Disagreement strategies and (Im)politeness in Saudis' Twitter Communication

Sarah Almutairi

University of Leeds

Introduction

It has been reported that many Saudis view Twitter as an "online parliament" (Alkarni 70), which shows that Twitter is not just a platform for socializing and sharing personal updates; it is a space where views on different political and social matters are discussed. In these Twitter discussions, it is natural, and certainly inevitable, for disagreements to occur. By investigating Saudis' Twitter disagreements and (im)politeness in political and sociocultural trending hashtags from 2017-2018, disagreement strategies and types can be revealed. This paper is part of ongoing research that follows a triangulation methodology involving corpus analysis, online questionnaires and follow-up interviews. However, the specific focus for this paper is examining the types of disagreements found in the corpus of tweets and the linguistic strategies used by Saudis to express disagreement. It also looks at how these strategies can be classified in terms of their (im)politeness. The analysis

reveals that most Saudis' Twitter disagreements in the corpus belong to the aggravated (i.e., strengthened) type, and 24% were linguistically unmarked, while 6.7% were mitigated (i.e., softened) disagreements. There are 11 disagreement strategies used by Saudis and the most commonly used in the corpus are act combination, verbal attack, explanation, verbal irony/sarcasm and counterclaim.

Overview of Twitter use in Saudi Arabia

New technology has offered societies great opportunities for self-expression that traditional media cannot accommodate. In the Arab world, although both new and traditional media are censored to varying degrees across Arab countries, social media platforms are less controlled than traditional media. Twitter, in particular, has gained considerable recognition in the Gulf region, and specifically among Saudis, making Saudi Arabia one of Twitter's biggest markets (Sreberny). Westall and McDowall report that in Saudi Arabia, Twitter is popular among young people between the ages of 18 to 24, followed closely by users in their late 20s to early 40s. At least 55% of Saudis are Twitter users. They also state that Twitter usage is split roughly between Saudi men and women. The majority of users access Twitter via mobile phones (Sreberny). Alsaggaf and Simmons claim that the issue of filtering and regulation of online content might be the reason behind Saudis migrating to platforms that are more difficult to regulate, such as Twitter.

In Saudi Arabia, Twitter, more than any other social media platform, is the main public platform used by many members of the Saudi royal family, politicians, academics and clerics, among other influential individuals and groups. It is evident that Twitter hosts many world leaders, influencers and policymakers, both nationally, like King Salman (@KingSalman), and internationally (e.g., @JustinTrudeau). In addition, Twitter is also used in many online movements, like the campaign for women's right to drive cars in 2013[1]. In 2016, Twitter was the main

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[1] Online campaigns advocating Saudi women to drive go back to at least 2008 when Wajeha Alhuwaider posted a video of herself driving a car in a rural road asking for a reconsideration of the driving ban on women. Another campaign took place in 2011, when Manal Alsharif set up a Facebook group, sharing a video of her driving the car and calling on women to drive. There was

platform used to organize a boycott against the Saudi Telecom Company (STC) as the public was furious at the company's restriction on internet data or what is also called *fair use*. In 2018, Twitter was used effectively alongside traditional media to introduce the Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's 2030 vision reform plans, and – according to the France-based social media monitor Semiocast – there were around 860,000 tweets produced by 46% of Saudis discussing the vision on Twitter (Westall and McDowall). These examples demonstrate that Twitter is certainly used for spreading awareness, sharing information, and having a public dialogue on social and political matters (Konnelly). Hence, it is indeed a rich source of naturally occurring data, and, more importantly, it is a place where many disagreements undoubtedly occur.

Disagreement in (im)politeness research

Early politeness theories, despite their epistemological differences, unanimously see politeness as a conflict avoidance strategy (Kasper 194). Eelen points out that this notion of conflict avoidance is evident in the work of Lakoff as well as others, but it has a more dominant presence in Brown and Levinson's model. Based on this conflict-avoidance view of politeness, disagreement was mainly classified as impolite given its disruption to social harmony. To clarify, Leech in *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983), for instance, classifies politeness into four categories depending on the illocutionary speech act used in the situations. In this classification, disagreement, like reprimanding and threatening, belongs to the conflictive category of illocutions where the social goal (comity or equilibrium) conflicts with the illocutionary goal (disagreement). In this scenario, "politeness is out of the question, because conflictive illocutions are, by their nature, designed to cause offence" (105). This classification evidently shows that Leech considers politeness as a "strategic conflict

no mass movement but about 40 Saudi women across the country drove in the streets to support Alsharif's call. In 2013, Twitter hashtags such as *#Women2Drive* were trending and Saudis were fiercely debating the matter. In the following years, the issue was frequently trending on Twitter using hashtags like *#women_driving_cars*, *#I'll_drive_I'll _drive*. Finally, in 2017 King Salman bin Abdulaziz issued a statement recognizing Saudis' women right to drive, and declaring that licenses were set to be issued on June 2018. On Twitter, Saudis celebrated the lift of the ban through hashtags like *#allowing_women_to_drive.*

avoidance" emphasizing the consideration of others (Watts, 'Politeness' 50). Leech observes that "there is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement etc.;" hence, he noticed the need for a Maxim of Agreement (138).

Almost two decades later, Leech still maintains that disagreement is dispreferred; he explains that in cases where a speaker has to disagree, this disagreement is unlikely to occur without mitigation devices such as indirectness and hedging. Thus, he considers the use of mitigation devices with disagreement as a sign of the unfavourableness of disagreement. In a similar tone, Thomas states that people tend to be more direct in expressing agreement and indirect when expressing disagreement; she describes direct disagreement as a failure or perhaps a refusal to consider others. However, she emphasizes the vital role of the nature of the situation and the relationship between interlocutors when analysing disagreement. Similarly, Brown and Levinson see disagreement as an inherently face-threatening act (FTA) because it negatively affects and weakens solidarity among interlocutors. In their model, disagreement belongs to those FTAs that threaten the addressee's positive face-wants,[2] showing that the speaker is not considering or ignoring the addressee's feelings, wants, etc. (Brown and Levinson).

This view of disagreement has been challenged by several scholars (e.g., Angouri and Locher; Kakavá, 'Negotiation of Disagreement'; Georgakopoulou; Schiffrin; Tannen and Kakavá; Sifianou, 'Politeness Phenomena'). These studies show that disagreement does not have to be always perceived negatively and it does not necessarily cause conflicts, on the contrary, it can strengthen relationships and signal intimacy. In the postmodern or discursive approaches of (im)politeness (e.g. Locher

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[2] The notion of face is one of the central, yet most debatable, concepts in (im)politeness research. The notion of face was introduced into social theory by Goffman who defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes…"(5). Building on this definition, Brown and Levinson describe face as that which 'consists of two specific kinds of desires ("face wants") attributed by interactants to one another: the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face) (13).

and Watts; Watts, 'Power in Family'), which were generally developed as remedies for the shortcomings of the traditional approaches, politeness and impoliteness are not treated as polar opposites. It is argued that the two concepts operate differently, and that politeness should not be always marked as positive and impoliteness as negative. Overall, (im)politeness here is seen as a situated evaluation; hence, it is difficult to decide a priori whether a disagreement is polite or impolite (Sifianou, 'Conflict'). In fact, a number of studies have demonstrated that the expression and evaluation of disagreements are influenced by different factors related to context, culture, medium, etc. (e.g., Angouri and Tseliga; Baym; Graham; Habib; Netz; Shum and Lee).

Disagreement research in DMC

When scrutinizing the extensive literature on disagreement, it appears that disagreement has been approached from different angles. For example, disagreement has been studied in the areas of conversation analysis (CA) (e.g., Pearson; Pomerantz), social-psychological pragmatics (e.g., Muntigl and Turnbull), speech act theory (e.g., Sornig), early politeness theories (e.g., Brown and Levinson; Leech), postmodern politeness theories (e.g., Locher, 'Power and Politeness'), second language learning (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury), and digitally-mediated communication (DMC) (e.g., Baym; Bou-Franch and Blitvich; Harb). In a more general sense, disagreement studies can be divided into two broad categories: studies that examine disagreement in offline communication (e.g., Kakavá, 'Opposition'; Netz; Pomerantz; Rees-Miller; Sornig) and studies that look at disagreement in online communication (e.g., Angouri and Tseliga; Baym; Georgakopoulou; Graham; Harb; Langlotz and Locher; Shum and Lee). The focus here is placed only on the latter category, particularly studies that examine the intersection between disagreements and (im)politeness in DMC. The literature reveals that the majority of the earliest studies on disagreement and politeness online were based on the classical politeness models, especially the politeness model proposed by Brown and Levinson as found in (Georgakopoulou); therefore, these studies will not be covered in this paper. Moreover, (and in attempt to narrow the discussion) I will focus on covering studies that draw on the relational

work model proposed by Locher and Watts in their analysis of online disagreements.

The expression as well as the evaluation of online disagreements were reported to be influenced by some key technical and social factors (e.g. Angouri and Tseliga; Bolander). Among the technical factors identified in previous studies are the features or the nature of the medium itself, the level of anonymity, the lack of social context cues, and synchronicity. On the other hand, some of the social factors that were found to be significant are participant relationships, topics, participation framework, and frame and culture. In her examination of disagreement and (im)politeness in e-mail messages sent to a ChurchList, Graham stated that the participants form what is known as a community of practice (CoP) (e.g. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet; Lave and Wenger), in which participation is governed in many ways by expectations for the behaviour of the members who affiliate with the Anglican Church. Disagreements which led to conflictive exchanges were caused by differing expectations and interpretations of (im)politeness norms in the group. These disagreements were valuable because they generated active negations of these (im)politeness norms, thus giving the members a chance to renegotiate the identity of the group. Graham concluded that disagreements were influenced not only by the medium but also by the power relation within the group alongside the relational history (i.e., prior communications among the members). Similarly, Angouri and Tseliga investigated disagreements and (im)politeness in two online fora, each representing a different CoP (Greek students and professional academics). They specifically focused on unmitigated (i.e., strong) disagreements and how impoliteness is lexicalized, especially through punctuation and unconventional spelling. They noted that emotions in disagreements can be accentuated through punctuation and unconventional spelling due to the absence of paralinguistic cues in online communication (see Langlotz and Locher looking at ways to index emotional stance in disagreements). Overall, their findings revealed that interactants tend to hold different judgments of what is considered a marked behaviour. They concluded that impoliteness is not only embedded in the strategies used by interactants, but also the social context—including the norms of the group, the topic and purpose of the

communication, the relationship between the participants, and the dynamic group identities.

In line with the above studies, Bolander investigated disagreements and agreements in personal blogs with special attention to the effects of participation framework and message formatting in blogs. She looked at how the responsiveness of disagreements and agreements is constructed—that is, how interactants signal the target(s) or indicate to whom the response is directed. Bolander found that in the absence of built-in technical affordances, interactants make use of various referencing strategies—some explicit and some less explicit—such as quoting, naming, order and participant roles, and format tying. The selection of one of these strategies seems to be influenced by the participation framework in blogs and the existing and emerging participant roles. She also found that most comments were readers' responses directed to the blogger. Likewise, and drawing on the work of Muntigl and Turnbull on the interactional order of disagreement, Langlotz and Locher analysed the participation framework in the online commentary section of the *MailOnline*. They found that the majority of the comments in their corpus were directed to the main character mentioned in the news article or an issue in the article. The identification and signalling of the disagreement target(s), especially on Twitter, is further discussed in preparation and coding of the corpus.

Other studies were more focused on examining the different types and strategies of online disagreements and how these disagreements were evaluated in terms of (im)politeness and (in)appropriateness. For instance, Shum and Lee investigated disagreements among Hong Kong communicators in two fora, and Harb looked at disagreements among Arabs on Facebook. Both studies reported that 10 to 11 disagreement strategies were used, and they found that the majority of these strategies expressed unmarked disagreements which were generally evaluated as politic. Shum and Lee used questionnaires and follow-up interviews to assess the participants' perceptions of the identified disagreements. They noted that although the majority of disagreements were direct and unmitigated, they were generally perceived by the participants as politic or appropriate since they are not negatively marked. Harb, on the other hand, examined the influence of topic and gender on the expression and

evaluation of disagreements among Arabs and found that the two social factors are influential. Generally, it seems that the findings of these two studies support the claims that disagreement is not always a face-threatening act (FTA) and that the production and perception of online disagreements are affected by different factors. Therefore, to achieve grounded understanding of online disagreements, the analysis should take into consideration the impact of both social and technical factors.

Significance of the study

Graham and Hardaker highlighted that, despite the prominent role Twitter plays on political and social levels, pragmatic research into Twitter remains thin compared to other digitally mediated communication (DMC) contexts, such as e-mails and blogs. Moreover, existing literature on Arabic speech acts and (im)politeness has given little attention to cultural-linguistic behaviours in DMC. Arabic studies on disagreement and (im)politeness are scarce, especially in Saudi Arabia, compared to other speech acts such as requests, apologies, compliments, and invitations. The literature of Arabic speech acts and (im)politeness has largely been focused on cross-cultural investigations (e.g., Almusallam; Alzumor; Bataineh and Bataineh; Nelson et al.; Nureddeen; Tawalbeh and Aloqaily). Also, the speech act of disagreement has not been extensively addressed; to my knowledge, there are very few recent studies on Arabic disagreement. For instance, Harb's study investigates Arabic disagreements on Facebook, through which he stresses the need for further research on disagreement in Arabic, especially in online communication. The second study, conducted by Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq, looks at disagreement strategies in Jordanian Arabic through investigating the data collected from university students using discourse completion task (DCT). Thus, this study seeks to address this lack of research on Arabic disagreement and (im)politeness, especially in Twitter communication among Saudis. In addition, there seems to be a general assumption that Saudis on Twitter are more aggressive in their disagreements. Alghathami points out in his book, *Twitter Culture,* that one of the apparent practices among Saudi Twitter users when disagreeing is severe verbal exchange without consideration or discretion—this practice is commonly known as قصف

الجبهة /qasˤf a:lʒabha/, literally translated as shooting the forehead. Therefore, the present study further investigates this assumption about the pervasiveness of unmitigated disagreements among Saudi Twitter users.

Finally, since this paper is part of an ongoing research, it only aims to answer two of the research questions through investigating the compiled Twitter corpus for this study:

1. What are the strategies and types of disagreement used by Saudis in Twitter communication?
2. What is the dominant type of disagreement in Twitter communication among Saudis discussing political and sociocultural topics?

Theoretical framework

Definition of Twitter Disagreement

Building on how disagreement was defined in previous studies and taking the nature of Twitter communication into consideration, I define Twitter disagreement as a post expressing a (written) incompatible or different position to the one expressed in the main tweet or a prior reply in the thread of replies. It could target all or some aspects of the main post or a prior reply. Hence, the connection between the disagreement and the targeted post should be explicit and direct through the use of replying to @username or mentioning by @username. Based on this, the identification of disagreement on Twitter is focused on directly expressed written disagreement to the exclusion of disagreement expressed by images, videos, or GIFs. The reasons behind this decision: (1) even though the internet has enriched people's means of communication, text-based communication remains the most popular in DMC (Herring); (2) for a proper classification of online disagreement, disagreement has to be stated explicitly and directly (Baym; Bolander). Baym reports that quotations with reference or reference to others' talk were used with every instance of disagreement in her corpus of posts taken from a newsgroup called *rec.arts.tv.soaps* (r.a.t.s). These two strategies are used to establish an explicit connection to the prior message. However, on

Twitter the primary reference strategies used to link the disagreement with the prior message are usually shown in the use of the reply option, which then marks the top of the tweet with *replying to @username,* or the use of the mention function, which appears as *@username* and can be found either at the beginning or the end of the tweet, as well as sometimes in the middle.[3]

Twitter communication is highly intertextual and multimodal; therefore, when examining disagreement, it is essential to identify who is the target of the disagreement (i.e., to whom the disagreement is directed). This necessitates looking at the nature of the structural order of disagreement on Twitter. One of the first studies that looked at the structural order of disagreement was that of Muntigl and Turnbull. They looked at both the structure and the strategies of conversational disagreements—termed 'arguing exchanges' (227)—as an interactional activity which was proposed from the social-psychological pragmatics point of view. The structure of disagreements they proposed is presented in Figure 1.
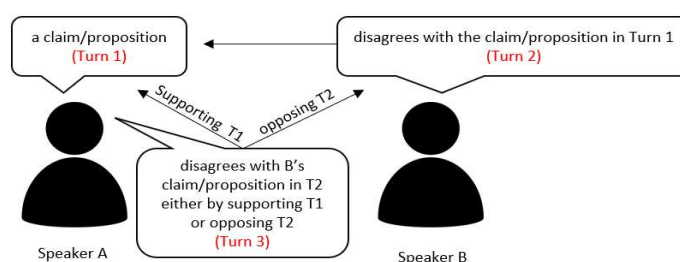

Figure 1. Conversational order of disagreement derived from Muntigl and Turnbull (1998).

Although Muntigl and Turnbull's account of the conversational turns of disagreement was based on dyadic face-to-face data, it can be adopted to analyse online disagreement taking into consideration the unique characteristics of online interactional order on a specific platform. Langlotz and Locher describe Muntigl and Turnbull's tripartite turn-structure of disagreement as a sophisticated and helpful basis for

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[3] Disagreement on Twitter can also be linked to other tweets through the use of the quoting function; however, these quoted tweets do not show up in the thread of replies as they are treated as retweets with comments, which is different from replying.

systemising the discursive structure of disagreement; however, it requires careful adjustments when applied to online disagreement. They used Muntigl and Turnbull's framework of disagreement to examine disagreements and emotional stance in the commentary section of the *MailOnline.* The model was also used in other studies of online disagreement, such as those of Shum and Lee on forum discussions and Harb on Facebook, both of which noted that online disagreements occur mostly in two turns and rarely in three turns. This also seems to be the case in this study, as the majority of Twitter disagreements found in the corpus occurred in T2 and very few in T3. More details are provided in the discussion of Figure 5.

In this study, the above model was helpful with the referencing between the disagreement and its target(s) on Twitter. However, the model was slightly altered to fit the nature of communication on Twitter. The 12 main tweets[4] collected from the 6 trending hashtags were coded as T1 as they occupied the first conversational turn. The replies to the main tweet were coded as T2, T3, etc. depending on the conversational turns these replies occupied within the main thread of replies. For instance, if the reply in T2 generated a sub-thread of the replies, then this reply was labelled as T1/2 because in terms of its relation to the main tweet it occupied the second turn, whereas it occupied the first turn for the replies in the sub-thread.

Disagreement taxonomy

The literature offers different taxonomies for classifying disagreement strategies. Although these taxonomies share some similarities, they still lack uniformity, thus making comparing frequencies very challenging (Netz). The taxonomies consulted in the study are those found in the work of (Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq; Harb; Rees-Miller; Shum and Lee). These taxonomies were chosen for the clear classification of the types of disagreements as in Rees-Miller's taxonomy; the application of the taxonomy on disagreement and (im)politeness in online communication, as in (Harb; Shum and Lee); and the description of disagreement

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[4] Can be described as a parent tweet as it generates all the replies in the thread of tweets. This tweet is also referred to as the 'triggering event' (Bousfield 203).

strategies in Arabic (as in Alkheder and Alabed-Alhaq; Harb).

In the present study, it should be noted that taxonomies of disagreements alone would not have been sufficient to provide a clear account of Saudis' Twitter disagreements unless theories of (im)politeness were taken into consideration. Therefore, the next subsection gives more insight into Watts and Locher's relational work model as well as Culpeper's impoliteness model, which were used to account for the (im)politeness aspect of online disagreements on Twitter.

The relational work model

The current research follows the discursive approaches to (im)politeness. In particular, it takes the relational work model (Locher and Watts; Watts, 'Politeness') as the main theoretical framework to analyse the data. Generally speaking, the discursive approaches are focused on (im)politeness in context from a social perspective. These approaches are more concerned with the contextual analysis of interactants' perceptions and how interactants reach specific evaluative decisions of whether a certain behaviour is polite, impolite, etc. Among the different discursive approaches, the relational work model was chosen because of its detailed categorization of communicative behaviours in terms of (im)politeness/(in)appropriateness as explained below. Furthermore, the relational work model has been used effectively to analyse disagreement and (im)politeness on Facebook (Harb) and forum communication (Shum and Lee), but not on Twitter. Therefore, I believe testing the model on Twitter can contribute to the discursive movement, which appears to need more empirical research given its relative newness.

Watts offers a diagram that fully maps the whole spectrum of relational work (see Figure 2). In this perspective, the relational work embraces the notion of markedness, focusing on whether behaviours in an interaction are marked or not. Markedness here is associated with the notion of appropriateness, and it implies that there are some shared social or cultural norms against which behaviours are judged (Locher, 'Power' 85-86). Behaviours can be unmarked or marked either positively or negatively. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the distinction between markedness and unmarkedness is not rigid; it allows for individualistic variation in perceptions and understandings of norms,

hence the different evaluations of (im)politeness. In fact, the boundaries between all the categories in the relational work spectrum are somewhat fuzzy—the dotted lines between the categories represent the negotiable discursive nature of assessments within the relational work (Locher and Watts 12; Locher, 'Polite Behavior' 256-58).
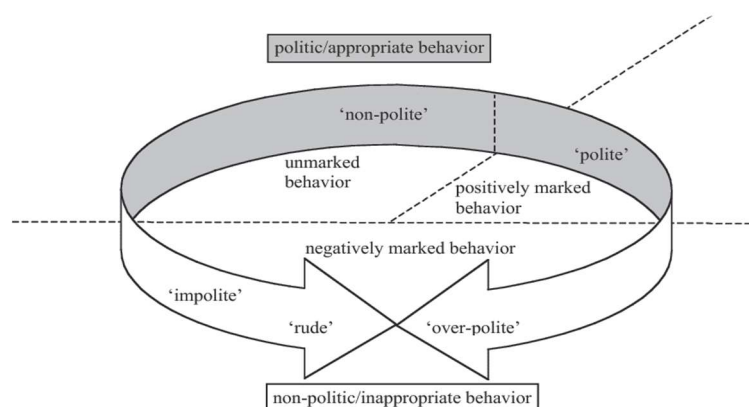

Figure 2. Relational work model by © Watts (xliii).

In the present analysis of disagreements, I adopted Rees-Miller's classification of disagreement types: (a) mitigated disagreement, which she refers to as softened disagreement; (b) unmitigated disagreement, referred to as not softened or strengthened disagreement; and (c) aggravated disagreement. I then attempted to specify the correlation between these three types and the relational work model. As displayed in Table 2 below, aggravated disagreement (column 1) is negatively marked. Disagreement strategies in this category involve the use of aggravation devices such as degrading remarks and calling others names, which are classified as impoliteness strategies (Bousfield; Culpeper, 'Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness'). Aggravation is defined as both linguistic and non-linguistic devices used to intensify and amplify the negative effects of disagreement. Impoliteness strategies, especially aggravators, are described as "communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (Culpeper et al. 1546). On the other hand, the mitigated disagreement (column 3) is positively marked. It contains disagreement that makes use of mitigation devices such as token agreement and hedging (Kreutel). Mitigation is usually employed to soften an utterance, thus reducing its potential negative effects on face (Czerwionka). Nonetheless, it is

important to note that in some contexts mitigated disagreement may not be perceived as polite as shown in column 4 in Table 1. Lastly, unmitigated disagreement (column 2) contains unmarked disagreement strategies that are neither aggravated nor mitigated.

Table 1. Theoretical framework

	Aggravated disagreement	Unmitigated disagreement	Mitigated disagreement	(Sarcastically) mitigated disagreement
	negatively marked	unmarked	positively marked	negatively marked
Second-order terms which are unlikely to appear in a lay person's judgments	non-politic	politic	politic	non-politic
Some possible first-order assessment	impolite	polite	polite	impolite
	inappropriate	appropriate	appropriate	inappropriate
	rude			rude

In addition to the above, the examination of impoliteness in this study is generally based on the impoliteness model proposed in (Bousfield), which is a revised version of Culpeper's model. The model can be simply paraphrased as follows:

1. **On-record impoliteness:** (a) an explicit and unambiguous attack/aggravation to one's interlocutor's face that (b) denies the interlocutor's face wants, needs, etc., and (c) constructs the interlocutor's face in a conflictive and inharmonious way.
2. **Off-record impoliteness:** an indirect way of attacking or aggravating an interlocutor's face conveyed through an implicature (Grice) that can be cancelled, denied, etc. This class of impoliteness contains two sub-classes:

    a. Sarcasm or mock politeness: the use of strategies that seem appropriate on the surface but are taken to mean the opposite; this is seen in disagreements which are sarcastically mitigated in column 4 in Table 1.

   b. Withhold politeness: in contexts where politeness would be accepted or mandatory, withholding it is seen as off-record impoliteness.

Methodology

Building a corpus of tweets

To answer the two research questions, an investigation of a Twitter corpus was carried out. The corpus of tweets collected for this study consisted of 12 engaging[5] main tweets extracted from 6 hashtags that were trending in 2017 and 2018 in Saudi Arabia. Every main tweet had at least 50 replies (i.e., responsive posts), thus giving a total of 1556 posts, as shown in Table 2 below. The 6 trending hashtags were identified based on reports in local news accounts on Twitter, such as (@SaudiNews50, @sabqorgand, and @HashKSA), and were based on my observations as a Twitter user. The hashtags chosen fall within political (POL) and sociocultural (SOC) categories as these topics are more likely to provoke disagreement given the major political and social changes the country has been undergoing. Noman et al. (38) noted that Twitter is serving different groups within Saudi society by allowing them to express their views regarding many political and social issues.

   Another category that is intertwined with the selected categories is religion (R); however, in the current study, exclusively religious topics were not selected for the following reasons. Chiefly, religion (usually Islam) is very integrated into the lives of Saudis; hence, it is difficult to separate it from other elements of life, such as politics or education. Therefore, the categories POL and SOC are in fact not entirely religion-free. Furthermore, religion as a topic is not limited to Saudi Arabia, and hence it would be more challenging to control the data as the primary interest was in tweets posted by Saudis.

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

Table 2. List of hashtags and number of replies for each main tweet

CATEGORY	HASHTAG CODE	HASHTAG	NO. OF REPLIES	SHARED MEDIA IN MAIN TWEET
SOC	SH1.1	#alsihaimi_ calls_for_closing_mosques	118	a short video
	SH1.2	#alsihaimi_ calls_for_closing_mosques	149	a short video
	SH2.1	#hijaz_identity	96	-
	SH2.2	#hijaz_identity	216	a short video
	SH3.1	#women_driving	219	-
	SH3.2	#women_driving	116	a short video
POL	PH1.1	#the_king_fights_corruption	85	-
	PH1.2	#the_king_fights_corruption	97	a short video
	PH2.1	#royal_decrees	60	photo
	PH2.2	#royal_decrees	202	-
	PH3.1	#gulf_crisis	128	-
	PH3.2	#gulf_crisis	70	a short video
TOTAL	12		1556	

*Table a.1. In the appendix provides a description of the accounts from which main tweets were retrieved.

Preparation and coding of the corpus

The tweets in the corpus were prepared for the analysis through coding the replies for (1) the linguistic variant used[6]; (2) the geographical location, which contained three categories (Saudis, Non-Saudis, Unidentified); and (3) the speech act expressed—disagreement (**Dis**), agreement (**Agr**), and undetermined (**U**)—which basically encompass all instances of replies that are off-topic, irrelevant, and unlikely to be agreement or disagreement. Finally, (4) the tweets were coded for their conversational turn in the thread of replies, using (T1) for the main tweet, which always occupies the first turn in the thread, (T2) for the reply, and so on.

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[6] There are three main categories:

Fusˤħa: includes both Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA); also referred to as the standard or the formal form of the Arabic language.

ˤammijah includes the different Arabic vernaculars (i.e., dialects); also referred to as the non-standard or the informal form of the Arabic language.

Mixed refers to the mixed style between the standard and the non-standard forms.

Other (**O**) refers to the use of links, emojis, etc.

The location needed to be identified to limit the analysis to Saudis' posts. However, Twitter users do not always clearly share their locations; therefore, a closer examination of individual accounts was carried out as necessary. The examination involved looking at a poster's[7] profile, shared media, tweets and replies, with the aim of finding a country affiliation through content and dialect used when posting. Nevertheless, in some instances, identification seemed difficult (e.g., when the account had very few tweets), and hence the location for this poster was classified as unidentified (U). Figure 3 displays the total occurrence of tweets in the corpus based on location.
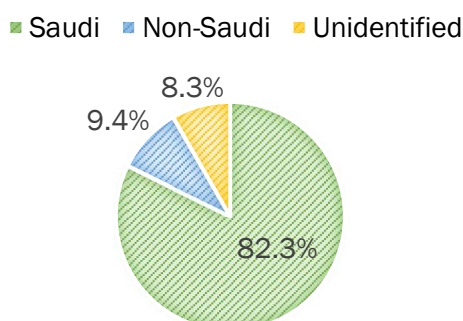
Figure 3. General classification of tweets based on location.
(Note: main tweets are not included in the count.)

As stated above, tweets were also classified into the **Dis**, **Agr**, or **U** categories. The analysis was then applied only to replies that expressed disagreement, thus excluding any reply belonging to the other two categories. Figure 4 shows the total occurrence of each category in the corpus. It appears that disagreement has the highest percentage of occurrence in the corpus at 48.7%, whereas agreement has the lowest percentage at 19.5%.

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[7] Unlike passive users, also known as lurkers, an active user or poster is someone who participates by commenting/replying, liking, sharing etc., thus showing an active participation (Khan; Takahashi et al.).
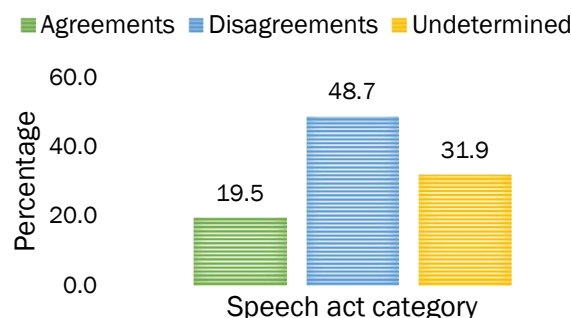
Figure 4. The total occurrences of each category in percentage.

Now, examining the disagreement instances in the corpus reveals that 82.7% of disagreements were expressed by Saudis (625 instances of disagreement). Also, most of the identified Saudis' disagreements occupied the second conversational turn (T1/2 and T2) as shown in Figure 5. This finding concurs with the findings of previous studies (Harb; Shum and Lee) that online disagreements can be identified in two-turn conversations. Hereinafter, the analysis of Saudis' disagreements is limited to those in T1/2 and T2, thus excluding about 7.1% of disagreements which occurred in other conversational turns.
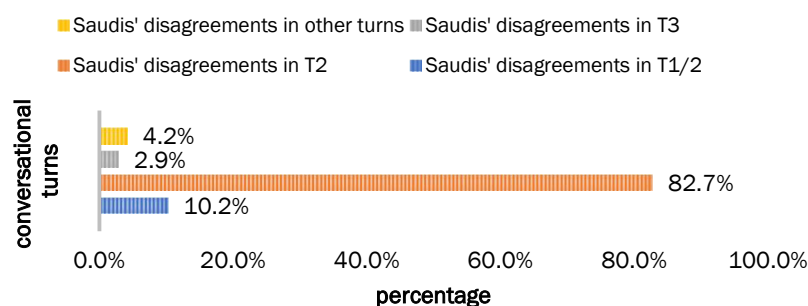

Figure 5. Frequency of Saudis' disagreements in each conversational turn.

The final phase of the data preparation was identifying the target of the disagreement (i.e., to whom the disagreement was directed), taking into consideration the highly intertextual and multimodal nature of Twitter communication. As Langlotz and Locher pointed out in their study of disagreements and emotional stance in the commentary section of the *MailOnline,* it seems that the direction of disagreement and precisely identifying the target in online communication can be

challenging and probably impossible in some cases. Hence, in my analysis, I focused on the explicit linkage between the disagreement and the preceding main tweet and replies. This connection between disagreement and what comes before it was emphasised in previous studies (e.g., Baym; Bolander; Langlotz and Locher). The analysis reveals that there was indeed more than one possible target for the online disagreement; based on the results, I generally divided them as follows:

1. Disagreements directed to one or more elements in the main tweet, such as the main poster, content of the main tweet, and/or content of shared media.
2. Disagreements directed to one or more elements in the previous reply, such as the poster, the content of the reply, and/or content of shared media.
3. Disagreements generally directed to the posters in the thread of replies.

The majority of the disagreements fit under the first group, while 7.81% fit under the second group and only 2.08% belonged to the last group.

Findings and discussion

The examination of Saudis' twitter disagreements revealed that aggravated disagreement (**Agg.Dis**) has the highest occurrence in the corpus, followed by unmarked disagreements (**Un.Dis**) and, finally, mitigated disagreement (**Mit.Dis**) has the lowest occurrence (Figure 6).
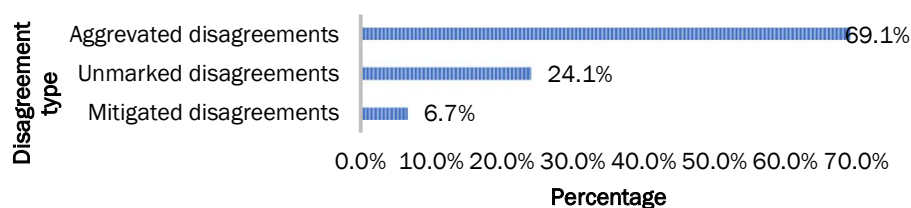

Figure 6. Total occurrence of each disagreement type in the corpus.

The general finding here shows that 69.1% of Saudis' disagreement belongs to the aggravated category, and this differs from Harb's finding in which the majority (54%) of Arabs' disagreements on Facebook were

unmarked. This difference might be the result of the platform influence, since on Facebook most posters in a group/page usually know each other on some level and the relationship has to be reciprocal; therefore, they might put more effort into maintaining social harmony. On the other hand, the majority of users on Twitter do not necessarily have a personal connection with each other, and the relationship does not have to be reciprocated. Hence, on Twitter there might be less pressure towards maintaining social harmony when disagreeing with others. Squires (247) notes that there is a clear distinction between the focus of the two social media sites: 'Facebook is about connecting with friends while Twitter is more about finding out what is happening'. Unlike Facebook, Twitter is more about reaching a broader audience and communicating with people one would not usually connect with (Squires).

Oz et al. stated that some of the previous studies found communication on Twitter to be generally with strangers or weak-tie acquaintances while on Facebook it is usually with pre-existing relationships. In addition, Oz and his team reported that the level of impoliteness on Facebook and Twitter seems to be different, especially in morally loaded or sensitive topics, with Twitter discussions tending to be more impolite. Similarly, Alsaggaf and Simmons noted that disagreements in sensitive topics among Facebook users in Saudi Arabia were not aggravated as users did not engage in flaming, sarcasm, or attacking the other; they described the interaction on Facebook as "peaceful" while YouTube comments, on the other hand, included more aggravated communication (10). They postulated that longevity and regularity of interaction among Facebook users might have influenced the relationships and allowed genuine relationships to develop over time; with regular communication, strangers can become online friends.

Furthermore, besides the longevity and regularity of interaction, I would argue that the length of the messages might have an impact on how disagreements are handled on Twitter. Twitter limits its users to 280 characters per post but does not limit the number of tweets a user can post—in fact, a user can use a thread of replies to write more. However, the corpus analysis shows that most Twitter disagreements occurred as one post in the second conversational turn, T2. Therefore, this might indicate that Twitter users are generally more interested in

expressing their views rather than engaging in back-and-forth interaction.

Based on the short discussion above, it seems that the platform and its affordances have an influence on the level of aggravated Twitter disagreements among Saudis. However, this does not tell the full story since the analysis requires a close-up investigation of the platform's influence as well as other factors such as education and topic sensitivity. Therefore, the next step of this project is to collect more information from Saudi Twitter users through online questionnaires and interviews to gain further insight on the influence of both technical and social factors on their expression and the evaluation of Twitter disagreement.

Disagreement strategies

In the current study, several taxonomies of disagreement strategies were consulted as stated earlier. The analysis of the corpus shows that a total of 11 disagreement strategies were utilized by Saudis when disagreeing on Twitter. Figure 7 shows the frequency of occurrence for each strategy in the corpus. In general, verbal attack had the highest frequency, followed closely by the act combination strategy. In what follows, I provide a detailed account for the top five strategies that occurred in the corpus: act combination (AC), verbal attack (VA), explanation (EX), verbal irony/sarcasm (VI/S) and counterclaim (CC). The remaining disagreement strategies are briefly described in Appendix A.2.
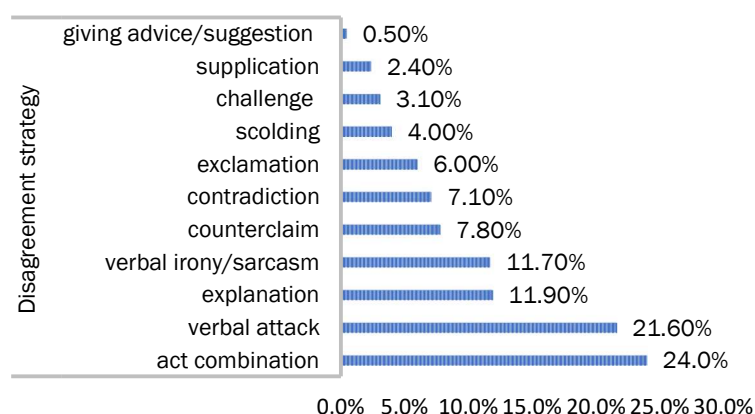

Figure 7. Disagreement strategies used by Saudis in the corpus.

Act combination (AC)

Act combination refers to the use of two or more of the disagreement strategies. In the corpus, 24% of the disagreements were expressed through AC. Around 65.5% of the instances were aggravated, while 7.2% were mitigated. It appears that classifying this strategy as politic and unmarked, as found in Harb's study, does not hold here, mainly because AC can be used in different ways (i.e., politely or impolitely), thus prompting different evaluations depending on its use. The examples below show how AC might be evaluated differently.

Example 1

[Main tweet: An angry neighbour enters the masjid (i.e., mosque) in the midst of the lecture requesting the imam to lower the speakers' volume, saying, 'We want to sleep.' This is part of the suffering with the masjids' loudspeakers, even during religious lectures and lessons #alsihaimi_calls_for_closing_mosques[8].]

Poster-7- T2 [SOC, SH1.1, Un.Dis]

إغلاق المساجد وإسكات صوت الأذان غير وخفض أو إغلاق صوت المكبرات الخارجية أثناء الصلاة وأثناء المحاضرات غير. لا تخلطوا الأمور.

[Closing mosques and silencing the call for prayers is different from lowering the volume or turning off the outside speakers during lectures. Do not mix things up.]

In example 1, Poster-7 used two strategies to express disagreement: explanation and mild scolding. The disagreement here is neither mitigated nor aggravated (i.e., unmarked); thus, it is mostly likely to be classified as appropriate (i.e., politic). Poster-7 explained what is perceived as wrong in the content of the main tweet: equating silencing the call for prayers with turning off the outside speakers during religious lectures or lessons. Poster-7 then directly reprimands the main poster and others who are in agreement with the main tweet, telling them not

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[8] The shared video shows an imam giving a short lecture inside the masjid after what is most likely to be Salat Alisha. The lecture was broadcast through the outside speakers. A man approaches the imam and requests that he turns off the speakers as the loud sound is disturbing his sleep.

to mix the two matters.

Example 2

[Main tweet: Prior to the #Gulf_crisis, Saudi Arabia was on Twitter, a source of the finest and most appealing accounts in (science - jurisprudence - culture - politics - and literature). Today, however, it has become a source of the most insignificant, sordid, dirty, stupid and bad mannered accounts. The misfortune is that they believe that this change is (soft power) #ignorance.]

Poster-50- T2   [POL, PH3.1, Agg.Dis]

والله مشكله تغلطون علينا بألفاظكم السافله وتبون نسكت لكم !؟!؟!؟ يمكن نسكت ونمشيها لبعض الرجال لكن الساقطين ما نمشيها لهم ونوقفهم عند حدهم مثل أشكالك انت وخويك الطاجيكي

[Indeed this is a dilemma, you insult us with your vulgar words and you want us to say nothing?!?!?! We sometimes might brush the insults aside, but when it comes from low men, like you and your Tajik pal, we do not let it pass and we stop you from crossing lines.]

The aggravated disagreement in example 2 is directed to the poster of the main tweet, who is from Qatar. The disagreement is expressed through exclamation and explanation. The use of (us, we) in the reply reflects Poster-50's sense of national collective identity and treatment of the other as an outsider (you), probably here not just an outsider but also a nemesis. The disagreement in the reply is bold on-record impoliteness; however, it might be argued that the impoliteness and the explicit insulting nature of the main tweet may have played a role in triggering the impoliteness in the reply. In other words, Poster-50 employed impoliteness as a defence mechanism against the impoliteness in the main tweet (i.e., the damage of the addressee's face in the process of saving one's own). The example here represents an impolite offence met with an impolite defence (see Bousfield on choises of reponding to offensive event 193).

Verbal attack (VA)

This strategy is solely composed of offensive or abusive language to express disagreement, and it mainly aims to attack the other's face with

an explicit disregard for the negative impact of the attack. As Harb stated, VAs differ from aggregators, which are used in the vicinity of other disagreement strategies in order to intensify the disagreement. VAs are used independently without the need for other strategies. Disagreements expressed in VAs are aggravated as they are intrinsically negative, aiming to hurt and damage the other's face; thus, VAs are classified as impolite/inappropriate or even rude as they fall under the category of on-record impoliteness. Out of the 580 instances of disagreements in the corpus, 21.6% were expressed in the form of VA. As the examples below reveal, it seems that VAs are not employed to express disagreements with the purpose of having a rational discussion but rather to voice a strong emotional response.

Example 3

[Main tweet: The poster shared a short clip of a TV interview with Alsihaimi[9] along with the news of his suspension. The tweet states that The Ministry of Culture and Information officially announced suspending the writer Muhammad Alsihaimi and that he is being investigated regrading media violations.]

Poster-90- T2 [SOC, SH1.2, Agg.Dis]

الله يلعنه ويلعن اشكاله

[May Allah damn him and damn those like him.]

Poster-90 in this reply appears to be provoked by what Alsihaimi was saying in the interview regarding his suggestion to reduce the number of mosques because the calls for prayers from all these mosques 'scattered' in each neighbourhood are disturbing and causing fear. Despite the news of his suspension and investigation, Poster-90 still felt the need to

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[9] Alsihaimi is a Saudi journalist and writer. In the interview, he was talking about how the sound of the call for prayers coming from all the mosques is spreading fear in the country and scaring children. Alsihaimi was also stating the need for decreasing the number of mosques in neighbourhoods to increase the number of worshipers inside the mosques. He relates this to the Alsahwa Movement (Awakening Movement) which he claims to have manipulated the religion and used it to engrain fear in the society.

express disagreement in a strong way by cursing and damning Alsihaimi, as well as others who shared his mindset. The disagreement is aggravated and personalized, and it is on-record impoliteness. Religiously and culturally, damning someone is prohibited and frowned upon[10]. The phrase means that Poster-90 is wishing Alsihaimi to be deprived and excluded from God's mercy.

Example 4

[Main tweet: The poster used the hashtag #royal-decrees to post a list of requests such as cancelling the general entertainment authority; nullifying the law allowing women to drive and enter football stadiums; and revoking the value-added tax, especially for real estate purchases.]

Poster-119- T2 [POL, PH2.2, Agg.Dis]

<div dir="rtl">م ت خ ل ف</div>

[B a c k w a r d.]

This example is interesting due to the way the word 'backward' was typed. Through letter-spacing, Poster-119 emphasised a certain prosodic stress of the word which, in a way, firmly reflects his or her disgust or disdain towards the main poster's list of demands. The reply attacks the main poster personally by calling him backward because the list shows the main poster's desire to go back in time instead of moving forward. The list in the main tweet seems to show some resistance or resentment towards some of the social, cultural, and economic changes happening in the country. The disagreement expressed by Poster-119 is aggravated and on-record impoliteness as it attacks the main poster's positive face.

Explanation (EX)

Explanations are described as conversational moves to answer explicit or implicit 'why' questions. Koczogh defined explanation as an "umbrella term" that includes giving or asking for reasons or examples showing that the previous proposition is not accepted as it is (83). She stated that

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[10] The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said 'curing a believer is like killing him.'

explanation has a mitigation effect, which might clarify the pervasive use of explanations as an indirect and mitigated strategy employed in refusals and rejections (e.g., Abed; Campbell; Nelson et al.). Nevertheless, the corpus analysis here reveals that explanations do not constantly have this mitigating effect; explanation can be expressed in a variety of ways with different effects depending on the context of the social situation (Turnbull).[11] The analysis shows that 12.70% of the explanations were mitigated, while the majority (50.79%) of the instances were unmarked. Other instances were used to express aggravated disagreements.

Example 5

[Main tweet: Same as in *Example 3*.]

Poster-29- T2 [SOC, SH1.2, Agg.Dis]

قطع الله لسانه قبل أن يقول إن المساجد ضرار, الآذان يريح القلب ويشرح الصدر حتى لو كثر ففيه من السعاده التي لاتذكر ...

[May Allah cut his tongue for saying that mosques are causing harm, the call for prayers calm and relieve the heart. Even if there are many calls for prayers, they are a source of indescribable contentment....]

The disagreement in the reply is directed towards Alsihaimi in the interview. It is expressed through explanation; however, this explanation is aggravated as it is preceded by an aggravator device that is invoking Allah's wrath on the target. The disagreement as a whole might be classified as inappropriate or impolite since the aggravating part of it overshadows the explanation.

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[11] Turnbull illustrated that asking for and giving explanations could be tricky. For example, in the academic context, someone might refrain from asking for an explanation to avoid embarrassment or looking unintelligent. Also, the explanation-provider might need to phrase the explanation in a way that does not threaten the questioner's positive face by implying that the explanation-seeker is ignorant or incapable of deep understanding.

Verbal irony/ sarcasm (VI/S)

Verbal irony[12] as a strategy can be delineated as saying "something that is superficially interpretable as polite, but it is more indirectly or 'deeply' interpreted as a face-attack—as impolite" (Leech, 'Pragmatics of Politeness' 232). Leech, like Culpeper, classifies irony as mock politeness,[13] which is described in the (im)politeness model above. The impolite evaluation of this speech act is derived from the formed implicature, but it is also argued that not every sarcastic statement is necessarily offensive (Bousfield). The corpus analysis of Saudis' tweets revealed that all instances of verbal irony or sarcasm, that is 68 posts, seem to be aggravated, and this is similar to Harb's finding. However, the evaluation of these instances as impolite appears to be tricky mainly because, as Bousfield noted, the offense is not direct.

Example 6

[Main tweet: Instead of the hashtag #Hijaz-identity, the poster stated that the #eject-the-racists is more appropriate because neither Hijazi nor a tribal person would agree with those participating in the #Hijaz-identity. Tribal people or Hijazi participate in this #eject-the-racists to let them understand that we are one country and one religion.[14]]

Poster-78- T2 [SOC, SH2.1, Agg.Dis]

<div dir="rtl">

اقرا اسمك اولا لتعرف هل انت حجازي ام لا
</div>

[First, read your name to know if you are a Hijazi or not.]

Instead of a direct disagreement, Poster-78 chose to disagree indirectly

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[12] Leech (232-233) highlights his preference for the term conversational irony while Culpeper uses sarcasm, especially in the context of impoliteness. Leech explains that irony is a broad term including both (1) non-verbal events such as "irony of fate;" and (2) verbal events in which irony is too widely compared to sarcasm, which can be narrower in scope.

[13] On the other hand, Leech describes banter as mock impoliteness because the apparent impoliteness serves to maintain social harmony.

[14] Generally speaking, the term Hijazi includes both tribal and non-tribal Saudis. It refers to those residing in the west region of Saudi Arabia. The non-tribal Saudis come from different backgrounds (e.g., Egypt, Yemen, Turkey, Burma, Indonesia, India, and many other countries).

through sarcastically pointing out the main poster's distinct classification of Hijazi and tribal people. In the reply, Poster-78 is telling the main poster to read his name first to see if he has the right to call himself a Hijazi. The main post is created by a Saudi of Turkish descent, and his last name clearly reflects his Turkish origin. It looks like Poster-78 is mocking and ridiculing the main poster for including himself in the Hijazi category and excluding tribal people who are originally from the Hijaz. Therefore, the sarcasm employed by Poster-78 is indeed offensive and thus might be seen as impolite or even rude.

Counterclaim (CC)

This disagreement strategy proposed by Muntigl and Turnbull refers to the use of an alternative claim that does not directly contradict or challenge the other's claim. They argued that the use of CC tends to give room for further negotiation, and that CC is usually preceded by mitigation devices such as partial agreements. However, Netz noted that these characteristics are not obligatory. Along with Muntigl and Turnbull, Harb also classified CC as the highest mitigated disagreement strategy (i.e. polite). In the current study, 7.8% of the corpus comprises instances of CC, and of these CCs (48.9%) were unmarked and (8.9%) were mitigated. Hence, it seems that classifying CC as a mitigated strategy does not apply here.

Example 7

[Main tweet: The poster shares a short video of a TV interview with Adel Aljubeir, the former Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs and the current Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. In the interview, he was discussing the government plan of fighting corruption. He stated that 208 individuals who were caught in corruption cases were informed to return the stolen money, or they would appear in court.]

Poster-30- T2   [POL, PH1.2, Un.Dis]

<div dir="rtl">المفروض يقدمون للقضاء ويعيدون الأموال المنهوبة ويشهر بهم</div>

[They should go to court, return the embezzled money, and be defamed.]

The disagreeing reply is targeting what Aljubeir stated in the interview, that the 208 accused were asked to return the embezzled money, or they would go to court. Poster-30 does not directly contradict or oppose Aljubeir's statement, but rather, proposes an alternative claim: that the accused individuals should not be given the option to return the money or go to trial. The disagreement in the reply is not aggravated nor mitigated; hence, it can be classified as appropriate or politic.

Final Remarks

In this paper, I investigated disagreement strategies and (im)politeness in Saudis' Twitter posts in political and sociocultural hashtags trending in 2017-2018. The corpus analysis revealed that most Saudis' Twitter disagreements occurred in the second conversational turn (T2). It also showed that mitigated disagreements have the lowest frequency while the aggravated ones have the highest frequency; hence, a high level of impoliteness seems to be indicated. The pervasiveness of aggravated disagreements in the corpus appears to partially support Alghathami's claim that Saudis' disagreements on Twitter are mostly aggravated. Based on the findings of previous studies, I presented some possible explanations suggesting that aggressiveness and impoliteness on Twitter might be a product of the communication between strangers or weak-tie acquaintances. It may also be the result of the short and irregular interaction between Twitter users. The corpus analysis showed that most of the disagreements were expressed in one post (limited to 280 characters). Although Twitter users can post more than one reply, in my corpus, it seems that they rarely use threaded replies to express disagreements, and there is minimal back-and-forth interaction between disagreeing parties.

Furthermore, the analysis unveiled that Saudis employed 11 linguistic strategies when expressing disagreements on Twitter; however, in this paper, I discussed only the first five strategies with high occurrences: act combination, verbal attack, explanation, verbal irony/sarcasm, and counterclaim. All instances of verbal attacks are aggravated and most likely to be perceived as impolite or rude since they are used to cause damage to the other's face with disregard for the negative impact of the attack. Similarly, all instances of verbal

irony/sarcasm in the corpus are aggravated; however, the evaluation of this strategy seems to be complicated since the offense is implied and may not be recognized straightforwardly. The remaining three strategies were used to express mitigated, unmarked, and aggravated disagreements; hence, the evaluation of (im)politeness in these strategies largely depends on the context.

The corpus analysis did help in answering the two questions in this paper; however, the picture remains incomplete. There are now more questions regarding the key factors that might influence Saudis' expressions and evaluations of disagreement and (im)politeness on Twitter. Besides, how Saudis' evaluations of disagreement strategies in terms of (im)politeness may vary. Therefore, the next phase of this project will be looking at the data collected through online scaled-response questionnaires and follow-up interviews to gain further insight and provide a thorough explanation by shedding light on the influence of Twitter on Saudis' construction of disagreement and how they conceptualize disagreement and (im)politeness online. The collected data will also help in analyzing Saudis' evaluations and metapragmatic assessments of disagreement and (im)politeness on Twitter.

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APPENDIX

A.1. List of hashtags and number of replies for each main tweet

CATEGORY	HASHTAG CODE	HASHTAG	NO. OF REPLIES	SHARED MEDIA IN MAIN TWEET	DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN POSTER' ACCOUNT
SOC	SH1.1	#alsihaimi_ calls_for_closing_mosques	118	a short video	Saudi, has more than 3000 followers mostly shares news usually with personal comments.
	SH1.2	#alsihaimi_ calls_for_closing_mosques	149	a short video	Saudi, has more than 1 million followers mostly tweet quotes and occasionally share news.
	SH2.1	#hijaz_identity	96	-	Saudi social media influencer, has more than 78 thousand followers, posts news and personal updates.
	SH2.2	#hijaz_identity	216	a short video	Saudi engineer, has more than 26 thousand followers, shares information and personal videos.
	SH3.1	#women_driving	219	-	Saudi, has more than 177 thousand followers, shares information, news, and posts personal views on different matters.
	SH3.2	#women_driving	116	a short video	Saudi, has more than 38 thousand followers, shares news and posts personal views on different matters.
POL	PH1.1	#the_king_fights_corruption	85	-	Saudi economist, has more than 70 thousand followers, posts, quotes, news, and personal views.
	PH1.2	#the_king_fights_corruption	97	a short video	Saudi, has more than 7 million followers, posts exclusive and breaking news about the country affairs.
	PH2.1	#royal_decrees	60	photo	Saudi, has more than 13 million followers, posts news and updates on the country affairs.
	PH2.2	#royal_decrees	202	-	Saudi, has more than 28 thousand followers, shares news and quotes, and posts personal views on different matters.
	PH3.1	#gulf_crisis	128	-	Qatari journalist, has more than 1 thousand followers, shares news and personal views.
	PH3.2	#gulf_crisis	70	a short video	Kuwaiti professor, has more than 1 million followers, posts information, news, and

TOTAL	12	1556	personal views on different matters.

A.2 List of other disagreement strategies

1. Supplication

This strategy refers to the use of a strictly religious language to express disagreement, indicating one's disapproval of the claims or propositions made in the previous turn. For instance, the use of al-ħawqalah لا حول ولاقوة إلا بالله /la: ħawla wa la: quwata illʔ billa:h/, which could be translated in English as 'There is no power or might except by Allah'.

2. Giving advice or suggestion

Giving advice can be defined as 'proposing a course of action to be taken by [the Other] O, but it is quite different from directives like open the door: the action proposed is supposed to be for the benefit of O, rather than at a cost to O' (Leech, 'Pragmatics of Politeness' 204). Therefore, giving advice is not like requesting, but more like telling the other what is best for her/him. Giving advice and suggestions are similar speech acts as both give the other the option of not carrying out the proposed action. Furthermore, both speech acts involve a risk of showing an opinionated behaviour thus imposing on the other (ibid).

3. Contradiction

Contradictions, also referred to as denials, can be expressed either in the negated or affirmative form, depending on the proposition expressed by the previous claim.

4. (Mild) scolding

This strategy is similar also to what is referred to as reprimand. Scolding or reprimand is a way of pointing the wrongdoing of others usually in short phrases without too much explanation.

5. Challenge

Bousfield (240-244) defines challenge as the act of asking the addressee a challenging question, critically questioning her/his position, stance, beliefs, assumed power, obligations, rights, previous actions, etc. There are two types of challenges: (1) Rhetorical challenges and (2) Response-seeking challenges.

6. Exclamation

Exclamations are utilised to express one's disbelief, surprise, astonishment, and wonder at the prior claim or proposition. They are usually emotionally loaded reactions.