations. The DCT consisted of two situations: one from a higher to a lower status person and the other from a lower to a higher status person. Responses were analyzed in accordance with Takahashi and Beebe’s (1993) politeness categories (e.g., positive prefaces, softeners, questions, address terms, etc.). The status difference was found to be an important factor among the Americans, but
it was not as such for the Turkish speakers. The authors point out that the Turkish speakers, regardless of status (H → L or L → H), were “more direct and blunt than the Americans” (p. 25). They suggested that the Americans’ indirectness in disagreement might be attributed to the American culture being more concerned with face-saving and individual rights. They also found that the Americans were more perceptive of the social variable of power than the Turkish speakers. Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisili conclude that disagreements are expected and accepted as long as they lead to productivity in the workplace.

In a study on business negotiations between Malay and Japanese speakers, Paramasivam (2007) argues that ‘culture’ is related to the ways in which people tolerate or handle opposing views in interaction. She demonstrates that Malays tend to manage disagreements peacefully, “especially in the context of negotiation, as a result of their emphasis for interdependence and harmony in working relationships” (p. 114). The Japanese showing cooperation perceived the Malays as trying to avoid confrontation. No feelings of discomfort were encountered.

Other cross-cultural studies report on the effect of the social parameter of gender. In her study of disagreement and requests collected via a DCT, Garcia (1989) claims that the Venezuelan females (n = 10) are more confrontational and personal than the American females who tend to employ more non-confrontational and impersonal strategies. Her observations of the Venezuelan females being confrontational were reaffirmed in a latter publication (1999) though on invitation/responses. Contrariwise, Edstrom (2004) finds a considerably large number of non-confrontational strategies of disagreement among the Venezuelan women (n = 14). Basing her work on naturalistic casual conversations along with follow-up interviews, she argues that professional training and personality may influence one’s conversational style and consequently
choice of stylistic devices to express disagreement. She concludes by cautioning against
generalizations without looking into such issues as individual variation (i.e., intra-cultural).

In cross-gender studies, Pilkington (1992) finds that the New Zealand female workers in
her study tend to agree much more than men and most importantly tend to be less direct in their
disagreement compared to the male workers who employ more direct strategies for expressing
their opposing views. In a similar vein, Munro (1987) reports that the Australian women use
more mitigated disagreement, while men tend to be balder and blunt in their choice of
disagreement strategies. Likewise, Makri-Tsilipakou (1991) argues that Greek men usually
exploit strong disagreement without mitigation, whereas Greek women tend to employ mitigated
ones. According to Tannen (1990, 1994, inter alia), such differing behaviors can be attributed to
differing perceptions of disagreement. Women, on the one hand, consider it rapport threatening,
while men find it more acceptable to negotiate status and further establish intimacy.

In contrast, Koczogh (2011) reports that women disagree more frequently than men in her
study of disagreement by speakers of Hungarian in mixed-sex dyads in semi-controlled settings
(e.g., guided conversations, task-based and controlled topics). However, she finds no statistically
significant differences. She notes, nonetheless, that while both men and women show preference
for *contradictory statements* and *partial agreement* strategies, women tend to give/ask for more
reasons and examples, whereas men seem to employ more hedging in their disagreement. This is
in stark contrast to previous literature (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1994; Holmes, 1995; among
others) associating higher frequencies of hedging with women, not men.

The above-discussed studies yield conflicting results in regards to the impact of gender
on disagreement. Some have found that women show preference for agreement, while men tend
to disagree rather frequently. Others have reported that men are more direct than women. Still,
others have maintained that women are more direct than men. Regardless, these conflicting views point to a word of caution: culture and individual variation along with whatever other factors that may be at play cannot and should not be neglected when examining disagreement (cf. Holliday, 1999).

### 2.5.3 Interlanguage Studies

Although relatively less researched in L2 settings, disagreement produced by ESL learners has also been examined from within the perspective of interlanguage pragmatics (also known as acquisitional or developmental pragmatics). Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004) investigated the development of disagreement practices in English L2 conversations. In this one-year longitudinal study, 12 ESL learners were observed while interacting with native speakers of American English. They suggest that development in L2 disagreement can be seen in the sequential organization of learners’ practices for expressing disagreement. They identify four developmental stages: (1) strong disagreements, characterized chiefly by the occurrence of “no”, (2) inclusion of agreement components with disagreement components, (3) postponement of disagreement components within a turn and (4) postponement of disagreement turns within a sequence of turns (p. 218). They conclude by emphasizing the pedagogical value of conversation to learners as “a tool for growth not only in pragmatics, but in oral expression” (p. 223).

Kreutel (2007) analyzed the devices used for disagreeing by 27 ESL learners, representing eight languages and of varying proficiency levels. Data were collected via a written DCT. ESL learners’ responses were compared against responses gathered from 27 native speakers of American English, using the same DCT. She divides features of disagreement into

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9 The majority of participants (19/27) fall under the categories ‘high intermediate’ through ‘high beginner’. It is unclear how students’ level of proficiency was measured for the purpose of this study.
‘desirable features’ and ‘undesirable features’ (cf. Pomerantz, 1984). Desirable features are assumed to be native-like and include token agreement, hedges, requests for clarifications, explanations, expressions of regret and positive remarks. Undesirable features are those of non-native speakers and include message abandonment, total lack of mitigation, use of the performative I disagree, use of the performative negation I don't agree, use of the bare exclamation no and blunt statement of the opposite.

Compared to the native speakers in this study, the ESL learners overused undesirable features more frequently than native speakers. They tended to intensify their disagreement (e.g., blunt statements) and used “impolite expressions instead” (p. 10). The non-native speakers, however, use token agreement more frequently than the native speakers. While expression of regret predominates among the ESL learners, the native speakers rarely made use of this feature probably, because it is “inappropriate when it comes to disagreement” (p.11) among the native speakers. Nonetheless, expressions like “I am sorry, but I do not agree” or “I hate to disagree” are common among American English speakers nowadays; however, they are rather formalistic.

Kreutel introduces additional features, namely, suggestions (desirable), exclamations and lack of initial mitigation (undesirable). She claims that although both groups use exclamations almost equally, the ESL learners often employ them either inappropriately or rudely. Most importantly, while the native speakers employ mitigation devices at the beginning (at sometimes at the end too10), the ESL learners tend to mitigate their disagreement mostly at the end of the utterance, “creating a rude impression even though mitigation was employed” (p. 24).

In short, ESL (or non-native speakers) learners’ expressions of disagreement may be characterized as structurally simpler than those produced by native speakers. In addition, they

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10 This is also known as the ‘sandwiched pattern of mitigation’ (Kreutel, 2007)
may be described as less mitigated and more direct than those of native speakers. Pragmatically, L2 expressions of disagreement may be uttered in the wrong contexts and are often sequentially misplaced (i.e., at the end of an utterance rather than at the beginning). As Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004) point out, non-native speakers of English, nonetheless, show progress over time, facilitated by interactions with native speakers along with explicit teaching of pragmatics (p. 223).

2.5.4 Computer-Mediated Communication Studies

Although there were earlier attempts to investigate computer communication dating back to as early as the 1970s (Joyner & Green, 1970; Bair, 1973; Shapiro & Anderson, 1985; Kiesler, et al., 1985; Selfe & Meyer, 1991; inter alia), it is Susan Herring’s publications (1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, among others) that have popularized CMC-oriented research in linguistics and have furthermore motivated linguists to pay scholarly attention to CMC phenomena. In this section, I present an account of the studies conducted from a CMC research-oriented approach. Attention, however, will be given to asynchronous modes of CMC, particularly, those studies that have investigated the speech act of disagreement.  

2.5.4.1 Preliminary CMC Gender-Based Studies

In her investigation of two online discussion forums (i.e., Linguistlist and Megabyte University), Herring (1993a) has shown that the male and female participants display significant differences in terms of amount, topic and manner of participation. Although the female participants are almost equally represented in both forums, the amount of their participation is minimal (i.e., 30%), while the remaining percentages of participation is dominated by the male participants, as evident by the males’ longer posts/responses. She suggests that “women are discouraged or intimidated from participating” due to receiving fewer responses either from the

11 Examples of synchronous studies include Darics (2010), Schieffelin and Smith (2011), among others.
males or other female participants. She attributes the unequal rate of response to the most powerful status of the male participants in both forums.

As for topic, Herring observes that the men contribute most to discussions of issues followed by informational postings, queries and personal discussions, respectively. The women, on the other hand, are most active in personal discussions followed by queries (e.g., asking advice), and least active in issues and informational postings. She also notes significant differences in the manner of participation on the basis of the rhetorical and linguistic strategies employed. While the women mitigate their assertions, apologize, justify, use questions and support other participants, the men, on contrary, intensify their assertions, self-promote, presuppose, and challenge other forum members along with humor and/or sarcasm. Overall, the men are authoritatively oriented while the women lean towards personal orientation.

Herring (1994) also explored the phenomenon of flaming in nine (non)-academic forums. She argues that the men and women in her study not only have different online communication styles, but also have different values assigned to their styles, i.e., each gender has “different ideas of what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior on the net” (p. 278). In line with her earlier study, she observes that the men post longer messages of contentious/hostile content (i.e., “flames”) along with sarcasm and strong assertions. The women, on the other hand, post shorter messages characterized by overt expressions of agreement, appreciation and support. She notes that such behaviors are not gender-exclusive and there may be some overlap (p. 280). Following Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, she claims that while the women employ both positive (e.g., agreement) and negative (e.g., apologies) politeness, men, in contrast, repeatedly violate both positive (e.g., ad hominem attacks) and negative (e.g., strong assertions) politeness.
To further understand such behaviors, she seeks the forum users’ evaluation of what constitute (in)appropriate behaviors via a ‘netiquette’ questionnaire. The results indicate that both the men and women are generally in agreement. For example, both genders disapprove of flaming, boasting, profanity and the like. Nonetheless, the women are more upset by violations of positive politeness (e.g., sarcasm), while the men are most bothered by violations of negative politeness, i.e., longer posts, which impose on their time and attention (p. 287). She contends that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory does not explain why the men are prone to violating negative politeness norms even though they disapprove of such violations, particularly, flaming. She suggests that the men flame due to “possessing some other value system that overlaps with and outranks considerations of politeness” (p. 288) that assigns greater importance to freedom of expression and firmness of verbal action than to possible consequences to the addressee’s face needs. Herring, however, cautions against gender-related generalizations.

2.5.4.2 CMC Disagreement Studies

Baym (1996) examined (dis)agreement in one CMC-discussion group of Usenet devoted to discussions of soap operas and dominated by well-educated female participants (i.e., 70 %). Drawing her data from the discussion of the soap opera All My Children, she collected a total of 524 messages. Of these 51 were coded as disagreement, 70 as agreement, while the remaining messages ($n = 403$) were classified as neither. Additionally, users were interviewed and responses were collected to two sets of open-ended survey questions. She proposes a categorization scheme consisting of 17 categories including, among others, partial agreement, elaborations, apologies and the like.

The findings of this study indicate that (dis)agreement in this CMC group is not much different from oral conversations and in writing. However, she notes that agreement is easier to
perform, while disagreement is much more complex as it requires more strategic mitigation and explicitness. In contrast to agreement, disagreement is more likely “to have reasoning, to be qualified, to acknowledge the other’s perspective and to be frame as non-offensive” (p. 31). Most significantly, disagreement contains more contradictory assessments and elaborations (about two thirds). She suggests that disagreement is used for functions other than “the interpersonal ones seen in oral and epistolary disagreement” (p. 32). She attributes this novelty in disagreement to the influence of six interrelated factors: medium, context, topic, gender and the social context participants strive to create (p. 36).

Disagreement has also been investigated in connection with (im)politeness and group identity in online communities. In his exploration of the *ChurchList*, Graham (2007) demonstrates that the established norms of this e-mail community (e.g., accurate marking of the content of messages in the subject line) can be contested, negotiated and changed over time. Basing his work on a corpus of over 78 thousand messages, he shows how deviations from the established norms in this CMC community often leads to disagreement and conflict evident in the users’ responses to messages perceived as inappropriate or of impolite intent. However, disagreement gives the community members an avenue to contest norms of (im)politeness and further negotiate their identities and the expectations for (polite/politic) behavior. He maintains that the different expectations and interpretations of (im)polite and politic behavior (Watts, 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2002, 2003) have “a huge impact as well as reflect group identity formations and the demands of the computer medium itself” (p. 757). In short, the norms of (im)politeness are realized according to the rules and perceptions of the online community. This is in line with Weber (2011) who emphasizes the role that disagreement and conflict play in the socialization of newcomers into a Usenet newsgroup for survivors of sexual abuse.
Grahams’s findings have received support in Nishimura (2008, 2010) who compares disagreements along with (im)politeness in two communities on Japanese bulletin board systems (i.e., Channel 2 and Yahoo). Four criteria are used to analyze the collected message: uses/non-uses of honorifics, abusive content, interactional behaviors directed towards others (e.g., requests or commands) and flow of discourse. The findings of this study indicate that although the two communities carry out similar purposes, disagreement and (im)politeness are constructed/perceived differently due to different values, norms and linguistic features. In other words, what is considered appropriate in one online community may be perceived as boorish in the other. Like Graham, she highlights that the online community norms are subject to participant’s perceptions of ongoing events. This lack of uniformity in norms gives the members an opportunity to situate their relations with others and further negotiate their identities.

Angouri and Tseliga (2010) contend that disagreement need not be regarded as a priori negatively marked act in online communities. They examine disagreement in 200 posts collected from two Greek online discussion forums: a students’ forum and a professional academic forum (PA). The two forums share no similarities. The student forum aligns with an informal tone, tolerating colloquial language, while the PA e-community is seriously toned where only formal register is expected. The participants’ acts of disagreement were explicitly marked with special attention to ‘intentional impoliteness’ as perceived and evidenced in the users’ reactions. The findings of this study indicate that both forums are highly confrontational, which is rather natural. Disagreement, and consequently impoliteness, is introduced through the manipulation of particular discourse marker (e.g., [re]). Also, the participants use unconventional spelling and punctuation to express disagreement and to aggravate face-threatening acts as a way of substituting paralinguistic cues in these online communities. Nonetheless, the practices followed
in both forums give different judgments of what constitutes impoliteness. As such, the authors contend that disagreement need not be regarded as a priori negatively marked act.

In line with the above-discussed studies, Shum and Lee (2013), following relational/interactional and discursive approaches, report that disagreements are pervasive in Cantonese online discussion forums and are generally perceived as appropriate. They collected 317 responses from two Hong Kong Internet forums. A two-part questionnaire was administered to 30 browsers of the forum to seek their perception of (im)politeness in the identified disagreements according to the three parameters of the discursive approach: (a) (im)politeness, (b) (in)appropriateness, and (c) positively/negatively marked behavior (Watts, 2003; Locher, 2004, 2006, Locher & Watts, 2005). A 5-point Likert scale was implemented. Additionally, 15 of the 30 participants were also interviewed to gain insight into their meta-pragmatic knowledge of (im)politeness in CMC platforms.

Ninety-nine responses were identified as disagreements and classified into 11 types. These were as follows: giving negative comments, using short vulgar phrases, raising rhetorical questions, making a personal stance, making an ironic statement, cursing, giving opposite opinions, rewording, giving personal experience, giving facts and reprimanding. The majority were direct and unmitigated. A rating of 3 out of 5 was indicated for most of the identified types of disagreement. This suggests that disagreements are perceived as neither polite, appropriate and positively marked nor impolite, inappropriate and negatively marked. Nonetheless, cursing and using vulgar phrases were rated 1 out of 5, indicating they are impolite, inappropriate and negatively marked. Ten out of the 15 interviewees equate (im)politeness with (in)directness. The Spearman correlation conducted shows that the three parameters on the questionnaire affect each other positively. They conclude that CMC disagreements are not uncommon and should be
“subject to the participants’ interpretations of behavior appropriate in an Internet community” (p. 72).

The act of (dis)agreement has also been examined in asynchronous personal/diary blogs. Bolander (2012) studies responsiveness in agreement ($n = 219$) and disagreement ($n = 185$) comments, collected from a corpus of eight personal/diary blogs in Australian and American English. She identifies seven different types of comments in which (dis)agreements are contained (e.g., by reader to blogger post, by reader to comment by reader, by blogger to reader, etc.). She finds that the majority of comments are reader responses to blogger posts with higher frequencies for agreements (58 %) than for disagreements (42 %), suggesting that bloggers (rather than other readers) are favored participants.

Bolander proposes six categories of responsiveness: quoting, naming, pro/noun use, format tying, inside other discourse move clues; and order and participant roles (p. 1615). ‘Naming’ is referring to another by name; ‘quoting’ is the use of quotes taken from the post or a previous comment; ‘format tying’ refers to instances when the speaker “produces an utterance that is connected or “tied” by means of semantic, syntactic, morphemic, or phonological operations to [the] previous speaker’s utterance” (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998, p. 231); ‘order and participant roles’ refers to (a) instances where the order of comments is the main signal that a comment is responding to a post (first comment in a comments section) or a previously written comment and (b) instances where the conversational dominance of a party (predominantly the blogger but also readers). Of these, naming and quoting are the most explicit devices, while pro/noun and format tying are the least explicit ones for signaling responsiveness.

Both types (most explicit and least explicit) are used almost equally by the participants in their responsiveness to (dis)agreements. The difference lies in the remaining two techniques.
‘Inside other discourse move clues’ occurs mostly with agreements, whereas ‘order and participant roles’ is used more frequently with disagreements. Most crucially, she finds that responsiveness requires a greater degree of explicitness, when readers respond to other readers than when they do respond to the blogger(s), the default addressee. The findings of this study suggest that responsiveness to (dis)agreements in CMC environments is not prima facie, but rather is made linguistically explicit probably to avoid misinterpretations by other readers., i.e., expressing disagreement with one comment might imply disagreement with another position previously raised.

A final noteworthy investigation of online disagreements is Langlotz and Locher (2012). They explored how emotions are communicated and displayed in conflictual disagreements and contend that online disagreements are complex and dynamic. Couched within the theoretical framework of relational work (Watts and Locher, 2005), 120 English postings from the commentary section of an online newspaper (i.e., MailOnline) were collected and classified according to the participation framework into agreement, disagreement and extension. Following Baym (1996) and Bolander (2012), an explicit link was required to qualify a comment as an act of (dis)agreement with the article, the author or another reader. Of the 120 postings, 116 were coded as disagreements. The majority of them were directed against the facts and the stories reported on rather than the author or his/her quality of as a reporter.

To delve into emotional display, the concept of indexicality (Ochs, 1992) is invoked since the authors do not have access to physical or visual cues for indexing emotions associated with online disagreements. Langlotz and Locher (2012) propose a categorization scheme of three categories: (1) expression (e.g., exclamations, interjections), (2) implication (e.g., lexical connotations, metaphors) and (3) description (e.g., emotion words). Emotional implication
occurred most frequently (57%) followed by expression (33%) and description (10%). Hence, they argue that the meaning of CMC disagreement has three interacting complex dimensions: conceptual content, relational meaning and emotional evaluation. They claim that such components “cannot be separated in the interpretation of online disagreements” (p. 1604).

As can be seen, some of the findings from the above-discussed studies on disagreement have been carried over to CMC research, while newer ones have emerged.

2.6 Disagreement Taxonomies

Table 4 below provides a list of disagreement taxonomies as proposed by several researchers in their investigation of the speech act of disagreement.

Table 4: Disagreement Taxonomies in Previous Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Categorization System</th>
<th>Focus/Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogancay-Aktuna &amp; Kamisli (1996)</td>
<td>Suggestion, Positive statement, Token agreement, Gratitude, Empathy, Acceptance, Refraining from expressing opinion, Postponement of decision, Positive preface, Softeners, Questions, Mitigating devices, Address terms</td>
<td>Semantic Formulas/Pragmatic Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive 1st person</td>
<td>Partial agreement</td>
<td>Softened disagreement (negative politeness): Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbs of uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagreement not softened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contradictory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal shadowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aggravated disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rhetorical questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal accusatory you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Judgmental vocabulary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Kreutel (2007) | Desirable features: token agreement, hedges, requests for clarifications, explanations, expressions of regret positive remarks. Undesirable features: message abandonment, total lack of mitigation, use of the performative I disagree, use of the performative negation I don't agree, use of the bare exclamation no blunt statement of the opposite. | Semantic Formulas/Pragmatic Strategies |

| Locher (2004) | Implication: Conceptual implications Lexical connotations Metaphors and their stylistic implications Sarcasm Irony Word play Expression: Exclamations Intensification Name calling Verbalization of emotional reaction Smileys Interjections | Semantic Formulas/Pragmatic Strategies/Linguistic Features |
2.7 Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a thorough overview of the literature conducted on the speech act of disagreement. The review of the studies above indicates the following important findings and issues:

2.7.1 Findings

- Although relatively less apparent than other speech acts, expressing disagreement is pervasive in face-to-face communication and occurs in a variety of contexts;

- Earlier empirical investigations and theoretical accounts have considered the act of disagreement as “dispreferred” (Sacks, 1987 [1973], Pomerantz, 1984) or face-threatening/aggravating (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and as such it should be minimized (Leech, 1983);

- Recent theories and investigations, however, have shown that disagreement can no longer be seen a negatively marked behavior, but rather the norm and must be examined in relation to several factors such as culture/frame (Kotthoff, 1993; Georgakopoulou, 2001,
Tannen & Kakava, 2002; Edstrom, 2004; Locher, 2004, Spencer-Oatey, 2008, among others), context (Netz, 2013, Rees-Miller, 2000), purpose (Chiu, 2008), institutional practices (Greatbatch, 1992; Dogancay-Aktuna & Kamisli, 1996; Angouri, 2012, inter alia); participant relationships (Schiffrin, 1984) and many others.

- With the ever-increasing impact of technological advances (i.e., the computer and the Internet), new forms of communication have emerged, one of which has come to be known as computer-mediated communication (CMC);
- The act of disagreement has been studied in CMC environments including discussion forums (Herring, 1993a, 1994; Baym, 1996; Graham, 2007, among others); personal blogs/diaries (Bolander, 2012); instant messaging (Schieffelin and Smith (2011) and the like;
- The findings of CMC-oriented studies support that disagreement cannot be seen as an a priori negative act and further shown that online communities have their own norms which may be contested, negotiated and changed over time;

2.7.2 Issues for further investigation

- While speakers of some languages have been studied, much of the research reviewed above is carried out on native speakers of English or on English as the medium of communication. This brings to mind the issue of ethnocentrism long noted by Wierzbicka (1985) and most crucially emphasizes the need to conduct research in languages other than English. This study responds to this call by researching the act of disagreement in Arabic;
- Although language-oriented CMC research has substantially increased over the last two decades, it is still limited to English and several European and Asian languages/countries.
This research expands its scope by implementing a CMC-oriented approach to investigating disagreement and (im)politeness among speakers of Arabic.

- The current research fills the gap and is further expected to spark further CMC-related studies in Arabic and on speakers of Arabic.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design implemented for this study. It is divided into four sub-sections. It begins with a number of operational definitions of the key terms employed, followed by the research questions tackled in this study. This will be followed by a description of the data collection and corpus construction along with a brief note on ethical considerations. The chapter will end with a description of data collection procedures along with the data analysis plan.

3.2 Operational Definitions

*Arabic speakers* refers to individuals whose mother tongue is Arabic and who are the respective users of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). They do not necessarily associate with a specific variety of Arabic (e.g., Jordanian, Lebanese, etc.). Yet, they tend to use Arabic similarly. *Realization* refers to the semantic formulas, linguistic devices or pragmatic strategies used to perform the speech act of disagreement in CMC. *Disagreement* refers to a posting or a comment that *explicitly* or *implicitly* opposes, negates, contradicts or simply contests the content of the main posting or a prior comment. *Pages* are public profiles on Facebook created by individual users (e.g., prominent religious figures, celebrities, or politicians) or organizational entities (newspapers, NGOs, etc.) suitable for long-term relationships with ‘page fans’, i.e., people who like said pages. *Groups* are public (or private) platforms for hosting active discussions of any topic by a group of individuals with shared interests.
3.3 Research Questions

The present study investigates how Arabic speakers express disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The study has three goals. First, the study attempts to account for the linguistic and pragmatic behavior of the speech act of disagreement as performed by Arabic speakers in online asynchronous communication. The second goal is to examine the effect(s) of the social variable of gender in the realization of the speech act of disagreement among Arabic speakers. The third objective is to determine if the topic of discussion has any effect on the type of disagreement rendered in terms of directness, mitigation (or lack of thereof), and the type of strategies used. More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Arabic speakers express the speech act of disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)?
   1.1 How are word choice and sentence structure used in the expressions of disagreement?
   1.2 How are mitigators and aggravators used in the expressions of disagreement?

2. Are there any differences between Arab males and females in their CMC-oriented realization of the speech act of disagreement?

3. Does topic affect the type of disagreement among speakers of Arabic?

For the linguistic realization of disagreement, I looked for linguistic features/forms that identify the head act of disagreement (the core part of a disagreement sequence which realizes a disagreement independently of other elements), i.e., how disagreement is expressed lexically and syntactically. In other words, I examined the composing parts of the head act: bare negative forms (e.g., “la” (no), “mustahil” (no way; impossible”), “TabSan la” (of course not) etc.), the
use of performative verbs “la ðuwafiq, ðuxalifak” (I disagree) or statement of the opposite. Concurrently, I looked for linguistic features that precede the head act and/or follow it. These are termed as supportive moves, which are the adjuncts to the head act, used to modify the impact or force of disagreement. Supportive moves are of two types: pre-supportive moves (before the head act) and post-supportive moves (after the head act).

At the pragmatic level, I analyzed the various strategies through which the act of disagreement within CMC is expressed during the exchange of ideas. In other words, I shifted focus from linguistic forms to pragmatic functions of such linguistic forms. For instance, I closely examined the use of hedges and whether their various forms carry any pragmatic functions when expressing disagreement.

As for the second research question, the participants’ various linguistic and pragmatic strategies were compared and contrasted to see whether the participants adhere to different styles of dealing with relational work connected with the act of disagreement. I examined how men and women construct their disagreements and consequently their identities (Herring, 1994, 2010, 2013). The complexity of the social factor of gender may be a cumbersome task to do so, especially in qualitative research as in the current research. It was not my attention to argue that men do X, while women do Y in absolute terms. Rather, an attempt was made to provide a glimpse into how Arab males and females differ in their expression of disagreement through capturing any recurrent patterns in the data.

Finally, the topic of discussion was examined to determine if it has any effect on the type of disagreement strategy used in the different Facebook Pages/Groups from which the data were extracted. Topics were divided into politics (POL), religion (REL) and society (SOL). A
comparison and contrast of the similarities and differences between the type(s) of disagreement used for each of the above-mentioned topics is discussed.

3.4 Data Collection and Corpus Construction

The study was based on a large corpus composed of over fifty thousand words extracted from the well-known social networking site (SNS) Facebook (https://www.facebook.com). Boyd and Ellison (2008) define SNSs as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211).

Facebook provide users with many features including, among others, ‘Friends’, ‘Walls’, ‘Groups’, ‘Pages’, ‘Likes’, ‘Photos’ and the like. The choice of Facebook is based on a variety of factors including, among others, the following: (1) Facebook is available in Arabic as one of the major languages, (2) it allow users to post, comment, and reply to prior comments, (3) Facebook is ranked second worldwide (Alexa Internet, 2015); (4) Facebook is highly accessible for Arabic speakers; for example, Facebook is ranked first and third in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, respectively; and (5) Facebook is accessible through phones, which increases the rate of response and consequently chances for collecting robust instances of disagreement. As noted above, SNSs offer the features ‘Pages’ and ‘Groups’. Through Facebook Pages and Groups, one can stay more connected with everything that matters in one’s life—from businesses and public

\[12\] Facebook is available in 70 languages, while Twitter is available in only 27 languages.

\[13\] Google is ranked first (Alexa Internet, 2015).
figures to common interests and hobbies. However, it is important to understand the differences between *Pages* and *Groups*.

Pages, much like a friend’s profile, allow public figures, businesses and other entities to have an authentic and public presence on social networking websites. By default, Pages are visible to everyone on the Internet. One can connect to these pages by becoming a fan and then automatically receive updates in the News Feeds and further interact by responding to posts and comments as well as to other fans’ posts and comments.

Groups, on the other hand, are the platform for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion. They allow people to come together around a common cause, issue or activity to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos and share related content. Groups range widely, from members of a religious group or athletic team organizing activities to serious topics on politics and world events or even more lighthearted themes such as marriage, love, lifestyle, studying overseas, and many others.

Once a group is created by a certain user (i.e., administrator or moderator), other online users join and become members of the group. As with Pages discussed above, new posts by a group are included in the News Feeds of its members and members can interact and share with one another within the group. Once a post has been published on the group wall either by the moderator or one of the members via the moderator, members are directly or indirectly asked to express their opinion or simply comment on the issue raised. Members usually have one full day to respond to the post and this period may be extended if the post is attracting a lot of responses/comments. Unlike Pages, Groups may be public for everyone on the Internet to join or kept private whereby administrator’s approval or invitation-only access is required.
The selection of the Facebook ‘Pages’ and ‘Groups’ was determined by three major criteria: (1) popularity of the Page/Group as indicated by the number of the subscribers/fans (i.e., at least one thousand fans/members), (2) nature of the topics raised in each page (controversial vs. non-controversial), and most crucially, (3) frequency of response to each posting indicated by the number of replies and comments accumulated. Controversy of topics refers to the degree of subjectivity associated with the topic raised. For instance, discussing the topic of religion in Muslim countries is considered less controversial compared to discussing the topic of politics. In other words, religion would probably yield less disagreement while politics would likely attract more disagreement. Disagreement on religion-related topics would possibly spark further disagreement (criticisms, attacks, irony, etc.) from other group members than politics-related issues would. As for frequency of response, preference was given to postings that attract a greater number of replies of no less than 30 responses.

It is to be noted that I was a subscriber to the selected groups and pages so as to be able to obtain the data necessary for this study. As noted above, ‘pages’ are visible to everyone on the Internet, while some administrator’s approval may be required to join a group. I joined only public groups. No data from closed or private groups were used for the purposes of this research. I frequently visited the selected Facebook Pages/Groups during a period of 90 days from February to May of 2016. I did not interact with other subscribers, nor did I post or comment on the Page/Group ‘wall’. I only read through the conversational exchanges, observed linguistic patterns and made notes about the conversational rituals observed and the linguistic markers employed by the page fans and group subscribers.

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations
Following Maricic (2005), Langlotz and Locher (2012) and many others, it was considered ethically acceptable to use the data for this analysis, as the networking site Facebook is part of the public domain. (Cf. Ess & the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) ethics working committee, 2002: 5). The proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to meet institutional practices followed at Ball State University. The Ball State University IRB approved the proposed study.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

To answer the research questions outlined above, the following procedures were followed. First, a number of Facebook Pages/Groups \( n = 19 \) were selected for the purposes of this investigation. Second, different discussion topics were selected for identifying possible instances of disagreement. These were divided according to their degree of controversy in three topic areas: Religious (R), Political (P) and Social (S). Third, the Facebook Page/Group members’ responses (i.e., potential instances of disagreement) were tagged for the following features: (1) gender of the poster, (2) country of the poster (3) dialect of the poster, and (4) the name of the person only for ease of reference. Fourth, the responses were then classified as either agreement, disagreement or off-topic. Both instances of agreement and off-topic comments were excluded, as they were seen as falling beyond the scope of this study.

To facilitate the organization and elicitation of raw data, the members’ CMC responses were transferred into a database composed primarily of Microsoft word documents, each of which has been formatted into a table of seven columns as follows: (1) the serial number of comment, (2) name of the poster, (3) the actual comment \( as \ is \), (4) the poster’s country (C), (5) the poster’s gender (G), (6) the dialect used (D) and finally (7) the speech act identified (SA),
whether an instance of disagreement, agreement, or off-topic. Table 1 below presents the general architecture of the table template used for data collection:

Table 5: Template Used in Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Poster</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*C = Country; G = Gender; D = Dialect (Standard vs. Vernacular); SA= Speech Act

Once transferred into the above-exemplified template, the collected data were then printed off into hard copies for data analysis purposes; that is, to locate instances of disagreement (if any). As noted above, the responses were then divided into agreements and disagreements. Instances of agreement were not considered and were excluded from the data analysis. Additionally, off-topic comments (i.e., irrelevant comments that are neither agreements nor disagreements) were also excluded as well.

It is should be pointed out that the country of the poster is public for the most part, but is not always identifiable. However, several clues were used to determine the country of the poster, chief among them are the location of the Facebook Page/Group and personal reference indicators on the part of the commentator/poster (e.g., my country Syria is bleeding). Other helpful signs include the member’s profile picture (e.g., one’s country flag in the profile/display photo), list of friends, and the like. Instances where no clues could have been identified were eliminated altogether and were no longer considered for analysis. Determining the type of Arabic used was a much easier task. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was easily spotted due to the many distinguishing features associated with MSA including, among others, case (i.e., nominative, accusative and genitive), grammatical gender (masculine and feminine), number (singular, dual
and plural), (in)definiteness and the like. As for regional varieties, Habash (2010), Versteegh (2014) and Zaidan & Callison-Burch (2014) claim that spoken Arabic may be broken down into the following regional dialect groups: Maghrebi (literally Western or Moroccan), Egyptian, Levantine, Gulf, and Iraqi, each of which was indexed by certain linguistic textual features specific to each dialect only at the morphological/syntactic level, since no access to phonological features was available.

3.6 Data Analysis

The naturally occurring identified instances of disagreement were analyzed qualitatively, supported by descriptive statistics. The posters’ comments were analyzed to determine counts, frequencies and percentages for cross-classification purposes, e.g., to determine which disagreement strategy (or set of strategies) has the highest/lowest statistical frequency in terms of linguistic choices (i.e., lexical categories and syntactic constructions), gender (i.e., male vs. female), and country/dialect (i.e., Modern standard Arabic vs. various Arabic dialects). Qualitatively, the posters’ online responses were coded, categorized and analyzed in consideration of the taxonomy of disagreement proposed by Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) from within the perspective of social psychological pragmatics. They proposed an elaborate analytical scheme for classifying the conversational expression and the interactional order of disagreements. They suggest that disagreements – termed “arguing exchanges” (p. 227) – are often constructed in a tripartite turn-structure (T1-T3), described below as follows:

T (1): Speaker A makes a claim/proposition;
T (2): Speaker B disputes claim/proposition in T 1;
T (3): Speaker A disagrees with B’s T2 claim/response by either supporting the original T1 claim or directly contesting the T2 disagreement.

In the current study, T (1) was invested in the original post published on the Facebook Page/Group from which data were extracted. The Page/Group fans’ and members’ responses (or comments) consequently constituted T (2). As stated earlier, responses identified as off-topic comments or agreements were excluded and were no longer subjected to analysis, as they fall outside the scope of this study. Examples of T (3) were minimal and were also eliminated from the current study. Accordingly, only the utterances in T (2) were explored to answer the aforementioned research questions. In line with Muntigl & Turnbull (1998), the speakers’ utterances in T2 are the most significant because, by definition, they constitute acts of disagreement. These can be of five types, with varying degrees of gravity (229-233):

a) Irrelevancy Claim (IC): previous claim is not relevant to the discussion at hand.

b) Challenges (CH): a speaker questions an addressee’s prior claim and demands that addressee provide evidence of his/her claim (p. 230).

c) Contradiction (CT): a speaker contradicts by uttering the negated proposition expressed by the previous claim.

d) Counterclaim (CC): a speaker proposes an alternative claim that does not directly contradict nor challenge other’s claim.

e) Act Combinations: two types of disagreement are combined, the most frequent being CT followed by CC.

As noted earlier, these five types of disagreement vary in their degree of aggressiveness. ICs and CHs are considered the most aggravating for minimizing further development in the process of negotiation, whereas CT, CC and act combinations are the least aggravating because
they more closely focus on solving the disagreement, allowing for further development in the interactional negotiation of the disagreement. While Muntigl and Turnbull’s scheme of classification was a good starting point for understanding the interactional and discursive nature of disagreement, it nonetheless failed to account for all types of disagreements in light of the corpus data. Accordingly, other classification schemes previously outlined in CHAPTER TWO (Section 2.7) were also considered in coding the data and a new classification scheme was proposed to be introduced below.

3.6.1 Coding Scheme and Theoretical Framework

As this study is data-driven, no theoretical framework was initially adopted for the purposes of this study. Rather, several theories of politeness were considered including the following classical accounts of politeness (e.g., Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987) and postmodern views of politeness such as Locher & Watts’ (2005) and Watts’ (2003) Model of Relational Work; Terkourafi’s (2005) Frame-Based Model and Spencer-Oatey’s (2000, 2002, 2005, 2008) Rapport Management Theory of Management. These accounts were discussed in Section 2.4 of Chapter Two under Politeness Research.

The collected data were examined and it became evident that the classical accounts of politeness (e.g., Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987) were not quite a good fit to account for the data elicited for a variety of reasons. First, the classical accounts of politeness place too much emphasis on the concept of face, which is not a major characteristic of Computer-Mediated Communication and a rather questionable concept in today’s faceless and anonymized communication. In other words, more weight is given to the individual rather than the process of interaction, which should be the focus of any politeness account. Second, the traditional accounts
equate and synonymize politeness with a set of linguistic structures/strategies/norms, the presence of which renders polite speech and simultaneously the lack of which implies impolite speech.

Third, the traditional view of politeness does not address the notion of impoliteness. Provided that various forms of impoliteness surfaced in the corpus, Brown and Levinson’s Theory of Politeness was deemed inadequate to account for a considerable amount of the data. The corpus showed many instances (single or multi-unit utterances) that lacked linguistic aspects of politeness specified by Brown and Levinson’s Theory of Politeness, but nonetheless were still appropriate in the established context of disagreement. Therefore, other accounts of politeness (i.e., Relational Work) were considered. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that some of the strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson were acknowledged and utilized.

3.6.2 Relational Work Revisited

Locher and Watts’ (2005, 2008) Model of Relational Work (henceforth RW) was deemed as the most adequate theoretical framework to account for the data in this study. First, the model does not reduce politeness to a set of isolated linguistics expressions subject to the sole interpretation of the researcher with no regard to the interpretation of the layman. Second, the model covers more than the two ends of the spectrum (politeness and impoliteness), but also what goes on in between the two extremes (e.g., politic and overpolite). Third, the model does not assume the universality of politeness, but advocates for cultural-specific practices. And finally, the model looks in detail “at the context, the speakers, the situation and the evoked norms” (Locher, 2004, p. 90).

As discussed in Section (2.4.2.1), RW refers to the “work individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others” (Locher and Watts, 2005, p. 10). It hinges on the concept
of politic behavior (i.e., appropriate/polite), which includes “linguistic or non-linguistic behavior(s)], which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction” (Watts, 2003 p. 144) in harmony with the social features of the situational context. It follows that what is considered inappropriate by interactants will be regarded/interpreted as impolite/inappropriate. Implied is the assertion that politeness (or lack thereof) is contextual and is not inherent in certain linguistic expressions or behaviors, the lack of which renders impoliteness, rudeness and so on. This sets the model of RW in stark contrast with other models which reduce politeness to a set of linguistic devices/mechanisms. The basic architecture of the model is represented in Figure 2 below:

![Figure 2. Relational Work (Watts, 2005: xliii)](image)

As Figure 2 above shows, the spectrum of RW is not restricted to only polite/impolite behaviors, but also incorporates other types:

1. impolite and inappropriate (non-polite = negatively marked);
2. non-polite but appropriate (politic = unmarked);
3. polite and appropriate (politic = positively marked);
4. overpolite and inappropriate (non-politic = negatively marked).
Although Locher and Watts’ (2005, 2008) theoretical framework was helpful in accounting for the data elicited, it nonetheless failed to (i) include non-rude behaviors or forms under *politic* (see definition above) such as MILD SCOLDING (MS), and (ii) specify which linguistic (or non-linguistic) behaviors are polite, politic or impolite or alternatively which linguistic (or non-linguistic) behaviors are positively marked, negatively marked, or neither. Nonetheless, these shortcomings can be easily salvaged and should not alter its essence nor will it render different implications that what was originally proposed and intended in the model. The following modifications to the theory of RW are proposed.

### 3.6.3 A Modified Theoretical Framework of Relational Work

The proposed modification to the theoretical framework of RW is twofold. First, the concept of ‘politic’ behavior is expanded to include common, non-rude, non-aggressive forms of scolding with advice overtones and implications that the person being scolded knows better. This modification includes MS as a politic behavior among the Arabic speakers (further clarification on this will be provided in Chapter Four). Second, the other suggested modification is basically to point out which of the pragmatic strategies identified in subsection (4.3.4) can be regarded as polite, politic and impolite/overpolite or alternatively which strategies are positively marked, unmarked, or negatively marked. The corpus of this study revealed several linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors (e.g., spitting) that are polite, politic and impolite. No overpolite utterances were observed. The proposed modification is presented in Figure 3 below:
As Figure 3 above shows, the proposed classification scheme builds on that of Muntigl & Turnbull (1998) by integrating the four original strategies (IC, CH, CT, CC) introduced in their own investigation of face-to-face disagreements, yet identifies and adds six additional strategies (VA, SP, MA, VI, MS, EX) that are of significance to understanding disagreements among Arabic speakers. Theoretically, the scheme specifies which disagreements are positively marked (i.e., polite), politic or appropriate (i.e., unmarked) and negatively marked (i.e., impolite) in accordance with Locher and Watts’ (2005) Model of Relational Work.

Politic behavior constitutes the unmarked form of disagreement, which is appropriate to the situation. In the data, politic disagreements appeared in the following strategies: MILD SCOLDING, CHALLENGE, SUPPLICATION, EXCLAMATION, CONTRADICTION and IRRELEVANCY CLAIMS. The use of these strategies is guided by the posters’ knowledge of the context of the discussion and the understanding that no need for offense to be taken. Polite disagreements manifested themselves in COUNTERCLAIM and ARGUMENT AVOIDANCE. They are regarded polite because they attend to the face of the other party by providing
alternatives, explanations, suggestions or refrainment from response to the matter under discussion. Impolite behavior in disagreement was materialized in VERBAL ATTACK and VERBAL IRNOY. Both attack the other party’s face and lead to create disharmony among the interactants.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the results of this study. It is divided into three sections to answer the three research questions. It begins with a description of the corpus, followed by linguistic forms and pragmatic strategies used to express disagreement in the data. Next will be an examination of the effect of gender on disagreement, followed by the effect of topic of disagreement.

4.2 General Overview of the Corpus

The corpus compiled for this investigation consisted of approximately fifty-thousand words \((n = 50,964)\) of original Arabic texts in the form of posts/comments, extracted from 19 Facebook Pages/Groups devoted to discussion of religious, political and social/cultural issues touching the lives of Arabic speakers in various parts of the Arab world. The actual contents of the corpus, i.e., topics and sub-topics included, serve as analysis categories for this thematic qualitative analysis endeavor. The corpus is not exhaustive, but it allows insight into how Arabic speakers express disagreement. Table 6 below presents the contents of the corpus:

Table 6: List of Facebook Pages/Groups Used in the Construction of the Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Topic Selected</th>
<th>No. of Words</th>
<th>Percentage of Category</th>
<th>Overall Percentage of Corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S.S.N. Sham</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sky News Arabia</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>RT Radio</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>8 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zaman Al-Wasl</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>2123</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dr. Faisal Al-Qasem</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>3971</td>
<td>26 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Akhbarak</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>6463</td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-Total (15227)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Palestine Online</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 6 above, three topic areas are represented in the corpus: political (POL), religious (REL) and social (SOC). Each category (or topic area) is further divided into several sub-topics, each of which constitutes only a single post on Facebook Pages and Groups. The POL category constituted 30% of the corpus (n = 15,227 words), and is primarily concerned with past and current events affecting Arabic-speaking countries at the international, regional and sub-regional levels. Examples of the political category include, but are not limited to, Egypt’s internal affairs, Syria’s current circumstances, Lebanon’s political party Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia’s relations with neighboring Arabic countries, Iran-Arab relations, the rise of ISIS, the United States involvement in the Middle East, and so on. Appendix I presents a short sample of the political category.

The POL category consisted of 17,068 words, which made up 33% of the overall size of the study corpus. Although the Middle East embraces all three monotheistic religions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam), all posts collected for the purpose of this study revolved around
Islam, which is the most widely followed religion in the Middle East. Sub-topics incorporated under this category include highly contested ones, such as the divisive nature between the two main sects of Islam (i.e., Sunni and Shi’a), Islamic religious groups (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood), scientific miracles in the Qur’an, women veiling (i.e., the hijab), and so forth. Appendix II provides a sample of the religious category (R).

Unlike the above-described categories primarily concerned with politics and religion respectively, the SOC category is much wider in scope due to the wide-ranging variety of sub-topics that are not otherwise incorporated under the first two topic areas of politics and religion. It included well-known sub-topics ranging from man-woman relationship/status in society and marriage to the rapidly cost of living and street harassment in the Middle East. This category constituted the largest portion the corpus (37%) at a total of 18,669 words. Appendix III provides a sample of this category. Figure 4 below presents the percentages of the three topic areas selected for this study:

![Figure 4. Distribution of Corpus Topics: Social, Political and Religious](image)

4.2.1 User Demographics of the Corpus

The corpus of this study provides important demographics of the Arabic language users. As outlined in chapter three, the data collected were tagged for the following demographic
features: (1) gender of the poster, (2) country of the poster and (3) dialect of the poster. These will be outlined below as far as each area topic is concerned.

4.2.1.1 Gender

In this study, gender refers to the sex of the commentators as being male or female, as indexed by several clues such as the name of the poster/commentator or how they are referred to by other members of the Facebook Page or Group. As Table 7 below shows, 68.4 % (n = 957) of the identified disagreements were expressed by the males and the remaining 36.1 % by females.

Table 7: Overall Distribution of the Demographic Parameter of Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>68.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.2 Country

The corpus under investigation also provides the country of the commentators and/or posters. As Figure 5 below shows, a total of 21 Arabic-speaking countries makes up the so-called ؤل-وَتَن ؤل-عَرَبِي (Arabic for the Arab World):

Figure 5. Map of the Arab World (ют-وَتَن ؤل-عَرَبِي).
However, only 19 countries were observed to have contributed to the content of the corpus. No participation was observed from Somalia and Djibouti possibly because Arabic is a co-official language along with other tribal languages. Table 8 below presents the list of the participating countries along with contribution percentages to the overall corpus:

Table 8: List of Arabic-Speaking Countries Observed in the Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Frequency (F)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>48.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>66.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>76.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>81.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>87.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>90.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>92.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>93.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>94.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>95.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>96.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>97.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>98.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>98.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>99.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>99.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>99.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>99.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1400</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 8 above, Egypt had the highest percentage of contribution to the overall size of the corpus with a total of 685 occurrences, constituting approximately half of the corpus (48.9%). This is consistent with the fact that Egypt is the largest Arabic-speaking country of the Arab World in terms of population estimated at 82 million per the World Bank (World Bank, 2013). The second highest percentage was contributed by Jordan (17.4%), followed by Syria (9.7%) and Iraq (5.9%). Both Palestine and Morocco ranked fifth and sixth with a total of 72 (5.1%) and 47 (3.4) disagreements, respectively. The Arab countries of the
Gulf (i.e., Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) altogether had an overall 3.5 percent of contribution at 44 disagreements. The remaining 5.91% was contributed by participants from Algeria ($n = 21$), Sudan ($n = 16$), Yemen ($n = 16$), Tunisia ($n = 13$), Lebanon ($n = 12$), Libya ($n = 6$), and Mauritania ($n = 2$).

As for individual country contribution to the three topic areas of the corpus, Egypt had the highest contribution to both the POL and REL categories of the corpus at 425 (30.4%) and 233 (16.6%) identified instances of disagreement, respectively. However, Egypt had only 27 (1.9%) disagreements in the SOC category of the corpus. This is in line with the current circumstances the State of Egypt has been going through, best characterized by the rise and rapid fall of President Mohammed Morsi, of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the military takeover of the new president, General Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. In light of such circumstances, it is quite natural that most Egyptians would be engaged in political and religious topics rather than social ones.

The second highest contribution to the POL category was reported from Syria ($n = 68$) followed by Jordan ($n = 35$) and Iraq ($n = 32$), all three of which have been witnessing similar conditions, especially Syria and Iraq emerging as the birthplace of ISIS and Jordan being the closest country to both Iraq and Syria.

The highest individual country contribution in the SOC category was supplied by Jordan at a frequency of 167 (11.9%) disagreements, followed by Syria ($n = 36$), Iraq ($n = 35$), and Egypt ($n = 27$), while the remaining occurrences are distributed unequally among other Arabic-speaking countries. Jordan’s higher frequencies in the SOC category of the corpus can be attributed to its economic and political stability and religious tolerance, where religion and politics are of less significance to the layman. These conditions have made Jordanians shun away from political and religious topics and invest more time in discussing socially related issues such
as marriage and the like. Table 9 below presents the cross-tabulation of Arabic-speaking countries with all three area topics of the corpus:

Table 9: Distribution of Country Contribution Cross-Tabulated with Corpus Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>612</strong></td>
<td><strong>434</strong></td>
<td><strong>354</strong></td>
<td><strong>1400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.3 Dialect

The demographic feature of dialect relates to the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or the local varieties (VER) spoken by the online users of the different countries of the Arab World represented in the corpus of this study. As pointed out in Section 3.5 of Chapter Three, MSA is an umbrella term, representing a version of Classical Arabic (also known as Qur’anic Arabic), which is the official language of education, government, and most importantly, media (radio broadcasts, news reporting, etc.). As previously mentioned, the POL category of the
corpus had 612 disagreements, 389 (63.6%) of which were expressed in vernacular varieties, while the use of MSA constituted only 36.4% \( (n = 223) \) as shown in Figure 6 below:

![Figure 6. Use of MSA and VER in the Political Category.](image)

The REL category of the corpus had 434 disagreements. As Figure 7 below shows, 219 of the 434 identified instances of disagreements (50.5%) were realized in MSA, while the remaining 215 (49.5%) were in the vernacular varieties of the participating countries. The higher percentages of MSA over the VER varieties in this category can be primarily attributed to the fact that MSA is the direct descendant of Classical Arabic, which the liturgical language of Islam.

![Figure 7. Use of MSA and VER in the Religious Category.](image)
The SOC category of the corpus was similar to the POL category in that there is more VER than MSA. Of the 354 identified naturally occurring instances of disagreement, only 121 (34.2%) were realized in MSA, while the majority ($n = 233; 68.8\%$) were performed in the VER varieties of Arabic. The same results are reported in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Use of MSA and VER in the Social Category.

Overall, the use of VER (59.8%) was more frequent than the use of MSA (40.2%) throughout the entire corpus as shown in Figure 9 below:

Figure 9. Overall Frequency of Dialect Usage
4.2.1.3 Gender and Dialect Cross-Tabulated

Gender (male vs. female) was cross-tabulated with dialect (MSA vs. VER) to see the joint distribution of these two variables in the three topic areas of the corpus. In other words, cross-tabulation was used to see which language variety (MSA vs. VER) was more dominant among the females and males in the three categories integrated in the corpus. As Figure 10 below demonstrates, both the males and females used more VER than MSA almost equally in the topic area of politics. Of the 464 disagreement expressed by males, 295 (63.6%) occurrences were in the VER varieties of the participating countries, while the remaining 169 (36.4%) were in MSA. Similarly, the females used more VER (63.5%) than MSA (36.5%) in political-related posts.

![Figure 10. Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Dialect in the Political Category.](image)

Slightly different results were obtained in the topic area of religion. As reported earlier (see Figure 9 above), the use of MSA was more frequent than VER varieties, at 50.5% and 49.5%, respectively. However, it was the females that used more MSA (53%) than VER (45%). The males, on the other hand, used both MSA and VER equally at 50%, respectively. Figure 11 below presents the cross-tabulation of gender and dialect in the topic area of religion:
Figure 11. Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Dialect in the Religious Category.

As can be seen from Figure 11 above, the females used more MSA (n = 38) than VER (n = 34) in the topic area of religion. Although this is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 (1, N = 434) = .185, p = .667$), it, nonetheless, shows a gender proclivity among the females to adhere to the standard form of the language. As for the males, 181 occurrences (50%) were delivered in MSA, whereas the other 181 instances (50%) were also realized in the VER varieties of the participating countries.

The SOC category of the corpus had conflicting results. As previously noted, this category of the corpus is female-dominated in comparison to the other two topic areas under investigation. As Figure 12 below shows, of the 223 disagreements performed by the females, 183 instances (82%) were realized in the VER varieties, while only 40 instances (18%) were performed in MSA. Interestingly enough, the males used more MSA (61.8%) than VER (38.2%). Of the 131 naturally occurring identified disagreements performed by the males, 81 instances were realized in MSA, while only 50 occurrences were delivered in VER.
Overall, the occurrences of VER in the three main categories of the corpus (POL, REL & SOC) were higher than those in MSA, when cross-tabulated with the demographic feature of gender as shown in Table 10 below:

**Table 10: Overall Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Dialect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSA</td>
<td>VER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>563 (40.2%)</td>
<td>837 (59.8%)</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 12. Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Dialect in the Religious Category.*
4.3 Anatomy of Computer-Mediated Disagreements

Disagreements were examined in terms of the following features: (i) how they are lexically and syntactically represented in the data and (ii) their illocutionary force (i.e., the communicative action). These levels of analysis may sometimes overlap and may not necessarily be described separately. In what follows, I present a description of the linguistic and pragmatic realization of the disagreement data. The analysis is divided as follows. In section (4.3.1), I describe the elements of the act of disagreement as found in the data. Section (4.3.2) provides an account of the lexical items used in the expression of disagreement. Section (4.3.3) identifies the most common syntactic constructions and grammatical categories found in the disagreements. The final section (4.3.4) presents a proposed taxonomy of the pragmatic strategies used to voice disagreement in the data.

4.3.1 Elements of CMC Disagreements: Mitigators and Aggravators

The data showed that the utterances in T (2) are typically preceded by certain linguistic features and are often followed by similar or different linguistic features. These are termed as supportive moves, which are the adjuncts to the head act, used to modify the impact or force of disagreement (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Supportive moves are of two types: pre-supportive moves (before the head act) and post-supportive moves (after the head act). In the current study, the pre-supportive moves and the post-supportive moves were used by the Arabic speakers interchangeably. That is, a pre-supportive move, at one place, appeared as a post-supportive move at another place and vice versa. Because of interchangeability, supportive moves will not be elaborated upon in terms of their discoursal location, but rather in terms of their illocutionary force serving as either mitigators or aggravators to the head act. The schematic representation in
Figure 13 below presents the overall architecture of CMC disagreements as found among the Arabic speakers:

4.3.1.1 Mitigation of CMC Disagreement

The linguistic concept of mitigation has been defined variously in the literature. Fraser (1999 [1980]: 334) views mitigation as a device used “to ease the anticipated unwelcome effect.” He associates mitigation with the linguistic phenomenon of politeness in that it “only occurs if the speaker is polite [but not the other way around].” He further contends that mitigation is not a speech act nor is it to be confused with hedging although “hedging words can contribute to creating a mitigating effect” (p. 334). He proposes two types of mitigation: self-serving and altruistic. The former is driven by fear of causing self-damage), while the latter by causing damage to others. Accordingly, the mitigation of disagreement is of the second type primarily driven to avoid damage to the other party.

Building on Fraser, Holmes (1984) defines mitigation as a type of attenuation that can only be understood as the exact opposite of boosting, both of which are used as modifiers of illocutionary force. To her, mitigation thus reduces any anticipated negative effects of speech acts. Similarly, Caffi (1999) describes mitigation as the upgrading or downgrading of
interactional variables, which influences the distribution of rights and obligations in that “it reduces risks for participants at various levels, e.g. risks of self-contradiction, refusal, losing face, conflict, and so forth” (p. 883). In this relation-oriented view of mitigation, she proposes three different tiers of mitigation: proposition (‘bushes’), illocution (‘hedges’), and utterance source (‘shields’). For other theoretical accounts on mitigation, please see Brown and Levinson (1987), Martinovski (2006), Schneider (2007), Schneider (2010), Thaler (2012), among others.

Building upon the above-discussed definitions, mitigation in the study refers to a distinct set of linguistic devices used by the Arabic speakers to soften the blow of the oppositional speech act of disagreement. As Table 11 below shows, only 242 (17.3%) disagreements were mitigated, while the majority (n = 1158) were non-mitigated, constituting 82.7% of all the data in the corpus.

Table 11: Distribution of Mitigated Disagreements in the Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-mitigated</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigated</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is in line with Locher’s and Watts’ (2005) observation that non-mitigated disagreements constitute the unmarked form in general. Locher and Watts argue that non-mitigated disagreements are neither polite nor impolite, but politic, whereas the mitigated ones constitute the specifically polite form of disagreement. They claim that conflictual interactions (e.g., disagreements) do not necessarily require mitigation to be considered politic defined as “that behavior, linguistic or non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction” (p. 144). In other words, no offense is generally taken because the content of the disagreement is neither aggressive nor impolite. It is usually unmarked and is
rather appropriate to the situation. The above-reported percentages are similar to Netz (2012) who reports low frequencies of mitigated disagreements (31%), compared to 63% non-mitigated or aggravated disagreements.

The data showed that the Arabic speakers mitigated their CMC disagreements via the implementation of the linguistic devices outlined in Table 12 below. The list represents the most commonly used mitigators found in the corpus.

Table 12: Distribution of Mitigation Devices in CMC Disagreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Mitigation</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address Terms</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedging</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Group/Solidarity Marker</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Downgraders (softeners, cajolers)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Remarks</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed Negation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the Passive Voice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexically Euphemized Expressions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized Opinion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement Marker (yes, true) + Coordinator (but)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Device Combinations (any of the above)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>242</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1.1.1 Terms of Address

Terms of Address (henceforth TAs) had the highest frequency of occurrences \((n = 85)\), which constituted 35% of all forms of mitigation. Oyetade (1995) defines TAs as words or expressions used in interactive, dyadic and face-to-face situations to designate the person being talked to while talk is in progress. More succinctly, TAs are “substantives and adjectives which designate interlocutors or refer to them in some other way” (Braun, 1988, p.9). TAs appeared in different forms including, but are not limited to, personal pronouns, first and last names, kinship terms, titles, terms of endearment/intimacy, and the forms of address that correspond to the
English Mr. and Mrs. The distribution of TAs along with representative examples is given in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Distribution of Address Terms in CMC Disagreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔanta (MASC) masculine; ʔanti: (FEM)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite Forms of Personal Pronouns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>həDertak (your presence); dzna:bak (your side/presence)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First (last) Names</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fai: Sal (Faisal/Faysal); Al-Qassem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship/Familial Terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔaxi (my brother); ʔil-ʔx (the brother); ʕami (my uncle); ʕam (uncle)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles fictively or literally)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maʃa:li:k (your Excellency); saʃatak (your Excellency); wazi:r (Minister); ba:ʃa (Pasha); daktor (Doctor/Professor); ʔustaʃ (Master/Teacher); jeiʃ (Sheik)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms of Endearment/Intimacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habibi: (dear/beloved one/darling); ʕazizi: (dear); zalameh (man)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. and Mrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radʒul (man); sai:di (sir)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 13 above shows, the use of titles \((n = 40)\) was the most commonly used form of address among the Arabic speakers in CMC. In the current study, the titles appeared in two manners: fictively and literally (Braun, 1988). The fictive use involves the use of occupational titles to addressees who do not occupy the corresponding position (e.g., doktor to someone who is not a Ph.D. holder), but are usually used to ease the impact of the following disagreement, as the occupation of the addressee is not always known in CMC. The literal use refers to titles being used with addressees who really occupy the corresponding position. The latter use was common in the POL category of the corpus, where the majority of titles were used in their literal sense, e.g. wazi:r (minister), ba:ʃa (Pasha), etc. The higher frequencies of titles suggest great value is ascribed to education and more crucially authority and power.

The second most commonly used form of address is terms of endearment with 16 occurrences, primarily in the SOC category of the corpus. Habibi (beloved one/darling) and
\textit{\textsf{\'azizi:}} were the most frequently used terms of endearment. The use of kinship (or familial) terms constituted the third most frequently form of address among the Arabic speakers, while voicing their CMC disagreements. KTs may be used inside the family (i.e., family members, relatives, etc.) as well as outside the family (i.e., non-family, others.). Although the use of kinship terms (KTs) is deeply ingrained in Arabic-speaking countries, the current corpus had only 11 instances of KTs in two major forms: conjugated to the first person possessive pronoun as in \textit{\textsf{\'axi}} (my brother) and \textit{\textsf{\'ami}} (my uncle) or attached to the definite article \textit{\textsf{\'il}} as in \textit{\textsf{\'il-\'ax}} (the brother); \textit{\textsf{\'il-\'am}} (uncle). When KTs are used with non-family members (e.g., CMC subscribers), several factors determine the normal form of address, including age, status and intimacy (El-Anani, 1971, p. 71), neither of which was accessible to me. However, the use of KTs in CMC disagreements entails that great value is ascribed to the concept of family because of its heavy role in the Arab culture, to which speakers in disagreement appeal.

The remaining 21\% (n = 18) of address forms appeared in the use of first personal pronouns (9\%), polite forms of personal pronouns (6\%), forms that correspond to the English Mr. and Mrs \textit{\textsf{sai:di `sir’}} at (5\%) and finally last names (1\%). Last names (LNs) are rarely used, for they sound very stylistically odd in Arabic, hence the only one occurrence observed in the corpus. In the posts studied, the use of TAs imply that the interlocutors intend to emphasize intimacy or commonality with the other party. In this sense, the use of TAs serves to soften the overall effect of the oppositional act of disagreement so as to maintain social harmony and leave room for further development in the discussion.

4.3.1.1.2 Hedging

Hyland (1998a) defines hedging as any linguistic means used to indicate either a) a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition, or b) a desire not to
express that commitment categorically” (p. 1). There were 29 occurrences of hedging, which compromised 13% of all mitigation devices \((n = 242)\). The 29 instances were classified into two sub-classes: single unit-hedges and multiple-unit hedges. Single-unit hedges \((n = 14)\) consisted of only one utterance such as لني (‘mean’); أعتقد (‘think’); أرى (‘see’), أتوقع (‘expect/anticipate) and so on. These hedges are attested in Locher (2004). Multiple-unit hedges \((n = 15)\) were composed of two or more utterances such as حسب إذا (‘it depends on’); وجهة نظر (‘point of view’); مش متأكد (‘I am not sure’); الله أعلم (‘Allah is more knowing), ضد التعميم ولكن (‘against generalization but’) and so forth. These hedges function to weaken the illocutionary force of the act of disagreement and further restore the social harmony between the interlocutors in the established context of disagreement. Kruetel (2007) argues that hedges are often realized through the use of fillers (e.g., pauses). Considering that my data were collected via Computer-Mediated Communication, detection of fillers was impossible and inaccessible.

**4.3.1.1.3 Solidarity/In-Group Markers**

Solidarity markers (SMs) were also used to mitigate disagreement, in which the speakers used them to claim closeness and establish common ground. SMs had a frequency of 21 occurrences, compromising 9% of all mitigation devices observed in this corpus \((n = 242)\). SMs manifested themselves in three forms: (i) plural possessive pronoun (-na), (ii) inclusive first person plural pronoun (ناحنا: ‘we’) and (iii) a combination of (i) and (ii). Table 14 below presents the distribution of SMs as found in the corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural possessive pronoun (-na)</th>
<th>Frequency ((f))</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plural possessive pronoun (-na)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Distribution of Solidarity Markers in CMC Disagreements
As seen in Table 14, 62% of solidarity markers appeared in the form of the plural possessive pronoun (-na), which is primarily used to signal an attempt on the part of disagreeing party to claim commonality and establish closeness. As a mitigation device, the use of solidarity markers has been acknowledged by many researchers, chief among them is Brown and Levinson (1987).

4.3.1.1.4 Lexical Downgraders

The use of lexical downgraders (e.g., downtoners and cajolers\textsuperscript{14}) constituted another mitigation device in the data. Lexical downgraders (LDs) included utterances in which a speaker used to tone down the overall impact of the opposition act of disagreement. There were 14 LDs, compromising 6% of all of mitigation devices ($n = 242$). LDs appeared in the form of verbs (V), adjectives (ADJ), Adverbs (ADV) and prepositional phrases (PP). As Table 15 below shows, the majority of lexical downgraders were realized via the use of lexical adjectives (64%), followed by verbs (21%), adverbs (7%) and prepositional phrases (7%). The preference to use adjectives rather than nouns may be understood from the perspective that adjectives – when used in the epistemic sense – have the power to diminish the strength of the nouns they determine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>$\textit{jabdu}$: (appears, seems);</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>$\textit{mumkin}$ (possible); $\textit{muhtamal}$ (probable); $\textit{Tayyib}$ (well/good); $\textit{Tab}$ (well)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>$\textit{rubbama}$ (possibly)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>$\text{Minl- mumkin}$ (possibly)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{14} ‘Cajolers’ was first used by Edmondson (1977) as cited in Watts 2003.
These lexical downgraders are used primarily to soften the face-threatening nature of the act of disagreement. Their use indicates that the interlocutors are well-aware of the oppositional nature of disagreeing and of the potential damage the act of disagreement may cause to their addressees’ face. Furthermore, the use of lexical downgraders renders disagreement utterances as polite and politic, when examined from Watt’s and Locher’s Model of Relational Work.

4.3.1.1.5 Positive Remarks

Mitigation is also accomplished with Positive Remarks (PRs), which include utterances intended to explicitly express respect, show gratitude, apology, and maintain social harmony by emphasizing cooperation (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; García, 1989). PRs comprise 5% of all mitigation devices, with a total of 13 instances. As Table 16 below shows, the majority of positive remarks appear as Respect/Politeness Markers, constituting 62% of all PRs, followed by the thanking expression شكرا /šukran/ ‘thanks’, with a frequency of 3 occurrences. The remaining occurrences are split equally between an expression of apology أسف /ʔasfa/ ‘sorry’ by a female participants and an expression of blessing بارك الله فيك /ba:raka Allahu fi:k/ ‘bless you’ by a male participant.

Table 16: List of Positive Remarks in CMC Disagreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRs</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thanking</td>
<td>شكرا /šukran/ ‘thanks’</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology/Regret</td>
<td>أسف /ʔasfa/ ‘sorry FEM’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>بارك الله فيك /ba:raka Allahu fi:k/ ‘bless you’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect/Politeness Markers</td>
<td>ارجو /ʔarju/ 'please/I hope'; أتمنى /ʔatamana:/ 'I wish'; مع الاحترام /ʔal-ʔiḥṭiram/ 'with respect/respectfully'; اسمحلي /ʔismahlī/ allow me</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.1.1.6 Delayed Negation

Delayed (or postponed) negation constituted another mitigation device in the data. There were 12 occurrences, all of which appeared in the SOC category of the corpus. Rather than prefacing their disagreement with the negation particle (Flat NO) or the use of performatives (e.g., I disagree, I do not agree, etc.), some interlocutors, mostly the females, delayed their disagreement until the very end of their statements. They did so through the conditional construction, which reads as follows:

\[
\text{ʔiða: si:n } \text{ʔi:ðan naʃam, lakin } \text{ʔiða Sad fa-la: (la: } \text{ʔuwafiq)} \\
\text{if X then yes but if Y then-NO (I disagree)}
\]

This delayed construction has the hedging power to diminish the strength of the disagreement. The use of this mitigating strategy has been noted by Kruetel (1998), who regards it as a desirable feature in the overall expression of disagreement. Similarly, it has been noted by Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury (2004), who see the postponement of disagreement components within a turn or a sequence of turns as constituting advanced stages of pragmatic competency for learners of English as a Second Language (p. 218).

4.3.1.1.7 Passive Voice

A number of the mitigated disagreements \((n = 8)\) were syntactically realized via the passive voice construction. Hyland (1998) did not catalogue the passive as a mitigators. In the data however, the passive construction is used by the Arabic speakers as a mitigation device with 8 occurrences, constituting 3% of all mitigated instances of disagreement \((n = 242)\). The passive voice works as a mitigator in three ways: (i) it distances the interlocutor and the other party from the disagreement (ii) it lessens the force of the disagreement by removing the agent (the interlocutor himself/herself) and most importantly (iii) it offers the other party (the party disagreed with) an alternative course of action as demonstrated in (1) below:
The conversational exchange in (1) above revolves around the role of religious groups and whether or not they should play a role in politics. In T (1), Dr. Faisal Al-Qassem states that faith-based groups are unsuitable for either fighting or political ruling. The speaker in T (2) does not hold the same opinion. He renders his disagreement in the form of an alternative suggestion that military leaders should not become political rulers, insinuating that the current president of Egypt should not be in office, given his military background and the military coup he launched to become president. The passive voice in T (2) serves to impersonalize the speaker and the addressee; thereby, reducing the illocutionary force of his disagreement. The avoidance of the second person possessive pronoun –ka (i.e., your statement) mitigates potential threat to the speaker in T (1). The use of passives as a mitigation device was recognized by Brown and Levinson (1987) as one of 10 strategies (‘Impersonalize S and H, avoid the pronouns “I” and “you”) which save the hearer’s negative face.

4.3.1.1.8 Euphemisms

According to Kany (1960), euphemism is defined as “the means by which a disagreeable, offensive or fear-instilling matter is designated with an indirect or softer term” (p.V). Similarly,
Allan and Burridge (1991: 11) describe the use of euphemistic expressions as “as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one’s own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party.” Although the use of euphemisms can be included under hedging (4.3.1.1.2) discussed above, I listed it here as a separate type of mitigation device due to its unique nature and significance, although not necessarily frequent ($n = 6; 2\%$). Euphemisms serve to soften his/her disagreement by not referring back to it. The use of certain nouns such as نقطة /nuqTa/ ‘point’, معلومة /maqu:la/ ‘statement’ and demonstratives هذه /haða:/ ‘this’ or their VER equivalents ده/دا /di: or da/ instead of disagreement points to the speaker’s orientation to disagree indirectly and further soften the illocutionary force of the disagreement. Additionally, the use of euphemisms further signals that the speaker may be in agreement with other ‘points’ and ‘statements’. Consider the following example

(2)

The Iraqi male in (2) directly disagrees with Dr. Al-Qassim by using several moves. He prefices his disagreement with an occupational term of address (i.e., ʔustað ‘teacher/mister/master’), followed by Dr. Al-Qassim’s first name (i.e., Faisal). Prior to voicing his disagreement, he avoids referring back to Dr. Al-Qassem’s statement and instead uses the euphemized expression bi-hadīhi ‘on this’ to minimize the effect of the upcoming disagreement.
and possibly to signal agreement with other statements, leaving negotiation open for future discussions. In this sense, the use of the demonstrative is seen as a mitigator in the current study.

### 4.3.1.1.9 Personalized Opinion

This mitigator manifested itself in the explicit use of the expression /ḥada raḥi: /ʕal-ʃaxSi/ ‘this is my personal opinion’. It has a frequency of 5 occurrences, all of which appear in the SOC category of the corpus. The essence of this mitigation device revolves around a speaker making clear that his/her statement is not to be taken for granted, nor should it be regarded as a claim for some greater truth, but should be taken only as one’s personal opinion, which may be biased or subject to change. Although the use of personalized opinion was first recognized by Holtgraves (1997) as a separate strategy of disagreement, it is not in the current study, for it appears primarily to modify the head act, which constitutes the actual act of disagreement. Consider the following example:

(3)

المرة المنيحة هي الي بتبوس ايد حماتها (1)

/ʕil-mara-l mni:ha hi: /ʔilli: btitboos ʔi:d ʔamatha
The woman-the good she who kisses hand mother-in-law--her
‘A good woman is one who hand-kisses her mother-in-law.’

لا مش صحيح.... هذا رايي الشخصي (2)

la: ʔiʃ ʔiʃī haða raʔi: /ʔal-ʃaxSi
no not true this opinion-my the-personal

[#1200 [SOC.F.JO.VER.GR]]

In T (1), a male poster states that a good wife is one who kisses her mother-in-law’s hand as a token of respect, courtesy and politeness. Apparently, the poster equates respect with hand-kissing, which is grounds for agreement, disagreement or both. In T (2), a female poster from Jordan directly disagrees with the claim in T (1) by using the negation word la: (Flat NO), followed by the syntactically negated adjective ʔiʃ ʔiʃī ‘not true’. However, she closes her
disagreement with the mitigator *haḍa raḍi: ?al-fašSi* ‘this is my personal opinion’ as an indication that it is just her personal opinion, which is not to be taken as a claim for greater truth. In this sense, the use of this personalized opinion is an attempt of relational work (Watts & Locher, 2003) invested on the part of the female speaker in T (2) to maintain social harmony among the Group Subscribers.

4.3.1.10 Agreement Markers

The last mitigator observed in the data is the agreement marker *našam* ‘yes’, and its VER variants *ʔa:/*, followed by the discourse connective *lakin* 'but' or its colloquial variant *bas/*. Overall, there are 4 instances, constituting only 2% of all mitigators (*n* = 242). Brown and Levinson (1987: 113) refer to this construction as *token agreement* or *partial agreement* (Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004; Rees-Miller, 2000, among others). The essence of this mitigator lies in the interlocutor’s pretense to agree (or brief agreement), but quick retraction to express disagreement with some aspect of a prior claim. It has a mitigating power in that it saves the positive face of the interlocutor or as Kuo (1994) puts it “satisfies the hearer’s desire to be right” (p. 96).

4.3.1.11 Mitigation Device Combination

The above-discussed list of mitigators also appears in combination. As Table 17 below presents, the highest frequency of mitigation device combination is manifested in the use of titles followed first/last names with a total of 10 instances, such as *ʔad-doktoːr faiSal ḥal-qasim* ‘Doctor Faisal Al-Qassem. The second highest frequency (*n* = 5) was a combination of titles followed by a term of endearment such as *doktoːri: ḥal-faziːz* (my dear doctor). Other combinations can be read from the table below.
Table 17: **Mitigation Device Combination**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>((f))</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TA (Title) + TA (FN+LN)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (Title) + TA (Term of Endearment)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Downgrader + TA (Title) + TA (Term of Endearment)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (Title) + Lexical Downgrader</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology Expression + TA (Title)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Downgrader + Kin Terms</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexically Euphemized Expression + TA (Title)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedging + TA (Title)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Remarks + TA (Title)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Downgrader + TA (Title)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (Title) + In-Group/Solidarity Marker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (Kin) + FN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr./Mrs. + LN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (OT) + TA (FN) + Lexically Euphemized Expression</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA (OT) + TA (FN) + Positive Remark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Group/Solidarity Marker + TA (Kin)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TA= Term of Address; FN= First Name; LN= Last Name

The preceding discussion has been of the mitigation devices observed in the corpus of this study. Of the 1400 identified instances of disagreement, only 242 (17.3%) examples appear with some form of mitigation. Fifty-six percent of mitigations appears in the form of TAs (35%), followed by hedging and solidarity markers at 12% and 9%, respectively (please refer to Table 11 above for other percentages). The use of mitigation points to the interlocutors’ relational work invested in negotiating relationships with others ([Locher & Watts, 2008, p. 78].

4.3.1.2 **Aggravation of CMC Disagreement**

While mitigation serves an integral part in the expression of disagreement, the data showed that aggravation played a significant role as well. Aggravation serves the opposite function of mitigation. It is used to intensify the impact of the upcoming disagreement. Unlike mitigation discussed above, the term *aggravation* seems to have been ignored or used rarely and often replaced by various terms including, but are not limited to, impoliteness (Culpepper, 1996, 2003, 2011; Locher & Bousfiled, 2008, inter alia), rudeness (Beebe, 1995; Kienpointner, 1997),
verbal aggression (Rancer et al., 2010), face-attack (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and many others. In the current study, the term aggravation (oragravator) is used to refer to linguistic (and non-linguistic) devices used by one interlocutor towards another not to only intensify the illocutionary force of disagreement but also to amplify any anticipated negative effects of the act of disagreement with the overall goal of causing and endangering “disharmony and/or social disturbance rather than promoting social harmony” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 349).

The data show that 402 (28.7%) examples of the 1400 disagreements are intensified via the implementation of five major types of aggravators appearing before or after the head act: (1) personality-related abusive language, (2) family-related obscene language, (3) invoking Allah, (4) structural/linguistic devices, and (5) paralinguistic devices. Additionally, a combination of these types was also observed in the corpus. The proposed list of aggravators is in conformity with Culpeper’s (2011) scheme of impoliteness strategies (e.g., insults, condescensions, etc.), which was initially deemed adequate to account for impoliteness observed in this study. However, his taxonomy does not seem to represent the cultural aspects or nuances embedded in a certain form of insult. Therefore, my classification remedies this shortcoming by referring to cultural aspects when they arise. Culpeper’s strategies are acknowledged, when appropriate. Table 18 provides the overall distribution of these five proposed types of aggravation.

Table 18: Distribution of Aggravators in CMC Disagreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related Abusive Language</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Related Obscene Language</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invoking Allah</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Aggravating Devices</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralinguistic Cues</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggravated</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1400</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 18 above, half of the aggravated disagreements \((n = 201)\) are expressed with abusive language that attacks the interlocutor himself/herself. The second highest frequency \((n = 61; 15.2\%)\) is manifested in the use of verbally obscene language intended to attack the family of the interlocutor. The third most commonly used aggravator is realized through structural/linguistic devices with 50 instances, constituting 12.4\% of all aggravation forms. Invoking Allah also constitutes another form of aggravation with 43 occurrences and an overall 10.7\%. Finally, a set of non-linguistic (paralinguistic) devices is also seen as aggravating the act of disagreement, which constitute the lowest frequency of occurrences \((n = 7; 1.7\%)\). A brief discussion of each type follows along with examples.

### 4.3.1.2.1 Personality-Related Abusive Language

The essence of this aggravator is to attack the interlocutor rather than his/her claim. It is similar to the logical fallacy known as *ad hominem*. This category resembles what Culpeper (2011: 135) broadly refers to as *insults*, which are normally “intended to wound the addressee” (p. 143). The data showed that the Arabic speakers had a range of creative ways to offend and abuse their interlocutors, namely, the following:


(3) **Cultural reference:** ʔabu dżahil ‘father of dżahil’ (literally father of ignorance), musai:lama ‘Musaylimah’ (a historical figure best known as “the liar”)


(6) **Political reference:** ʔami:l ‘traitor/collaborator’ and Sahju:ni ‘Zionist’

As Table 19 below shows, the majority of this aggravator appeared in in the form of abusive language attacking character with 137 instances, which constituted 68% of personality-related abusive language. Comparing interlocutors to animals had a frequency of 40 instances (20%), wherein xanzi:r ‘pig’ was the most frequently used animal in performing face-attacks. This makes sense, given that the pig along with its products is prohibited among Arabs, most of whom are Muslims. The remaining 12% was distributed between cultural reference (4.5%), sexual reference (4%), religious reference (2.5%) and political reference (1%).

---

15 Abu Jahil is one of the Meccan polytheist pagan Qurayshi leaders known for his critical opposition towards the Islamic prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims in Mecca.
16 Musaylamah was one of a series of people (including his future wife) who claimed prophethood in 7th century Arabia, which is the time of Islamic prophet Muhammad. He is considered by Muslims to be a false prophet, and is always referred to as ʔal-kaḍḍab ‘the liar’.
Table 19: Forms of Personality-Related Abusive Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Metaphor</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related Cultural Reference</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related Sexual Reference</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related Religious Reference</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related Political Reference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>201</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1.2.2 Family-Related Obscene Language

This aggravator occurs when a speaker attacks the interlocutor’s family through the implementation of crude, profane or obscene language that refers to family members, as outlined in Table 20 below. Culpeper (2011: 143) broadly catalogues this aggravator under ‘familial’ relations’. Given the family-oriented nature of Arabic-speaking societies, this aggravator appeared in the following forms:


2. **Sister-invocation**: kus ʔuxtak ‘your sister's vagina', ʔaxu ʔaf-farmu:Ta 'brother of a whore', and ʔaxu ʔaf-ʃalqa ‘brother of a slut, jalʔan kus ʔuxtak ‘damn your sister’s vagina’

(4) **General (father and mother):** ʔibn zina: 'son of fornication', ʔibn ħaram 'bastard', ʔibn ħaywa:na:t 'son of animals', ʔahl ʔal-буран 'camel men'.

Table 20: **Distribution of Family-Related Abusive Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother-invocation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father-Invocation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister-Invocation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Reference to Family</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the table above, mother invocation constitutes the highest number of occurrences ($n = 33$), which is 54.1% of all family-related obscene language used by the Arabic speakers in the context of disagreement. This sub-category is the strongest aggravation device. This can be attributed to the fact that the mother occupies the most revered status among all members of the family. Equally important, the mother represents the honor of the family in its entirety. Therefore, invoking the mother is equal to attacking everyone in the family. Similarly, family-related obscene language involved reference to the sister, who is also associated with the concept of honor deeply rooted in the Arab culture. There were a total of 7 occurrences, which constitutes 11.5% of this category. Father invocation is also apparent in the corpus with a total of 13 instances (21.3%), however, with no reference to the father’s sexual parts or honor, for these are reserved for mothers and sisters (or women in general). Finally, there were 8 occurrences, none of which specifies the referent (e.g., mother, father or sister) but which make general reference to the family as a whole. It is worth noting that no brother-invocation was observed in the corpus, for at least two reasons: it is odd and most crucially a brother can bring a family honor, whereas a sister can only bring shame.
4.3.1.2.3 Structural Aggravating Devices

A third type of aggravators was seen through the use of structural devices intended to intensify the act of disagreement. There were a total of 50 occurrences, which constitute 12.4% of all aggravation forms observed in the corpus. These are sub-divided and presented in Table 21 below:

Table 21: Distribution of Structural Aggravators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Devices</th>
<th>$(f)$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Upgraders (Certainty Marker/Intensifier/Quantifier/Determiner)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit Adjective of Disagreement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of the Independent Negative (la:)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel Lengthening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 21 above, half of the structural aggravating devices are expressed with the use of lexical upgraders expanded here to include (i) certainty markers (e.g., ʔaki:d ‘certainly’, mustahːl ‘impossible; (ii) intensifiers (e.g., Tabʕan ‘of course’, bifidah ‘strongly’, la: wa ʔalf la: ‘thousand nos’, la: wa malju:n la: ‘million nos’); and (iii) determiner/quantifier (e.g., kul ‘all’ vs. baʕZ ‘some’). The next 20% was invested in the use of certain lexical adjectives seen as aggravators for they inherently denote that the possessor is unable to make sound claims. These included ʕazi ‘empty’, ʕariɣ ‘hollow’, and ʕaṭtiʔ ‘extremely wrong’ (the use of these adjective is further clarified in Section 4.3.2.2 below). Certain imperatives $(n = 8)$ were also regarded as aggravating such as ʔixras ‘shut up’, ʔitlihi ‘get busy’, ʕuːr ‘get lost’, ruːh ‘go away’, ʔitrikin ‘get cornered’, and ʔuskut ‘shut up’. There were also 4 occurrences (8%), in which the negation word la: (or its VER variant) was constantly repeated up to 5 times in one statement. Finally, vowel lengthening (also referred to as vowel multiplication by Darics 2010)
was also seen as aggravating with 3 instances, constituting 6% of all aggravation forms observed in the corpus.

4.3.1.2.4 Invoking Allah

Another form of aggravation among the Arabic speakers took the form of invocation with 43 instances, constituting 10.7% of the 402 aggravated disagreements. This cultural-specific aggravator occurred when a speaker prayed against another and ill-wished the other through cursing by invoking Allah’s wrath on the addressee. This aggravator appeared in two forms: (1) invoking Allah against the interlocutor himself/herself and (2) invoking Allah against the interlocutor’s children. The former had 38 instances, while the latter had only five occurrences. Examples of cursing against the interlocutor himself/herself include the following:

- *Allah jintaqim minak* ‘May Allah avenge you!’
- *Allah jixrib beitak* ‘May Allah wreck your house!’
- *rabina jisawid wedʒhak* ‘May God darken your face [during the lifeafter]!’
- *Allah jaqTaʕ lisanak* ‘May Allah cut your tongue!’
- *Allah jaxuðak* ‘May Allah take you [away]!’
- *Allah jifî lisanak* ‘May Allah paralyze your tongue!’
- *Rabina jahriqak* ‘May God burn you!’
- *saxaTaka Allahu qirdan* ‘May Allah transform you into an ape!’

Examples of the latter type include the following:

- *rabina jahriq qalbak Šala Zanak* ‘May God burn your heart over your children.’
- *rabina jahriq Zanak* ‘May God burn your children.’
4.3.1.2.5 Paralinguistic Cues

The final form of aggravation is performed via paralinguistic cues, with a total of only 7 instances sub-divided into three sub-categories: gestural spitting, farting sound and baby talk. There were 3 instances of gestural spitting indicated by ْلفُ /tfu:/, which makes up the sound of spitting. The use of spitting is also attested in British culture as reported by Rancer, Durbin and Faulkner (2010). Another paralinguistic cue is accomplished through the farting sound (n = 2) via the use of the word Tuz, which is the onomatopoeia of the farting sound, as a device for disregarding someone’s claim or statement. Finally, there are also two instances of baby-talk used to belittle the other party. These are (i) faTir ‘good boy’ and (ii) ʔabu faxxa ‘one who urinates a lot [wet pants]’, both of which are exclusively used when addressing children.

The preceding discussion has been of the aggravating devices used by the Arabic speakers to intensify the act of disagreement. In what follows, I provide a detailed account of the lexical items used in the expression of disagreements among the Arabic speakers in the data.
4.3.2 Lexical Vehicles of Expressing Computer-Mediated Disagreements

Several disagreement patterns recurred throughout the corpus. At the lexical level, disagreements were realized through the use of recurring lexical items as given in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Recurrent Lexical Verbs of Disagreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-type</th>
<th>MSA</th>
<th>VER</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internally Negated (Ex. Performative)</td>
<td>لا أخالفِ (لك.كم.كن) /تؤلفُ + (PRO) + PREP + N</td>
<td>بخالفِ (لك.كم.كن) /با-تؤلفُ + (PRO) + PREP + N</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>أعارضُ (لك.كم.كن) /تؤلفُ + (PRO) + ن</td>
<td>بعارضُ (لك.كم.كن) /با-تؤلفُ + (PRO) + ن</td>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>برفضُ /تارفعُ + ن</td>
<td>برفضُ /بارفعُ + ن</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لا أختلفُ مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /تؤلفُ + PREP + 2nd Person Possessive + (PREP² + N)</td>
<td>لا أختلفُ مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /با-تؤلفُ + PREP + 2nd Person Possessive + (PREP² + N)</td>
<td>Differ from/with</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لا أعترض على (لك.كم.كن) في/على /تؤلفُ + PREP + ن</td>
<td>لا أعترض على (لك.كم.كن) في/على /با-تؤلفُ + PREP + ن</td>
<td>Object to</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally Negated (Im. Performative)</td>
<td>لا أتفق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /لاأتفاقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>لا أتفق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /لاأتفاقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لا بتفق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /لاأتفاقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>لا بتفق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /لاأتفاقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لا توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>لا توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ما توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>ما توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ما توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>ما توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ما توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>ما توافق مع (لك.كم.كن) في/على /بة توافقُ + (PREP + 2nd Person Possessive PRO + N)</td>
<td>Not agree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ex = Explicit/Direct; Im. = Implicit

4.3.2.1 Lexical Verbs of Disagreement

Several performatives were used in the corpus to express disagreement. Performatives indicate the speaker’s desire to commit to disagreement. These can be classified into two major...
categories: (i) internally negative verbs and externally negative verbs. The former encompasses a
group of verbs that directly express the act of disagreement, while the latter are made negative
through syntactic words of negation (e.g., لَ، ‘no/does not/do not’; مَا، ‘no/does not/do not’ and لَيْسَ ‘to not be’.

4.3.1.1.1 Internally Negative Performative Verbs of Disagreement

Internally negative performative verbs of disagreement are syntactically affirmative, but
express negation such as the following verbs in MSA with their VER variants enclosed in
parentheses: (1) ءخالِفَ (بِخَالِفَ) ‘disagree’, (2) ءعَارضَ (بِعَارض) ‘oppose’, (3) ءرَفضَ (بِرَفض) ‘refuse’, (4) ءطَلِدا (بِطَلِدا) ‘differ’
and (5) ءاعترضَ (بِاعترض) ‘object’. These are clarified below along with examples.

1. The use of ءخالِفَ (V)

The lexical item ءخالِفَ is derived from the triliteral root [خ - ل - ف] ‘x-l-f’, which
inherently denotes disagreement on the part of the speaker to a prior claim or proposition made
by another speaker. It literally carries the notions of “be against; be of a different opinion from;
differ in opinion with; disagree with; dissent from; object to; oppose; take issue with; think
differently from” (Lisa:n ءال-عَارَاب, 2016). In my data, a 2nd person possessive pronoun suffix (-
ka) attached to this internally negative performative verb, indicating the addressee, which varies
in form, contingent upon the grammatical gender and number as follows:

(4)

دَكَّتْ أَسْمَى تَلْنَي أنَّ مَكَّانَ الرَّأَي (2)
daktor faiSal ?ismah 1-i ?an ءخالِفَ-ka ءال-را؟i
Doctor Faisal allow to-me that disagree-you 2nd SG.MASC.POSS.PRO the-opinion
‘Doctor Faisal, allow me to disagree with you’

[#89 [POL.M.SY.MSA.PG]]

(5)

لا مَكَّانَكَ في هَيِّ النَّقْطَة حَبِيبتي (2)

لا ءخالِفَكَ في هَيِّ النَّقْطَة حَبِيبتي (2)
La ba-xalif-ki fi hai ṣel-nuqTa habibti

No to-disagree-you 2nd SG.FEM.POSS.PRO in this the-point dear-my

‘No I disagree with you on this point, my love [my dear]’

[25 [SOC.F.JO.VER.GP]]

(6)

T (2)

من أين أتيتم بهذه الخرافات؟ أختلفكم وبشدة (2)

Man ṣaina ṭataitum bi-haḍhi ṣal-xurafat? ṭuxalif-kum wa bi-fidda

From where bring-you to-this the-myths? Disagree-2nd PL.MASC.POSS.PRO and in-strength

‘From where did you come up with these myths? I strongly disagree.’

[440 [REL.M.JO.MSA.GP]]

Although Arabic distinguishes between three levels of grammatical number (SG, DL, and PL) and two levels of grammatical gender (MASC and FEM), only SG and PL 2nd person possessive pronouns were observed in the corpus. No instances of the dual (DL) masculine or feminine (-kuma) or the plural (PL) feminine (-kunna) pronouns were found in the corpus. These are often neutralized and replaced by the PL MASC pronoun –kum. It is significant to note that the presence (or lack of thereof) of the 2nd possessive pronoun (-ka, -ki and -kum) plays a key role in either mitigating or aggravating the disagreement (further clarification on this issue will be furnished later in the analysis).

2. The use of أعارض أعراض Z- (V)

The verb ṭuṣareZ is lexically derived from the triliteral root [ع - ر - ض] ‘ṯ.r.Z’ (to oppose), which inherently denotes a different view or stance on the part of the speaker to the addressee’s prior claim or proposition. Unlike ṭuxalif-/ above denoting a semi-permanent position not likely to change, ṭuṣareZ/ represents a temporary position susceptible to change. This is due to the fact that the root [ع - ر - ض] embodies the notion of contingency or that of incidence, both of which are used to designate events that do not last for too long, but are rather designed for a limited amount of time. In other words, the use of ṭuṣareZ/ depicts an asymmetrical position, in which there exist two sides, one of which happens to be the original claim delivered by the speaker and the other to be the other side of the argument realized by the
addressee, each of which complements the other. In this sense, /ʔušareZ/ may be seen as an attempt on the part of the speaker to restore and manage social harmony by rendering the other side of the argument, thereby, allowing for further development and negotiation among the interactants. Similar to /ʔuxalif/, this inherently negative performative verb also attaches to a 2nd person possessive pronoun which varies in form, contingent upon the addressee’s (s’) grammatical gender and number as shown in the following illustrative examples:

(7)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{T (2)} & \quad \text{Obama jas}a \quad \text{lis-salam} \\
\text{Oppose-you 2}^{\text{nd}} \text{ SG.MASC.POSS.PRO} & \quad \text{Obama seek-he to-the-peace.}
\end{align*}
\]
‘I oppose you. Obama seeks peace.’

(8)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{T (2)} & \quad \text{Because the respect not in-kiss the-hand} \\
\text{in-oppose-you 2}^{\text{nd}} \text{ SG.MASC.POSS.PRO} & \quad \text{laʔ}nu \quad \text{؟el-ʔehti:ram mej bi-bo:set ʔel-ʔi:d}
\end{align*}
\]
‘I oppose you because respect is not [manifested] in kissing hands.’

3. The use of /ʔarfuZ/ (V)  

The lexical verb /ʔarfuZ/ is derived from the triliteral root [r-f-z] ‘r-f-Z’, which literally means to “reject, refuse, not accept, leave behind, let go…” (Lisa:n ʔal-ʕarab, 2016). Unlike (1) and (2) described above allowing for potential expansion of the dialogue in varying degrees, /ʔarfuZ/, on the other hand, does not promote a sense of social harmony, but rather functions as constricting any further avenues for the negotiation of alternative options, as it directly conveys the meaning that the other party’s point of view is ignored or is not acknowledge to the ongoing interaction. In this sense, /ʔarfuZ/ is inherently negative or face-threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987) due to the conveyance of a position that is not liable to change at least in the meantime or in the discourse of the established disagreement. However, the
lexical item /ʔarfuZ/ cannot be taken as an impolite expression of disagreement, but rather as appropriate or politic (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008) to the ongoing discourse of voicing disagreement. Aggravated as it may be, this verb does not usually attach to the 2nd possessive pronouns (-ka, -ki, -kum) in the discourse of disagreement. It can, however, attach to these pronouns in other contexts, especially those that denote intimacy or marriage proposals (e.g., /ʔarfuZak/ ‘I refuse [do not accept] you’), where the person is rejected rather than his/her ideas or claims. Below are some illustrative examples of the lexical verb /ʔarfuZ/:

(9)

T (2)

أرفض هذا الادعاء الباطل

ʔarfuZ haða ʔal-ʔiddiʃa: ʔal-ba’Til

Refuse this the-invalid the-claim

‘I refuse this invalid claim’

[#181 [REL.M.IQ.MSA.PG]]

(10)

T (2)

لا هالحكي جملة وتفصيل

Hahahahahaha ʔarfuZ hal-haki dagumlatan wa-tafSilan

(Laughter) refuse-I this-talk whole and-detail

‘hahahahahaha I refuse this talk altogether’

[#154 [SOC.F.QT.VER.GP]]

4. The use of مع أختلف مع /ʔaxtalifu (V)

This lexical verb is similar to /ʔuxalif-/ (see # 1 above) at the morphological level. /ʔaxtalifu/ is also derived from the same triliteral root [خ ل - f] ‘x-l-f’, which inherently embodies the notions of contradiction, difference in opinion and so on. The difference lies at the lexical level, where /ʔaxtalifu/ gives a sense of partial disagreement (e.g., part of the issue), while /ʔuxalif-/ often signals total disagreement unlikely to change over the course of time. In this sense, /ʔaxtalifu/ is internally hedged or softened, where /ʔuxalif/ is internally boosted or intensified. Another major difference lies at the syntactic level. Whereas /ʔuxalif-/ is a (bi)transitive verb, /ʔaxtalifu/ is an intransitive verb, which does not allow the addition of a direct
object, be it a noun or a pronoun. It does, nonetheless, mandates the addition of the preposition مع /maʕ/ ‘with’, the lack of which renders the overall structure as ungrammatical. Since /ʔaxtalifu/ is an inherently intransitive verb, the 2nd person possessive pronoun (-ka, -ki, -kum) does not get attached to it but rather attaches the preposition /maʕ/ followed by other prepositions, specifically, في /fi/ ‘in’ or على /ʕala/ ‘on’ as shown in the following illustrative examples:

(11)

ماكو صحيح هالحكي يختلف معاك في هاي الجزئية (2)

mako Šahiːh hal- haki ba-xtalif maʕa-ak fi hai ʔel-dʒuzʔija
not true this talk in-differ-with-you 2nd SG.MASC.POSS.PRO in this part
‘This talk is not true. I disagree with you on this part.’

[518 [REL.M.IQ.VER.PG]]

(12)

انا بوجهة نظري يختلف معك (2)

ʔana bi-wdʒhet naZari ba-xtalif maʕ-ak ʕala hai ʔin-nuqta
I in-point view in-disagree-with-you 2nd SG.MASC.POSS.PRO on this point
‘In my view, I disagree with you on this point.’

[106 [REL.M.SY.VER.PG]]

5. The use of أعترض عليه /ʔaʕstareʔ/ (V)

The lexical verb /ʔaʕstareʔ/ is morphologically similar to /ʔuʕareʔ-/ (see # 2 above) in that both variants are derived from the triliteral root [ع - ر - ض] /ʕ-g-Z/, which denotes objection on the part of the speaker to a prior claim or statement raised by another speaker. Notably, this lexical verb invokes the mental image of blockage, where Speaker [S] through the use of this verb blocks the addressee’s [A] thread of thinking by denying its content for lack of logic. Unlike /ʔuʕareʔ/- inviting a sense of complementation (e.g., A’s different view complements S’s statement to reach possible agreement), /ʔaʕstareʔ/ is argued to be internally boosted or intensified, adding or provoking a greater sense of aggravation to the argument. Accordingly, it is seen as disrupting and threatening social harmony among the interactants. From a syntactic
point of view, /ʔaʃtareZ/ is an intransitive verb, which does not take an object complement (NP), nor does it require the addition of a preposition to license its use. Nonetheless, it is often followed by the preposition /ma$/ `on’ which – unlike the previously introduced prepositions—does not allow the 2nd person possessive pronouns (-ka, -ki, -kum ...) to dock on its base. Below are some examples:

(13)

\[ \text{T} \]

اعترض مو صح و الدلائل من التاريخ (2)

ʔaʃtareZ mu sah w-ad dalalʔel mina-t tarix

Object not true and evidence from the- history

‘I object [that is] not true best evidenced in history.’

[#79 [REL.M.SY.VER.PG]]

(14)

\[ \text{T} \]

اعترض على كلامك... كتاب الله يصلح لكل زمان ومكان (2)

ʔaʃtareZ ʕala kalam-ak ... kitabu Allah jaSluh li-kul zaman wa makan

Object on talk-you ... book Allah serves for-every time and place

‘I object to your talk ... the book of Allah is valid for every time and place.’

[#96 [REL.M.SY.MSA.PG]]

4.3.1.2 Externally Negative Performative Verbs of Disagreement

Externally negative performative verbs of disagreement involve a class of verbs that are semantically affirmative but are syntactically negated, for they are preceded by certain words of negation (e.g., /ma:/ or /la:/ `not’). They include the following verbs in MSA along with their VER variants enclosed in parentheses: /la ʔattafiq/ (ما أتفق, لا أتفق), /la ʔuwafiq-/ (ماوافق, لا أوافق, مباافق). These are explained below supported by examples from the corpus of the study:

1. The use of /la ʔattafiq/ (not + V `agree’)

This externally negated verb is derived from the triliteral root [w.ʃ.ʔ] /w.f.q/, which literally means to “agree or come to an agreement” (Lisa:n ʔal-ʕarab, 2016). When syntactically headed by a negation particle such as /ma/ ʔa or /la/ ʔa `not’, the opposite meaning is rendered –
that of disagreement. It is equivalent to the English phrase ‘do not agree’ rather than the internally negated ‘disagree’. It can stand alone, but it is often in need a complement in the form of a prepositional phrase (i.e., /maʕ/ ‘with’ + OBJ), which may (or may not) attach to the 2nd person possessive pronoun (-ka; -ki, -kum …), contingent upon the speaker’s purpose whether or not he/she intends to mitigate his utterance through the avoidance of the possessive pronoun on /maʕ/ or chooses to drop it altogether so as to focus on the content of the disagreement (e.g., I do not agree with this idea vs. I do not agree with you on this idea). If the complement is suppressed, a null pronoun is appealed to. As such, if one says /la ʔattafiq/ without a complement, he or she implies that they never agree regardless of people or topics, the potential referent of the null pronoun. Of importance to this investigation is /la ʔattafiq/ along with the complement. Two important issues must be noted: (i) /la ʔattafiq maʕ/ implicates that the speaker respects the person as a human being, but (ii) does necessarily indicate that the speaker is in disagreement with the proposition/claim raised. In this sense, /la ʔattafiq maʕ/ (Cf. /la ʔuwafiq/-/ below) helps to maintain social harmony among the interactants. It solicits an invitation on the part of the speaker to view the subject argued about from a different angle – be it totally or slightly dissimilar – by rendering an explanation or evidence with the overall goal of restoring or achieving social harmony:

(15)

لا أتفق معك فمحمد كان رجل عقيدة وقد نجح نجاحا باهراً

T

1 not agree with-you for Muahmmad was man ideology
2 and indeed succeeded well-COG ACCU\(^\text{17}\) splendid

\(^{17}\) The cognate accusative (COG-ACCU) is a verbal noun morphologically derived from the same verb of the sentence, which is “an elegant way of emphasizing or enhancing a previous statement by deriving a verbal noun from the main verb or predicate (which may also be in the form of a participle or verbal noun) and modifying the derived verbal noun with an adjective that intensifies the effect of the statement (Ryding, 2005, p. 285).
I do not agree with you, for Muhammad was a man of ideology and he did indeed achieve a splendid success.

2. The use of لا أوافق /la ʔuwafiq-/ (Not + V ‘agree’)

The verb la ʔuwafiq- is similar to la ʔattaﬁq in that it is also derived from the trilateral lexical root [و - ف - ق] /w-f-q/, which denotes agreement (Lisa:n ʔal-ʔarab, 2016). It is syntactically negated by the negation word /ma:/ ـا or /la:/ ـا ‘not’ to achieve the function of contradiction. Differences, however, lie in the associated connotation and the syntactic constraints imposed on each verb. As explained above, la ʔattaﬁq does not necessarily indicate disagreement with the speaker himself/herself, but rather with the content of the disagreement. In contrast, la ʔuwafiq does imply that the speaker disagrees not only with the content of a prior proposition or statement, but also with the person himself/herself. In this perspective, the former is argued to be as a hedger promoting social harmony, while the latter to be an intensifier and/or an aggravator disrupting social harmony in the discursive discourse of disagreement. As for syntax, the verb la ʔuwafiq does not demand a complement, hence no null pronoun is needed. Additionally, the 2nd person possessive pronoun suffix is constrained to attach only to the following preposition /ma$/ in the case of la: ʔattaﬁq, while it is licensed to attach to the lexical verb la: ʔuwafiq-, but not to the following preposition (i.e., ʕala ‘on’ or fi ‘in’) as demonstrated in the following illustrative example:

(16)

ما بوافقكي الراي على حكيك التخبيص (2)

not agree-you the-opinion on talk-yours nonsense
‘I do not agree [with you] on your nonsense talk.’

[98 [SOC.F.LIB.VER.GP]]
The preceding description has been of the lexical items under the grammatical category of verb (V). As demonstrated, seven major lexical verbs were found in the corpus to voice disagreement directly. Five of them inherently carry the lexical meaning of disagreement, while the remaining two verbs are made negative through external negation. Some are syntactically transitive and some are intransitive. Both variants (MSA and VER) were observed and illustrated. In what follows, I will present the grammatical category of adjectives (ADJ) and demonstrate how they were utilized to voice disagreement in the data. A classification system will be proposed as well.

4.3.1.2 Lexical Adjectives (ADJ) of Disagreement

Expressing disagreement can also be signaled through the grammatical category of adjectives (ADJ). Adjectives are describing words syntactically used to qualify a noun, a pronoun or a noun phrase, so as to give more information about the object signified. Ryding (2005) reports that traditional Arab grammarians categorize adjectives as falling under the syntactic category of اسم/?ism/ ‘noun’ (p. 255). She also notes that Arabic adjectives are classified according to their form and function. In term of form, Arabic adjectives – like all other grammatical categories with the exception of prepositions and determiners – are often morphologically derived from a lexical root through the process of root-and-pattern system (e.g., ka.ta.ba ‘wrote’; ki.ta:b ‘book’; mak.tub ‘written’; ka:.tib ‘writer’, etc.). This aspect of Arabic grammar will be invoked and applied so long as it serves the overall purpose of the discussion of the results.

As for function, Arabic adjectives are of two types: (i) attributives, and (ii) predicates. Arabic attributive adjectives are post-nominal (Cf. English being pre-nominal), following the
noun (or the noun phrase NP) directly, agreeing not only with its grammatical gender, but also number, case and definiteness as shown in (17) below:

(17)

تَفَكِّر خاطئ ومنطق عقيم
tafki:r-MASC-SG-NOM-INDEF xa:T?-MASC-SG-NOM-INDEF wa manTiq ʕaqi:m thinking wrong and logic barren
‘[this is] wrong thinking and barren logic.’

Predicate adjectives are also post-nominal and are used in “an equational [no overt copula] sentence [i.e., nominal sentence\(^{18}\)] to provide information about the subject of the sentence, thus completing the clause” (ibid: 240). Predicate adjectives in Arabic fully agree with the subject except in definiteness. It is highly unusual for the adjectives in the predicate to agree with the subject in terms of definiteness. If otherwise, the adjective in question can no longer be classified as predicate, but as attributive. Compare the following pair of examples:

(18)

هَذَا الْكَلَامُ غَلْطٌ عَنْ جَد
haZa ʔel-kalam yalaT ʕan ḏaad
this the-talk-MASC-SG-NOM-DEF (SUB) wrong-MASC-SG-NOM-INDEF (PRED) on serious
‘This talk is wrong, seriously.’

(19)

هَذَا الْكَلَامُ الْبَذْلِ عَنْ جَد
haZa ʔel-kalam ʔel-yalaT ʕan ḏaad
this the-talk-MASC-SG-NOM-DEF the wrong-MASC-SG-NOM-DEF on serious
‘This talk is wrong, seriously.’

In (18) above, the underlined adjective agrees with the subject in terms of gender, number, case, but not in definiteness. In this view, the adjective functions as a predicate rather

\(^{18}\) Arabic classifies sentences into either verbal or nominal. The former refers to a sentence which starts with a verb (V), while the latter starts with a noun (N).

\(^{19}\) This instance has been modified to show the difference between predicate and attributive adjectives in Arabic. Example (10a) constitutes the original version.
than as an attribute to the subject, which renders it as a completely meaningful clause. The adjective in (19) fully agrees with the subject in all four grammatical aspects. As such, it is an attributive adjective and the overall meaning is incomplete; a predicate – be it a NP, VP, ADJP or PP – is needed to turn it into a meaningful complete clause. In this view, the whole phrase is regarded as SUBJ in need of a PRED to be legally grammatical.

Although the above-described classification may be fruitful from a syntactic point of view, it fails to capture the lexico-pragmatic aspect(s) of the adjectives identified in the corpus, for it seems to place much emphasis on the location of the adjective along with any associated grammatical features rather than the pragmatic function(s) directly or indirectly embodied in the individual lexemes. To remedy this situation, adjectives in this study will be classified according to their illocutionary force or (i.e., communicative action) as either (i) intrinsically negative adjectives and (ii) extrinsically negative adjectives. These will be elaborated on below along with illustrative examples from the corpus.

4.3.1.2.1 Intrinsically Negative Adjectives of Disagreement

Intrinsically negative adjectives involve a class of adjectives that encode negative meaning; and negative emotional states and judgments towards the addressee (e.g., angry, disgusted, annoyed, etc.) and/or towards the subject of disagreement (e.g., contradiction, denial …). These adjectives carry the lexical meaning (i.e., denotation or connotation) of disagreement in that they communicate a different stance/position from the original stance performed by the author of the post or one of the fans subscribed to the Facebook page or group. Several adjectives were identified in the corpus to meet the above-proposed definition, i.e., encompassing negative judgments on the part of the interlocutor; thereby, they are seen as potential stimuli to disrupting
social harmony. Below is a brief account of the most recurrent intrinsically negative adjectives observed in the corpus supported by examples:

1. The use of غلط /yalaT/ ‘wrong’ (ADJ)

As noted earlier, Arabic adjectives fall under the syntactic category of اسم/pism/ ‘noun’. It comes as no surprise that this adjective appears in the corpus as a noun (N) and as an adjective (ADJ), with more instances of the latter, contingent upon whether it is being modified (N) or modifying (ADJ). This adjective is morphologically derived from the triliteral root [غ - ل - ط] /γ.l.T/, which literally means “to err, do wrong …” (Lisa:n ʔal-ʕarab, 2016). The use of this adjective in the context of disagreement directly denotes that a prior claim, statement or proposition has been negatively evaluated or directly judged by one of the online commentators. Concurrently, this utterance implicitly entails that the interlocutor feels that the argument in hand is not based on sound logic or simply lacks evidence, but it does not necessarily indicate that the interlocutor disagrees with the commentator’s per se, but rather with the logic behind his/her argument. In this view, the adjective /yalaT/ is seen as a dismissive remark that may disrupt the social harmony among the interactants. However, it is often followed by an explanation (or a counterclaim/counterproposal) to mitigate its force and to explain the rationale behind the unfavorable judgment as seen in example (20) below:

(20)

كَلَامَك غَلَطُ، الدِّوْلَةِ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ كَانَت فِي قَمَتِها وَكَانَ يَحْكُمُهَا اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِسْلَامًا
kala:m-ak yalaT. ʔad-dawlah ʔal-ʔislamijah kanat fi qimati-ha

talk-your wrong. The state the-Islamic was in summit-its

wa ʔakθaru ʔan-nas-i ʔisla:m-an
And was ruled-PAS-its most the-people Islamic-ACCU
‘Your statement is wrong. The Islamic State reached its peak and it [nonetheless] was ruled by the most deeply religious people.’

20 The speaker is referring to the Muslim Empire that Prophet Mohammad built 1400 years ago. It is not to be confused with today’s Islamic State known as ISIS or ISIL.
In (20) above, the interlocutor reacts to a prior statement that people of religion (or ideology) are not well-suited for ruling. He renders his disagreement via two strategies: (i) the use of the adjective /yalaT/ ‘wrong’, which clearly describes the noun /kala:m/ ‘talk or statement’, but not the speaker per se, followed by (ii) an explanation so as to justify his negative judgment. The combination of the two strategies functions to soften the overall blow of the disagreement and save the speaker’s face. In this view, the use of yalaT is neither polite nor impolite, but rather appropriate (i.e., politic) in the established context of disagreement. Nonetheless, it would have still been regarded as politic with or without the subsequent explanation, because – as noted above – it shows the interlocutor feels the prior statement lacks evidence or sound logic. Yet, the sole use of yalaT (i.e., without the following explanation) would have been extremely aggravating if the commentator’s response had shifted the focus of his utterance from the speaker’s statement to the speaker himself, e.g., anta yalaT ‘you (are) wrong’, which would be interpreted as the speaker is always wrong no matter what he/she says or does. In this hypothetical scenario, the use of yalaT would be face-threatening, for it attacks the speaker, not the statement; thereby, undermining solidarity among the interactants.

2. The use of مخطئ /muxTiʔ/ ‘wrong doer (ADJ)

The lexical adjective muxTiʔ is derived from the quadrilateral root [أ-ط-خ-أ] ‘؟.x.T.؟’, which also means “to err, make a mistake …” (Lisa:n ?al-ʕarab, 2016). Because it follows the Arabic morphological root-pattern scheme of [ʔaf.ʕa.ʔa → ʔax.Ta.ʔa → mux.Tiʔ], it has a default causative meaning to it (Ford, 2009, p. 3). The causative meaning in this adjective is understood to be one of two things: (i) X made himself/herself do or perform something intentionally or (ii) X made himself/herself do something unintentionally due to lack of knowledge or simply forgetfulness. The former gives rise to the lexical adjective (or noun) خاطئ /xa.Tiʔ/ ‘wrong doer’
or ‘one who purposefully commits mistakes’. The latter is closer to the meaning of the lexical adjective \textit{muxTiʔ}, for it simply denotes that the speaker has deviated or steered away from the truth due to ignorance or simply obliviousness, neither of which is grounds to attack the interlocutor’s face. The second meaning is attested in a number of religious scriptures from the Qur’an where both lexical roots are used to signify different meanings. Consider the following pair of verses:

(21)

(a) \textit{Wa: laysa alai-kum dʒunaːh fi-ma: ?axTaʔ-tum wa lakin ma: taʔamadat qulu:bu-kum}

And not on-you-PL blame in-what erred-you-PL and but what intended hearts-yours

(Chapter (33:5) su:rat l-ahza:b)

(b) \textit{ju:sufu ?aʃriZ ʕan haːdaː wa ?astayfiri:;-2\textsuperscript{nd} PERS-FEM-SG-IMPER V}

Joseph turn away from this and ask for forgiveness

li-ðanbiki ʔina -ki kunti mina 1-xaTiʔi-na

for-sin-yours indeed-you-2\textsuperscript{nd} PERS-FEM-SG-PRO are from the-sinful-GEN-MASC-PL AP

‘O Yusuf’ (Joseph)! Turn away from this! (O woman!) Ask forgiveness for your sin. Verily, you were of the sinful.’

(Chapter (12:29) su:rat Yu:suf)

In (21a), the verse makes clear that an unintentional mistake is not grounds for blame, nor will it count as a mistake that will lead to asking for forgiveness on the part of the believer, for no harm was committed. But it explicitly states that a mistake is one that is intended in the heart (i.e., premeditated). Of significance is the fact that this meaning is conveyed through the quadrilateral root [ʔ-x-T-ʔ] (boldface in the transliteration line), which shows that the lexical adjective /muxTiʔ/ is not necessarily face-threatening, but simply indicates that someone has erred (in opinion or action). In (21b), the woman who deliberately attempted to seduce Prophet Joseph is described as being of the sinful and was further commanded to ask for forgiveness.
Notice that the lexical adjective *l-xaTīʔi-na*, whose root is the triliteral [x-T-ʔ] (boldface in the transliteration line), is used so as to signify an intentional mistake or a face-threatening act. Following this exposition, the lexical adjective *muxTiʔ* is argued to mean that the person in his/her statement has steered away from the truth due to unintentional lack of knowledge or ignorance. In this sense, *muxTiʔ* is not seen as face-threatening, but rather as face-enhancing, for it presents the party disagreed with the opportunity to correct his/her statement, not to use it as ground for further contestation, as shown in example (22) below:

(22)

Example (22) above constitutes a response to a prior statement by Dr. Faisal Al-Qassim who holds the view that “ideological groups are good only for fighting because they fight with faith, but they are never good for political ruling.” The Iraqi male in (13) directly disagrees with Dr. Al-Qassim by using several moves. He prefaces his disagreement with an occupational term of address (i.e., *ʔustaḍ* ‘teacher/mister/master’) followed by Dr. Al-Qassim’s first name (i.e., Faisal) to soften the impact of the upcoming disagreement. He then voices his disagreement by using the lexical adjective */muxTiʔ*/ only on this statement, which indicates he is agreement with everything else so as to point out that Dr. Al-Qassim has steered away from the truth unintentionally. He then provides an explanation as to why he finds Dr. Al-Qassim’s claim to be
wrong. He elegantly cites Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) for being ideological, yet successful in political ruling.

The provided explanation functions as a reminder for Dr. Al-Qassim to correct his statement to reach a common ground. Had the lexical adjective /xa.Tiʔ/ been used in lieu of /muxTiʔ/, the overall impact of the disagreement would have been face-threatening irrespective of the pre-supportive and post-supportive moves, for the speaker’s utterance could be interpreted as Dr. Al-Qassim is intentionally making false claims, despite his knowledge of the truth. All in all, the speaker gives Dr. Al-Qassim the benefit of the doubt in that Dr. Al-Faisal is not intentionally making false claims. Accordingly, as argued above, the use of the lexical adjective /muxTiʔ/ is not face-threatening but rather face-enhancing and politic in the discourse of disagreement.

3. The use of فارغ /fa.riy/ ‘empty’ (ADJ)

The adjective فارغ /fa.riy/ ‘empty’ constitutes another recurrent lexical adjective used by online commentators to voice their disagreement. It is derived from the trilateral root [ف - ر - غ] /f.r.y/, which literally denotes the notion of containing nothing. In the context of disagreement, it literally denotes that a prior claim or proposition has no solid content to it or it is meaningless and irrelevant to the subject of discussion. In this sense, its use is seen as face-aggravating, for it implicitly says that the interlocutor is unable to make meaningful and germane claims or propositions. To lessen the overall impact of this adjective, the use of /fa.riy/ is often followed by a counterclaim to point out the flaw in the original statement. From a grammatical point of view, the adjective /fa.riy/ may (or may not) be followed by a propositional phrase (e.g., /fa.riy mnl-Siha ‘empty from truth’). It can stand alone or be followed by a PP with no effect on the overall meaning of the utterance as seen in (23) below:
4. The use of /fa:Zi/ ‘empty’ (ADJ)

A closely related adjective to (3) above is the use of the lexical adjective /fa:Zi/ or /fa.Zi/. This adjective is derived from the triliteral root [ف - ي - ض], /f.j.Z/, which expresses vacuousness. That is, in the context of established disagreement, the use of /fa:Zi/ implies that a prior claim is too meaningless to be true due to lacking in ideas or intelligence (e.g., a vacuous mind). It directly points to the stupidity of the person making such claims. Unlike /fa.riy/ frequently followed by a counterclaim, the lexical adjective /fa:Zi(i:n)/ is often followed by several forms of impoliteness (e.g., name calling, negative comments, belittling, etc.) as shown in examples (24) from the political (POL) category and (16) from the religion (REL) category of the corpus below:

(24)

كلام فاضي انت كاذب ابن كاذب
kalam faZi: ʔenta kaða:b ʔibn kaða:b
talk empty you liar son liar
‘[This is] empty talk; you are a liar, son of a liar’

[558 [POL.M.SY.VER.PG]]

In example (24) above, a Syrian male responds to a statement by the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Adel Al-Jubair, who directly points out that the status quo of Syria is due to
President Bashar’s totalitarian style of ruling which has driven the country to war. He performs his disagreement by describing the Foreign Minister’s statement as being too empty followed by a series of name-calling. Not only does he describe Mr. Al-Jubair as a liar, but Al-Jubair’s father, which is a rather common form of name-calling in the Arabic world so as to indicate that lying is hereditary in the family and is passed on from father to son, so as to cast further doubt on Mr. Al-Jubair’s overall logic and sense of soundness.

(25)

Example (25) presents a similar scenario. Mr. Al-Badri Farghali, an opposition member of the Egyptian House of Representatives, holds the view that the collapse of economy is attributed to Egypt’s Muslim brothers. One of the online subscribers finds the previous statement to be untrue and directly disagrees with Mr. Farghali’s view through a couple of moves. First, he describes the parliamentarian’s view as being too empty intensified by belittling Mr. Farghali as having a small brain, that of an ant. It directly points out that having a brain of an ant explains the vacuousness behind Mr. Farghali’s statement, hence the lexical adjective faZi:. Second, he then provides a counterclaim that it is the military that robbed the economy, followed by mocking Mr. Farghali as being his mother’s soul (i.e., mother’s spoiled son). In this context of established disagreement, a mother’s soul is not a term of endearment, but a highly offensive, derogatory term, not because of age-related implicature, but because the word mother is used, which invokes images of honor in the Arabic-speaking world.

5. The use of عار (عمن/عن) /ṣarin (ṣan/min)/ ‘devoid of’ (ADJ)
Another recurrent lexical adjective is /ʕarin/. It is morphologically derived from the trilateral root [ع - ر - ى] /ʕ.r./, which literally denotes the notion of something being stripped from its contents. Without the following prepositional phrase (ʕan/min ‘from/of’ + NP), ʕarin is equivalent to English bare, nude, or naked – which on its own – does not communicate the notion of disagreement but rather describes a person being stripped of his/her clothes. However, when followed by the PP, it becomes a clear and direct indication of disagreement due to the object of the preposition being a noun signifying truth, credibility, validity and the like. Similar to ɣalaT above, the use of this lexical adjective directly indicates that a prior statement/claim has been negatively evaluated by one of the online commentators. Indirectly, this utterance entails that the interlocutor has been not convinced, but feels that the argument in hand is not based on facts or simply cannot be substantiated, but it does not necessarily indicate that the commentator disagrees with the original interlocutor per se, but rather with the statement itself or more accurately with the facts behind it. In this sense, the adjective ʕarin (ʕan/min) is seen as a dismissive remark that may disrupt the social harmony among the interactants. However, it is often followed by an explanation (or a counterclaim/counterproposal) not necessarily to contradict but rather to mitigate its force and to explain the rationale behind the unfavorable judgment as seen in example (26) below:

(26)

هـذا الكلام عـار عـن الصـحة فـسـيدنا محمد وـأصـحـابة كـانوا أـشداـء فـي المـعارك وـمـع ذلـك أـسسوا دوـلـة وـحكـمـوها بـالعدل

haḍa-l kalam ʕarin ʕan ?aS-Saḥah fa-sai:dina Mohammad wa ?aS-Sahabi-his
This talk devoid of the-truth because-master-our Mohammad and companions-his

kanu: ?aʃida:? fi-l maʃarik wa maʃ ḍalika ?assasu: dawlatalan wa ḥakamu-ha bi-l-ṣadil
were tough in battles and with that founded state and ruled it with justice

wa kanat ʕalamatan fariqatan fi tarix-l baʃari:ja.
and was milestone distinctive in history-the humanity

‘This talk is unfounded, for Muhammad and his companions were tough in battles; however, they established a country and ruled it with justice, which was a distinctive milestone in the history of mankind.’

Example (26) constitutes an instance of disagreement in response to Dr. Al-Qassim’s claim that ideological groups are not good for political ruling but only for fighting. The Syrian male uses the lexical adjective /ʕarin ʕan + NP/ to indicate that Dr. Al-Qassim’s claim is void of substantiated facts. In this sense, ʕarin ʕan constitutes a face-threatening attack, implying that Dr. Al-Qassim is unable to make claims that are based on substantiated facts. However, the speaker softens the blow of his direct disagreement by making a counterclaim via citing historical figures including Prophet Mohammad and his companions who were successful in political ruling best manifested in the establishment of the Islamic State stretching from the Arabian Peninsula all the way to China and parts of Europe. The counterclaim serves to mitigate the disagreement by giving Dr. Al-Qassim a substantiated fact, unlike the original claim, which according to the disagreeing party, is not based on solid facts.

6. The use of سخيف/saxi:f/ ‘ridiculous’ (ADJ)

The lexical adjective سخيف saxi:f ‘ridiculous’ is derived from the tri-consonantal root [s-x-f], which denotes the notions of foolishness and ridiculousness, but most crucially those of weakness and having no value. In the context of established disagreement, the use of this adjective indicates that a prior claim is weak or has no value to the discussion. While it can be used to describe the person making the claim (e.g., ʔanta saxi:f ‘you are ridiculous’), it is often
directed at his/her statement, not the person per se, at least per the corpus of this study. Nowhere did it appear to describe the interlocutors, but rather their statements, claims, arguments, questions, etc. Regardless, *saxi:f* is still argued to be face-threatening whether directed toward a person or his/her argument, for it makes one’s claim as being dismissed and unoriginal or weak to the conversation. Below is an illustrative example from the social (SOC) category of the corpus:

(27)

\[
\text{‘Seriously this is ridiculous thinking; respect is not about kissing hands.’} \\
\text{[#55 [SOC.F.JO.VER.GR]]}
\]

Example (27) above was extracted from a conversation posted on the Facebook Group ‘Ladies Only’, primarily devoted for the discussion of social topics briefly outlined in Section 4.2 above. In this conversation, one female online user posted that “a good woman is one who kisses her mother-in-law’s hand, so as to show respect.” Implied is the assertion that a bad woman is one who does not do so. This statement was received with a mix of agreement, disagreement or neither of the two. However, disagreement constituted the majority of responses. In (27) above, a Jordanian female disagrees through the use of the lexical adjective *saxi:f*, which describes the mentality behind such a thought rather the person, i.e., it does not say that the person making the claim is */saxi:f/*, but rather the statement itself. Yet, it comes off as an extremely strong dismissive remark, disrupting the social harmony among the interactants. Its face-threatening effect is even boosted through the use of the adverb *\text{\textasciitilde an \textscar d\textcent} \text{\textasciitilde ad}* ‘seriously’. It is then followed by a contradictory statement that kissing hands does not equate with respect.
4.3.1.2.2 Extrinsically Negative Adjectives of Disagreement

Not all adjectives are intrinsically negated or encompass inherently negative meanings. Some are indeed affirmative and carry inherently positive meanings, but are made negative via the following extrinsic means: (i) words of negation, (ii) words of exception and (iii) particular propositional phrases. Each group will be briefly described below.

Syntactic Words of Negation

A variety of syntactic means are used to express negation in Arabic. However, only the ones appearing with adjectives are adequately explained below. This category includes the negation words لا/la: ‘no/dos not/do not’; ما/ma: ‘no/does not/do not’ and ليس/la:jsa/ ‘not be’, as shown in the following examples:

(28)
لا:jsa Sahi:han (ADJ) biZ-Zaru:ra
not true necessarily
‘[this is] not necessarily true.’

(29)
haZa-l haki la:jsa sahi:ihil saji:dil-ʔazi:z ʔana bahib ʔel-ward ʔaktar
this talk not true sir-my dear I like the-flower more
‘this is not true, my dear sir. I like flowers much more’

(30)
ma: mazbu:T ja: zalameh ʔerham-na
Not true O man have mercy upon-us
‘[it is] not true. O man have mercy upon us.’

As can be seen from the examples above (28 through 30), the lexical adjectives used in this context are externally negated with ma: and la:jsa, rendering contradictory and/or opposite
statements (i.e., not $P$) to the original proposition (i.e., $P$) proposed by another online user. It is to be noted that the syntactic particle $ma$: appears in its vernacular variant as مش /meʃ/ ‘not’ among almost all Arabic speakers observed in the corpus.

**Syntactic Words of Exception**

This category involves the use of the exception word غير $ɣai:jr$ ‘non-, un-, -in’ followed by an adjective (ADJ) in order to express “negative or partitive concepts denoting the absence of a quality or attribute” (Ryding, 2005, p. 649). Similar to the syntactic words of negation, $ɣai:jr$ has the effect of rendering statements contradictory and/or opposite to earlier statement. Below are some examples from the corpus:

(31)

غير صحيح كتاب الله يصلح لكل زمان ومكان  
ɣai:jr Sahih (ADJ) ... kita’bu Allah jasluh li-kul zaman wa makan  
un- true ... book Allah serves for-every time and place  
‘[This is] untrue … the book of Allah is valid for every time and place.’

[#94 [REL.M.LEB.MSA.PG]]

(32)

كلام غير صحيح 90% فاسد. وال10% شريف  
kala:m ɣai:jr Sahih (ADJ) fa-90% fasid wel-10% faɾi:f  
talk un- true for 90% corrupt and the-10% honest  
‘[this] talk is untrue for only 10% is honest and the [remaining] 90% is corrupt [referring to Egyptian law enforcement forces].’

[#216 [POL.M.EG.MSA.PG]]

Also found in the corpus are certain lexical adjectives as part of a prepositional phrase. They appear in the form of an inherently positive adjective followed by a prepositional phrase (PP) that denotes the after-effect of the original statement on the interlocutor, carrying negative reactions and/or emotions. These include some of the following lexical adjectives: مثير للغثيان $muθi:r lil-yabaj:an$ ‘vomit-stimulating/nauseating’ مثير للإشمئزاز $muθi:r lil-ʔiʃmʔiʔaz$ ‘disgusting’, and the like. Below are some illustrative examples:
As examples 33 and 34 above present, the lexical adjective *muθi:r* carries positive connotations – those of excitement and enjoyment – and does not express disagreement on its own. However, when post-modified by a prepositional phrase PP (i.e., PREP + (·) Noun\(^{21}\)) indicating unpleasantness, a different meaning is rendered. That is, it denotes a negative after-effect on the interlocutor primarily caused by the original post. In (33), an Algerian male disagrees with Dr. Al-Qassim’s statement that religious groups are only good for fighting. He finds such a statement as causing him distress and sickness, hence the use of the prepositional phrase *lilyaθaj:an* ‘for-vomiting’. Similarly, a Syrian female disagrees with the moderator’s statement that cases of sexual harassment in Arab countries exceed those reported in the West.

\(^{21}\) The symbol (·) is used here to indicate a noun that carries negative denotation and connotation.
She finds this claim unsupported, causing her negative feelings such as disgust and abhorrence. It should be noted that the lexical adjective can be followed by other negatively denoted prepositional phrases such as للقرف /lil-qaraf/ ‘for-disgust’, للسخرية /lil-suxri:ja/ ‘for-mockery’ and the like, but these did not appear in the corpus of this study.

The preceding description has been of the lexical items under the grammatical category of adjective (ADJ). Some are intrinsically negative adjectives directly expressing disagreement, while others are made negative via extrinsic means of negation (i.e., negation words, exception words). Table 23 below presents a summary of the lexical adjectives identified in the corpus to express the act of disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication:

Table 23: Recurrent Lexical Adjectives of Expressing Disagreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intrinsically Negated Adjectives</th>
<th>Lexical Adjective</th>
<th>IPA Transcription</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>غلط</td>
<td>/yalaT/</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مخطئ</td>
<td>/muxTiʔ/</td>
<td>Mistaken</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>فارغ</td>
<td>/fa:riy/</td>
<td>Empty</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>فاضي</td>
<td>/faZi:/</td>
<td>Empty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عار (ع. من)</td>
<td>/karin (ʕan/min)/</td>
<td>Devoid (of)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>سخيف</td>
<td>/saxiːf/</td>
<td>Ridiculous</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrinsically Negated Adjectives</th>
<th>Lexical Adjective</th>
<th>IPA Transcription</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Syntactic Words of Negation</td>
<td>ليس صحيحًا</td>
<td>/la:ja Sahiːhan/</td>
<td>Not correct</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/mish Sahih/</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/mish saʔ/</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ما مزبوط</td>
<td>(VER)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ما مزبوط</td>
<td>(VER)</td>
<td>/maː mazbuːT/</td>
<td>Not correct</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ما مازربوط</td>
<td>/meʃ mazbuːT/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii) Syntactic Words of Exception</th>
<th>Lexical Adjective</th>
<th>IPA Transcription</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>غير صحيح</td>
<td>/yaiːr Sahiːh/</td>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(iii) Negatively Denoted</th>
<th>Lexical Adjective</th>
<th>IPA Transcription</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>معير للفحيران</td>
<td>/muːbiː:r al-yaθaj:an/</td>
<td>Vomit-Causing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>معير للأشمئزاز</td>
<td>/muːbiː:r lil-laθen:zaːz/</td>
<td>Disgusting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data show that CMC disagreement can also be voiced through the lexical category of nouns (N). Nouns of disagreement appear primarily in two formats: (a) independently and (b) as part of a prepositional phrase. In the former category, a single morpheme (N) shows up independently to signal that a prior claim is not true. Nouns under this category are extensive in Arabic, but only two appear in the corpus: (i) *kiððib* ‘lying’ (*n* = 8) and (ii) *ʔal-ʕaks* ‘the opposite’ (*n* = 13).

The latter category includes nouns that appear as part of a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by a noun. Like English, prepositions in Arabic often refer to a location (*في* /fiː/ ‘in’), direction (*من* /min/ ‘from’) or time (*في* /fiː/ ‘at’). In the context of disagreement, prepositional phrases are, however, rarely used to denote literal meanings, but are often used figuratively to convey the particular meaning of disagreement. These appear independently and sometimes followed by explanations, counterclaims and the like. Some of the recurrent nouns in prepositional phrases identified in the corpus include the following forms along with descriptive statistics summarized in Table 24 below:

**Table 24: List of Nouns Used for Expressing Disagreement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th><em>F</em> in POL</th>
<th><em>F</em> in REL</th>
<th><em>F</em> in SOC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>على العكس</td>
<td>/kalal-ʕaks/</td>
<td>on the contrary</td>
<td>36 (50%)</td>
<td>25 (35%)</td>
<td>11 (15%)</td>
<td>72 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>بالعكس</td>
<td>/bil-ʕaks/</td>
<td>on the contrary</td>
<td>11 (31%)</td>
<td>9 (26%)</td>
<td>15 (43%)</td>
<td>35 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>على النقيض</td>
<td>/salan-naqi:Z/</td>
<td>in contrast</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
<td>17 (81%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.1.4 Other Items of Disagreement

This last category of lexical items includes all other grammatical categories that cannot otherwise be listed under the other categories (i.e., verbs, adjectives and nouns) identified above. These involve the use of fixed or formulaic expressions which expresses that one interlocutor is in disagreement with another.

4.3.1.4.1 Formulaic Expressions

Several formulaic (or fixed) phrases surfaced in the corpus to signal the speech act of disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication. Formulaic expressions are “fixed in form, often non-literal in meaning with attitudinal nuances, and closely related to communicative-pragmatic context” (Van Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004). They appear in all three topic areas of the corpus (i.e., POL, REL, and SOC). These are as follows:

1. The use of ... صحح ولكن/Sahih wa lakin/ ‘true but …’

This formulaic expression occurs in all of the three area topics of the corpus. The highest frequency of occurrences is observed in the SOC category (n = 26), followed by the REL category (n = 14), while the POL category exhibits the lowest number of occurrences (n = 3). This formulaic expression pragmatically signals that the interlocutor is in partial agreement with a prior claim, but still signifies disagreement. Given Arabic embraces several (L) varieties, this fixed expression has undergone dialectal change, where its composing components (the adjective ‘Sahih’ along with the coordinator ‘lakin’) have acquired new forms such as ‘Sah’ or ‘sah’ for true and ‘bas’ for but. Example (35) below nicely presents an illustration of this fixed expression:

(35)

النساء تحب الشاورما أكثر من الورد (1)
The women-PL like-they the-Shawarma more than the-rose
‘Women like gyros more than roses.’

صحيح بس الورد احلى (2)
Sahih bas ?il-ward ?ahla
True but the-roses prettier
‘[That is] true, but roses are prettier.’

In the above interactional exchange, a male poster jokingly makes the claim in MSA that women prefer Shawarma (a sandwich made of sliced lamb or chicken and vegetables wrapped in pita bread) over roses. Implied is the assertion that women prefer food over romance. The implied claim in T (1) gets disputed by the majority of the Group Subscribers, especially the females. In T (2), a female poster from Jordan does not deny the prior claim, but rather expresses temporary agreement with the claim in T (1). Yet, she turns around and disagrees with the interlocutor in T (1) by asserting that roses are prettier than food, indirectly negating the implied assertion of the male speaker in T (1). This formulaic expression has been noted by politeness theorists (e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1987) and conversation analysts (Sacks, 1987 [1973]).

2. The use of موافق (معك/معاك) بس/mu:wafiq mašak(i) lakin(bas) …/ ‘I agree with you but …’

The use of mu:wafiq mašak(i) lakin(bas) …‘I agree with you but …’ also occurs in all three categories of the corpus with the highest frequency observed in the SOC (n = 11), followed the POL and REL categories with seven and five occurrences, respectively. This formulaic expression is not much different from (1) above at the semantic and pragmatic levels, but differs syntactically in which the speaker uses the active particle (AP) /mu:wafiq/ of /wafa:qa/ to indicate a higher degree of harmony with the speaker. The AP /mu:wafiq/ is optionally followed by the preposition maš ‘with’, which mandatorily attaches to the second person singular possessive masculine pronoun (-ka), the second person singular possessive feminine pronoun (-ki), the second person dual possessive masculine/feminine pronoun (-kuma), or the second
person plural possessive pronoun (-\textit{kum}). Example (36) nicely illustrates this formulaic expression:

(36)

\begin{align*}
\text{T (1)} & \quad \text{ترامة المنيحة هي الي بتوس ايد هماتها} \\
& \quad \text{؟؟للما:؟ ء؟؟ة؟ب؟؟د ء؟؟ةح؟ماثة} \\
& \quad \text{The woman-the good she who kisses hand mother-in-law--her} \\
& \quad \text{‘A good woman is one who hand-kisses her mother-in-law.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{T (2)} & \quad \text{موافق معك ولكن هناك اساليب اخرى للاحترام} \\
& \quad \text{موع؟ق معك ولكن هناك اساليب اخرى للاحترام} \\
& \quad \text{Agre-AP with-you and but there ways-PL other for-respect} \\
& \quad \text{‘I agree with you, but there are other ways to show respect.’}
\end{align*}

[\text{#1079 [SOC.F.JO.VER.GR]]}

In T (1), a male speaker makes the proposition that a good wife is one who kisses her mother-in-law’s hand as a token of respect, courtesy and politeness. Apparently, the speaker seems to equate respect with kissing hands, which is grounds to agreement or disagreement. Although this statement may sound outrageous, it, nonetheless, received a lot of agreement, \textit{unsurprisingly}, from the females themselves\textsuperscript{22}. Almost equally however, the same statement was disputed by the other female Group Subscribers, who voiced their disagreement either directly or indirectly. In T (2), a female speaker partially agrees with the speaker’s claim in T (1) via the use of the AP /\textit{mu:wafiq}/, but she quickly retracts her agreement by indirectly asserting that respect should not be equated with hand-kissing. Rather, she proposes that respect can be shown via other ways. Similar to (1) above, the use of this fixed expression is seen as an attempt of relational work (Watts & Locher, 2003) invested on the part of the female speaker in T (2) to maintain social harmony among the Group Subscribers.

\textsuperscript{22} The practice of hand-kissing is deeply ingrained in the Arab culture, reinforced by Qur’anic verses that call for the good treatment of parents and warn against treating them with disrespect. The same logic applies to the mother-in-law by the virtue of being a mother/parent to the daughter-in-law.
3. The use of /ʔal-маʔаðira (or ʕafwan) lakin (bas)/ ‘pardon (me), but …’

Another formulaic expression in the data /ʔal-маʔаðira (or ʕafwan) lakin (bas)/ ‘pardon (me)/I am sorry, but …’. It appears only in the SOC category of the corpus ($n = 16$). Unlike in (1) and (2) above, this formulaic expression indicates neither partial agreement nor regret on the part of the speaker, but rather often functions as mitigator/preface to soften the blow of the upcoming disagreement. It is followed by a counterclaim (e.g., an alternative statement) or a challenge (e.g., a request for clarification). The following example illustrates this expression precisely:

(37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ىویاما یضحکع عینا بزویرة احد من اساجد فی امریکا.....</td>
<td>Obama laughs on-us in visiting one the-mosques in American ‘Obama fools us [Arabs] by visiting a mosque in America …’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عفوا دکتور حنا یلی بنضحکع ع حالنا</td>
<td>Pardon doctor but it is us who fool ourselves.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In T (1), Dr. Faisal Al-Qassem, a well-known political figure in the Arab World, refers to the American President’s recent visit to one of the Islamic centers in Maryland. Dr. Al-Qassem makes the claim that the President’s visit is nothing but an act of deception to fool Arabs, in particular, and Muslims in general. Prior to stating his disagreement, the speaker in T (2) prefaces his disagreement with an apology/regret expression ʕafwan (pardon), followed by the occupational term daktor (doctor/college professor). He then moves to voicing his disagreement by rendering a counter-proposal that it is not Obama that fools Arabs, but Arabs who fool themselves. Although ʕafwan is an expression of apology/regret, it is to be noted that the speaker in T (2) is not apologizing, nor is he regretting his statement, but rather is attempting to soften
the blow of his upcoming disagreement. In this sense, as mentioned above, $safwan$ is a mitigation device (more clarification on mitigation/aggravation will be discussed later in the study).

This expression has been claimed by Kreutel (2007) to be as a formulaic, undesirable feature in English, as it “reduces the authority and power behind a statement and may lead to the disagreement not being taken seriously by the listener.” She reports that non-native speakers of English overuse this expression in voicing their disagreement and further contends that absence of which among native speaker of English signals its inappropriateness in the context of disagreement. Contrary to Kreutel’s data in English, the use of this expression does not indicate failure nor does it imply a weaker position on the part of the speaker. In fact, the recurrent use of this formulaic expression in the corpus ($n = 35$), especially in the social (SOC) category, indicates that it is culturally appropriate among Arab speakers in that it is used to lessen the amount of face-threat expected from an upcoming disagreement and also to maintain social harmony among the interactants, as evident in Example (37) above.

It is should be pointed out $\textit{\textasciitilde al-ma\textasciitilde adira}$ may be slightly different from $safwan$. The former is used in formal settings and from an inferior (son, employee, etc.) to a superior (father, boss, etc.). The latter may be used in informal settings, especially among equals (friends) or – most relevant to this study – when roles are leveled and/or anonymized, where superiors and inferiors have an equal opportunity of interaction regardless of roles be it social status or gender. This in line with Herring and Stoerger (2014), who maintain that Computer-Mediated Communication is inherently democratic, “leveling traditional distinctions of social status and creating opportunities for less powerful individuals and groups to participate on a par with members of more powerful groups” (p. 1).
4. The use of /haða raʔak ?aʃ-faxsi/ ‘this is your personal opinion’

Although the use of /haða raʔak ?aʃ-faxsi/ appears only 5 times in the data, which is relatively less frequent than the other forms covered above, its pervasiveness in face-to-face communication among Arabic speakers led me include it here under the list of formulaic expressions used for expressing disagreement. In this fixed expression, a speaker acknowledges the other party’s claim/opinion, but indirectly expresses that the speaker is not in agreement with the other party. In other words, one’s claim is acknowledged out of respect and courtesy, but it cannot be taken as truth. Below is an example from the REL category of the corpus:

(38)

الحجاب ليس فرضا على المرأة والله أعقل من أن يأمر النساء بالحجاب

The veil is not obligatory and Allah is wiser than ordering women to wear the veil

In the above interactional exchange, the moderator of the Facebook Group “Kalimati” (literally my word) posts the statement in T (1) above to the home page in an attempt to solicit responses from the group subscribers. He basically claims that Muslim women are not required to wear the veil, for Allah cannot be wise in doing so. His statement gets disputed and provokes a relatively long thread of disagreements ($n = 266$), especially from the female subscribers. In T (2), a Libyan female voices her disagreement by using the formulaic expression /haða raʔak ?aʃ-faxsi/. She acknowledges the moderator’s contribution out of respect and courtesy; yet she does not agree with the content of his statement. Although she does not explicitly state her
disagreement, it is understood that she does not adopt the same opinion as that of the moderator. By using the fixed expression *hada raʔak ṭaf-ṭaxsi*, she accomplishes two objectives: (i) she distances herself politely from such a claim, implying that she has a different opinion on the matter that remains unstated, but obvious in the context of disagreement and (ii) she manages to maintain social harmony with the moderator as well as other group subscribers.

The preceding has been an adequate description of the lexical choices Arabic speakers make in constructing their computer-mediated disagreements. It included an account of lexical verbs (explicit and implicit), adjectives (intrinsic and extrinsic), nouns and other lexical items such as the use of formulaic expressions. In what follows, I will provide a detailed description of the syntactic constructions used to express disagreement.

### 4.3.3 Syntactic Means of Expressing Computer-Mediated Disagreement

The data showed that the head acts (the core part of a disagreement sequence independent of other elements) manifested themselves in several different syntactic forms. They appeared as one word (e.g., *la* ‘no’; *ʔuʕaredh* ‘oppose’), two words (e.g., *mif sahih* ‘not true’; *ʔinta muxTi?* ‘you’re wrong) or even three words (e.g., *kalamak mif Sahih* ‘your talk is not correct). They also appeared as multiple sentences of similar or different syntactic constructions: declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatory. Table 25 below presents the major syntactic constructions by frequency of occurrences and percentages:

Table 25: *Distribution of Syntactic Realizations of Disagreements in Posts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamatory</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1400</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 25 above shows, the majority of disagreements had the syntactic form of a declarative sentence or statement, constituting 79% of all the data. The next largest syntactic construction manifested itself in interrogative constructions at a frequency of 178 occurrences, followed by imperative forms \((n = 70)\). Exclamatory forms had the lowest frequency of occurrences \((n = 50)\), constituting only 4% of the data. The four types of syntactic constructions are discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Declarative Sentences

Declarative sentences take the form of a typical statement to perform representative (descriptive) speech acts …. “[that] convey the belief of the speaker that the proposition \([P]\) expressed is true or will turn out to be true” (König & Siemund, 2007, p. 6). In Searle’s taxonomy of the speech acts, disagreements are representatives (or assertives) in which a speaker commits to the truth (or falsity) of a proposition. Unlike other syntactic constructions (e.g., interrogatives, exclamatives, and imperatives), declarative statements have truth conditions. In the context of established disagreement, when speaker B disagrees with speaker A, he/she believes that speaker’s A original proposition (or prior claim) does not hold true and has a different proposition; therefore, agreement is not possible and the act of disagreement is rendered reactively.

As noted above, declarative sentences made up approximately 79% of the data \((n = 1102)\). This is consistent with Panther and Köpcke (2008), who maintain that the declarative sentence type is basic and that it exemplifies the concept of sentence in its purest form. That is, when compared to the other sentence types, declarative sentences are the default or the unmarked, most natural version of all types so to speak of the linguistic theory of markedness first proposed by Nicholas Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson in the 1930s. A defining feature of
declarative sentences is the type of word order exhibited, be it SVO, VSO, VOS, and so on. Arabic has a relatively free word order, however, with two primary word orders: VSO and SVO. Arabic declarative sentences in VSO word order are referred to as declarative verbal sentences, as the verb (V) precedes both the subject (S) and the object (O), if any. As seen in T (2) of example (39) below, both the subject (understood to be “I”) and the object (saʕadtak) are preceded by the transitive verb (ʔuʕariZ), which is the major syntactic constituent (or parameter) in an VSO order:

(39)

T (1)
لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
la: ju:dʒad muʕtaqalu:n ʔaw taʕði:b fis-sudʒu:n
not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons
‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

T (2)
؟uʕariZ-I-SUBJ saʕadtak-DO
Object excellency-your
‘I object, your Excellency.’

Arabic declarative sentences in SVO word order are called declarative nominal sentences (of Latin nomin/nomen ‘name’), because the head constituent (SUBJ) is a noun preceding either a verb (V) along with its complement or some other type of complement (e.g., N, ADJ, PP, etc.). In either case, the following syntactic constituent would function as the predicate (PRED). Examples (40) and (41) below present an illustration of nominal sentences of both variants:

(40)

T (1)
لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
la: ju:dʒad muʕtaqalu:n ʔaw taʕði:b fis-sudʒu:n
not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons
‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

23 For a succinct discussion of the differences between Arabic nominal and verbal sentences, please see Ryding (2005).
It should be pointed out that traditional Arab grammarians maintain that VSO (verb-initial sentences) is the unmarked word order in Arabic. This may be the case in their reference to Classical Arabic (CA), but not necessarily applicable to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or the many dialectal varieties (VER) spoken across the Arab World, as observed in the corpus of this study. The data of this study are in contrast to this traditional view in that the overall distribution SVO sentences was over three times higher than that of VSO ones. Of the 1102 declarative sentences, only 264 (24%) were VSO, while the remaining 838 instances were SVO, making up over two thirds (79%) of all the declarative sentences in the data.

It has been observed by Dahlgren (1989) that a shift from the canonical VSO to SVO is occurring in Arab vernaculars in his computational study of colloquial Arabic texts. The data support this finding, for approximately 60% of the data ($n = 837$) appeared in the local VER varieties, while the remaining 40% ($n = 563$) were realized in MSA (please refer to Section 4.2 above for general corpus statistics). It is also in conformity with Edwards (2009), who argues
that the canonical VSO has been overridden by SVO in Egyptian Arabic. As noted in Section 4.2 (General Overview of the Corpus), almost 50% of the corpus data were contributed by online posters/commentators from Egypt (please refer to Table 8 for further statistics on individual country/dialect contribution). Finally, my observation is also consistent with Dakwar (2005) who, in her investigation of children’s acquisition of Arabic word order, reports that the SVO order appears only later, even though it is the more frequent order in the adult target language.

4.3.2.2 Interrogative Sentences

A total of 178 (12.7%) disagreements were interrogative sentences, which constitute the second highest syntactic construction immediately after the declarative sentences discussed above. Interrogative sentences were used by the participants primarily to ask questions or simply to request clarification. These fell into two syntactic subtypes: polar interrogatives (closed-ended) and non-polar (constituent) interrogatives (open-ended). The former occurred 99 times (56%), and the latter 79 times (44%). A detailed discussion of both subtypes follows.

4.3.2.2.1 Polar Interrogatives

Polar interrogatives require a simple “yes or no” response, where “yes” functions to affirm and “no” to negate. Of the 178 identified interrogative constructions, polar questions constituted 55.6% (n = 99), expressed primarily through the addition of the canonical interrogative particle لله /hal/ in MSA as demonstrated in (42) below:

(42)

T (1)
أوباما يضحك علينا بزيارة احد المساجد في امريكا…."
Obama laughs on-us in vising one the-mosques in American ‘Obama fools us [Arabs] by visiting a mosque in America ….’

T (2)
الدكتور فيصل القاسم هل انت مسلم؟
The-doctor Faisal the-Qasim are you Muslim?
‘Doctor Faisal Al-Qasem, are you Muslim?

Another interrogative particle apparent in both the MSA and VER data is the use of the glottal stop [], known as *hamza* and orthographically represented as <ء>. As an interrogative particle, the *hamza* does not function as an independent letter, but rather as a diacritic that attaches to the word-initial long vowel <أ>, producing the following orthographic representation <أ>. A major difference between *hal* and the *hamza* is that only the *hamza* can be used for a question with a negated statement as exemplified in (43) below:

(43)

T (1)

لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون

لا: ٖلدَكَّة ٖمُطَّقَلَعْن ؟أّذِبُك ٖفِسَذْعْن

not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons

‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

T (2)

ألا يملون من الكذب الوقح المفضوح؟؟؟؟؟؟

ألا: ٖلاَّ جَمِيلٍ كَمِنَ الْمُقْتَحِمِ ؟الْمَفْضِحِ

not bore-they from the- lying the-presumptuous the-unmasked

‘Don’t they get bored of telling blatant and obvious lies?’

However, the data showed that the online Arabic users utilize other strategies to ask polar questions, including, particularly, their intonation contour. In this strategy, the interrogative particle *ھل*/*hal* and the hamza are dropped altogether and a question mark is placed at the end of the sentence as exemplified in (44) below:

(44)

T (1)

لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون

لا: ٖلدَكَّة ٖمُطَّقَلَعْن ؟أّذِبُك ٖفِسَذْعْن

not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons

‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

T (2)

أنت مصدق الذي بقوله؟

أنت مصدق الذي بقوله؟

َإِنْتَ مِسْتَذْكِرَ َكَيْفَ بِتَقُولُ؟

You believe-AP that say-you?
'Do you actually believe what you are saying?  

Finally, the data showed that the online users/commentators use interrogative tags placed exclusively at the end of a sentence. Although similar to the interrogative particles discussed above, the interrogative tags imply the expected answer, i.e., they orient the addressee to opt for either an affirmative or a negated answer. Example (45) below shows that the speaker in T (2) expects a positive answer:

(45)

الجماعات العقائدية لا تصلح للحكم أبداً

The-groups the-ideological no suit for-ruling never

‘Faith-based groups are never suitable for [political] ruling.’

هذا يعني أن الأنبياء لا يصلحون للحكم .. أليس كذلك ؟


This means that—the prophets no suit for-ruling .. [?]not that?

‘This means that the prophets are suitable for ruling, isn’t that so?’

4.3.2.2 Non-polar (constituent) Interrogatives

Non-polar questions, also known as constituent, do not call for a simple “yes/no” answer, but rather seek information. They begin with the Arabic interrogative words such as مَا /maː/ (what), مَا /maː/ (what), لِمَا /limaːː/ (why), مِن /man/ (who), كِيف /kayfa/ (how), أين /ʔayna/ (where) so on. Of the 178 identified interrogative constructions, non-polar questions had an overall frequency of 79 occurrences, constituting 44.4% of all interrogative constructions in the corpus. Examples (46) through (48) present sample interrogative words as they appear in the corpus:
الجماعات العقائدية تاريخيا لا تصلح للحكم أبداً …

‘Faith-based groups are never suitable for [political] ruling.’

تاريخيا ماذا تقصد؟

‘What do you mean by historically?’

لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون

‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

الي اين صدرتم المساجين...

‘To where did you confiscate the prisoners?’

أوباما يضحك علينا بزيارة احد المساجد في امريكا

‘Obama fools us [Arabs] by visiting a mosque in America …’

ما دخل هذا بذالك؟ أوباما ليس …

‘What is this to do with that? Obama is not …’

It is worth noting that although the interrogative words /ma:/ and /maða:/ both correspond to the English *what*, their usage in MSA is syntactically governed by the following constituent. That is, the former *ma:* appears only after a noun as in (48) above, but *maða:* can be licensed
only before a verb, as seen in (46) above. Along with the MSA data, several colloquial interrogative words surfaced in the corpus. These are summarized in Table 26 below:

Table 26: Frequently Used MSA & VER Interrogative Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>MSA</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>VER</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>مَا [ma:]</td>
<td>ما [ma:]</td>
<td>شو [ju:]</td>
<td>(SY, JO, LEB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لَا [la:]</td>
<td>لَيْث [laih]</td>
<td>يش [ei]</td>
<td>(SY, JO, LEB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>اِيْه [aih]</td>
<td>شنُو [nu:]</td>
<td>(IQ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>اِیْه [aih]</td>
<td>(EG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where</th>
<th>أَيْن [ayna]</th>
<th>وِين [wein]</th>
<th>(SY, JO, LEB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>فِين [fein]</td>
<td></td>
<td>(EG, SA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How</th>
<th>كَيف [kayfa]</th>
<th>كِيف [keif]</th>
<th>(SY, JO, LEB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>اِزَاي [izzay]</td>
<td></td>
<td>(EG)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why</th>
<th>لَمَا [lima:]</th>
<th>لَشْو [leiw]</th>
<th>(SY, JO, LEB, SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>لِيْه [leih]</td>
<td></td>
<td>(EG)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>مِن [man]</th>
<th>مِين [mi:n]</th>
<th>(JO, SY, LEB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>مِنْو [minu]</td>
<td></td>
<td>(IQ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the second highest percentage of syntactic constructions is realized in interrogatives suggests that the use of questions (polar and non-polar) may be central to voicing disagreements among Arabic speakers in Computer-Mediated Communication. However, it should be made clear that the speakers in T (2) are not necessarily looking for an answer, nor are the speakers in T (1) are expected to do so. The utilization of interrogatives as rhetorical questions serves to communicate a wide variety of pragmatic functions (accusation, cast doubt, sarcasm, etc.) that will be further elaborated upon in Section 4.3.3 below.

4.3.2.3 Imperative Constructions

Disagreements were realized through the use of imperative sentences, most commonly used to function as commands, instructions, or orders. Bolander (2013) notes that the imperative is one of the constructions through which disagreement can be syntactically realized. In the current study, imperatives were used to issue commands/criticisms that cast doubt on the validity of the claim(s) made by the speakers in T (1) and to cause face damage by expressing strong
disapproval of the original proposition in T (1). The imperative sentences had an overall frequency of 70 occurrences, constituting only 5% of the syntactic constructions in the corpus. These fell into two subtypes: affirmative (positive) and negated (negative). Both subtypes discussed below.

4.3.2.3.1 Affirmative (or positive) Imperatives

Affirmative imperatives in Arabic are basically formed through a process of deletion that targets the present tense prefix of the imperfect form \( \rightarrow (ja/ju/ji) \rightarrow (\text{ta/ti/tu}) \) The schematic representation in Figure 14 below demonstrates how basic imperatives are derived in Arabic:

![Figure 14. The Derivation of Imperatives in Arabic](image)

Some of the positive imperatives that appeared in the corpus are provided in Table 27 below. They range in their degree of aggressiveness, for some (qu:l) are used to request clarification; however, the majority are used to cause face-damage.

Table 27: List of Frequently Used Imperatives in CMC Disagreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative Verb</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Imperative Verb</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>قول</td>
<td>/qu:l/</td>
<td>Say</td>
<td>حاول</td>
<td>/hawil/</td>
<td>Try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خاف</td>
<td>/xaf/</td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>ارحمونا</td>
<td>/ʔirhamu:-na/</td>
<td>Have mercy upon us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خذ</td>
<td>/xuø/</td>
<td>Take</td>
<td>سم</td>
<td>/sallim/</td>
<td>Say hello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ركز</td>
<td>/rakkiz/</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>التهي</td>
<td>/ʔitlihi/</td>
<td>Get busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اتقي</td>
<td>Fear (God)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪baTTal/</td>
<td>Stop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اسمحلي</td>
<td>Allow me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪iʔy{kis/</td>
<td>Invert (the sentence)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪radʒis/</td>
<td>Revise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اخرس</td>
<td>Shut up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪iʃqal/</td>
<td>Be up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪irdʒis/</td>
<td>Go back</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪ʔitaqi/</td>
<td>Get lost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪ru:h/</td>
<td>Go away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪ʔuskut/</td>
<td>Be silent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪ʃu:f/</td>
<td>Look</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪fakkir/</td>
<td>Think</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪Tu:b/</td>
<td>Repent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>﹪ʔitrikin/</td>
<td>Go cornered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.3.2 Negated (or negative) Imperatives

Negated imperatives in Arabic follow the same derivation process outlined in Figure 14 above, however, with the addition of the negation word ﹪la:/ placed in front of the verb, as exemplified in example (49) below:

(49)

T (1)

الإعجاز العلمي في القرآن كلام فارغ

؟ال-؟يز ز ؟ال-تلى ب قرآن كلام فارغ
The-miracle the-scientific in-the Qur’an talk empty
‘The scientific miracles in the Qur’an are empty talk’

T (2)

لا تأخذ نصائح من واحد ماضيه فظائح

؟لا: ﹪؟وؤو-IMP نا سى؟ىح مى وىىد مى زىح طا كىح
not take advices from one past-his scandals
‘Do not take advice from someone whose past is scandalous.’

As example (49) above shows, the underlined positive imperative is preceded by the negation particle ﹪la:/ to render its negative counterpart. In T (2), the interlocutor uses the negated imperative to cast doubt on the speaker’s proposition in T (1) by implying that the speaker in T (1) has a disgraceful past that his statements should not be taken into account.

4.3.2.3 Exclamatory Constructions

Exclamatory sentences constituted the last syntactic construction used to realize the speech act of disagreement. In the context of disagreements, exclamations are not used to inform the other party about a situation, but rather to express an affective reaction to a prior
claim/proposition, i.e., for expressing a state of disbelief, surprise, wonder and astonishment at a prior claim. Only 50 sentences manifested themselves in the exclamatory construction, constituting the lowest percentages of all syntactic structures in the corpus (4%). This scarcity is in line with Ryding (2005), who notes that Arabic exclamatory sentences are rare in the media, but they are more abundant in literary contexts (p. 519).

Michaelis (2001) notes that exclamations can be performed by a wide variety of formal structures and constructions cross-linguistically. In Arabic, /ʔuṣlu:b ʔat-taʕadʒub/ (literally the exclamatory style) is formed by placing the syntactic particle /ma:/ before a Form IV verb (ʔafʕal) of a certain adjective, to be followed by a noun in the accusative case, or a pronoun suffix that denotes the possessor of the quality being affectively reacted to and to end with an exclamation mark (!). Cantarino (1974) describes the word following /ma:/ as “an elative in the accusative of exclamation” (II:210). That is, it is a comparative adjective, hence the Form IV verb (ʔafʕal/أفعل) to indicate a comparison of two things or people. Figure 16 below shows how exclamatory sentences are formed in Arabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UR (Input)</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>کذاب /kaθðab/</th>
<th>Liar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV Verb</td>
<td>أكذب ?akθab</td>
<td>More/most lying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ما أكذب /ma ?akθab</td>
<td>What more/most lying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of the Particle /ma:/</td>
<td>ما أكذب /ma ?akθab</td>
<td>What a liar-he (him)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of the pronoun suffix</td>
<td>ما أكذبه! /ma ?akθabahu</td>
<td>What a liar! (what a liar her is)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16. Derivational Process of Arabic Exclamatory Sentences

The use of exclamatory sentences to voice the speech act of disagreement is well-attested in the literature with various intakes on it. Kreutel (2007) regards the use of exclamations as an undesirable feature in the context of disagreement, when uttered by non-native speakers of
English. Locher (2004) classifies the use of exclamation (or exclamative sentences) as one of the common linguistic/pragmatic strategies used by online users to express the act of disagreement. In her investigation of agreements and disagreements in online blogs, Bolander (2013) notes that exclamatory constructions, along with other syntactic constructions, were used in the context of disagreement. As noted above, the use of exclamatory sentences in the current study was primarily implemented to indicate disbelief to a prior claim/proposition. Since EXCLAMATION is of the pragmatic strategies adopted in this study, further clarification will be provided in Section 4.3.3 below.

4.3.3 Summary and Conclusion

The preceding discussion has shown that the communicative act of disagreement can be syntactically realized by various types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. However, the data showed that Arabic speakers have a proclivity to voice their disagreement through the use of declarative sentences (79%). This is in line with Bolander (2013), who also found that 75.8% of the disagreements identified in her study of online blogs were realized in declarative sentences.
4.3.4 Pragmatic Vehicles of Expressing Computer-Mediated Disagreements

A variety of pragmatic strategies were used by Arabic speakers in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in voicing their disagreement. The combination of syntactic forms and lexical meanings constituted conventional disagreement strategies among Arabic speakers. The data showed that Arabic speakers employed a total of 10 major strategies, outlined in Table 28 below:

Table 28: Distribution of Pragmatic Strategies of Disagreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>(f)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cum %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negatively Marked (Impolite)</td>
<td>VERBAL ATTACK</td>
<td>VA</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERBAL IRONY</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positively Marked (Polite)</td>
<td>COUNTERCLAIM</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGUMENT AVOIDANCE</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTRADICTION</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHALLENGE</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLICATION</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCLAMATION</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILD SCOLDING</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRRELEVANCY CLAIM</td>
<td>IC</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1605</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shading indicates the level of Relational Work embedded in each strategy.**

As Table 28 above shows, Arabic speakers varied their use of strategies, ranging from polite ones (e.g., COUNTERCLAIM and ARGUMENT AVOIDANCE), through socially acceptable or politic strategies (e.g., CONTRADICTION, CHALLENGE, SUPPLICATION, EXCLAMATION, MILD SCOLDING and IRRELVANCY CLAIM) to impolite ones (e.g., VERBAL ATTACK and VERBAL IRONY). Overall, negatively marked behaviors constituted 29%, positively marked behaviors 26%, unmarked behaviors 45%, constituting almost half of the data.

Prior to delving into the minute details of above-specified strategies, two important issues must be acknowledged. First, strategies may overlap and such overlapping may (may not) be as clear as desired. Attempts were made to reduce the amount of overlapping to better present a
relatively accurate picture of each individual strategy introduced here. Second, it should be pointed out that each of the above-listed pragmatic strategies embraces several minor or sub-strategies to further account for the complex nature of the act of disagreement. These will be indicated in lower case letters, when appropriate. What follows is a detailed description of each strategy, supported by illustrative examples from the corpus. The strategies are presented in accordance with the frequency of occurrences from highest to lowest with the exception of ACT COMBINATIONS, as these will be demonstrated last.

4.3.3.1 CONTRADICTION (CT)

The most frequently used strategy of disagreement among Arabic speakers was invested in the implementation of CONTRADICTIONS (CTs). CTs had an overall frequency of 428 occurrences, which constituted 27% of all identified disagreements \((n = 1605)\). In this strategy, the Arabic speakers voiced their disagreement by uttering the negated proposition expressed by the previous claim. CTs can be either affirmative or negative, contingent upon the previous claim. That is, if the claim in T (1) is affirmative, the CT in T (2) is to be negative and if the claim in T (1) is negative, the CT in T (2) is to be affirmative. Examples (50) and (51) below nicely demonstrate the polarity aspect of CTs:

(50)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{T (1)} & \quad \text{لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون} \\
& \quad \text{la: ju:d3ad muʃtaqalu:n ʔaw taʃ:]b fis-sudʒu:n} \\
& \quad \text{not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons} \\
& \quad \text{‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{T (2)} & \quad \text{يوجد ياسعادة الباشا} \\
& \quad \text{ju:dʒad ja saʃ]adit ʔil-baʃʃa} \\
& \quad \text{exist O Excellency the-Pasha} \\
& \quad \text{‘there are, your Excellency the-Pasha.’}
\end{align*}
\]

[#61 [POL.M.EG.MSA.PG]]
(51)

T (1) 99% من أمناء الشرطة شرفاء
99% min ʔumana: ʔʃurTa ʃurafa:-ADJ
99% from deputies police honest
’99% of police officers are honest.’

T (2) 99% من أمناء الشرطة مش شرفاء
99% min ʔumana: ʔʃurTa ɣayir ʃurafa:-ADJ
99% from deputies police except honest
’99% of police officers are not honest.’

However, the data showed that not all CTs were realized through uttering the negated proposition (i.e., statement of the opposite) as discussed above. CTs were also realized through one of the following sub-strategies: (1) Flat NO, (2) explicit performative nouns, (3) explicit performative verbs, (4) implicit performative verbs, (5) intrinsically negated adjectives, and (6) extrinsically negated adjectives. The sub-strategy termed flat NO takes place when a speaker simply utters only the negation particle ِلا/la:/ (no) in response to a prior claim. Sub-strategies were previously introduced in Section (4.2.2) and some are outlined in Table 30 below:

Table 29: Sub-Strategies of CONTRADICTION (CT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Strategy (CT)</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat NO</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td>/la:/</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Noun</td>
<td>العكس</td>
<td>/ʔal-ʕaks/</td>
<td>The Opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Verb</td>
<td>ارفض</td>
<td>/ʔarfuZ/</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit Verb</td>
<td>لا اتفق</td>
<td>/la: ʔatafiq/</td>
<td>Does/do not agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically Negated Adjective</td>
<td>غلط</td>
<td>/ʔalaT/</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsically Negated Adjective</td>
<td>ليس صحيح</td>
<td>/lajsa Sahih(an)/</td>
<td>Not true</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CTs were most apparent in the SOC category of the corpus at a total of 188 occurrences (44%), especially manifested in the sub-strategy Flat NO. The second highest utilization of CTs was reported in the POL category (n = 137), primarily in the form of the sub-strategies
Explicit/Implicit Verbs. The REL category had 103 CTs primarily manifested in the use of inherently or exherently negated adjectives such as /laįsa Sahįh(ə)/ ‘not true’. Table 30 below reports the same results.

Table 30: Distribution of CONTRADICTIONS in the Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political (POL)</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious (REL)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (SOC)</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike CCs discussed below allowing for further development in the conversational exchange, CTs are oriented towards closing the discussion rather than allowing further development in the negotiation of meanings; thereby, CTs are contractive, for they directly deny a prior claim and fail to provide alternatives in the context of established disagreement. CTs are realized syntactically and semantically with more directness. Syntactically, CTs are realized by the negation word, whether as a flat no or preceding the main verb (e.g., la: ‘no’; la: ʔuwafiq ‘I do not agree’). Semantically, they are realized through either inherently negated lexical verbs (e.g., ʔarfūF ‘refuse’; ʔuxalif ‘oppose/disagree’) or adjectives (e.g., ɣalaT ‘wrong’; faZi ‘empty’).

Although CTs are more direct than CCs, CTs do not necessarily attack the competency, rationality of the other or even the speaker’s identity as in VERBAL ATTACKs. Consider the conversational exchange in (52) below:

الحجاب ليس فرضا على المرأةة والله أعقل من أن يأمر النساء بالحجاب (1)  

t  ؟al-?):dash;ab laysa farZZan wa Allah ؟aʕqal min ؟an jaʔmur ؟an-nisa: bil-?):dash;ab  
The-veil is not obligatory and Allah wiser from that commands the-women fi-the hijab  
‘The veil is not obligatory and Allah is wiser than ordering women to wear the veil’

لا اتفق معك في هذه النقطة (2)  

la: ʔatafiq maʕak fi haδihi ؟al-nuqTa  
no agree with-you in this the-point  
‘I do not agree with you on this point

[#1023 [REL.M.EG.MSA.GR]]
In (52) above, the speaker in T (2) is in direct disagreement with the speaker in T (1) through the use of the implicit performative verb *la: ʔatafiq* (I do not agree). He is simply opposing to the content of the speaker’s statement in T (1), as clearly indicated by the use of the lexically euphemized expression *fi haðihi ʔal-nuqTa* ‘on this point’ to maintain social harmony. While the speaker in T (2) directly disagrees with the speaker in T (1), he may be in agreement with the speaker in T (1) on other issues, but not on the current issue. This reinforces the claim that CTs do not necessarily attack the rationality of the other party, but rather object to the content of the statement under discussion.

However, the data showed some CTs, especially those uttered via the use of certain inherently negative adjectives, can be highly confrontational in the context of disagreement. These include َفْارَغ /fariɣ/ ‘empty’, َفَاضِي /faZi/ ‘hollow/empty’, and ُسْخَيْف /saxi:f/ ‘ridiculous/absurd’. These three adjective not only deny/reject the truth value of a prior claim, but also attack the interlocutor as one being unable to make a sound claim. The assertions made through the use of these three adjectives are seen as highly confrontational or what Turnbull et al. (1998: 5), term as ‘meta-dispute acts’, because they are oriented towards not only closing up negotiation, but causing face-damage. The interpretation of the above-mentioned adjectives is in alignment with that of several native speaker of Arabic, who confirmed the highly contestational nature of such adjectives, even among close friends and relatives.

4.3.3.2 COUNTERCLAIM (CC)

The second highest strategy manifested itself in the form of COUNTERCLAIMS (CC). This strategy occurs when the speaker in T (2) proposes an alternative claim that does not directly contradict nor necessarily challenge the other party’s prior claim/proposition. The CC strategy had 395 occurrences, constituting 25% of the data. As seen in Table 31 below, the
highest frequency of CCs occurred in the POL category \((n = 168)\), followed by the SOC category \((n = 142)\), while the REL category had the lowest number of CCs \((n = 85)\).

Table 31: *Distribution of COUNTERCLAIM CLAIMS (CCs) in the Corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency ((f))</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political (POL)</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious (REL)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (SOC)</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>395</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CCs allow for further development and negotiation of the claims/propositions introduced in T (1), i.e., they are expansive for allowing room for diversity of opinions. As exemplified in the conversational exchange in (53) below, the speaker in T (2) does not agree with the speaker’s claim in T (1) that the American President, Barack Obama, intends to fool Arabs and Muslims by his visit to one of the Islamic Centers in America. The speaker in T (2) seems to have a different perspective on Mr. Obama’s visit that it should not be interpreted as an act of deception, but rather as a normal visit from the American President to his own people, regardless of their religion.

(53) T (1)

أوباما يضحك علينا بزيارة أحد المساجد في أمريكا…

\begin{quote}
Obama laughs on-us in vising one the-mosques in American
‘Obama fools us [Arabs] by visiting a mosque in America ….’
\end{quote}

T (2)

أوباما يزور مسجد في أمريكا من أجل المسلمين الأمريكيين

\begin{quote}
Obama visit mosque in American from for the-Muslims the-Americans
\end{quote}

In-meaning other the-citizen the-American to-him the-respect even if he was Muslim

‘Obama visits a mosque for the Muslim Americans. In other words, the American citizen is respected even if he is Muslim’

[#460 [REL.M.EG.MSA.PG]]
In line with Muntigl and Turnbull (1997), CCs in this study are contractive or expansive by keeping the conversation open as demonstrated in Example (54) below:

(54)

In (54) above, the speakers are arguing if loyalty still has any value in today’s times. In T1, speaker A (male) makes the claim that being loyal does not seem to matter anymore; it is meaningless. Speaker B (female) disagrees by providing a CC in T2 by partly agreeing (i.e., Loyalty has decreased these days), yet offering an alternative claim that loyalty may have decreased due to influence of money on people. By partially agreeing with the speaker in T (1), the speaker in T (2) acknowledges A’s contribution and by providing an alternative claim, she tries to keep the conversation open as evident in T 3 (i.e., yeah probably). Rather than prefacing her disagreement with an IC, the speaker in T (2) chooses to delay her use of the lexical item ḥašikī (disagree) until the very end of her sentence. This postponement of disagreement has been recognized by Kruetal (2007) as a desirable move on the part of the interlocutor.
It is worth noting the majority of CCs were realized via the use of declarative sentences ($n = 330$), followed by interrogatives ($n = 31$), while the remaining 34 CCs were delivered through the imperative, exclamatory constructions. This clearly suggests that there is no one-to-one correspondence between form and function. That is, a certain syntactic form can be used to achieve various pragmatic functions. Simultaneously, a certain pragmatic function may be delivered through various syntactic constructions and structures. This finding is consistent with Sadock and Zwicky (1985: 192), who too found “it is possible to use nearly any sentence type with the effect of nearly any other, under appropriate circumstances” (p. 192).

4.3.3.3 VERBAL ATTACK (VA)

The third most frequently used strategy manifested itself in the use of language best described as verbally attacking the other party. Some analysts might consider this strategy as supportive move or an adjunct to the head act. However, because of its uniqueness, regularity and frequency, it seemed rather appropriate to include it here as a separate strategy. VA was only considered a separate strategy if (and only if) the entire response/post (comment) was composed of taboo, abusive language where no other strategies could have been selected. That is, VA constitutes the head act. However, if the foul language occurred before or after another head act, VA was not selected and was considered as pre(post)-supportive moves rather than head acts, i.e., aggravator (see subsection 4.3.1.2).

VA had a frequency of 294 occurrences, constituting 18% of the data. The VA strategy occurred mostly in the REL category with 143 instances (48.6%), followed by the POL category at 123 occurrences (41.8%). The SOC category had the lowest number of VAs at a frequency of 28 occurrences (9.5%).
The interactant(s) in T (2) intentionally used abusive language intended to discredit the other party through a wide array of ways including, but not exclusive to, the following: name calling, derogatory nominations, cursing, belittling, profanities, obscenities and many others to cause severe face-damage, not only to the other party’s positive face wants but also their negative face wants as well. (Culpperp, 2011 [1996]). Additionally, the interactants in T (2) also used non-linguistic (or paralinguistic) cues to cause face-damage, like gestural spitting and farting sounds, both of which signify aggression and lack of concern for the other party. The following are some examples of this strategy:

(55)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T₁</th>
<th>ت₂</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>الإعجاز العلمي في القرآن كلام فارغ</td>
<td>فعلاً انك يهودي صهيوني خنزير</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The miracle the-scientific in-the Qura’n talk empty</td>
<td>truly you Jew Zionist pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The scientific miracles in the Qur’an are empty talk’</td>
<td>‘Truly you are a Zionist, a Jew, and a pig.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above revolves around the issue of scientific miracles in the Holy Book of Qur’an. The speaker in T (1) denies the fact that the Qur’an embraces scientifically proven facts and considers it empty talk. The speaker’s claim in T (1) aggravates the speaker in T (2). Rather than arguing back through possibly providing a counterclaim or counter-evidence from the Holy Book of Qur’an to dispute the validity of the speaker’s statement in T (1), the speaker in the second exchange (T2) verbally attacks the speaker in T (1) by calling him names, a Zionist Jew, which evokes the images of betrayal and usurpation in Arabic-speaking countries, followed by xanziːr ‘pig’, which brings to mind images of filthiness and impurity. The speaker’s choice of words and sequence in T (2) is carefully calculated, for it is explicitly stated in the Qur’an that
Jews were transformed into apes and swines as a punishment for their transgression in the matter of the Sabbath (i.e. Saturday\textsuperscript{24}). In other words, he draws on his religious belief to construct the insult.

Example (56) below was extracted from the POL topic area of the corpus. In this interactional exchange of ideas, the speaker (the Egyptian Minister of Interior Affairs) claims that there are no prisoners, nor is there torture in the Egyptian prisons. The interlocutor in T (2) disputes the truthfulness of the statement in T (1) by using the most aggravating vulgar phrase 
\textit{kus \?ummak} ‘your mother’s vagina’ due to its reference to the sacred status of mothers in Arabic-speaking countries. Indeed, the use of this vulgar phrase is the strongest form of aggravation, when used in disagreement or used elsewhere. It is worth noting that the combination of the polite address term \textit{sa\ʕadit} (Excellency) and the occupational term \textit{wazir} (Minister) is a clear manifestation of what Culpeper (1996) refers to as mock politeness; they are obviously insincere and in the example serve the reverse function of politeness.

(56)

T (1) لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
\begin{quote}
لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون.
\end{quote}

\begin{align*}
\text{T (1)} & \text{ لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون} \\
& \text{la: ju:zd\digm\msh \mu\dima\dmt\mcq:lu:n \?aw \ta\digm\digm\msh \fis-\sd\digm\msh} \\
& \text{not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons} \\
& \text{‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’}
\end{align*}

T (2) كس امك ياسعادة الوزير
\begin{quote}
كس امك ياسعادة الوزير.
\end{quote}

\begin{align*}
\text{T (2)} & \text{ كس امك ياسعادة الوزير} \\
& \text{kus \?umm-ak ja sa\digm\digm\msh \al-wazi:r} \\
& \text{vagina mother-your O Excellency the-minister} \\
& \text{‘Your mother is a cunt, your Excellency the Minister.’}
\end{align*}

As noted above, due to higher frequencies of stand-alone instances of abusive, aggressive language, it was deemed appropriate to consider it as a separate strategy used by Arabic speakers to voice their disagreement. The higher frequencies of VAs can be accounted for due to the

\textsuperscript{24} As reported in the Qur’an, the Jews were ordered to refrain from fishing on Saturday, but they disobeyed God’s order and set up their nets the day prior.
factor of anonymity of Computer-Mediated Communication (Baym, 1996; Locher, 2004, Angouri and Tseliga, 2010). The findings agree with those of Shum & Lee (2013), who report that using vulgar phrases was a common strategy of disagreement among native speakers of Cantonese in two online communities. The use of VA as a direct strategy of disagreement was also attested in several other works such as Locher and Bousfield (2008), Locher (2005), Cuplpeper (1996), Bousfiled (2008), among others. Contrary to Muntigl and Turnbull (1997), who consider IRRELEVANCY CLAIMS (IC) as most aggravating, my data showed that use of VAs constitutes the most aggravating strategy in the context of disagreement.

4.3.3.4 VERBAL IRONY (VI)

The fourth most frequently used strategy of voicing disagreement among the Arabic speakers manifested itself in the use of VERBAL IRONY (VI). VIs had an overall frequency of 182 occurrences, which constituted 11% of the data. In this strategy, the speaker in T (2) agrees to a prior claim, yet to be understood as communicating the opposite of agreement; that is, disagreement. In other words, VI is not implemented by the Arabic speakers to ground previously presented claims/propositions, but rather to express sarcasm or criticism. Consider the following example:

(57)

\[
\begin{align*}
T (1) & \text{ لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون} \\
\text{la: } & \text{ju:dʒad muʃtaqalu:n ?aw taʃdʒib fis-ṣu:n} \\
\text{not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons} \\
\text{‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
T (2) & \text{انا عارف ان مفيش تعذيب في بس هزار} \\
\text{ʔaŋa ʔarif ʔin maʃʃ ʔaʃdʒib fi: bas hiza:r} \\
\text{I know (AP) not torture in but teasing}
\end{align*}
\]

It should be pointed out that the strategy VERBAL IRONY is used in the current study an umbrella term, covering several related terms such as sarcasm (Locher, 2004), sarcastic irony, conversational irony (Leech, 1983), and sarcastic humor. No attempt was made as to distinguish among these terms, for they are seen to fall outside the scope of this study and most crucially require access to paralinguistic cues (prosodic) to which I had no access.
‘I know there is no torture; there is only teasing.’

In (57) above, the speaker in T (2) agrees with the statement in T (1) that there is no torture in the Egyptian prisons; yet she sarcastically states that prisoners may still get teased. By doing so, she clearly flouted the supermaxim of the Maxim of Quality (“Try to make your contribution one that is true.”) as well as the submaxim of the Maxim Quality (“Do not say what you believe to be false”). The female speaker in T (2) above is likely to have violated the Gricean Maxims purposefully to create negative pragmatic effect through the use of sarcasm, i.e., to express a different meaning (i.e., disagreement) than what is literally uttered (i.e., agreement). A similar effect is provided in Example (58) below:

(58)

لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
la:     ju:dʒad muʃtaqalu:n ʔaw taʃðiːb fî-sudʒ:u:n
not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons
‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

أصلا احنا البلد الوحيدة التي مش فيها سجون
ʔaSlan ʔiħna ʔilbalad ʔiħwaħida ʔilli mʲf fi-ḥa sudʒ:u:n
Primarily we the-country the-only that not in-it prisons
‘Indeed we are the only country that does not have prisons.’

Similarly, the speaker in (58) sarcastically agrees with the Egyptian Minister of Interior’s statement in T (1) that there are no prisoners, nor is there torture. He, however, goes for the extreme and states that there are no prisons in Egypt to begin with. His statement cannot be taken as holding true, for no country is prison-free. As such, Grice’s Maxim of Quality is violated to create the pragmatic effect of disagreement with the minister’s statement that there are no prisoners, nor is there torture.
Of the 182 instances of VI, the POL category had the highest frequency of occurrences with 122 instances, constituting 67% of all VI occurrences. This implies mistrust and lack of confidence on the part of the Arabic speakers towards their political governments, which may explain the recent military coups and social upheavals that took place in the Middle East. The second highest frequency of VI occurred in the SOC category \((n = 40)\) with an overall 22 percent, notably by the male participants. The lowest frequency of VI was reported in the REL with only 20 occurrences, constituting only 11% of VI. This can be accounted for due to fact that VI goes against the general teachings of Islam and those of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), whereby honesty is highly valued and a sign of believers. The same results are reported in Table 32 below:

Table 32: Distribution of VERBAL IRONY in the Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political ((POL))</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social ((SOC))</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious ((REL))</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although recognized under different labels, the use of VI has been noted by politeness theorists such as Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) as well as impoliteness theorists such as Culpeper (1996). Leech (1983) developed the Irony Principle, which states “if you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn’t overtly conflict with the PP [Politeness Principle], but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature” (p. 82). Apparently, Leech does not consider VI to be a Face-Threatening Act (FTA) and indirectly presents VI as a permissible act to mitigate the force of face-damage to the addressee.
Leech’s view is not similar to Brown and Levinson, who view VI as an FTA, hence categorized along with contradictions, verbal attacks, imperatives and commands as a direct Bold-On-Record (BOR) strategy. Yet, he posits VI as a potential Off-Record strategy, through the violation of the Gricean’s Maxims, for face mitigation. Adopting Leech’s Principle of Irony, Culpeper (1996) includes VI in his model of impoliteness as one of the major strategies to perform impoliteness, termed as *sarcasm* or *mock politeness*, which reads as “performing the FTA with politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations (p. 356). He further clarifies that sarcasm (or mock politeness) is intended to cause social disharmony as opposed to banter, which restores social harmony.

My observation of VI as a separate strategy in the context of disagreement is in line with Locher (2004), who also reports that irony/sarcasm is used by her participants to express the act of disagreement. It is also consistent with Shum & Lee (2013), who introduce *making ironic statements* as one of the most commonly used strategies among Cantonese speakers in their expression of the act of disagreement.

4.3.3.5 CHALLENGE (CH)

The fifth most commonly strategy used by the Arabic speakers in voicing disagreements was invested in the use of CHALLENGE (CH), (Muntigl & Turnbull, 1997) syntactically realized often through the use of interrogatives (polar and non-polar). CHs constituted 7% with 107 occurrences, the majority of which \((n = 54)\) appeared in the POL category, followed by the REL and SOC categories at 32 and 21 occurrences, respectively. Table 33 below summarizes the frequency of CHs in all three topic areas of the study corpus:

Table 33: *Distribution of VERBAL IRONY in the Corpus*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political (POL)</th>
<th>Frequency ((f))</th>
<th>Percentage ((%))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

179
| Social (SOC) | 21 | 19.6 |
| Religious (REL) | 32 | 29.9 |
| **Total** | **107** | **100%** |

CHs included utterances in which a speaker questioned an addressee’s prior claim and demanded that the addressee provide evidence of his/her claim as demonstrated in (59) below:

(59)

الأمارات_Q_قبلة_المفسدين_ا_ة

الإمارات قبلة المفسدين
The UAE is a destination for the corrupt

على أي أسس؟
على أي أساس؟
On what basis

‘The UAE is a destination for the corrupt.’

In (59) above, the speakers are arguing about the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The speaker in T (1) makes the claim that the UAE is basically a corrupt country. The speaker in T (2) disagrees with the speaker’s claim in T (1) by questioning his knowledge of the UAE and further demands that he provide evidence for this claim. Via the use of the pragmatic strategy CH, the speaker in T (2) implicates that the addressee cannot back up their claim; therefore, should not be making false claims. Compared to CONTRADICTIONS (CTs) discussed above, CHs attack the knowledge and competency of the addressee.

Contrary to Muntigl and Turnbull arguing that CHs in English are used exclusively to demand evidence, the data showed that CHs serve other sub-functions such as casting doubt on a speaker’s prior claim as exemplified in (60) below:

(60)

لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
لا يوجد معتقلين أو تعذيب في السجون
not exist prisoners or torture in the prisons
‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

 لماذا بنيتم سجون جديدة أما؟

why build-PAST-you prisons new then

‘Why did you build new prisons, then?’

In (60) above, the speaker in T (2) does not agree with the Minister of Interior’s statement by questioning the rationale behind building new facilities so as to cast doubt on the claim provided in T (1). Given his position, it can be assumed that the Minister of Interior is (or at least should be) aware of any new prisons being built. In this sense, the use of CH does not necessarily implicate lack of knowledge on the part of the Minister nor does it demand evidence; rather, it serves to cast doubt or more succinctly to imply that the Minister is lying or simply not telling the truth.

In addition, the data showed that CHs were also used to simply request further clarification from one speaker to another. In (61) below, the speaker in T (2) requests of Dr. Al-Qassem to clarify what he means by historically. The speaker is apparently unsure if Dr. Al-Qassem is referring to ideological, religious groups in current times (e.g., ISIS) or past times (e.g., Prophet Mohammad and his companions).

(61)

المجتمعات العقائدية تاريخيا لا تصلح لحكم أبداً

The-groups the-ideological historically not suit for-ruling never

‘Faith-based groups are never suitable for [political] ruling.’

تاریخیا ماذا تقصد؟

Historically what mean-you?

‘What do you mean by historically?’
Ranked immediately after IRRELEVANCY CLAIMS (ICs), CHs are regarded as second most aggravating according to Muntigl and Turnbull (1997) and as an undesirable feature in Kruetel (2007). Although this may be true in face-to-face disagreements, it, nonetheless, does not seem applicable to faceless communication, where participants appear to use CHs as a way of voicing their disagreements to previously presented information. It is, in fact, culturally appropriate to voice disagreement via the use of CHs, as a high value is placed upon the act of questioning for it creates a sense of involvement. The practice of questioning is deeply rooted in the Arabic culture, where it is believed that the more questions one asks, the smarter he/she will sound. It is not uncommon for Arabic speakers to contradict, deny and negatively evaluate each other. In this sense, CHs among Arabic speakers are similar to Jewish (Schiffrin, 1984) and Greek (Tannen & Kavaka, 1992) disagreements characterized by confrontation and a considerable amount of questioning.

4.3.3.6 SUPPLICATION (SP)

A relatively frequent and commonly used strategy used among the Arabic speakers in CMC disagreements was seen through the use of SUPPLICATION (SP). This culturally specific strategy (not catalogued by any other researchers investigating the act of disagreement) had an overall frequency of 88 instances, constituting 5% of the data. In the context of disagreement, SP revolves around the use of a strictly religious language, wherein the speaker in T (2) expresses his/her disagreement via the use of a certain religious statement to indicate their disapproval of the claims/propositions made in T (1). Primarily, SP utterances were invested in the use of the religious expression known as the hawqala, which is the semi-acronym for the Arabic statement لا حول ولا قوة الا بالله (la: hawla wa: la: qu:wata ?illa: billa:h/), roughly translated into English as There is no power or might except in Allah. The hawqala is a form of duSa: (literally supplication or
prayer) used among Muslims, whenever they are faced with a calamity or simply faced with something beyond their control. Significant to understanding this expression is the lexical noun حول hawla, which semantically encodes the concept of not only change but also transformation. That is, real change and transformation can only be done through the power of Allah. In the data, the interlocutors implemented this expression to convey disapproval of a prior claim. That is, they are not in agreement; yet, there is nothing that can be done about it, but to disagree indirectly via supplications that only Allah can change the current status, as exemplified in Example (62) below:

(62)

T (1)
لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
la: ju:dʒad muʃtaqalu:n ?aw ta$di:b fis-su:n
‘There are no prisoners or torture in the-prisons’

T (2)
انا أقول لا حول ولا قوة الا بالله
‘I say there is no might or power except in Allah’

In (62) above, the female speaker in T (2) disagrees with the Minister’s statement in T (1). She personalizes her stance via the use of the first person pronoun ʔana, followed by the lexical verb ʔaqu:l, which – taken together – is a metalinguistic comment to preface her disagreement. She chooses to go off-record by being indirect through the implementation of the religious expression of hawqala. That is, she is indirectly communicating that she does not approve of the Minister’s claim, but she is powerless; therefore, she seeks refuge in Allah who has the power and might to change the status quo. By uttering the hawqala, she flouted Grice’s Manner Maxim for being ambiguous (i.e., religious quote) and for being incomplete (i.e., incomplete utterance).
As a stand-alone expression, the *hawqala* appeared 57 times in the data with equal frequencies in the REL and POL categories at 27 occurrences, respectively. The SOC category had the lowest frequency of the *hawqala* expression at only 3 instances. Such higher frequencies in the REL and POL categories indicate the appropriateness of such an expression in religious and political contexts. This is not to say that the lowest frequency of *hawqala* in the SOC category necessarily signals inappropriateness. Rather, it can be accounted for by invoking the notion of topic controversy. That is, given the uncontroversial and light-hearted nature of the SOC-related topics, the participants did not feel the need to be indirect or ambiguous, hence other indirect strategies were sought.

Not all supplications were realized in the form of *hawqala*. Other supplications included the use of حسبى الله ونعم الوكيل /حسبى: Allahu wa: naʕmal- waki:l, roughly translated as *Allah is Sufficient, and He is the Best Trustee*. This statement is sometimes referred to as *hasbla*, which is a semantic blend of the first two words of the statement *hasbi: Allahu*. Similar to *hawqala*, the use of *hasbla* indicates disagreement on the part of an interlocutor to a prior claim and/or proposition. It uses the same logic as the *hawqala*, wherein a speaker disagrees with another, but chooses to render his/her disagreement rather indirectly through the use of this religious expression. The *hasbla* had a total of 31 occurrences in the corpus, which constituted 35% of all SP instances (\(n = 88\)). Consider the following example:

(63)

الزهر مفرخة للإرهاب (1)
\(\text{?al-ʔazhar mafraixa lil-ʔirhab}\)
The-Azahr incubator for-terrorism
‘Al-Azhar Mosque is a breeding ground for terrorism.’

حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل (2)

\(\text{hasbi: Allahu wa: naʕmal- waki:l}\)
sufficient Allah and best guardian
‘Allah is Sufficient for me and the Best Trustee.’

The conversational exchange above revolves around Al-Azhar Mosque/University located the Capital City of Egypt, Cairo. Founded in 970, Al-Azhar undertakes the mission of spreading Islam and the Islamic culture. To this end, Al-Azhar scholars are endowed with issuing religious fatwas (religious decrees), some of which have been controversial (e.g., adult breastfeeding) and some have been perceived as implicit calls to terrorism. In (63) above, Ahmad Musa, an Egyptian TV broadcaster and journalist, attacks Al-Azhar by describing it as a breeding ground for terrorism and terrorists. His statement stirred the feelings of some of the online subscribers (n = 4,332,554 at the time of data collection) of the Arabic Facebook Page Al-Shorouk News, who view Al-Azhar as the chief center of Arabic literature and Islamic learning in the world. The speaker in T (2) does not hold the same opinion as of Mr. Musa’s. He indirectly disputes Mr. Musa’s claim through the use of the hasbla expression. That is, he does not believe that Al-Azhar is a breeder of terrorism. However, he is unable to do anything about it so as to change Mr. Musa’s view; therefore, he chooses to go off-record to express his disagreement.

4.3.3.7 EXCLAMATION (EX)

EXCLAMATION (EX) is another strategy found in the data. It occurred 45 times, which constituted 3% of the data. The highest frequency of EX appeared in the POL category (n = 25), followed by the SOC and the REL categories, at 15 and 5 occurrences, respectively. In this strategy, the speakers expressed their surprise and/or astonishment to a prior statement. That is, the speakers emphasized his/her emotional reaction to what they take to be a falsity by either casting doubt on the truth value of the other party’s statement or accusing the other party of some wrongdoing. Consider the following examples:
In the above conversational exchange, the speakers are arguing about whether the phenomenon of harassment has been witnessing drastic increase in the Arab World. The speaker in T (1) makes the claim that the number of harassment cases are increasing in the Arab World. This statement gets disputed by many subscribers of the Facebook Group ‘Ladies Only’, which is mostly dominated by females. One of the female subscribers (T2A) expresses her disagreement by strongly stressing her emotional reaction by casting doubt on the truth value of the claim expressed in T (1). She describes such a claim as being one of the strangest things she has ever heard of. Given that she is a woman in the Arab World, she is indirectly saying that she has not been harassed, nor has she noticed any changes. She cannot relate to the claim clearly stated in T (1); therefore, she holds it to be false and should be taken with caution. Unlike the speaker in T (2A) casting only doubt, the female speaker in T (2A) above accuses the speaker in T (1) of fabrication through her use of the exclamatory construction (outlined in sub-section 4.3.2.3) to denote the possessor of the quality being affectively reacted to; that is, lying.
4.3.3.8 MILD SCOLDING (MS)

Another common, non-rude politic strategy found among the Arabic speakers in disagreements is—termed in this research—MILD SCOLDING (henceforth MS). As I argue above, MS can be considered politic in Arabic because the offense which led to the use of MS do not constitute serious infringement to Arabic speakers (i.e., slightly face-threatening). In other words, they are regarded as small breaches or even small lies, which would require only MS. In this sense, bigger lies and breaches would require greater scolding which may be accompanied with aggravators or the use of taboo language to emphasize the seriousness of the offense committed.

There were 29 instances of MS, constituting 2% of the data. Broadly speaking, MS in Arabic-speaking societies occurs when an older speaker (e.g., parents) explicitly uses the Arabic word عيب/ˈʕajb/26 ‘shame’ to a younger speaker (e.g., children), as an indicator of some violation of socially or religiously agreed-upon rules. In this sense, MS in this study is different from Goffman (1956), whose work centered on embarrassment, but is more similar to Scheff (2006) who sees shame as arising from a threat to the social bond, no matter how slight. In the established context of disagreement where age is irrelevant (or inaccessible for the most part unless indicated somehow), the use of MS signals that one speaker has found a fault or an unsoundedness in another’s claim (i.e., T1). As such, it is used to point out the fault and further make the other party feel disgraced by his/her prior statement(s), which are deemed as lacking truth-value and are threatening the social bond, hence the need to feel ashamed and disgraced.

Consider the following example:

---

26 Although the concept of shame covers other terms such as embarrassment, bashfulness, shyness, etc., it is only used in the current study to mean disgraceful or dishonorable. For a discussion of the lexical semantics of shame in Arabic, please see Al Jallad (2010).
In (65) above, the speaker in T (2) does not agree with the speaker’s statement in T (1) and holds the view that the veil is not optional but obligatory to be worn by all Muslim women. To communicate this opposite view, he voices his disagreement via mildly scolding the other party for having violated a religiously agreed-upon rule (i.e., woman veiling) and as such should be ashamed of himself and of such a statement. Let us consider other examples, where MS is used to voice disagreement for violating a socially agreed-upon rule:

(66)

In T (2A), the speaker does not hold the same view as that of the Egyptian Minister of Interior. He obviously takes the Minister’s statement, as a pure example of truth fabrication, for
he believes that it just cannot be true that there are no prisoners nor is there torture. He expresses his disagreement by shaming the Minister for fabricating the truth, which is considered an explicit violation of socially agreed-upon rule (i.e., do not lie!). Although the use of the occupational term of address (i.e., Minister) can still be seen as an attempt to give deference, it is, nonetheless, used in this context to remind the Minister that given his position, lying is not an option.

Similarly, the female speaker in T (2B) disagrees with the Minister by scolding his statement, which is also taken as untrue. She, however, does not remind him of his governmental position, but rather of his age. In other words, age should be the drive behind telling the truth. As mentioned above, lying is often associated with children and it is taken to correlate negatively with age, i.e., the older one gets, the less lies he/she will tell. This again suggests that lying deliberately violates one of the socially agreed-upon principles in Arabic-speaking societies, hence the use of MS to remind and advise the speaker that it is not acceptable to do so and indirectly invites him/her to correct their actions.

4.3.3.9 IRRELEVANCY CLAIM (IC)

The IRRELEVANCY CLAIM (IC) strategy occurred when a prior claim was dismissed by one of the online commentators/posters. This category manifested itself in several forms including, but not exclusive to, the following: (a) syntactically declarative nominal sentences (e.g., mish muhim ‘it is not important’), (b) syntactically declarative verbal sentences (e.g., la juhimuna ‘it does not concern us’), (c) syntactically imperative sentences (e.g., ghor bas ‘just get lost’), and syntactically interrogative sentences (e.g., men ayana atytum bihadhi alxurafat ‘where did you come up with these myths?’). Once again, this suggests that there is no one-to-one
correspondence between form and function as the above examples show. ICs had a frequency of 21 occurrences in the data, which constituted only 1% of the data.

Muntigl and Turnbull (1997, 1998) contend that ICs are most aggravating, for they render one’s prior claim as irrelevant to any discussion. Langlotz and Locher (2012) support this view and further note that ICs constitute pure opposition, limiting any further development because they attack “the social skills of making relevant claims” (p. 1594). However, in the corpus ICs do not always dismiss one’s prior claim, nor they do implicate lack of making relevant claims, but rather sometimes invite the original poster to rethink his/her statement often times by rendering an alternative perspective to the issue at hand as seen in example (67) below:

(67)

T (1)

أوباما يضحك علينا زيارتنا أحد المساجد في أمريكا …

Obama laughs on-us in vising one the-mosques in American
‘Obama fools us [Arabs] by visiting a mosque in America …’

T (2)

لا يهمنا أوباما أو غيره المهم توحيد صفوفنا

no matter Obama and-not other-him the-important uniting lines-ours
‘Obama (or anyone else) does not matter to us; what matters is our unity’

Example (67) revolves around the current circumstances in the Middle East best characterized by the rise of ISIS and social upheavals. In T (1), the speaker makes the statement that Obama fools the Muslims, whether in the United States or anywhere else, by visiting a mosque in Maryland, USA. The speaker in T (2) finds the content of the speaker’s statement in T (1) to be irrelevant to the current discussion and dismisses the claim altogether. Yet, he invites the speaker in T (1) to adopt an alternative perspective by focusing more on the concept of unity, which should be the vocal point of the discussion. In this sense, ICs are not the most aggravating strategies and the data of this research do not support such a claim.
4.3.3.10 ARGUMENT AVOIDANCE (AA)\textsuperscript{27}

Another strategy that surfaced among the Arabic speakers was ARGUMENT AVOIDANCE (AA). AA occurred when some subscribers deliberately refrained from commenting on a certain topic of discussion. The essence of this strategy is to avoid expressing disagreement and choose to be silent through the use of certain phrases (e.g., \textit{la: tašli:q} ‘no comment’, \textit{bidu:n tašli:q} ‘without comment’, \textit{mif haruđ ġaleik} ‘I will not respond to you, \textit{la: jistahal ġat-tašali:q} ‘not worth commenting on, etc.). These phrases are often followed by a series of periods (i.e., ellipsis as a non-verbal cue) to indicate topic change/avoidance (Darics, 2010). This supports the claim that AAs are often used in the context of disagreement. In this sense, lack of commenting (or absence of direct disagreement) is not meaningless; it is meaningful, for it encodes dissatisfaction with a prior claim, yet indirectly expressing hidden disagreement. Its illocutionary force is used “to question, promise, [deny], warn, threaten, insult, request or recommend, as well as to carry out various kinds of ritual interaction” (Saville-Troike, 1985, p.6). As seen in example (68) below, the speaker in T (2) denies the Minister of Interior’s statement in T (1) by directly stating that he has no comment to share, for the statement in T (1) cannot be true. In other words, commenting (or refraining) will not make a difference, for the prior claim is obviously fabricated.

(68)

\begin{align*}
\text{T (1)} & \quad \text{لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون} \\
& \quad \text{la: ju:d3ad muštaqalu:n ʔaw tašōi:b fis-sud3u:n} \\
& \quad \text{not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons} \\
& \quad \text{‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{T (2)} & \quad \text{لا تعليق} \\
& \quad \text{la: tašli:q} \\
& \quad \text{no comment}
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{27} It is to be noted that others have used the term ‘Message Abondonment’ for this category, but I consider it confusing, for saying ‘no comment’ is in fact a message. The term ARGUMENT AVOIDANCE is more felicitious.
It is worth mentioning that there was one instance of AA, followed by an explanation, justifying the lack of comment. In (69) below, the speaker in T (2) clearly stated that he does not wish to comment, for he may be imprisoned for doing so.

(69)

T (1)
لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون
‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

T (2)
مش عاوز اعلق عشان ما تحبسش
‘I don’t want to comment to avoid imprisonment.’

MAs had 16 occurrences, constituting only 1% of all strategies used among the Arabic speakers. Interestingly enough, 10 of the 16 MA occurrences appeared in the POL category, followed by the REL category ($n = 5$) and only one occurrence in the SOC category. This suggests that the topic of discussion plays a crucial role in substantiating the usage of this very particular strategy (further clarification on the effect of topic will be provided in Section 4.5 below). This strategy has been noted by other researchers, including Kruetal (2007), who describes it as an undesirable strategy of disagreement. In the current study however, the use of MA seems to be topic-dependent and its use is seen as one of the appropriate and possible ways to convey the emotional state of disbelief and dissatisfaction among the interactants. The view of ARGUMENT AVIODANCE being appropriate is in line with Brown and Levinson (1987), who consider it along with silence as non-face threatening acts.
4.3.3.11 ACT COMBINATION (AC)

ACT COMBINATION involves the use of two (or three) of the above-discussed strategies in the overall expression of the act of disagreement. There were 175 instances of double acts, constituting 11% of the data. Table 34 below summarizes the distribution of double acts in the data:

Table 34: Distribution of Double Acts in the Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT + CC</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT + CT</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT + CH</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC + CC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>175</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CT = CONTRADICTION; CC = COUNTERCLAIM; CH = CHALLENGE & IC = IRRELEVANCY CLAIM

As seen in Table 34 above, the most salient form of double acts appears in the form of CONTRADICTIONs (CTs) followed by COUNTERCLAIMs (CCs) with 112 instances, which made up 64% of all double act occurrences. This is in line with Muntigl and Turnbull (1998), who report that the double act of (CT + CC) is the most common act combination in English. Consider the following examples:

(70)

(1) حالات التحرش في الدول العربية في ازدياد

T حالات التحرش في الدول العربية في ازدياد

CASES OF HARASSMENT IN THE ARABIC COUNTRIES ARE ON THE RISE.

(2A) لا... حالات التحرش في العرب أقل منها عند الغرب

T لا... حالات التحرش في العرب أقل منها عند الغرب

‘No. Harassment cases among Arabs are fewer than those of the West.’

In (70) above, the Jordanian female does not agree with the claim stated in T (1). She delivered her disagreement by implementing two strategies, particularly, CONTRADICTION.
(CT), followed by COUNTERCLAIM (CC). The CT was realized in the sub-strategy termed in this study as Flat NO, which functions to negate the proposition made in T (1). The following CC provides an explanation (or an alternative account) to the claim made in T (1), which indirectly negated the claim in T (1). This pattern of DS (CT ‘Flat NO’ + CC) had a frequency of 39 occurrences mostly by the females in the SOC area topic of the corpus.

Similarly, the speaker in (7) below implements a combination of two strategies to voice his disagreement. He uses the Flat NO to directly contradict the speaker in T (1) and then provides a CC in the form of a personal stance to further repudiate the claim made in in T (1).

(7)

T (1)

لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون

not exist prisoners or torture in the-prisons
‘There are no prisoners or torture in prisons.’

T (2)

لا في اخوئه تم حبسه وتعذيبه وضربه

la: fi: ʔaxu:ja tam ħabsu wa-taʃaðibuhu wa-Zarbuhu
no in brother-my was prisoned-PAS and-tortured-PAS and-hit
‘No there is. My brother was imprisoned, tortured and beaten.’

Another prominent form of double act – one that was not found by Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) in their English data– appeared in the form of CONTRADICTION (CT), followed by another CONTRADICTION (CT). The double act of (CT + CT) had a frequency of 42 occurrences, constituting 24% of all act combinations. As demonstrated in example (72) below, the female subscriber rejects the claim made in T (1) via a combination of strategies, both of which qualify as a separate manifestation of CTs. She first uses Flat NO to negate the proposition (i.e., women do not like gyros more than roses) and then she implements an extrinsically negated adjective (i.e., mif Sahih) to further intensify his disagreement with the speaker’s prior statement in T (1).
The remaining 21 (12%) instances were performed via a variety of combinations, including, CONTRADICTION (CT) followed by CHALLENGE (CH) as seen in example (73) below; and IRRELEVANCY CLAIM (IC) followed by COUNTERCLAIM (CC) as seen in example (74):

(73) حزب الله الإرهاب والفوضى بالكلمة
hizbullah ?al-ʔirhab wal- fawZa: bil-kalima
Hizbullah terrorism and-the chaos in-the-wrod
‘Literally, Hizbullah [the political party] stands for terrorism and chaos.’

ليس صحيحا... على أي أساس تم تصنيفه ارهابي؟
laysa Sahih ... ʕala ai ?asas tamma taSnifuhu ?irhabi:
not true ... on what basis was-PAS classified terroristic?
‘That is not true. On what basis was it classified as terroristic?’

(74) اوباما يضحك علينا بزيارة احد المساجد في امريكا …
Obama laughs on-us in vising one the-mosques in American
‘Obama fools us [Arabs] by visiting a mosque in America ….’

وما علاقة الغرب بنا حتى يدخلو فيها يا دكتور؟ العرب انتهوا وماحصل هم السبب فيه
and-what connect the-West in-us so intervene in-us O doctor

the-Arabs finished and-what happened they the-reason in-it
What’s the West have to do with us so as to intervene in us, Doctor? Arabs are finished and they are the reason behind what happened?
As mentioned above, the use of act combinations (e.g., CT + CC, CT + CH, etc.) was noted by Muntigl and Turnbull (1998), prominently of the subtype (CT + CC); however, in the data, other combinations were also attested (i.e., CT + CH; IC + CT, etc.).

Another form of ACT COMBINATION was manifested in the use of three acts to express disagreement. There were 17 instances throughout the entire corpus, which constituted only 1% of the data. The use of triple act disagreements was not noted by Muntigl and Turnbull (1997, 1998) or any other researcher – to the best of my knowledge – investigating the speech act of disagreement. Table (35) below presents the overall distribution of triple acts, as observed in the corpus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT (Flat NO) + CT (Implicit ADJ) + CC</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT (Flat NO) + CT (Implicit V) + CC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT (Flat NO) + CT (Opposite Statement) + CC</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT (Flat NO) + CT (Implicit ADJ) + CH</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CT = CONTRADICTION; CC = COUNTERCLAIM & CH = CHALLENGE

As shown in Table (35) above, the most prominent form of TS disagreements was manifested in a sequence of CT (Flat NO) followed by another CT realized syntactically via the use of an explicit adjective (extrinsically negated adjective) and ended with a CC. There were seven instances (41%) of this sequence. Consider the following example:

(75)

\[
T \text{ من أمناء الشرطة شريفاء (1)} \]

99% min ʔumana: ʔʃurTa ʃurafa:
99% of police officers are honest.

‘No. That is not true. Forty percent would be plausible.’

In (75) above, the speaker in T (2) disagrees with the Minister of Interior’s statement that almost all police officers are honest. He directly contradicts the Minister’s statement first by using Flat No, followed by a syntactically negated adjective (i.e., miʃ Saḥiːː ‘not true’). Yet, he provides an alternative account (or suggestion) that the Minister’s claim would have been more plausible, had the percentage been, for example, 40%.

Another salient TS employed by the Arabic speakers appeared in a sequence of two CTs, followed by a CH. There were four instances of this TS sub-type. As example (76) below shows, the female speaker in T (2) does not hold the view that cases of harassment are increasing Arabic countries. She uses a TS to voice her disagreement. She negates the prior proposition by using a sequence of two CTs: Flat No and an extrinsically negated adjective. Then, she challenges the speaker in T (1) to provide evidence to support his claim made in T (1).

(76)

T (1) حالات التحرش في الدول العربية في ازدياد
haːlatʔaṭṭaharuːf fid duwalʔaʃararːiːja fiːz-diːjːad
case harassment in-the counties the-Arabic in-increase
‘Cases of harassment in the Arabic countries are on the rise.’

T (2) لا مش صحيح. ما هي مصادركم؟
laː miʃ Saḥiːː maː hiːjaː maSaːdirukuːm?
No not true what they sources-yours?
‘No. That is not true. What is your evidence?’

Similarly, the speaker in T (2) below rejects the claim that faith-based groups are never good for political ruling. Immediately after the two direct CTs (Flat NO followed by a
syntactically negated adjective), he challenges the speaker in T (1) by requesting further clarification on the claim made in T1.

(77)

الجماعات العقائدية تارِيخيًا لا تصلح للحكم أبدًا
al-dʒaːmaːʔaːt tariːxiːʔaː laː tɛlːhukm ʔaβaːdan
The-groups the-ideological historically not suit for-ruling never
‘Faith-based groups are never suitable for [political] ruling.’

لا غير صحيح. ومن يصلح إذا؟?
alːɣaːr Saːħiːʔ waːman jaSluːʔ ʔiːðaːn?
No except true and-who
‘No. That is not true. Who would be a good fit then?’

4.3.5 Summary and Concluding Remarks

The preceding discussion has sought to provide a detailed anatomization of the speech act of disagreement as employed by the Arabic speakers in their discussion of various topics on the most widely used social networking website Facebook. The above-detailed description included a thorough account of the lexical, syntactic and pragmatic devices employed to deliver the speech act of disagreement. As shown, the Arabic speakers used a variety of lexical items ranging from verbs, through adjectives, to nouns along with several formulaic expressions. Syntactically, the communicative act of disagreement was shown to be realized by various types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory with a tendency among the Arabic speakers to voice their disagreement through the use of declarative sentences (73.9%). This is in line with Bolander (2013), who also found that 75.8% of the disagreements identified in her study of online blogs were realized in declarative sentences.

Pragmatically, the Arabic speakers used a variety of strategies in voicing their disagreement. The combination of syntactic forms and lexical meanings constituted conventional disagreement strategies among Arabic speakers. The data showed that Arabic speakers employed
a total of 10 major strategies. The majority of the identified strategies (45%) are politic geared toward constructing normal interpersonal relationships (Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008), although some were polite (26%), promoting social harmony and some were impolite (29%) leading to potential communication breakdowns.

The findings, as those of others before (Sifianou, 2012), point to the complexity of the act of disagreement but add to existing scholarship by identifying new cultural-specific strategies such as SUPPLICATION and MILD SCOLDING. As mentioned above, MILD SCOLDING – although slightly face-threatening – is still politic in Arabic-speaking societies, the use of which signals a breach of sociocultural norms established including, but are not limited to, lying, truth fabrication, falsification, and so on. The use of these two strategies are only fathomable to speakers of Arabic and may be in need of further explanation for learners of Arabic or those who are interested in Middle Eastern cultures. Additionally, the findings also indicate that Locher and Watts’s (2005, 2008) Relational Work can be a useful theoretical framework in understanding the complex and discursive nature of disagreement.
4.4 A Closer Look in the Effect of Gender on CMC-Disagreements

The second research question tackled in the study is whether gender had any effect on the realization of disagreement between the Arab males and females. To adequately answer this question, a mixed method was used. Quantitatively, several cross tabulations were performed to determine the differences (if any). Qualitatively, the participants’ various linguistic and pragmatic strategies were compared and contrasted to see whether the participants adhered to different styles of dealing with relational work connected with the act of disagreement in CMC, i.e., how men and women construct their disagreements and consequently their identities (Herring, 1994, 2010, 2013). I acknowledge the complexity of the social factor of gender and it may be a cumbersome task to do so, especially in qualitative research as in the current study. It is not my attention to argue that men do X, while women do Y in absolute terms. Rather, I attempted to provide a glimpse into how Arab males and females may differ in their expression of disagreement through capturing any recurrent patterns in the data. In what follows, disagreements for gender-associated features were examined in terms of the following: (i) social online presence or frequency, (ii) mitigation, (iii) aggravation, (iv) syntactic patterns and (v) disagreement strategies.

4.4.1 Overall Online Social Presence and Gender

The current study drew on a corpus of approximately fifty-thousand words \((n = 50,964)\) of original Arabic texts in the form of naturally occurring comments (also known as posts), extracted from 19 Facebook Pages/Groups devoted for religious (REL), political (POL) and social (SOC) issues touching the lives of Arabic speakers in various parts of the Arab world. A total of 1400 examples were identified as instances of disagreement. Although both genders actively participated in all 19 Facebook Pages/Groups, the overall percentage of online presence
was noticeably unequal. As Figure 15 below shows, the female participation \((n = 443)\) constituted only 32% of the overall number of identified disagreements, while the male participation was twice as high at 68%, with a total of 957 disagreements.

![Figure 15. Frequency of Participation by Gender](image)

The above percentages are in line with most CMC research (Herring, 1993a, 1996; Herring & Lombard, 1995; Baym, 1996; among others). In her study of two English online forums, Herring (1993a, 1996) found that participant by women was 30%, in contrast to males’ 70%. She suggests, “women are discouraged or intimidated from participating” due to receiving fewer responses either from the males or other female participants. She attributes the unequal rate of response to the more powerful status of males.

The POL category of the corpus had 724 comments, of which 612 (84.5%) were identified as disagreements, while the remaining 112 comments (15.5%) were excluded as either agreement \((n = 82)\) or off-topic comments \((n = 30)\). Of these, 464 (75.8%) were posted by males and only 148 (24.4%) were by females.
Similar results were obtained in the REL category. This category had a total of 533 comments, of which 434 (81.4%) were identified as disagreements, and the remaining 99 were either agreements (n = 61) or off-topic (n = 38), both of which were eliminated from further analysis. Of the 434 disagreement, 362 (83.4%) were by males and 72 occurrences (16.6%) were by females.

The SOC category of the corpus presented a rather different picture. Unlike the first two categories, the SOC category was heavily female-dominated. This category had a total of 753 comments, of which 354 (47%) were identified as disagreements, while 41% as agreements (n = 310) and 12% as off-topic comments (n = 89). This suggests that there is more agreement than disagreement in the discussion of socially-related topics (this will be discussed further below). As Figure 18 below demonstrates, 63% (n = 223) of the 354 disagreements were by females, and
male 37% \( (n = 131) \) by males. Compared to the REL category described above, female participation in the SOC category represents a drastic increase by 209.7% and 50.7% for the political category.

*Figure 18. Gender Distribution in the Social Category*

Figure 19 below summarizes the distribution for gender in all three topic areas (i.e., POL, REL and SOC) described above:

*Figure 19. Overall Gender Distribution by Topic*

As noted above, the POL and REL categories are male-dominated, while the SOC category is female-dominated. There are two possible reasons for this result: (i) the aggressive language (including vulgar terms and profanities) used by the men in the POL and REL topics could discourage female participation (ii) Arabic-speaking women could be less interested than males in political and religious topics. This is consistent with Herring (1992, 1993a), who found
that men contribute more to the discussion of current issues (e.g., politics and religion), unlike women, who are most active in personal discussions and less active in current issues and informational postings.

Additionally, the low frequency of disagreements in cross-gender interactions in the data (i.e., POL & REL) can also be attributed to the governing social norms prevailing in Arabic-speaking countries, reinforced by Islamic teachings, wherein all forms of cross-gender interaction (e.g., face-to-face and faceless) are restricted. As shown however, the females were active in all three topics in the corpus, although their contributions differed, contingent upon the topic under discussion, be it politics-related, religion-related, or society-related topics.

4.4.2 Mitigation of CMC Disagreements and Gender

As defined in section (4.3.1.1), the linguistic concept of mitigation in the current study refers to a distinct set of linguistic (and paralinguistic) devices used by the Arabic speakers to soften the blow of the oppositional speech act of disagreement. As Table 35 below shows, only 242 (17.3%) disagreements were mitigated, while the majority \((n = 1158)\) were non-mitigated, constituting 82.7% of all the data in the corpus. Of these, 165 (17.2%) instances of the 957 disagreements by males were mitigated. The females mitigated 77 disagreements (17.4%), whereas the remaining 366 (82.6%) were non-mitigated. This indicates that gender has no role on mitigation.

Table 36: Cross-tabulation of Gender & Mitigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-mitigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A chi-square test was performed to further examine the effect of the independent variable of gender on linguistic mitigation. As Table 37 below shows, no significant relationship was found between gender and the overall distribution of mitigation of disagreement, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1400) = .004, p = .949$. Thus, gender did not play a key role in affecting the participants’ overall usage of mitigators.

Table 37: Chi-Square Test of Gender & Mitigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher's Exact Test</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have count less than 5. *P < .05

The above results do not agree with those of Herring (1993a) who claims while the women mitigate their assertions, apologize, justify, use questions and support other participants, the men, on the contrary, intensify their assertions, self-promote, presuppose, and challenge other forum members along with humor and/or sarcasm. Similarly, the findings of this study are not in alignment with the previous literature (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1994; Holmes, 1995; among others) associating higher frequencies of mitigation with women, not men. While this may be true, my data do not support such claims, at least whichever pertaining to men and women in the area of mitigation.

4.3.3 Aggravation of Disagreements and Gender

Gender in the current study significantly affected the participants’ use of aggravation. As discussed in section (4.3.1.2), aggravation serves the opposite of mitigation, intensifying the impact of disagreement. In the current study, the term aggravation (or aggravator) is used to
refer to linguistic (and non-linguistic) devices used by one interlocutor towards another not only to intensify the illocutionary force of disagreement, but also to amplify any anticipated negative effects, causing and endangering “disharmony and/or social disturbance rather than promoting social harmony” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 349).

Of the 1400 disagreements, 402 (28.7%) instances were intensified through the implementation of five major types of aggravators appearing before or after the head act: (1) personality-related abusive language, (2) family-related obscene language, (3) invoking Allah, (4) structural/linguistic devices, and (5) paralinguistic devices. The remaining 998 (71.3%) were non-aggravated. As Table 38 below presents, of the 957 disagreements by males, 307 (32.1%) disagreements were aggravated, while the remaining 650 (67.9%) were non-aggravated. In contrast, only 21.4% (n = 95) of the disagreements realized by the female participants were aggravated, whereas the remaining 348 (78.6%) were non-aggravated.

Table 38: Cross-tabulation of Gender & Aggravation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggravation</th>
<th>Aggravated</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aggravated</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above frequencies between the two genders suggest that the males had a higher tendency to aggravate their disagreements than the females. This finding is consistent with the bulk of CMC literature, which suggests that males are more likely to have an aggravating and adversarial stance toward their interlocutors often manifested in their use of crude language such as insults and profanities (Herring 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Kramarae and Taylor
A chi-square test was administered to examine the effect of gender on the participants’ usage of aggravators when voicing their disagreements in CMC. In line with our expectations, gender played a role in the Arabic speakers’ overall distribution of aggravation. As Table 39 below shows, a significant relationship was found between gender and the overall distribution of aggravation of CMC disagreement, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1400) = 16.723, p = .001$. This finding is consistent with Herring (1994), who found that men and women exhibit different styles of CMC in English. Relevant to this study is her finding that men are prone to ‘flame’ with the proclivity to post messages of contentious/hostile content (i.e., “flames”) along with sarcasm and strong assertions.

Table 39: A Chi-Square Test of Gender & Aggravation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>16.732</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>16.216</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>17.302</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fisher's Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>16.720</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. *P < .05

To point out the differences between the Arabic men and women in CMC disagreements, the five different subcategories of aggravation were cross-tabulated with the social variable of gender. The results are reported in Table 40 below. Additionally, a chi-square test was performed to see whether gender or not had any effect on the participants’ use of the five aggravation devices. The results of the chi-square test confirmed a significant relationship between gender and the aggravation subcategories, $\chi^2 (5, N = 402) = 80.620, p = .000$.

Table 40: Cross-Tabulation of Gender and Subtypes of Aggravation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Aggravation</th>
<th>Personality-Related Abusive Language</th>
<th>Family-Related obscene Language</th>
<th>Invoking Allah</th>
<th>Linguistic Devices</th>
<th>Paralinguistic Devices</th>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>% within Gender</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Shading indicates higher percentages, when compared to the other gender.

As Table 40 above shows, the men had higher frequencies \((n = 172; 56\%)\) than the females \((n = 29; 30.5\%)\) to use abusive language against their interlocutors. Within this subcategory (Personality-Related Abusive Language), the men had 114 (41.9%) character-related attacks (e.g., stupid, ignorant), whereas the women had only 23 (25.6%). The men referred to their interlocutors as animals (e.g., *xanzi:r* ‘pig’) 35 times (12.9%), while the women did so 5 times (5.6%). The women did not use any culture, religion or politics-related attacks (e.g., Musyłamah, atheist, collaborator), while the men had a frequency of 9, 5 and 2 occurrences, respectively. Finally, the men had 7 occurrences (2.6%) of sexual-related attacks (e.g., gay, faggot), while the women had only 1 instance (1.1%). These results are provided in Table 48 in Appendix IV.

Similarly, the men exhibited higher frequencies \((n = 55; 17.9\%)\) than the women \((n = 6; 6.3\%)\) in using obscenities to attack their interlocutors. Within this subcategory (Family-Related

---

28 Musyłamah was one of a series of people (including his future wife) who claimed prophethood in 7th century Arabia, which is the time of Islamic prophet Muhammad. He is considered by Muslims to be a false prophet, and is always referred to as *ʔal-kaḏḍab* ‘the liar’.
Obscene Language), the men used 31 (11.4%) mother-related obscenities to attack their interlocutors with only 2 occurrences (2.2%) by the females. The men used 11 father-related attacks (4%), while the women had only 2 occurrences (2.2%). There were 6 (2.2%) sister-invoked attacks by males and only 1 (1.1%) by a female. Finally, there were 7 (2.6%) general family-related attacks by males and only 1 instance by a female (2.2%). The same results are given in Table 49 of Appendix IV.

However, the women used more religious expressions (18.9%) than the men (8.1%), more structural/linguistic devices (34.7%) than the men (5.5%) and more paralinguistic devices (4.2%) than the men (1%). Within gender in terms of structural/linguistic devices, the women used the negation word more repeatedly (3.3%) than the men (0.4%). The women’s usage of lexical upgraders (e.g., certainty marker/intensifier/quantifier/determiner) was higher than that of men’s at 26.7% and 1%, respectively. Similarly, vowel lengthening was more frequent among the women (2.2%) than the men (0.4%). However, it was the men who used more implicitly negative adjectives (e.g., Fazi ‘empty’; Xatiʔ ‘extremely wrong’) than the women at a frequency of 8 and 2 occurrences, respectively. Similarly, it was the men who used more imperatives ($n = 6; 2.2\%$) than the women ($n = 2; 2.2\%$). These results are reported in Table 50 in Appendix IV.

As for the use of paralinguistic (non-linguistic) devices between the two genders, there were only 7 instances, almost equally distributed between the females and the males. The women had 2 instances (2.2%) of gestural spitting, with only one occurrence by the men (0.4%). The men had 2 occurrences ($n = 2; 2.2\%$) of the paralinguistic device of farting sound with none by the women. The females, however, had 2 instances of baby-talk (2.2%), while men had none. The results are presented in Table 51 in Appendix IV.
A final difference showed up in the participants’ combination of aggravators. Not only did the men have higher numbers of aggravators ($n = 307; 32.1\%$) that the women ($n = 95; 21.4\%$), but also combined aggravators up to four aggravators at once. There were 40 occurrences, where aggravators were combined, of which 35 (11.4%) instances were employed by the men, while the women had only 5 instances (5.3%). Twenty-nine possible combinations were observed. Of the 40 combined instances of aggravators, 38 were a sequence of two aggravators, 1 of three aggravators and 1 of four aggravators. However, it should be pointed that there was no significant relationship between gender and the combination of aggravators, $\chi^2 (28, N = 40) = 30.857, p = .323$. Table 52 in Appendix IV presents a breakdown of aggravators along with the observed combinations and Table 53 in Appendix IV presents the chi-square results.

### 4.3.4 Syntactic Realization of CMC-Disagreements and Gender

As discussed in subsection (4.3.3), the Arabic speakers realized their CMC-disagreements via five syntactic patterns in the following order: declarative ($n = 1102; 79\%$), interrogatives ($n = 178; 12.7\%$), imperatives ($n = 70; 5\%$), and exclamatory ($n = 50; 4\%$). A chi-square test was performed and yielded statistically significant results, $\chi^2 (3, N = 1400) = 17.582, p = .001$. The two genders exhibited significantly different choices of syntactic patterns. To capture any gender-related differences, gender was cross-tabulated with the various types of syntactic constructions as reported in Table 41 below.

**Table 41: The Syntax of CMC-Disagreements Cross-tabulated with Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic Construction</th>
<th>Declarative</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>1035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamatory</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 40 above shows, the males and the females had equal percentages in terms of the exclamatory construction at 3.6% each. However, differences were apparent in the other syntactic patterns. The males used declarative constructions \((n = 773)\) twice as many as the females \((n = 369)\). Compared to the overall number of the females \((n = 443)\) to the males \((n = 957)\), the overall percentage of women’s usage of declaratives (83.3%) is higher than that of men (76.5%). As such, it is more likely that women would use more declarative sentences than the men in the expression of the act of disagreement. However, the men exhibited higher percentages in both the interrogative (14.3%) and imperative (5.5%) constructions than the women (9.3% and 3.8%, respectively). This is consistent with the bulk of literature (Herring, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Kramarae and Taylor 1993; among others) that men in asynchronous CMC were more likely to be more direct through the use of imperative (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and like to challenge others through the use of interrogatives.

### 4.3.5 Disagreement Strategy and Gender

The effect of gender on the type of strategy used by both genders was also examined. An initial chi-square test shows that there is a significant relationship gender and the overall employment of strategy, \(\chi^2 (10, N = 1400) = 121.563, p =.001\). As Table 42 below shows, there is an obvious tendency among the males to employ more VERBAL ATTACK (26%) than the females (11%), which is consistent with the majority of English CMC literature, suggesting that men are likely to use more crude language often characterized by insults and negative judgments. Similarly, the men used more VERAL IRONY (15%) than the females (8%), which is once
again in line with the CMC literature, claiming that men prefer the use of more direct strategies like sarcasm, irony and the like (Culpeper, 1996; Locher, 2004, among others). Also obvious in the data is the men’s inclination to use more CHALLENGE (7%) than the females (4%). This finding is consistent with the men’s syntactic preference to use imperatives and interrogatives, since most CHALLENGEs are realized syntactically through primarily interrogatives and sometimes through imperatives as well. The men in the current study were also observed to employ MESSAGE ABANDONMENT more frequently (n = 14; 1%) compared to the women who had only 2 occurrences (0%). Similarly, the men had an overall frequency of 13 instances of IRRELEVANCY CLAIM (1%), compared to only 2 occurrences by the females (0%). The lower frequencies among the females are attributed to the women’s style of communication characterized by supporting others and adopting an aligned stance towards their interlocutors (Hall 1996; Herring 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Savicki, Lingenfelter, and Kelley 1996) or simply attending to the face of their interlocutors, regardless of the fact it is faceless communication.

In contrast, the women’s linguistic behavior in terms of strategy exhibited higher percentages in the use of COUNTERCLAIM (21%) compared to 18% by males. Given that most women tend to justify their assertions and adopt an ‘aligned’ stance towards their interlocutors (Hall 1996; Herring 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Savicki, Lingenfelter, and Kelley 1996), it came as no surprise that the women in the current study had a higher inclination to employ CCs, since a COUNTERCLAIM functions to provide an account, an explanation or an alternative claim to the original claim presented in the first turn (T1). This suggests that the women are more likely to use CCs as positive politeness devices (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989b; Kruetel, 2007) and as relational work invested to maintain social harmony (Locher & Watts,
However, what came as a big surprise was that the women employed more CONTRADICTIONs (21%) compared to only 10% by the men. At first glance, this finding contradicts the bulk of literature not only in CMC research but also in speech act research, suggesting that women tend to be more indirect than men who tend to be more direct.

Upon further examination however, the data revealed that 71 instances of CONTRADICTION (75.5%) employed by the women took place in the SOC category in the corpus, which is female-dominated (63% F vs. 37% M). The remaining 23 examples of CONTRADICTIONs were unequally distributed between the POL (n = 16; 17%) and the REL (n = 7; 7.5%) categories of the corpus, both of which are male-dominated. The data support of what Herring (1996b) refers to as majority-gender effect in English CMC. While Herring finds that women tend to be more aggressive and direct in male-dominated groups than among other women, and men tend to be more aligned in female-dominated groups than in groups dominated by men, the data, nonetheless point to a different trend of interaction: women tend to be more direct with other women and less direct and more aligned in male-dominated groups.

The differing behaviors may be attributed to the cultural, religious and social norms in the Arabic-speaking countries, dictating that women – seen as subordinate to men but not necessarily inferior – conduct themselves in a modest manner. Negative posts elicit negative responses (e.g., profanities, negative judgments, sarcasm, irony, etc.). Additionally, Islamic teachings make clear that pious women must show respectful obedience. Although involved in faceless communication, Arab women possibly still feel the need to be respectfully obedient so as to be perceived as religiously pious in male-dominated groups, but not in female-dominated ones. This explanation is in harmony with Hymes (1974) and Wolfson (1981, 1983) who
maintain that one’s communicative patterns (e.g., disagreements) are shaped by the cultural environment.

The women were also observed to have slightly higher percentages in the use of the strategy SUPPLICATION (7%) than the men (6%). As discussed in subsection (4.3.3.5), this cultural-specific strategy involves the use of religious expressions to indicate disapproval or denial of a previous claim – one that is beyond control. The higher percentages of SPs among the females are primarily attributed to cultural, religious and social norms, wherein Arab women being in patriarchal societies are perceived as weaker than men, hence their lack of control and say on decisive matters, thereby, seeking refuge in Allah who is capable of real change.

Another gender-related difference in terms of strategy was observed in the women’s tendency to employ more EXCLAMATION (4%) than the men (3%). Considering that EXs embody negatively emotional reactions (e.g., surprise, astonishment) in the established context of disagreement, this differing behavior of the two genders may be understood from a functional perspective; that is, the women used more EXs to manipulate and further influence the strength of the negatively affective speech act of disagreement. Also, given that men are authoritatively oriented (Herring, 1993b), the use of EXs would probably render them as odd figures of authority not to be taken too seriously.

MILD SCOLDING also exhibited higher percentages among the women (3%) than the men (2%). As discussed in subsection (4.3.3.9), this strategy occurs when an older speaker (e.g., father, mother) explicitly uses the Arabic word عيب /rajab/ ‘shame’ to a younger speaker (e.g., children), as an indicator of some violation of socially or religiously agreed-upon rules. The women’s tendency to use this strategy more frequently than the men is largely determined by her societal role in the family. While men are supposed to work and provide financial support for the
family, women are to keep the house and look after the children by teaching them moral values and social norms. Thus, the mother has more contact with her children than the father does, hence the sacred status of mothers in Arabic-speaking countries. Although age is irrelevant in CMC, the women’s tendency to use SHAMING suggests they are socially accustomed to using this strategy at home. In this sense, the women’s communicative pattern of SHAMING is shaped by her cultural environment (Hymes, 1974; Wolfson, 1981, 1983, among others).

Finally, the women displayed a tendency to employ ACT COMBINATIONS (i.e., double-strategy and triple strategy) more frequently (21%) than the men (11%). This, once again, suggests that the women are more likely to follow their disagreements with an explanation or an alternative to restore social harmony with their interlocutors in CMC.

Table 42: Disagreement Strategy Cross-tabulated with Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic Strategy</th>
<th>Male (n)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female (n)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VERBAL ATTACK</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTERCLAIM</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTRADICTION</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERBAL IRONY</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLICATION</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHALLENGE</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCLAMATION</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MESSAGE ABONDONMENT</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAMING</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRRELEVANCY CLAIM</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT COMBINATIONS</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.6 Summary

This section has sought to see whether or not gender had a key role on CMC-disagreements in terms of (i) social online presence or frequency, (ii) mitigation, (iii) aggravation, (iv) syntax, and (v) strategy. As shown, the Arabic males had more social online
presence than the females. As for mitigation, the Arabic males and female used it almost equally with no statistically significant differences obtained. A significant relationship, however, was found between gender and the use of aggravators. The males showed a proclivity to aggravate their disagreements more frequently than the females did. Gender was also found to influence the participants’ choice of syntactic patterns. While the men employed more interrogatives and imperatives, the women, on the other hand, used more declarative sentences. Finally, statistically significant differences were obtained in terms of strategy. The men exhibited higher frequencies in the strategies VERBAL ATTACK, VERBAL IRONY and CHALLENGE, while the women showed a tendency to employ COUNTERCLAIM, SUPPLICATION, MILD SCOLDING, EXCLAMATION, and ACT COMBINATIONS. The higher frequencies of VERBAL ATTACK, VERBAL IRONY and CHALLENGE among the males can be primarily attributed to having different communication styles, of which the males’ is characterized by their use of questioning and crude language such as insults and profanities (Herring 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Kramarae and Taylor 1993; Savicki, Lingenfelter, and Kelley 1996; Sutton 1994, Baym, 1996, among others). Similarly, Tannen (1990, 1994, inter alia) note that such differing behaviors can be attributed to differing perceptions of disagreement. Women, on the one hand, consider it rapport threatening, while men find it more acceptable to negotiate status and further establish intimacy.
4.5 The Effect of Topic on Disagreement

The third research question in the study is whether or not the topic of discussion has any effect on the act of disagreement among Arabic speakers in their realization of the oppositional act of disagreement in Computer-Mediated Communication. To this end, several cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were performed to determine any significant effects and differences. In what follows, disagreements for topic-associated features were examined in terms of the following: (i) overall frequencies, (ii) mitigation, (iii) aggravation, (iv) strategy.

4.5.1 Overall Frequency of Topic

As Figure 20 below shows, the POL category had the highest frequency of occurrences \( n = 612 \), which constituted 44% of the overall number of disagreements \( n = 1400 \). This was followed by the REL category at a frequency of 434 disagreements (31%). The lowest frequency of disagreements was observed in the SOC category with 354 disagreements, which constituted 25% of all disagreements.

Figure 20. Distribution of Disagreements by Topic

The higher number of disagreements in the POL category can be attributed to primarily the advent of the so-called Arab Spring and the Collapse of several authoritarian regimes in the
Arab World. The Arab Spring, a wave of demonstrations, protests, riots and civil wars in the Middle East, began in late 2010, and officially sprung in early 2011 with the collapse of the Tunisian president, followed by the Egyptian, Libyan and Yemeni presidents. Its effect spread to the surrounding countries, resulting in civil riots and street demonstrations in almost every corner of the Arab World, primarily in Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman, and even in Saudi Arabia.

Concurrently, the Arab Spring opened the door for the rise of the so-called ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). As such, it is quite natural that the POL and REL categories of the corpus would be dominating topics among the Arabic speakers. In fact, the highest number of disagreements were from countries affected, chiefly Egypt (n = 425), followed by Syria (n = 68), Jordan (n = 35) and Iraq (n = 32), all three of which have been witnessing similar conditions, especially Syria and Iraq emerging as the birthplace of ISIS and Jordan being the closest country to both Iraq and Syria and the host country to thousands of refugees from said countries. The lowest number of disagreements in the SOC category can be attributed to two interrelated facts. First, the nature of the SOC-related topics (e.g., marriage; likes/dislikes of women and men; wife-mother-in-law relationships, etc.) is less controversial. Second, there were more agreements than disagreements, which resulted in lower percentages of contributions in the SOC category. This is in line with Shum and Lee (2013) who report that the number of disagreements correlates with the topic of discussion in the posts; that is, “less disagreement in the posts of less controversial topic than in the posts of the controversial topic” (p. 70).

4.5.2 Mitigation of Disagreement & Topic

As Table 43 below shows, only 242 (17.3%) disagreements were mitigated, while the majority (n = 1158) were non-mitigated, constituting 82.7% of all the data in the corpus. The
highest frequency of mitigation took place in the POL category (59.5%) at a total of 144 occurrences, followed by the REL category (24.8%) with 60 mitigated instances of disagreement. The SOC category had the lowest number of mitigated disagreements with only 38 instances (15.7%). Obviously, the percentages are far apart from each, which initially indicated that topic might have had an effect on the participants’ overall usage of mitigation.

Table 43: Cross-tabulation of Mitigation with Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus Topic</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-mitigated</td>
<td>Mitigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A chi-square test was performed to examine the effect of the independent variable of topic on linguistic mitigation. As Table 44 below presents, a significant relationship was found between topic and the overall usage of mitigation in CMC disagreements, $\chi^2 (2, N = 1400) = 30.494, p = .001$. Thus, topic in the current study significantly affected the participants’ use of mitigators.

Table 44: Chi-Square Test of Mitigation & Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>30.949$^a$</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>31.163</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>28.691</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. *p > .05

I suggest that the degree of subjectivity associated with each of the three topics played a role in the results. The degree of subjectivity refers to the controversy and sensitivity of topics in the current study with one being most controversial (POL), less controversial (REL), and least controversial (SOC), governed by the established social and cultural norms of a given society. In
other words, discussing the topic of religion in Arab-Muslim countries is considered less controversial compared to discussing the topic of politics. Religion would probably yield less disagreement while politics would likely attract more disagreement. Similarly, social topics in Arab-Muslim countries are considered less controversial than both POL and REL. As such, SOC-related topics yield less disagreement, while POL and REL would attract more disagreement, respectively.

Thus, the Arabic speakers – considering the controversy of each topic – employed a high frequency of mitigators when discussing POL \( (n = 144; 59.5) \) being the most controversial topic, a lower frequency of mitigators in REL \( (n = 60; 24.8\%) \) being the less controversial topic and the least number of mitigators in SOC \( (n = 38; 15.7) \) being the least controversial topic of all. The data support our explanation and are in line with the majority of the literature (LoCastro, 1986; Baym, 1996; Angouri & Tseliga, 2010; Locher, 2004, among others), suggesting that the degree of mitigation in disagreement is highly influenced by the controversial nature of the topics discussed, where paying face consideration to the addressee is less important.

### 4.5.3 Aggravation of Disagreement & Topic

Aggravation functions to strengthen the force of the oppositional act of disagreement (please refer back to subsection 4.3.1.1 above). In the current study, the Arabic speakers aggravated 402 disagreements (28.7%), whereas the remaining 998 were non-aggravated (71.3%). As Table 45 below presents, the majority of the aggravated disagreement \( (n = 182) \) took place in the REL category (45.3%), followed by the POL category at a frequency of 165 (41%). In contrast, only 55 disagreements were aggravated in the SOC category of the corpus, which constituted 13.7% of all aggravated disagreement in terms of topic.

Table 45: Cross-tabulation of Aggravation with Topic
### Table 45: Chi-Square Test of Aggravation and Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>68.013*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>69.273</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>6.857</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. *P > .05

The above-reported frequencies indicated that the Arabic speakers were more likely to aggravate their CMC-disagreements, when discussing both REL and POL-related topics and less likely to do so for SOC-related topics of discussion. A *chi-square* test was administered and the results are reported in Table 45 below.

**Table 46: Chi-Square Test of Aggravation and Topic**

Although REL was previously hypothesized as less controversial than POL, this should not be seen as self-contradictory, but rather as still following our logic. That is, disagreement to REL-related topics in Arab-Muslim countries often spark further aggravated disagreement (especially in the form of personality-related attacks and invoking Allah) than POL or SOC-related issues would. In fact, a further cross-tabulation of topic with the five types of aggravators (*see* subsection 4.3.1.2 for definitions) confirms our explanation as presented in Table 46 below.
As Table 47 above shows, 52.7% of REL-disagreements were aggravated via the use of personality-related abusive language, followed by invoking Allah at a frequency of 30 instances, which constituted 16.5% of all aggravated instances in the REL category \((n = 182)\). Almost equally, the POL category had 50.3% aggravated disagreements in the form of personality-related abusive language, followed by family-related attacks at a frequency of 45, constituting the second highest form of aggravation (27.3%) in the POL category. As for the SOC category, the highest form of aggravation was manifested in linguistic devices (e.g., lexical upgraders) at a frequency of 28 occurrences, which made up over half (50.9%) of all aggravators in the SOC category.
4.5.4 Disagreement Strategy & Topic

The effect of discourse topic on the participants’ usage of strategy was also examined. A chi-square test showed a significant relationship between topic and the participants’ overall employment of strategy, $\chi^2 (21, N = 1400) = 241.571, p = .000$. As previously covered (see section 4.3.4), the Arabic speakers employed a total of 10 strategies to express their disagreement arranged in Table 48 below in a descending order for each of the three area topics in the corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VA</strong></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>VA</strong></td>
<td>143</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td><strong>CC</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VI</strong></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CC</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td><strong>CT</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC</strong></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>AC</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td><strong>AC</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CT</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SP</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td><strong>VI</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AC</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CT</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td><strong>VA</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CH</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CH</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td><strong>CH</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SP</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>VI</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td><strong>EX</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EX</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SH</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td><strong>SP</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SH</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>EX</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td><strong>IC</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IC</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MA</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td><strong>MA</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MA</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>IC</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td><strong>SH</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>612</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>434</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>354</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dark shading* indicates the most commonly used strategies across topics.

**AC = Act Combination**

As seen in Table 48, there is obvious variation in the use of strategy in light of topic. VARBAL ATTACK (VA) is ranked first, constituting 20% and 33% in POL and REL, respectively. However, VA is ranked fifth in the SOC category at only 8%. Echoing Angouri and Tseliga (2010) in English, higher percentages of VA is directly linked to the discursive nature of disagreement and the social context. The second most used strategy in the POL category is VERBAL IRONY (VI) at 20%, while COUNTERCLAIM (CC) is ranked second in REL (15%). The use of CONTRADICTION (CT) is ranked second (23%) in the SOC category.
The third most frequently used strategy in the POL category is CC (17%), which is reserved for the use of ACT COMBINATION (AC) in the REL (12%) and SOC (19%) categories. The fourth strategy in POL is CT (10%), which is taken by SUPPLICATION in REL (11%) and VERBAL IRONY in SOC (11%). The fifth commonly used strategy surfaced as AC in POL (10%), CT in REL (10%) and VA in SOC (8%). CHALLENG (CH) appeared in the sixth place in all three topic areas at 7%, 6%, and 5%, respectively. The remaining rankings can be read from the table above. The above-reported rankings are primarily attributed to the controversy of topic, where controversy is best understood as a continuum of subjectivity exemplified in Figure 21 below:

![Figure 21. Continuum of Topic Controversy](image)

Accordingly, the choice of strategy was influenced by the topic of discussion, i.e., topic-dependent. That is, VA is ranked first in both POL and REL due to being most controversial and less controversial for both topics, respectively, but is ranked fifth in SOC, due to being the least controversial, for its dominance would probably jeopardize social harmony among the interlocutors in SOC. Similarly, CC is ranked first in SOC due to being least controversial, but second and third in REL and POL, respectively. In short, topic (i.e., its degree of controversy) seems to be a determining factor in the prevalence of one strategy over another.
4.5.5 Summary

This section has examined whether or not topic played a role in the data in terms of (i) frequency, (ii) mitigation, (iii) aggravation, and (v) strategy. As shown, POL and REL categories had higher frequencies than the SOC category, best attributed to the political and religious turmoil the Arab World has been witnessing. Topic was also found to influence the participants’ overall usage of mitigation, primarily attributed to the degree of subjectivity associated with each topic: the more controversial the topic is, the more mitigation is needed. A significant relationship was also found between topic and the use of aggravators, which can also be attributed to the degree of controversy linked to each topic, i.e., POL and REL had higher degrees of aggravation than that of SOC topics. Finally, statistically significant differences were obtained in terms of strategy. The POL and REL-related categories appropriate the dominance of the use of VERBAL ATTACK and VERBAL IRONY, where the degree of subjectivity is on the rise and social harmony is not of an issue, while the same strategies are demoted in the SOC category, for their promotion would cause social disharmony and minimize further development in the discussion and negotiation among the interactants. In sum, topic was found to influence the realization of disagreement among the Arabic speakers. This finding is consistent with several other works (LoCastro, 1986; Baym, 1996; Angouri & Tseliga, 2010; Locher, 2004, Kleinke & Bös, 2015, among others) highlighting the role of topic in the expression of disagreement.


CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined how disagreements are performed by Arabic speakers in Computer-Mediated Communication. It sought to achieve the following objectives: (1) to account for the linguistic and pragmatic behavior in the expression of disagreement and (2) to determine if gender and topic had any effect on disagreement. As for the first objective, the data revealed that the Arabic speakers used a variety of lexical items ranging from verbs, through adjectives, to nouns along with several formulaic expressions. Syntactically, the act of disagreement was shown to be realized by various types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory with a tendency among the Arabic speakers to voice their disagreement through the use of declarative sentences (73.9%). This is in line with Bolander (2013), who too found that 75.8% of the disagreements identified in her study of online blogs were realized in declarative sentences.

Pragmatically, the Arabic speakers used a variety of strategies in voicing their disagreement. These combinations of forms and meanings constituted conventional disagreement strategies among Arabic speakers. The data showed that Arabic speakers employed a total of 10 major strategies as well as a combination of these strategies. The majority of the identified strategies are politic geared toward constructing normal interpersonal relationships (Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008), some were polite promoting social harmony and some were impolite leading to potential communication breakdowns.

The social factor of gender was examined in terms of (i) social online presence or frequency, (ii) mitigation, (iii) aggravation, (iv) syntax, and (v) strategy. The data showed that the Arabic males had more social online presence than the females. As for mitigation, the Arabic
males and female used it almost equally with no statistically significant differences obtained. A significant relationship, however, was found between gender and the use of aggravators. The males aggravated their disagreements more frequently than the females did. Gender was also found to influence the participants’ choice of syntactic patterns. While the men employed more interrogatives and imperatives, the women, on the other hand, used more declarative sentences. Finally, statistically significant differences were obtained in terms of strategy. The men exhibited higher frequencies in the strategies VERBAL ATTACK, VERBAL IRONY and CHALLENGE, while the women showed a tendency to employ COUNTERCLAIM, SUPPLICATION, MILD SCOLDING, EXCLAMATION. The higher frequencies of VERBAL ATTACK, VERBAL IRONY and CHALLENGE among the males can be primarily attributed to having different communication styles, of which the males’ is characterized by their use of questioning and crude language such as insults and profanities (Herring 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Kramarae and Taylor 1993; Savicki, Lingenfelter, and Kelley 1996; Sutton 1994, Baym, 1996, among others).

Topic was also examined (i) frequency, (ii) mitigation, (iii) aggravation, and (v) strategy. The data showed that the POL and REL categories had higher frequencies than the SOC category, best attributed to the political and religious turmoil the Arab World has been witnessing. Topic was also found to influence the participants’ overall usage of mitigation, primarily attributed to the degree of subjectivity associated with each topic: the more controversial the topic is, the more mitigation is needed. A significant relationship was also found between topic and the use of aggravators, which can also be attributed to the degree of controversy linked to each topic, i.e., POL and REL had higher degrees of aggravation than that of SOC topics. Finally, statistically significant differences were obtained in terms of strategy.
The POL and SOC-related categories appropriate the dominance of the use of VERBAL ATTACK and VERBAL IRONY, where the degree of subjectivity is on the rise and social harmony is not of an issue, while the same strategies are demoted in the SOC category, for their promotion would cause social disharmony and minimize further development in the discussion and negotiation among the interactants. In sum, topic was found to influence the realization of disagreement among the Arabic speakers. This finding in consistent several other works (LoCastro, 1986; Baym, 1996; Angouri & Tseliga, 2010; Locher, 2004, Kleinke & Bös, 2015, among others) highlight the role of topic in the expression of disagreement.

The findings of this research point to the complexity of the act of disagreement, but add to existing scholarship by identifying new cultural-specific strategies such as SUPPLICATION, and MILD SCOLDING. Additionally, the findings also indicate that Locher and Watts’s (2005, 2008) Relational Work can be a useful theoretical framework in understanding the complex and discursive nature of disagreement.

As demonstrated throughout this study, I have discovered no studies that have looked at the speech act of disagreement among speakers of Arabic. There exists a plethora of studies on other speech acts, especially apologies and requests, but none on disagreements. Although these studies have enriched our understanding of different speech acts in Arabic, they nonetheless suffer from methodological limitations primarily due to heavy reliance on discourse completion tasks and role-plays, neither of which yields naturalistic data. This study differed from previously conducted research in Arabic in that: (i) it investigated disagreement among Arabic speakers for the first time and (ii) it undertook a language-oriented CMC research approach. It is hoped that this study will spark further studies to examine the speech act of disagreement among Arabic speakers (or other speech acts) and further encourage researchers to adopt language-
oriented CMC research in Arabic. In what follows, I will present the major implications of the current study.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Cultural Implications

Speech acts reflect the cultural norms and values adopted and practiced by speakers of different speech communities. Given that different cultures realize speech acts differently, chances of cultural misunderstanding and miscommunication are always possible. In the context of disagreement, the greater the differences between two cultures, the greater the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication and misunderstanding, often manifested in pragmatic failure. This study has provided a thorough linguistic anatomy of the speech act of disagreement among Arabic speakers, which contributes a baseline on Arabic for contrastive work with other languages/cultures to help understand issues in cross-cultural communication.

The cultural, social and religious norms of Arab-speaking countries justify and give rise to cultural-specific disagreement strategies such as SUPPLICATION and MILD SCOLDING, both of which are culturally appropriated in the context of disagreement. In SUPPLICATION, interlocutors either directly or indirectly invoke the name Allah to signal disapproval with a prior claim. SUPPLICATIONs are culturally and religiously motivated due to belief in the empowerment and uplifting of supplication, for it is known as the weapon of the believer. It functions to affirm one’s belief in Allah and remind the other party of Allah’s power. MILD SCOLDING is also culturally motivated, the use of which signals the breach of sociocultural norms established in Arabic-speaking societies including, but are not limited to, lying, truth fabrication, falsification, and so on. The use of these two strategies are only fathomable to
speakers of Arabic and may be in need of further explanation for learners of Arabic or those who are interested in Middle Eastern cultures.

5.2.2 Pedagogical Implications

The study has potential pedagogical implications for both ESL/EFL teachers of Arabic speakers and teachers of Arabic as a foreign/second language in that it will provide them with objective information on how Arabic speakers perform the speech act of disagreement. The application of its results in the classroom is hoped to reduce any communication breakdowns between L2 learners and teachers as well. Teachers should be aware of the sociocultural and linguistic differences and are further advised to incorporate naturally occurring interactions in their classrooms to make their learners be conscious of cultural differences, appropriate behaviors as well as inappropriate ones so as to minimize any potential communication breakdowns. A word of caution is in order: Arabic (whether language and/or culture) should not be perceived as less polite than English and vice versa. Different cultures around the world have different notions of politeness and how they expect polite people to behave. In fact, it is polite to not apply the same politeness assumptions to people who come from a different culture.

Given the ever-increasing interest in Arabic as a world language and culture, this study is of great value to learners of Arabic, as it provides them with MSA and VER data relevant to one of the most predominant speech acts among the Arabic speakers. As was shown, approximately 60% of the corpus was delivered in the various VERs of Arabic. This states of affairs presents educators or pedagogy professional/practitioners with a long list of questions, the most significant of which is whether MSA should continue to be taught or be replaced by the various VER. Echoing Ryding (2006), “Why study Arabic” is no longer the question. Rather, it is how
long it takes to reach a high level of proficiency, where proficiency seems most associated with how the language is used (VER) rather than how it is written (MSA).

5.2.3 Theoretical Research Implications

While focus has been on politeness, the current study showed that impoliteness best manifested in the use of aggravators is significant. This is in line with the claims of discursive theories of politeness emphasizing the need to include impolite aspects of speech acts so as to arrive at a thorough picture of speech acts (Culpeper 2011 [1996]; Bousfield & Locher (2008), inter alia). The list of aggravators introduced in this study expands the strategies proposed by Culpeper (2011 [1996]). The current study is couched in a CMC-oriented approach, which makes it a steppingstone for further research in Arabic, whether investigating speech acts or other pragmatics-related issues. The study also contributes to sociolinguistics in examining the role of the social factor of gender.

5.3 Limitations

Despite the significance of the current study, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, this study examined only asynchronous forms of disagreements; it did not look at synchronous CMC modes of disagreement (e.g., text-messaging on mobile phones, instant messaging, among others). A different, yet related limitation is the focus of this study on textual interactions (or typed exchanges) of disagreements in CMC. Disagreements mediated through voice communication such as Skype and other forms of Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) were not represented in this study and no comparison across multiple modes of CMC were attempted here. Additionally, the current study did not analyze whether individual posts by males were in response to a post by another male vs. a female, and by females to another female vs. a
male. Finally, the current study did not examine the social variable of age. Thus, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other forms of communication.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

It is highly recommended that this work be expanded to research disagreement in individual Arabic-speaking countries (or smaller groups of countries) to see if the results of this study can be confirmed or rejected either by collecting naturally occurring data in face-to-face interactions, administering a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to be constructed from the data of the current study or by employing a combination of methods (e.g., DCT, role-play interviews and naturally observed instances) to arrive at better and clearer picture of disagreements among Arabic speakers.

The current study relied on a corpus of naturally occurring data from only one social networking website (i.e., Facebook). There are dozens of other social networking websites still in need of further investigations. Future researchers are recommended to consider collecting their data from other commonly known websites such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Myspace, Google Pages, Google Circles, hi5, Netlog, and many others. These websites provide invaluable naturalistic data that may uncover linguistic patterns and behaviors of value to the current debate on politeness, impoliteness, speech acts and so on.

The current study controlled only for the effects of gender and topic on the overall realization of the speech act of disagreement among Arabic speakers. It is possible that other factors might have been at play. It is highly recommended that prospective researchers look into the possible effect of age, traditionalism, social status, level of familiarity, level of formality and the like among Arabic speakers. These may bring about further insights into the speech act of disagreement.
Paralinguistic cues (i.e. tone of voice, intonation, gestures, facial expressions, among others) may inform the nature of the complex nature of the speech act of disagreement, as they play an integral role in the overall process of communication. Paralinguistic features help in the interpretation of the disagreement, for they can be seen as either mitigators or aggravators, depending how they are communicated to the hearer. Future studies are recommended to look into paralinguistic features in CMC, especially in the context of disagreements among Arabic speakers.

Additionally, it is highly recommended that future researchers look into investigating how disagreements are perceived, for perception is as significant as production. Finally, prospective researchers should further examine the possible effects of gender in post-to-post interaction; that is, whether individual posts by males were in response to a post by another male vs. a female, and by females to another female vs. a male.
References


### Appendix I: Sample of the Political Category

Light Shading = Original Claim/Statement/Proposition → T (1)
No Shading = Responses/Comments/Disagreements → T (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>الوزير الداخلية المصري: لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>وزير الداخلية المصري: لا يوجد معتقلون أو تعذيب في السجون</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
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<td>#8 [POL.F.PA.VER.PG]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#70 [POL.F.EG.MSA.PG]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#115 [POL.M.EG.MSA.PG]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#117 [POL.F.EG.VER.PG]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>وزیر الداخلية المصري 99% من أمناء الشرطة شرفاء</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'99% of police officers are honest.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (2) ʔuʕareZ saʕadtik Object-I Excellency-your ‘I object to your Excellency.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (2) ʔiħSaʔijatak yalaT: 100% furafa: No statistics-yours wrong: 100% honest. ‘Your statistics are wrong: 100% are honest.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (2) ?inta wazi:r hima:r You Minister donkey ‘You are a stupid Minister.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (2) ja: ruħ ma:ma: 1% Salih wil-baqi ?awsax minl- ?isfilt O soul mother 1% righteous and-the remainder filthier from-the asphalt ‘O your mother’s soul, 1% are good and the ramining are filthier than the ground.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (2) Tab haZratik maʕana fil- kawkab Well presence-your with-us in-the planet ‘Well, sir are you with us on this planet?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (2) ʔiʕskis ʔil-dʒumlih Reverse the-sentence ‘Reverse the sentence.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أوباما يضحكون علينا بزيارة أحد المساجد في أمريكا لإظهار التضامن مع المسلمين. ومع ذلك يسمح بشار الأسد بتهجير 15 مليون سوريا وحرق منازلهم.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama fools on- us in-visiting one the-mosques in America to showing solidarity with The-Muslims. And with that allows-he to-Bashar the-Assad fi-displacement 15 million Syrian and burning houses-their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>[411 [POL.M.IQ.MSA.PG]]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lajsa ?uba:ma: man samah? bi-tahd?i:r ?as-suriji:n bal nahnu ?al-muslimu:n Not Omama who allowed in-displacing the-Syrinas but we the-Muslims ‘It is not Obama who allowed to displace the Syrians, but we the Muslims did.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[450 [POL.M.JO.MSA.PG]]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[457 [POL.F.JO.MSA.PG]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kafaka tahrid?an Enough clowing ‘Enough clowing.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[471 [POL.M.SD.MSA.PG]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?anta tafih You trivial ‘You are ridiculous.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[478 [POL.M.PA.VER.PG]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?u?ariZ-ak hu:wa taZamana faqat ma?il- ?ixwan Oppose-(I)-you he solidarity only with-the brothers ‘I oppos you; he is in solidarity with the Brotherhood [Muslim Brotherhood].’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[493 [POL.M.JO.MSA.PG]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
حزب الله الإرهاب والفوضى بالكلمة

‘Literally, Hizbullah [the political party] stands for terrorism and chaos.’

هاررا الذراع وا حاربة ئيسل اول وا قدامحا ئحادا: وا جعسانف ئيرهابي!!!
‘[Hizbullah] freed the South, fought Israel and gave martyrs and then classified terrorist!!!’

لساناكم ئالله
‘Allah curses you.’

هارطا ئوراف ئرطاك ئينتا؟
‘How did the sister of yours know?’

مجزح وديدن
‘That is really funny.’
Appendix II: Sample of the Religious Category

Light Shading = Original Claim/Statement/Proposition → T (1)
No Shading = Responses/Comments/Disagreements → T (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (1)</th>
<th>ت (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>light shading</td>
<td>الأجماعات الاعتقادية تاريخياً تصلح للقتال فقط، لأنها تقاتل بإيمان، لكنها لا تصلح للحكم أبداً</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no shading</td>
<td>‘Historically, ideological groups are only good for fighting, because they are fighting with faith, but they are not suitable for ruling.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (2)</th>
<th>ت (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;What would you say of the Islamic Caliphates?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;لماذا ليس للحكم على الإطار الذي بنى الرسول محمد؟&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This statement is not true.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;لا، ما أنى هذا الكلام.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You are the most despicable, wicked, trivial and hateful of all humans.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;أنت أشد الأشقاء شجاعةً، أشد الناس شجاعةً في العرق، أشد الناس شجاعةً في القلوب، أشد الناس شجاعةً في الله.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Islam is the only righteous system for ruling.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;الإسلام هو النظام الوحيد المنشأ للمحكمة.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#613 [REL.M.MO.MSA.PG]

#625 [REL.M.AG.MSA.PG]

#636 [REL.M.JO.MSA.PG]

#647 [REL.M.AG.MSA.PG]

#652 [REL.M.TN.MSA.PG]

#703 [REL.M.PA.MSA.PG]
| T (1) | The Azahr incubator for terrorism. ‘Al-Azhar Mosque is a breeding ground for terrorism.’ |
| T (2) | Disagree-I with you the-Azhar not it his connect in the terrorism. ‘I disagree with you. Al-Azhar has nothing to do with terrorism.’ [#738 [REL.M.EG.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | ‘By Allah the Great you are stupid.’ [#744 [REL.M.EG.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | ‘Fuck you [your mother is a cunt].’ [#753 [REL.M.EG.VER.PG]] |
| T (2) | ‘Islam is the finest and most beautiful thing in life.’ [#784 [REL.F.JO.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | ‘You are a whore’s brother and a revert.’ [#794 [REL.M.SY.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | ‘I refuse this invalid claim.’ [#812 [REL.M.IQ.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | ‘I spit on you, dog!’ [#825 [REL.M.SY.VER.PG]] |
| T (1) | الاعجاز العلمي في القرآن كلام فارغ
The scientific miracles in the Qur'an are empty talk |
| T (2) | fihi:h ʔiːsˤdazăʔ ʔiːlmiː wa ʔiːad daqiq in-in miracles scientific and number accurate
‘The Qura’n embodies scientific miracles in accurate numbers.’ [#849 [REL.M.EG.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | ʔinta ʔilfaZi
You the-empty
‘You are the empty one.’ [#877 [REL.M.JO.VER.PG]] |
| T (2) | ʔanta ʕar ʕalal- muslimiːn
You disagrace on-the Muslims
‘You are a disgrace to Muslims.’ [#884 [REL.M.EG.VER.PG]] |
| T (2) | jaː ʔibnZ- zibala ja: Sahjuːniː ja: ʔabu: ʔaːhl ja: ʔibnl- baqara
O son trash O Zionist O father Jahel O son Cow
‘Son of trash, Zionist, Abu Jahel, and son of a cow.’ [#896 [REL.M.EG.VER.PG]] |
| T (2) | kalamak fariːq kaman
Talk empty
‘Your talk is empty as well.’ [#897 [REL.F.EG.VER.PG]] |
| T (2) | laː ʔaːdaː ʔukum ʕam. ʔaːl-mutaʔalim laː jaːstaʔiː ʔiŋkar ʔaːl-ʔaːdazăʔ ʔiːl- qurʔan
No this claim general the-educated no can deny the-miracle in-the Qura’n.
‘No. That is a general claim. An educated person cannot deny the miracles in the Qura’n.’ [#899 [REL.F.EG.MSA.PG]] |
| T (2) | hasbuna ʔallahu wa ʔiːsmal- wakiːl
sufficient Allah and best guardian
‘Allah is sufficient and the best guardian.’ [#912 [REL.M.EG.MSA.PG]] |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>للحجاب ليس فرضا على المرأة ولا أعتقد أن يأمر النساء بالحجاب.</td>
<td>The veil is not obligatory and Allah is wiser than ordering women to wear the veil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لعن الله علىك في الدنيا والآخرة.</td>
<td>‘Allah’s curse is upon you in this life and the afterlife.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اغروم.</td>
<td>‘Shut up.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا أتفق معك، دكتور.</td>
<td>‘I do not agree with you, doctor.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>من حضرتك أتكلم عن الحجاب.</td>
<td>‘Who are you to talk about the veil?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا: لا قوة ولا شجاعة إلا عن الله.</td>
<td>‘There is no might or power except in Allah.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>حيوان: رجل الحيوان.</td>
<td>‘You are an animal and son of animals.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أحببتي، في أي وقت ممكن تفقد حياتك.</td>
<td>‘Fear our God, for it is possible to lose your life anytime.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III: Sample of the Social Category

Light Shading = Original Claim/Statement/Proposition \( \rightarrow \) T (1)
No Shading = Responses/Comments/Disagreements \( \rightarrow \) T (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (1)</th>
<th>T (2)</th>
<th>T (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ءيل-مارال-</td>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td>ءيل-؟یتهم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td>ءيلي: بتبوس ايد حماتها حتى تبينلها الاحترام</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A good woman is one who kisses her mother-in-law's hand to show respect.'

What’s the hand kiss to do with respect? Would you clarify for us?

No. That is not true.’

No, no, no.’

Hand-kissing is only for the mother, the father and the spouse.’

‘No. I would kiss her head and eyes.’

Despite my respect and love for my mother-in-law, I would not kiss any hands, but my mother’s.’

253
T (2) la: ma: bawafiq mumkin ?abu:s rasha: faqaT
No not agree possible kiss-I head-her only
‘No. I do not agree. I may kiss only her head.’
[#1117 [SOC.F.JO.VER GR]]

T (2) la: no ‘No.’
[#1125 [SOC.F.JO.MSA.GR]]

I personally not support-it because the-respect not that
‘Personally, I do not support it, for respect should not be like that.’
[#1174 [SOC.F.LEB.VER GR]]

T (2) la: babu:sij’nuqTa
No kiss-not
‘no. I will not kiss PERIOD.’
[#1181 [SOC.F.PA.VER GR]]

Mean the-respect not become unless in-prostrating to-mother-in-law-my!!!!
‘So to show respect, I have to prostrate myself to my mother-in-law!!!’
[#1189 [SOC.F.PA.VER GR]]

Except hand mother-my not kiss-I neveeeeeeer
‘Except for my mother’s hand, I will neverrrrrr kiss.’
[#1195 [SOC.F.SD.VER GR]]

T (2) ?i?da: ba:s ?eid ?ummi a::
If kiss-her hand mother-my yes
‘If he [husband] kisses my mother’s hand, then yes I will [kiss his mother’s]’
[#1197 [SOC.F.UAE.VER GR]]

T (1) 
النساء تحب الشاورما أكثر من الورد
?an-nisa: tuhib ?aj-fa:warma ?k0ar men-l ward
The women-PL like-they the-Shawarma more than the-rose
‘Women like gyros more than roses.’

T (2) ?ana: ma: bahib-ha w- bkrarah ri:thta
I not like- it and-hate smell-its
‘I do not like it and I hate its smell.’
[#1201 [SOC.F. EG.VER GR]]
Nothing is as significant as red roses for me.

‘Nothing is as significant as red roses for me.’

No. That is not true.

‘That is not true.’

No. Of course roses.

‘The Library of Alexandria is the oldest in the World.’

The United Arab Emirates has the largest library in the Arab World.

‘The largest library is the Library of Alexandria [Egypt], darling.’
T (2) maktaba xaSa lil- buʃran
Library special to-the camels
‘A library [designed] special for the camels.’
[#1266 [SOC.M.IQ.MSA.GR]]

T (2) ?akbar maktaba akbar burdʒ akbar u:tel akbar akbar wa ?aSyar ḡaql
Largest library largest tower largest hotel largest largest and smallest brain
‘The largest library, tower and hotel, yet the smallest brain.’
[#1269 [SOC.M.IQ.MSA.GR]]

T (2) wa- man saji:qa: fi- ha? ?al-baʃi:r?
And who read in-it? The camels?
‘Who will read? The camels?’
[#1281 [SOC.M.MO.MSA.GR]]

T (2) haða: sahil lakin ?al-muʃkila man bi-qa: fi-ha: hahaha
This easy but the-problem who in-read in-it hahaha
‘This is good, but who will read in it, hahaha?’
[#1294 [SOC.M.MO.MSA.GR]]

T (2) la: miʃ saḥiːh
No not true
‘No. That is not true.’
[#1303 [SOC.F.JO.MSA.GR]]

T (2) la: miʃ sah
No not true
‘No. That is not true.’
[#1304 [SOC.F.PA.MSA.GR]]

largest library in-the world tallest tower prettiest horse.
Tajjib ma: fi- bahat Tibi:
Well not in research medical
‘[The UAE] has the largest library, the tallest tower, and the most beautiful horse. How about some medical research?’
[#1314 [SOC.M.SY.MSA.GR]]

T (2) li- taʃliːm rakb ?al-dʒimal
To-teaching riding the-camel
‘To teach camel-riding.’
[#1322 [SOC.M.SY.MSA.GR]]
Appendix IV: Additional Tables of Statistical Analyses

Table 49: Distribution of Personality-Related Abusive Language Crosstabulated with Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related (Character)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related (Animal Metaphor)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related (Cultural Reference)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related (Religious Reference)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related (Political Reference)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality-Related (Sexual Reference)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 50: Distribution of Family-Related Obscene Language Cross-tabulated with Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Related (Mother Invocation)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Related (Father Invocation)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Related (Sister Invocation)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Related (General/Other)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 51: Distribution of Aggravating Structural Devices Cross-tabulated with Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of the Negation Particle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Upgraders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel Lengthening</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit ADJ</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 52: Distribution of Paralinguistic Devices Cross-tabulated with Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 53: List of Aggravators’ Combinations Cross-tabulated with Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Mother Invocation + Character-Related
2. Character-Related + Repetition
3. Mother Invocation + Word Playing
4. Religious Reference + Word Playing
5. Mother Invocation + Repition of the Negation Particle
6. Imperative + Animal Metaphor
7. Religious Reference + Intersifier
8. General Family Reference + Political Reference
9. Implicit ADJ + Character-Related
10. Mother Invocation + Father Invocation
11. General Family Reference + Character-Related
12. Sister Invocation + Religious Reference
13. Allah Invoking against the Interlocutor + Character-Related
14. Character-Related + Animal Reference
15. Allah Invoking against the Interlocutor + General Family Reference
16. Religious Reference + Character Related
17. Imperative + Character Related
18. Implicit ADJ + Religious Reference
19. Sexual Reference + Character Related
20. Animal Metaphor + Intensifier
21. Character Related + Gestural Spitting
22. Character Related + Vowel Lengthening
23. Religious Reference + Mother Invocation
24. Mother Invocation + Cultural Reference
26. Implicit ADJ + Vowel Lengthening
27. Intensifier + Vowel Lengthening
28. Baby-Talk + Mother Invocation + Religious Reference  1  0  1
29. Character-Related + Political Reference + Cultural Reference + Mother Invocation  1  0  1

Total  35  5  40

Table 54: Chi-Square Tests of Aggravators’ Combination & Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>30.857a</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>24.596</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>.650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. *P > .05

Table 55: Chi-Square Tests of Syntactic Construction & Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>17.582a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>18.609</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>11.108</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. *P > .05