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EDITED BY

Omar Ali Al-Smadi,
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REVIEWED BY

Raed Al-Ramahi,
The University of Jordan, Jordan
Mamoon Alqudah,
University of Hail, Saudi Arabia

*CORRESPONDENCE

Radzuwan Ab Rashid
✉ radzuwanrashid@unisza.edu.my

†These authors have contributed
equally to this work and share first
authorship

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A discourse analysis of teachers' messages in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups

Suzan Farouq F. Hussein^{1†}, Radzuwan Ab Rashid^{1,2*†},
Mazlin Azizan^{3†} and Omar Mohammad Mousa Alali^{4†}

¹Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia, ²Applied Science Research Centre, Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan, ³Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam Campus, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, ⁴Department of English Language and Literature, Irbid National University, Irbid, Jordan

This study explores Jordanian English language teachers' social and discursive practices online. It aims to scrutinize the way Jordanian English language teachers at one of universities in Jordan construct their posts in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups. Employing an ethnographic approach, this paper examines the differences in teachers' discursive behavior in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups. Data generation took place from March 2018 to May 2018. The data were obtained from participants' observation in both official and unofficial WhatsApp groups. 18 English language teachers participated in this study. A total of 817 posts were made throughout the observation period which were included in the analysis. Data generated through participant observations were analyzed using discourse analysis combined with discursive psychology approach. The findings suggest that teachers behave differently in how they talk to their superiors than in how they speak to their colleagues to construct their desired identities. They convey a positive impression to their leaders, and they tend to use persuasive techniques to appear more friendly to others. Exemplification, ingratiation and self-promotion were the impression management techniques used by the participants. This paper concludes that Jordanian English language teachers convey a positive impression to their superiors as they do not want to jeopardize their careers.

KEYWORDS

discourse analysis, English language teachers, Jordan, WhatsApp messages, official and unofficial WhatsApp groups

1. Introduction

Teachers play essential roles in shaping the communities. The process of teaching is charged with sharpening students' skills and capacities that allow the community to flourish in the age of information (Naba'h and Jaber, 2006). According to a survey by the National Union of Teachers, nearly half of the young teachers under the age of 35 intended to withdraw from the profession within the next 5 years due to heavy workload, poor work-life balance, and mentally demanding jobs (Adams, 2017). Occasionally, teachers are not allowed to express their opinions. They are forced to obey their superiors

without sharing personal views. To minimize these issues, teachers should be given the freedom to share their ideas and suggestions, making them feel satisfied with their achievement. Undeniably, social media has become very appealing since it allows teachers to express and share their thoughts. They can speak and exchange ideas freely about different topics, including reflections on their teaching skills and experiences.

In the case of Jordan, teachers experience a heavy workload resulting from national education reformation (Lyon, 1996; Bryant, 2005). In addition, Jordanian teachers rate participation in decision-making in school as the lowest on the quality of working life scale (Al-Zboon et al., 2015). Jordanian educators confront challenges in expressing their ideas and ventilating their feelings freely in their profession, whether at schools, universities, or educational administrations. Usually, they do not know how to decline their superiors' requests or express their feelings; they are forced to obey their leaders without sharing personal views. Naturally, they wish to convey a positive impression to their leaders as they do not want to jeopardize their careers. Teachers, therefore, typically behave differently in the way they talk to their superiors and principals, compared to the way they talk to their colleagues and friends. Gee (2014) emphasizes that people communicate differently with strangers and friends to indicate their social distance or to accomplish their desired identities. The teachers create an unofficial WhatsApp group to share opinions, ventilate feelings, and discuss new ideas about educational topics. The present study examines the way Jordanian teachers use social medial platform—WhatsApp group—as part of their professional development. In particular, it investigates the construction of the messages shared by Jordanian English language teachers in both official and unofficial WhatsApp groups within the period of 3 months at a Jordanian university. All the participants in this study are members of the official and unofficial WhatsApp groups. The unofficial WhatsApp group is not joined by the Head of the English Department and three teachers who are close friends to him. The research question is: How do teachers construct the posts in the official and unofficial WhatsApp groups?

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework: Community of practice and discourse community

2.1.1. Community of practice

Community of Practice (CofP) provides a helpful framework for understanding the phenomenon studied in this research. CofP is defined as a group of people who share common interests, goals and targets for information sharing, self-development, and knowledge enhancement (Lave and Wenger, 1991). CofP occurs when people learn and share their

experiences through communication and storytelling. It is also defined as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p. 4). People generally share experiences and knowledge for specified hobbies, education and professional growth. In addition, they improve their skills, abilities, and learning through their engagement in the CofP. They explore ideas and solve problems related to their job environment, although they may not meet face-to-face regularly. However, within the educational context, Priny (2008) suggested that authorities at academic institutions such as principals and department chairpersons significantly shape teachers' opportunities in CofP. The study showed that principals are well removed from the instructional concerns of teachers, and that department chairpersons might lead slowing down the rate of instructional change. Within the online community, Rosell-Aguilar (2018) argued that language teachers employ the suggestions and ideas they found on Twitter, which positively impact their teaching.

2.1.2. Discourse community

Discourse community theory emphasizes that people feel connected by their shared discourses (Bizzell, 1992). Members share more than a particular native tongue or symbol manipulating skill in a discourse community. Typically, different patterns of language use characterize other discourse communities such as school, workplace, and home. Discourse communities are defined as social groups with standard rules for language usage. According to Winsor (1996) and Pogner (2003), members of the discourse community use texts to prove their membership in the community they belong to. Besides, a discourse community is a group of communicators who share common goals or interests and adopt specific discursive practices in public discussion or communication (Swales, 1988, 1990; Johns, 1997; Pogner, 2005).

To further elaborate, Swales (1990) emphasizes the “publicness” of a discourse community as it allows anyone to join the membership, including family members, friends, and other individuals from various professional backgrounds. Swales also states that a discourse community has “mechanisms of intercommunication among its members” which vary from one community to another (p. 471). These mechanisms include meetings, telecommunications, correspondence, newsletters, and conversations. In the context of this paper, written conversations are a medium of communication by exchanging messages and sharing ideas.

Within the educational contexts, Luhach (2020) assessed that participation in online discourse communities develops confidence among students in ways that alleviate their apprehensions. The study implies that students' collaborative involvement in online discourse community interaction

helps them to improve their higher-order thinking and writing skills.

Subsequent research by Swales (2016) highlighted re-imagining the concept of a DC due to the evolving nature of academia and the pedagogy field. Swales added two features to the idea of a discourse community. The first is that a discourse community develops shared understanding, which Swales (2016) quotes as “silent relations” (p. 16). The second creates a close rapport among its members, which Swales (2016) refers to as “horizons of expectation” (p.16). He argues that this addition makes it workable for the discourse community. Swales (2016) further added that a discourse community helps educationists improve their skills, making them capable of accomplishing many interdisciplinary academic tasks.

2.2. Teacher professional development

Teacher Professional Development is defined as embracing all activities that enhance and reinforce professional career growth (Rogan, 2004; Teclé, 2006). According to Tan and Dimmock (2014), teacher professional development involves several processes, actions, and mechanisms that are influenced by cultural, social, economic, and political features.

Arnon and Reichel (2007) revealed that the professional and personality traits are inseparable from an ideal teacher. Notably, a teacher who has an empathic and attentive feature, a teacher who is a leader with a wide-ranging and positive attitude toward the profession, and a teacher who has obtained the professional and the academic knowledge of the subject taught can reach professionalism. Azizan (2019) highlighted that teachers’ constructions of their professional identities and power are characterized by politeness and relational devices to generate good rapport and maintain positive relationships with their students, thus achieving effective teaching and learning opportunities.

Al-Smadi et al. (2022) found that there are five salient identities constructed by teachers on classroom interaction from the lens of discursive psychology and discourse analysis: the expert, the counselor, the student, the storyteller and the controller. They stated that teachers mediated classroom discourses by shifting identities along the inclines of power. Al-Smadi et al. (2022) concluded that teachers’ discursive identities conveyed positive self-images and took into consideration students’ engagement and involvement in the learning process.

Makovec (2018) suggests that teachers define their professional identity and role through their personality traits. Sancar et al. (2021) argue that teacher professional development is attentive to several aspects such as assessment, research scale, duration, comprehensiveness, context, support, and collaboration.

Within an online community, Hou (2015) found that teachers’ online communication allows them to recognize the

significant presence of others in supporting and improving their learning. For example, voluntary participation and empowerment are substantial factors in the professional community for professional development and growth. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize teacher professional development that benefits the students and community.

2.3. WhatsApp messenger

The development of digital technology has facilitated our communication in terms of commercial purposes, teaching, and conversation. The use of social media has become widely shared in everyday communication. Social Media platforms have several applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and many others, phenomenally popular in our daily touch. WhatsApp is widely used among students, teachers, and workers to send multimedia messages such as photos, videos, audio, and simple text messages (Riyanto, 2013; Chan and Holosko, 2017). Olanof (2012) asserts that WhatsApp could handle 10 billion messages per day in August 2012, and it increased to 27 billion messages per day in 2013 (Sushma, 2012). In 2019, the WhatsApp application was used by 1.5 billion users in 180 countries (Digital Information World, 2019). Several research studies on the use of this application was implemented for different purposes such as personal use, health services and journalism (Sánchez-Moya and Cruz-Moya, 2015; Awada, 2016; Kumar and Sharma, 2017). This mobile application dominates our communication, especially the group chat feature. This study identifies the differences in conversation among Jordanian teachers in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups.

2.4. Recent studies on the official and unofficial WhatsApp groups

Several recent studies on WhatsApp groups have discussed the communication aspect and teachers’ presence in students’ WhatsApp groups. For example, Akakpo (2020) argued that communication *via* the WhatsApp platform could support teaching and learning in formal and informal situations with required guidelines.

Within the educational context, Baishya and Maheshwari (2020) explored how the presence of teachers in the groups can influence group functioning. The findings showed that the primary functions of the WhatsApp groups are mostly education-related. However, students use this platform to share wishing/congratulations, exchange extra curriculum activities, and share entertainment. Interestingly, they revealed that the presence of a teacher could significantly influence group conversation. That is to say, when the teacher becomes a part of any WhatsApp group, the communication and the conversation become more formal and restrictive. Baishya and Maheshwari

(2020) stated that although the students behave gently and politely, the teacher's presence hinders their freedom as they have to respect the teacher.

However, Zengin et al. (2011) argued that online communication among students and their instructors could create an effective learning environment. Another study by Barhouni (2015) showed that WhatsApp mobile learning activities are beneficial for students' achievement and attitudes toward learning and teaching. Also, Abualrob and Nazzal (2020) argued that WhatsApp is used more for noninstructional purposes than instruction-related messages. On the other hand, Ismailbekova and Baialieva (2022) explored the informality in WhatsApp communication. They showed that people and researchers preferred to communicate through semi-public and informal spaces *via* the multiple WhatsApp groups. They showed that casual access to public resources works with inter-generational dynamics (older adults, intergenerational solidarity, gendered division of responsibilities and support), involving groupmates and other social networks, especially when the institutions are weak.

Moreover, Jabbar et al. (2021) claimed that Omani employees in an educational institution- AlBuraimi University College preferred to use WhatsApp for informal communication and email for formal communication and purely academic purposes. They revealed the consequences of using this platform, such as privacy intervention concentration reduction, which might lead to delayed work completion. Accordingly, although the finding affirmed that WhatsApp enabled faster, easy and more effective communication, most respondents did not recommend using the WhatsApp platform in the learning and teaching process- formal communication.

Within the fieldwork communication and management, Jailobaev et al. (2021) found that the quality of immediacy was highly critical in their research projects as they could respond to research assistants' questions easily and quickly. They showed that WhatsApp groups could make communication and decision-making quicker, particularly with tight schedules. They found that this feature helped support the research assistants and address challenges they faced in the field. Thus, they asserted that WhatsApp groups could improve the communication, coordination, and management of teams in research (Guest and MacQueen, 2008; Quartiroli et al., 2017). Jailobaev et al. (2021) stated that WhatsApp could be an effective platform for supporting research assistants, empowering them, and giving them a sense of team belonging. They argued that WhatsApp groups have the potential to meet the needs of research assistants raised in some research, such as a lack of feedback and support and an absence of a sense of belonging (Vukotich and Yearwood, 2014; Weeks et al., 2015; Anwar and Viqar, 2016). The previous studies showed that communication on WhatsApp can become informal by using emojis and sharing humorous messages, which makes the atmosphere relaxed and friendly. On a similar note,

Quartiroli et al. (2017) highlighted that Internet-based tools enable their users to develop a collaborative environment where all the members can voice their opinions, limitations, and disagreement.

Overall, recent studies have raised some interesting points regarding communication *via* WhatsApp groups, whether formal or informal WhatsApp groups. They argued that communication becomes more elevated for the legal WhatsApp groups, and restrictive communication becomes more formal and restrictive in the legal WhatsApp groups. However, they showed that communication in the informal WhatsApp groups develops a collaborative environment by voicing their opinions or disagreement and using emojis and sharing humorous messages. Turning to this study, this paper examines the differences in Jordanian teachers' discursive behavior in WhatsApp groups by employing an ethnographic approach. This exploratory study aims to scrutinize the way English Language teachers at a Jordanian University construct their posts in both official and unofficial WhatsApp groups.

2.5. Recent studies on discursive behavior in WhatsApp groups

Various recent studies about discursive behavior in WhatsApp groups have found discursive realizations, pragmatic themes, and social media's role in educational contexts significant in the discourse analyzed (e.g., Rosenberg and Asterhan, 2018; Moodley, 2019; Strasser, 2020).

According to Strasser (2020), ubiquitous social messaging services in the WhatsApp platform, embedded into an EFL micro-teaching context, might lead to motivating phases of L2 acquisition among learners. University students can participate actively in developing tasks during the academic course *via* this platform, and they are able to be involved in learning lessons and improve their level of motivation as using this communication tool in the educational environment is innovative and effective (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2018).

Teacher WhatsApp groups are characterized as backstage discourse arenas accompanying the front stage offline classroom activities and the "official" classroom WhatsApp group (Rosenberg and Asterhan, 2018). Moodley (2019) investigated how teachers and officials in a rural district in South Africa used the WhatsApp platform as a virtual community of practice. Moodley found that the effective use of an online social media network to support a virtual community depends on the participants' willingness to accept differing views and opinions. It also depends on the participants' awareness of the context of the community.

In short, the recent studies reviewed affirmed that online communities formed through WhatsApp Groups could be valuable, beneficial and effective to interlocutors within the educational context. The current study reveals how WhatsApp

groups have given teachers a way to express their professional voice freely.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study. It enables the observation of natural human behavior, which can only be achieved by personal contact *in situ*, not by artificially arranging experimental observations (Hammersley, 1991). Teachers' participation in social media as part of their daily routine affords an ethnographic approach an excellent opportunity to pursue this. Therefore, this study adopts the ethnographical approach of 'living with and living like those who are studied' (Van Maanen, 1988; p. 2); the prolonged engagement technique was used in this study as the first author of this paper joined both WhatsApp groups and spent 3 months as a participant-observer. Also, the researcher has a high level of personal familiarity with the WhatsApp platform and prior rapport with the teachers.

3.2. Participants

The participants were recruited based on the purposive sampling approach, but they were conveniently chosen through the researcher's friend, a WhatsApp group member. The friend helped discuss this matter with the other members and explained that the observations would be solely for research purposes. The participants were Jordanian English language teachers at a Jordanian university. There were 18 teachers in the official WhatsApp group. Their ages range from 26 to 54. Six of them are male and twelve of them are female. These selected participants were also in the unofficial WhatsApp group consisting of 15 teachers and it is not participated by the Head of the English Department and three teachers who are close friends to him. Their ages range 26–48. Four of them are male and the other eleven teachers are female. The teaching experience of the English language of the participants involved in this study varies from 2–25 years. Thirteen of them hold PhD certificates in the English Language and the remaining five of them hold master's degrees.

3.3. Ethical issues

3.3.1. Confidentiality and anonymity

The ethical procedure demands that the researcher take care at all times to protect the participants from physical and mental harm (BERA, 2018). Thus, it is necessary to avoid the possibility of making the participants feel uncomfortable and insecure.

Accordingly, careful consideration was employed regarding issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore, permission was obtained from all the members to join their group and they were informed that the observation would only be used for the research purposes. They agreed on this matter providing that their names and their phone numbers are made confidential. Thus, tactful measures were implemented to protect the privacy of the subjects with each participant being given a pseudonym. Also, as requested by the members, the name of the university, the participants' names and their phone numbers were made anonymous. This was done at the transcription stage by the first author of this paper to ensure that no-one else has access to the data.

3.4. Data generation procedure

Data was generated from participant observations of the posts in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups. The observations took 3 months from March to May 2018. The data were analyzed using an eclectic approach involving a combination of discourse analysis and discursive psychology as an analytical approach. The researchers had already established a professional relationship with these educationalists prior to any planning of the research, since they were previously friends of the researchers. They often communicate and send messages on topics related to their profession using WhatsApp group.

A total of 953 postings were made throughout the observation period. However, only 817 of these messages were included in the analysis as 136 of them were found to be irrelevant to the study since they were mostly related to files, videos and pictures. These messages were excluded as this study only focuses on text messages. To prepare data for analysis, the data were transcribed by copying the WhatsApp messages to Microsoft Word files to facilitate data analysis as transcription provides a high level of detail needed for the interactional analysis. The extracts shown in this article were chosen due to their illustrative potential that served the research purpose (Hashmi et al., 2021).

3.4.1. Data analysis

An eclectic analytic framework was employed to analyze the data of this study. Discourse analysis focusing on syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, which outline general communicative behavior (Miller, 2004) was employed. Specifically, the discourse analysis approach examines theoretical linguistics, such as syntactic construction, choice of tense, the structure of referring expression/noun phrases, and word order. This approach is termed Broad Discourse Analysis (BDA) by Rashid (2016). Employing discursive psychology allows us to discover how teachers communicate and interact in social media by highlighting the elements proposed by

Edwards and Potter (2005), which includes justification, obedience and condemnation. This study was also informed by Politeness Theory and it adopted Holmes and Stubbe's (2015) perspective to data interpretation. Moreover, this study adopts CofP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and discourse community (Swales, 1988, 1990, 2016) as part of the analytical framework.

4. Discussion and analysis

This section discusses in detail four extracts of the messages sent by the teachers in the two WhatsApp groups. The first group, the official one, includes the head of the English department and the English language teachers. It is created for work-related issues. The second group, the unofficial one, includes only the English language teachers. It is created by the teachers to discuss their work-related issues and other personal or social topics. The first extract is taken from the official group as the messages are shared by the head of the department and the teachers. The second extract is taken from the unofficial group and the messages are only shared by the teachers. The extracts that served the research goal and illustrated the interaction with other extracts were chosen to identify the discourse and the conversation among the teachers and look at how they are constructed by identifying the linguistic devices and their functions.

4.1. Extract 1

Context: Mansour (pseudonym), the head of the English department initiated the postings. He asks the teachers to cooperate and finish the task that he has distributed for each teacher. The teachers immediately respond to his message; they accept and agree on his request.

1. Mansour: *VERY IMPORTANT NOTE !! I have sent next week missions distribution and expect all to cooperate, please all are expected to attend by 9 am to receive their missions, if we all cooperate we will finish everything in 3 days.*
2. Ghada: *Ok.. inshallah*
3. Amani: *don't worry... we are always here to help*
4. Ahmad: *No problem... at all*
5. Ali: *InshaAllah... sure*

The head of the department introduces the message with an important note in capitalized letters *VERY IMPORTANT NOTE* where he implies that teachers should pay attention to this important message. He emphasizes that he has sent the required mission for each teacher and he expects them to do the required job and accomplish the mission. The use of the two exclamation marks provides an energized tone. It implies that a special care must be paid attention to what will be said. It is noticeable that he does not begin with greeting the teachers as he just concentrates

on the required job. His discursive behavior indicates the power of the administrative authority that focuses on the transactional aspects of leadership discourse. He constructed his identity as a leader and commander as he had the authority to talk as he wanted. As highlighted by Fairclough (1989), those in positions of power have the ability to decide what is appropriate in a particular interaction. According to Manipuspika et al. (2019), directives are one of the richest data sources of workplace discourse as they highlight how the variables of social distance are performed and actualised. Moreover, directives provide means for examining the relational practices among people in a particular community. As highlighted by Mullany (2007) and Baxter (2017), effective communicators make use of a wide range of discursive strategies to display power at the workplace. Additionally, the use of the footing *we* creates a sense of involving all the members. Karapetjana (2011) argues that the footing *we* is employed when providing a sense of collectivity, and shared responsibility. As highlighted by Azizan et al. (2020), the utilization of expressions of solidarity through collective pronouns like 'we' and 'us' suggests solidarity and empowerment whilst confronting a struggle.

Finally, he ended his message by encouraging and motivating the members to cooperate and finish the task within 3 days. Briefly, power differences are played down, and politeness is paramount in interactions in white-collar workplaces (Holmes and Stubbe, 2015).

Although he does not seem to be extremely courteous and friendly with the teachers, it is observed that he politely asks all the teachers to attend early by using an indirect order such as "all are expected to attend" and polite expressions such as "please" to reflect a respectful behavior. Spencer-Oatey (2000) highlights that politeness toward a subordinate can be interpreted as an indication that the more powerful person tends to construct good relations at the workplace and maintain or develop collegial rapport. Sometimes, politeness can be politic as treating others politely is more likely to result in cooperation, which assists in achieving workplace goals (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003).

Most importantly, it is evident that the teachers respond positively to the required mission. They instantly show acceptance without objection or refusal, e.g., '*don't worry... we are always here to help*' and '*InshaAllah... sure*', which indicates their acceptance and show their willingness to fulfill the request. The use of *InshaAllah* is a standard response in the Jordanian culture that reflects acceptance. Accordingly, they approve and agree to do the mission even without asking questions about the required mission. It can be seen that the teachers' responses are brief and limited. Baishya and Maheshwari (2020) highlighted that if the WhatsApp group is official, the communication and conversation become more formal and restrictive. Also, they try to provide assistance and alleviate the overwork condition. This implies that they try to show an *Exemplification* behavior which is one of the impression-management techniques for expressing how hardworking or committed one is in performing particular

tasks (Jones and Pittman, 1982). Naturally, they tend to convey a positive impression for their superior to show that they are committed, helpful and hard-workers as they do not want to jeopardize their careers.

4.2. Extract 2

Context: The English language teachers share the messages in the unofficial group about what has been sent by the head of the department in the official group.

1. *Eman: Dears, have you read what Mansour has sent to the group?? I was planning not to come next week... ☹*
2. *Ali: Anyone has any idea about that mission????*
3. *Manar: Umm... I don't know exactly... but I heard that it is for rearranging and sorting papers for the oooooold systems...*
4. *Emani: Oh... it seems that it is a tough job*
5. *The teachers are surprised by what has been sent by Mansour, the head of the English department (see Extract 1).*

In line 1, it is noticeable that Eman mentions the direct name without referring to the title. This implies that the teacher talks freely without courtesy or restriction. She reveals that she was planning not to come to the university next week. She expresses her feelings by adding the sad face emoji ☹ to convey an emotional pain associated with, or characterized by, feelings of disappointment and frustration. This implies that the teacher could not reveal her planning to the official group, and she preferred to share her arrangement and express her intention to her colleagues. Weiss and Morrison (2019) highlight that employees usually fail to speak up with valuable suggestions or about serious concerns.

Also, it is noticeable that some of them do not know precisely what they will do during the mission. Thus, Ali asks if anyone knows anything about the mission (line 2). He ends the question with four question marks, reflecting his surprise and astonishment at the new mission, which implies and gives the impression of being annoyed and irritated. The use of the quadruple question marks to demonstrate shock and amazement resonates with Gee (2014), who recommends that language be used to render something as significant or to lessen their significance or signal to others how we view their meaning' (p. 32).

In line 3, Manar tries to answer the previous question. She begins the message with a hesitating filler "umm" to indicate uncertainty and deliberation, one of the linguistic features characterizing women's speech (Lakoff, 1973). Fillers are usually used to help speakers begin or continue the conversation smoothly. This filler expresses doubt, hesitation and sometimes lack of information. Thus, this filler indicates that the teacher is not sure enough about the news that she will give concerning the mission. However, she answered the question based on what she had heard from others. She preserves the collegial relationship

with her colleagues by providing help based on her knowledge. As Holmes and Stubbe (2015) highlighted, co-workers construct, maintain, and extend their collegial relationships by helping each other. She provides an impression of being likable which can be associated with "self-promotion" and "ingratiation" (Jones and Pittman, 1982).

The teacher spells the word old as *ooooold*, an emphatic statement with emphasis and stress to indicate the importance and attract special attention. This type of expression is used with or marked by an emphatic refusal.

The last message in line 4 comments on the previous statement where the teacher expresses herself and ventilates her feelings. The teacher can reveal that the mission is complex and needs lots of effort. She immediately vented upon receiving the news that the upcoming week would be exhausting, long and fatigued. The expression "Oh" at the beginning of her message implies the feeling of surprise, disapprobation and pain. This ubiquitous interjection of dismay is usually used in expecting something wrong (Bierwert, 1996). It is evident that the teachers share opinions, ventilate feelings and express themselves freely in the unofficial group. This behavior can be explained by the CofP perspective (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Venting thoughts and feelings becomes a collaborative aspect of the community to form a sense of belonging. Teachers express their frustration, tension or other negative emotions as a signal for seeking social support (Rashid, 2015; Rashid and Rahman, 2016). Quartiroli et al. (2017) emphasized that online communities allow their members to build a collaborative environment by voicing their opinions, concerns, and disagreement. Thus, the members tended to support each other and satisfy themselves.

4.3. Extract 3

Context: Sulaiman (pseudonym), one of the teachers responsible for collecting the course syllabus from the other teachers, requested the teachers in the official group to submit their revised syllabi. They responded to his message and provided some explanations or excuses.

1. *Sulaiman: Good morning... the following teachers (Eman, Ghada, and Faisal) haven't sent their revised course syllabus. I need them today to prepare them for the dean. Each teacher is responsible for submitting their work ON TIME.*
2. *Eman: Salam Dr Sulaiman. I have just sent it. If you never mind checking it... All my respect...*
3. *Ghada: Good morning... My laptop is not working... anyone can help me??*
4. *Faisal: Good morning, dear... can you please resend the form we have to fill-in?*

In line 1, Sulaiman initiates the conversation by greeting the teachers and immediately mentions the names of teachers who failed to submit their revised course syllabi, which illustrates

his directness in emphasizing the importance of the matter. He affirms that he needs the revised syllabi on that day and gives a reason to prepare them for the dean. He further capitalizes the phrase “ON TIME” to ensure that the teachers immediately respond to his order. It was noted that Sulaiman confidently mentions teachers’ names distinctly without feeling awkward or timid. He forcefully displays assertive behavior and a forceful personality. He exerts power and the right to give the teachers orders or even threaten them. Sulaiman applies one of the impression-management techniques, which reflects “intimidation” to convey an impression of being assertive and exhibiting his powerful ability. Intimidation is typically used to construct the identity of authority by using threats, anger statements, and other power-imposing behavior (Jones and Pittman, 1982). This implies that Sulaiman showed a way of dealing strongly, firmly or aggressively with group members who do not contribute accordingly.

The initial response in line 2 is from Eman. She claims that she has sent the course syllabi. First, she initiates the message by greeting him, wherein she uses a standard form and calls him “Dr. Sulaiman”. In Arab culture, to be addressed as a doctor is something highly expected and demanded by a PhD holder. She then politely asks him to check his email. Eman applies two impression-management techniques. The first is “ingratiation” as she attempts to display friendliness, respect, and amicable. The second technique refers to “exemplification” as she conveys that she is a diligent team player, committed, and wholeheartedly dedicated to meeting the purpose of the work in discussion. She is undoubtedly worried about her work; therefore, she opts to respond immediately to his statement. Interestingly, she displays high self-monitor in her response. Turnley and Bolino (2001) assert that high self-monitor typically has high adept in using ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification to obtain favorable images among their colleagues.

Moving to line 3, Ghada states that her laptop was problematic, hence the reason for failing to submit the required course syllabus. Ghada justifies and attempts to offer a solution for her glitch. She seeks aid from her colleagues. Ghada claims that she is helpless and weak, thus asking if anyone in the group can come to her assistance in light of the issue at hand. She applies one of the impression-management techniques called “supplication” to convey an impression of being weak or dependent on others in the hope of soliciting help (Jones and Pittman, 1982).

Line 4 refers to the last response by Faisal, in which he greets his colleagues by using the word “dear”, displaying positive politeness to portray close rapport and emphasize intimacy. Faisal uses a polite form of a question to ask Dr. Sulaiman to resend the course syllabus. This polite way of speaking implies that he feels guilty as he forwards justification or a reason to defend or justify his fault. He chooses a polite form of a question because he fails to send the required work due to his carelessness, which implies that he genuinely feels guilty and

wants to compensate for his negligence. Therefore, he opts for a polite form to save his face and avoid harm or criticism from the other group members.

The positive politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987) is useful in making sense of this extract. Since it is posted in their official WhatsApp group, it indicates that they need to be polite and kind, especially with their superiors. Accordingly, the teachers in the official WhatsApp group try their best to convey to their superior a positive impression of being committed and hardworking, thus engaging in self-promotion and exemplification strategies (Jones and Pittman, 1982).

4.4. Extract 4

Context: The messages are shared by the English language teachers in the unofficial group. The teacher appeared to be complaining about teaching using a book that failed to match the course syllabus.

1. Amani: Are we going to teach the SAME book again???!
We all know that this book is not appropriate for the level of the students. This book is not matching with the course objectives.
2. Amani: *Dr. Ali tries to contact the dean as soon as possible to discuss the confirmation of the book.*

In Extract 4, it is observed that Amani initiates the conversation by posing a question that is reflective of a complaint regarding the use of the same particular book for teaching. She employs the interrogative approach to express her disapproval for using a similar book for the next semester. She even fails to greet her colleagues. Additionally, she neglects the use of polite forms, such as “please” and “if you do not mind”, which portrays the annoyance and dissatisfaction felt by Amani. She uses the adjective “SAME” in capitalized letters to reflect her ire and disapproval. She ends the interrogative approach by using three question marks and two exclamation marks that emphasize her discontentment and angst.

Amani continues her message by affirming that all the teachers reckon the unsuitability of the book for the students. Amani claims that she was not the only teacher who knew about this fact, as all the other teachers also knew this matter. Therefore, she implies that it is the responsibility of all the teachers to discuss the issue and reject the idea of using the same book. It is noted that she talks freely in the unofficial group and uses an imperative sentence when she requests Dr. Ali to contact the dean. The word “please” is used since she consciously presses that it is his duty as the course coordinator.

Despite not being the course coordinator, she feels that it is partly her responsibility to select an appropriate book. She applies an impression-management technique called “exemplification” to convey that she is indeed a committed

teacher (Jones and Pittman, 1982, p. 245). Based on the message shared, Amani seems to employ the “self-promotion” technique (Jones and Pittman, 1982, p. 241) to instill the impression that she can influence other teachers and suggest a potential solution to address the issue at hand. Interestingly, sharing this message in the unofficial WhatsApp group suggests that she is being heedful in voicing out about the book issue.

5. Conclusion

It is observed that teachers typically behave differently in talking to their superiors and principals compared to how they speak to their colleagues and friends. Naturally, they tend to show a different behavior, and they wish to convey a positive impression to their superiors as they do not want to jeopardize their careers. Mainly, they tend to use some persuasive techniques to appear more amicable, sociable and friendly to others so that they might accept them and comply with their requests. The impression management techniques used are mainly exemplification, ingratiation and self-promotion so that their superiors view them as committed, hard-working and assiduous. This study provides deep insights to understand better the academic dialogue of discourse and communication among teachers and instructors on social media. Specifically, it gives teachers a healthy conception to benefit from this study data, professional knowledge, and perspectives shared, which may have resonance because of similar experiences, and which may thereby further enhance the dialogue on teacher communication with their principals and managers in voicing their opinions and give them opportunities to experience autonomy in their professional life.

Substantially, this study aims at contributing toward more informed decisions to establish better working conditions and initiate new, improved changes more efficiently in their professions. Moreover, it contributes to the literature of teachers' discursive identity as it generates new insights into the discourse of teachers' identity in an online community. Finally, this study is also significant since it reveals how the WhatsApp groups have given the teachers a way to express their professional voice freely. It also supports them in recognizing and establishing

their position as fair-minded partners. However, future research may include more significant number of participants to collect more representative data for analysis as the number of the participants who participated in this discourse-based qualitative study is limited. Thus, future research may include a greater number of participants with more than one university in Jordan and a more longitudinal period of the research to extend the findings of this study. Also, more research studies can be conducted to investigate the reasons behind the discursive behavior among Jordanian teachers to understand the issue further.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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