

# **The Significance of Speech Acts in the Analysis of Argumentation with Special Reference to Imam al-Ridha's (PBUH) Debate : A Pragmatic Study**

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## **Abstract:**

The current study is a pragmatic study that attempts to demonstrate the significance of using speech acts in analyzing argumentative debate. The analysis is conducted by applying Eemeren et al (2014) distribution of speech acts and applying it on Imam Ali Bin Musa al-Ridha's (PBUH) argumentative debate with the Catholicus. This analysis aims to investigate the influence of speech acts in resolving the difference of opinions between the arguers. The study includes qualitative and quantitative analyses to fulfill its aims. This research paper comprises the concept of pragmatics, the interface between pragmatics, conversation, debates, an overview of argumentation theory, and the framework of the analysis. It also includes the analysis of speech acts found in Imam al-Ridha's (PBUH) debate with the Catholicus, discussion of the data under analysis. The findings show that the utilization of speech acts as distributed by Eemeren et al.(2014) is closely related to the context of the debate under investigation and quite effective in resolving the difference of opinions between the arguers.

**keywords: pragmatics, argumentation, conversation, speech acts, Imam al-Ridha( PBUH).**

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أهمية أفعال الكلام في تحليل الجدل مع إشارة خاصة إلى مناظرة الامام الرضا (عليه السلام)  
: دراسة تداولية

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**ملخص البحث:**

الدراسة الحالية هي دراسة تداولية تهدف إلى إثبات أهمية استخدام أفعال الكلام في تحليل النقاشات الجدلية. تم إجراء التحليل باستخدام أفعال الكلام كما تم تقسيمها من قبل أميرن وآخرون (٢٠١٤) وتطبيقها على مناظرة الامام الرضا (عليه السلام) مع الكاثوليكيوس . هذا التحليل يهدف إلى بحث تأثير أفعال الكلام في حل اختلاف وجهات النظر بين المجادلين . تتضمن الدراسة تحليلات نوعية وكمية لتحقيق أهدافها . تشمل الدراسة على مفهوم البراغماتية ، والتفاعل بين البراغماتية ، والمحادثة ، والمناقشات ، ونظرة شاملة لنظرية الجدل ، وإطار عمل التحليل . كما يتضمن تحليل أفعال الكلام الموجودة في مناظرة الإمام الرضا (ع) مع الكاثوليكيوس ، ومناقشة البيانات قيد التحليل لتوضيح الأرقام والنسب التي تم التوصل إليها . تظهر النتائج ان استخدام الافعال الكلام في أنموذج ايميرن ترتبط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بنصوص المناظرات المستخدمة في الدراسة ولها تأثير فاعل في حل الخلاف في الاراء بين المجادلون .

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التداولية ، الجدل ، المحادثة ، أفعال الكلام ، الامام الرضا (عليه السلام).

## 1.Introduction

This research paper is concerned with covering some important information about the concept of pragmatics as it represents the first step that this study is built on. It also lists some of its definitions for the purpose of arriving at a point of agreement about what is meant by the term 'Pragmatics '. Then, it focuses on clarifying The interface between Pragmatics, conversation, and debates. It also presents the argumentation, definition, origin, and development to supply the readers with a brief background about the argumentation theory. Finally, the significance of applying Eemeren et al. (2014) distribution of speech acts to resolve the difference of opinions in the debate under investigation.

## **2. The Concept of Pragmatics**

When someone speaks or writes something, the meaning conveyed by what is spoken or written is not always limited to the literal meaning (Tahir, 2020:1). The beginnings of pragmatics can be dated back to some philosophical works by Charles Morris, Rudolf Carnap, and Charles Peirce in the 1930s (Huang, 2007:2). It is best to try to unravel the threads of pragmatics emergence to establish the scope of what pragmatics has become. Philosophers of language (e.g., Morris, Austin, Grice, and Searle) did the early foundational work that represents the core of pragmatics. Importantly, pragmatics arose from a desire to better understand how meaning is made when using language. Even though early work is purely introspective rather than empirical: it is concerned with the conditions of usage and performance (O'Keeffe et al.,2020:1).

However, at the time of Morris's monograph, pragmatics was still considered futuristic. According to Bar-Hillel, pragmatics is concerned with what C. S. Peirce called indexical expressions which are words and sentences whose reference cannot be determined without the knowledge of the context of use (Montague,1974: 95). Pragmatics has become one of the most significant disciplines of linguistics since its inception. Many scholars claim that the nature of language cannot be grasped unless we understand pragmatics as "how language is used in communication " as Leech defined it (Leech, 1983: 1).

Yule (1996: 3) defines pragmatics in different ways. First, he defines it as " the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader) ". Then, as " the study of meaning in relation to context " and how more gets communicated than is said.

In short, not every practitioner of pragmatics will experience it the same way. According to some thinkers, pragmatics is seen as the general study of language use, while others regard it as the study of communication, and yet others regard it as a method of studying language through its communicative function. Allott (2010:1,2) states that despite disagreements over the scope, goals, and methods of pragmatics, it seems that there is a broad agreement on four particular points, especially among those theorists who study communicative language use. All the following four points are derived from Grice's work:

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1. Communication entails a complex aim that is realized when the addressee recognizes it.
2. From the utterance, the addressee has to infer this aim in order to get the best explanation.
3. Communication follows a set of rules or maxims. These maxims are frequently considered to originate from more broad concepts of rationality or cognition.
4. There is a difference between what a speaker says explicitly and what he/she might imply; both are components of speaker's meaning or "what is communicated". Many theorists contend that speaker meaning also includes one or more other components. Presupposition, conventional implicature, and illocutionary force are the list's components.

Looking deeply at all these various definitions, it can be recognized that most of them share one point which is called " context ". As a result of this, pragmatics can be defined as the study of meaning that depends on its interpretation in the context in which it occurs.

### **3. The Interface between Pragmatics, Conversation, and Debates**

Levinson (1983:97-100) incorporates Conversation Analysis (CA) as an integral aspect of Pragmatics, hence, other scholars might be more hesitant, even skeptical, as to whether CA is truly relevant to the Pragmatic program or not. Drew (2017:59) states that some conversation analysts have been wary of being connected with Pragmatics, seeing CA's program as substantially different from Pragmatics. Despite the various distinctions and divergences between CA and Pragmatics, it was believed that CA and Pragmatics have a number of focused concerns that are at or near the center of both.

To some extent, it seems that those who treat conversation as an integral part of Pragmatics have the rightest decision. Looking at the definition of pragmatics by Huang (2007:1) who considers Pragmatics as "the study of language use in context .", it might be observed that conversation lies under the words ' language in use '. language might be used in reading, singing,...etc, but still, its wider use lies in conversation.

Drew (2017:60) focuses on how the CA advances our knowledge of the pragmatics of language use, notably in three key areas: implicature (e.g., from Grice 1975), speech actions (social action), (e.g., from Austin 1962 and Searle 1969), and Presupposition and well-formedness (e.g. from Lakoff 1971). To determine whether and how utterances are considered to be correctly produced, pragmatics introduced the pragmatic context as being as important as or more important than formal linguistic (grammatical and semantic) constraints in our perception of utterances. The foundation of pragmatics is the assertion that "language conveys action, not meaning ". As a result, speech acts can be thought of as actions or interactions carried out through language.

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There is a difference between conversation and debate in that unlike the former, in the latter, each interlocutor seeks to express his/her viewpoint in a way that makes him/her the winner. A debate, as stated by FADHIL (2019:1), is thought to be "an event embracing so many speech acts used by debaters with the intention of convincing the audience of the speakers' arguments and claims". According to Hassan (2020:1), debates blend the best aspects of spoken and non-spoken language such as gestures. Almost every aspect of life involves public debate. Public discussion is considered as a platform for the exchange of ideas and the reaffirmation of ideologies in a variety of settings. Despite these differences between debate and conversation, the latter can be considered an integral part of the former. Most of the time, a debate is fulfilled through conversation.

Additionally, Johnson (2009:12) states that debating entails persuading an audience through a conversation about the truth or untruth of a motion. It is a competition of the arguments used to prove or deny that motion. So, the goal of the argumentation as viewed by Johnson (2009:12) is to present a perspective on particular events. As a result of which an antagonist decides whether to accept or reject the motion under consideration (as represented by the protagonist). Therefore, the features that make a suggested interpretation of an experience attractive outside of a debate round should also make an argument convincing in a debate round.

#### **4. The Argumentation Theory: An Overview**

The argumentation theory can be considered as a multidisciplinary field descending from communication theory, linguistics, philosophy, discourse analysis, and social psychology. The study of the nature and structure of argument as it occurs in real-life settings is referred to as argumentation. It is an important branch of communication studies because of the regularity with which disagreements occur in everyday life. On the one hand, the argumentation theory has been around since Aristotle's time (Allen, 2017:1). On the other hand, however, the theory doesn't receive its new theoretical impulses until the 1950s, under the influence of the publications of philosophers like Arne Naess, Stephen Toulmin, Cha'im Perelman, and the less well-known Rupert Crawshaw-Williams. By far, the greatest influence – after they had at first been criticized or ignored was exerted by two books published in 1958: Toulmin's 'The Uses of Argument' and 'La nouvelle rhétorique: trait é de l'argumentation' by Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004:45).

Argumentation is observed as a systematic way of persuading the opposing arguers (GHAILAN:2019,1). So, it arises when there is a difference of opinion, whether this difference is genuine or might be imagined by the arguers. Argumentation is developed whenever someone adopts a point of view that is not shared by others. So, the result is a difference of standpoint. Usually, a difference of standpoint or opinion does not manifest itself as a comprehensive conflict between two opposing viewpoints, but rather as a fundamental difference of thought.



## **5. Speech Acts in Argumentation Study**

Searle's speech acts, as stated by ABOOD (1999:iv) is considered to be the world-wide accepted pragmatic theory. However, Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) regard that making several amendments to Searle's speech act is necessary when applying this theory to argumentative discourse. In "A Systematic theory of Argumentation" (2004:62), Eemeren and Grootendorst state that speech acts theory is ideally suited to supply the theoretical tools that deal with verbal communications that are aimed at resolving a difference of opinion based on the pragma-dialectical principles. Thus, analyzing Argumentation as a speech act becomes possible by Eemeren and Grootendorst in which they make a connection between the illocutionary act of complex argumentation with the perlocutionary act of persuading.

### **5.1 Eemeren et al (2014) Distribution of the Different Types of Speech Acts**

#### **1. Assertives**

Assertive is the first type of speech acts. The engagement to a proposition forwarded in an assertive may differ from "very strong, as is the case in an assertion or statement, to fairly weak, as in the case of a supposition". However, not always necessary for assertive to include a truth or claim but might also refer "to the acceptability of propositions in a more general sense, as when the correctness or justness of an evaluative opinion concerning a certain state of affairs or event is at issue ("Baudelaire is the best French poet")". Assertive can show standpoints, make a satisfactory argumentation in advocate of a claim, and might be used to confirm a conclusion( Eemeren et al.,2014:531). Eemeren, et al. (2007:12) mentioned that in such type of speech act the speaker and the writer perform their views on the standpoint or the state of affairs expressed in a proposition. Assertive speech acts are, for example, "claiming," "stating," "assuring," "supposing," "opining," "denying," and "conceding."

#### **2. Directives**

Directive is the second type of speech acts. It can be defined as the speech acts that the speaker might use to get the addressee to do something. Orders, requests, and commands are examples of such type. The "Ordering" act represents the archetype of directive in which the speaker or writer should have a special position towards the listener or reader(Levinson,1983:240). For example, uttering a sentence like "Come to my room", means an order only in case the speaker has an authority position with regard to the listener, otherwise, it might be a request or an invitation. A question might be considered as a special design of request since it requires a verbal act (i.e.an answer) ." challenging," "recommending," "begging," and "forbidding" represent other examples of directives"(Emeren et al., 2014: 531).

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One of the most essential aspects of directives is that they are frequently excluded from critical discussion because they are treated as “taboo”. As a result, utilizing instructions to challenge another party is not permitted in a critical discussion. There are various purposes for using directives. For instance, one arguer might use directives to challenge another party to defend his claim. One party might ask the other party to provide support for his claim in the debate or to provide a “definition, explanation, or anything else to defend his standpoint”. This speech act couldn't be applied in all critical discussions. Utterances that are performed as commands or prohibitions are not permitted in all stages. The speech act might take the shape of challenges to particular arguments in order to defend its arguments, as well as demand for clarification or explanation depending on the speaker's desire (Eemeren et al., 2007).

### 3. Commissives

The third category of speech acts is Commissives in which speakers or writers conduct a commitment towards their listeners or readers to take an action or to prevent from taking an action (Eemeren, 2018:40 ). These include “acts in which the words commit the speaker to future action, such as ‘promising’, ‘offering’, ‘threatening’, ‘refusing’, ‘vowing’ and ‘volunteering’ ” (Cutting, 2002:17). Promising represents the archetype of commissive that is commonly discussed by the speech acts theory. In promising, the speaker or writer concerns him/herself to do something or vice versa: “I promise you that I will get back to this point later”. Other commissive speech acts are, for example, “accepting” (“I accept that you will get back to this point later”), “rejecting” (“I reject your getting back to this point later”), and “agreeing” (“I agree to your getting back to this point later”) (Eemeren, 2018:40 ).

In addition to these acts, silence, in a specific context, can be considered as a commissive speech act. Alagözlü and Sahin (2011:1-5) treat silence as a speech act since it commits the hearer(s) to do an action. Language can be classified into verbal and non-verbal. Silence, however, as stated by Ibrahim (2021:1) is “a linguistic and socio-cultural nonverbal concept that depends heavily on the context, which makes it explicable and meaningful. Its interpretation is related to the context of situation in which it occurs and what the interlocutor wants to convey through it”. Thus, the interpretation of silence differs, depending on people, circumstances, and societies. In Arabic societies, for instance, most of the time they say “silence is a sign of agreement”.

Many researchers including Jawaraski (1993), Blimes (1994), and Sacks et al (1974), indicate that silence does not mean only the absence of speech but it forms an essential and important part of communication as speech does ( Ibrahim, 2021:23).

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There are different deductive roles of commissives in a critical discussion. This type of speech acts is used for showing agreement or non-agreement of a standpoint, deciding to begin a critical discussion for challenging to defend a standpoint, accepting to assume the discussion roles of protagonist and antagonist, and for acceptance on the rules of discussion that are to be followed. "If this proves to be relevant, after a critical discussion has been concluded the parties involved in the discussion can also make use of commissives to decide jointly to start another discussion "(Eemeren,2018:40).

#### **4. Expressives<sup>1</sup>**

Via this speech act, a speaker or writer expresses how s/he feels towards something, such as congratulation, thanks, regret, and so on. This type doesn't have a single prototype. "congratulating" "thanking", "commiserating", "regretting," "condoling", and "greeting" are examples of expressive (Eemeren et al.,2014:532).

#### **5. Usage Declaratives**

Declarative is the fifth type of speech acts which includes those speech acts which enable the speaker or writer to perform a specific state of affairs into being. The state of being declarative is typically associated with a specific institutionalized framework in which specified people are competent to declare something. For example, if someone uttered "I open the meeting "his utterance makes sense only if "I" refers to the headmaster of the meeting (Eemeren et al.,2014:532-533).

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<sup>1</sup>Expressives do not play a constitutive role in a critical discussion that's why they are excluded from the distribution of speech acts in a critical discussion( Eemeren et al.,2014: 532).

What is called "usage declaratives" represents a particular subdivision of declarative which control linguistic usage. Their major function is to make other speech acts easier to be understood by the listeners or the readers, "definitions," "precizations," "explications," and "amplifications." are examples of declarative (Eemeren et al.,2014:532-533). There is no requirement for the participants to have any form of an institutional link to use "usage declaratives". This type of speech acts might help in unmasking a spurious dispute, removing uncertainty regarding the discussion rules, preventing premature acceptance or non-acceptance, and so on. "With the exception of the usage declaratives, declaratives do not play a role in the resolution of a difference of opinion on the merits " (Eemeren et al.,2014:532-533).



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## 6. Data Analysis

Based on the analysis of the first debate, there are 144 utterances performed by both arguers. The Imam(PBUH) shares 109 of these utterances which indicate a hint that he(PBUH) is the central arguer in this debate. The debate is mainly held to challenge the Imam(PBUH), accordingly, the Catholicus has uttered only 35 utterances.

The utterances in this debate include all four types of Eemeren et al division of Searle's speech acts taxonomy, which has a role in the resolution. However, some types of these acts occur more frequently than others as shown in the following tables:

**Table (1) Types of Speech Acts in the First Debate**

Type	Number	Percentage
Assertives	57	39.58
Directives	32	22.22
Commissives	7	4.86
Usage Declarative	48	33.34
All	144	100%

**Table (2) Number and Percentage of Speech Acts in both arguers in The First Debate**

Speech Acts	The Imam(PBUH)		The Catholicus	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Assertive	39	68.43	18	31.57
Directive	24	75	8	25
Commissive	1	14.28	6	85.72
Usage Declarative	45	93.75	3	6.25

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## 6.1 Assertives

The most frequent type of speech act in this debate is the assertive speech act. It appears in **57** utterances (**39.58**)%. This speech act recurs **39** times (**68.43**)% in the Imam's (PBUH) utterances, which represents more than the number of assertive that are performed by the Catholicus which appear **18** times (**31.57**)% in his speech.

As previously mentioned, within this type of speech acts, the truth of a proposition (i.e. claim) has to be set by the speaker or writer. In other words, assertive speech acts can be defined as statements that might be treated as either true or false. Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) uses this speech acts to assert his standpoint and to give the Catholicus proof from his Gospel to make him admit his standpoint, first, he uses assertive, stating that :

” أنا مقر بنبوۀ عيسى وكتابه، وما بشر به أمته، وأقرت به الحواريون، وكافر بنبوۀ عيسى لم يقر بنبوۀ محمد وكتابه، ولم يبشر به أمته .“

(I admit the Prophethood of 'Isa' (Jesus Christ) and his Book, of what message he brought to his people, and the disciples admitted it. He who does not admit the Prophethood of Muhammad and His Book and the message he brought to them to his community denies the Prophethood of 'Isa').

All these utterances are asserted as direct standpoints to answer the Catholicus's question. Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) knew very well that such an assertion will need evidence. Thus, he chooses the name ” يوحنا الديلمي “ (John of Dailam) who is the most respectable of the people to Messiah, stating that:

” أن يوحنا قال، إن المسيح أخبرني بدين محمد العربي: وبشرني به، أنه يكون من بعدي، فبشرت به الحواريين، فأمنوا به.“

(John the Baptist says: Verily Messiah has brought to our knowledge the religion of Muhammad, the Arab, that he will be (a prophet) following him, so I (John the Baptist) retold the good news of him to the disciples and they believed in him.)

These utterances are performed as advance argumentation to convince the Catholicus. However, when Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) notices that mentioning this assertion of John of Dailam is not enough to convince the Catholicus and achieve the persuasive aim, he (PBUH) recites some assertions from the third book of the Gospel, concerning the prophet Muhammad and his household (PBUT) . Through this recitation, the Imam (PBUH ) forced the Catholicus to accept his argumentation because if he denies these assertions, this means that he also denies Moses ' and Jesus ' and if so, then he must be killed according to their religion. Adding to these utterances, The Imam (PBUH ) states that:

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” والله إنا لنؤمن بعيسى الذي آمن بمحمد (صلى الله عليه وآله) وما ننقم على عيسى شيئا إلا ضعفه، وقلة صيامه وصلاته“

(Swear to Allah, we believe in 'Jesus' who believed in Muhammad, PBUH. We have nothing against 'Jesus' except his weakness and the paucity of his fasting and prayer).

All these three utterances are assertive speech acts. The first one is concerned with a state of the fact that is the belief of 'Jesus', while the second two utterances lack truthfulness. The aim behind uttering such false utterances is to give the Catholicus proof that if the "Messiah is a god other than Allah", then why shall he pray or fast? In another scene, the Imam(PBUH) uses such type of speech acts, saying that:

”أتجد هؤلاء في شباب بني إسرائيل في التوراة اختارهم (بخت نصر) من سبي بني إسرائيل حين غزى بيت المقدس، ثم انصرف بهم إلى بابل، فأرسله الله عز وجل إليهم، فأحياهم، هذا في التوراة لا يدفعه إلا كافر منك“

(you find in the Torah that these (men) were among the youths of the children of Israel whom Bukht Nasr (Nebuchadnezzar) choose from among the children of Israel when he invaded Jerusalem, that he took them and headed for Babylon, and that Allah, the Great and Almighty, dispatched Elisha for them and he resurrected them. This (statement) is in the Torah. None denies it except an unbeliever).

Although the beginning of these utterances is in the form of a question, they function as a statement through which the Imam (PBUH) obliges the Catholicus to assert that he heard and knew what the Imam (PBUH) has told him about.

The other ١٨ assertive speech acts are uttered by the Catholicus. An example of such utterances is ; ”إن يوحنا لم يسمه لنا حتى نعرفه“ (John the Apostle did not name him for us, the way we may recognize his name). The Catholicus performs this utterance as an advanced argumentation to indicate that the evidence that is presented by Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) is not enough. Consequently, the Imam (PBUH) recites some verses from the third book to convince the Catholicus. As a result of this recitation, the Catholicus asserts that he admits what has been said. Another assertive speech act is:

”أفسدت والله علمك“، وضعف أمرك“

(“I swear to God", you have corrupted your knowledge! , Your affair has become weak! )

The Catholicus utters these assertive speech acts to show his refusal to the Imam's (PBUH) utterances:

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”وما ننقم على عيسى شيئا إلا ضعفه، وقلة صيامه وصلاته“

(We have nothing against 'Jesus' except his weakness and the paucity of his fasting and prayer.) However, the Imam's (PBUH) utterances do not mean that Jesus was with little prayer or fast, rather he wants to give proof to the Catholicus of his false ideas about Jesus. Then, the Catholicus immediately continued his new view by saying:

”ما كنت ظننت إلا أنك أعلم أهل الاسلام“

( I thought that you were the most knowledgeable of the Muslims.)

In this utterance, the Catholicus uses the past tense to indicate that he no longer considers the Imam (PBUH) as such since he (i.e. the Imam (PBUH)) described Jesus Christ as weak with a little prayer and fasting. However, this view will be changed with the progress of this debate. Then, the Catholicus performed a series of assertions to justify the reason behind his previous assertion, stating that:

”وما أفطر عيسى يوما قط، وما نام بليل قط، وما زال صائم الدهر، قائم الليل“

('Jesus' never broke fasting for a day and never slept a night. He always fasted by day and prayed by night.)

Another assertive speech acts through which the Catholicus indicates his upholding to a new standpoint is that:

”ولا إله إلا الله“

( and there is no God but Allah).

## 6.2 Directives

Directive, as previously mentioned, is defined as the speech acts that the speaker might use for the purpose of getting the addressee to do something. Although utilizing instructions to challenge another party is not permitted in a critical discussion, there are various purposes for using directives. For instance, one arguer might ask the other party to provide support for his claim or to provide a definition, explanation, and anything else that assists in supporting his standpoint(s). This form of speech act appears in 32 utterances (22.22)% of all utterances made by both Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) and the Catholicus in this debate. As a result, it is the second most common type among the four different kinds of speech acts. Directives have been uttered mostly by Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) who performed 24 utterances (75)%, while the Catholicus utters only 8 utterances (25)%.

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This debate opens with this type of speech act. In the beginning, there appears to be a series of sentences that are uttered using such type. Directive utterances, first, occur during the conversation between Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) and the Catholicus in which they discuss the matter of providing proof from the “ Gospel ” instead of providing it from the Holy Quran. Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) uses directive speech acts to question the Catholicus, saying that:

” يا نصراني فان احتججت عليك بإنجيلك أقرر به؟ “

(Christian, if I give proof from your Gospel, will you admit it?)

” الا تقبل مني العدل، والمقدم عند المسيح بن مريم ؟ “

( Don't you accept from me the just one who was given preference (over the others) by Jesus, son of Mary?)

These speech acts are performed by requesting acceptance of proposed evidence to supply a base upon which the argumentation can be progressed. Following these utterances, the Imam (PBUH) performed another directive speech act functions as requesting a usage declarative, stating that :

” ما تقول: في يوحنا الديلمي؟ “

(What is your say of John of Dailam? )

Another directive utterance is performed to introduce assertive utterance as a result of the Catholic's reaction after hearing what the Bible has said:

” أقسمت عليك هل نطق الإنجيل أن يوحنا قال، إن المسيح أخبرني بدين محمد العربي: وبشرني به، أنه يكون من بعدي، فبشرت به الحواريين، فأمنوا به “

(I challenge you swear (by God), does the Bible say that John the Baptist says: Verily Messiah has brought to our knowledge the religion of Muhammad, the Arab, that he will be (a prophet) following him, so I (John the Baptist) retold the good news of him to the disciples and they believed in him).

When Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) utters these utterances, the Catholicus claimed that the Bible does not mention the name of that prophet. Consequently, Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) uses other directive acts by asking:

” فان جئناك بمن يقرأ الإنجيل فتلا عليك ذكر محمد، وأهل بيته، وأمته أتؤمن به؟ “

(If we bring you, someone who recites the Bible and recites to you Muhammad's name, his Household, and his umma, then will you believe him?)

Other directive speech acts are performed in the form of rhetorical questions such as:



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”هذا قول عيسى بن مريم؟“

(What is your say? Isn't this the statement of Jesus, the son of Mary?)

Nevertheless, Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) does not need an answer for such a question, rather is to force the Catholicus to admit his standpoint. Directives have also been used by the Catholicus, however, their functions vary from one utterance to another. First, he uses them as requesting usage declarative to the Imam's (PBUH) standpoint such as:

”ما تقول في نبوة عيسى، وكتابه هل تنكر منهما شيئاً؟“

(What do you say about the Prophethood of 'Isa' (Jesus Christ) and his Book? Do you deny anything of them?)

Then, he performed them as requesting evidence as:

”أليس انما تقطع الاحكام بشاهدي عدل؟“

(Aren't quarrels settled through two just witnesses?) asked the Catholicus.

Another directive acts performed by the Catholicus is that:

”فأقم شاهدين من غير أهل ملتك على نبوة محمد ممن لا تنكره النصرانية“

(Therefore, name two witnesses from other than the people of your religion and from among those whom the Christians do not deny, that they might (confirm) the Prophethood of Muhammad).

These utterances although being performed in the form of a statement, have an imperative mood. Imperative always indicates either an order or a request. These utterances, however, indicate a request since they are preceded by a question.

### 6.3 Commissives

7 of the utterances<sup>2</sup> (4.86)% are performed in this debate which refer to the commissive type of speech acts. Within this type, a speaker or writer conducts a commitment towards the listener or reader to take any action or to prevent from taking an action such as promising, offering, threatening, and refusing. Commissives have different roles in a critical discussion such as showing agreement or non-agreement of a standpoint, accepting to assume the discussion roles of protagonist and antagonist, and showing an agreement for challenging to defend a standpoint.

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<sup>2</sup> Silence has been treated as a speech act depending on the idea of Alagözlü and Sahin (2011:1-5).

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As stated before, commissive speech acts occur seven times. 6 of these utterances (85.72)% are performed by the Catholicus while only 1 (14.28)% is uttered by Imam al-Ridha (PBUH). The Imam (PBUH) uses this speech act just for showing acceptance, saying that:

”الآن جئت بالنصفة“

(Now, you have brought justice)

He uses this commissive utterance as an acceptance of the Catholicus 's request:

” فأقم شاهدين من غير أهل ملتك على نبوة محمد ممن لا تنكره النصرانية، وسلنا مثل ذلك من غير أهل ملتنا “

(Therefore, name two witnesses from other than the people of your religion and from among those whom the Christians do not deny, that they might (confirm) the Prophethood of Muhammad. And ask us for the like of that from among other than the people of our religion).

On the other hand, this type of speech act is performed repeatedly by the Catholicus. Such use is conducted for showing similar responses in different situations. First, the Catholicus uses it to show his acceptance, saying:

” نعم “

(yes)

In this utterance, the Catholicus accepts the Imam's (PBUH) offering of providing evidence from the Gospel. Other utterances that show acceptance are:

” بخ بخ، ذكرت أحب الناس إلى المسيح “

(Gramercy! “You have mentioned the most lovable of the people to Messiah)

In Arabic, this utterance ” بخ بخ “ (Gramercy) is usually performed to show acceptance. This utterance is followed immediately by some information about Jesus which again indicates that the Catholicus accepts ”يوحنا“ (John of Dailam) as a witness to confirm the prophethood of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his household).

The third form of commissive as used by the Catholicus is to show acceptance and to summarize all the discussion as in :

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”القول: قولك“

(My view agrees with yours.)

This commissive speech act is completed by an assertion

”ولا إله إلا الله“

(and there is no God but Allah.) Through which the power of argumentation can be recognized.

#### 6.4 Usage Declaratives

This type of speech acts assists in understanding other acts. The function of usage declarative-including, for example, to define, to specify, to explain, and to elucidate is to increase or facilitate the listener's or reader's understanding of other speech acts(see p.22).

Usage declarative occurs **48** times (**33.34**)% in this debate and they are all performed by the Imam (PBUH) except **3** (**6.25**)% that are performed by the Catholicus. In one of the arguments within this debate, the Imam (PBUH) performed some usage declarative as an answer for the Catholicus's directive speech acts, saying that:

”أما الحواريون فكانوا اثني عشر رجلاً“

(As for (the number of) the disciples, they were twelve men. As for (the number of) scholars of the Christians, it was three men: John the Apostle, (of Circesium), and John of Dailam (In Zikhar))

”وأما علماء النصارى فكانوا ثلاثة رجال: ”يوحنا“ الأكبر - ياحي - و ”يوحنا“ بقرقيسيا، ويوحنا ”الديلمي بزخار“

All these utterances are performed as specifications for the Catholicus's question. However, through these specifications, the Imam(PBUH) gives a hint to the Catholicus that he knows more about Jesus's religion. In another scene of this debate, Imam al-Ridha (PBUH) performed usage utterances to strengthen his evidence via telling some miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his household). These miracles are performed as advanced argumentation that makes the Catholicus completely convinced. In mentioning these miracles, the Imam(PBUH) wants to prove that what Jesus does (healing the blind and the leprous and giving life to the dead )is also done by many prophets (PBUT), however, they were not considered as lords other than Allah. Thus, through these utterances, the Imam (PBUH) makes the Catholicus realize that the matter of worship is not determined by some specific works.

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Three utterances with usage declarative speech acts are performed by the Catholicus who says that :

”من قولك: إن عيسى كان ضعيفا قليل الصوم والصلاة“

(Because of your statement that ‘Jesus’ was weak with little fasting and praying).

This utterance represents an explanation for his angry behavior. In one of the scenes, the Imam (PBUH) describes Jesus Christ with little pray and fast. This description makes the Catholicus lose his mind and become angry which led the Imam (PBUH) to ask him about such behavior.

## 7. Discussion of Results

The analysis of the selected debate of Imam al-Ridha( PBUH) shows that each of the four speech acts has a different function in which certain standpoints are discussed in a satirical way. Also, in this debate, the utterances of each arguer differ according to their roles, for example, the Imam (PBUH) has the protagonist role, which makes him produce more utterances than the other arguer. Most of the utterances in this debate belong to the assertive and usage declarative speech acts. The average of assertive occurrence in the analyzed debate is about **39.58%** and the average of the usage type is about **33.34%**. The third most frequent type of utterances in this debate is the directive one, with around **22.22%** average, and finally, only **4.86%** of the utterances are commissives. The arguers attempt to reflect their standpoints( or how they see the case under discussion), so it is expected that the majority of the utterances in this selected debate are assertive and usage declarative.

As mentioned in the earlier lines, the conversations show that the arguers differ in their use of speech acts according to their roles. So, the Imam (PBUH), who is considered to be the protagonist, seems to use assertive speech act for showing the admitting of certain standpoints, rejecting others, stating some facts, and describing some views as he believes whereas usage declaratives appear in his utterances(i.e.The Imam (PBUH)) to facilitate the antagonist's understanding to his previous assertions. On the other hand, the antagonist (i.e.The Catholicus)uses assertives just for showing his admitting of certain standpoints and uses usage declaratives as reasons for one of his assertions.

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Another important point to be discussed is that the Imam(PBUH) performs 75% of directive speech acts, however, most of these utterances are performed to effectively persuade the Catholicus about the standpoint (which they differ in ) whereas the Catholicus performs 25% of assertive speech acts and all of them are for the purpose of challenging the Imam( PBUH), not solving the difference of their standpoints. Commissive speech acts are also found in this debate. The Imam(PBUH) performs only 14.28%. However, this result is quite expected since the Imam (PBUH)is the arguer that the Catholicus aims to challenge. On the other hand, the Catholicus performed 85.72%. Looking deeply at this result, it can be concluded that the Imam's (PBUH) argumentative utterances are successfully achieved by making the Catholicus accepts what the Imam(PBUH) has argued about.

## Conclusions

Based on the results arrived at by analysis of the data under investigation, it can be concluded that; Firstly, Eemeren et al. (2014) distribution of speech acts has a great explanatory power to the extent that can function properly across languages. Secondly, the speech acts are effective tools to show how the arguers resolve the difference of opinions. It also shows that all the types of Eemeren et al.(2014) distribution of speech acts(i.e. assertive, directive, commissive, and usage declaratives ) occur, in different proportions, in this debate's conversations. The utterances of the arguers in this debate vary in the acts they provide. The analysis also reveals that these speech acts are found to have different impacts. They are used in various arguments to deliver some standpoints (whether directly or indirectly) for some purposes, among the most important is persuasion and resolving a difference of opinions. Finally, what is important to be mentioned is that applying speech acts is not only effective in resolving the difference of opinions but makes the other party admit a new standpoint that is totally rejected (before involving in such argumentative debate).



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