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**The Use of Encouragement in Iraqi Arabic Dialect: A Pragmatic Perspective****Abstract**

. Iraqi Arabic dialect. It also aims to discover the social and cultural norms that underlie performing and perceiving encouragements. Data were collected by employing Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) and Focus group interview (FGI). Data obtained from these two instruments were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. Written Discourse Completion Task involves eight situations in which the participants as interlocutors of higher and equal status were to encourage an individual with close and familiar social distant in various contexts. The model followed to analyze the collected data based on Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) classification of semantic formulas. The main findings were that Iraqi Arabs employed 30 types of encouragement strategies, 18 more than those used in Van's (2011) and Jung's study. They also preferred directness rather than indirectness in giving their encouragements across the eight situations. However, they varied their preference of the specific strategies according to the social status, social, distance, and the context of situations. They favoured praying as the dominant strategy in encouraging close lower-status interlocutors, while giving advice were employed dominantly in encouraging familiar lower-status interlocutors. In encouraging close equal-status interlocutors, they preferred reminding H's responsibility as the prominent strategy. Iraqi Arabs varied their tendency of strategies in encouraging familiar-equal interlocutors due to contexts. That is, the most frequent strategy was emphasizing the value of success/achievement in academic field, whereas creating hope were the prominent ones in workplace context. Importantly, some strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs involving creating hope, offering solutions, Quranic verses and Hadith, emphasizing the value of success/achievement, commendation, proverbs and sayings, praying, praising, showing trust in hearer's ability, stating facts, solidarity, being patient, blessing, invoking the name of God, ability to compensate, and swearing were new ones which have not been included in Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) studies. Moreover, regarding FGI findings, it is appeared that context, social status, social distance, Islamic teachings, social and cultural values such Al-Muru'a ("المروءة") and Al-Nakhwa ("النخوة") are the most important factors which affect Iraqi Arabs' performing and perceiving of encouraging speech act. It is hoped that the present study will contribute in minimizing or avoiding any potential misunderstanding in cross-cultural interaction, specifically between individuals from other cultures and Iraqi Arabs. It also aims to develop the pragmatic competence of foreign language learners of Arabic to avoid misinterpretation when they offer encouragements in Iraqi Arabic dialect.

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة استراتيجيات الفعل الكلامي للتشجيع التي يستخدمها العراقيون العرب في اللهجة العراقية العربية. تهدف الدراسة كذلك إلى اكتشاف الأعراف الاجتماعية والثقافية التي تكمن في أداء واستقبال الفعل الكلامي للتشجيع. جُمعت البيانات من خلال استخدام مهمة إكمال الخطاب الكتابي مفتوحة النهاية ومقابلة جماعية مركزة. البيانات التي حُصل عليها من هاتين الأداتين تم تحليلها وصفيًا ونوعيًا. تشمل مهمة إكمال الخطاب ثمانية مواقف يشجع فيها المشاركون، كمتحاورين ذوي مكانة عالية أو متساوية، شخصًا من مكانة قريبة أو مألوفة في سياقات مختلفة. الأداة التي استخدمت في تحليل البيانات اعتمدت على تصنيف فان (2011) وجونغ (2010). النتائج الرئيسية كانت أن العراقيين العرب استخدموا 30 استراتيجية للتشجيع، بزيادة 18 استراتيجية عن تلك المذكورة في دراسة فان (2011) وجونغ (2010). هم كذلك فضلوا التشجيع المباشر على التشجيع غير المباشر في تقديم تشجيعهم. إلا أنهم نَوَّعوا رغبتهم تجاه استراتيجيات محددة عبر المواقف الثمانية. فضلوا استراتيجية الدعاء في تشجيع متحاور من علاقة اجتماعية قريبة ومكانة اجتماعية أدنى، بينما إعطاء النصيحة كانت هي السائدة بالاستخدام مع شخص مألوف ومن مكانة اجتماعية أدنى. في تشجيع المتحاور القريب وبمكانة اجتماعية متساوية، فضلوا استخدام استراتيجية تذكير السامع بمسؤولياته كأكثر استراتيجية بارزة. كذلك نَوَّعوا رغبتهم في الاستراتيجيات في تشجيع المتحاور المألوف وفقًا للسياقات: بمعنى أن أكثر استراتيجيات استخدمت كانت تأكيد قيمة النجاح أو الإنجاز في الحقل الأكاديمي، بينما خلق الأمل كانت هي البارزة في سياق مكان العمل. من الجدير بالأهمية أن بعض الاستراتيجيات التي استخدمها العراقيون العرب تضمنت: خلق الأمل، إعطاء الحول، الآيات القرآنية و الحديث الشريف، تأكيد قيمة النجاح والإنجاز، الإشادة، الأقوال والأمثال، الدعاء، المدح، تذكير السامع بالمسؤولية، قول الحقائق، التآزر، "التحلي بالصبر"، المباركة، الاستعانة بالله، القدرة على التعويض، والقسم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، بالإشارة إلى نتائج المقابلة الجماعية المركزة، تبين أن السياق، المكانة الاجتماعية، المسافة الاجتماعية، تعاليم الدين الإسلامي، والقيم الاجتماعية والثقافية كـ"النخوة" و"المروءة" هي أكثر العناصر أهمية والتي تؤثر على أداء واستقبال العراقيين لفعل كلام التشجيع. تأمل هذه الدراسة أن تساهم في تقليل أو تجنب أي سوء فهم كامن عبر التواصل عابر الثقافات. كذلك تهدف إلى تطوير المخزون التداولي لمتعلمي اللغة العربية لغة أجنبية لتجنب سوء التفسير عند تقديمهم التشجيع باللهجة العراقية العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية، الفعل الكلامي للتشجيع، اللهجة العراقية العربية

1.Introduction

Interpersonal interactions play a significant role in human social life, deeply affecting how communities function and people connect. They are a continuous process of performing an action through language (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Language plays a fundamental role in human interactions enabling people to build relationships, communicate their internal state, and influence their environment. According to Austin (1962), language is not only used to express thoughts or convey information, but it is an effective and powerful tool employed to perform actions. These actions are carried out and understood based heavily on the surrounding specific cultural rules and the context of the conversation, emphasizing how context shapes interactions. Austin (1962) confirmed that "to say something is to do something" stating that each utterance essentially constitutes a speech act. In other words, to say something is to perform a speech act. Further, Searle (1969) defined speech acts as "the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" (p. 24), highlighting their rule-governed and intentional nature. More elaborately, Levinson (1983) indicates that speech acts are "the acts one does in uttering a sentence with determinable sense and reference (locutionary acts), ... the intended and conventional use (illocutionary acts), and ... the intended or unintended consequences of what one says (perlocutionary acts)." (p. 236). Consequently, in conversations, every utterance employed by individuals is not to say something, but to perform a specific speech act for a clear and indented communicative purpose.

However, systematic empirical studies, including recent research (e.g., Al-Saidi, 2020; Bousfield, 2022; Fu & Li, 2021; Schneider, 2018; Waring & Zuniga, 2023, Salman, 2024), showed that realization for speech acts differ across cultures, languages, societies, and even among individual speakers. This significant variation represents a remarkable obstacle to achieve effective communication

across cultures. In other words, this variation complicates inter-cultural exchanges resulting in pragmatic failure and misinterpretations. This fact was confirmed by Usmani and Almashham (2024) who ensure that "Cross-cultural pragmatic variation can lead to serious communication breakdowns when speakers of different cultural backgrounds interact" (p. 186). How people actually understand and use speech acts, including encouragement, rely heavily on contextual factors. More clearly, differences in power, social distance, social status, and background knowledge play a significant role in determining how utterances are comprehended and created (Kasper & Rose, 2003; Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Therefore, what is polite and impolite is culturally specific, particularly, when producing speech acts by people of different cultures. Thus, a speech act is considered as face-saving act in some cultures may be referred to as a face-threatening act in others (Fukushima, 2024; Varghese, 2019; Zhu & Yu, 2020). In collectivists cultures, where group interdependence and harmony are crucial, speech acts such as giving advice (Waring & Zuniga, 2023), refusal (Rabab'ah, Alghazo, & El-Dakhs, 2025), apologies (Al-Saidi, 2020), or requests (Fu & Li, 2021) are seen as face-saving acts as they are performed indirectly as people in such cultures prefer indirectness. On the other hand, in individualist cultures, where personal autonomy and clarity are emphasized, a concise apology, explicit advice, a direct refusal, or a straightforward request are perceived as face-saving speech acts, for people in such cultures being direct is valued as a form of politeness.

Accordingly, what is seen as polite encouragement in one culture might be interpreted and understood as interference or rudeness. These differences arise from the variations of the social and cultural norms that govern social interactions comprising the preferred level of directness, how people behave towards those in power, and how important they consider maintaining group harmony (Al-Saidi, 2020; Fu & Li, 2021; Sari & Yulianti, 2022). This study focuses on highlighting

the importance of differences in employing strategies by different ethnic groups or cultures, such as Iraqi Arabs, when performing the speech act of encouragement. Gass & Neu (1995) emphasized that lacking of awareness considering how speech acts are interpreted and realized across cultures can substantially prevent effective and successful interethnic and intercultural interaction. It is hoped that the findings of this study contribute to the field of knowledge in general, and pragmatics in particular by examining the strategies of encouraging employed by Iraqi Arabs in relation to the social status and distance of interlocutors, providing deeper understanding of how patterns of encouragement utilized, and consequently creating significant awareness among both people with different cultural backgrounds and Iraqi Arabs. Consequently, this can reduce any potential misunderstandings in future cross-cultural interactions. Therefore, the present the study aims to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs when they give encouragements to equal lower-status interlocutors who had a close, familiar, and distant social relationship with the encourager?
2. What are the cultural and social norms that underlie the perception and performance of encouraging speech act among Iraqi Arabs?

2.Encouraging as a speech act

Socially, encouraging is one of the most common and co-occurrence speech acts in every day communication across all languages, societies, and cultures (Goldsmith, 2004; Matsuoka, Smith, & Uchimura, 2009). It plays a significant persuasive function in strengthening and forming good relation indicating the intimacy and rapport among interlocutors (Almubaddal, 2025). That is, its aim is to instill support and build self-confidence, and strengthen hope or courage in the hearer. This fact was confirmed by Hornby (2000) who ensured that to encourage is simply "to give somebody support, courage or hope (80)." This communicative

encouragement act is required where an addressee face challenging situations, specifically when the addresser believe that an event the addressee face is discouraging. From religious perspective, expressing encouragement is highly emphasized in Isalm as Islamic teachings value the charity, kind words, wishing good for others as one wish it for themselves. Therefore, according to these religious principles, encouragement is not only an exchange of words regraded and treated as virtuous action, but it is a moral imperative that reinforces mutual harmony, rapport, and promotes social solidarity. Values such cooperation, support, and love for good are appreciated in Arab society (Izutsu, 2002; Taeschner, 1998), and when individuals offer encouragements, they embody these values, consequently emphasizing their role as persons committed to empowering and supporting their community.

Pragmatically, encouraging is a complex speech act that performs various functions and purpose. It is considered as an expressive speech act that functions to convey the psychological state of speaker's support and approval towards the hearer. Searle (1969) defined encouragements as acts used "to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition" (p. 95). It also classified as directive, particularly when the aim of encouragement is to affect the future actions or attitudes of the hearer (. e.g., Go for it). According to Jung (2009) encouraging speech act can be categorized as an expressive (e.g. "Great work"!), a directive (e.g. "Don't be worried, honey"!), a commissive (e.g. "I'll stand by you."), or a representative (e.g. "You've clearly got talent". From a politeness perspective, encouragement is seen as a positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987), Through the expressions of solidarity, admiration, and approval, encouraging directly maintains and save the positive face of the hearer of being favored, liked, and accepted by others. In other words, this reflects the idea that encouragement enhance the effort of the hearer or acknowledge their potential. Spencer-Oatey's

(2000), through her theory of rapport management, confirmed that encouraging employed to manage and enhance rapport comprising the "quality of the relationship between interactants" (p. 13). Despite its universal nature and function in fostering self-confidence, realization aspiration, and achieving success, the specific strategies of encouraging speech act employed in cross-cultural communication vary across societies and cultures. That is, variation in the employment of these strategies is culturally specific ranging from direct to indirect. For this reason, the present study investigates encouraging speech act among Iraqi Arabs, specifically in Iraqi Arabic dialect in relation to social status and distance of speaker and hearer. It aims to discover the specific strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs when they express their encouragements in their daily life in various contexts. It also aims to explore the social and cultural norms that underlie this speech cat. It is hoped the findings of this study would contribute in providing a deeper understating and overview of encouraging speech acts in Iraqi Arabic context. Hopefully, such insights could mitigate and overcome any possible cross-cultural pragmatic failure in communication, specifically for non-Iraqi dialect interlocutors interacting with Iraqi Arabs, as well as for second language learners of Arabic. Furthermore, this study will add a significant valuable broader insight to the field of knowledge in general, and to the field of pragmatics and speech act domain in particular.

3.Literature Review

This section provides a systematic review of existing research regarding the speech act of encouragement. The review sheds light on the main findings and methodologies for six studies investigated encouraging speech act in different cultural contexts. It also aims to show differences and similarities in how such speech act is performed and realized. The review falls into three categories: examining encouragement among people with different languages and cultures, non-native English speakers, and encouragement in one culture or language,

thereby exploring the social and cultural variables that shape such important communicative act.

The first study by Van (2011) examined encouraging speech act among Americans (ANS) and Vietnamese (VNS). Six DCT situations, in which social status and distance was taken into account, were used to gather data. The participants' responses were coded and classified into nine strategies developed by the author involving *complimenting H*, *stating facts*, *suggesting things to do*, *offering help or reward*, *alleviating H's hard feelings*, *giving advice*, *predicting bright prospect*, *showing understanding and sympathy*, and *reminding H's responsibility*. The study revealed that both ANS and VNS employed all the nine strategies categorized by the author. The two groups showed tendency towards employing more *complimenting H* strategy when encouraging higher-status interlocutor, and *suggesting things to do* in encouraging lower-status individual. Regarding social distance, both groups preferred to use more strategies when giving encouragement to acquaintances more than that to intimates. Strategies such as *Reminding H's responsibility*, *suggesting things to do*, and *stating facts* were more frequent in encouraging familiar person among the two groups. However, While VNS favoured *showing understanding and sympathy* and *compliment H* when encouraging intimates, ANS tended to use these two strategies frequently in encouraging acquaintances. ANS favoured *predicting bright prospect*, *stating facts* in higher-status situations, *giving advice* in equal- status situations, and *predicting bright prospect* and *giving advice* in lower-status contexts. Conversely, VNS frequently employed *alleviating H's hard feeling*, *giving advice* in higher-status contexts, *alleviating Hs hard feeling* in equal settings, and *giving advice* in lower-status scenarios. VNS used *compliment H* and *showing understanding and sympathy* more frequently with intimates, while ANS utilized such strategies dominantly with familiar individuals.

Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, a second study by Ahangar, Rezaeian, and Esfandiarpour, (2022), investigated the effect of gender and power on the Persians' choice in terms of type and number of encouragement strategies. The participants of this study were 60 M.A. Persian students (30 females and 30 males). Role Plays Technique and Discourse Completion Test were employed to collect data. The main findings demonstrated a significant relationship between the power of the addressees, and the number and types of encouraging speech act strategies utilized by Persian females and males. Negative politeness was the most frequent strategy which mostly employed by the addresser to give and show more respect for the addressee of higher power, i.e., professor, indicating the tendency towards indirect approach. Conversely, positive politeness strategies were the most dominant strategy in encouraging individuals with lower and equal social power, i.e., janitors and classmates. This shows that female and male Persian students tended to be more explicit with individual of equal and lower status, but prefer to be indirect with those of superior or higher in status. The complexities of strategies were also influenced by the addressees' power. Specifically, the participants preferred to employ multi-layered, complex combinations of strategies (e.g., five-pronged or four-way strategies) in their encouragement for higher-power addressee. While, they opted to use more simple strategies i.e., two-way strategies, in encouraging individuals with lower power, and three-way strategies for those of equal power. Furthermore, the type of encouragement strategies employed by male also affected by the gender of the addressee in certain situations. However, there was no significant effect of the addressee's gender on the type of strategies of encouragement employed by female participants. Positive politeness was generally favoured by female to encourage male and female participants. In contrast, male students primarily employed positive politeness for encouraging male students, but shifted to encourage female by employing negative politeness. This suggests that

male students pay a greater attention to the gender of the addressee. Finally, this study revealed that gender has no significant effect on the number of encouraging strategies employed by both female and male students.

The study by Poliakova and Sibul (2021) aimed to examine linguistic strategies employed by individuals to convey encouragement in current French interactions. This study follows a contextual and quantitative analysis to organize and classify the various communicative strategies individuals employ in their verbal interactions, and to identify the specific grammatical and lexical expressions used with each strategy when conveying encouragement. The findings demonstrated that various strategies used to convey encouragement including expressions of gratitude, apologies, reassurance, articulations of happiness, demonstrations of understanding, expressions of agreement, and explicit encouragement. This study presents a theoretical model to understand how encouragement functions in contemporary French conversations regarding its linguistic realization, its conceptualization, and its active interactive dynamics. This study revealed that encouragement employed as a reinforcing act in communication, functioned as a goal-oriented communicative act, and based on mutual trust and understanding between interactors.

Another study by Jung (2010) investigated strategies of encouragement employed by Korean EFL learners (NNS) and American English native speakers (NS). This study aimed to specify the type of strategy, analyze instances of pragmatic failure comparing the two choices of the two groups. 88 Native speakers and 88 Korean EFL learners participated in this study. Data collected through DCT involving six various encouragement situations focusing on close social distance and three levels of social status (inferiors, peers, superiors). The study showed that fifteen encouragement strategies were employed by both groups classified as thirteen functional (e.g., complimenting, cheering up, wishing, giving help, commanding,

diminishing, suggesting, advising, worrying, sympathizing, calming, warning, assuring/reasoning) and two nonfunctional (e.g., incomplete, implicit). However, the findings showed distinct patterns in terms of strategy preference among NS and NNS. NS frequently employed *being implicit* and *assuring*. In contrast, Korean EFL learners often preferred to utilize *sympathizing*, *cheering up*, and *worrying*. Notably, *diminishing and worrying as* functional strategies were common among NNS, but were not used at all by NS indicating pragmatic divergence. Conversely, giving help was prominent among NNS, but doesn't appear among NS. Finally, the study is highly characterized by indirectness and implicitness posing a crucial challenge for second language learners.

Shahid's (2025) study focuses on how the speech of encouragement is employed and understood in Arabic conversation differentiating inferred meaning (inferences) and automatically grasp (defaults). The results indicated that encouragement deeper meaning in Arabic is frequently and commonly conveyed through defaults which are deeply rooted in typical language use and cultural norms. These automatic understandings are common in every day discourse, and significantly preferred as they convey meaning smoothly. However, their exact interpretations are subtly adjusted according the conversational contexts. The study explained how an utterance having a straightforward literal meaning such as "The chicken wrap just left" can effectively and successfully convey the communicative intent of encouragement meaning "Go catch up with him! particularly via the pragmatic inference and default interpretations. The research suggests that comprehending metapragmatic conventions (unwritten language rules) is crucial in explaining how both automatic and inferred meanings of encouragement are created. This study demonstrated that comprehending metapragmatic conventions is crucial in explaining how inferred and automatically understood meanings of encouragements are constructed. This study showed that encouragement is a

significant act to positive relationships and human interactions. Consequently, it offers valuable cross-cultural perspectives from the Arabic context into the wider understanding of communication process.

The last study by Smith and Uchimura (2011) investigated how encouragement employed by healthcare professionals. It concentrated on GAMBARU concept ('to try hard') as encouragement speech act employed by Japanese in healthcare manga context. Forty-one scenes from *healthcare manga* were analyzed in relation to different variables such dynamic relation between professional (like a physiotherapist, nurse, or doctor) and patient, contextual factors, social distance, relative power, evaluation of face-threatening acts, the degree of impositions on the hearer's face, and contextual background. This study followed a qualitative method to analyze data. The findings indicated that encouragement is a complex speech act that its effective perceptions depend heavily on these variables rather than only linguistic forms. For instance, "Gambarimasho" (e.g., "Kyoomo riharibi Gambarimasho"- "Try your best at today's rehabilitation again") is a commissive speech act employed by the nurse to be more polite in her encouragement; however, this utterance implicitly makes the patient's face is threaten significantly according to the inherent imposition and unequal power of social relation. In contrast, a child patient was successfully motivated when the physiotherapist employed "Gambare" (e.g., "Hora, Gambare, ato moo sukoshi" – "Hey, keep it up. Just a bit more") as a direct directive speech act of encouragement. Here, the appropriate social distance and low imposition, despite the higher professional authority of the physiotherapist, mitigated and decreased the threats to the hearer's "face." The surrounding context and the pre-existing relation among patient and professional play an essential role when perceiving encouragements. Furthermore, other strategies such as an assertive speech act of comfort and gratitude appeared to be more effective when used as encouragement by a nurse, and counter-assertive

speech acts employed by doctors effectively succeed to manage the despair of the patient. In conclusion, a good relation between them can make perceiving direct encouragement more effective by the hearer. The study revealed that encouragement to be successful and effective in healthcare, an accurate pragmatic awareness is required. That is, considering established relationships, employing appropriate power relation, managing social distance, and understanding the context of situations are all crucial, often outweighing mere superficial linguistic politeness.

The reviewed studies demonstrated that there was a significant variation in the realization of encouragement speech acts among people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This variation was due to the sociopragmatic variables such as gender, social distance, relative power, contextual factors, evaluation of threatening speech acts, the degree of imposition, and the dynamic relation between the hearer and speaker which influence the number and the type of the strategies employed. It is concluded that encouragement is a complex speech act requiring a mutual understanding and trust between the hearer and speaker. Its complexity is not only related to the linguistic realization, but to the different politeness variables. In addition, there was various preferences in employing the specific strategies of encouragement between native speakers and EFL learners. It also appeared that metapragmatic conventions were essential to explain both the understood and inferred meanings of encouragements. Despite its common occurrences among Iraqi Arabs and its religious, psychological, and social importance in reinforcing positive social relations, encouragement has not been investigated in Iraqi Arabic contexts yet, specifically in Iraqi Arabic dialect. Therefore, by providing an overview of how Iraqi Arabs realize, perceive, and perform this crucial speech act, the present study aims to fill this significant gap, specifying the type of strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs in their encouragements.

in everyday life situations, particularly, the most preferred and dominant ones. Thus, it contributes valuable data to the fields of speech act theory and cross-cultural pragmatics. Consequently, successful communication in future cross-cultural contexts is achieved, thereby avoiding misunderstanding and reducing pragmatic failure in interactions.

4.Methodology and Data analysis

Two instruments were used in the present study to collect data including open-ended *Written Discourse Completion Task* (WDCT) and Focus group interview (FGI). Commonly, WDCT is used to collect data to investigate pragmalinguistic aspects of encouragement, however, it fails to elicit the social and cultural norms underlying this speech act. Therefore, WDCT and FGI were triangulated to collect data examining these two aspects of encouragement. Descriptive qualitative analysis conducted to analyze data obtained from WDCT which involves eight various scenarios related to the social status and social distance in different contexts. To achieve the methodological validity and reliability, the researcher consulted two professors holding Ph.D. in linguistics (English Language), and two PhD-holding professors in linguistic (Arabic Language) to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the eighth situations for the Iraqi Arabic context. Contextual factors of social status and social distance of the interlocutors which comprise eight situations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of WDCT Situations

Situations of encouragement	Speaker status relative to interlocutors	Hearer' status	Hearer's distance
S1: A father encourages his son to give up the idea of postponing the examination	Father-son	Lower	Close
S2: Grandfather Encourages his grandson to overcome his illness	grandfather-son	Lower	Close
S3: Professor encourages a postgraduate student to start a project	professor-student	Lower	Familiar
S4: A boss encourages an employee to reconsider his decision to resign	Boss-employee	Lower	Familiar
S5: Someone encourages his friend to retract the decision to divorce	Friend-friend	Equal	Close
S6: Someone encourages his friend to overcome the grief of his father's death	Friend-friend	Equal	Close
S7: Someone encourages his former classmate to continue his postgraduate study	Classmate-classmate	Equal	Familiar
S8: Someone encourages his co-worker to reconsider his decision to resign from his profession	Co-worker-co-worker	Equal	Familiar

The situations varied according to the social status and distance involving encouraging lower and equal-status interlocutors who had close and familiar social distance with speaker. Moreover, the context of situations also varied to include two situations for each level of social distance in order to cover the most common contexts in which encouragements are frequently used. This study, carried out in the spring academic terms 2024, raised at the classroom sections at Karbala University/College of Education for the Humanities, after taking the permission from the classroom instructors. The WDCT filled by 50 male Iraqi Arabs who were asked to encourage individuals who had equal and lower social status with close and familiar social distance with them. The participants' age ranged between 22 and 23, at the fourth year of their study. The participants of this study were males

only in order to control the possible influence of gender on performing and perceiving encouragement strategies, as the present study does not concentrate on gender differences. Consequently, this methodology increases the validity of the findings of this study by limiting their generalizability to the male gender. Data gained from WDCT were first coded and classified according to the classification of strategies developed by Van (2011) and Jung's (2010) classification. However, modifications were made to these classifications according to the resulted strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs. The modified classifications are shown in Appendix 1.

According to the modified classification in Appendix 1, the utterances employed by Iraqi Arabs in their encouragements in the eight situations divided and coded into various semantic formulas. For example, the following utterance in which a father encourages his son to give up the idea of postponing his exams are classified into different semantic formulas, i.e., strategies as showed in Table 2

"اسأل الله يوفقك وليدي ، أدري بيبك گدها وتطلع من الأوائل إذا ركزت على دراستك. ومن تنقبل بالكلية اللي تريدها راح تنسى كل هذا التعب بمرحلة السادس. ودير بالك من فكرة التأجيل تضيع سنة من عمرك. وأني وياك خطوة بخطوة، إن شاء الله."

" "May God grant you success, my dear son. I know you're up to the task and you'll be among the top students if you focus on your studies. And once you get accepted into the university you want, you'll forget all this hardship from your sixth-grade year. Be careful not to let the idea of postponing waste a year of your life. I'll be with you every step of the way, God willing."

Table 2

No	Utterances in Araic	English Translation	Types of Strategies
1	اسأل الله يوفقك وليدي	"May God grant you success, my dear son."	Praying
2.	أدري بيك كدها وتطلع من . الأوائل إذا ركزت على دراستك	"I know you're up to the task and you'll be among the top students if you focus on your studies"	Showing trust in hearer's ability
3	ومن تتقبل بالكلية اللي تريده . راح تنسى كل هذا التعب بمرحلة السادس	"And once you get accepted into the university you want, you'll forget all this hardship from your sixth-grade year."	Emphasizing the value of success/achievement
4.	ودير بالك من فكرة التأجيل تضيع سنة من عمرك	"Be careful not to let the idea of postponing waste a year of your life."	Warning
5	وأني وياك خطوة بخطوة	"I'll be with you every step of the way"	Solidarity
6	إن شاء الله	"God willing"	Invoking the name of God

In regard to the FGI, after completing their answers to WDCT situations, six male participants voluntarily participated in the FGI. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively. To manage and analyze data, following miles and Huberman (1994), participants' responses to each question of the FGI were compiled in a table. Then, following Bertrand, Brown, and Ward (1992), an inventory of the main themes (social and cultural norms) and ideas discussed was collated. Bertrand et al. (1992) claims that this approach has the advantage of reducing the information of a large amount to be shorter. However, some rich details would be lost when the participants' responses are summarized. Therefore, to overcome this shortcoming, actual quotes were elicited as instances of the points argued in the sessions of FGI.

5. Results and Discussion

This study presents the results in four sub-sections. It starts with an overall perspective of the encouragement strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs, whereas the other two subsections are dedicated to concentrate on specific strategies used by the participants when performing encouragements made by a higher and equal status person who has close and familiar social distance with hearer. Strategies

employed by participants were coded due to Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) classification of semantic formulas, then they were classified into direct and indirect strategies. The last sub-section is devoted to investigate social and cultural norms that underlie encouragement speech act in relation to the production and perceptions side.

5.1 Overall Distribution of Iraqi Arabs' Encouragement Strategies

The results in Table 3 indicates that the total number of strategies employed across the eighth situations was 885 strategies. 30 types of strategies were used and varied according to the different situations. 18 new strategies, which were not used in Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) studies, were employed by Iraqi Arabs emphasizing the culturally specific nature of encouragement speech act when it is performed in different contexts, languages, and cultures. The results demonstrated that Iraqi Arabs prefer direct strategies when they give encouragements to lower and equal-status interlocutors who had close and familiar social distance with the speaker. The total number of direct strategies was dominant across the eighth situations accounted for 75.93% compared to indirect ones which were used less frequently at the parentage of 24.07%. Thus, encouragements are seen as face-enhancing acts by Iraqi Arabs, and this may be because of their collective culture in which group solidarity and cohesion are prioritized. Consequently, encouragement is not considered as a face-threatening act for the hearer as it is employed to enhance self-confidence and save the hearer public image of being like and admired (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Moreover, Iraqi Arabs speak a high context language (Hall, 1976) in which maintaining strong relation and shared understanding favoured. Thereby, encouragements, specifically through direct strategies, are considered more effective for social harmony. With reference to the specific situations separately, direct engouements were frequently employed by Iraqi Arabs with slight difference as their employment of direct encouragements

were distributed as 97.84%, 73.80%, 82.60%, 80.18%, 67.74%, 76.52%, 75.55%, 72.81% from situations 1 to 8 respectively. While indirect strategies of encouragement were used less dominantly at the percentage of 20.15%, 26.19%, 17.39%, 19.81%, 32.25%, 23.47%, 24.44%, and 27.18 % sequentially from Situation 1 to 8.

Regarding the total number of strategies for each situation, the results indicates that Iraqi Arabs employ strategies sufficiently when the social relation is close as they employed encouragement strategies dominantly at 14.55% in the first situation and 14.23 % at the second ones when encouraging lower-status interlocutor with close relation. Importantly, they sustained their sufficient use of encouragement strategies in the fifth and seventh situations at the percentage of 14.01% and 12.99 % respectively when they encourage equal status interlocutor with close social relation. Thus, it is proved that the closer social distance, the more strategies Iraqi Arabs use in their encouragements. This is in line with view that in collective culture, individuals within such societies constantly employ encouragements as a communicative act to support each other focusing on collective well-being. This fact was supported by Spencer-Oatey's (2000) and Eelen's (2001) who affirmed and highlighted that the speech act of encouragement serves to maintain and enhance positive social relationships, and it is inherently evaluated as supportive and polite act.

With reference to familiar social relation, Iraqi Arabs employed a smaller number of strategies compared to those used in encouraging close social distance interlocutors. They employed encouragement strategies in the third and fourth situations at the percentage of 10.39%, 11.97% sequentially, and 10.16%, 11.63% in the seventh and eighth situations respectively in encouraging an individual of lower and equal status and familiar social distance with the speaker. This finding indicates that in close relations (close friends, family), there is a deep emotional

investment and high trust, which encourage the high frequency of type and number of encouragement strategies. Thus, individuals anticipate ongoing emotional support, and encouragements are regarded natural expressions of strong social relationships, enhancing and saving the positive face of others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Conversely, in familiar relationships (colleagues, acquaintances), encouragement strategies were decreased. This may be according to the fact that Iraqi Arabs belong to high-context cultures (Hall, 1976) which rely on implicit comprehending; thereby support and appreciation are often comprehended without the need to use more repeated verbal expressions. Moreover, there is a tendency towards modesty, and excessive encouragements may be understood as flattery or exaggerated when the social relation is not close or deep. Therefore, they tended to reduce the overall number of encouragement strategies as a commitment to the general social etiquette, and to keep and maintain a certain distance with hearer (Fraser, 1990). This is paralleled to Brown and Levinson (1987) view of saving negative face of the hearer to maintain social distance and to avoid the imposition on the other person's face. Overall distribution of Iraqi Arabs' encouragement strategies is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Overall Distribution of Iraqi Arabs' Encouragement Strategies

Situations	Types & number of strategies (Iraqi Arabs)					
	Direct	100%	Indirect	100%	Total	100%
Situation 1	103	79.84	26	20.15	129	14.55
Situation 2	93	73.80	33	26.19	126	14.23
Situation 3	76	82.60	16	17.39	92	10.39
Situation 4	85	80.18	21	19.81	106	11.97
Situation 5	84	67.74	40	32.25	124	14.01
Situation 6	88	76.52	27	23.47	115	12.99
Situation 7	68	75.55	22	24.44	90	10.16
Situation 8	75	72.81	28	27.18	103	11.63
Total	672	75.93	213	24.07	885	100%

5.2 Encouraging Close and Familiar Lower-Status Interlocutors

The results in Table 4 demonstrated that Iraqi Arabs employed 129 strategies in the first situations distributed into 17 types when a father encouraged his son to (lower status-close distance) give up the idea of postponing the examination. The most dominant strategy was *praying* accounted for 15.50%, followed by *creating hope*, *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, *invoking the name of God*, *emphasizing the value of success/achievement*, and *showing trust in hearer's ability* at the percentage of 12.40%, 10.07%, 9.30%, 8.58%, 7.75% respectively. Other types of strategies such as *predicting bright prospect*, *swearing*, *cheering up*, *showing empathy and sympathy*, *proverbs and sayings*, *warning*, *blessing*, *reminding hearer's responsibility*, *well-wishing*, *being patient*, and *complimenting* were used at 6.20%, and less. In the second situations, the social status and social distance of interlocuters was the same as in Situation1; however, the context of encouragement is different as a grandfather encourages his grandson to overcome his illness i.e. chronic diabetes. The results indicated that Iraqi Aabs employed nearly similar number of strategies accounted for 126, but less types distributed into 14 ones. Iraqi Arabs sustained their tendency towards praying at the percentage of 18.25%, as it was the most prominent strategy in Situation 2. However, they varied their preference of other strategies as they *employed Quranic Verses and Hadith* at 16.66% as the second preferred strategy followed by *creating hope* at 15.87%, *showing empathy and sympathy* at 14.28%, *swearing* at 7.93%, *invoking the name of God* at 7.14 %, and *alleviating H's hard feelings* at 6.34%. *Well-wishing*, *giving advice*, *praising*, *showing trust in hearer's ability*, *reason/affirmation*, *being patient*, and *solidarity* were used at 3.17%, and less.

Regarding the third situations in which a lower-status interlocutor (postgraduate student) was encouraged by a familiar professor (higher status) to start a project as he was hesitated, Iraqi Arabs varied their preference towards encouragement strategies compared to the first and second situations. They reduced the number of

strategies compared to situation 1 and situation 2, as they used 92 strategies comprising 14 types. The results indicated that *giving advice* was the most favoured strategy among Iraqi Arabs used at the percentage of 17.39%, followed by *creating hope*, *emphasizing the value of success/achievement*, and *proverbs and sayings* at 16.30%, 9.78%, 8.89% sequentially. Strategies such as *reminding hearer's responsibility*, *predicting bright prospect*, *reason/affirmation*, *warning*, *commanding*, *stating facts*, *swearing*, *invoking the name of God*, *praying*, and *Quranic verses and Hadith* were used at 6.62%, and less. In the fourth situation when a boss (higher in status) encouraged an employee (lower in status) with familiar social relation to reconsider his decision to resign, the number and types of strategies is increased slightly in comparison with Situation 3, as they employed 106 distributed into 15 types. Iraqi Arabs maintained their tendency to use *giving advice* prominently at 13.20 % followed by *creating hope* at 12.26% as the prominent strategies as in Situation 3. However, the third preferred strategy was *showing trust in hearer's ability* at the percentage of 9.43%, followed by *commanding* and *suggesting things to do* at exact same percentage at 8.49%, *commendation* at 7.54%, *offering solutions* and *worrying* at exact similar rate of 6.60% and *stating facts* at 5.66%. *Quranic verses and Hadith*, *praying*, *praising*, *invoking the name of God*, *swearing*, and *reason/affirmation* at 4.71% and less. Significantly, some strategies involving *creating hope*, *offering solutions*, *Quranic verses and Hadith*, *emphasizing the value of success/achievement*, *commendation*, *proverbs and sayings*, *praying*, *praising*, *showing trust in hearer's ability*, *stating facts*, *solidarity*, *being patient*, *blessing*, *swearing*, and *invoking the name of God* employed by Iraqi Arabs when encouraging lower-status interlocutor with close and familiar social distance have not been included in Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) studies.

Table 4: Encouraging Lower-Status Interlocutor

Types of Strategies	Close distance				Familiar distance			
	S1		S2		S3		S4	
Direct								
Creating hope	16	12.40	20	15.87	15	16.30	13	12.26
Offering solutions	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6.60
Emphasizing the value of success/achievement	11	8.52	0	0	9	9.78	0	0
Commendation	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7.54
Complimenting	1	0.77	0	0	0	0	0	0
Showing empathy and sympathy	8	6.20	18	14.28	0	0	0	0
Praying	20	15.50	23	18.25	4	4.34	4	3.77
Commanding	0	0	0	0	5	5.43	9	8.49
Giving advice	0	0	4	3.17	16	17.39	14	13.20
Cheering up	5	3.87	0	0	0	0	0	0
Praising	0	0	1	0.79	0	0	4	3.77
Showing trust in hearer's ability	10	7.75	1	0.79	0	0	10	9.43
Reminding hearer's responsibility	4	3.10	0	0	6	6.52	0	0
Predicting bright prospect	3	2.32	0	0	6	6.52	0	0
Stating facts	0	0	0	0	5	5.43	6	5.66
Reason/affirmation	0	0	1	0.79	2	2.17	4	3.77
Being patient	3	2.32	4	3.17	0	0	0	00
Solidarity	0	0	2	1.58	0	0	0	0
Blessing	4	3.10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Invoking the name of God	12	9.30	9	7.14	4	4.43	2	1.88
Swearing	6	4.65	10	7.93	4	4.43	4	3.77
Indirect								
Alleviating H's hard feelings	0	0	8	6.34	0	0	0	0
Suggesting things to do	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8.49
Worrying	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6.60
Proverbs and sayings	6	4.65	0	0	8	8.89	0	0
Warning	4	3.10	0	0	5	5.43	0	0
Quranic Verses and Hadith	13	10.07	21	16.66	3	3.26	5	4.71
Well-wishing	3	2.32	4	3.17	0	0	0	0
Total	129	100	126	100	92	100	106	100

5.3 Encouraging Close and Familiar Equal-Status Interlocutors

The results in Table 5 demonstrate that Iraqi Arabs employed a total number of 124 strategies consisted of 16 types when someone encourages his friend to retract the decision to divorce. The social distance of the speaker and hearer are equal and the social distance are close. It is appeared that the participants employed similar number of strategies compared to Situation 1 and Situation 2 with slight difference. However, their preference of the specific strategies used was varied. *Reminding H's responsibility* was the most dominant strategy among Iraqi Arabs at the

percentage of 12.90%, followed by praying at 12.09%, *Quranic Verses and Hadith* and *creating hope* at exact same percentage of 9.67%, *warning* and *giving advice* at 8.87% and 6.45% respectively. *Praising, alleviating hearer's hard feelings, swearing, diminishing, invoking the name of God, solidarity, offering solution, proverbs and sayings, blessing, and showing empathy and sympathy* were used at 5.64% and less. In the sixth situation, when an interlocutor encouraging his friend to overcome the grief of his father's death, Iraqi Arabs employed 115 strategies involving 14 types. They sustained their sufficient use of reminding H's responsibility as the most preferred strategy as in Situation 5. However, their preference of other frequent strategies changed into *creating hope* as the second frequent strategy at a percentage of 13.91%, followed by *Quranic Verses and Hadith* at 11.30%, *showing empathy and sympathy* at 10.43%, praying at 9.56%, solidarity at 8.69%, and *alleviating hearer's hard feelings* at 7.82%. *Swearing, invoking the name of God, proverbs and sayings, praising, cheering up, blessing, and compliment* at 6.08%, and less.

In encouraging equal-status interlocutors with familiar relation, Iraqi Arabs reduced the number strategies and types compared to Situation 6 employing 90 strategies allocated into 12 types. In Situation 7, Iraqi Arabs as equal-status interlocutor encourages his former classmate (familiar social distance) to continue his higher studies. *Emphasizing the value of success/achievement* was the most favoured strategy at the percentage of 15.55%. Yet, they continue their prominent employment of *creating hope* as the second frequent strategy at 13.04%. *Warning* was the third preferred strategy at 11.11%, followed by *praying* at 10%, *giving advice* and *showing trust in H's ability* at the same exact percentage of 8.88%, and *ability to compensate* at 7.77%, *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, and *well-wishing* at quite same rate of 6.66%. Other strategies such as *complimenting, swearing, and solidarity* used at 5.55%, and less. In the eighth situation, when someone

encourages his co-worker (i.e., equal-status interlocutor with familiar social distance) to reconsider his decision to resign from his profession, Iraqi Arabs employed 103 strategies distributed into 13 types. *Creating hope* was the most employed encouragement strategy in the field of word context at 14.56%, followed by *showing empathy and sympathy* at 13.59%, *well-wishing* at 12.62%, *offering help or reward* at 9.70%, *praying* at 8.73%. *praising*, *alleviating hearer's hard feelings*, *reminding H's responsibility*, *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, *ability to compensate*, *suggesting things to do at*, and *swearing* at 6.79%, and less. Notably, in encouraging equal- status interlocutor with close and familiar social distance at the Situations 5, 6, 7, and 8, Iraqi Arabs employed some strategies such as *swearing*, *offering solutions*, *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, *ability to compensate*, *emphasizing the value of success/achievement*, *proverbs and sayings*, *praying*, *praising*, *showing trust in hearer's ability* , *solidarity*, *swearing*, and *blessing* as new strategies which were not appeared in Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) classification of encouragement strategies.

Table 5: Encouraging Equal-Status Interlocutor

Types of Strategies	Close distance				Familiar distance			
	S5	%	S6	%	S7	%	S8	%
Direct								
Creating hope	12	9.67	16	13.91	12	13.04	15	14.56
Offering solutions	4	3.22	0	0	0		0	0
Complimenting	0	0	1	0.86	2	2.22	0	0
Ability to compensate	0	0			7	7.77	4	3.88
Emphasizing the value of success/achievement	0	0	0	0	14	15.55	0	0
Offering help or reward	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	9.70
Showing empathy and sympathy	2	1.61	12	10.43	0	0	14	13.59
Praying	15	12.09	11	9.56	9	10	9	8.73
Giving advice	8	6.45	0	0	8	8.88	0	0
Cheering up			4	3.47	0	0	0	0
praising	9	7.25	1	0.86	0	0	7	6.79
Showing trust in H's ability	0	0	0	0	8	8.88	0	0
Reminding H's responsibility	16	12.90	17	14.70	0	0	6	5.82
Reason/affirmation	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7.76
Solidarity	6	4.88	10	8.69	5	5.55	0	0

Blessing	1	0.80	3	2.60	0	0	0	0
Invoking the name of God	5	4.03	7	6.08	0	0	0	0
Swearing	6	4.83	6	5.21	3	3.33	2	1.94
Indirect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Well-wishing	0	0	0	0	6	6.66	13	12.62
Quranic Verses and Hadith	13	9.67	13	11.30	6	6.66	5	4.85
Warning	11	8.87	0	0	10	11.11	0	0
Proverbs and sayings	3	2.41	5	4.34	0	0	0	0
Diminishing (Problem reduction)	6	4.83	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suggesting things to do	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2.91
Alleviating hearer's hard feelings	7	5.64	9	7.82	0	0	7	6.79
Total	124		115		90		103	

5.4. Focus Group Interview (FGI) Analysis

The data obtained from FGI group is analyzed qualitatively. The results from FGI showed that encouragement is seen as a common speech act that occurs in very-day life in various situations among Iraqi Arabs. Participants demonstrated that it is a persuasive, but complex speech act which cannot be understood from its literal meaning, but it depends on various social, cultural, contextual, and religious factors. The participants highlighted that encouragement complexity based on the fact that the effect and the value of encouragement is determined not only by verbal utterances of encouragement, but also by social status of speaker, the social distance of hearer, and in what circumstances it has to be used (the context of situations). The participants agreed that they care more for hearer's distance and status when giving encouragements. Consequently, their encouragement strategies are shaped and chosen in relation to these two social norms, and accordingly adapting their linguistic choices. This indicates that encouragement speech acts are not only seen as a face enhancing act but as an effective social act which influence social relations in Iraqi Arabic society. That is, caring for politeness rules and saving the interlocutor's face are of great importance among Iraqi Arabs when expressing encouragements. FGI P5 elaborated:

" In Iraqi Arabic society, encouragement is a fundamental and complex daily act. Its profound impact relies not just on the words themselves, but critically on who speaks and who listens, given its deep roots in our social, cultural, and religious frameworks. We therefore meticulously deliver moral support, ensuring it's appropriate and polite to avoid discomfort, thereby solidifying the very fabric of our social bonds"

Participants also illustrated that encouragements involve many functions within Iraqi Arabic society based on the contexts they are used in, thereby this speech act is considered a powerful means to boost morale, instill hope and self-confidence, build and strengthen social relations, and significantly to motivate individuals to achieve goals and overcome difficulties. They clarified that, for them, encouragement is mostly considered as an effective and desired speech act employed as crucial means to motivate individuals to achieve their dreams, progress, success, and to continue contribution. They contended that one of the most intended aims of using this linguistic act within Iraqi Arab society is to strengthen and reinforce social ties. That is, its importance and frequent co-occurrence among Iraqi Arabs stems from its role in developing and sustaining social relations by creating an atmosphere of mutual rapport and intimacy that enhance the solidarity of community. FGI P4 argued that:

"Encouragement is an intrinsically social act within Iraqi society, playing a crucial role in reinforcing social relations. Its widespread use stems from its tangible benefits: it empowers listeners with confidence and motivation, and is seen by Iraqi Arabs as a polite and desirable act, effectively solidifying communal bonds for both the speaker and the hearer."

Accordingly, Iraqi Arabs perceive encouragements speech act as a face enhancing act that motivate the hearer to perform a specific future action that serve the interests of the hearers or in agreement with speaker's positive expectations. Participants argued that in spite of their direct form, utterances such as "Continue your endeavor; you must exert greater effort to achieve success" or "Don't rush your decision to divorce" are perceived as polite speech acts when employed by someone who tries to encourage one of his friends to progress and succeed, and the other friend to reconsider his decision of divorce. Thus, the speakers' intentions were to serve the hearer's best interest, and to support them. In return, the hearers will not perceive and understand such utterances as direct commands. Instead; they regarded them as genuine encouragements in the form of suggestions and constructive motivation to achieve their benefits. That is, these utterances are understood as polite act as it is used for the hearer benefits, acknowledging his worth and affirming his self-esteem, consequently lessening any possible social distance, and sustaining solidarity. This is paralleled with Brown and Levinson's (1987) perspective that encouragement serves as a positive politeness strategy aiming to fulfill the desire of the recipient to be admired and liked. In other words, performing encouragement speech acts in a align with the hearer's need to feel deeply "cared for" and "desired". Participants maintained that when

individuals decide to encourage their friends or one of their relatives, they aimed to motivate the listeners to achieve success or overcome a challenge as well as seeking to strengthen their own relationship and interest with the recipients. This means that mutual consideration and interest lead to enhancing social relations benefitting both the speaker and the hearer. They explained that in performing requests or commands, the desire for autonomy of the recipient is threaten. Conversely, encouragements impose no coercion or obligation on the hearers' desire to be autonomous and unforced. This confirms with Leech's Politeness Principle (1983), in which encouragement speech act benefits the hearer as this speech act directly address the Approbation Maxim when providing positive reinforcement and praise, and satisfy the Tact Maxim when building confidence and offering emotional support, accordingly decreasing psychological burdens of the hearer such as anxiety or fear. Moreover, encouragement significantly is advantageous for the speakers as encouragements enhance and sustain their social bonds, thereby their own face-needs are fulfilled by appearing supportive and kind.

In general, FGI findings revealed that encouragement among Iraqi Arabs is related to and affected by some social and cultural factors. One of the most important factors was the context in which encouragement is performed. The participants stated that the situations, in which encouragements are commonly used, include illness, competitions, making crucial decisions, starting projects, work performance, overcoming hesitations and fears, developing skills, celebrating success, solving social problems, and facing hardships. Participants claimed that they varied their employment of encouragement strategies according to the specific context of these situations in interactions. To put it simply, encouragements strategies significantly affected by situational contexts. In addition, they explained that in facing an academic challenge, a professional reversal, a personal crisis, or an illness, some specific types of encouragement strategies are required more than others for each situation to make encouragements more effective and appropriate. That is, who suffer from an ill may need strategies of empathy and spiritual reassurance, or praying while students who prepare for their exams may need strategies such advice, creating hope, showing trust in their abilities as encouragement strategies. This finding is in line with findings of WDCT which revealed that participants varied their tendencies of strategies according to the contexts of encouragements.

The second important factors that may affect encouragement in everyday communication among Iraqi Arabs was social status. The participants confirmed that respect and authority that higher-status individuals such as teacher, manager, father, or an older person have may affect the

intention and weight of utterances employed in encouragements. For example, when a father encourages his son who prepared for an exam by saying "شِدْ حِيْلَكَ، أَعْرِفْكَ گَدَه" ("Be strong, I know you're capable"), he is not just providing support, but his encouragement may be understood by his son as an implicit motive to make a greater effort. That is, his encouragements include implicit expectations and guidance. They said that the hearer understand that this utterance is an encouragement, but at the same time, it reflects the fathers' trust in his son's ability which put a greater responsibility on him to make great effort. On the other hand, participants highlighted that when a peer encourages the same student encouraged by his father saying the exact same utterance "أَعْرِفْكَ گَدَه" ("I know you're capable"), this utterance may be understood by the hearer as explicit encouragement indicating a mutual understanding, empathy, and sense of camaraderie, thereby there is no implicit authoritative expectations are required behinds this utterance. Thus, though support is the main aim of encouragement, the level of social status among individuals are essential in specifying the most impactful and effective approach to express such support through that speech act within its specific cultural contexts. Additionally, the participants indicated that Iraqi Arabs preferred direct encouragement, and they are mostly used it in everyday interactions, particularly when the hearers are of lower and equal status. However, the participants ensured that direct encouragement is uncommon when the recipient of higher status indicating that it is more polite to use indirect encouragement, and they are may be misunderstood by the person of higher status as damaging the superior sense of dignity or exceeding their authority. The preference for direct encouragements by participants of FGI demonstrates consistency with the results obtained from WDCT which showed that Iraqi Arabs favoured direct strategies when encouraging individuals of lower and equal status.

Another important factor which shapes the strategies of performing and perceiving encouragements among Iraqi Arabs was the social distance. Participants claimed that the closer the social distance, the more emphatic, informal, and emotionally charged encouragements become among intimate friends or family members. They stated that when someone supports his brother who face a problem might employ collective and emotional utterances such as "أخوي، أَنَه "سندك، لا تخاف من شي، كلنه وياك نَگدر نحلها" ("My brother, I am your support, don't fear anything, we are all with you; we can solve it"), indicating emotional intimacy and solidarity. In contrast, encouragements are more task-oriented and formal among acquaintances or colleagues, concentrating on professional motivation and support. Someone may encourage his co-worker through direct commendation "تَقْتِي بجهودك كبيرة، أَعْرِفْكَ گَدَه هذا الشغل وراح تكمله على أحسن وجه" ("My

trust in your efforts is great; I know you are capable of this work and will complete it perfectly"). This demonstrates how the levels of social distance (close and familiar) determine the type of pragmatic strategies employed to make encouragements effective and appropriate in certain contexts. Regarding distant social distance, participants indicated that encouragements among stranger are rare in Iraqi Arabic society, and it has minimal effect on the hearer. They confirmed that without mutual trust and contextual understandings, some specific strategies of encouragements may be understood as exaggeration or flattery. They argue that the hearer may perceive the strangers' motives for encouragements as insincere; instead of being supportive utterances.

Moreover, the results revealed that encouragement within Iraqi Arabic society is significantly affected by *Islamic religion*. The participants indicated that there is a strong relation between Islamic principles and encouragement as Islam encourages people to maintain their social relations, increase intimacy and cooperation; and this speech act is one of the most common social acts that achieve these principles. Participants assured that Islam and its teachings are among the factors which support employing encouragement, and make it a desirable act within Iraqi Arabic society. In collective cultures, including Iraqi Arabs, values of benevolence, helping others, and mutual support are deeply emphasized through religious teachings solidifying the belief that offering moral support is part of faith and virtue. Therefore, religious instructions make encouragement as a continuous and positive social act that occur in everyday interactions among Iraqi Arabs. Accordingly, employing encouragements is not only a personal choice among Iraqi Arabs, but it is considered as an effective speech act that strengthens social relations and maintains their fabric. They added that principles of Islam which emphasize mutual support, patience, and creating hope relate encouragement to religious and spiritual belief. For example, Islamic religious utterances such as "إن شاء الله خير" (God willing, it will be good), "ربك ما ينساك" ("Allah is ever mindful of you."), "الله موجود" (God is present), "الله كريم" (God is Generous), "ربك" ("Your Lord will ease it") "توكل على الله" (Rely on God) are encouragement strategies widely employed in Iraqi Arabic and deeply in the collective consciousness. These strategies are used as powerful encouragements strategies in instilling reassurance and hope in the hearers' hearts. Moreover, *Quranic verses and Hadith* are mostly employed by Iraqi Arabs in various context as indirect encouragements. *Quranic verses and Hadith* when used as an indirect encouragement strategy achieve the illocutionary force of the speaker effectively. Further, direct strategies of encouragements such as praying (e.g., الله يقويك على كل شدة. May God strengthen you against all

hardship"), and swearing (e.g., *أقسم بالله، ما يضيع تعبك* I swear by God, your effort won't be wasted") are employed frequently among Iraqi Arabs in everyday encouragements. The participants highlighted that religious utterances have a spiritual and persuasive power when employed in encouragement, and significantly enhancing acceptance of support and suggestion by the hearers. They clarified that utterances which are religious in nature are mostly used in giving encouragements and they are highly valued in all contexts, regardless of social status and distance of interlocutors. This primary finding aligns with WDCT results as religious-based strategies were frequently utilized across all situations, irrespective of social relation (familiar or close) or social status (equal or lower). FGI P1 explained that:

"We consistently use religious expressions for encouragement due to their sacred, spiritual, and divine nature. Mostly we use strategies such as praying, invoking the name of God, and swearing as direct and impactful forms of encouragement. Others, such as Quranic verses and Hadith, serve as indirect encouragement. This frequent employment of religious utterance as direct or indirect encouragement reflects the importance of encouragement in Islam".

Importantly, the FGI results showed that Al-Muru'a ("المروءة") and Al-Nakhwa ("النخوة") were crucial factor which influence encouragement speech act in Iraqi Arabic contexts. The participants highlighted that encouragements are significantly shaped by these two Iraqi Arabic cultural values, as they are considered one of the most influential traditions that necessitate and motivate Iraqi Arabs to offer support to others, thereby giving encouragements is a social and moral obligation rather than mere personal choice. FGI P 6 claimed that:

"In our culture, *Nakhwa* and *Muru'a* are not mere theoretical concepts; rather, they are deeply rooted core values that strongly compel us to offer moral and verbal support. I feel it is my moral and social duty to encourage others; for a kind and motivating word is an integral part of this magnanimity that binds us as individuals and strengthens the ties of our community."

Finally, since factors such context, social status, social distance, Islamic teachings, social and cultural values are varied across cultures and societies, strategies of encouragement also differ. In other words, what are regraded effective or appropriate encouragements in one culture or society might be misunderstood and misinterpreted, or be less effective in another. Therefore, understanding how social and cultural norms shape strategies of encouragements is important to achieve effective and successful cross-cultural communication. For this reason, the present study doesn't base on the data gained from WDCT, but it extended to explore the social and cultural norms which influence the performance and perception of encouraging speech act.

6.Conclusion

The overall results of this study showed that Iraqi Arabs prefer directness when they give their encouragements rather than indirectness. Thus, encouragements are seen as face-enhancing or face-saving acts by Iraqi Arabs, and their tendency of directness may be because of their collective culture in which “social harmony has greater value than individual rights and independence” (Chojimah, 2015, p. 915”).

With reference to the specific strategies employed across the eighth situations, the results demonstrated that Iraqi Arabs varied their tendencies towards strategies in performing encouragement act according to the social status, social distance, and contexts of situations. They preferred to use *praying* as the most prominent strategy in encouraging close lower-status interlocutor in the first and second situations. However, they change their style of encouragement regarding the other strategies. They employed *creating hope* as the second preferred strategy followed by *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, and *invoking the name of God* in Situation 1, while *Quranic Verses and Hadith* was the second favoured ones followed by *creating hope* and *showing empathy and sympathy* in Situation 2. In encouraging familiar lower-status interlocutor, they changed their tendency as they employed *giving advice* and *creating hope* as the most prominent strategies in the third and fourth situations. They also varied their use of other strategies employed in these two situations as they used *emphasizing the value of success/achievement* followed by *proverbs and sayings* in Situation 3, and *showing trust in H's ability* followed by *commanding, and commendation, offering solutions, and worrying* in Situation 4.

Regarding, the close equal status situations, *reminding H's responsibility* was the dominant in Situation 5 and 6. Thus, their preferences were changed regarding the other strategies as they favoured *praying*, as the second frequent strategy followed by *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, and *creating hope* in Situation 5, while in Situation 6, the second preferred strategy was *creating hope* followed by *Quranic Verses and Hadith*, and *showing empathy and sympathy*. In encouraging familiar equal-status person, Iraqi Arabs' tendency was different from all previous situations as they employed *emphasizing the value of success/achievement* followed by *creating hope, warning* as the prominent strategies in Situation 7, whereas *creating hope* followed by *showing empathy and sympathy, well-wishing, and offering help or reward* as the most frequent ones in Situation 8.

Importantly, some strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs when encouraging lower and equal status interlocutors with close and familiar social distance including *creating hope, offering solutions, Quranic verses and Hadith, emphasizing the value of success/achievement, commendation, proverbs and sayings, praying, praising, showing trust in hearer's ability, stating facts, solidarity, being patient, blessing, invoking the name of God, ability to compensate, praying, and swearing* were new ones which had not been included in Van's (2011) and Jung's (2010) studies. Additionally, *calming* which appeared in Jung's (2010) classification of strategies had not used in this study.

With reference to the findings of FGI, Iraqi Arabs viewed encouragement as a face-saving or face-enhancing speech act. That is, it saves both the speaker's and the hearer's positive and negative face. The findings showed that they preferred direct strategies when they express their encouragements more than indirect ones in relation to lower and equal status and close and familiar distance across different contexts. Thus, this supports the findings of WDCT which showed that Iraqi Arabs' preference of direct encouragements. Moreover, the findings indicated that context, social status, social distance, Islamic teachings, social and cultural values such Al-Muru'a ("المروءة") and Al-Nakhwa ("النخوة") are the most important factors which affect Iraqi Arabs' performance and perception of encouraging speech acts. This also supports the results gained from WDCT which demonstrated that Iraqi Arabs varied their tendencies of encouragement strategies according to the social status and social distance between the speaker and the hearer, and the contexts in which encouragements were used.

7. Limitations, Suggestions, and Pedagogical Implications

It is important to indicate that every study has some limitations, and stating these limitations clearly will pave the way for future studies. This study is limited to encouragement speech act in Iraqi Arabic dialect. However, there are many other speech acts, which used commonly among Iraqi Arabs, are expressed through different linguistic patterns from those of encouragements. Moreover, this study is restricted to the population of one region, male gender, specific academic field and level, and age ranged from 22 to 23. Consequently, generatability of the findings of this study is confined only to these included variables. Therefore, to provide a broader understanding of the communicative and linguistic patterns in Iraqi Arabic dialect when performing encouraging speech act, it is proposed to examine encouragements employed by people from different regions in Iraq, in different contexts, with different age, and by female gender.

Similarly, this study limited to focus FGI and WDCT instruments in collecting data. While these two instruments are appropriate to illicit subtle understandings and appropriate linguistic patterns, they may not fully provide authentic, genuine, natural, and spontaneous interactions. For this reason, future studies should triangulate natural data-collection instruments by integrating more naturalistic data collection such as video/audio recorded real-life situations and ethnographic observation. It is hoped that the present study will contribute in minimizing or avoiding any potential misunderstanding in cross-cultural interaction, specifically between individuals from other cultures and Iraqi Arabs. It also aims to develop the pragmatic competence of foreign language learners of Arabic to avoid misinterpretation when they express their encouragements in Iraqi Arabic dialect.

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Appendix 1

Modified Categorization of Encouragement Strategies Proposed by Van (2011) and Jung's (2010)

Types of Strategies	Examples (Iraqi Arabic Dialect)	English Translation
Well-wishing	"أتمنالك كل التوفيق والنجاح"	"I wish you all the best and success."
Creating hope	"الأمّل موجود، تكدر تكمل المراجعة، "عندك وقت، شد حيلك"	"Hope is there! You can finish reviewing; you have time, give it your all!"
Offering solutions	"خلي نفكر بمشاريع صغيرة تكسر "الروتين"	"Let's think about small projects that could break the routine."
Quranic Verses and Hadith	"تذكر قوله تعالى: (فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا) ، إن شاء الله خير"	"Remember Allah's saying: 'For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.' God willing, it will be good."
Calming	"على كيفك، اهدأ وفكر بهدوء قبل "كلشي"	"Take it easy, calm down and think calmly before anything."
Ability to compensate	"أدري بيك مقهور، بس الوقت كدامك، "وراح تعوضها بفرصة أحسن"	"I know you're upset, but time is on your side, and you'll compensate for it with a much better opportunity."
Emphasizing the value of success	"الفرحة اللي تحس بيها من تخلص "الدراسة، تسوى كل التردد"	"The joy you'll feel when you finish your studies is worth all the hesitation."
Commendation	"إنجازاتك السابقة بالدراسة تخلي الكل "يشهدلك"	"Your past academic achievements make everyone testify to you."
Offering help or reward	"إلك مكافأة إضافية نهاية السنة إذا "بقيت"	"You'll get an additional bonus at the end of the year if you stay."
Warning	"فكر بجهاك، الطلاق راح يدمر "حياتهم"	"Think about your children; divorce will destroy their lives."
Complimenting	"أنت ذكي وعندك كل الإمكانيات، لا "تشك بنفسك"	"You're smart and have all the capabilities; don't doubt yourself."
Showing empathy and sympathy	"حاس بيك كلش، العلاج مو سهل، بس "أنت أقوى"	"I really feel for you; the treatment isn't easy, but you're stronger."
Proverbs and sayings	"مثل ما يگولون: 'الصبر مفتاح "الفرج'. لازم ما تستسلم"	"As they say: 'Patience is the key to relief.' You must not give up."
Praying	"أسأل الله يوفقك ويسهل أمرك، "ويكتبلك كل الخير"	"I ask God to grant you success, ease your affairs, and ordain for you all the good."
Commanding	"لا تستعجل، اگعد وفكر بعمق"	"Don't rush, sit down and think deeply."
Giving advice	"نصيحتي لك: ابدأ بخطوات صغيرة"	"My advice to you: Start with small steps."
Cheering up	"يا معود، لتبقى هيچ! كوم نطلع نكسر "الروتين"	"Hey buddy, don't stay like this! Come on, let's go out and break the routine."
Praising	"أنت معروف بذكائك، وكل مشروع "كملتة بأحسن وجه. متأكد راح تبدع "بيبه"	"You are known for your intelligence, and every project you've completed flawlessly. I'm confident you'll excel in this one!"
Showing trust in hearer's ability	"أنا واثق مليون بالمية راح تنجح "وتتفوق"	"I'm 100% confident you'll succeed and excel."
Reminding hearer's responsibility	"أطفالك أمانة بر گبتك، مستقبلهم يعتمد "على قرارك"	"Your children are a trust upon your shoulders, and their future depends on your decision."
Worrying	"والله بالي يمك كلش، مو كافي "هالحن، قلقان عليك"	"Honestly, I'm really worried about you; this sadness is too much, I'm concerned."
Predicting bright	"تخيل مشروعك يكبر ويصير حلم"	"Imagine your project growing and becoming a real

Types of Strategies	Examples (Iraqi Arabic Dialect)	English Translation
prospect	"حقيقي"	dream."
Stating facts	"هاي المادة مو أصعب مادة، ودرجاتك "السابقة جانت زينة"	"This isn't the hardest subject, and your previous grades were good."
Reason/affirmation	"لا تخاف، ترى أنت شاطر وفاهمه " زين، ودليل هذا درجاتك بيه جانت زينة"	"Don't worry, you're truly intelligent and understand it well. Your excellent grades in it previously are proof of that."
Suggesting things to do	"شرايك نغعد سوا وأشرحك النقاط "الصعبة؟"	"How about we sit together and I explain the difficult points to you?"
Being patient	"بس أصبر شوية، وإن شاء الله كل شي "يتغير للأحسن"	"Just be patient a little, and God willing, everything will change for the better."
Solidarity	"أني وياك بكل خطوة، لا تفكر إنك "وحدك"	"I'm with you every step of the way; don't think you're alone."
Alleviating H's hard feelings	"إنسى الإحباط مال البارحة، اليوم "نبش صفحة جديدة"	"Forget yesterday's frustration; today we start a new page."
Blessing	"إن شاء الله كل خطوة تخطيها بحياتك "تكون بركة"	"God willing, every step you take in life will be a blessing."
Swearing	"والله العظيم، تگذرله !"	"By God Almighty, you can do it!"

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