

12th International Symposium on Intercultural, Cognitive and Social Pragmatics

GLOBAL ENGLISH IN ACTION:

CONGRATULATORY SPEECH
ACTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

- The rise social media has reshaped everyday communication.
- English functions as a global lingua franca in online interactions.
- Congratulatory speech acts are a key way users express support, solidarity, and social bonding.
- Digital environments encourage brief, creative, and multimodal expressions (text, emojis, GIFs).
- Social media offers real-world data for observing Global English in use.

Focus:

- How congratulations are expressed across different English-speaking communities online ?

CONGRATULATIONS

- Classified as **expressive speech acts** (J. Searle)
- Reflect subjective attitudes toward events and achievements.
- They convey the speaker's positive feelings toward someone else's achievement or good fortune
- Express speaker's emotions (happiness, admiration, pleasure).
- Common in everyday communication due to social norms of expressing emotions .
- **Illocutionary acts** (J. L. Austin; Searle) - communicates psychological states in response to others' success.
- Enhances the 'positive face', supports and maintains social harmony (Brown & Levinson).

- Influence by context, social relation of speakers, culture etc.
- Vary in tone (formal, informal, or humorous), intention (including occasional sarcasm), and form.
- **Flexible acts** that may target different domains:
 - personal milestones (e.g., birthdays or weddings),
 - professional accomplishments (e.g., promotions or awards), or
 - significant life events
- play a significant **interpersonal role**:
 - help build rapport,
 - reinforce solidarity, and
 - maintain harmonious relationships
- Important **social function**:
 - Builds rapport and solidarity
 - Maintains positive interpersonal relationships
 - Expresses support and goodwill toward the hearer

CONGRATULATION STRATEGIES BY ELWOOD (2004)

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) | "Congratulation" |
| 2 | Expression of happiness: | I am so glad |
| 3 | An offer of good wishes | "I wish you the best of luck in your new life" |
| 4 | Request for information | "Is it a boy or a girl?" |
| 5 | Asking for sweets | "You must bring me some sweet" |
| 6 | Self-related comments: an expression of envy and longing | "May God give me a cute baby as yours" |
| 7 | Joking | "You better if you didn't get married" |
| 8 | Thanking God | "Thank God" |
| 9 | Encouraging | "Always try your best" |

- from simple, formulaic expressions to more elaborated forms ;
- highlights how congratulatory speech acts can vary in complexity, emotional intensity, and degree of personalization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Objective: Explore congratulatory comments on public posts from famous figures.
- Design: Qualitative content analysis
- Sample: 10 public figures (British & American)
- Professions: Singers, actors, athletes, chefs, media personalities, football club owner;
- Follower range: 4M – 88.8M
- Event focus: Life & career celebrations

POST DETAILS

| Ethnicity | no. | Profession | Number of followers | Event | Number of comments |
|-----------|-----|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| British | 1 | actress | 27.7M | Woman of the year | 3274 |
| | 2 | Footballer | 17.9M | Player of the season | 668 |
| | 3 | Football Club owner | 88.5M | Cup champion | 9454 |
| | 4 | Singer | 88.8 | Sold out concert | 4547 |
| | 5 | Chef | 19.M | Wedding anniversary | 4064 |
| American | 6 | Actress | 71.7M | Wedding anniversary | 5 286 |
| | 7 | Singer | 406M | Wedding | 1209 |
| | 8 | Comedian | 172M | Best comedy performance | 4054 |
| | 9 | Chef | 4M | Celebrate 10 M followers | 1022 |
| | 10 | TV Host | 29.1M | New book | 6300 |

DATA COLLECTION

- Platform: Public Instagram posts
- Unit of analysis: Comments expressing congratulations
- Number of comments per post: 668 – 18.7K
- Criteria for post selection:
 - Celebratory events
 - High engagement

DATA ANALYSIS

- Analysis steps: Extract congratulatory comments
- Thematic coding: emotional tone, emojis, formality
- Ethical considerations:
 - Public data only
 - No usernames or personal identifiers reported
 - Focus on aggregated patterns

1. WOMAN OF THE YEAR

- **Expression of Validation / Complimenting** — Most Frequent
- Users praised: appearance, personality, smile, elegance, talent, celebrity identity.

“You look amazing” “Gorgeous smile” “Amazing woman and human”

- **Direct congratulations:** “Congrats on another award”
- **Expression of Admiration** (fandom-based identity language)

“My queen”

“Favorite actress”

- **Expression of Happiness / Excitement**

“Yaaasss!” “Awww” “So happy and proud of you”

2. FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE SEASON

- The **most frequent strategy** was **direct congratulation (IFIDs)** using formulaic expressions:
 - *“Congratulations Harry” “Congrats Harry!” “Well done Harry”*
- The second most common strategy involved **indirect congratulations through praise and admiration**:
 - *“The best striker in the world” / “Legend” / “King Harry”*
- Many comments emphasized **deservedness**:
 - *“Well deserved” “You deserve all the wins”*
- Fans frequently used **collective identity and solidarity**:
 - *“We did it Harry” “We won trophies”*
- Congratulations were highly **multimodal and emotional**, characterized by:
 - Emojis, capitalization, repetition/intensification .





3. FOOTBALL CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

- **Explicit Congratulations** The most frequent strategy
 - “Congrats” “Massive congratulations”
 - The congratulation is often intensified through: emojis, capitalization, exclamation marks, and honorifics (Sir).
- *Complimenting Achievement and Merit*
 - “You truly are a master!!!” “Amazing Legendary”
- *Admiration and Idolization*
 - “Icon ??” “Legend” “The myth” “king”
- **Expression of Happiness for the Recipient**
 - “Love seeing you win” “Congrats your dream come true!”

Congratulation extends beyond sporting achievement and becomes: celebration of family unity, admiration of public image ,and reinforcement of family identity.

4. SINGER'S SOLD OUT CONCERT

- **Expression of Happiness (Most Frequent)**

- Fans mainly expressed excitement, admiration, and emotional enthusiasm about singer's success.
- “Epic concert!!” “I LIVE!” “The duo we didn't know we needed”
- Use of emojis such as    

- **Validation and Praise**

- Many comments praised singer's talent, success, and hard work.
- “Legend with legends” “No one deserves this more than you”

- **IFIDs (Direct Congratulations)**

- Some users used explicit congratulatory expressions to directly acknowledge the accomplishment.
- “Congrats queen!” “Congratulations queen!”

- **Good Wishes**

- Fans frequently expressed supportive wishes and blessings.
- “ May God bless you” “Love you more”

5. CHEF CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY

- congratulatory speech acts in celebrity anniversary discourse are predominantly indirect and affective.

- **Expressions of admiration/praise** (most frequent)

“Perfect couple”

“Great looking couple”

“Such a beautiful couple”

- **Happy anniversary formulas** “Happiest Anniversary!”

- **Explicit congratulations** “Congratulations to both of you!”

- **Blessings and good wishes** “Cheers to many more years!”

“May you continue to love and celebrate each other”

6 WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

- Most Common Strategy: **Indirect congratulation** through **admiration and praise**
- praising the couple rather than explicitly using the word “congratulations.”
- “cute couple” “beautiful together”
 “perfect couple” “lovebirds”
- **Expressions of deservedness:** “Well deserved” (very frequent)
- Direct congratulations “Congratulations!”, “Congrats!”
- Expressions of happiness for hearer “So happy for you”

7 WEDDING

- **Expressions of admiration and praise** (most frequent)
“Absolutely beautiful” “Goals” “You deserve this”
- **Direct congratulation formulas**
“Huge congratulations” “Congratulations to both of you”
- **Expressions of blessings and good wishes**
“Wishing you a lifetime of happiness”
“May your love continue forever”
- **Expressions of happiness for the hearer**
“So happy for you!” “Love seeing you happy”

8 BEST COMEDY PERFORMANCE AWARD

- **Explicit Congratulations** (Most Dominant Strategy)
 - direct expression of congratulations through performative statements.
 - “Congrats” “Congratulations my boy” “Congratulations Champ”
 - **Expression of Happiness for the Recipient**
 - Many commenters express personal joy and excitement
 - “Very proud of U brother” “YES #1 #worldwide”
 - **Complimenting the Achievement**
 - highly frequent strategy involves praising the comedy special, talent, or hard work behind the achievement.
 - “This shit is soooooo funny!” “You never disappoint” “legendary”
 - **Expression of Admiration and Pride**
 - “GOAT” “My icon”
- * Emoji-only comments and exaggerated punctuation are extremely common.

9 CELEBRATING 10 M FOLLOWERS

- **Explicit Congratulations** (Most Dominant Strategy)
 - “Congrats” “Big congratulations”
 - **Complimenting** Achievement and Merit
 - “Absolutely deserved” “You inspire so many people”
 - **Admiration and Idolization**
 - “GOAT” “Legend” “King”
 - **Expression of Happiness for the Recipient**
 - “So happy for you” “Love seeing this”
- ❖ The congratulatory acts are often intensified through: emoji clusters, repeated letters, capitalization, and exclamation marks.

10 NEW BOOK

- **Expression of Gratitude and Appreciation** (Most Frequent)
 - The overwhelmingly dominant strategy was thanking for mentioning or defending a term

“Thanks for your support” “We appreciate you brave man”
- **Expression of Solidarity / Group Identity**
 - Many comments emphasized collective identity and emotional alignment.

“You are in Persian hearts” “From all Iranian people”
- **Direct praise** and congratulatory-style approval.

“You are the best” “Well done to you” “Wise man”
- **Overlapped Strategies:** gratitude, solidarity, praise, emotional support, validation.
- the comments demonstrate how congratulation/support strategies on Instagram can expand beyond personal achievements into political and cultural solidarity performances.





MAIN PATTERNS OF CONGRATULATION STRATEGIES

- **Dominance of Indirect Congratulations** Through Praise and Admiration
- Across both British and American celebrity posts, users frequently congratulated indirectly by *praising: appearance* (“Gorgeous smile”), *talent* (“Legend”, “GOAT”), *personality and celebrity identity* (“My queen”, “King Harry”).
 - Wedding and anniversary posts especially relied on admiration and validation rather than explicit congratulatory formulas.
- **Direct Congratulations** Were Most Common in **Achievement-Oriented Posts**.
 - Sports victories, awards, and follower milestones showed high use of IFIDs (explicit congratulatory formulas):
 - “Congratulations “Huge congratulations”

- **Emotionality and Audience Participation**

- Comments often expressed excitement, pride, and emotional solidarity:
“So proud of you” “Love seeing you happy”
- Congratulation acts functioned as public emotional participation rather than simple acknowledgment.

- **Multimodal Intensification**

- Users intensified congratulations through: emojis    , capitalization, repeated letters, multiple exclamation marks.
- Emoji-only comments were also highly frequent.

- **Congratulation as Identity and Solidarity Performance**

- Many comments extended beyond achievement recognition into: fandom performance, collective identity, emotional solidarity, cultural or social alignment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ❖ Instagram congratulation discourse is highly emotional, multimodal, and community-oriented.
- ❖ Both British and American posts showed frequent use of praise, admiration, happiness expressions, and direct congratulations.
- ❖ British comments were generally more indirect and admiration-based, while American comments were more explicit and emotionally intensified.
- ❖ Emojis, capitalization, repetition, and fandom language played an important role in strengthening congratulatory meaning.
- ❖ The findings highlight the need for EFL teaching to include authentic and varied congratulation strategies beyond traditional textbook formulas.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Move beyond formulaic textbook expressions.
- Integrate authentic social media comments into EFL materials.
- Teach both direct and indirect congratulation strategies.
- Include digital communication features such as emojis and multimodal expression.
- Develop learners' pragmatic and digital communicative competence.
- Encourage intercultural and context-based analysis of online communication.

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