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**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES STRATEGY IN FACEBOOK  
AND TWITTER**

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*Abstract*

The language behaviour study on congratulatory messages in Malaysia's social media is limited. The language behaviour focuses on face-to-face congratulatory greetings or language behaviour in texts. The language data usage from social media such as Facebook and Twitter is significant in linguistic study. This is because language usage in Facebook portrays the actual language usage among the language speakers. Data from Facebook and Twitter are also authentic data and can be considered as language corpus. With that, this study examines the strategies used by Malay speakers while giving congratulatory messages in Facebook and Twitter. The objective of this study is to analyse the strategies used by the Malay speakers while giving congratulatory messages in Facebook and Twitter. The strategies observed include verbal and non-verbal symbols. This study uses ethnographic approach as the methodology. The data is collected through observation of comments and the usage of non-verbal symbols. The content analysis method is used to analyse the congratulating strategy used by the Malay speakers. The findings show that the congratulatory messages that often used by the Malay speakers are verbal phrases, which are 'tahniah' (congratulations) and 'syabas' (well done). These phrases are used as illocutionary device in congratulatory messages in Facebook and Twitter. Expressions of gratitude such as 'Alhamdulillah' and 'Terima kasih' (thank you) are also been used. The observation also shows that expression of praise can also be used as one of the strategies in delivering congratulatory messages.

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**Keywords:** Facebook, Twitter, corpus, illocutionary, congratulation.



## 1. Introduction

Please replace this text with context of your paper. According to Kamus Dewan (2007), ‘tahniah’ (congratulations) means “a greeting for an individual to express the happy feeling for his success”. Congratulatory expression is a speaking behaviour introduced by Austin (1962) which is called behabitive that is done with attitude and social behaviour such as apologise, congratulating and condolence and thankful (Can, 2011; Elwood, 2004; Pishghadam & Moghaddam, 2011). Congratulatory expression is also one of the speaking behaviours expanded by Searle (1969), which is an expressive means that translates the feeling and psychology situation of a speaker to the listener (Elwood, 2004). Congratulatory expression to an individual is a suitable action to celebrate the success or happiness achieved by the listener (Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011). Makri-Tsilipakou (2001) stated that congratulatory messages are happiness expressions and praises to the listeners towards something that pleases them (Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011; Bosemi & Soleimani, 2016). Can (2011) stated that congratulating is an action to maintain social interaction among the society and strengthen social relations between one another. Besides, Leech (1983) argues that congratulations is a way and form of modesty to express happiness (Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011; Bosemi & Soleimani, 2016).

## 2. Problem Statement

This study uses social media as the basis of study due to the development of Internet usage among today’s Malaysian society. Internet is exposed to the whole society as early as a child that gives positive and negative impact (Nazli, 2019). However, the development in Facebook and Twitter usage that have high statistics (Statistik Media Sosial Malaysia, 2019) show the users’ styles and ways to translate their expressions. Facebook is a social site that is used to communicate between one another which is faster, easier and cheaper (Sallehuddin & Sukimi, 2014). Facebook also lets the users to share unlimited information, news and stories, especially time and geography (Sallehuddin & Sukimi, 2014). Twitter on the other hand is a microblogging site that is widely used as an unlimited communication field of time and geography with information, opinions and news sharing (Ha & Kim, 2014). With this, both Facebook and Twitter create various delivery forms and style either in the form of verbal or non-verbal language for the users to express their feelings specially to congratulate.

This study is to examine the congratulatory strategies used by the Facebook and Twitter users in Malaysia. Besides that, this study is done to analyse congratulatory strategies used in a form of verbal and non-verbal language along with the development of social media among the users in Malaysia.

## 3. Research Questions

The present study was set to answer the following three questions:

- (1) What is the form of congratulatory messages used by the Facebook and Twitter users?
- (2) How is the congratulatory messages expressed verbally and non-verbally by the social media Facebook and Twitter users in Malay?
- (3) What are the congratulatory messages strategies used by the social media Facebook and Twitter users?

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to:

- (1) To analyse the usage of congratulatory phrases in Facebook and Twitter in Malaysia from the word, phrase and sentence aspect.
- (2) To analyse the congratulatory messages used by Facebook and Twitter in Malay.

#### 5. Research Methods

This study uses mixed methods, which are qualitative and quantitative that involves observation study and corpus from Facebook and Twitter for three months starting on August to November 2019. The data is collected directly and manually with copy and paste method from both chosen social media. There are 577 status, comments and tweets as the corpus data collected from Facebook and Twitter that are uploaded in Malay as general reading. The data is collected using the keywords ‘tahniah’ (congratulations) and ‘syabas’ (well done) at the search column in the chosen social media. The data is saved in Microsoft Word (.docx) and Note Pad (.txt) files.

Table 01 shows the data collected from a few situations that were trending in Facebook and Twitter within the duration of data collection, which are some successful situations.

**Table 01.** Congratulatory messages situations from Facebook and Twitter.

	Situations
1	Succeed in studies
2	Succeed in work
3	Succeed in sports

These three situations are chosen in parallel with the situations during the data collections involving graduation seasons, end of the year work assessment, local and overseas sports. Table 02 shows the number of data collected according to the selected situations from Facebook and Twitter.

**Table 02.** Number of data according to the situations in Facebook and Twitter.

	Situation	No. of Data	
		Facebook	Twitter
1	Succeeded in studies	154	59
2	Succeeded in work	76	60
3	Succeeded in sport	64	35

The study data is analysed following the strategy according to Elwood’s congratulatory taxonomy (2004) that is modified according to the suitability of the study context. The corpus data is listed following a number of strategies as shown in table 03:

**Table 03.** Adaptation of congratulatory strategies from Elwood’s congratulatory taxonomy (2004)

No.	Strategi	Example
1	Illocutionary device	<b>Tahniah!!! Congratulations!!!</b>
2	Situation-based statement	Tahniah HARIMAU MALAYA... <b>Dapat menewaskan Thailand.. Congratulations HARIMAU MALAYA..You beat Thailand..</b>
3	Prayer	<b>Semoga terus cemerlang utk thn2 mendatang @ aamiin Continue your excellence for the coming years @ aamiin</b>
4	Compliments	Tq naresh,, <b>awak memiliki keberanian dan hati yg murni,</b> ,,moga ramai lagi ygmemiliki hati seperti awak Tq naresh,, <b>you are brave and have a good heart,</b> ,,hope there are other people with good heart as you
5	Gratitude to God	<b>Alhamdulillah,</b> syabas anak muda... <b>Alhamdulillah,</b> well done young man...
6	Good speech/ Advice	<b>Jangan jadikan kegagalan sebagai titik noktah akhir...</b> kegagalan jgk blh buat kita Berjaya kl kita terus menerus berusaha.... <b>It is not the end of the world.</b> Failure can direct us to success if we continue to work hard.

There are 729 data from 448 status, comments and tweet from both social media according to the strategy of the study focus. Table 04 is the total data listed according to the strategy adapted from Elwood’s congratulatory taxonomy (2004):

**Table 04.** Total of data according to the strategy.

	Strategy	No.	Percentage
1	Illocutionary device	366	50.2
2	Situation-based statement	82	11.2
3	Prayer	52	7.1
4	Compliments	94	12.9
5	Gratitude to God	87	12.0
6	Good speech	48	6.6

## 6. Findings

The data collected according to situations are analysed based on the strategy from Elwood’s congratulatory taxonomy (2004).

The first strategy is illocutionary device that use the words ‘tahniah’ (congratulations) and ‘syabas’ (well done) to express happiness to the readers. There were 366 from 729 of overall Facebook and Twitter data referred to the usage of illocutionary device as shown in table 05:

**Table 05.** Illocutionary device strategy in Facebook and Twitter

Social media	No. of Data
Facebook	228
Twitter	138

Based on table 05, this strategy is the highest findings compared to all strategies used in both Facebook and Twitter. Facebook usage is 228 data, while Twitter usage is 138 data. Examples of congratulatory messages expressed using illocutionary device are as follow:

- a) Syabas Harimau Malaya terbaik mng ke ats Thailand demi lencana di dada.  
Well done Harimau Malaya on their winning over Thailand.
- b) Tahniah anak2 lemoi  
Congratulations lemoi

Besides that, table 06 shows that the usage of compliments as congratulatory strategy in Facebook and Twitter are also have medium value, which is 94 data:

**Table 06.** Compliments strategy

Social media	No. of Data
Facebook	74
Twitter	20

Table 06 shows the usage of compliments strategy is medium compared to other strategies. The usage of this strategy contributes 74 data in Facebook and 20 data in Twitter. Compliments used as strategy are closely related with the situations occur such as success in sports or marriage:

- a) Pencapaian yang terbaik..TAHNAH HARIMAU MALAYA..Dapat Menewaskan Thailand.  
The best achievement..CONGRATULATIONS HARIMAU MALAYA..You beat Thailand.
- b) Persembahan yg mantap.. Kreatif cikgu.. Tahniah anak2..  
Excellent performance..Creative teachers...Congratulations children...

Gratitude to God strategy was used in 87 data from Facebook and Twitter as shown in table 07:

**Table 07.** Gratitude to God strategy

Social media	No.of Data
Facebook	69
Twitter	18

Based on table 07, examples of congratulatory messages that expressed the gratitude to God by saying ‘thank you Allah’ dan the word ‘Alhamdulillah’ which means ‘praise be to Allah’ or exclamation to express ‘gratitude’ (Kamus Dewan, 2007). There were 69 data from Facebook and 18 data from Twitter that used strategy. Examples of phrases used are as follow:

- a) Alhamdulillah.pencapaian yg hebat..  
Praise be to Allah..excellent achievement
- b) Terima kasih Ya Allah dengan hadiah terindah ini..  
Thank you Allah for this wonderful gift...

Next, situation-based statements are used with the total number of 82 from the overall data. Table 08 shows the number of data from Facebook and Twitter:

**Table 08.** Situation-based statements strategy

Social media	No. of Data
Facebook	29
Twitter	53

Table 08 is about the strategy used in Facebook and Twitter with situation-based statements that occur such as graduation and marriage. 29 data are acquired from Facebook usage and 53 data from Twitter. Examples of the usage of statement based situation strategy are as follow:

- a) Syabas dan tahniah diucapkan kepada aktivis Harmoni yang telah bergraduasi pada 16 sehingga 19 haribulan November yang lalu bertempat di Dewan Besar, Universiti Putra Malaysia.  
 Well done and congratulations to the Harmoni activists who graduated from 16 to 19 November in Dewan Besar, Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- b) Tahniah HARIMAU MALAYA..Dapat menewaskan Thailand..  
 Congratulations HARIMAU MALAYA...For beating Thailand..

The next strategy used to express congratulatory is prayer. There are 52 data from Facebook and Twitter that use prayer strategy in table 09:

**Table 09.** Prayer strategy

Social media	No. of Data
Facebook	42
Twitter	10

Table 09 above shows the total number of prayers in congratulatory messages by Facebook and Twitter user in Malaysia. The prayer strategy is detected and analysed with the usage of the word ‘semoga’ and ‘moga’ which is a function word means ‘mudah-mudahan’ (may) (Kamus Dewan, 2007) or request. Facebook shows the usage of this strategy with 88 data, while Twitter with 14 data. Below are examples of the prayer strategy used:

- a) tahniah. moga terus melakar kejayaan  
 congratulations. May you continue to excel.
- b) Tahniah. Semoga berjaya dunia dan akhirat  
 Congratulations. May you succeed in the world and Hereafter.

The final strategy used by Facebook and Twitter users to express congratulatory is a good speech. This strategy has the lowest data compared to all strategies used, with 48 from the whole data. Table 10 below is a good speech strategy used as congratulatory expressions:

**Table 10.** Good speech strategy

Social media	No. of Data
Facebook	35
Twitter	14

Table 10 shows that there are 35 data from Facebook and 14 data from Twitter that use the strategy. The good speech is analysed with the positive word and advice to the readers:

- a) Jangan jadikan kegagalan sebagai titik noktah akhir... kegagalan jgk blh buat kita berjaya kl kita terus menerus berusaha....  
 It is not the end of the world. Failure can direct us to success if we continue to work hard.
- b) Sukan menyatukan kita semua, tahniah Malaysia!!! MY🇲🇾  
 Sports unite us all. Congratulations Malaysia!

## 7. Conclusion

Congratulatory is one of the expressive speakers' behaviour that introduced by Searle (1969) which expressed to please an individual in celebrating happiness. Congratulatory is delivered in various ways and styles just like in Facebook and Twitter, which is in verbal and non-verbal language. The verbal language expressed can be seen by the word and speech written in the status, comment and tweet column. For example, a speech with the word 'tahniah' (congratulations) and a good speech. Meanwhile, the non-verbal language is translated with the usage of emoji that shows happiness as an expression of a success and blissfulness.

There are 933 data that contain congratulatory strategy used by Facebook and Twitter users in Malaysia based on the three situations chosen, which are success in studies, work and sports. The researcher focuses on six strategies used as congratulatory expressive speakers' behaviour. Some of the congratulatory strategies in this study are illocutionary device, statement-based situation, prayer and compliments. Illocutionary device is the most used strategy by Facebook and Twitter users with the usage of 'tahniah' (congratulations) and 'syabas' (well done) which are common among the speakers in written of face-to-face forms.

There is a significant difference between the data acquired from Facebook and Twitter. This is because Facebook is the communication field that is used to share stories, experience and news between one another, while Twitter is used to share information and experience that is more to an open 'diary' by the users. Other than that, the study focuses the Malay data that is collected more from Facebook than Twitter.

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