

## **Some Aspects of Arabic Rhetoric and Modern Pragmatic Theory: The Complementary Relations**

Dr. Adnan Abdul Dayem Abdul Wahid  
Shatt Al-Arab University College  
Department of English

**Abstract:** In this paper, an argument is made to account for and justifiably assess the relation between modern pragmatic theory of language, as recently introduced by prominent scholars, and some aspects of long-standing Arabic rhetoric. The focus is on the contributions old Arab rhetoricians made by discussing such areas of linguistic communication that are significantly figuring out in the current discussions of contemporary linguists. Some of the key concepts in present-day theory of pragmatics, e.g. context, presupposition, implicature, speech act, can be traced back to a tradition of speculates in the vast heritage of Arabic rhetoric, though there might be here certain instances where some of the points are not all coherently presented. These concepts are complemented, developed, refined or formalized by contemporary western pragmaticists and philosophers of language.

### **1. Introduction**

It is probably a truism that pragmatics is now a field that occupies a significant position within contemporary linguistic theory. In the definitional heritage of this field, the tradition known as ‘the component view’ marks pragmatics as a component of the theory of language on a par with the components of phonology, syntax and semantics (Verschueren 1987: 25). Such a tradition is basically Morrisian, where pragmatics is formulated as the dimension of the theory of signs and signification that is concerned with the study of the relation of signs to their interpreters (Morris 1938: 6).

On this conception, pragmatics presupposes the subject in discourse, and intuitively marks the resurgence of subjectivity which was for a relatively long time denied as a relevant explanatory or descriptive category in linguistics. The decrease of interest in subjectivity is evidently manifested by the dichotomizing mentality of contemporary linguists. Here, what is subjective is expelled as the residue of the real and the

objective to be treated as the second term of the dichotomy: Parole in Saussure and Performance in Chomsky. This is why pragmatics revolted against structural linguistics, and “developed as a reaction or antidote to Chomsky’s treatment of language as an abstract, or mental ability, dissociable from the uses, users and functions of language” (Levinson 1983: 35).

With the resurgence of pragmatics, a paradigm change takes place in linguistics, leading to new orientations in functional linguistics which openly oppose the abstract formalism of Chomsky’s generative grammar and the rigid structural linguistics. The change in linguistics towards pragmatic studies seems influential enough that Chomsky comes finally to admit the requirement, besides linguistic competence, to a competence to perform, a communicative competence or pragmatic competence, to account for linguistic ability (Chomsky 1980: 224).

However, the resurgence of pragmatics in modern linguistics can be seen to have further connections with the approach to language in Arabic rhetoric in which approximate pragmatic studies were popularized long time ago by Arab predecessors. It is not difficult for anyone acquainted with Arabic rhetorical discipline to find out that it is underlain by similar pragmatic assumptions: underscoring the subjective in discourse as represented by due attention given to speech participants, as well as supporting functional orientation in language usage.

The concept of rhetoric, as originally understood by Arab scholars, involves formulating speech such that it is grammatically accurate, semantically clear and perceptively effective. These linguistic features are optimal when speech is delivered in conformity with appropriate context specifically identifiable with appropriate communicative status of the receiver (Atiq 1985: 10).

This paper is an attempt to account for specific points that mark the links between Arabic rhetoric and modern pragmatic theory of language. The issues investigated involve some of the key phenomena that predominate the work of pragmaticists, and give substance to the notion that pragmatics is the study of language in context.

## **2. Objectives and rationale**

The present work is a linguistic study that is conducted in response to an intercultural research interest. It seeks to provide a convincing argument that some of the basic issues in linguistic communication that have been recently considered as the basic topics to discuss in modern pragmatic theories have already been discussed in classical Arabic rhetoric. For the

purpose of pinpointing the linguistic features that are of common concern of the two comparable approaches, viz. Arabic rhetorical discipline and pragmatics, we set out to explore some of the areas of language usage where Arabic rhetorical analysis can provide insights into modern pragmatic studies. The kind of comparative analysis we offer serves this end: it presents a brief description of how Arab predecessors tackled such communicative phenomena as what have come to be termed in modern linguistics as context of situation, Gricean maxim of informativeness with some of the implicatures consequent upon it, presupposition, and direct and indirect speech acts; for the sake of clarity of discussion this presentation comes in a sequence where it may be followed, preceded or just in juxtaposition with the way these linguistic features have been subsequently complemented and developed as the key pragmatic concepts by contemporary celebrity scholars. The comparison reveals that some of the major contributions made during the growth of research in Arabic rhetoric have come up with theses that are clearly felt in modern European tradition.

Although some of the linguistic phenomena discussed in this paper may have already been addressed by other authors, for example Abdul Raof (2006), the way they are presented and focused on here is different, and their investigation is conducted for a different purpose. Rather than coming as part of a comprehensive overview of the subjects within the purview of Arabic rhetorical discipline, the issues introduced for analysis in this study are especially selected for the main objective of demonstrating how far their discussion in Arabic rhetoric is insightful to modern pragmatic theories. The study therefore has significance in its own right: it alerts all those concerned with pragmatics in general, and Arab students of pragmatics in particular to the long-standing Arabic linguistic heritage where these linguistic features have been explored in a way approximate to the way they are currently discussed by contemporary pragmaticists.

### **3. Arabic rhetoric and pragmatics defined**

As originally defined by Arab rhetoricians, the term ‘bala:ghah’, the Arabic equivalent of rhetoric, is connected with the study of the effective use of language and the pragmatic analysis of linguistic communication. In the general linguistic sense, it is the infinitive form of ‘balagha’ which means ‘reached’ or ‘delivered a message’. The linguistic meaning of this concept can therefore be taken to involve certain linguistic aspects the most important of which are a high degree of grammatical accuracy, semantically-well formulated expressions and a predominant concern with logical truth implied in speech (cf. Atiq 1985: 10).

The technical sense in which this concept is normally understood by Arab predecessors is twofold: it relates rhetoric to speech as well as to speaker. Rhetoric of speech is the characterizing traits that make it conform to context of situation; on the other hand, rhetoric of speaker refers to the linguistic capability by virtue of which he dispatches his speech in conformity with the context in which it is made. In both cases, however, for speech to appropriately conform to the kind of specified context it should already enjoy a sufficient degree of eloquence, hence the semantic overlap between the concept of rhetoric and that of eloquence (Abbas 2004: 57-65).

Arab rhetoricians have defined rhetoric as the compatibility of an eloquent discourse to context, originally put in Arabic as (muṭa:baqat al-kala:m l-muqtada: l-ḥa:l ma‘a faṣa:ḥatih), and is attributed to cognition and to eloquent discourse (cf. Abdul Raof 2006:16). It is a characterization of Arabic written and spoken discourse that renders it compatible with surrounding context and subject to eloquence criteria, chiefly among them are avoiding stylistic oddity and semantic ambiguity. According to this definition, rhetoric discipline is concerned with the analysis of language that aims to account for interpersonal communication in terms of the emotional, stylistic and aesthetic aspects in order to achieve a given pragmatic function. Thus, in the light of Arabic rhetoric the two utterances

**1. ṣaḥa: al-jaw al-yawm.**

**The weather is getting clear today.**

**2. inna al-jaw ṣaḥw al-jawm.**

**Indeed, the weather is clear today.**

are distinguished, not merely as a verbal and a nominal sentence as grammar diagnoses, but by the fact that the speaker/writer chooses to produce a verbal or a nominal sentence according to his state of mind and the attitude towards his addressee; whereas, his informative speech act is neutrally or un-markedly made by the sentence-initial main verb and the following subject in **1**, it is emphatically conveyed in **2** by the nominal sentence together with the emphatic particle ‘?inna’ in order to eliminate any doubt he feels the receiver may have in mind about the weather. It follows that analysis in Arabic rhetoric is primarily oriented towards the interpersonal relationship between the communicator and the addressee, and that in rhetoric the psychology of language and speech production is prominently figuring out. Such intimate relationship between text and context, on the one hand, and between communicator and addressee, on the other, can be further illustrated in rhetorical analysis by the pragmatic

effect of continuity and progression in contrast with that of permanency of a characteristic feature in the following utterance:

**3. jukha:di'un ?llah wa-huwa kha:di'uhum (Qur'anic verse)**  
**They deceive God, but he is deceiving them.**

where the shift from the verbal to the nominal is to mark the different attitudinal position taken by text producer towards his addressees in so far as the kind of deception is concerned; their deception is in a continuously changing state whereas that of God is of a permanent, unchangeable nature (Abdul Raof 2006:13).

This definition of rhetoric given by Arab scholars is no different, and to a large extent reflected in the whole enterprise of defining pragmatics and delimiting the scope of its investigation by contemporary pragmaticists. Coined with the term 'pragmatism' as a general movement in philosophy, which postulates the significance of a concept as the practical consequences that might conceivably result from its truth, and stresses the role of man as a rational organism for reasoning towards reality, pragmatics is finally reconstructed as a concept with a formulated role being maintained in linguistic theory (Parret 1985: 90).

As a linguistic approach that comes about in response to recognizing the importance of reference to speakers in linguistic studies, pragmatics gets further development and relative systematization largely due to the considerable body of the philosophical works by Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975) and Grice (1971, 1975), a common premise of which all is the importance of the use of language to the understanding of its nature. In his communicative approach to language, Grice (1971) puts forward his theory of meaning based on intention and recognition of intention. The fundamental distinction that he makes between "utterer meaning" and "utterance meaning" hinges upon the same conception. In Gricean terms, instances of utterer meaning are characterized by two features: they give the message indirectly to the effect that the addressee must do some inference for its recovery, and, more importantly, the conveyance of the message in each instance is a function of the speaker's intention, the addressee's recognition of the speaker's intention, and the addressee's response on the basis of that recognition of intention. In short, "utterer meaning" involves the notion of what a speaker means by an utterance when he makes it in a given context, whereas "utterance meaning" is simply what utterance, or utterance-type, conventionally means. According to this distinction, "utterer meaning" provides an explanation for the

implicit communicative content of utterances, that is, it explains the broad sense of meaning in pragmatic theory.

This concept of meaning forms the basis of Grice's whole theory of communication which arises out of a distinction to be drawn within the total signification of a remark between "what the speaker has said and what he has implicated" (ibid: 54). Saying is intended to be related to the conventional meaning of words and sentences in the utterance, and whatever meaning the utterance has beyond this level of saying is accounted for by the notion of implicature: the intended derivation by the hearer of what is tacitly communicated in utterances (Grice 1975: 44). The distinction at hand is well attested to in an utterance like

#### **4. I've got an exam tomorrow.**

which may not simply be a statement about tomorrow's activities, its literal meaning on the level of saying, but could also contain an implicature (an additional conveyed meaning) concerning tonight's activities, and would therefore be conveniently given as an answer to a question like

#### **5. Are you coming to the party tonight?**

The orientation towards pragmatic studies is underlain by the requirement, besides linguistic competence, for communicative competence as suggested by Hymes (1971, 1972), or pragmatic competence to account for the linguistic ability of the speaker to produce and understand utterances which are appropriate to the context in which they occur. The multifarious definitions of pragmatics in the updated sense that Levinson handles (Levinson 1983: 9-32) generally underscores context for the specification of meaning of language as appropriately used (Verschueren 1987: 32).

#### **4. Context of situation in Arabic rhetoric and pragmatic theory**

According to Arab rhetoricians, the type of utterance that can be appropriately used is pragmatically constrained by the context of situation. For them, the communicative potential of an utterance is increased or lowered according to whether the utterance is compatible or incompatible with the context in which it is embedded. It is to this effect that they have made their short, pithy saying "li-kulli maqa:m maqa:l" (for every context there is a given speech act) and "likulli kalimah ma'a sa:hibatiha: maqa:m" (for every word and its accompanying item there is a specific context)

(Hassan 1973: 337). Arabic expounding of the notions of *maqa:m* (context of situation) and *maqa:l* (speech event), as two important bases of linguistic meaning analysis, is a genuine one. It came nearly thousand years before these features of language use are recognized in modern western linguistics.

Most of the contextual variables identified in recent linguistic studies are considered by Arab rhetoricians as part of what they understood *maqa:m* (context of situation). However, of these factors it is the perceptive system of the receiver to whom the utterance is ultimately directed in actual linguistic exchange that attracts most of their attention. In fact, the scope of the whole rhetorical discipline is confined by Arab scholars to the observance by the speaker of the receiver's contextual status *ḥa:l al-mukhaṭab* (state of the receiver) broadly given as the latter's immediate as well as long-term ideology (cf. al-Hashimi n.d.: 33-34; al-Shaykh 1986: 37).

Such awareness in Arabic rhetoric of the constraints imposed by context on the communicative potential of linguistic forms is prompted by the observation that one cannot say anything one likes to say in any situation. The Arab predecessor who worked on giving an approximation of a systematic account of the link between syntactic features and contextual constraints was al-Jurjani in his theory of *al-naTHm* (order system) (cf. for example, al-Qizwini n.d.: 10). According to this theory, a given discourse is effective not as a result of its constituent lexical items as much as of the significations of these items as they are correctly selected and precisely ordered in conformity with the grammatical conventions of language. It is clearly suggested here that the juxtaposition of the constituent units of a given proposition is context-sensitive and pragmatically motivated. In producing an utterance like

**6. *ḍaraba Zaydun 'amran yawm al-jum'ah ta?di:ban lahu.*  
Zayd beat Amr on Friday to discipline him.**

the speaker selects the lexical items and grammatically orders them according to what he already intends to communicate about what Zayd did; for this pragmatic end the grammatical ordering of the lexical units is effected in such a way that *ḍaraba* (beat) is made the fore-grounded informative part of the utterance which underlines Zayd's action, that *'amr* is made the patient against whom the action is taken at the time specified as Friday and that the complement *ta?di:ban lahu* (to discipline him) is introduced to convey the purpose of this action. Had the communicator intended another meaning, he would have resorted to a different ordering of

the same lexical items (cf. al- Jurjani 1998: 260). The combination of the same lexical constituents in different ways to serve different communicative meanings can be well illustrated in the two propositions

**7. ?atazu:r Sayf?**

**Are you going to visit Sayf?**

**8. ?aSayf tazu:r?**

**Is it Sayf that you are going to visit?**

In 7, where the verb is for-grounded and where the context is appropriate, the speaker could intend to mean that you should abandon your planned visit to Sayf, but in 8, where the proper noun is fore-grounded, the intended meaning could be anything as there is something wrong with the mentioned person, which the speaker does not like (Abdul Raof 2006: 15).

These observations on such features which al-Jurjani called ma'a:ni al-nahw (semantic syntax), and the examples he gave to illustrate this assumption have come later to be worked out as 'ilm al-ma'a:ni (science of meanings). This is a branch of the three-pronged field of knowledge which has come finally to be known as 'ilm al-bala:ghah (science of rhetoric). The latter includes, besides 'ilm al-ma'a:ni (science of meanings), the two sciences of al-baya:n (lucidity), basically concerned with the different means of attaining clarity of linguistic expressions, and al-badi:' (embellishments) which studies all sorts of linguistic ornamentation.

The first significant approach in modern linguistics to determine in a principled way the features of the context of situation that are relevant to the interpretation of an utterance is assigned to the protopragmaticist J.R. Firth (Firth 1957). Following Malinowski's basic insights into language as a means of social activity with interpersonal function, and developing his (i.e. Malinowski's) context of situation identifiable with extra-linguistic observables, Firth considered context of situation as part of the linguistic apparatus in the same way as are the grammatical categories that he uses (Palmer 1981: 49). In this sense, context of situation becomes a level of linguistic description on a par with phonology and grammar. In Firthian linguistic theory, context of situation is systematized to become a schematic construct which consists of a consistent framework of categories (Dinneen 1967: 305).

These categories that a context of situation brings into relation are: **1.** the features of participants which include their **a.** verbal and **b.** non-verbal actions, as well as **2.** the relevant objects: the non-verbal and non-personal events, and **3.** the effects of the verbal action. Most of these features which



Firth considers to be relevant to the analysis of an utterance at various linguistic levels, and which he systematically categorizes were explicated long time ago by Arab scholars, though in less systematic exposition and less technical terminology. An example of such an Arabic analysis which offered valuable insights and an approximate account to that of Firth was by Ibn-Jinni (cf. Mujahid 2005: 338-376). The latter's observations on meaning were derived from the understanding that language has a social function, and that its descriptive function does not exhaust the whole use of language. Thus social meaning merges with lexical meaning such that the two kinds of meaning are inseparable, and should not be distinguished from each other for the ultimate recovery of the meaning of linguistic forms. It is context of situation that determines the social framework for the speech event, and limits the circumstances that surround it. Firth's category of participants' non-verbal actions already received due attention in Ibn-Jinni's account as it is here perceived to involve a significant communicative import based on what he called the participants' conditions that attest to their intentions; thus gestures and facial expressions may replace, or have more influence than linguistic forms however strongly these forms are used. As to the category of 'relevant objects', it is manifestly given in terms of any sort of action that accompanies the utterance and relates to the shared background knowledge or the mutual assumptions of the participants.

## **5. Informativeness of utterances in Arabic rhetoric and Grice's maxim of quantity**

The outline of Arabic rhetoric given above, sketchy though as it might be, would lead us to probe Arabic rhetoric for certain features of informativeness as rhetorically valued. Given that 'ilm al-ma'a:ni (science of meanings) is the rhetorical sub-discipline where syntax is primarily linked with pragmatics, it is in this area of language use that Arabic informative utterances are rhetorically specified. More precisely, taking into account the communicative status of the receiver in terms of his immediate and long-term ideology, the speaker will dispatch utterances with varying degrees of informativeness to satisfy the needs of the receiver as they come out on the relevant occasion. It is interesting therefore to account for informative utterances which are made in response to specifically identified patterns in Arabic rhetoric (cf. al-Hashimi n.d.: 228-234; al-Qizwini n.d.: 195-210), and which would accord with Gricean Maxim of quantity stated as "Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange" (Grice 1975: 45).

According to one pattern of this type, an utterance is informative just to interpret what is already included in the same utterance as a vague subject. Such an interpretation-after-vagueness kind of informativeness is justified from the rhetorical point of view by pragmatically appealing to the receiver as a psychological system: when one comes to something vague, one gets more interested to know more about it, and thus on receiving this required information one should be more impressed. The redundancy in the information given is therefore functional; it makes the utterance more impressive for the receiver, or assigns what is conveyed more importance, emphasis and value. A lot of examples on such a kind of tautology can be found in the rhetorical language of the Holy Qur'an, or in other types of Arabic discourse as the oratory and argumentative speech. An example from (al-Aqqad 1969: 144) may serve to illustrate the point at hand:

**9. wa-sha:'at sayyi?a:t al-harb al-'a:lamiyah fi iqli:m  
Aswa:n al-?a:min al-wadi:' : tajni:dun ijba:riy wa-  
'tiqa:lun mutakarrir li- shubuhah wa- li-ghayr  
shubuhah wa-?ata:wa:tin tufradu li-'illah wa-lighayr 'illah.**

**The evils of the World War have expanded most badly in  
the calm, settled province of Aswan: compulsory  
recruitment, recurrent detainment for doubtful or even  
non-existent accusations, and taxes imposed for one or  
another alleged reason.**

Clearly, in this utterance the word sayyi?a:t (evils) comes earlier as a general, vague term. By interpreting it later on with the addition of informative elements like tajni:dun ijba:riy (compulsory recruitment) and 'tiqa:lun mutakarrir (recurrent detainment) the speaker/writer makes what he intends to convey more forceful, and thus more readily understandable for the receiver.

Another type of functionally informative redundancy can be met with in utterances where what is particular is given in juxtaposition with what is general of the same species in one utterance. The rhetorical aim is to attach more value to the particular part such that it seems different from what is already mentioned. For such utterances in Arabic we can offer the following example:

**10. qara?tu al-adab l-'arabiy al-qadi:m wa-al -?adab  
al-'abba:si.  
I read the old Arabic literature and the Abbasid**

**literature.**

As the utterance shows, the particular, i.e. Abbasid literature, is given twice: first as part of the general, i.e. the old Arabic literature, and second distinctly. It should therefore get more import in the whole communicative instance.

Extra but functionally significant information may also be found in having utterances with one word (usually in the dual form) interpreted by the following conjoined words. This is to induce the intended meaning in two different forms, and thus to make it more interesting to enjoy by the receiver, as in the Arabic saying:

**11. al-‘ilm ‘ilma:n: ‘ilm al-adya:n wa-‘ilm al-abda:n.**

**Science is of two sciences: science of bodies and science of religions.**

Here, the dual form ‘ilma:n (two sciences) is interpreted by the following conjoined phrases.

Repetition of different kinds may also be rhetorically exploited in Arabic utterances to serve a variety of purposes. Of such utterances characterized by a repetitive type of information we may have such examples as

**12. ?at‘ni wa-la:-  
ta’sini.**

**Obey me and do not disobey me.**

The repetition of information in the utterance inheres in that asking someone to obey one’s orders is a tautology of asking him not to disobey what one asks to do. The rhetorical effect is to emphasize the information being conveyed.

**6. Typology of constative and receiver in Arabic rhetoric and pragmatic presupposition**

As part of their genuine account of the contextual bases of language use, Arab rhetoricians contribute to the pragmatic theory of language by recognizing the distinction between al-khabar (constative utterance) and al-‘insha:? (performative utterance). Their distinction is based on the possibility of having the utterance amenable to truth valuation, strikingly enough the same criterion used in modern linguistics very long time later

(cf. for example al-Shaykh 1986: 99-108). Here again the subject is tackled within the domain of ‘ilm al-ma‘a:ni (science of meanings), since the kind of utterance, whether constative or performative, that is appropriately used has to be compatible with the communicative status of the receiver. In positing speech acts theory as the major characterization of the field of pragmatics, Austin (1962) made the distinction between a performative utterance, which is, or is part of, the doing of an action, and a constative utterance which is only to constate, report or describe some state of affairs. Thus, according to Austin, performatives are not subject to truth-value judgment, unlike constatives which are intended to make true or false statements. As a significant feature of language usage upon which valuable linguistic inquiry is based, the distinction at hand marks a point of common conception between Arabic rhetoric and modern pragmatics.

When delivered in congruent contexts, constatives, according to the classical theory of Arabic rhetoric, serve to yield two functions: **1.** to inform the receiver of the proposition as well as the fact that the speaker knows the proposition, or **2.** to inform the receiver that the speaker knows the proposition as well, i.e. the proposition being mutual knowledge (cf. al-Hashimi n.d.: 153-154; Abbas 2004: 108-109). These two functions coincide respectively with what Strawson (1971: 34) calls “the principle of the presumption of ignorance”, and “the principle of the presumption of knowledge”. The former represents the normal use of constatives to convey new information on the presumption of the ignorance of the receiver. The latter, on the other hand, is connected with the use of constatives to convey known information on the presumption of knowledge of the receiver. The distinction at hand will therefore bear importantly on the speaker’s choice of what he says. The following two Arabic utterances would illustrate the two uses of constative discourse in the respective order they have been stated above:

**13. al-masa:fah baynana: wa-bayna al-shams ad‘a:f  
ma: baynana: wa-bayna al-qamar.  
The distance between us and the sun is many times  
the distance between us and the moon.**

**14. ?anta qadimta min safratik ?ams. (said to someone whom  
we know that he came back yesterday)  
You came back from your journey yesterday.**

From these constative functions it follows that a typology of the receiver can be set up in relation to the information communicated by constative

discourse. Thus, taking the receiver's immediate contextual status as motivating the speaker's issuance of constative discourse, Arab rhetoricians have identified the relatively specific types of receiver. This typology is determined by the relationship which the receiver's contextual status has with the proposition of the constative discourse.

Two types of receiver are likely to emerge if the purpose of the constative discourse is to inform or convey new information. If, however, the purpose is only to inform the receiver that the speaker knows the proposition as well, one type of receiver is identifiable. These receiver types can be elucidated by the notion of 'pragmatic presupposition', broadly suggested in modern pragmatic theory as referring to the receiver's status of having the proposition in mind without any belief in its truth or falsity prior to the speaker's issuance of the constative utterance (Jackendoff 1972: 230). Consequently, the following types of receiver are in order according to the original theory in Arabic rhetoric:

1. Presuppositionless receiver who has neither the proposition nor any belief in its truth or falsity.
2. Information-seeking receiver who has the proposition without having any prior belief in it, which makes him skeptical about the truth or falsity of the proposition.
3. Cognizant receiver who has a prior belief in the proposition (cf. among others Atiq 1985: 55-56).

Clearly, the first two types are set up to respond to the function of the constative which is to convey new information. In contrast, the last type, of which the receiver being cognizant of the proposition, corresponds to the other function of the constative which is only to convey that the proposition is mutual knowledge.

## **7. Contextual implication in Arabic rhetoric and the concept of implicature in pragmatic theory**

It is further possible to get a typology of constatives generated to correspond either isomorphically or non-isomorphically with the kind of informativness involved in the types of receiver already cited. This constative typology represents the kinds of utterances that are congruently or incongruently made in the context prompted by the receiver's contextual status. The concept of congruence used here to describe the relationship between the typology of the receiver with that of constative can be seen as closely related to Halliday's definition of congruence to indicate the unmarked, neutral realization of a semantic configuration in the lexico-grammar (Halliday 1985: 321). In the sense involving contextual

implications, congruence and incongruence seem to correspond to Grice's notions of observing and flouting a maxim respectively (Grice 1975: 49-51). Thus, the following specific types of constatives are congruently issued with the specific types of receiver already established:

1. Discourse-initiating constative which is normally used when the receiver is preuppositionless or non-cognizant, as in

**15. qadima al-ra?i:s.**

**The president came.**

4. Reconfirmational or information-seeking constative which is normally used when the receiver is information-seeking or skeptical about the truth or falsity of the proposition. As such, this kind of constative is preferably used with an emphasis device, as in

**16. ?inna al-ra?i:sa qadimun.**

**The president is undoubtedly coming.**

3. Specificational (contrastive) emphasis constative which is used when the receiver is counter-presuppositional. Thus, the constative must be emphasized with more than one emphasis device, as in

**17. ?inna al-ra?i:sa la-qa:dimun.**

**Undoubtedly, the president must be coming.** (cf. for example Abbas, 2004: 115-125).

In terms of pragmatic theory of implicature, each of the above-mentioned types of constatives should hold the speaker as observing the maxim of under-informativeness, i.e. of giving no less information than is required (Grice 1975: 46), by issuing an utterance in congruence with the immediate contextual status of the receiver. Since the speaker is observing this sub-maxim of quantity in a fairly direct way, a standard quantity implicature in Gricean sense is likely to come about by amplifying what is said to the effect that the proposition is made with a degree of emphasis directly related to the kind of constative issued.

On the other hand, there are cases of non-isomorphic relation between these established types of constative and receiver. These cases emerge as a result of using a constative incongruently with the type of receiver as distinctly identified with his immediate contextual status. Such non-literal realization of the respective proposition is understood in classical Arabic rhetoric to essentially involve that the speaker demotes the receiver from his actual communicative status to a different one. From the perspective of

modern pragmatic theory of implicature, this kind of demotion entails that the speaker flouts the maxim of informativeness by issuing an utterance which does not give as much information as is required and an implicature based on maxim flouting is therefore generated.

We can accordingly account for the following incongruent contexts in which a given constative is used to address other than its congruent receiver (cf. al-Hashimi n.d.: 60-63; al-Qizwini n.d.: 17-21). A receiver who is actually cognizant of the proposition might be demoted to a presuppositionless receiver. This can be illustrated by such an informative utterance as

**18. al-ṣala:tu wa:jibah.**

**Saying prayers is obligatory.**

addressed to a person who knows that saying prayers is obligatory, but he himself does not pray. The utterance is made in an incongruent context since it does not conform to the contextual status of the receiver. It further involves a flouting of the sub-maxim of under-informativeness as the quantity of information given is less than what is required on the respective occasion. The implicature that is likely to arise from this flouting might be deduced by the receiver as follows: the speaker has offered less information than required on the occasion; he could have given me a due informative utterance; since he has not done so, he should have intended me, the receiver, to infer some sort of information he has not literally said; the most probable deduction from the maxim being flouted as well as the informational background would count as “you (the addressee) are to be reproached for failing to say your prayers which you have to say for the sake of your welfare in the hereafter life”.

Similarly, a receiver who is actually information-seeking or skeptical about the proposition might also be demoted to a presuppositionless receiver. This is well illustrated in an informative utterance like

**19. qadima al-ra?i:s.**

**The president came.**

made to someone who is doubtful about the coming of the president. By stating this proposition with no emphasis proper, as normally done with the information-seeking receiver, the speaker flouts the maxim of under-informativeness; he offers less quantity of information than what is actually required on the relevant occasion. The implicature derived from such a flouting would be counting as “the coming of the president is taken for

granted, and your, i.e. the addressee's, doubtfulness is therefore out of place". Along similar lines, a receiver who is actually information-seeking or skeptical about the truth of the proposition can be demoted to a counter-presuppositional receiver. The constative is consequently given with emphasis. This is illustrated in such an utterance as

**20. ?inna al-nasra la-qari:b.**

**Undoubtedly, victory must be imminent.**

said to someone who is doubtful about the achievement of victory. As the utterance is emphatically made with two emphasis devices, and thus incongruent with the actual communicative status of the receiver, it is informatively stronger than what is actually required. The speaker here is flouting the second sub-maxim of quantity, i.e. the maxim of over-informativeness. The implicature inferred from such a flouting would be gathered to the effect that "you should be self-assured of the victory achievement, and you should not have the least doubt about it".

Finally, we can bring in the case where it is possible for a receiver who is actually counter-presuppositional of the proposition to be demoted to presuppositionless of the proposition. The kind of utterance involved can be illustrated by such a constative as

**21. al'ilmu na:fi'.**

**Science is useful.**

said to someone who does not seem to acknowledge the usefulness of science. The constative, being devoid of any emphasis, is of the discourse-initiating type, and thus incongruently given with the communicative status of the receiver. Such a flouting of the under-informativeness maxim can be taken to yield a quantity implicature which might be generated as "see to all evidence to make sure that science is useful".

## **8. Performative utterances in Arabic rhetoric and speech acts in modern pragmatic theory**

Along with their study of constatives, Arab rhetoricians concentrated on al-insha:? (performative utterances) as the other major parallel type of speech. According to them, a linguistic form is performative when it cannot be judged as true or false with regard to the particular meaning it has on a given occasion. The basis on which they drew the distinction between constatives and performatives is truth-value judgment: unlike constative, a



performative utterance is not subject to be truth-valued as it has no true or false reference prior to the time of its issuance (Atiq 1985: 74). The following Arabic utterances are performative in terms of the same conception:

**22. ?uktub al-dars.**

**Write the lesson.**

**23. la taftah al-ba:b.**

**Do not open the door.**

**24. bi'tuka hadha al-kita:b.**

**I hereby sell this book to you.**

However, like constatives, for performative utterances to be appropriately made they should be delivered in appropriate context, and should therefore be uttered in compliance with the communicative status of the receiver. Like constatives too, the analysis of performative discourse in Arabic is introduced within the purview of 'ilm al-ma'a:ni (science of meanings) since the subject-matter of the latter is the study of the rhetorical effect in all kinds of utterances when appropriately produced to conform to contextual elements, chiefly among them is the communicative status of the receiver.

As already distinguished, 'performative utterance' is classified into two pragmatically definable classes in the classical theory of Arabic rhetoric: al-insha:? al-talabi (directive performative) and al-insha:? ghayr al-talabi (non-directive performative). Directive performative is any utterance that requires the performance of what is non-existent at the time of the issuance of the utterance. It is the utterance in which the act of uttering a sequence of words precedes the meaning it gives in terms of the performance of a designated action. Non-directive performative, on the other hand, is the utterance which does not involve such a kind of action-performance; yet it is performative in that its meaning designates something non-existent prior to the issuance of the utterance, but temporarily coincident with it (Abbas 2004: 151). To illustrate the distinction at hand the following examples may be permuted:

**25. li-yaqum kullu wa:hidin minkum biwa:jibih.**

**Each one of you must do his job.**

**26. ?aKhali:lun fa:za bi-lja:ʔizah am Usa:ma?**  
**Did Khalil win the prize or Usama?**

**27. zawwajtuka ʔibnati.**  
**I hereby name you husband to my daughter.**

**28. laʕalla al-imtiḥa:n sahl.**  
**I hope the examination is easy.**

In **25** and **26**, the utterance calls for the receiver to perform an action which may come about only after the utterance is issued by the speaker. The meaning of the utterance, therefore, involves an action designated in response to what the speaker intends to convey, ordering the receiver in the first example, and questioning him in the second. Thus it is directive performative that is expressed by these sample utterances. But the performative is non-directive in **27** and **28**, where the action identified by the utterance, naming husband and wife in one example and wishing that something is the case in the other, coincides in the time of its occurrence with that of issuing the utterance and does not come before it.

As posited by Arab predecessors, the analysis of ‘performative’ is not at odds with the basic tenets of speech-act theory, the model in modern linguistics that is of prime importance to the characterization of pragmatics in its own right as the contextual analysis of language. In its orthodox form, the theory of speech acts draws upon the observation that actions are performed by utterances (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), and develops as a result of a distinction made between performative utterances, the issuing of which is or is part of the doing of an action, and constative utterances which are only to constate, report or describe some state of affairs. Here, as held by Arab scholars, the constative-performative distinction is based on truth-value judgment, giving the same conception that performatives are not subject to be truth-valued, unlike constatives which are intended to make true or false statements.

The definition and classification of performative utterances already suggested in Arabic rhetoric, as evidenced from the examples **25**, **26**, **27** and **28**, and the commentary on them cited above would indicate further similarities with the basic postulates of speech-act theory as regards the utterance-meaning interpretation. According to speech-act theorists, utterance meaning is analyzable in terms of the action that is felicitously performed by the utterance. The action thus performed, or ‘illocutionary act’, is identifiable with the force as represented in the

intention behind the utterance, or in what the utterance is taken to achieve on a given occasion, as to make a promise, for example. It is distinguishable from 'locutionary act', the act of utterance itself, or the utterance of a sequence of words with certain meaning in a particular language. Thus the illocutionary act of 'suggestion' may involve the locutionary act

### **29. I suggest you abandon the job.**

One further point that may conveniently be made to assert the relation between performative in Arabic rhetoric and speech-act theory in pragmatics is connected with 'indirect speech acts'. Like other oblique cases of verbal interaction, in which sentence meaning is at variance with speaker's utterance meaning, the analysis of indirect speech acts is highly involved and poses a particular problem of crucial importance for all approaches to utterance interpretation. To this end a wide range of proposals has been offered in contemporary linguistics (cf. for instance, Sadock 1974; Gordon and Lakoff 1975; Leech 1981; Leech 1983). In terms of standard speech-act theory, however, indirect speech acts are cases "in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by performing another" (Searle 1975: 60). Thus, the utterance

### **30. Can you pass the salt?**

though interrogative in form, and has the illocutionary act of questioning the ability of the hearer, can more often, and almost conventionally be used to perform the illocutionary act of 'request'; it is a request performed by way of asking a question.

This suggestion is originally based on the observation that an act can be performed implicitly, or without invoking the explicit illocutionary force-indicating device, where the context and the utterance make it clear that the essential condition is satisfied (Searle 1969: 68). Syntactically, the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts is provided by a form-force correlation according to which each syntactic category is to relate to its corresponding pragmatic category. Given that declarative, interrogative and imperative forms correlate respectively with the communicative functions of statement, question and directive (request/command), indirect speech acts are those where surface form does not match the interactional function to

which it is originally reserved (Troike 1982:36; Yule 2006: 118-119). Being a declarative,

**31. It is cold outside.**

will accordingly be functioning as a direct speech act whenever it is used to make a statement, but as indirect speech act when it is used to make a request.

Both pragmatic and syntactic bases employed in pragmatics to account for the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts are approximately offered in Arabic rhetoric to deal with the general category of performatives. Whether it is directive or non-directive, a performative may retain its original type by functioning isomorphically with its basic syntactic form, and should therefore be considered a direct speech act. Alternatively, it may change its type due to contextual factors and have a function other than that associated with its basic structure, which would characterize it as an indirect speech act (cf. Atiq 1985:80-129; Qassab 1998: 39-88). As a sub-category of directive performative, 'question', for example, is identified on pragmatic grounds, and further distinguished from other performatives by distinct syntactic marking. Pragmatically, a question is the utterance that asks for what is already unknown by the speaker, and is syntactically realized by the use of the interrogative particles and interrogative words. In the following utterances, the interrogatives are genuine questions, and by the same token of form-function correlation should be taken as direct speech acts:

**32. hal tuḥibbu al-mu:si:qa?**

**Do you like music?**

**33. ?ayuzra'u al-quṭnu fi al-Jaza:ir?**

**Is cotton grown in Algeria?**

**34. man fi l-bayt?**

**Who is in the home?**

However, the interrogative forms can also be rhetorically employed in a wide range of instances to function differently from what they are primarily used in language. Consequently, they are no longer questions, but change into other performative types according to the context in which they are made. Given the principle of form-function

correlation, they are indirect speech acts, as shown in the following examples:

**35. ?alam tara: ma: fa‘alta bi?akhi:k? (as said by father to his son)**

**Didn’t you see what you did to your brother?**

**36. ?a‘aṣayta rabbak?**

**Did you disobey your Lord?**

**37. “fahal antum muntahu:n?” (Qur’anic verse)**

**So, will you not then abstain?**

**38. “?alam nuhlik al-awwali:n?” (Qur’anic verse)**

**Did we not destroy the ancients?**

When produced in appropriate contexts, each of the above interrogative forms may function as an indirect speech act where it does not serve as a genuine question by having a function which does not match the interrogative form it is primarily associated with. The indirect speech act can be ‘surprise’ in **35**, ‘disapproval’ in **36**, ‘order’ in **37** and ‘threat’ in **38**.

## **9. Conclusions**

Arabic rhetoric is a linguistic discipline that has a lot of affinities with pragmatics as a reconstructed concept with a formulated role in modern linguistics. The linguistic features that Arabic rhetoric has in common with the theory of pragmatics should be considered as contributions made by Arab rhetoricians who discussed these features long time before they are recognized by western pragmaticists.

Both Arabic rhetoric and pragmatics are concerned with the study of language as actually used, and both are underlain by the assumption that invokes the relation of language to its users. More specifically, the two comparable approaches underscore the significance of ‘context of situation’ for appropriate language production and interpretation, a point that gives rise to the development of either of the models as a distinct discipline taking life of its own. Arab predecessors genuinely expounded the notion of ‘context of situation’, and considered most of the contextual variables identified in recent linguistic studies. Of these

constituents of context, however, they concentrated on the perceptive system of receiver as the more important variable that constrains the type of utterance to be dispatched by speaker. To them the whole rhetorical discipline is confined to the observance by the speaker of the receiver's contextual status.

The rhetorical principle of issuing utterances in conformity with the communicative status of receiver suggests that utterances can be rhetorically valued in relation to their informativeness: taking into account the communicative status of receiver in terms of his immediate and long-term ideology, the speaker will dispatch utterances with varying degrees of informativeness to satisfy the needs of the receiver on the relevant occasion. Accordingly, there are patterns in Arabic rhetoric which are specifically identified to constrain the informativeness of utterances, and to accord well with Grice's maxim of quantity basically formulated to impose the constraint of giving as much information as required by the current purpose of the exchange.

The distinction between 'constative' and 'performative' is a significant contribution made by Arab rhetoricians to the pragmatic theory of language. Their recognition of the two functions of constative utterance, viz. to inform the receiver of a proposition, or to inform him that the speaker knows the proposition as well, coincides with Strawson's principles of the presumption of ignorance and of the presumption of knowledge respectively. The typology of receiver they set up on the basis of constative functions is elucidated by 'pragmatic presupposition' as recently suggested to refer to the assumptions made by the speaker regarding the way the proposition is known by the receiver prior to the issuance of constative. Thus, a presuppositionless receiver, for instance, is assumed to have neither the proposition nor any belief in its truth or falsity in mind.

In Arabic rhetoric, the Hallidyan notion of 'congruence' is made use of to make a typology of constatives based on whether they are congruently or incongruently produced in the context as prompted by the receiver's contextual status and the kind of informativeness the relevant type of receiver involves. Accordingly, we have specific types of constative which are issued in congruence with specific types of receiver. Such instances of language usage obviously represent cases of observing the maxim of informativeness in Gricean terms, and should therefore result in a deduction of a standard implicature. On the other hand, there are types of constative which are incongruently issued with the types of receiver as distinctly identified with his immediate contextual status. The latter instances are cases of flouting the Gricean

quantity maxim, and should therefore generate an implicature that is deduced from exploiting or blatantly violating the maxim.

The notion of action-performance in explaining utterance meaning, as recently suggested in speech-act theory, is not a completely innovative idea since it is already brought in for the discussion of performative by Arab scholars. Their distinction between directive and non-directive performative is fundamentally based on the very idea of action-performance. It is the same idea that is further exploited to identify different sub-categories of directive performative as each of them is associated with the performance of a distinct action. Finally, there is no subject in pragmatics that seems to be more connected with Arabic rhetoric than the issue of direct and indirect speech acts. As it is conceived in Arabic rhetoric, a performative utterance, both directive and non-directive, has its direct or indirect illocution exclusively determined by whether it can function isomorphically with its structure type in which case it is a direct speech act, or non-isomorphically to be characterized as an indirect speech act.

## References

- **Abbas, Fadhil Hasan** (2004). *Al-Bala:ghah Funu:nuha wa-Afna:nuha 'ilmi al-Ma'a:ni*. Amman: Dar al-Furqa:n lil-nashr wa-al-tawzi:ʿ.
- **Abdul Raof, Hussein** (2006). *Arabic Rhetoric: A pragmatic Analysis*, 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- **al-Hashimi, Ahmed**. (n.d.). *Jawa:hir al-Bala:ghah fi al-Ma'a:ni wa-al-Baya:n wa- al-Badi:ʿ*. Beirut: Dar ihya:? al-tura:th al-ʿarabi.
- **al-Jurjani, Abdul Qahir**. (1998). *Dala:?il al-I'ja:z fi 'ilm al-Ma'a:ni*. Mohammad Abdah and Mohammad al-Shanqi:ti: (eds.), Beirut: Da:r al-ma'rifah.
- **al-Shaykh, A. H.** (1986). *Dira:sa:t fi al-Bala:ghah 'inda Diya:? al-Di:n Ibn al-Athi:r*. Alexandria: Mu?assasat Shaba:b al-Ja:mi'a lil-ṭabʿ wa-al-nashr wa-al-tawzi:ʿ.
- **Atiq, A.** (1985). *Fi al-Bala:ghah al-ʿarabiyah 'ilmi al-Ma'a:ni*. Beirut: Da:r al-Nahdah al-ʿarabiyah.
- **al-Qizwini, Mohammed Ibn Abdul Rahman**. (n.d.). *al-?i:da:h fi 'ulu:m al-Bala:ghah*. 2 Vols., Reprint, Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthanna.
- **Austin, John I.**, (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University press.
- **Chomsky, Noam**. (1980). *Rules and Representations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- **Dinneen, Francis P.** (1967). *An Introduction to General Linguistics*. New York: Halt, Rinehart and Winston.
- **Firth, John R.** (1957). *Papers in Linguistics, 1934-51*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Gordon, David and George Lakoff** (1975). 'Conversational Postulates'. In Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, 83-106. New York: Academic Press.
- **Grice, H. Paul**. (1971). 'Utterer's Meaning, Sentence Meaning and Word Meaning'. In John R. Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, 54-70. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ----- (1975), 'Logic and Conversation'. In Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.
- **Halliday, Michael A. K.** (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd.



- **Hassan, Tammam.** (1973). *al-Lughah al-‘arabiyah: Ma‘na:ha wa-Mabna:ha*. Cairo: al-Hay?ah al- Misriyah al-‘a:mmah lil-kita:b.
- **Hymes, Dell** (1971). ‘Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory’. In R. Huxley and E. Ingram (eds.), *Language Acquisition: Models and Methods*, 3-28. London: Academic Press.
- ----- (1972). ‘On Communicative Competence’. In J. B. Pride and Janet Holmes (eds.), *Sociolinguistics*, 269-285. Harmondsworth Penguin.
- **Jackendoff, R. S.** (1972). *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. press.
- **Leech, Geoffrey N.** (1981). *Semantics*. 2nd. ed. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- ----- (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- **Levinson, Stephen C.** (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Morris, Charles W.** (1938). ‘Foundations of the Theory of Signs’. In Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap and Charles Morris (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Unified Sciences*, 77-138. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- **Mujahid, A.** (2005). *‘ilm al-Lisa:n al-‘arabi*. 1st ed. Amman: Dar Usa:mah lil-nashr.
- **Palmer, Frank R.** (1981). *Semantics*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Parret, Herman.** (1985). *Semantics and Pragmatics, an Evaluative Comparison of Conceptual Frameworks*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- **Qassab, W.** (1989). *al-Bala:ghah al-‘arabiyah ‘ilm al-Ma‘a:ni*. Dubai: Dar al-Qalam lil-nashr wa-al-tawzi:‘.
- **Sadock, Jerrold M.** (1974). *Towards a Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- **Saville-Troike, Murrel.** (1982). *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction*. Oxford: Basil: Blackwell.
- **Searle, John R.** (1969). *Speech Acts, an Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ----- (1975). ‘Indirect Speech Acts’. In Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, 59-82. New York: Academic Press.

- **Strawson, Peter Frederick.** (1971). 'Intention and Convention in Speech Acts'. In John R. Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, 23-38. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **Verschueren, Jef** (1987). *Pragmatics as a Theory of Linguistic Adaptation, Working Document 1*. Belgian National Science Foundation, University of Antwerp, International Pragmatic Association.
- **Yule, George.** (2006). *The Study of Language*. 3rd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## Appendix

Transliteration symbols for Arabic vowels and some consonants that are used in the present work.

Arabic Alphabet	Symbol	Example	Meaning
ء	ʔ	ʔamal	hope
ث	th	tha'lab	fox
ج	j	Jamal	camel
ح	<u>h</u>	<u>H</u> ub	love
خ	kh	Khubz	bread
ذ	dh	Dhahab	gold
ز	z	Zayt	oil
ش	sh	Shams	sun
ص	<u>s</u>	<u>S</u> ayf	summer
ض	<u>d</u>	<u>D</u> ayf	guest
ط	<u>t</u>	<u>ti</u> :n	mud
ظ	TH	THuhr	noon
ع	'	'bd	slave
غ	gh	gharb	west
ق	q	Qalam	pencil
و	w	Ward	rose
ي	y	Yawm	day
(فتحه)	a	Kataba	he wrote
(ضمة)	u	Kutub	books
(كسرة)	i	Sin	tooth
مد طويل / ي	a:	ka:tib	writer
ضمة طويلة و	u:	fu:l	beans
كسرة ي طويلة	i:	fi:l	elephant
Diphthongs (اصوات عله مركبه)	aw	Mawt	death
	ay	Bayt	house

جوانب من البلاغة العربية والنظريه التداوليه اللغويه الحديثه: العلاقات التكاملية

د. عدنان عبدالدايم عبدالواحد

كلية شط العرب الجامعة

قسم اللغة الانكليزية

تقدم هذه الدراسة عرضا جدليا للوقوف على العلاقة بين النظرية التداولية اللغوية الحديثة، كما يصفها أبرز المفكرين المحدثين، وبعض جوانب البلاغة العربية ذات الأصول القديمة مع محاولة تقييم هذه العلاقة تقييما موضوعيا. وتركز على مساهمات البلاغيين العرب القدماء من خلال دراستهم لتلك الجوانب من التواصل اللغوي التي تبرز جليا في دراسات اللغويين المعاصرين في الغرب. كما يظهر من هذا العرض أن بعض المفاهيم الأساسية في النظرية التداولية الحديثة مثل المقام Context والأفتراض الضمني Presupposition والأقتضاء التداولي Implicature وأفعال الكلام Speech acts يمكن تتبع جذورها في سياق الطروحات الفكرية في التراث الواسع من البلاغة العربية، رغم أن بعض هذه المفاهيم قد لا تكون مترابطة كليا في عرضها ضمن هذا التراث. وأن هذه المفاهيم قد جرى إكمالها وتطويرها وبلورتها أو تقديمها على نحو فني على يد مفكري الغرب المعاصرين ممن درسوا تداولية اللغة وفلسفتها.