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### A Pragmatic Analysis of Iraqi Proverbs: Mosuli Proverbs as a Case Study

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#### Abstract

Proverbs represent a cultural and social record of the community of every nation, and they reveal how they utilize their environment as a source to enrich their language. Also, they can influence the thoughts and actions of the hearers. This research attempts to explore the pragmatic meaning of selected Mosuli proverbs. It also aims to examine how the pragmatic functions of Mosuli proverbs are used to achieve specific purposes like describing, complaining, stating, boasting, advising, warning, loving, excusing, deplored, and blaming. The present study is qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is based on Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory. The data is collected spontaneously from everyday stereotype interactions in the Mosuli Arabic speech community. The findings of this study have proved that representatives and directives are the most frequent types of illocutionary speech acts. The main pragmatic functions used are describing, complaining, and advising, which are utilized to express wisdom and reflect its linguistic eloquence feature.

**Keywords:** illocutionary acts, Mosuli proverbs, pragmatics, speech act theory.

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## التحليل التداولي للأمثال العراقية: الأمثال الموصلية انموذجا

زينب قصي العربي

كلية علوم الحاسوب والرياضيات/ جامعة الموصل

### المستخلص

تمثل الأمثال سجلاً ثقافياً واجتماعياً للمجتمع، تكشف عن كيفية استخدام بيئتها كمصدر لإثراء لغتها. كما يمكنها التأثير على أفكار وأفعال مستمعيها. طبيعة الدراسة نوعية وكمية. تحاول استكشاف المعنى التداولي للأمثال الموصلية المختارة. وتهدف إلى دراسة كيفية استعمال الوظائف التداولية للأمثال الموصلية لتحقيق أغراض محددة كالوصف، الشكوى، التفاخر، النصائح، التحذير، التعبير عن المحبة، الاعذار، الاستكفار، واللوم. يستند تحليل هذه الدراسة على نظرية فعل الكلام لسيرل (1969). تم جمع البيانات من أكثر الأمثال الموصلية المتناولة في المجتمع العربي الموصلي. أثبتت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن أفعال التمثيل والتوجيه هي أكثر أنواع أفعال مؤدي الكلام شيوعاً. وإن الوظائف التداولية الرئيسية المستخدمة هي الوصف، الشكوى والنصائح الذي يعبر عن الحكمة، وتعكس سمة البلاغة اللغوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأمثال الموصلية، علم اللغة التداولي، نظرية أفعال الكلام، أفعال مؤدي الكلام

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the most significant languages since it is rich in folks' proverbs. It is a treasury of communities' thoughts and experiences, passed down from generation to generation. Proverbs also have their own seat at the heart of pragmatics. It is used explicitly or implicitly for many purposes like wisdom, advice, sarcasm, or humor.

Speech act theory is concerned with locutionary acts, illocutionary forces, and perlocutionary effects of speakers' speech directly and indirectly. Pragmatically speaking, proverbs are more than just words that convey their literary meaning; they are actions that have potential meaning that have a great influence on the listeners. Hence, they are powerful linguistic tools that are roughly embedded in the various cultures and deeply impact the behaviors of communities indirectly. Based on the above-mentioned importance of folk proverbs and the features they carry, the research analyzes the speech act of Iraqi Mosul Proverbs (henceforth IMPs), for they represent many purposes such as describing, complaining, stating, boasting, advising, warning, loving, excusing, deplored, and blaming. Reflecting the norms and values of Mosul's citizens.

Proverbs are the best linguistic tools to understand the nature of any community's thoughts, beliefs, and culture. IMPs have distinctive characteristics due to the geographical, historical, and linguistic advantages that Mosul city has and distinguish it from the rest of the Iraqi governorates. The main problem addressed in this study is that IMPs not only convey just literal meanings of their lexis but also embedded meanings, carry pragmatical functions that may not immediately appear to listeners. Hence, the study's main objective is to identify the illocutionary acts of IMPs and uncover their pragmatical functions, which typically involve acts of complaint, warning, description, promise, or advice, by examining the speech acts embedded within IMPs. It aims to clarify IMPs used by the Mosuli community. Identify the types of illocutionary speech acts of Iraqi Mosuli proverbs. Find out the functions of IMPs acts.

The study tries to answer the questions: What are the main illocutionary acts of IMPs? What are the main functions of the proverbs' acts under discussion?

It is hypothesized that representatives and directives, consequently, are the most frequent types of illocutionary speech acts. The most pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts are advising, describing, and complaining.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In a broad sense, proverbs are a mirror of any society's culture. They are regarded as the most complex category among phraseological units since they are ready-made textual components and self-contained communicative units. Another reason for its importance is that proverbs are distinguished, in nature, from other verbal and adjectival referential phrases of the collocational type. Also, they are representative of different social attitudes and cultural patterns, Aleš Klégr (2013:3).

Although too much literature has been written about proverbs, it is challenging to define them. Ruth Finnegan (1970:393) defines Proverbs as "a saying in more or less fixed form, marked by 'shortness, sense, and salt' and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.". Kerschen (1998:3) states, "A proverb is a short, homely statement that teaches a lesson or gives practical advice." In the same sense, proverbs are considered the heritage of any nation, (Attia,2004:3). According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005: sv proverb), the word proverb means "a well-known phrase or sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true." Since they reflect the accumulated experiences of the community speech. Proverbs usually have specific functions that make them distinct from other expressions for many generations. Manser (2007: IX) states, "A proverb is a saying, usually short, that expresses a general truth about life. Proverbs give advice, make an observation, or present a teaching in a succinct and memorable way". Thus, they include great wisdom. Generally speaking, proverbs are regarded as a common saying that holds the sense of advice, warning, or even sarcasm. not necessarily convey direct meaning, they often carry intended meaning, making it unique.

Folk proverbs are an inexhaustible resource. They convey the summary of the community's experiences, and life practices, becoming a collective product passed down by people. Iraqi Mosuli dialect, for which the city of Mosul is famous, is the dialect of people in Mosul City, north of Iraq.

There is a distinct function that each dialect fulfils within the overall linguistic landscape of the country. The Iraqi Mosuli dialect is not a standard dialect, when certain rules apply

regarding the replacement of some letters with others from the original in which they are placed, for example, the letter (ر) /r/ to (خ). It is worth noting that this feature is what most distinguishes the Iraqi Mosuli dialect from the rest of the Iraqi dialects and even Arabic in general, AL-Ghulami (1964:6).

IMPs are distinguished by the fact that they are said exclusively in the Mosuli dialect, Hazem and Mohammed (2021). They have an impact on people's lives, because of the meanings and values it carries. These proverbs are distinguished by the beauty of their wording and pronunciation and take one back to the beautiful past and the rare and beloved Mosul dialect.

Each part of the city has its proverbs according to the dialects and customs of its residents. Even the Christians of the city have their proverbs. In addition, Mosuli people may use proverbs from a language other than their language, for example, Turkish, Persian, and Kurdish, AL-Ghulami (1964:6).

According to the speech act, this term is commonly used to describe a theory that examines the role of utterance concerning the hearer and speaker's behaviors through communication. The theory of speech act was primarily inspired by Austin (1962) in his book *How to Do Things with Words*, which presents a new approach to analyzing the meaning of utterance. He argues that language should be viewed as a social rather than a scientific tool. Furthermore, He introduces three distinct acts that occur in our daily speaking.

- **Locutionary act** is defined as the actual word and the literal meaning of speech, it is a communicative activity regarding the speaker's intention.
- **Illocutionary act** refers to the impact of locutionary act and the speaker's intention. It is the effect the speaker achieves on the listener.
- **Perlocutionary act** is the effect on their utterances and the effect the speaker has on the listener. That is the effect of the utterance on the thoughts.

For example, would you like a cup of tea?

The locutionary act is the actual utterance "Would you like a cup of tea?" While the illocutionary force is offered, and the perlocutionary speech acts is the effect of utterance on the addressee, which is to make him feel welcome, Ferrar (1993:35).

The illocutionary act is the most interesting among other speech acts. Many linguists try to identify the various types of illocutionary acts. Moreover, each type has specific pragmatic functions such as promise, order, stating, expressing feelings, and declaring, Suryanti (2020:16). Searls's (1979) studies are regarded as the most prominent among others and have aroused the interest of many linguists and researchers. He classifieds illocutionary acts into five categories as the following:

#### **a-Representative Speech Acts**

According to Searle (1969), The speaker is committing to express a statement of fact or point of view. There are various types of this type, such as describing, asserting, stating, explaining, boasting, assuring, swearing, agreeing, insisting, suggesting, believing, predicting, complaining, concluding, claiming, directive, and reporting Ferrar (1993:11). Christison (2018) claims that a representative usually refers to what the speaker's belief is true. therefore, it occurs as a description, conclusion, question, or statement of fact. In sum, the speaker's speech or opinion is based on his observation. e.g., You'll pass the exam; I just know it! (Believing)

### **b-Directive Speech Acts**

The speaker attempts to make the hearer do something, such as advice, order, request, recommend, command, or beg. Della and Sembiring (2018) claim that directives are used to gain attention from the hearer.

e.g., Make a cup of coffee.

### **c-Commissive Speech Acts**

Commit the speaker to some future course of action, Searle (1969). Put simply, it refers to the act of conveying a message to the hearer, which may involve expressing a specific idea or intention, such as a promise, swear, or offer. in advertisements

e.g., I will make a cup of coffee.

Syafitri, S., & Usman (2019) state that commissive is found a lot in advertisements since it heavily contains various kinds of promises.

### **d- Expressive Speech Acts**

The speaker expresses his/her psychological feelings with intention, such as congratulating, thanking, blaming, or praising. Emotionally triggered utterances—such as spontaneous expressions of delight, annoyance, or surprise—are categorized as expressive speech acts. These phrases or sentences directly convey the speaker's emotional state, serving as immediate reactions to events or stimuli Ahmed (2022).

Based on Christison (2018), this act is used to signal an utterer's emotions or attitude to the hearer.

e.g. I'm sorry for what I said when I was angry.

### **e- Declarative Speech Acts**

According to Searle (1976), the speaker's utterance can change the hearer, reality, or even the world. It is saying something to make it so and the immediate change in the institutional state. The classes of this act as declare, name, resign, sentence, or appoint, Ratnasari & Edel (2017).

e.g. I pronounce you man and wife.

The illocutionary act can be performed directly and indirectly. In the direct speech act, the speaker literally means what he uttered.

e.g., The weather is warm.

There is an assertion that the weather was warm. While in the indirect speech act, there is an intended meaning behind what the speaker says. He "means what he says, but also means something more." Searle (1979:30)

e.g., I want you to close the widow.

The present example is a statement, but the indirect illocutionary force is a request.

According to proverbs, it is regarded as the best form of the indirect speech act. One type of speech act is threat, it is exemplifying the fluidity of speech acts, operating as both commissive (binding the speaker) and directive (influencing the hearer) Aziz (2023). Since proverbs as a metaphorical language and express folk wisdom, it is heavily dependent on the cultural values, thoughts, and beliefs of its societies.

## **3. THE METHODOLOGY**

The data was collected randomly from most Iraqi Mosuli proverbs known and used in Mosul community, from AL-Ghulam's book *The Most Popular Colloquial Mosuli*

*Proverbs*, AL-Ghulam (1964). The researcher adopted a quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative analysis was to conduct a deeper analysis of the pragmatic functions of Iraqi Mosuli proverbs. The quantitative approach was employed to determine the number of illocutionary speech acts used and to specify which types are the most frequently used. The researcher calculated the types of Illocutionary acts along with their functions. This analysis was based on Searle's speech act theory, classifying illocutionary acts in addition to the function of each subclassification. Then, the discussion and conclusion of the study will be made.

#### **4. THE MODEL**

Searle's (1969) model has been adopted for this study since it provides an appropriate framework for analyzing the pragmatic function of IMPs. Searle's method identifies five types of illocutionary speech acts: representatives, expressive, directives, commissive, and declarations. Representatives express a speaker's beliefs, including describing, which is used to describe persons or specific things, complaining about negative issues, and stating statements of facts, while boasting, is usually about showing off. The directive speech acts are the speaker's attempt to make the hearer do something, like order or advise him. Commissive speech acts is used when the utterance regarding the future, such warning. Expressive speech acts, expressing the speaker's feelings like loving, hating, excusing, deplored, or blaming. Declarations change the world through their utterances.

#### **5. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data will be analysed pragmatically following Sereal's model (1969). The aim is to analyze these proverbs to determine their pragmatic functions.

The results reveal the occurrence of the four speech acts of Searle (1976) in 50 IMPs are selected among the most popular and common proverbs in Mosuli society and documented in AL-Ghulam's book (1964) of Mosuli proverbs. These selected proverbs deal with different topics in daily life to fulfill different pragmatic functions. These pragmatic functions will be discussed as the following:

Four types of speech acts occurred in 50 IMPs: Representative, directive, commissive, and expressive. It is worth mentioning that each IMP in the data collected may carry more than one classification of illocutionary acts. Since the intended meaning of proverbs depends on the situation. The researcher depends on the most common interpretation of each proverb, regardless of the context.

The researcher adapts quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data. Based on Searle's (1969) speech act theory, the study attempts to examine the applicability of Searle's model to the IMPs and find out the occurrence of these types in it.

Representative speech acts make 38 IMPs fulfill four pragmatic functions: describing, complaining, stating, and boasting. While the directive occurs in 12 IMPs for one pragmatical, namely advising. Moreover, commissive repeats three times to describe the warning. Also, expressive occurs in 6 IMPs described the three subcategories: loving, excusing, and deplored. The 50 IMPs, with their pragmatic functions, will be discussed in detail below:

Table (1) Proverbs' Illocutionary Functions

seq.	Illocutionary Speech acts	Functions	Total
1	Representatives	Describing	17
		Complaining	14
		Stating	5
		Boasting	2
2	Directives	Advising	12
3	Commissives	Warning	3
4	Expressives	Loving	2
		Excusing	1
		Deploring	2
		Blaming	1
5	Declarations	--	0

### 1 – Representative speech acts:

There are 38 occurrences of IMPs performing representative speech acts, which serve several pragmatic functions like describing, complaining, stating, and boasting. As follows:

#### a- Describing:

Describing represents the highest number among the other pragmatic functions, it is repeated 17 times in the data.

Ex. Proverb No. 5

يَتَقَعُ قَبْلَ الْمَطَعَنِ -

- *He gets wet before the rain.*

The intended meaning of *wet* (مطاعن) is affecting and *rain* (ياتقون) is events. Hence, this proverb is used to describe people who are affected by events before they occur.

#### b-Complaining:

The pragmatic functions of complaining appear 14 times in the data.

Ex. Proverb No. 19

يَطَلُعُ مِنْ نَفْعًا يَقْعُ بِدَحْيَةٍ -

- *He goes out of a hole and falls into a hollow.*

In the present proverb, the literal meaning of the word (نفعا) is a hole, (يطلع من نفعا) *He goes out of a hole*) means getting out of one problem, (يقع بدحية) (*falls into a hollow*) means finding himself falling into the worst. This proverb is said to someone who has bad luck. Meaning he falls into successive problems or misfortunes. There is an English proverb (out of the frying pan into the fire) that has a similar meaning: the pragmatic meaning is that he goes from bad to worse.

#### c- Stating:

This type appeared 5 times in all the data. It can be described as a statement of fact or something. As the following:

Ex. Proverb No. 13

- انكندخ الدست افالو قبغ.

- *The pot rolled and threw off its lid.*

The proverb states the fact that a person meets a person with the same characteristics, behaviors, and nature. This proverb is equivalent in meaning to the English proverb, "Birds of a feather flock together." Usually, this proverb is used sarcastically.

#### d- Boasting:

Boasting occurs twice in all data. It is someone's excessive pride in his possessions and achievements.

Ex. Proverb No. 33

- القفعا تتباهى بشغ اختا الطويل

- *Bald girl shows off her sister's long hair.*

It is a proverb, used sarcastically to describe a person who shows up about things doesn't have or actions he doesn't do.

### 2 - Directive speech acts:

Directives is the speaker's intention to the hearer to do something. In the examined data, it is found that only advising functions.

#### Advising:

This function has occurred 12 times in the data. As long as proverbs present wisdom, it is not strange to find this pragmatic function is frequented a lot.

Ex. Proverb No. 38

- اعطي الخبز لخبازو حتى لو اكل نصو.

- *Let the bakery make the bread even if he eats half of it.*

This IMP means putting the right person in the right place. It explains that whoever undertakes any work that is not part of his profession, will not perform it perfectly.

### 3 - Commissive speech acts:

Commissive speech acts whose function has occurred three times in the examined data.

#### Warning:

The warning is the only pragmatic function concerning the commissive speech act. It is found twice in the data. It is used to warn someone about something. As the following proverb:

Ex. Proverb No. 50

- افالكي يا كنتي اسمعي يا جارتى.

- *I talk to my daughter-in-law, listen, my neighbor.*

What distinguishes IMPs is that they deal with social life, especially the relationship between the wife and her mother-in-law, or marriage. In the present proverb, when the speaker indirectly addresses a person by speaking to a third party, the addressed person is expected to understand that the intended meaning is directed to the daughter-in-law. The

husband's mother is talking to her neighbor, but she is referring to her daughter-in-law in the conversation, as a warning to her that something is wrong. In many Arab countries, there are some proverbs with this meaning, this reflects the convergence of heritage, cultures, and customs among Arab countries.

#### 4 - Expressive speech acts:

Expressive, in general, expresses the speaker's emotions. This type of speech acts has been found four times in different classifications: loving, excusing, deplored, and blaming. As follows

##### a- Loving:

Loving is seen twice in the data examination. As the following example:

Ex. Proverb No. 46

من حبك لا شاك ومن بغضك فات وخلاك .

- *He Who loves you always provokes you and he who hates you abandons you.*

One of the ways to express love for someone is by teasing him or making him angry by behavior or the like.

##### b- Excusing:

The excusing pragmatic function is found once in the data. As the following example:

Ex. Proverb No. 16

الما يعفف بيرقص يقول الا غضب عوجا .

- *He who does not know how to dance says the floor is tilted.*

The implied meaning of this proverb, *a person who fails to perform his task will try to justify failure*

It means that the person who does not know how to dance makes up an excuse and says that the ground is unsuitable for dancing. This IMP applies to someone who fails to complete something and tries to admit failure. Hence, he creates arguments and excuses to justify his failure.

##### c- Deplored:

It is found twice in the data examined, as the following:

Ex. Proverb No. 35

تساوت الفجعا وام الشعع .

- *The bald woman and the woman with hair are equal.*

This proverb expresses denouncement of unfairness. It is said in a situation where there is inequality in treating people who are doing the best in their work and those who don't.

##### Blaming:

Another pragmatic function of expressive is blaming. It has appeared once in all the data. As in the proverb below:

Ex. Proverb No. 48

عفاكي عفاكي على الفند اللي عمانينو .

- *Good for you, Good for you for your tactic.*

This proverb is related to a real story and speaks in the voice of the groom's mother, she sees her son's interest shift to his bride.

The present proverb involves the implicit meaning, the phrase (عَنْكَي / *Good for you*), includes a kind of rebuke. While "الفَدَ," is "the tactic" the plan that the bride devised to take her beloved son from her. It is as if she blames her harshly and says: What an elaborate plan you made and take my son away from me, whom I raised, and then you came and took him away from me. Usually, this proverb is said to a woman who mastered cunning and has caused someone to fall into trouble or something not expected.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The study found the following:

- 1- Iraqi Mosul proverbs align with Sereal's speech acts (representatives, commissives, directives, expressives). These IMPs encompass ten pragmatics functions: representatives (describing, complaining, stating, boasting), commissives (warning), directives (advising), and expressives (loving, excusing, deplored, and blaming).
- 2- The dominance of representatives and directives. Representatives align with the nature of IMPs as a tool for conveying truths and social norms. Directives reflect the moralization role of IMPs and their effective roles in shaping behavior and offering advice consistent with their cultural and pedagogical purposes.
- 3- The commissive focuses on observations rather than personal pledges.
- 4- IMPs are linguistic devices; the speaker uses them for a specific pragmatic function. These functions are different according to situations and contextual factors.
- 5- IMPs are loaded with directive and indirective speech acts, they convey embedded meaning through the precision of expression, the accuracy of meaning, and the brevity of expression, and this is what makes them distinct from other proverbs.

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