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Pragmatic Functions of Illocutionary Speech Acts Digital Arabic-Language Debates

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts in digital Arabic-language debates, focusing on the final round of the 7th International Universities Arabic Debating Championship organized by QatarDebate and published on YouTube. The study aims to identify and describe the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts in constructing arguments, expressing disagreement, and maintaining communicative interactions. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using documentation, observation, and note-taking techniques. The data consisted of 65 utterance units analyzed using Searle's speech act theory and Leech's classification of pragmatic functions. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while theoretical triangulation was used to support the validity of the findings. The results identified four pragmatic functions: collaborative (60.0%), conflictive (18.5%), competitive (13.8%), and convivial (7.7%). The dominance of collaborative functions indicates that speakers frequently employ informative statements and explanations to construct arguments and establish shared understanding with audiences. Meanwhile, conflictive and competitive functions reflect strategies for expressing opposition and challenging arguments, whereas convivial functions contribute to maintaining politeness during debate interactions. These findings highlight the importance of contextual interpretation in understanding illocutionary speech acts and provide insights into pragmatic communication strategies in Arabic-language debates.

Keywords: pragmatic functions, illocutionary speech acts, digital, Arabic language debates

Fungsi Pragmatik Tindak Tutur Ilokusi dalam Debat Bahasa Arab Digital

ABSTRAK
Penelitian ini mengkaji fungsi pragmatik tindak tutur ilokusi dalam debat bahasa Arab digital dengan fokus pada babak final Kejuaraan Debat Bahasa Arab Antaruniversitas Internasional ke-7 yang diselenggarakan oleh QatarDebate dan dipublikasikan melalui YouTube. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan fungsi pragmatik tindak tutur ilokusi dalam membangun argumentasi, menyampaikan pertentangan, serta mempertahankan interaksi komunikasi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik dokumentasi, observasi, dan pencatatan. Data penelitian terdiri atas 65 unit tuturan yang dianalisis menggunakan teori tindak tutur Searle dan klasifikasi fungsi pragmatik Leech. Analisis data mengikuti model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, sedangkan keabsahan data didukung melalui triangulasi teori. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat fungsi pragmatik, yaitu kolaboratif (60,0%), konfliktif (18,5%), kompetitif (13,8%), dan konvival (7,7%). Dominasi fungsi kolaboratif menunjukkan bahwa peserta debat lebih sering menggunakan pernyataan informatif dan penjelasan untuk membangun argumentasi serta menciptakan pemahaman bersama dengan audiens. Sementara itu, fungsi konfliktif dan kompetitif mencerminkan strategi dalam menyampaikan pertentangan dan menyanggah argumen, sedangkan fungsi konvival berperan dalam menjaga kesantunan selama interaksi debat. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya interpretasi kontekstual dalam memahami tindak tutur ilokusi serta memberikan wawasan mengenai strategi komunikasi pragmatik dalam debat bahasa Arab.

Kata kunci: fungsi pragmatik, tindak tutur ilokusi, debat bahasa Arab, digital

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as an instrument of social interaction through which speakers express intentions, attitudes, and communicative purposes. From a pragmatic perspective, language is understood as a form of social action whose meaning depends on the context in which it is used. Speakers employ utterances to communicate information, express opinions, influence others, and establish relationships within particular communicative situations. Levinson (1983) explains that pragmatics examines the relationship between language and context, while Yule (1996) emphasizes the importance of interpreting speakers' intended meanings beyond the literal meaning of their expressions. These perspectives indicate that understanding language requires attention to linguistic forms, communicative intentions, and the social contexts surrounding an interaction.

One important aspect of pragmatics is the study of speech acts, particularly illocutionary speech acts, which concern the communicative actions performed through utterances. Searle (1969) explains that speakers perform particular actions when producing utterances, such as stating, requesting, promising, or expressing attitudes. Furthermore, Searle (1979) classifies illocutionary speech acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. However, identifying the types of illocutionary speech acts does not fully explain their communicative purposes within social interactions. Leech (1983) introduces four pragmatic functions of illocutionary acts, namely competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive functions. These functions describe the relationship between illocutionary goals and social goals, providing an analytical framework for understanding how speakers use language to achieve particular communicative purposes.

In argumentative communication, particularly formal debates, illocutionary speech acts play an important role in constructing arguments, expressing disagreement, defending positions, and influencing audiences. Arabic-language debates provide a relevant context for examining these communicative practices because participants must organize their arguments, respond to opposing perspectives, and maintain interaction throughout the debate. Pratama (2024) explains the structure and argumentative techniques employed in Arabic debates using the QatarDebate method, including the roles of speakers and the organization of arguments. These characteristics demonstrate that debates involve not only linguistic competence but also the strategic use of language to accomplish specific communicative objectives. The availability of Arabic debate recordings on YouTube also provides opportunities to examine authentic spoken discourse within a publicly accessible digital environment.

Previous studies have examined illocutionary speech acts in various Arabic-language communication contexts. Fitriyani et al. (2021) investigated illocutionary speech acts in the novel Zainy Barakat by Gamal Al-Ghitani and highlighted the importance of contextual interpretation in identifying communicative intentions. Similarly, Fauzy (2020) examined expressive speech acts in the Arabic animated film Muhsin dan Mahasin, demonstrating how utterances convey speakers' psychological attitudes and emotions. Athala and Rachman (2023) investigated conversational implicatures in Arabic illocutionary speech acts in the animated film Cars, emphasizing the relationship between utterances and their implied meanings. These studies contribute to understanding pragmatic phenomena in Arabic-language discourse, particularly within literary narratives and audiovisual media.

Other studies have examined pragmatic phenomena in public communication and Arabic-language debates. Aprilian (2024) investigated praising speech acts used by Arabic-language commentators during the 2022 FIFA World Cup final, while Nurhannah and Triwinarti (2025) analyzed criticizing speech acts in the Arabic-

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language series Crashing Eid. These studies demonstrate how speakers employ language to express appreciation, criticism, and particular communicative attitudes. Meanwhile, Mahdi et al. (2022) examined grammatical and diction errors among participants in Arabic academic debates at the ninth ITHLA Congress. Although their research addressed Arabic debate discourse, its primary focus was linguistic accuracy rather than the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts. Furthermore, Zamzamy and Aziz (2024) discussed the implications of Arabic pragmatics for language teaching and communication, highlighting the relevance of pragmatic awareness in understanding communicative meaning.

Based on these studies, previous research has contributed to identifying speech act categories, interpreting implied meanings, and examining linguistic performance across different communication contexts. However, the studies reviewed have not specifically examined the distribution and argumentative roles of collaborative, competitive, conflictive, and convivial functions in digital Arabic-language debate discourse. Research on audiovisual narratives has primarily addressed particular speech act types or contextual meanings, while studies of Arabic academic debates have also focused on grammatical and lexical aspects. This distinction identifies a specific research gap concerning how the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts operate within structured, argumentative interactions. Examining these functions is important because similar linguistic forms may serve different communicative purposes depending on the speaker's position, argumentative context, and intended audience.

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts in a formal Arabic-language debate published through a digital platform. Unlike studies that primarily classify speech act types, this research focuses on how utterances function within argumentative interactions by applying Leech's (1983) pragmatic classification alongside Searle's (1969, 1979) speech act theory. The study analyzes 65 utterance units identified in the final round of the 7th International Universities Arabic Debating Championship organized by QatarDebate. Through contextual analysis, this research seeks to explain how different pragmatic functions contribute to argument construction, ideological opposition, persuasion, and interpersonal interaction. The findings are expected to contribute to Arabic pragmatic studies and provide relevant examples for developing pragmatic awareness and argumentative speaking skills in Arabic-language learning.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify and describe the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts in digital Arabic-language debates and explain how these functions operate as communicative strategies within argumentative discourse. By examining collaborative, competitive, conflictive, and convivial functions, the study seeks to provide a contextual understanding of the relationship between utterances, speakers' communicative intentions, and the argumentative situations in which they occur.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach as it aims to provide an in-depth description of linguistic phenomena based on the context of natural language use. This approach was selected because the object of the study consists of spoken utterances in Arabic debates, which are analyzed based on the pragmatic functions of the illocutionary speech acts they contain. Through a qualitative approach, the meanings of utterances are understood not only at the textual level but also through an analysis of the communicative context, speakers' intentions, and interactional relationships established during the debate process.

The object of this study comprises the utterances produced by participants in the final round of the International Universities Arabic Debating Championship, organized by

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QatarDebate and published on its official YouTube channel on July 29, 2024. The debate recording is accessible at [https://youtu.be/eVXHv8Pr5IY?si=S0UANw86K_p8A42w]. The research data consist of utterance units that contain illocutionary force and convey specific pragmatic functions. Following the processes of data reduction and classification, 65 relevant utterance units were identified and selected as research data. Data were collected through documentation, observation, and note-taking techniques. The researcher repeatedly watched the debate video to gain a contextual understanding of the debate proceedings and subsequently transcribed selected utterances according to the research focus. Each utterance containing illocutionary force was identified, recorded, and classified based on the pragmatic function manifested within its communicative context.

Data analysis employed the interactive model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verification. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected utterances relevant to the research focus. The data display stage involved classifying the utterances according to categories of pragmatic functions, followed by interpretative analysis that considered the context of each utterance. The verification stage involved interpreting the dominant patterns of communication emerging from the entire dataset. To ensure the validity of the findings, this study employed theoretical triangulation by comparing the analytical results with relevant perspectives from pragmatics and speech act theory.

RESULT

The analysis of illocutionary speech acts in the final round of the 7th International Universities Arabic Debating Championship organized by QatarDebate identified 65 utterance units containing various communicative intentions and pragmatic functions. The findings were classified into five types of illocutionary speech acts based on Searle's classification and four pragmatic functions based on Leech's framework. The results demonstrate that the participants employed different linguistic strategies to present arguments, express opposition, influence audiences, and maintain communicative relationships throughout the debate.

1. Distribution of Illocutionary Speech Act Types

The classification of 65 utterances identified five types of illocutionary speech acts: assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Assertive speech acts were the most frequently identified, while declarative speech acts occurred least frequently. The distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of Illocutionary Speech Act Types

Illocutionary Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	50	76.9%
Directive	6	9.2%
Expressive	4	6.2%
Commissive	3	4.6%
Declarative	2	3.1%
Total	65	100%

The findings indicate that assertive speech acts accounted for 50 utterances (76.9%), followed by directive speech acts with 6 utterances (9.2%), expressive speech acts with 4 utterances (6.2%), commissive speech acts with 3 utterances (4.6%), and declarative speech acts with 2 utterances (3.1%). The predominance of assertive speech acts reflects the frequent use of statements, explanations, and claims in presenting and defending arguments. Meanwhile, the limited occurrence of declarative speech acts indicates that utterances involving formal announcements or

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changes in institutional status appeared less frequently within the analyzed debate.

2. Distribution of Pragmatic Functions of Illocutionary Speech Acts

The analysis identified four pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts: collaborative, conflictive, competitive, and convivial. Each function reflects a different communicative orientation within the debate. The distribution of these functions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of Pragmatic Functions of Illocutionary Speech Acts

Pragmatic Function	Frequency	Percentage
Collaborative	39	60.0%
Conflictive	12	18.5%
Competitive	9	13.8%
Convivial	5	7.7%
Total	65	100%

As shown in Table 2, collaborative functions were the most frequently identified, accounting for 39 utterances (60.0%). Conflictive functions ranked second with 12 utterances (18.5%), followed by competitive functions with 9 utterances (13.8%). Convivial functions were the least frequent, with 5 utterances (7.7%). These findings indicate that the analyzed debate contained more utterances intended to provide information and construct arguments than utterances expressing direct confrontation, imposing communicative demands, or maintaining interpersonal harmony.

3. Representative Utterances Based on Pragmatic Functions

To illustrate how the four pragmatic functions appeared in the debate, representative Arabic utterances were selected from the research data. Each utterance was examined according to its communicative context and the speaker's intended meaning. Table 3 presents examples representing collaborative, conflictive, competitive, and convivial functions.

Table 3
Examples of Illocutionary Speech Acts Based on Pragmatic Functions

Arabic Utterance	English Translation	Pragmatic Function	Contextual Meaning
الوضع الاقتصادي ينهار	The economic situation is collapsing.	Collaborative	The speaker presents an economic condition as an argumentative premise to support a particular position.
الغرب هو المسؤول عن ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا	The West is responsible for the phenomenon of Islamophobia.	Conflictive	The speaker attributes responsibility to a particular social actor, expressing criticism and ideological opposition.
يجب أن نفهم الواقع المرير	We must understand this bitter reality.	Competitive	The speaker emphasizes an obligation to understand a particular situation and directs the audience toward the intended perspective.
تحييكم جميعًا في هذه المناظرة	We greet you all in this debate.	Convivial	The speaker expresses a greeting to establish respectful and positive interactions with participants and audiences.

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Table 3 illustrates the relationship between linguistic expressions and their pragmatic functions in the analyzed debate. Collaborative functions were represented by utterances that communicated information and established argumentative premises. Conflictive functions appeared in statements expressing criticism or opposition toward particular positions. Competitive functions were identified in utterances containing demands or expressions of obligation, whereas convivial functions appeared in greetings and expressions intended to maintain respectful communication. These examples demonstrate that the pragmatic classification of an utterance depends on its communicative purpose and the context in which it is produced.

4. Collaborative Functions in Argumentative Construction

Collaborative functions were identified in 39 utterances (60.0%), making them the most frequent pragmatic function in the analyzed debate. These utterances primarily involved statements, explanations, and the presentation of information intended to support the speakers' arguments.

One example is the utterance "الوضع الاقتصادي ينهار" (*The economic situation is collapsing*), identified as data card 09. The speaker used this statement to describe an economic condition and provide a premise supporting an argument concerning migration. Another example is "نناقش اليوم نص القضية" (*We are discussing today's debate motion*), identified as data card 04. This utterance introduces the subject of the debate and establishes a shared understanding of the topic being discussed.

The findings show that collaborative functions were frequently expressed through informative statements and explanations. In this context, collaboration refers to the communicative purpose of conveying information rather than agreement between opposing debate teams.

5. Conflictive Functions in Expressing Opposition

Conflictive functions accounted for 12 utterances (18.5%), representing the second most frequently identified pragmatic function. These utterances were characterized by explicit criticism, rejection, accusations, or expressions of opposition toward particular positions.

An example appears in the utterance "الغرب هو المسؤول عن ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا" (*The West is responsible for the phenomenon of Islamophobia*), discussed as data card 64 in the thesis's findings chapter. Through this statement, the speaker explicitly attributes responsibility for Islamophobia to Western societies. The utterance expresses criticism and reinforces the speaker's opposition to a particular ideological position.

The identification of conflictive functions demonstrates that direct opposition remained part of the debate. However, their lower frequency compared with collaborative functions indicates that explicit criticism and accusations were less frequently classified than information-oriented utterances within the analyzed data.

6. Competitive Functions in Strengthening Argumentative Positions

Competitive functions were identified in 9 utterances (13.8%). These functions appeared in statements containing requests, demands, expressions of obligation, and attempts to direct the audience toward particular interpretations.

One example is the utterance "يجب أن نفهم الواقع المرير" (*We must understand this bitter reality*), identified as data card 48. The expression "íÌÈ" (*must*) indicates an obligation and emphasizes the speaker's intention to encourage the audience to adopt a particular perspective.

Another example is "اسمحوا لي ان ابدا بتفنيد ما جاء به الفريق الموالي" (*Allow me to begin refuting what the affirmative team has presented*), identified as data card 37. This utterance introduces a rebuttal and signals the speaker's intention to challenge the opposing team's arguments.

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These findings show that competitive functions were employed to reinforce argumentative positions and direct attention toward the speakers' intended claims.

7. Convivial Functions in Maintaining Communicative Politeness

Convivial functions were the least frequently identified pragmatic functions, comprising 5 utterances (7.7%). These functions appeared in greetings, expressions of appreciation, and polite forms of communication.

An example is the utterance "نحييكم جميعًا في هذه المناظرة" (*We greet you all in this debate*), identified as data card 02. This greeting demonstrates the speaker's intention to acknowledge the audience and establish respectful communication at the beginning of the debate.

The limited occurrence of convivial functions indicates that expressions of interpersonal courtesy occupied a relatively small proportion of the analyzed utterances. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that politeness-related expressions remained present alongside argumentative statements and oppositional communication.

The classification of all four pragmatic functions shows that the analyzed Arabic-language debate involved different communicative purposes. Collaborative functions were dominant, followed by conflictive, competitive, and convivial functions. These patterns provide the empirical basis for discussing how pragmatic functions operate within formal Arabic-language argumentative discourse.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the Main Findings

The findings reveal that illocutionary speech acts in digital Arabic-language debates perform four pragmatic functions: collaborative, conflictive, competitive, and convivial. Among the 65 utterance units analyzed, collaborative functions were the most dominant, accounting for 39 utterances (60.0%), followed by conflictive functions with 12 utterances (18.5%), competitive functions with 9 utterances (13.8%), and convivial functions with 5 utterances (7.7%). This distribution indicates that the analyzed debate relied primarily on statements and explanations to construct arguments, while direct opposition, communicative demands, and expressions of politeness appeared less frequently. These findings suggest that argumentative interaction involves different communicative purposes that cannot be understood solely through the grammatical structure of utterances.

The distribution can be explained through Leech's (1983) classification of illocutionary functions, which distinguishes collaborative, conflictive, competitive, and convivial functions according to the relationship between communicative goals and social goals. In formal debates, speakers are expected to defend their positions while responding to opposing arguments. Consequently, different pragmatic functions may appear within the same argumentative interaction. The predominance of collaborative functions does not necessarily indicate agreement between opposing participants. Instead, it reflects the frequent use of information-oriented utterances in presenting arguments and establishing the premises required for debate.

Collaborative Function and Argumentative Construction

The dominance of collaborative functions represents the most significant finding of this study. A total of 39 utterances (60.0%) were classified as collaborative because they primarily conveyed information, explanations, or statements intended to establish an argumentative basis. One example is the utterance "الوضع الاقتصادي ينهار" (*The economic situation is collapsing*), identified as data card 09. In the context of the debate, the speaker employed this statement to describe an economic condition as a premise supporting an argument concerning migration. Another example is "نناقش اليوم نص القضية" (*We are discussing today's debate motion*), identified as data card 04, which establishes the subject of discussion for the participants and audience.

These findings are consistent with Leech's (1983) explanation that collaborative functions involve communicative goals that are relatively independent of social goals. In argumentative discourse, collaborative utterances allow speakers to present information and establish a shared understanding of the issues being discussed, even when the opposing parties disagree about the validity of their claims. Searle's (1969) theory also provides a relevant explanation because assertive speech acts involve speakers' commitment to the propositions they express. The predominance of assertive speech acts in the present study, accounting for 76.9% of the analyzed utterances, supports the observation that statements and explanations occupy a substantial proportion of the debate. Nevertheless, assertive forms and collaborative functions should not be treated as identical categories, since their classification depends on different analytical considerations.

The findings also relate to Fitriyani et al. (2021), who examined illocutionary speech acts in the novel *Zainy Barakat* and emphasized the importance of context in interpreting communicative intentions. While their study focused on literary discourse, the present research examines spoken interactions in a formal Arabic-language debate. This difference highlights how contextual conditions influence the communicative purposes of utterances across different genres. Furthermore, Pratama (2024) describes the importance of structured argumentation in Arabic debates using the QatarDebate method. The predominance of collaborative functions in the present study is consistent with the importance of providing explanations and establishing argumentative premises within that structure.

Conflictive Function and Ideological Opposition

Conflictive functions were the second most frequently identified category, comprising 12 utterances (18.5%). These functions appeared in utterances expressing explicit disagreement, criticism, accusations, or rejection of particular positions. In Leech's (1983) classification, conflictive functions involve communicative goals that oppose social goals, particularly when speakers express hostility or challenge others through confrontational language. Their occurrence in the analyzed debate indicates that ideological opposition forms an identifiable part of argumentative communication.

One example discussed in the thesis is the statement attributing responsibility for Islamophobia to Western societies, identified as data card 64. This utterance conveys an accusation and expresses criticism toward a particular social actor. Within the debate, the statement is used to reinforce the speaker's ideological position and challenge the perspective associated with the opposing argument. Its conflictive function therefore emerges from both its accusatory content and its communicative context.

These findings can be compared with Nurhannah and Triwinarti (2025), who investigated criticizing speech acts in the Arabic-language series *Crashing Eid*. Both studies address language used to express criticism, although their communicative contexts differ. The previous study examined criticism in a fictional audiovisual narrative, whereas the present research analyzes argumentative interaction in a formal debate. This distinction suggests that criticism should be interpreted in relation to the communicative setting in which it occurs. In debates, conflictive utterances may serve to reinforce opposition and distinguish competing ideological positions rather than simply express negative attitudes.

Despite the argumentative nature of the debate, conflictive functions accounted for a smaller proportion of the data than collaborative functions. This finding indicates that explicit accusations and confrontational expressions were less frequent than information-oriented statements within the selected utterances. However, the distribution does not establish that collaborative strategies were more persuasive or effective, because the research did not directly measure audience responses.

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Competitive Function and Argumentative Strategies

Competitive functions accounted for 9 utterances (13.8%) and were identified through requests, demands, expressions of obligation, and utterances intended to advance the speaker's communicative objectives. According to Leech (1983), competitive functions arise when illocutionary goals compete with social goals. In the context of Arabic debates, such functions may appear when speakers attempt to direct attention, introduce rebuttals, or encourage audiences to consider particular arguments.

An example is the utterance " يجب أن نفهم الواقع المرير" (*We must understand this bitter reality*), identified as data card 48. The expression "يجب" (*must*) indicates an obligation and emphasizes the speaker's intention to direct the audience toward a particular interpretation. Another example is " اسمحوا لي ان ابدا بتفنيد ما جاء به الفريق الموالي" (*Allow me to begin refuting what the affirmative team has presented*), identified as data card 37. Although the utterance begins with a polite expression requesting permission, its larger argumentative purpose is to introduce a rebuttal to the opposing team's position.

These examples indicate that the pragmatic function of an utterance cannot always be determined solely by its surface expression. A grammatically polite statement may still serve a competitive purpose when its communicative objective involves challenging an opposing argument. This interpretation is consistent with Thomas's (1995) discussion of meaning in interaction, which emphasizes the importance of contextual factors in understanding speakers' intentions.

The findings can also be considered alongside Mahdi et al. (2022), who investigated grammatical and diction errors among participants in Arabic academic debates. Although their research focused on linguistic accuracy, both studies examine language use in argumentative settings. The present research contributes a different analytical perspective by examining how speakers use utterances to accomplish communicative goals rather than evaluating grammatical correctness. These perspectives address different aspects of linguistic competence that are relevant to Arabic debate practices.

Convivial Function and Communicative Politeness

Convivial functions represented the least frequent category, consisting of 5 utterances (7.7%). These functions appeared in expressions of greeting, appreciation, and respect toward participants, judges, or audiences. Leech (1983) explains that convivial functions involve communicative goals that correspond with social goals, particularly those associated with maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. Their presence in the analyzed debate demonstrates that polite expressions remain part of formal argumentative interactions.

One example is the utterance " نحييكم جميعًا في هذه المناظرة" (*We greet you all in this debate*), identified as data card 02. The speaker used this expression to acknowledge the audience and establish a respectful communicative atmosphere. Another example discussed in the thesis involves an expression of gratitude toward the judging panel. Such utterances reflect the conventional practices of courtesy that accompany formal debate activities.

The findings share a thematic connection with Aprilian (2024), who examined praising speech acts used by Arabic-language commentators during the 2022 FIFA World Cup final. Both studies demonstrate the presence of appreciative expressions in public communication, although the communicative situations differ. Similarly, Fauzy (2020) examined expressive speech acts in Arabic-language animation, providing another perspective on how speakers communicate attitudes and emotions through language. The present research extends attention to interpersonal expressions within structured argumentative discourse.

The limited occurrence of convivial functions may be related to the communicative demands of formal debate, where participants allocate

substantial speaking time to presenting and defending arguments. Nevertheless, the presence of greetings and expressions of appreciation indicates that argumentative disagreement can coexist with respectful interpersonal communication. This finding highlights the importance of distinguishing the argumentative objectives of speakers from the social conventions governing their interactions.

Contextual Meaning and the Relationship between Speech Act Types and Pragmatic Functions

Another important finding concerns the relationship between illocutionary speech act types and pragmatic functions. The results show that assertive speech acts were the most frequently identified type, accounting for 50 utterances (76.9%), while collaborative functions dominated the pragmatic classification with 39 utterances (60.0%). Although these findings indicate the importance of statements and explanations in debate discourse, the two classifications describe different analytical dimensions.

Searle's (1969, 1979) classification focuses on the illocutionary actions performed through utterances, including asserting, directing, committing, expressing, and declaring. In contrast, Leech's (1983) framework examines the relationship between communicative goals and social goals. Consequently, a particular speech act type may perform different pragmatic functions depending on the communicative context. For example, an assertive statement may communicate information to establish an argument or express criticism toward an opposing position. Its pragmatic function must therefore be interpreted by considering the speaker's intention, the content of the utterance, and its position within the debate. This interpretation is consistent with Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996), who emphasize the importance of context in understanding meaning. It also relates to Athala and Rachman (2023), whose research examined conversational implicature in Arabic illocutionary speech acts within an animated film. Both studies highlight the relevance of contextual interpretation, although the present research focuses on formal argumentative discourse rather than fictional dialogue. The findings therefore support an analytical approach that considers both the linguistic form and the communicative purpose of an utterance.

Research Contribution and Implications for Arabic Language Learning

The principal contribution of this study lies in its examination of pragmatic functions within authentic Arabic-language debate discourse published through a digital platform. While previous studies have investigated speech acts in literary works, animated films, and public commentary, this research focuses on the communicative roles of illocutionary utterances in structured argumentative interaction. By combining Searle's speech act classification with Leech's pragmatic framework, the study provides a more specific description of how different communicative purposes operate within the analyzed debate.

The findings also offer potential implications for Arabic-language learning, particularly in developing speaking skills (*Mahārah Kalām*) and pragmatic competence. Understanding the distinctions among collaborative, conflictive, competitive, and convivial functions may help learners recognize how utterances are used to present information, express disagreement, introduce rebuttals, and maintain respectful interaction. Zamzamy & Aziz (2024) emphasize the relevance of pragmatic analysis for Arabic-language teaching and communication. In this regard, authentic debate recordings may provide contextual examples for classroom activities involving argument construction and interpretation of communicative intentions.

However, these educational implications should be understood as potential applications of the findings rather than demonstrated learning outcomes. The present study analyzed debate utterances and did not examine the effectiveness of particular teaching methods or measure improvements in learners' speaking abilities.

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Strengths and Limitations of the Study

One strength of this research is its use of authentic audiovisual data from a formal Arabic-language debate. The availability of the debate recording, transcription, and data cards provides contextual information for examining the communicative purposes of individual utterances. Furthermore, the analysis considers both illocutionary speech act types and pragmatic functions, allowing the findings to describe different dimensions of language use within argumentative interaction.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research examined 65 selected utterances from a single debate recording. Consequently, the findings describe the pragmatic characteristics of this dataset and cannot be generalized to all Arabic-language debates or digital communication platforms. Second, some utterances may exhibit more than one pragmatic function, particularly when polite expressions accompany argumentative rebuttals. This situation requires clear coding criteria to distinguish primary functions from possible secondary functions. Third, the analysis focuses on utterances and their communicative contexts without directly investigating audience interpretations or the persuasive effects of the speakers' arguments.

Future research could examine a larger collection of Arabic-language debates involving different topics, participants, and competitive settings. Comparative analyses could also investigate whether similar pragmatic patterns appear across other digital platforms or educational debate contexts. Furthermore, studies involving audience responses or multiple independent coders could provide additional evidence concerning communicative effectiveness and classification consistency.

The findings indicate that pragmatic functions in the analyzed Arabic-language debate are characterized by the predominance of collaborative utterances alongside conflictive, competitive, and convivial expressions. This distribution demonstrates the importance of contextual analysis in explaining how speakers organize arguments, express opposition, direct audience attention, and maintain interpersonal relationships within formal argumentative discourse.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of 65 utterance units from the final round of the 7th International Universities Arabic Debating Championship organized by QatarDebate, this study identified four pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts: collaborative, conflictive, competitive, and convivial. Collaborative functions were the most dominant, accounting for 39 utterances (60.0%), followed by conflictive functions with 12 utterances (18.5%), competitive functions with 9 utterances (13.8%), and convivial functions with 5 utterances (7.7%). These findings indicate that information-oriented utterances were more frequently identified than expressions of direct opposition, communicative demands, and interpersonal politeness in the analyzed debate.

The dominance of collaborative functions demonstrates the importance of statements and explanations in constructing argumentative premises and communicating ideas to audiences. Meanwhile, conflictive functions reflect explicit criticism and ideological opposition, competitive functions involve efforts to advance particular argumentative positions, and convivial functions contribute to maintaining respectful interactions. The findings also demonstrate that the pragmatic functions of illocutionary speech acts depend on communicative intentions and contextual conditions rather than linguistic forms alone. Therefore, understanding Arabic-language debate discourse requires attention to both the illocutionary acts performed by speakers and their communicative purposes within argumentative interactions.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Arabic pragmatics by examining the relationship between illocutionary speech act types and pragmatic functions in authentic digital debate discourse. Practically, the findings may serve as contextual examples for teaching Arabic speaking skills

(*Mahārah Kalām*), particularly in developing argumentation, interpreting communicative intentions, and expressing disagreement appropriately. However, because the study examined 65 selected utterances from a single debate recording, its findings are limited to the analyzed context. Future research may investigate a broader range of Arabic-language debates to examine the consistency of pragmatic patterns across different topics, participants, and communicative settings.

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