

A Pragmatic Study of Mitigation in Quranic Texts

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Abstract:-

This paper attempts to investigate mitigation in Qur'anic texts from a pragmatic perspective. This study tries to answer the following question: What are the categories of speech acts applied in using mitigation in Qur'anic texts ? 2) What are the most prominent strategies of politeness used in this text? It is hypothesized that 1) Qur'anic texts have different kind of speech acts; 2) different politeness strategies are used in the text .

An eclectic model is developed which utilizes Searle's (1969) model of speech acts and Brown & Levinson's (1987) model of politeness . Data of analysis are limited to five Suras taken from the Qur'anic text. According to the results of the analysis, it is concluded that: various politeness strategies and pragma-rhetorical devices are used in Qura'nic texts. It is also found that some types of speech acts are utilized in Qura'nic texts for the purpose of mitigation.

Key words: Pragmatic, Mitigation, Quranic Texts

المخلص:

تحاول هذه الورقة البحث عن التخفيف في النصوص القرآنية من منظور عملي. تحاول هذه الدراسة الإجابة على السؤال التالي: ما هي فئات أفعال الكلام المطبقة في استخدام التخفيف في النصوص القرآنية؟ (٢) ما هي أبرز استراتيجيات الأدب المستخدمة في هذا النص؟ يفترض أن (١) النصوص القرآنية لها أنواع مختلفة من أفعال الكلام. (٢) يتم استخدام استراتيجيات مختلفة للتأدب في النص. تم تطوير نموذج انتقائي يستخدم نموذج (Searle's (1969) لأفعال الكلام ونموذج Brown & Levinson (1987) للتأدب. تقتصر بيانات التحليل على خمس سور مأخوذة من النص القرآني. واستنتجت نتائج التحليل أن: استراتيجيات الأدب والبراغمات الخطابية المختلفة تستخدم في النصوص القرآنية. كما تبين أن بعض أنواع الأفعال الكلامية تستخدم في النصوص القرآنية بغرض التخفيف. الكلمات المفتاحية: واقعية ، مخففة ، نصوص قرآنية.

Literature Review

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is defined as "the study of invisible meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't said or written". Accordingly, Pragmatics involves the analysis of language, i.e. what the speaker aims to express instead of the real words or phrases he uses (Yule,2010:128). Birner (2013:11) defines pragmatics as "the study of language use in context. For example.

1-His day was a nightmare.

The example above means that his day was unpleasant or a hard day, not he has a bad dream. In this situation the semantic meaning (a bad dream) is different from the pragmatic meaning, that is intended by the speaker's utterance in the context.

2.2 Speech Act Theory

Yule (1996:48) states that Speech act refers to actions performed through utterance. Hence, individuals do things in words similar to physical actions. Searle (1969:16) states that a speech act (SA) is the main unit of linguistic communication. This indicates that a speech act is a production of what is said. Moreover, it is the study of how words are used to not only provide information but also to carry out actions. Individuals not only develop sentences with grammatical structures to express their wants, but also achieve actions through their utterances.

2.2.1 Searle's Categorization of Speech Act (1969)

Searle (1969: 23-24) divides speech act into three acts. Searle states that when someone speaks, he/she make three distinctive acts, namely, propositional acts, utterance acts, and illocutionary acts. He classifies speech acts into five types: Declaratives, representatives, directives, commissives and expressive. Each speech act constitutes a number of other categories which can be distinguished from each other by their felicity conditions

2.2.1.1 Representative

Representatives are statements that link the a listener to the reality of the statement (e.g. arguing, implying, alleging, saying, publishing, bragging, stating, asserting, claiming, etc.) (Searle,1969:66).

2.2.1.1.1 The SA of Stating

Stating is a representative speech act. Stating is giving a complete explanation of anything or expressing an official opinion on something (Searle & Vanderveken ,1985:183).

2.2.1.1.2 The SA of Asserting

Searle & Vanderveken (١٩٨٥:١٨) state that the speech act of asserting is a kind of representative .This type is closely connected to the right of the speaker. The S claims that the case is true.

2.2.1.2 Directive

Directives are kinds of speech acts in which the speaker attempt to get the addressee to do something. (Yule, 1996:52). Directives are used to get the hearer to do something in the future by uttering a directive. Requesting, asking, demanding, advising, begging, bidding, forbidding, and recommending can be considered as examples of the directive act.

2.2.1.2.1 The SA of Ordering

Searle(1969: 201) remarks that there is a great degree of strength in the speech act of ordering. This strength comes from the fact that the speaker's position of power and authority over the hearer are invoked when he issues a speech act of ordering.

2.2.1.2.2 The SA of Asking

Asking is a speech act in which the speaker's intention is to get the addressee to do a specific task for the speaker Searle(1969:66).

2.2.1.2.3 The SA of Warning

Warning is the directive act, where the speaker warns the listener not to take action. In other words, to warn someone against taking an action is to suggest that he/she should not do this, and it would be risky if he/she does it. Warning has a meaning that contains request and command in the sense, that the addresser warns the addressee by asking him or her to stop acting unpleasantly or badly (Searle,1975:71).

2.3 Brown and Levinson's(1987)Politeness Strategies

Mitigation is frequently considered as part of the larger issue of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987, 42) describe mitigation as "politeness. According to Caffi (2007, 48), the term "mitigation" has traditionally been used in politeness research to refer to a group of strategies used by interlocutors to lessen the effect of what Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to as "face-threatening acts" (FTAs).

Brown and Levinson (1987:5) propose a more explicitly articulated model that considers a larger view of social interaction, developing the idea of face in particular. The concept of face, according to Brown and Levinson (ibid:62), refers to the public self-image of others that is emotionally invested and can be lost, preserved, or reinforced in interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987:65) distinguish between two types of faces: positive and negative. The positive face represents a person's desire for interaction and solidarity with others, whereas the negative face represents a person's push for independence and not to be imposed on by others. These two aspects of the face are threatened during interaction, and thus a face threatening act (henceforth FTA) is produced (ibid:66). They argue (ibid) that FTA is an act that contradicts H's stated desire. In practice, the entire focus of Brown and Levinson's theory is on politeness strategies (henceforth PSs) that are intended to redress or minimize FTA. Linguists' primary goal is to discover why people do not use simple and direct language in conversation, but rather complex and sometimes indirect phrases, especially when a listener must be motivated to perform a specific act (ibid:67).

2.3.1 positive politeness

According to Brown and Levinson (1987:129), positive politeness asserts the identity of the participants and is meant to meet positive face needs. The strategies of ORPP are redressive strategies directed to H's positive face in order to satisfy his desire by communicating in some respects similar to his wants. It is worth pointing out here that ORPP functions to minimize the social distance between S and H. The strategies of positive politeness are the following:

2.3.1.1 Intensifying H's Interests

S uses a good story, vivid present, swinging back and forth between past and present, direct quoted speech, tag questions, or language like "you know?", "see what I mean?", or "isn't it?" to engage H into the delivered speech as a participant (ibid.).

2.3.1.2 Including both S and H in the Activity

Brown and Levinson (1987:132) state that S can include H in the activity by using inclusive "we" forms to convey mutual cooperation with H.

2.3.2 Negative Politeness

Any attempt to meet negative face wants is known as a negative politeness technique. It widens the gap between S and H in terms of

social interaction. Although the language is indirect, the meaning is usually obvious from the context (ibid)

2.3.2.1 Minimizing the imposition

As politeness strategy, minimizing the imposition aims to reduce the seriousness of the FTA towards the hearer. This method is used by the speaker to imply that the situation was not serious and that everyone should treat it lightly. It indicates that the imposition isn't particularly severe. It's small and it shouldn't be taken seriously.

2.4 Mitigation

"Mitigation" is a new pragmatic notion that has caught the interest of linguists since the eightieths century. Many linguists, including Holmes (1984:345), Haverkate (1992:505), Caffi (1999,881; 2007:67), and Schneider (2010:255), note that Fraser (1980:341) is the first to use the term "mitigation" in "modern pragmatics. He clarifies it as "the modification of certain unwanted effects which a speech act has on the hearer. Mitigation is a strategy for minimizing the impact of criticism, commands, or terrible news. It is defined as "both the process of reducing commitment and its results" (Caffi,2006:67; Schneider,2010:255).

According to Caffi (2006:171), "mitigation, as an action noun, can refer both to the action of mitigating and to the fact of being mitigated" in everyday language . According to Vine (2010:339), "mitigation is oriented toward interpersonal goals." Gladwell (2008:194) defines mitigated speech as "any attempt to downplay or sugarcoat the meaning of what is being said." Schneider (2010:255) points out that in verbal interaction, mitigation facilitates the management of interpersonal relations because it makes an utterance as acceptable as possible to the interlocutor without the speaker having to give up his or her standpoint. In other words, mitigation manages the interaction 'smoothly' and lessens the risks that the interlocutors may face on various levels.

2.5 Pragma-Rhetorical Devices

Rhetorical devices are techniques or tropical figures of speech used to convey a point or convince an audience. There are four rhetorical devices used in this study and explained in the following sections:

2.5.1 Understatement

Cruse (2006:186) recognizes this pragmatic rhetorical figure of the speech as implicit by stating something other than what the

writer/ speaker intends to convey. So, the speaker attempts to understate and put the hearer beneath the point that is depicted as a human being by understating him/her.

Ortony (1993:267) states that understatement is viewed as flouting of Grice's maxim. It flouts the maxim of quantity i.e. "the contribution neither more nor less to the conversation than is required". According to the Grecian view, the speaker causes the hearer to look for an implicit meaning beyond the literal interpretation of what is said or meant.

2.5.2 Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions are functionally opposed to informative questions since these do not serve to communicate but rather to elicit assertive information. In speech act theory, informative questions are considered to be manifestations of direct speech acts, that is, speech acts characterize by the expression of not more than one illocutionary point. When the speakers utter a rhetorical question do not expect the listener to give an answer to that question, an answer is refrained from being given (Haverkate,1997:223).

In this respect, rhetorical questions are distinct from indirect defectiveness, such as „Can you pass the salt?“, where the cooperative interlocutor, who wishes to comply with the speaker's request, frequently gives an affirmative answer to the literal question(Haverkate,1997:223).

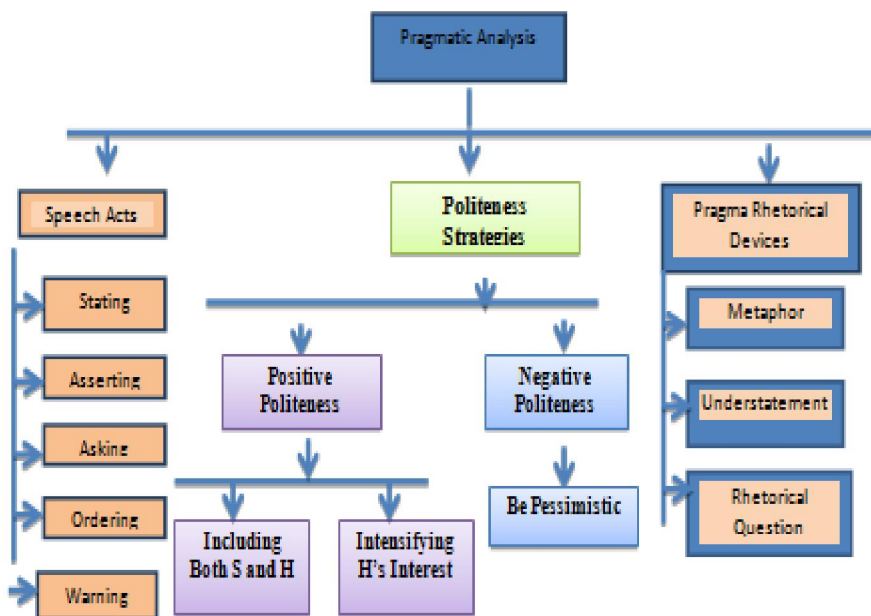
2.5.3 Metaphor

Metaphor concerns the relations between word and sentence meaning, on the other hand, and speaker's meaning or utterance meaning on the other hand. So, there are two kinds of sentence meaning, literal and metaphorical although, sentences and words have only the meanings that they have. Thus, whenever the speaker talks about the metaphorical meaning of a word or a sentence, he talks about his intentions to deliver (Ortony , 1993:84).

Metaphor is an interesting expression that portrays an object or activity such that is not truly valid, however clarifies an idea, or makes a comparison between two things. A metaphor expresses that one thing is something else. So, metaphor includes the case where the speaker uses a word or phrase to describe something it does not literally point to this thing. It likens those two things not because they are really the equivalent, yet for comparison or imagery. If the

concept of metaphor is literally taken, it will presumably stable extremely unusual (Ibid).

Model of Analysis



Chapter Three

Data Analysis

3.1 Data Description and Analysis

The data of this study are represented by five texts from different Suras of the Glorious Quran

3.1.1 Data Analysis

Text (1)

﴿وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَى﴾ (طه: ٢٢)

"Now draw thy hand Close to thy side: It shall come forth white

(And shining), without hann (Or stain)-as another Sign – (Ali,2004:768)

1. Speech Act

A. Speech Act of Ordering

Allah directed an order to his prophet Moses ,and he said :and join your hand to our wing and it will come out white without any

blemishes .To mitigate the speech Allah uses the word your wing instead of your armpit .

2. Politeness strategy

A. Minimize the imposition

Allah aims to reduce the seriousness of the FTA towards the the Prophet Moses. His saying " **without hann (Or stain)**" means not bad to be careful to ward off the illusion that its whiteness is due to illness or harm.

B. Intensifying H's Interests

In this verse (And shining), without hann (Or stain), Allah told his prophet Moses to put his hand in his pocket .It would come out shining without leprosy or bad .This is another miracle that Allah taught him to challenge Pharaoh and the magicians.

3. Pragma Rhetorical Devices

A. Metaphor

In this verse (draw thy handu Close to thy side), (thy side) imetaphorically used to refer to the armpit. It is what is under the upper arm like the wing of the bird in this habitat. This shows the beauty of the Qur'anic expressions and the ingenuity of the analogy in it . Your wing and didn't say your armpit because in the last word there is heaviness in speech an disgust.

Text 2

﴿ وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَقَّ يَأْنِيكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴾

"We do indeed know How thy heart is distressed . At what they say.

98. But celebrate the praises Of thy lord. and be of those Who prostrate themselves In adoration .99. And serve thy Lord Until there come unto thee

The Hour that is Certain".

1. Speech Act

A. The speech Act of Asserting

In this verse "We do indeed know How thy heart is distressed . At what they say" Allah states that he knows the false statements of the polytheists about you and what you brought from us will grieve your soul and trouble your mind . "We do indeed know" this phrase

is used to confirm the news and to show more interest and care to the prophet Mohammed.

B. Speech Act of Ordering

Allah ordered his messenger to glorify his praises and be one of the worshipers of Allah who worship him. Worship your lord until the death in which you are certain comes to you.

2. Politeness Strategies

A. Including both S and H in the Activity

According to this strategy, Allah says "We do indeed know" to ensure that he knows the false statements of the polytheists about his messenger .

B. Intensifying the hearer Interest

This verse "We do indeed know How thy heart is distressed . At what they say" is used to confirm the news and to show more interest and care to the prophet Mohammed. Allah wants to mitigate situation.

3. Pragma Rhetorical Devices

A. Understatement

"And serve thy Lord Until there come unto thee The Hour that is Certain" .In the previous verse the kindness and beauty of the qur'anic expression appear because the speech is directed to the messenger . Allah didn't say until death comes to you ; sympathy for his prophet and relieving him.. So he expressed death with certainty.

Text (3)

﴿وَإِذَا الْمَوْءِدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴿٨﴾ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ﴾ (التكوير: ٨)

When the female (infant), Buried alive, is questioned . For what crime She was killed.(Ali ,2004:1607)

1. Speech Act

A. Speech Act of Stating

Allah states the practice of infanticide ,which the holy Qur'an referred to repeatedly , is considered one of the most heinous crimes of the pre- Islamic era of ignorance.

B. Speech Act of Asking

In this verse (For what crime She was killed)Allah rebukes and blames the killers through saying for what sin was she killed , asking her to reprimand her killer , and it was said : The meaning asks her killer for what sin she was killed.

1. Politeness Strategy

A-Minimizing the imposition

In the glory Qur'an ,Allah used the word "al-maw'u da" to denote murder .At the same time , it reduces the ugliness that associated with this heinous act.

2. Pragma Rhetorical Devices

A-Understatement

The word "ma'uda" expresses murder and conceals the ugliness of the act associated with the loss of the soul that Allah has forbidden. This shows the greatness of the Quranic expression in its use of many words to denote killing, which mitigated the painful effect associated with killing.

B-Rhetorical Question

According to this strategy, Allah says " **For what crime She was killed**" .The verse states that young girls are killed without sin. Allah directed his questions to the killers to rebuke them.

Text 4

﴿ فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْءِ تَيْهَمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنْ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴾ (الاعراف: ٢٠)

Then began Satan(1005) to whisper suggestions to them, in order to reveal to them their shame(1006) that was hidden from them (before): he said: "Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest ye should become angels or such beings as live forever."

(Ali, 2004:93)

1. Speech act

A. Speech Act of Stating

Satan has obsessed the prophet Adam and his wife to eat from the prohibited tree in Paradise that Allah ordered them not to eat from at any time and under any condition. Here is a controversial point, Adam already knows that Satan is his enemy, so how he follows his order and eats from the tree. What is important here is the perlocutionary act of the obsessive order that Adam actually committed the sin and ate from the tree. So it is so clear that Satan ordered Adam and his spouse to eat from the tree, so Satan has the locutionary and illocutionary acts and the response of Adam and his wife is the perlocutionary act of Satan's order.

2. Politeness strategy

A. Minimize the imposition

Allah, in His Glorious Book, uses the word “their shame” or “Badness” instead of the genitals. The genitals are something that cannot be mentioned or expressed, so the Qur’anic discourse came with a polite and gentle wording, “their shame” or “badness” to denote sexual parts of the body without causing embarrassment. Moreover, Allah in his saying aims to reduce the seriousness of the FTA towards the prophet Adam and his wife.

Text 5

﴿أَجَلٌ لَّكُمْ لَيْلَةُ الْفِصَامِ الرَّفْتُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ مِّنْ لِّبَاسٍ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ﴾ (البقرة: ١٨٧)

Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments (195)

(Ali, 2004: ٢٤)

1. Speech Act

A. Speech Act of Stating

Allah Almighty, in His Glorious Book states that is a lawful for you to have sexual relations with your wives on the night of As-Siyam (fasting). This Ayah contains a relief from Allah for the Muslims because Muslims were allowed to eat, drink and have sexual during the nights of Ramadan.

2. Politeness strategy

A. Intensifying the hearer interest

In the two verses (They are your garments and ye are their garments) and (approach to your wives). Allah told the Muslims that you can have sexual intercourse with each other and women are the cover for their husbands and their husbands are cover for them because each one of them obtains the protection of other. Here Allah gets the Muslims’ attention. These phrases make the Muslims interested in listening because Allah shares some common purposes with them.

3. Pragma-rhetorical devices

A. Understatement

Allah Almighty, in His Glorious Book uses the word “Al-Rafth” “approach your wives” instead of having sexual intercourse to mitigate the speech. The use of this word gives evidence of the gentleness of the Qur’anic text.

Table (1) Results of Speech Acts, Politeness Strategies and Pragma Rhetorical Devices

No	Speech Acts	Fr.	Per.	Politeness strategies	Fr.	Per.	Pragma Rhetorical Devices	Fr.	Per.
١	Ordering	٢	٢٨,٥٧	Minimizing the imposition	٢	٤٢,٨٥	Metaphor	١	%٢.
٢	Asserting	١	١٤,٢٨	Intensifying the hearer's interest	٢	٤٢,٨٥	Understatement	٢	%٢.
٣	Asking	١	١٤,٢٨	Including both the hearer and	١	١٤,٢٨	Rhetorical question	١	%٢.
٤	Stating	3	٤٢,٨٥						
Tot.		٧	١٠٠		٧	١٠٠		٥	١٠٠

Fr.= Frequency

Per.= percentage

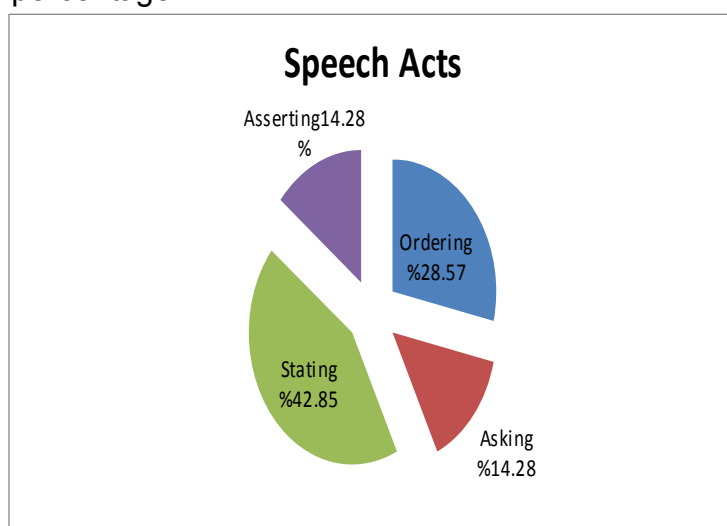


Figure (1) Speech Acts

As it is observed, in figure (1) above, the speech act of stating is highly used .It receives (42.85%). The speech act of ordering

amounts (28.57%). Finally, the speech act of asking and asserting are less frequently and receive the same percentage (14.28%).

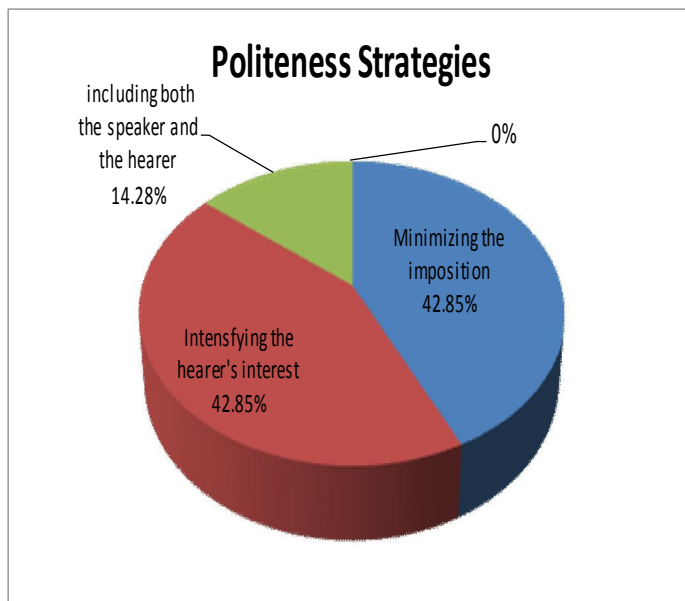


Figure (2) Impoliteness Strategies

According to the table above, the results show that minimizing the imposition and intensifying the hearer's interest receives the highest politeness strategies. It amounts (42.85). While the strategy of including both the speaker and the hearer receives (14.28).

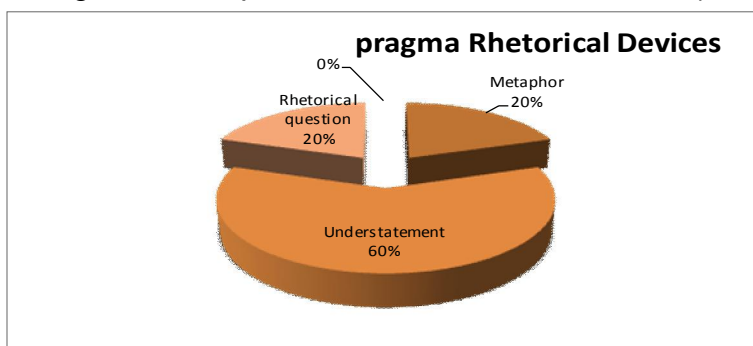


Figure (3) Pragma Rhetorical Devices

As the result show in the table above, Understatement is the most frequently used in the holy Qur'an to mitigate certain situation and also used for the sake of politeness. It is amounted (60%)

percentage. Metaphor and rhetorical questions receive the same amount (20%).

Conclusion

According to the results above, it is concluded that:

- 1- Different speech acts are used to achieve the purpose of mitigation.
- 2- In the glory Qur'an, politeness strategies are utilized to reduce and mitigate unwelcome effects on the hearer.
- 3- As a pragma rhetorical device, Understatement is the most frequently used to mitigate the painful effect.

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