The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook

Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

Department of Missions and Cultural Relations, Fallujah University, Fallujah, Anbar, Iraq

muhammed22286@uofallujah.edu.iq

ABSTRACT:

This study explores the pragmatic functions of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic (henceforth IDA), focusing on how human attributes are assigned to non-human entities in everyday speech. While personification has been widely examined in literary contexts, its role in localized Iraqi digital Arabic discourse remains underexplored. Drawing on Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory, The study design involves qualitative content analysis of natural Iraqi conversations on Facebook. The analysis reveals that assertive and expressive speech acts each constitute 35% of the data, reflecting how personification is used to describe socio-economic conditions and convey emotions. Directive speech acts account for 20%, functioning as indirect advice or warnings, while commissives, comprising 10%, reinforce cultural identity and social cohesion. The findings demonstrate that personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic serves not merely as a stylistic feature but as a communicative tool for expressing frustration, voicing indirect complaints, and strengthening interpersonal interaction. This study contributes to the field of Arabic pragmatics by highlighting the interplay between figurative language and everyday discourse.

REFERENCES:

Abdul-Raof, H. (2006). Arabic rhetoric: A pragmatic analysis. Routledge.

Abdulrazaq, M. F. (2012). A pragmatic study of personification in English neoclassical poetry (Master's thesis, University of Baghdad, Ibn Rushd College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of English Language). University of Baghdad. (Master Thesis).

Abumathkour, H. (2023). Metaphor realization in Jordanian Arabic proverbs: An exploratory study. Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław, 24(2), 191–200. https://doi.org/10.23817/lingtreff.24-12

Austin, J. L. (1962). How to do things with words. Oxford University Press.

Badawi, E., Carter, M., & Gully, A. (2016). Modern written Arabic: A comprehensive grammar. Routledge.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some universals in language usage. Cambridge University Press.

Charteris-Black, J. (2014). Analysing political speeches: Rhetoric, discourse and metaphor. Palgrave Macmillan.

Farghal, M., & Almanna, A. (2014). Some pragmatic aspects of Arabic/English translation of literary texts. Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literature, 6(2), 1-24. Link.

Gibbs, R. W. (1994). The poetics of mind: Figurative thought, language, and understanding. Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor. University of Chicago Press.

Larson, M. L. (1985). Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language. Cambridge University Press.

Vestermark, I. (2007) Metaphors in Politics: A Study of the Metaphorical Personification of America in Political Discourse (Unpublished extended essay) Lulea University of Technology. Department of Languages and Culture.

Introduction

Personification, as a verbal figurative device, is entrenched in banal human communication, wherein human features are projected onto non-human or inanimate entities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As a conceptual strategy, personification moves beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries, making it a widely shared expressive tool.

Within the milieu of Iraqi Digital Arabic, this figurative device is not confined to poetic or literary usage. it instead, works as a communicative strategy in banal talk, making speakers articulate emotions, express cultural values, and manage social interactions in a nuancing fashion (Abu-Rabia, 2017; Al-Azzawi, 2020).

Contrary to its aesthetic function in literary genre, personification in banal spoken digital discourse serves **pragmatic roles**, such as veiled complaint, emotional emphasis, or social urgency. Common expressions like *"السنين تركض"* ("The years are running") and *"يبچي الحجر"* ("Even the stone cries") are not merely rhetorical embellishments. They embody shared cultural understandings and act as performative utterances that align with social and emotional realities (El Refaie, 2003). Such figurative expressions are pragmatic tools for generating intentions and eliciting responses, rather than decorative language alone.

Despite the ubiquitous nature of personification in digital discourse, scholarly attention has largely remained within the boundaries of literary analysis (Abdulrazaq, M. F. 2011); Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Prior research has often emphasized the artistic or stylistic features of personification, overlooking its functional role in digital banal interactions. This creates a notable research gap concerning the pragmatic deployment of personification in digital **spontaneous Iraqi Digital Arabic discourse**, particularly in how these expressions are used to perform illocutionary acts and mediate meaning in real-life interaction.

This study addresses that gap by investigating the pragmatic functions of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic as perceived by Searle's (1969) **Speech Act Theory**, which investigates utterances in terms of their function rather than form. While speech act analysis has been applied to various aspects of Arabic communication, there remains a gap in tackling studies on digital figurative speech acts in Iraqi Digital Arabic, especially with regard to personification.

Accordingly, this research is driven by the need to illuminate how digital figurative expressions like personification fulfill communicative intentions beyond artistic expression. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What types of speech acts do personifications in Iraqi Digital Arabic perform?

- What pragmatic functions does personification serve in digital Iraqi Digital Arabic communication?

- How does context shape the interpretation of these expressions?

To this end, a sample of 20 authentic personification expressions from natural Iraqi Digital Arabic interaction on Facebook platform will be analyzed. This corpus-based inquiry will facilitate an integrated understanding of how such expressions function as **assertives,**

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

directives, expressives, and **commissives**, reflecting not just linguistic structure but also the socio-pragmatic conditions of their use.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To classify the use of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic according to the categories of Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969).

2. To analyze the pragmatic functions that personification fulfills within everyday Iraqi discourse.

3. To explore the influence of contextual variables (e.g., social, cultural, economic) on the interpretation and effect of personified expressions.

By bridging insights from metaphor theory and speech act theory, this study aims to contribute to a fuller understanding of how figurative language functions as a communicative tool in real-world Arabic usage.

Personification is a rhetorical and cognitive linguistic device in which human characteristics are attributed to non-human entities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As a universal linguistic phenomenon, personification is present across various languages and cultures, serving both aesthetic and communicative functions (Gibbs, 1994). While traditionally examined in literary studies, personification is also integral to spoken discourse, where it performs pragmatic functions such as emphasizing emotions, making abstract ideas relatable, and enhancing persuasive communication (Abdulrazaq, M. F. (2012).

In English, common examples of personification include "time waits for no one" or "justice is blind," where abstract concepts (time and justice) are depicted as human-like agents. Similarly, in Arabic, particularly Iraqi Digital Arabic, expressions such as "الزمن غدار" (al-zaman ghaddār, "Time is treacherous") and "الكاع عطشانة" (al-kāʿ ʿaṭshāna, "The land is thirsty") illustrate how temporal and environmental concepts are metaphorically humanized to convey emotion, critique, or urgency (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Linguists have analyzed personification from different theoretical perspectives. Cognitive linguists such as Lakoff and Turner (1989) argue that personification is rooted in conceptual metaphors, where non-human entities are structured in terms of human experience. Meanwhile, pragmatists (e.g., Searle, 1969) examine how personification functions in communication, particularly in speech acts, where it is often used to assert opinions, give warnings, express emotions, or persuade others (Farghal & Almanna, 2014). **This study adopts Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory as its analytical framework to investigate the pragmatic roles of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic discourse.**

In his "A Pragmatic Study of Personification in English Neoclassical Poetry", Abdulrazaq, M. F. (2011) conducted a key study of personification in literary discourse where he examines how personification in English Neoclassical poetry serves as more than just an aesthetic technique because it functions as a communication platform which delivers three distinct speech types: assertives and expressives together with commissives. His research about written poetry explores personification effects on pragmatic force which translates to spoken languages particularly in Iraqi Digital Arabic. This research crafts a foundation to evaluate the

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse
on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

pragmatic nature of personification within daily spoken Iraqi Digital Arabic discourse which forms the focus of this study.

Linguistics utilizes personification in two distinct functions.

1. Aesthetic Role – as a stylistic device in literature and poetry (Abdulrazaq, 2011).

2. Spoken discourse (digital or real) makes use of personification as a pragmatic functional linguistic tool (Farghal & Almann

The research investigates this subject further by concentrating on functional aspects of personification in specific contexts. The pragmatic functions of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic discourse will be examined on banal Facebookplatform interaction.

2. Personification in Arabic Linguistics

2.2.1 Studies on Figurative Language in Arabic

Figurative language, including personification, metonymy and metaphor, constitutes a critical role in Arabic communication and is entrenched in both literary and spoken discourse. Abdul-Raof (2006) remarks that Arabic retains a resourceful rhetorical legacy where figurative language is used not only aesthetic but also communicative. The Holy Qur'an as well as Arabic poetry extensively utilize personification together with metaphor and metonymy. (Eharif, 2015).

Research has been steadily accumulating about personification in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and dialectal Arabic. According to Abdul-Raof (2006) personification within the Arabic language system functions to provide three essential benefits: increased meaning intensity and stimulation of empathy and strengthened rhetorical effect. The authors show how speakers of Arabic use personifications of time along with fate and objects to communicate emotions indirectly as a primary dialectal usage technique.

A research conducted by Abumathkour 2023 investigates metaphorical expansions in Arabic proverbs which show personification as a common technique for converting abstract notions into humanlike entities. The Arabic idiom "الوكت غدار" (al-wakt ghaddār, "Time is treacherous") embodies the linguistic habit of giving sentient qualities to nonliving things to understand life's destinies and unpredictable and adverse events.

2.2.2 Differences Between Literary and Spoken Personification

While literary personification in Arabic is extensively documented in classical poetry, religious texts, and philosophical writings, spoken personification remains a largely understudied area. In literary Arabic, personification is more structured and metaphorically elaborate, often serving aesthetic or moralistic functions (Abdulrazaq 2011). It is commonly found in majāz (figurative speech), Qur'anic rhetoric, and formal oratory.

Conversely, spoken Arabic dialect of Iraqi Digital Arabic applies personification primarily for day-to-day as an interactional tool. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) explain that everyday discourse employs personification through figurative speech when speakers aim to reduce directness and

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

enhance emotional strength and adapt abstract messages for better understanding. Literary personification displays a grand and poetic quality but spoken personification keeps its expressions brief while being anchored in social situations and contextual requirements (ibid).

Local Iraqis are found to use the expression "السوق نايم" (al-sūq nāyim, "The market is asleep") to show there is little economic activity although they do not specifically mention the term "economic activity." More richly, the expression "يبچي الحجر" (yibchī al-ḥajar) serves as a hyperbolic form through which someone could express overwhelming grief making such emotions more relatable to humans (Abdulrazaq 2011).

2.2.3 The Unique Features of Iraqi Arabic in Using Personification

Personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic is indirectly embedded in everyday contact. It reveals the way Iraqis engage with abstraction, communicate feelings and manage social realities. The humanization of time, economic conditions, and even inanimate objects, leads to the ability of speakers to express complex emotions and emphasize cultural values and implicit criticism (Abdul-Raof, 2006). Such expressions are multidimensional, strongly influenced by historical, sociopolitical, and economic contexts, and as such personification can be a profound communicative tool in Iraqi localized discourse.

Time along with fate receive human characteristics in the linguistic landscape of Iraqi Digital Arabic. People in Iraq humanize time in a fashion that creates an active element which remains unpredictable in its interactions with their daily lives. People often use the popular phrase "(الوكت غدار alwakit ghaddār" to describe how time operates as a dangerous element that causes unanticipated difficulties. According to cultural tradition people view life events as beyond control so they attribute this concept of destiny to time as a deceptive force.

Personification plays an essential part in economic and social expressions within the Iraqi Digital Arabic language. The economy receives frequent description as if it behaved just like a responsive living system. Using the phrase "السوق واقف" (al-sūq wāqif, "The market is standing still") enables us to describe economic stagnation in an efficient manner without needing financial data. Through personification speakers can turn vague economic conditions into concrete concepts that people can understand more easily thus expressing financial concerns swiftly (Abdulrazaq 2012).

The multiple linguistic patterns demonstrate Iraqi Digital Arabic has a substantial pragmatic value in personification. Personification serves multiple purposes for the Iraqi Digital Arabic language through media discourse, folklore poetry, everyday conversations and proverbs to express messages indirectly while preserving cultural heritage. Social and cultural belief systems connected to figurative speech and pragmatic meaning form a comprehensive foundation of Iraqi Digital Arabic language studies (ibid).

2.3 Pragmatics and Personification

The analysis of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic surpasses its aesthetic purpose because it serves important pragmatic functions when used in daily conversations. Pragmatics serves as an analytical framework for studying personification in Iraqi discourse because it investigates language use beyond the literal meaning according to contextual situations as outlined by Abdul-Raof (2006). The communicative functions of personification receive analysis through Searle Speech Act Theory (1969).

2.3.1 Speech Act Theory and Personification

According Speech Act Theory, developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), language is not merely used to describe reality but also to perform actions. In Iraqi Digital Arabic, personification frequently functions as a speech act, allowing speakers to express attitudes, issue warnings, or make implicit statements about reality (Abumathkour 2023).

2.4 Iraqi Digital Arabic and Cultural Context

The use of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic is deeply influenced by linguistic, cultural, and social factors that shape everyday communication. Unlike Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Iraqi Digital Arabic incorporates vernacular expressions, idiomatic speech, and figurative language, making personification a prominent feature in informal discourse.

2.4.1 Linguistic Features That Influence Personification

Iraqi Digital Arabic, like many spoken Arabic dialects, is highly metaphorical and relies on expressive speech patterns. Due to its historical interactions with multiple languages (e.g Persian, Turkish, and Aramaic), it has developed unique metaphorical expressions that frequently personify abstract ideas (Abdul-Raof, 2006). This influence is evident in expressions like "الوكت غدار" (al-wakit ghaddār, "Time is treacherous"), where time is personified as a deceitful agent, a linguistic strategy used to convey fatalistic beliefs about life and destiny.

2.4.2 Cultural Beliefs and Social Norms in Personification

Personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic derives from cultural stories and religious teachings and oral tradition development, where personificational expressions originate from Islamic and folkloric stories which use human characteristics to explain inanimate things and natural elements and abstract concepts for wisdom and ethical lessons. Through "يبجي الحجر" (yibchī al-ḥajar "Even the stone cries") lyric expressions achieve hypertrophic emotional effect when used for conveying strong sadness or injustice (Abdul-Raof, 2006).

Being inherent in Iraqi Digital Arabic, humor personification is often used to create comedic or sarcastic effects. Saying "السوك نايم" (al-sūq nāyim, "The market is asleep") is a lighthearted way of describing economic downturns without resorting to harsh criticism. These linguistic tendencies illustrate how cultural beliefs, humor, and pragmatics work together to make personification a flexible and socially embedded feature of Iraqi Digital Arabic ((Abdul-Raof , 2006).

III. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to investigate the pragmatic functions of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic, drawing on authentic, naturally occurring Facebook discourse. The aim is to understand how personification is pragmatically utilized in digital discourse within a culturally specific context. This approach enables the analysis of nuanced linguistic behavior, particularly the communicative intentions behind figurative expressions.

3.1 Research Approach

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

Given that personification is a context-sensitive and figurative linguistic phenomenon, the study utilizes a qualitative, interpretive approach that allows for the close examination of language in its social setting. This approach is particularly suited to identifying implicit meanings, speaker intentions, and socio-pragmatic influences.

The study is anchored in **Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1975)**, which provides a framework for classifying utterances not solely based on grammatical structure, but according to the illocutionary acts they perform. The classification involves four main speech act types:

- **Assertives** (statements conveying belief or opinion),

- **Directives** (requests, commands),

- **Expressives** (emotional expressions),

- **Commissives** (promises, commitments).

Each instance of personification is analyzed to determine its primary illocutionary force within the interactional context.

3.2 Data Collection

The dataset comprises 20 authentic examples of personification used in Iraqi Digital Arabic Facebook discourse, where personification frequently appears in user-generated content.

Screenshots of these posts were collected and archived. All examples selected reflect spontaneous, unrehearsed language use to ensure authenticity. No elicitation or manipulation of data occurred, preserving the natural communicative environment in which personification expressions appear.

Ethical Note: Consistent with research ethics and due to difficulty reaching out and seeking individual consent from all related Facebook posters and in a bid to avoid a research paradox, the names and account details of the related Facebook posters have fully been anonymized. In addition, any potentially offensive or culturally inappropriate content was excluded from the dataset to reserve the due respect of socio-cultural sensitivities.

3.3 Data Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify and select expressions that clearly illustrate the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- The expression must involve explicit personification, attributing human characteristics to inanimate or abstract entities.

- The utterance must occur in a naturally occurring communicative context (i.e., not scripted, poetic, or literary).

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

- The instance must be classifiable under one or more of the Speech Act Theory categories (assertive, directive, expressive, commissive).

The selection process aimed to maximize variety in both function and context, covering a spectrum of social situations and speaker intentions. This ensured a balanced and representative corpus for pragmatic analysis.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

Each selected example was subjected to contextual pragmatic analysis. The procedure involved:

- Identifying the form and content of the personification.

- Describing the social and interactional context in which it occurred.

- Interpreting the communicative function using the Speech Act Theory framework.

- Classifying each utterance accordingly and discussing its socio-pragmatic implications.

This analytical model provides both a structural and functional understanding of how personification operates pragmatically in Iraqi Digital Arabic, revealing how speakers use it to navigate emotional, social, and relational dynamics.

IV. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Analytical Framework

The Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969) is applied to categorize each instance of personification based on its pragmatic function**.**

4.2 Data Analysis

This section will carry out the analysis of 20 representative examples of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic using Speech Act Theory (SAT) (Searle, 1969, Austin, 1962). Each expression is examined individually to determine whether it functions as an assertive, expressive, directive, or commissive speech act.

1. السنين تركض (al-sinīn tarkuḍ, "The years are running")

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This expression describes the rapid passage of time, implying that life moves too quickly for people to fully grasp it. It serves as an assertion of reality rather than an attempt to influence the listener's behavior. It may also carry an expressive undertone, particularly when used in nostalgic or regretful contexts.

2. السوق واكف (al-sūq wāqif, "The market is standing still")

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This phrase describes economic stagnation by personifying the market as a motionless human being. It is used in conversations about financial hardships, lack of demand, or economic recession, asserting the current state of affairs rather than instructing or expressing emotions.

3. الوضع تعبان (al-waḍʿ taʿbān, "The situation is sick/tired")

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This phrase describes the state of political, economic, or social instability, portraying the situation as a weak or ill person. It serves as a factual statement about hardships but can also imply an indirect complaint, about social and economic or security conditions.

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

4. يبجي الحجر (yibchī al-ḥajar, "Even the stone cries")

Speech Act Type: Expressive

This hyperbolic expression of grief suggests overwhelming sadness that even inanimate objects would be moved to tears. It primarily serves an expressive function, emphasizing intense sorrow, regret, or distress, making the situation more relatable to the addressee.

5. ابن شارع (ibn shāriʿ, "Son of the street")

Speech Act Type: Assertive / Expressive

This phrase labels someone as ill-mannered or improperly raised, equating being "of the street" with a lack of discipline. It serves as an assertion of a perceived reality but also conveys a strong emotional reaction, making it partially expressive as well.

6. يعاند الحايط (yaʿānd al-ḥāyiṭ, "Argues with the wall")

Speech Act Type: Expressive

This phrase describes an extremely stubborn or opinionated person, attributing human-like argumentative behavior to an inanimate object. It expresses frustration, disapproval, or criticism, making it an expressive speech act.

7. السوق نايم (al-sūq wāqif, "The market is asleep")

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This is a repeated phrase from earlier, reinforcing its role as an assertive speech act—stating economic conditions without instructing or requesting action.

8. الكاع عطشانة (al-kāʿ ʿaṭshāna, "The land is thirsty")

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This phrase personifies the land as a being experiencing thirst, describing drought or dry conditions. It asserts environmental reality but can also serve as a poetic complaint about poor agricultural conditions.

9. الوكت غدار (al-wakit ghaddār, "Time is treacherous")

Speech Act Type: Directive / Expressive

This phrase serves as a warning about the unpredictability of time and life's uncertainties. It is both expressive (conveying regret or fear) and directive (cautioning the listener to be careful about trusting time/life).

10. البيت بدونكم كئيب(**al-bayt min dūnakum kaʾīb, "The house is bleak without you"**)

Speech Act Type: Expressive

This phrase attributes human-like emotions to a house, expressing loneliness and longing for absent loved ones. It is purely expressive, emphasizing emotion rather than fact or action.

11. الامور ما تبشر بخير (**al-umūr mā tubashshir bi-khayr, "The matters do not give good omens"**)

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This expression predicts negative outcomes, framing situations as agents of bad news. It asserts reality with a pessimistic tone. It can also be directive (cautioning the listener to act heedfully and carefully in the near future).

12. الحب اعمى (**al-ḥubb aʿmā, "Love is blind"**)

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This common expression asserts that love disregards logic and reason, attributing blindness to an abstract emotion. It does not seek to influence behavior, making it purely assertive.

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

13. (الحر قتلنا)(al-ḥarr qatalnā, "The heat killed us")

Speech Act Type: Expressive

A hyperbolic complaint about extreme heat, this phrase conveys discomfort and suffering, making it expressive.

14. كتله الفكر (kitalah al-fikr, "He is murdered by poverty")

Speech Act Type: Expressive

Another hyperbolic phrase, this expression personifies poverty as a killer, expressing severe financial distress.

15. اخو الجديد (akhū al-jadīd, "The semi-new is the brother of a new commodity")

Speech Act Type: Assertive

This phrase asserts a belief about the quality of items, equating "semi-new" with "new" in a familial metaphor. This assertive speech act can be a marketing strategy in the marketplace in a bid to lure buyers especially when the sold commodity is of poor quality.

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse
on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

16. ابن خير (ibn khayr, "Son of goodness")

Speech Act Type: Commissive

This cultural identity marker asserts that someone comes from a good, generous background, influencing their future actions.

17. ابن فكر (ibn fikr, "Son of misery")

Speech Act Type: Expressive/ Assertive

This phrase is derogatory and implies disdain. It reflects that one's early impoverished life badly affects his subsequent behavior, making him ill-mannered individual.

18. ابن بغداد (ibn Baghdād, "Son of Baghdad")

Speech Act Type: Commissive

This phrase asserts one's cultural heritage and identity, reinforcing Baghdadian pride and social belonging.

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

19. ابن سوك (ibn sūq, "Son of the market")

حرب إيه الي انت گاي تئول عليه
إنت عارف ثبلى معنى الحرب إيه
لماتتكلم عليه ....حرب إيه إيه
إلي انت گاي تئول عليه
ترامب ابن سوگ يعرف ان خبرا مثل هذا سيحرك اسواق
البورصا العالمية ..وبالتالي ربحله كم مليار .....وهو گاعد
يكرز فستق حلبي امام شاشة التلفزيون بمكتبه ......
يابن اللعيبة .

Speech Act Type: Assertive / Expressive

This phrase labels someone as vulgar, unrefined, or poorly raised, serving both as a description and a form of emotional disapproval.

20. اخذنه الوكت (akhadhnā al-wakit, "Time has taken us")

غفله أخذنه الوكت
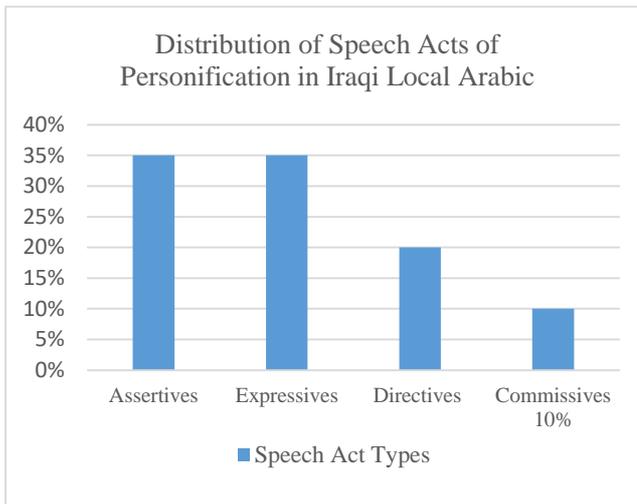(يا بو بلم
عشاري)...

Speech Act Type: Expressive

This expresses nostalgia or regret, describing how time has passed too quickly and changed people's circumstances.

V. Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

The analysis of 20 instances of personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic using Searle's 1969 Speech Act Theory (SAT) reveals significant patterns in how figurative language serves pragmatic functions in everyday discourse. The findings indicate that personification is not merely a literary or stylistic device but a crucial tool for communication, social interaction and cultural expression.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The recurrent use of assertive and expressive speech acts by (70%) indicates that Iraqi-used personification is oriented to express socio-political realities and humanize emotions. The 20% occurrence of directives highlights the role of personification in offering advice and warnings, while commissives (10%) demonstrate its function in reinforcing identity and cultural values. The graphical representation below illustrates the percentage distribution of each speech act category, confirming that Iraqi Digital Arabic personification is deeply embedded in everyday discourse for both expressive and pragmatic.

Distribution of Speech Acts of Personification in Iraqi Local Arabic

(Chart: bar chart showing Assertives 35%, Expressives 35%, Directives 20%, Commissives 10%, with Y-axis from 0% to 40% in 5% increments. Legend: ■ Speech Act Types)

The present study shares some findings with Abdulrazaq, M. F. (2012), *A Pragmatic Study of Personification in English Neoclassical Poetry*, though key distinctions become clear when one considers the difference in genre and the theoretical tools applied. This research investigates naturally occurring digital personifications in Iraqi Digital Arabic, relying on Speech Act Theory, while Abdulrazaq's work applies Larson's (1985) model of meaning components to literary texts from the Neoclassical literary period, wherein their respective contexts reflect meaningful variation shaped by genre, research methodology, intent, and cultural framing.

In the poetic sphere with particular mention to the Neoclassical period, personification was predominantly used for beauty, deep emotion, abstraction, or philosophical thinking. It offers means of expressing imaginative thoughts in formal literary structures bound by rigorous rules or metaphorical language. On the other hand, Iraqi Digital Arabic is more contextual with its use of personification—often pragmatic and socially resonant tied to belonging, emotions, or life commentary.

Consistent with Searle's classification of speech acts, this study demonstrates that there are four main functions attributed to personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic. The most dominant are assertives and expressives which account for 35% each. They are then followed by 20% directives and 10% commissives. Unlike their counterparts inspired by poetry, these forms are not employed to add embellishment; rather they serve as structural layers to interactions in day-to-day exchanges steeped with emotions such as reality, reasoning behind actions and reactions disguised as subtle speech laden with rich significance.

In contrast, in Ida Vestermark's (2007) seminal study titled "Metaphor in Politics: A Study of the Metaphorical Personification of America in Political Discourse" where politically motivated speech and ideology through the lens of personification of America was investigate. Additionally, Conceptual Metaphorical Theory (CMT) (1980) was adopted where nation as a person was analyzed. Group solidarity, unifying communitarian values, or preemptive moral positioning would be portrayed using personification. Consider the example of political language "The nation will not rest until justice is served," which implies a nation can morally act as one with consciousness. As Vestermark (2007) observed, such instances of politics

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

personification serve strategy, because they seek to cognitively bolster power or sway audiences, it is done strategically.

Iraqi dialect Arabic uses more emotionally charged expressives that are intimately tied to ordinary life rather than starkly political rationales.

Illustrating these differences in Iraqi Digital Arabic, which has a number of remarkable features. An assertive like "السوق واكف" ("The market is standing still") gives an allegorical description of economic stagnation while, "الوضع تعبان" ("The situation is sick") expresses more generalized social anger. The use of such expressions stems from cultural norms where critics strive to remain tactful and non-confrontational.
Likewise, expressive personifications also serve a similar purpose with phrases like " يبچي الحجر" "البيت من دونكم كئيب" ("Even the stone cries"), which display deep sorrow and grief; or, "البيت من دونكم كئيب" ("The house is gloomy without you.") Further shows nostalgic emptiness laden with emotions. These utterances illustrate sentiments as well as engender collective bonds.

"Directive phrases utilize interaction." For instance, "الوكت غدار" ("Time is treacherous") gives a warning about life's uncertainty in a roundabout way. Also unwise stubbornness can be captured in "يعاند الحايط" ("He argues with the wall"). With these expressions, culturally delicate counsel can be offered more freely without fear of overstepping because politeness reigns supreme. Less common are the commissives 'ابن بغداد' ('Son of Baghdad') and 'ابن خير' ('Son of goodness'). These do, however underscore identity and moral value which reminds one how also political discourse uses personification to forge allegiance, virtue, and love for one's country.

To sum up, although personification is a common stylistic feature across all genres, its purpose and impact vary with environment. In English neoclassical poetry, it adds to the richness of literature as well as the philosophy of the genre. On the other hand, in Iraqi Digital Arabic, personification functions more like a social resource connected to everyday social life communication which revolves around the relationship, identity shift, and non-verbal discourse.

5.2 Conclusion

Personification analysis in digital Iraqi Digital Arabic reveals multiple uses in communication through Searle' 1969 Speech Act Theory (SAT) since it enables emotional expression and real-life description and shares warnings indirectly and maintains cultural links. The usage of personification focuses mainly on assertive and expressive speech acts which

make up 35% of instances respectively. These speech acts demonstrate economic and social conditions ("السوق واكف", "The market is standing still") alongside expressives that intensify emotional experiences ("يبچي الحجر", "Even the stone cries"). The results support the figurative and emotional characteristics that define Iraqi Digital Arabic discourse techniques.

The 20% directive speech acts clarify how personification delivers instructions through subtle warnings which appear as "الوكت غدار" and "Time is treacherous." The examples exhibit both the strengthening of graciousness and the maintenance of vague communication approaches within Iraqi context. Social declarations labeled as commissives (10%) build cultural identity

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

and social belonging among the population through statements like "ابن بغداد" indicating heredity and mutual societal beliefs.

In a nutshell, personification in Iraqi Digital Arabic is entrenched in banal speech, shaping discourse in terms of expressiveness, indirectness, and cultural identity. These findings contribute to Arabic pragmatics, showing that figurative language serves essential communicative functions beyond aesthetics. Future research may explore regional dialectal variations or analyze personification in Arabic digital discourse for further insights.

5.3 Implications

Expressives typically indicate that figurative language is entrenched in the linguistic system of Iraqi Digital Arabic, where typical Arabic phrases serve as the main language tool which Iraqi localized speakers use to share their feelings and life stories.

In addition, the common occurrence of directives indicates that personification serves as an alternative and polite approach to providing counsel or alerting others. The usage of commissives stands as evidence that language serves to reinforce culture and social identities even though they are somewhat scarce. The analysis crafts foundational knowledge about personification usage in Arabic pragmatics which will enable further studies about figurative language in localized Middle Eastern discourse contexts.

مجلة كلية المعارف الجامعة

The Pragmatic Roles of Personification in Iraqi Arabic: A Study of Everyday Digital Discourse
on Facebook
Muhammed F. Abdulrazaq

الأدوار البراغماتية للتشخيص في اللهجة العراقية: دراسة للخطاب الرقمي اليومي على منصة فيسبوك

محمد فزع عبدالرزاق

قسم البعثات والعلاقات الثقافية، جامعة الفلوجة، الفلوجة، الانبار، العراق

muhammed22286@uofallujah.edu.iq

الملخص:

أُجري هذا البحث لاستكشاف الوظائف البراغماتية لمفهوم التشخيص في اللهجة العراقية المحلية، وهو أسلوب خطابي تمنح فيه صفات إنسانية للجمادات أو المفاهيم المجردة. وعلى الرغم من أن الدراسات الأدبية قد درست التشخيص على نطاق واسع، إلا أن الباحثين لم يتطرقوا في وظيفته في التداول المحلية المنطوق يوميا عبر منصة فيسبوك، سيما اللهجة العراقية. يستخدم البحث نظرية أفعال الكلام لسيرل (١٩٦٩) لتفسير وظيفة وسائل التشخيص المكتشفة في التواصل الطبيعي. استخدم البحث ٢٠ تعبيراً تشخيصياً مستمدة من حوارات اللغة العربية العراقية المحلية المستمدة من اتصالات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والتبادلات الثقافية التقليدية. تؤكد نتائج البحث مؤشراً على أن تعبيرات التشخيص العراقية تميل في المقام الأول إلى أن تكون توكيدية (٣٥%)، حيث يستخدم العراقيون هذه الأداة المجازية لوصف الحقائق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية. كما تبين أن أفعال الكلام التشخيصية التعبيرية تمثل (٣٥%) تجارب عاطفية. وكما وُجد ايضا أن أفعال الكلام التشخيصية التوجيهي (٢٠%) والإلزامي (١٠%) تُستخدم كتحذيرات غير مباشرة وكذلك لتأكيد الهوية الثقافية. كما يُظهر البحث أيضًا أن التجسيد ليس مجرد زينة لغوية، بل له وظائف تواصلية، حيث تُنقل المشاعر الإنسانية، كالإحباط، وصياغة الشكاوى غير المباشرة، وتعزيز التفاعل الاجتماعي، عبر التجسيد. ويُعد هذا البحث شهادة إضافية على البراغماتية العربية، حيث تتفاعل اللغة المجازية والخطاب الاجتماعي من جديد.