

## Wartime Reporting: A Cross-Linguistic Investigation of Arabic and English Press Headlines on the Gaza Conflict

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الخطاب الصحفي في زمن الحرب: دراسة مقارنة بين عناوين الصحف العربية والإنجليزية حول الصراع في غزة

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### Abstract

Media discourse plays a central role in shaping public perceptions, particularly during times of crisis and conflict, where language functions as a powerful tool of influence. Since there is a shortage of the cross-linguistic studies about pragmatic meaning construction, the present research is considered a comparative pragmatic study. It aims to investigate how pragmatic mechanisms are used in media headlines about the war in Gaza to construct particular perspectives and reflect evaluative meaning. It also examines how these mechanisms contribute to the construction of meaning and framing across Arabic and English newspaper headlines. The researcher adopts an eclectic pragmatic model for the analysis that combines Austin's (1962) speech act, Grice's (1975) implicature and lexico-pragmatic strategies for Allan and Burridge (1991), together with Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse markers to examine the interactional meaning construction. The data set consists of ten selected headlines, together with four comments for each headline. The analysis reveals that both datasets indicate a high reliance on the conversational implicature mechanism and the dysphemism strategy to convey the propositional content. However, the employment of such mechanisms differs across headlines and between the two languages, depending on the nature of the issue being presented. It concludes that because headlines are constrained by space, conversational implicature plays a central role in headline construction. It contributes to the understanding that the language of headlines is not always neutral, but every lexical choice has its pragmatic weight. Keywords: Wartime Reporting, Cross-Linguistic Study, Pragmatics, Arabic Press Headlines, English Press Headlines, Gaza Conflict

### المستخلص

يلعب الخطاب الإعلامي دورًا مركزيًا في تشكيل التصورات العامة، خاصة في أوقات الأزمات والصراعات، حيث تعمل اللغة كأداة قوية للتأثير فيها، ونظرًا لوجود شحة في الدراسات عبر الثقافات المختلفة لبناء المعنى البراغماتي، فإن البحث الحالي يُعتبر دراسة براغماتية مقارنة تهدف إلى دراسة كيفية استخدام الاستراتيجيات البراغماتية في عناوين وسائل الإعلام حول الحرب في غزة لبناء وجهات نظر معينة وعكس معنى تقييمي. كما تدرس كيف تساهم هذه الاستراتيجيات في بناء المعنى والتأطير عبر عناوين الصحف العربية والإنجليزية. اعتمد الباحث في تحليله نموذجًا عمليًا انتقائيًا يجمع بين فعل الكلام لأوستن (1962)، والتضمين الضمني لكرايس (1975) والاستراتيجيات المعجمية والبراغماتية لآلان وبوريدج (1991)، جنبًا إلى جنب مع علامات ما وراء الخطاب لهايلاند (2005) للوصول إلى بناء المعنى التفاعلي. تتألف مجموعة البيانات من عشرة عناوين مختارة، بالإضافة إلى أربعة تعليقات لكل عنوان صحفي. يكشف التحليل أن مجموعتي البيانات تشير إلى اعتماد كبير على آلية التضمين التخاطبي واستراتيجية التقييد لنقل المحتوى الفكري. على كل حال، فإن استخدام مثل هذه الآليات يختلف عبر العناوين الرئيسية وكذلك بين اللغتين، اعتمادًا

على طبيعة القضية المطروحة. كما يخلص إلى انه نظرًا لأن العناوين الرئيسية مقيدة بالمساحة، فإن التضمين التخاطبي يلعب دورًا مركزيًا في بناء العناوين الرئيسية. وهذا يساهم في فهم أن لغة العناوين ليست محايدة دائماً، ولكن كل اختيار معجمي له وزنه البراغماتي. الكلمات المفتاحية: تقارير زمن الحرب، دراسة متعددة اللغات، البراغماتية، عناوين الصحافة العربية، عناوين الصحافة الإنجليزية، أزمة غزة

## 1. Introduction

The study of pragmatics provides valuable insights into how language is strategically employed to convey implicit meanings, assert authority, shape discourse, and affect perception. Birner (2013:1) indicates that to know the real intended meaning behind someone's utterance, it is not sufficient to know the literal meaning of the words and how they are put together to form a sentence. But rather, to look at how meaning is influenced by a variety of factors, including the speaker, the context, their purposes, and any additional meanings that listeners can fairly infer, which is the domain of pragmatics. Busà (2014:129) clarifies that readers are influenced by the writer's word choices that reflect "the writer's attitudes, point of view and personality traits. She further argues that language can introduce events fairly and neutrally or, alternatively, in a biased and distorted manner. This highlights the importance of choosing words in exercising power over readers, which is a central function of media discourse. However, the present study focuses on the newspaper, with particular attention to the language of headlines and the power that it exercises on readers. In this regard, Sánchez Macarro (cited in O'Keeffe, 2006:1) illustrates that "as individuals we are all influenced, our opinions shaped, reinforced and altered by our exposure to the media. It may affect readers by framing events pragmatically through using lexical choices that trigger implicature, or euphemism, and dysphemism.

### 1.2 The Problem of the Study

The present study emphasizes the role of pragmatics in constructing meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words through various persuasive mechanisms. As during times of crisis and conflict, the media represent a strategic communicative environment where language is wielded as a powerful tool. Understanding how linguistic power is employed in this context and how it differs across languages and cultures can reveal deeper dimensions of media influence on collective awareness. Despite many previous studies that analysed newspaper headlines using pragmatic and discourse-analytic approaches, most of these works had focused on general political or local events, with little attention to the Gaza war. Moreover, existing studies tend to examine headlines in either Arabic or English, but not in both languages in a comparative framework. Thus, there is an absence of cross-linguistic investigation of pragmatic meaning construction. It addresses the following questions:

1. How do newspaper headlines about the Gaza war use pragmatic strategies and persuasive mechanisms, including implicature, euphemism and dysphemism, to shape readers' perception and to convey implied meaning?
2. What role does pragmatics play in constructing power relations in newspaper headlines covering Gaza's war?
3. What differences can be observed between Arabic and English pragmatic strategies that are used to construct the newspapers' headlines on the Gaza war?

### 1.3 The Aims of the Study

The study aims to investigate how pragmatic tactics are used in media headlines about the war in Gaza to construct particular perspectives and evaluative meaning. It also aims examine how these strategies contribute to the construction of meaning and framing across Arabic and English newspaper headlines.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Implicature

Birner (2013:1) claims that speakers/writers may imply more meaning than what they explicitly stated, and it's up to their addressees to infer what they might have intended. This is what Grice (1989:25) calls "implicature", which is used as a term for utterance content that the speaker intentionally implies but does not say or state. He (1989:26) distinguishes two types of implicature. These are conversational implicature, a context-dependent implied meaning that does not affect the truth of what is said, and conventional implicature, a non-truth-conditional meaning that remains the same regardless of context. This means that while conversational implicature depends on context, relying on shared contextual knowledge to accurately interpret the speaker's intended meaning, conventional implicature, on the other hand, is consistently attached to a particular linguistic expression, such as but, therefore, even, not yet, etc., regardless of context (Birner, 2013:66).

### 2.2 Dysphemism

According to Spears (1981:xxvi), dysphemism refers to a word that has been intentionally altered or chosen to convey negative, offensive, or socially taboo associations. Additionally, dysphemism is the antonym of euphemism which is generally prohibited and sometimes motivated by fear, dislike, hatred and disdain (Allan and Burrige,2006:31). Allan and Burrige (1991:26) explain that the choice of words, like calling Abu Nidhal a freedom fighter or a terrorist, is influenced by the connotations of the terms, with terrorist serving as a dysphemism to convey negativity. Gómez (2012:44,57) concludes that euphemism and dysphemism should not be reduced merely to lexical substitution, as the traditional works viewed them as simple replacements of taboo words, he later argues that they are complex linguistic and pragmatic processes. Specifically, they function as speech acts in which speakers use various lexical, linguistic, and paralinguistic strategies within a specific social and contextual setting to either neutralize or intensify a forbidden term.

### 2.3 Power and Media Discourse

Language has the power to shift the direction of attention and affect another through the use of words. Language “is a powerful tool in the hands of writers”, as Busà (2014:129) describes it, particularly for media reporters. Additionally, Habermas (cited in Smith and Higgins 2020:10) notes that language serves as a tool for social power and dominance, helping to legitimize organized power relations. Wrong (2017:2) defines power as the ability to influence others. Consequently, while language is used to exercise power in many social contexts, the media is one of the most crucial settings where this power is both created and challenged, giving rise to media discourse. Furthermore, language acquires power both from the context in which it is used and from the user’s skills in manipulating it effectively. Because linguistic acts can have real social consequences, many countries regulate certain forms of language use by people in both spoken and written communication (Mooney and Evans 2015:14). Pragmatics plays a significant role as it concerns not only understanding meaning in context, but moreover, as Mey (2009:27) observes, enables us to comprehend how language exercises power by producing discriminatory effects across diverse social contexts. So, understanding pragmatic strategies enables language users to identify the communicative intention and its effects particularly in headlines which are the focus of the present study

### 2.4 Newspapers Headlines and Their Role as Discursive Tools

Newspapers play a crucial role as mediators of events occurring in the world, particularly in reporting, sketching, and offering a view of political, societal and criminal international conflicts. The important part in any newspaper is its headlines, which are regarded as an effective linguistic tools that practically affect readers' perceptions, interpretations, and assessments of news events. Busà (2014:80) considers headline writing to be one of the most creative aspects of journalism because headlines need to be concise, informative and at the same time attractive. They are, as Smith and Higgins (2020:97) explain, “the hook that attracts readers to pick up the paper or pause at that page”.Eva (2009:10) and Smith and Higgins (2020:97) present one constraint of the creation of a headline that makes its structure unique, that is constrained by the limitation of space. Since the space of a headline is very limited within newspaper, it requires specific word usage, which means only significant words are used to convey meaning or information. Such constraint makes pragmatics crucial in conveying meaning, as headline writers can evoke particular associations, attitudes, or evaluations without stating them explicitly. Hence, headlines represent pragmatic strategies that are used to explain how meaning and intention are shaped and inferred by readers and how events are seen and understood.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research design

The present study is a mixed method research, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive pragmatic analysis of the language used in newspaper headlines that covered the Gaza war, particularly focusing on the period of the beginning of the conflict from the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 and extending to the end of 2025. Thus, the main goal of employing both methods of analysis is to ensure the validity of study’s findings and conclusions. According to Creswell (2009:188), using only quantitative or qualitative methodologies may not be sufficient to meet the complexity of the study. The present study employs purposeful sampling, whereby 10 headlines are selected from two newspapers, five headlines from each newspaper. The newspaper selected include العربي الجديد (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed) from Qatar and **Washington Post** from the United States of America. Hence, the data are not randomly selected; rather, they were chosen purposefully to address the research problem and answer the questions of the study. This is what Yin (2016:339) calls a purposive sample in which the selection of data sources for a study is based on their expected richness and relevance to the research topic.

### 3.2 The Eclectic Model

Many previous studies employed Speech Act Theory (SAT) to guide the process of data analysis, particularly focusing on Searle’s taxonomy of speech acts. The current study, however, adopts Austin’s (1962) original classification of speech acts as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts to examine the force and the effect of language in the particular context that is used in newspaper headlines. It further integrates Grice’s (1975) implicature theory along with the pragmatic mechanisms, together with euphemism, dysphemism, and Hyland’s (2005) metadiscourse markers. Overall, the components of this model are systematically arranged in a way that shows how pragmatic elements collectively reveal the effect and power of language. Furthermore, this model is employed to uncover how headline writers use various pragmatic strategies to frame the Gaza conflict and convey implied meanings and guide the process of data analysis in a systematic and sequential way

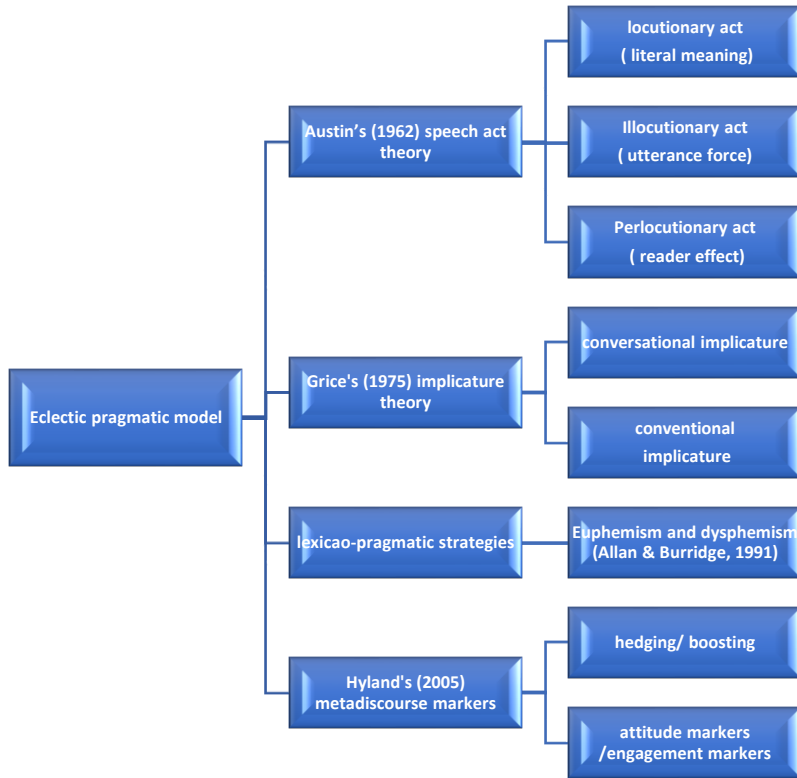


Figure 3.1: The Eclectic Pragmatic Analytical Model

#### 4. Data Analysis

##### 4.1 Qualitative analysis

##### 4.1.1 The Washington Post [Washington Post on Facebook \(official\)](#)

##### 1- How Israel’s invasion has shattered lives, livelihoods and learning in Gaza

[Washington Post](#) | [Facebook](#)

At the locutionary level, the headline takes the form of a rhetorical interrogative structure, but it does not end with a question mark. It describes the Israeli’s invasion as an agent that has shattered lives, livelihoods, and learning in Gaza. At the illocutionary level, the headline is an assertive speech act in which the verb “shattered” asserts that the invasion has caused severe and violent destruction, which affects multiple domains and not just damage in a limited sense. Hence, the headline is not presented as an opinion, but as a factual reality. The headline is designed to convey additional meanings through its lexical choices and not just to state facts. Hence, by using phrases such as “Israel’s invasion” and “shattered”, the headline implies a moral responsibility for destruction that is attributed to Israel. In this context, the dysphemistic words “invasion” and “shattered” trigger a conversational implicature, whereby readers infer an aggressive military operation that affected or led to extensive damage on a large scale. At the perlocutionary level, the headline’s overall lexical structure and choices may evoke varied reader reactions. In this regard, in one comment, the booster “really” is utilized to intensify the certainty of bias in the headline “WaPo really hates Jews with this headline. No mention of 10/7”. The attitude marker “hates” is further used to describe the overall attitude of the newspaper toward the Jews. Similarly, a reversed meaning is constructed of the headline by establishing a counter-framing of agency. Hence, the headline is reinterpreted through the comment “The invasion was on Oct 7, 2023”, by using a categorical tone as a booster to highlight certainty. Furthermore, a reversal of victimhood framing is performed, reframing “shattered” as a deserved consequence rather than unjust harm. Thus, the attitude markers “genocide” and

“fanatical” are deployed to emphasize such reframing in “It’s shattered a genocidal, fanatical armed group and the civilian population that supports them”. Finally, the phrase “excuse me”, is used with the rhetorical question and double question marks, “Can I find an article in 1945 on how the war changed Berlin??, as engagement markers to legitimate and normalize the destruction during wartime. It also extends the meaning of the headline by invoking “Berlin in 1945” to activate a powerful analogy that Gaza is like Berlin in 1945 and Israel is similar to the Allied air forces.

## 2. The fate of dozens of trapped Hamas fighters is hindering Trump’s Gaza plan

[Washington Post](#) | [Facebook](#)

At the locutionary level, the headline represents a declarative statement that describes a causal link between two specific things: the uncertain fate of a group of trapped fighters and the present continuous “is hindering” indicates an ongoing obstruction of progress. At the illocutionary level, the headline is examined by its force concerning what is being done by saying it. Since the writer is committing to the truth of a claim, it performs an assertive speech act, as the headline is not just suggesting a possibility, but it is also constructing a causal relationship as factual. Furthermore, the headline is constructed to imply additional meanings beyond what is explicitly stated, generating conversational implicature. Although it seems a simple and factual statement, it implies a very specific and complex narrative and triggers conversational implicature through its lexical choices, such as “dozens”, which implicates a numerically limited group and “trapped”, which implicates a lack of agency and vulnerability. Additionally, “the fate” and “hindering” imply the importance of Hamas’s fighters as having significant leverage. Additionally, the word “hindering” implies the plan is ongoing but its progress is obstructed. Furthermore, the lexical choices of the headline, such as “fighters”, activate a neutral frame. Moreover, at the perlocutionary level, the comments are examined to reveal the perlocutionary effects of the headline’s lexical choices. The neutral journalistic employment of lexical choices such as “fighter” seems to directly affect readers’ perception. In this regard, the booster “I know” is utilized to express certainty in reversing a stance. Hence, the word “fighters” in the headline triggers a reaction reflected in the comment about the newspaper’s employment of such a neutral term rather than a dysphemism for “terrorists”, which is derived from the background knowledge. Another comment, “Oops, you spelled “terrorists” wrong”, uses the attitude markers such as “Oops” and “wrong” to respond to the headline’s use of “fighters”. Additionally, the comment “Leave them. They are enemy combatants. The Palestinians can take care of them if they want”, using “enemy combatant” show an evaluative stance to react to the headline “the fate of the fighters”, and further uses a hedge “if they want”, emphasizing that their fate is left for the Palestinians to decide. Finally, the hedge “maybe” “I am just asking”, and the whole phrase “Maybe to surrender is an option” is used to give a neutral stance and a solution to the problem that the headline frames and produces.

## 3- Israeli forces fatally shoot 2 Palestinians after they appeared to surrender

[Washington Post](#) | [Facebook](#)

At the locutionary level, the headline is a declarative statement that describes the action of the Israeli forces against two Palestinians, resulting in their death. At the illocutionary level, the headline is an assertive speech act, and the additional clause “appeared” modifies the strength of the commitment regarding the surrender and may generate an inference of procedural impropriety. Although the headline conveys a direct propositional meaning, the use of lexical choices like “fatally” and “appeared” seems to extend the interpretive scope beyond the explicit content, generating conversational implicature. Such words are considered euphemistic terms, as they mitigate the act of killing. Thus, the adverb “fatally” foregrounds the lethal outcome, while the verb “appeared” signals possible evidential limitation, journalistic caution, and a hedge that weakens the illocutionary force and signals adherence to the maxim of quality (do not say what you lack sufficient evidence). Hence, the readers may infer that the Palestinians were shot despite their surrender. In the war context, the act of “surrender” means to capture without killing, but what happens here triggers condemnation and illegality. The current headline seems to create varied perlocutionary effects on readers because of the lexical choices, particularly, “fatally shoot” and “appeared to surrender”. In this regard, the rhetorical questions, “fatally shoot?” and “Is that what we call summary execution these days?” are used as engagement markers to signal a moral condemnation toward the Israeli forces’ action that is framed in the headline. Another comment employs ridicule toward the lexical use of the euphemism “appeared”. It reinterprets the headline that the “2 Palestinians” are actually surrendered and not appear to surrender. Hence, the epistemic mitigation is rejected and replaced with factual certainty. Similarly, the attitude markers “murdered in cold blood” or more explicitly “executed without any legitimate reason”, are used to reframe how the headline should actually be, rejecting the mitigation of the lexical choices of the headline. Finally, the attitude marker “good” is deployed to show a positive stance

toward the act of the Israeli forces, signalling approval of the shooting. It produces an excuse or justification for this act by using the booster “they were wanted terrorists”, which presents the claim as a fact. Furthermore, an engagement marker “they leave the part out”, implies a criticism of the newspaper’s framing and suggests an intentional omission.

#### 4- Israel approves plan to seize Gaza City, paving way for full occupation

[Washington Post](#) | [Facebook](#)

At the locutionary level, this headline takes the form of a declarative statement that describes the Israeli’s approval of a plan to seize the city of Gaza and put it under its control. At the illocutionary level, the headline represents an assertive speech act that presents a political-military development as factual. Through this assertive act, the newspaper constructs the decision as an objective reality rather than an evaluative claim. Additionally, the lexical choices are deployed to trigger additional meaning beyond what is explicitly stated, conversational implicature. Hence, the dysphemistic use of words such as “seize” and “occupation” intensifies the representation of the event. The verb “seize” is not neutral; it implies the use of military force to control, a lack of consent, and military aggression. Similarly, the phrase “paving the way for full occupation” implies that the plan for seizing Gaza is just the beginning that may lead to broader subsequent actions. At the perlocutionary level, the lexical choices of the headline are likely to generate varied effects on readers, particularly in response to “seize” and “full occupation”. In this regard, the booster “always” in the comment “it was always his plan, always” is used to show an alignment with the headline’s implied meaning and may extend it further. The repetition of the adverb “always” intensifies the commitment and signals a high degree of certainty that strongly closes the dialogue space. Similarly, the self-mention “I” and the attitude marker “disappointed” are used to express the reaction toward the current plan, then normalize the action as “not surprising”. A positive stance toward the framing of the headline is utilized through the attitude marker “good”. It also interacts positively and predicts improvement that will result from such a decision, adding “Gazan's will be much better off than under Hamas.” Finally, the meaning of the headline is reframed, concerning “the occupation” using the booster “not” to construct a categorical denial and reframe the event lexically by stating another booster “it is their territory”.

#### 5- Israel breaks Gaza ceasefire, killing more than 400 in wave of strikes

[Washington Post](#) | [Facebook](#)

At the locutionary level, the headline takes the form of declarative statement that consists of two clauses. The main clause “Israel breaks Gaza ceasefire” is a transitive a declarative that describes Israel as the grammatical agent that is responsible for violating an existing agreement to stop fighting. The second is a participle clause “killing more than 400 in a wave of strikes” function as a resultative structure that specifies the consequence of this action. At the illocutionary level, the headline is constructed to perform a representative speech act in which the newspaper commits to the truth of the reported event. The syntactic structure of the headline triggers readers to infer additional meanings beyond what is explicitly stated. The headline does not overtly flout the conversational maxims, but the syntactic structure, which encourages causal interpretation. It is inferred that the dysphemistic participle clause “killing more than 400” is a resultative from the act of “breaks ceasefire”. In this regard, conversational implicature also arises from the lexical choices in the headline that the verb “breaks” carries normative weight, reinforcing an implicature of violation and wrongdoing. At the perlocutionary level, readers are expected to show varied reactions to the framed meaning in the headline. In this regard, a positive communicative stance is indicated toward the headline framing by shifting responsibility to Hamas through the repeated capitalization of “HAMAS”, which emphasizes certainty and attribution. The attitude marker “terrorists” is used to resist the headline’s meaning and reframe it, stating “HAMAS terrorists use civilians as human shields. Their blood is on HAMAS hands.” another comment uses the attitude marker “Shame” to express a strong negative evaluation and “you Washington post” and the rhetorical interrogative “where were you on October 7<sup>th</sup>” as engagement markers to challenge the newspaper’s framing and imply blame. Additionally, a comment adopts an affective stance and emotional reaction to the headline, using rhetorical questions, “Can't this be resolved by any chance? Why are more people losing their souls???” as engagement markers to emphasize the communicative stance toward the framing meaning in the headline. Finally, the attitude marker “the terrorists” is utilized to reframe the meaning of the headline by replacing “Israel striking” in the headline with “the terrorists strike”, thereby reversing agency and assigning evaluative force without mitigation.

4.1.2. العربي الجديد (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed) <https://web.facebook.com/AlAraby.ar>

أحرقهم أحياء.. الاحتلال يقصف خيام النازحين في دير البلح وسط قطاع غزة -١

### **Burn them alive... The occupation shelled the tents of the displaced in Deir al-Balah in the centre of Gaza**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1BtT9MFMse/>

At the locutionary level (the literal meaning), the headline represents a declarative statement that is used to describe an action performed by the Israeli occupation forces against the displaced (the Palestinians) who live in tents within the Gaza district. At the illocutionary level, the headline functions as an assertive speech act to accuse and condemn the Israeli forces for their cruelty against civilians and not merely to inform and describe events. Concerning the implicature, the headline conveys meaning that goes beyond what is explicitly stated. Hence, by stating “burn them alive”, the headline implicates an intentional image of brutality and sadism of the Israeli forces that the writer is fully aware of its suitability for the Arabic readers. In this context, the reader is invited to infer the brutality of the Israeli forces, as the action against the civilian displaced is not accidental, but deliberate and inhuman. Furthermore, this expression reflects dysphemism to intensify the negative evaluation of the Israeli forces. This dysphemism is used as a persuasive pragmatic mechanism that provokes outrage, anger, and hatred toward the Israeli forces, as they did not distinguish between fighters and civilians. Finally, at the perlocutionary level (the effect on the reader), the headline is likely to provoke strong emotional and cognitive responses among readers represented by the Facebook comments as “حسبنا الله ونعم” “Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs”, which represents a strong attitude marker that is used to condemn the action stated in the headline. Another comment states “هو نحنا بغزة لحمنا” “Are we in Ghaza so worthless... Hasn't the Massacres, the destruction, and the killing of children moved you?” includes several rhetorical questions that directly react to the headline wordings, such as “أحرقهم أحياء” which functions as an engagement marker. Furthermore, one commentator writes “حماس السبب” “Hamis is the reason” which represents a categorical assertive reaction, expressing an extremely compressed stance that emphasizes the certainty of the commentator's pragmatic reaction, showing how the reader may reframe responsibility and redirect meaning. Finally, a blame is constructed in “لولا صمت الحكام العرب وتخاذلهم لم تحدث هذه المجازر” “Had it not been for the silence and inaction of the Arab rulers, these massacres would not have occurred”, by using the boosters “لولا.....لم” and the attitude marker “صمت الحكام العرب وتخاذلهم” to throw the responsibility of all events on them.

غوتيريس: آخر شرايين الحياة في غزة على وشك الانقطاع -2 [Facebook | العربي الجديد](#)

### **Guterres: The last lifelines in Gaza are about to be cut off**

At the locutionary level, this headline represents a declarative statement that is attributed to António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. At the illocutionary level, the headline does not function merely as informative or descriptive. But rather, it performs an assertive speech act that functions as a warning for an expected collapse of what has survived to stay to provide people with a living. The headline conveys more implied meaning than what is explicitly stated. Hence, conversational implicature is rising where readers infer more unstated meaning. The metaphorical use of “آخر شرايين الحياة” reflects the bad conditions that people in Gaza suffer from, depicting it as a biological body that is about to die to increase the image of suffering. Readers may infer the message intended in the headline as an urgent call to take action to stop the war; otherwise, life in Gaza will end. Moreover, the institutional authority of the speaker gives utterances additional force. Furthermore, at the perlocutionary level, the attitude markers “يخاف من إسرائيل” “fear of Israel” and “يعامل القضايا” “He deals with issues with double standards” in the comment reflect an angry reaction to the Secretary-General, who is supposed to take an action that can save lives rather than merely informing as a reporter. Another comment criticizes the absence of ethical responsibility: “لو أي مسؤول فيكم يحترم حاله و دماء الأبرياء كان: “استقال... يجب ان يكون لك موقف فالعمل مواقف والاسف انتم عبيد الدراهم” “If any official among you had any self-respect and respect for the blood of the innocent, they would have resigned... You must take a stand—actions require positions—and unfortunately, you are slaves to money.” Hence, the engagement marker (انتم) directly addresses the audience, and the attitude marker “عبيد الدرهم” “slaves of money” expresses moral condemnation, reflecting how the headline's alarming tone triggers moral judgment rather than neutral sympathy. Similarly, a comment uses the particle (فقط) “only” to show the narrow and inappropriate role the speaker, Guterres, performs, noting: “أنه يلعب دور الاعلام يخبرونا ماذا يجري في غزة فقط” “He plays the role of the media, simply telling us what is happening in Gaza”. This creates a kind of ironic effect, which is used to criticize Guterres, reframing responsibility, where readers redirect blame from the situation itself to institutional passivity. All in all, these comments do not simply show that readers infer the headline as a warning, but they actively negotiate its meaning.

وزيرة إسرائيلية تقترح على “الكابينت” حرق جثة السنوار -3 [Facebook | العربي الجديد](#)

### An Israeli minister proposes to the “Cabinet” to burn al-Senwar’s body

At the locutionary level, this headline is a declarative affirmative statement that describes an event in the form of a demand. It represents a request attributed to an Israeli minister to carry out the act of burning the body of one of Hamas’s leaders, Al-Sinwar. At the illocutionary level, the headline directive speech act functions to frame the proposed action as an act of extreme cruelty at the official political level through the use of the phrase “حرق جثة”, which reflects outrage and inhuman treatment. Additionally, based on Grice’s implicature theory, the headline generates a conversational implicature where the meanings of cruelty and inhumanity are implicitly conveyed rather than explicitly stated. Additionally, the headline is built on the use of dysphemistic lexical choice “حرق” to reinforce the implied message that is intended to be conveyed, and invites readers to infer the excessive hatred toward the represented figure. Finally, at the perlocutionary level, most comments condemn the act of burning, questioning what effect such an act could have on someone already dead. In this regard, the booster “ما يهم” in “ما يهم الشاه صلخها بعد ذبحها” “What matters to the sheep is how it is skinned after it has been slaughtered”, emphasizes certainty, reacting to the act of “حرق جثة السنوار” in the headline. Another comment utilizes the attitude marker “العظيم” / “يبقى عظيماً” to express high evaluation and the booster “يبقى” “remains” to directly react to the headline that whatever you do, it will never reduce his greatness in our memory. Furthermore, the comment “مرتعبون حتى من وجود جثمانه الطاهر...أحياء عند ربهم يرزقون” “Terrified even by the presence of his pure body...alive with their Lord, receiving provision”, using the booster “حتى” and the attitude marker “جثمانه الطاهر” to suggest that the perpetrators get feared even with the powerless body, reframing the act of burning positively. Finally, a direct reaction is constructed to the act of burning in the headline, combining the booster “سيبقى” with strong attitude markers “أنذل من وجد” “The most despicable ever found”. This comment demonstrates how readers reverse the negative implication of the act, transforming offensive implication into positive reinterpretation.

فرانس برس " عن وزير الخارجية الألماني: نحث إسرائيل على ضبط النفس في غزة 4-

AFP, quoting the German Foreign Minister: We urge Israel to exercise restraint in Gaza

[العربي الجديد](#)

[Facebook](#)

At the locutionary level, where literal description is involved, the headline is reported as an affirmative declarative statement. It describes a call by the German government through its minister of foreign affairs for Israel to take self-disciplined behaviour in its war in Gaza. At the illocutionary level, the headline represents a directive speech act in which the lexical choices, especially “ضبط النفس”, can provoke many Arabic readers’ reactions. It is just directed to Israel, seeing the conflict just from one side, and depicting that Israel has been attacked and needs to act with patience. Furthermore, the headline gives rise to a conversational implicature shaped by contextual interpretation and readers’ background knowledge. Hence, the euphemistic expression “ضبط النفس” (self-restraint) functions as a mitigating lexical choice that downplays the severity of the action. However, the choice invites readers to infer a contrast between the stated restraint and the actual situation on the ground. The last level is the perlocutionary level, in which the force of the utterances is examined through the readers’ reactions reflected in their comments on the headline. In this regard, a strong attitude marker “الأسطوانة المشروخة” in the comment « “After killing 100 people, including 30 children, the worn-out refrain now resurfaces, urging Israel to exercise restraint”, expressing a moral outrage, where diplomatic restraint is interpreted as a moral failure. Similarly, the attitude marker “بلهجة حادة” in the comment, which takes the form of a rhetorical question « لماذا « “Why not strongly condemn Israel for not respecting the ceasefire and killing innocent people?”, that functions as an engagement marker to reject and criticize the simple language directed to Israel despite the crimes that were committed. It also expresses blame in an outraged language, challenging the illocutionary intent used in the headline. Additionally, a historical and political context is combined to reject the neutrality of the headline through the attitude marker « نازي قديم يدعم « “An old Nazi supports a new Nazi”, producing a radical image for the alignment. It emphasizes that what Germany has done, Israel is doing the same. Finally, an ironic language is used in the comment « ضبط « “By ‘self-restraint,’ do you mean killing self?”, attacking the euphemistic expression “self-restraint” “ضبط النفس”, which is at the core of the headline, replacing it with a dysphemistic attitude marker “قتل” “killing self” to describe what is happening in reality. Overall, these euphemistic expressions “ضبط النفس” soften the description of the situation and may generate a conversational implicature where the perlocutionary act, the effect on readers, shows how readers activate attitude markers, boosters, engagement markers, irony, and dysphemism to actively renegotiate and reject the intended message of the headline.

احتجاج أمام مقر وسائل إعلام أميركية: أكاذيبكم تقتل الأطفال في غزة -5 [Facebook | العربي الجديد](#)

### Protest outside US media headquarters: Your lies are killing children in Gaza

The locutionary description of this headline is represented by the declarative statement depicting a protest in front of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), accusing them of lying and deceiving the public opinion. At the illocutionary level, the headline primarily performs an assertive speech act that functions as an accusation and blaming the media for distorting facts in ways that allegedly contribute to the death of children in Gaza via their biased coverage of the life circumstances there. However, readers may infer multiple meanings beyond what is explicitly stated, reinforced by the context and background knowledge. The headline uses the dysphemistic term “اكاذيبكم” which negatively evaluates the media’s discourse and frames it as intentional falsehood rather than an error. Furthermore, since words do not literally kill, the phrase “تقتل الأطفال” invites readers to infer a causal relationship between media narratives and real-world violence. This inferred causal link operates at the level of conversational implicature. These implied meanings become evident at the perlocutionary level, as reflected in readers’ comments. The majority of the news readers react emotionally to the headline, commenting “حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل” “Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best disposer of affairs”. On the other hand, the comment “فوكس و سكاي شبكتين و عدة صحف و وسائل اعلام أخرى مملوكين لميردوخ و تعرفون من هذا” “Fox and Sky are two networks, along with several newspapers and other media outlets, owned by Murdoch. You know who he is and his religion. They always lie. Don't forget their dirty role in the Iraq War and other misleading stances taken to manipulate public opinion for their murderous agenda”, directly aligns with and accepts the accusation tone used in the headline combining cultural context “دورهم في حرب العراق” “their role in Iraq war”, introducing ideological information about “Murdoch” as the owner of certain media agencies, implying that he plays a decisive role in shaping news narratives for the benefit of Israel. In this comment, the reader includes various attitude markers like “الفنر” and “اجندتهم القاتلة”, which highlight an evaluation toward American media. It also uses boosters like “دائما” to reinforce what has to be said by confirming the certainty against any possible doubts. Furthermore, the use of engagement markers such as “تعرفون”, “لا تنسوا” encourages engagement with the reader on a certain level to create mutual knowledge or awareness. Additionally, another commentator who seems to have been influenced by the content as a whole, uses the booster “المفروض” to express obligation and the attitude marker “المظلوم” to emphasize sympathy, “المفروض الذي يوزع المساعدات الإنسانية”, “It is supposed that the distribution of humanitarian aid to the oppressed Palestinian people in Gaza should be carried out either by the United Nations or by one of the Arab countries.”

#### 4.3 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis is now conducted to identify the frequency and distribution of pragmatic features observed in the dataset. It builds upon the qualitative pragmatic analysis applied to the ten selected headlines to determine how often speech acts, implicatures, and lexico-pragmatic strategies (euphemism/dysphemism) occur. In the following table, the qualitative analysis is interpreted into a coding model in which every headline receives three coded variables. These codes include speech act types, implicature (conversational, conventional) and lexico-pragmatic strategies (euphemism, dysphemism, or neutral). It is applied on both languages.

**Table 4.1 The Distribution of Pragmatic Features**

| No.   | Speech Act | Implicature type | Lexico-pragmatic mechanisms |
|---|------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. How Israel’s invasion has shattered lives, livelihoods and learning in Gaza  | assertive  | conversational   | dysphemism                  |
| 2. The fate of dozens of trapped Hamas fighters is hindering Trump’s Gaza plan  | assertive  | conversational   | neutral                     |
| 3. Israeli forces fatally shoot 2 Palestinians after they appeared to surrender | assertive  | conversational   | euphemism                   |
| 4. Israel approves plan to seize Gaza City, paving way for full occupation      | assertive  | conversational   | dysphemism                  |

|  |           |                |            |
|--|-----------|----------------|------------|
| 5. Israel breaks Gaza ceasefire, killing more than 400 in wave of strikes  | assertive | conversational | dysphemism |
| 6. أحرقهم أحياء.. الاحتلال يقصف خيام النازحين في دير البلح وسط قطاع غزة    | assertive | conversational | dysphemism |
| 7. غوتيريس: آخر شرايين الحياة في غزة على وشك الانقطاع                      | assertive | conversational | dysphemism |
| 8. وزيرة إسرائيلية تقترح على "الكابينت" حرق جثة السنوار                    | directive | conversational | dysphemism |
| 9. فرانس برس " عن وزير الخارجية الألماني: نحث إسرائيل على ضبط النفس في غزة | directive | conversational | euphemism  |
| 10. احتجاج أمام مقر وسائل إعلام أميركية: أكاذيبكم تقتل الأطفال في غزة      | assertive | conversational | dysphemism |

Table 4.2 Frequency of the Occurrence of Speech Acts

| Speech Acts | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Assertive   | 8         | 80%            |
| Directive   | 2         | 20%            |
| Total       | 10        | 100%           |

The distribution frequency of speech acts in the total selected headlines shows the prominence of assertive acts, accounting (80%) of the total number of headlines, while directive occurs less frequently with (20%) of the total number of headlines. This distribution indicates that the main function of newspaper headlines is to report and present information rather than to request, or commit to future actions.

Table 4.3 Frequency of the Occurrence of Implicature

| Implicature type | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Conversational   | 10        | 100%           |
| Conventional     | 0         | 0%             |
| Total            | 10        | 100%           |

The distribution frequency of implicature shows that conversational implicature is adopted on a large-scale in the total number of the analysed headlines, accounting for (100%) of selected headlines. Conventional implicature, in contrast, does not record any occurrence of the selected headlines. This distribution reveals that most headlines rely on the implied meaning that readers infer based on the context and background knowledge. Such strategy is particularly salient in headlines because they are constrained by the space, so additional meaning beyond what is explicitly stated is more suitable in headline context than conventional one.

Table 4.4 Frequency of Lexico-pragmatic strategies

| Lexico-pragmatic mechanisms | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Dysphemism                  | 7         | 70%            |
| Euphemism                   | 2         | 20%            |
| Neutral                     | 1         | 10%            |
| Total                       | 10        | 100%           |

The distribution frequency of lexico-pragmatic mechanisms indicates the dominance of dysphemism strategy, accounting for (70%). The high frequency of dysphemism in headlines suggest a strong tendency toward the use of lexical choices that intensify negative meanings, violence, destruction, or suffering, which is common in reporting armed conflict and humanitarian crisis. This could also be to attract readers' attention, as such loaded headlines can be more attractive. In contrast, euphemism record less frequent with (20%), which implies that

headlines do not widely deploy such strategy in the war context. Finally, neutral expressions counted the least frequency with (10%), indicating for the straightforward descriptive language that headlines adopt.

#### 4.3.1 The Distribution of Pragmatic Features in English Headlines

This section presents the distribution of pragmatic features that are identified in the English newspaper headlines. It focuses on the frequency of speech acts (Table 4.5), implicature (Table 4.6), and lexico-pragmatic strategies (Table 4.7). The following tables summarise the occurrence of these features across the selected dataset.

##### 4.5 Frequency of the Occurrence of Speech act

| Speech act type | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Assertive       | 5         | 100%           |
| Directive       | 0         | 0%             |
| Total           | 5         | 100%           |

Table 4.6 Frequency of the Occurrence of Implicature

| Implicature type | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Conversational   | 5         | 100%           |
| Conventional     | 0         | 0%             |
| Total            | 5         | 100%           |

Table 4.7 Frequency of the Occurrence of Lexico-Pragmatic strategies

| Lexico-Pragmatic mechanisms | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Dysphemism                  | 3         | 60%            |
| Euphemism                   | 1         | 20%            |
| Neutral                     | 1         | 20%            |
| Total                       | 5         | 100%           |

#### 4.3.2 Distribution of Pragmatic features in Arabic Headlines

In contrast to the English dataset, this section examines the distribution of pragmatic features that are identified in the Arabic newspaper headlines. It focuses on the frequency of speech acts (Table 4.8), implicature (Table 4.9), and lexico-pragmatic strategies (Table 4.10). The following tables summarise the occurrence of these features across the selected dataset.

##### Table 4.8 Frequency of the Occurrence of Speech Act

| Speech act type | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Assertive       | 3         | 60%            |
| Directive       | 2         | 40%            |
| Total           | 5         | 100%           |

Table 4.9 Frequency of the Occurrence of Implicature

| Implicature type | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Conversational   | 5         | 100%           |
| Conventional     | 0         | 0%             |
| Total            | 5         | 100%           |

Table 4.10 Frequency of the Occurrence of Lexico-Pragmatic Mechanisms

| Lexico-Pragmatic mechanisms | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Dysphemism                  | 4         | 80%            |
| Euphemism                   | 1         | 20%            |
| Neutral                     | 0         | 0%             |
| Total                       | 5         | 100%           |

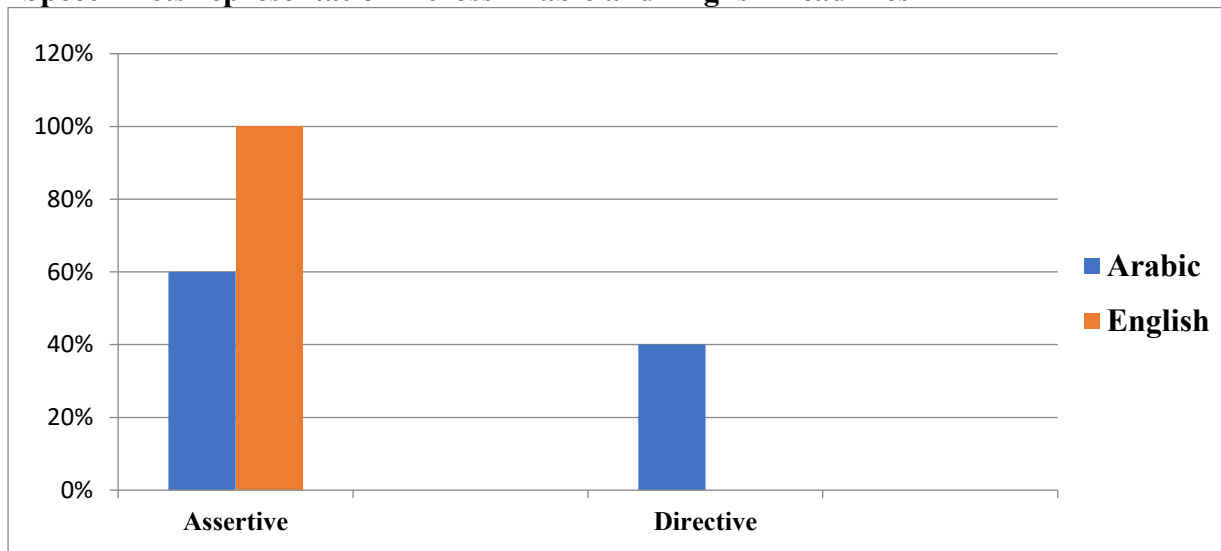
#### 4.3.4 Comparative Analysis of Arabic and English Headlines

In this section, the overall comparative results are displayed in tables according to each pragmatic category, together with figures to show the differences and similarities between the two datasets. The main aim here is to

highlight patterns of convergence and divergence in the use of pragmatic features across the selected headlines of English and Arabic datasets. **Table 4.11 Speech Act Categories Across Arabic and English Headlines**

| Speech act   | Arabic    |             | English   |             |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
|              | Frequency | Percentage  | Frequency | Percentage  |
| Assertive    | 3         | 60%         | 5         | 100%        |
| Directive    | 2         | 40%         | 0         | 0%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>5</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>5</b>  | <b>100%</b> |

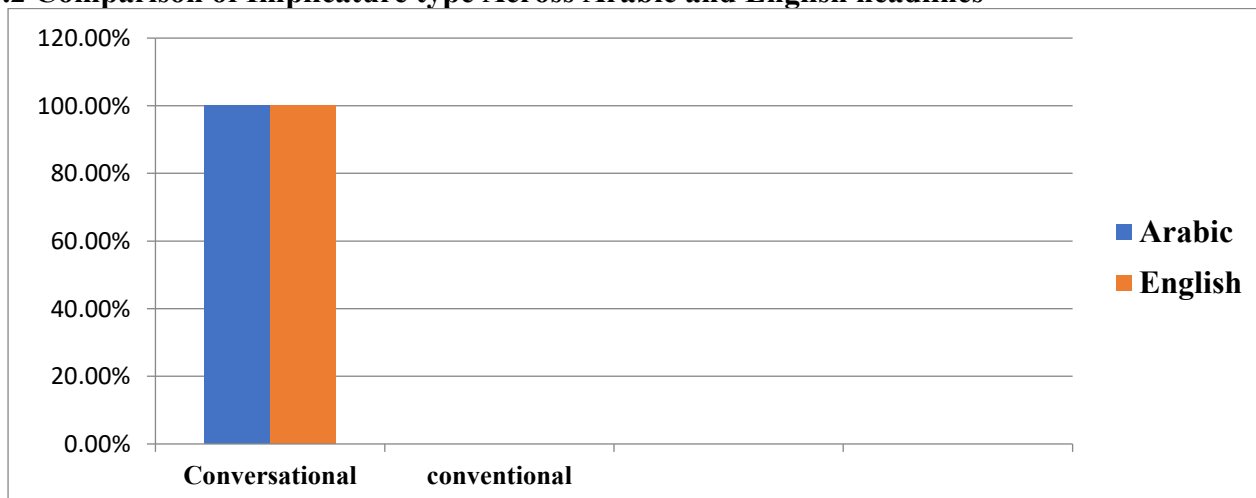
**Figure 4.1 Speech Acts representation Across Arabic and English Headlines**



**Table 4.12 Implicature types Across Arabic and English language**

| Implicature type | Arabic    |             | English   |             |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
|                  | Frequency | Percentage  | Frequency | Percentage  |
| Conversational   | 5         | 100%        | 5         | 100%        |
| Conventional     | 0         | 0%          | 0         | 0%          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>5</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>5</b>  | <b>100%</b> |

**Figure 4.2 Comparison of Implicature type Across Arabic and English headlines**

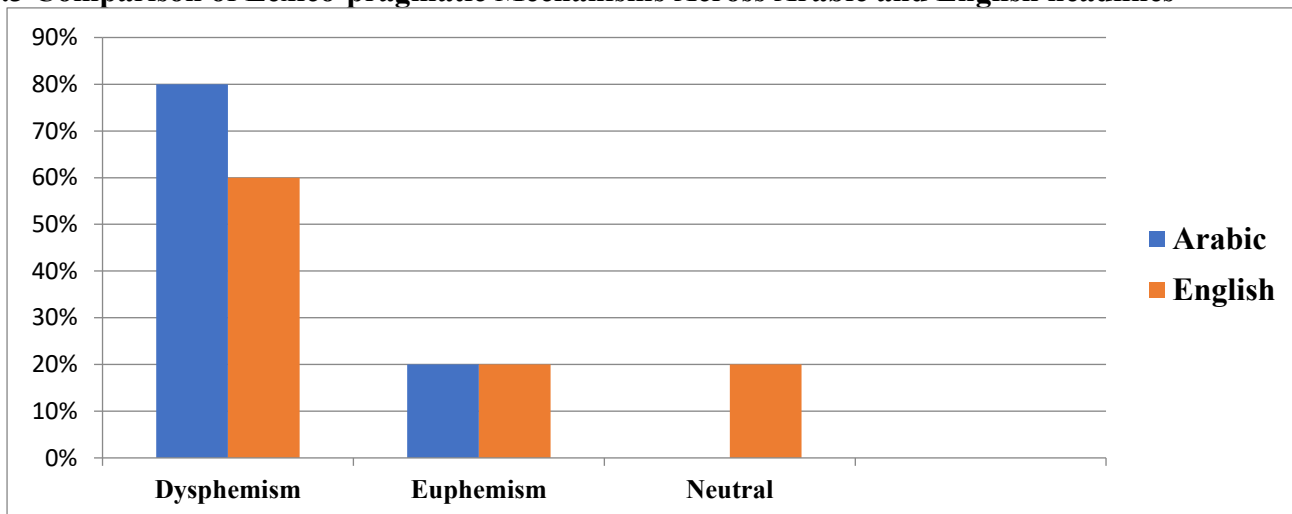


**Table 4.13 Lexico-pragmatic Mechanisms Across Arabic and English language**

|  | Arabic | English |
|--|--------|---------|
|--|--------|---------|

| Lexico-pragmatic Mechanisms | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Dysphemism                  | 4         | 80%        | 3         | 60%        |
| Euphemism                   | 1         | 20%        | 1         | 20%        |
| Neutral                     | 0         | 0%         | 1         | 20%        |
| Total                       | 5         | 100%       | 5         | 100%       |

Figure 4.3 Comparison of Lexico-pragmatic Mechanisms Across Arabic and English headlines



#### 4.3.5 Comparative analysis for the quantitative patterns

The present study is conducted to investigate the power of the headline's language across the Arabic and English languages through pragmatic strategies. The quantitative analysis reveals that assertive acts show a dominance in both languages. However, in Arabic data, assertive acts account for (60%) less frequently than English data, which accounts for (100%). Such dominance highlights the primary communicative function of newspaper headlines, which is dedicated to reporting events and presenting claims about ongoing developments. The other categories of speech acts also revealed noticeable differences between the two datasets. In this regard, directive speech act indicates a higher frequency in Arabic headlines (40%) in comparison with English data, which did not record any frequency for such kind. Concerning implicature, with its two types, conversational and conventional, the quantitative analysis of the Arabic and English datasets show that all selected headlines are built on conversational implicature with (100%) frequency, In contrast, the Arabic and English headlines did not record any instances of conventional implicature, this indicates a heavy reliance on contextual and pragmatic interpretation rather than explicit linguistic markers of implicature. Furthermore, the analysis of the lexico-pragmatic mechanisms reveals approximate similar distribution between Arabic and English headlines. Hence, the dysphemism represented the most frequent strategy in both Arabic and English headlines, recording (80%) of the Arabic data and (60%) of the English data. Additionally, the euphemism constitute the second most frequent after the dysphemism, appearing equally in the two datasets, accounting for (20%) of the Arabic and English data. In contrast, the Arabic headlines do not account for neutral expressions, while the English headlines account for (20%) as neutral.

#### 4.4 The Overall Comparative Analysis

The analysis reveals considerable similarities between the two datasets. This is to say that both datasets indicate a high reliance on conversational implicature mechanism and dysphemism strategy to convey the propositional content. However, the employment of such strategies differs across headlines and between the two languages, depending on the nature of the issue being presented. In this regard, the selected Arabic newspapers generally tend to use powerful dysphemistic terms, particularly at the beginning of the declarative headlines, such as "احرقهم احياء", to create a strong illocutionary force that generates varied reader reactions. Moreover, the Arabic dataset uses the attribution strategy "غوثيريس", "فرانس برس" عن وزير الخارجية الألماني, at the beginning of the headline to reinforce the persuasive pragmatic force of the headline and guide readers to infer conversational implicature, which records a high frequency in the Arabic dataset. The English dataset, on the other hand, tends to utilize more neutral lexical choices, such as "fighters", "death", "halted", and "strike", which reflects a

tendency toward objectivity and balance in producing the events, while avoiding emotionally loaded language in many cases. Conversational implicature and dysphemism expressions, like “invasion”, “seize”, “horror”, and “killing”, are also used to a considerable extent in the English dataset, but not more than the Arabic one. In this respect, cultural and social contexts play a crucial role in facilitating the understanding of the varied differences in deploying the lexical choices to reinforce the pragmatic force in headlines. All in all, the comparative analysis shows that close similarities are indicated in the use of pragmatic strategies in the construction of headlines in both datasets. However, they differ in their distribution and intensity, which shape the way in which intended meaning is constructed and interpreted across the two contexts. Hence, the role of pragmatics is highlighted as a cross-linguistic mechanism associated with conveying meaning implicitly. Thus, pragmatic strategies are particularly salient in the journalistic arena, as they enable newspapers to present information indirectly, while avoiding explicit attribution of responsibility or overt bias to one side of the conflict.

### Conclusions

The study of the newspaper headlines reveals that pragmatic strategies are heavily involved in their construction. It concludes that because headlines are constrained by space, conversational implicature plays a central role in headline construction. Additionally, since headlines are designed to attract attention, lexico-pragmatic mechanisms are used to fulfil this purpose and trigger varied evaluative readers' reactions. Furthermore, these strategies demonstrate the powerful role that language plays through the lexical choices, which directly influence readers' interpretations. Concerning the questions of the study, the findings indicate that headlines' construction depends heavily on pragmatics, particularly the conversational implicature and the dysphemism strategy, which is an answer for the first question. Concerning the second question, the findings reveal that pragmatics plays a central role in encoding and constructing power relations in newspaper headlines, particularly in crisis contexts like the Gaza conflict, through linguistic choices to affect readers' perception. Finally, concerning the third question, the analysis revealed that although the close similarities of newspapers in constructing headlines, several differences can be clearly observed, particularly, speech act, implicature, and the distribution of lexico-pragmatic strategies. It is recommended that Pragmatics should play an essential role in the study of headline construction, particularly the conversational implicature and the lexico-pragmatic mechanisms. Additionally, headline writers have to be fully aware of such pragmatic strategies in order to produce headlines that are effective and meaningful, rather than just a collection of lexical items. Suggestions for future studies could focus on how multimodal elements are used in headlines to convey more meaning than explicitly stated. Hence, future study could include the images that accompany the headline wordings, highlighting the pragmatic value they contain. Additionally, future studies could be conducted to combine pragmatic and discourse analysis in one study to examine headline structure for the closeness between the two linguistic fields. This provides both micro- and macro-level analysis of headlines.

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