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## A Pragmatic Study of Oaths in Arabic Ceremonies

## A B S T R A C T

Language is viewed as a kind of communication that includes greeting, requesting, threatening, demanding, thanking, swearing, and so on. Oath is a fundamental foundation of the language that individuals regularly use. Oath is considered a linguistic phenomenon and exists in most languages for the same purpose in various structures. The current study intends to investigate the oaths and how they are constructed to deliver the message and discover the pragmatic features of the chosen oaths relating the performative speech actions and presuppositions. The study used a mixed research technique, both qualitative and quantitative, to explore and characterize five English oaths. It has been determined that English oaths involve explicit and implicit performative speech acts represented by the verbs "swear and pledge" and the future tense structure. Furthermore, they are found to meet Searle's taxonomy of speech actions, with two sorts of presuppositions, existential and lexical. © 2022 EDUJ, College of Education for Human Science, Wasit University

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## دراسة تداولية للقسم في المراسم العربية

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## المُستخلص

يُنظر إلى اللغة على أنها نوع من التواصل الذي يتضمن عبارات مثل التحية والطلب والتهديد والمطالبة والشكر والقسم وما إلى ذلك. يعتبر القسم أساساً أساسياً للغة التي يستخدمها الأفراد بشكل منتظم. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من التعبيرات العديدة للقسم وكيفية بنائها لإيصال الرسالة ، بالإضافة إلى اكتشاف السمات البراغماتية للقسم المختار المتعلقة بإجراءات الكلام والافتراضات. استخدمت الدراسة أسلوب بحث مشترك ، نوعياً وكمياً ، لاستكشاف وتمييز خمسة أقسام. لقد تقرر أن القسم الإنجليزي يتضمن أفعال الكلام الأدائية الصريحة والضمنية ممثلة بالأفعال "أقسم وتعهّد" وبنية الفعل المستقبلية. علاوة على ذلك، وجد أنها تلبي تصنيف سيرل لأفعال الكلام، مع نوعين من الافتراضات، الوجودية والمعجمية. بناءً على النتائج ، تم تقديم عدد من المقترحات والتوصيات للباحثين في علم اللغة من أجل تحسين المجال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القسم ، البراغماتية ، أفعال الكلام ، الأعمال الأدائية ، الافتراضات

## 1.0 Introduction

Language is the most important way of communication. By language, the connection occurs, and the experiences are transmitted from one generation to another.

Ahmed (2020) said that swearing is transmitted from one generation to another due to its existence in holy books such as Holy Quran and Bible. It is regarded as the possessions of the heirs. It is also presented in other languages such as Hebrew and other Semitic languages.

Kiani (1991, as cited in Aliakbri, Mahjub & Heiderizadi, 2013) stated different purposes of uttering an oath. He claimed that its essential functions are to give an assertion to the subject matter, prove the guilt, give the truthiness to the speech, establish evidence of declaration, and build a trust line between the interlocutors.

## 2.0 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Oath Meanings

The oath is a declaration that can be undertaken for the future as the promise, explicitly or implicitly. It is built upon honour and the truth; without them, it is considered a crime against humanity. By saying the words of the oath, it is obliged to connect the words with the speakers' emotions according to the context where it is being said (Sommerstein; Torrance, 2014).

Gray (2013) also mentioned that the oath is a declaration in which someone is a witness to the truth of one's. The idea of the oath is to persuade the others to whom it is sworn that the assertion of the swearer is the truth and can be trusted. Using the name of God in the swearing (oath) shows the acceptance of God's witness on oath saying's behaviour towards their heavy duties. This acceptance is related to society's religious beliefs, which restrict human attitude.

To Montagu (2016), the Oath is a fundamental human behaviour whose purpose is to provide relief. Similarly, it is an instrumental that effectively may be performed if sustained by a significant degree of emotion.

### 2.2 Why Oath?

In communication, the people hold the expectations from each other within the communicative situation. These expectations are found based on the implicit intentions of the utterances. Some cases need an explicit oath in marriage ceremonies, court, graduation, and public loyalty to the nation. A promise is a contract that interlinks the promiser and promisee in unstable situations (Schlesinger, 2008).

Gray (2013) proclaimed that it is a kind of worship to God. In the holy books, God permits the people to claim by his names for specific issues that are important and severe cases and consider the swear by the mortal creatures forbidden. The creatures do not have the power of punishment, but God has, making the oath a sacred phenomenon.

## **2.3 Oath Types**

### **2.3.1 Hippocratic Oath**

In popular medical culture, the Hippocratic Oath, the Hippocratic tradition, and the Hippocratic principles are frequently mentioned as guiding medical practice and the medical profession. They have been used as professional identification for doctors (Jotterand 2018).

Physicians first used the Hippocratic Oath in ancient Greece. They swear by the God Apollo to provide the best possible care for patients and treat everyone equally, regardless of race, gender, or age. They want God to be the witness in their care as they serve humankind. The wording of the Hippocratic oath evolves with time, showing diverse cultures, beliefs, and faiths. The Hippocratic Oath is the one that embodies medical ethics across the world (Milles, 2004)

### **2.3.2 Allegiance Oath**

In 2014, Orgad also mentioned that oaths foster camaraderie and a sense of belonging. They want to build in- and out-groups and bring the in-groups together most importantly. According to this viewpoint, the oath's words are less effective without the ceremony. Signing a few words on a piece of paper is insufficient to create the necessary sense of solidarity. The dramatic moment of taking the oath in a public ceremony, on the other hand, is what makes the swearing unforgettable. Patriotic customs such as saluting the flag, reading the pledge in public, and swearing on the Bible are generally included in the ceremony, adding to the dramatic atmosphere.

John Locke (A Letter Concerning Toleration. Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing, 2007) observed long ago, "Faith only, and inward sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance.". When a person is loyal, they consistently express affection for the object of allegiance (Orgad, 2014).

### **2.3.3 Office Oath**

Oaths of office bind office holders to their duties. They are designed to guarantee that official commitments are met, but they also subject the nature of those tasks to external examination (Arony, 2018).

Rutgers (2010) proclaimed that the oath of office is a moral responsibility that prioritises public issues over personal concerns to help others in society. For example, university graduates take this type of oath, and the president, upon entering office in the state, the military, and other sectors of society, swears by this oath to be accountable in their practical lives.

### **2.3.4 Pauper Oath**

Illinois Poor-Law is another name for it. Defendants who cannot afford to hire a counsel to represent them in court use it. It is only observed in countries where such a statute is supported to defend offenders. After the repeater establishes that he does not own the property and is using it to pay counsel to defend him, the oath is repeated.

## 2.4 Oath in Arabic

The oath is one of the emphasizing methods people have known in many languages. It was known and spread among the Arabs as it was common among other nations, so they used it in all that the need calls for documenting and verifying it from news, promises, covenants, and other things that necessitate confirming the matter in the affairs of individuals and groups.

Mohammed (2019) mentioned that oath is a common Arabic term that denotes to promise by Allah, the sun, the moon, the light, the darkness, the night, and the day. Such expressions are found in holy Quranic verses. Al – Zarkashi (1992, as cited in Mohammed 2019) stated that an oath is a speech used to confirm a statement with emphasis.

Masliyah (1999) stated that the people used various formulations within their Arabic language according to their values and beliefs and which expressions strongly impact their community. For example, they used 'wa-llahi; bi-llahi; ta-llahi' 'by God'. Using the prepositions as 'bi; ta; wa', which precedes the name of 'Allah', gives more intensive swearing according to the context and the situation. Muslims also swear by the name of the Prophet since it has a divine entity in the Muslim religion. In ancient Arabic people, they have claimed the holy stone or idol, like 'wa-alat; wa-aleza'.

## 2.5 Concept of Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the field of linguistics that is not only concerned with a word or sentence's forms but, as identified by Mey (2001 as cited in Archer et al., 2012), including syntax, semantics, lexicology, and phonetics.

Yule (1996, 2000) defined pragmatics as "the study of speaker meaning." His definition shows that this field of linguistics, pragmatics, focuses on the intended meaning of the speaker's speech, in other words, on the purpose of using this type of word formation by the speaker. Lakoff claimed that "pragmatics is concerned with the interesting stuff about language." He meant by "interesting stuff" that there is always something around us that affects our decoding of the utterances of others and our choices of expressions in the communication environment (Lakoff, 1993, as cited in Archer et al., 2012).

### 2.5.1 Context and Structure in Pragmatics

Widdowson (1989, as cited in Pranowo, 2020) defines context as "those aspects of the circumstances of actual language use which are taken as relevant to meaning." In other words, context is the schematic creation of pragmatic meaning in which linguistic codes correspond to their schematic constituents. As a result, the factual contexts are concealed inside the speaker's speech pattern.

Linguistic pragmatics is the discipline of making decisions based on a set of alternatives, being structural (found at any level of the language structure) or contextual (relating to any ingredient of a speech event). Incorporating context within the domain of decision-making objects implies that it is not viewed as a static external reality (Verschueren, 2008).

### 2.5.2 Speech Acts

Birner (2013) mentioned that Austin's idea of speech act theory is performed to show the differences between constative speech, which means the "declarative utterances expressing some state of affairs", and performative speech means that it is used to perform the act by words in contrast to the constative speech. Performative speech could be either explicit performative (direct speech) or implicit performative (indirect speech)(Johnstone, 2008).

Any utterance at any time and any place have three-act dimensions: (a) a locutionary act, which is the original act of utterance with meaningful linguistic expression; (b) an illocutionary act, which is a purposeful linguistic expression that has a powerful effect on the addressee in the communicative situation; This effect is known as illocutionary force; (c) perlocutionary act. This dimension depends upon the conditions in which it occurs, revealing what the addressee understands from the addresser's speech or intention (Yule, 1996, 2000).

Austin (1962) and Searle (1976) proposed categorising speech activities into broad groups. Because Austin's taxonomy was weak, Searle developed an alternate taxonomy. He categorises them as follows: a) *Representatives*: the speaker represents what he/she believes to be true; b) *Comissives*: the speaker is obligated to act the uttering words in the future; c) *Directives*: the speaker not only acts as an instructor on the listener but also acts as an instructor on himself/herself by words; and d) *Expressives*: the speaker uses words to present the psychological status at the time of the speech, e) *Declaratives*: which means that the speaker declares something by words that change the world.

### 2.5.3 Presuppositions

Stalnaker (1973) described presupposition as a semantically linked relation that may decide between assertion and presupposition based on the truth-conditional on the one hand; in pragmatic analysis, it can decide between assertion and presupposition based on the situation in which the speech occurs. A presupposition is a manipulative weapon used by the speaker to transmit the speaker's implicit intention to the listeners based on the norms, policies, and values of a given culture (Peter et al., 2016). It possesses the property of consistency under negation, which indicates that even when the same sentence is repeated in negative forms, it still conveys the same notion (Frege, 1892, as cited in Atlas, 2006). According to Yule (1996), there are seven categories of presuppositions: prospective, existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual.

## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Nature of the Study

The researcher adopted qualitative and quantitative research methods to complete each other in analyzing data to give more strength to the study's outcome than qualitative or quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007 as cited in Creswell, 2009). So, the type of this research is mixed research (triangulation method), the exploratory sequential method is used, and its notation is (QUAL→quan). The process is started inductively, and then the theory is enhanced qualitatively and accomplished quantitatively (Morse, 1991).

There are seven aims in adopting the mixed-method research in analyzing data found by Tashakkori and Newman (2010, as cited in Hafsa, 2019); *Complementarity, Completeness, Development, Expansion, Corroboration/confirmation, Compensation, and Diversity*.

### 3.2 Data Collection

This chapter is set up to achieve the study's aims and answer the research questions. The data are collected using the following steps:

1. The researcher chooses *four* oaths in Arabic for various purposes in various situations, and the sample size is collected carefully to fit the research hypothesis to avoid repetition.
2. Converting some authorities of oath ceremonies in Arabic from the official websites into texts to analyze.
3. The researcher is trying to identify the pragmatic aspects of the oath's formation, aiming to clarify the meaning behind oath pragmatically, such as speech act and presupposition, and how it conforms semantically by explaining the relationship between words within the text.
4. Using statistics for accounting the frequency of pragmatic aspects found in the oaths.

### 3.3 Theoretical Background

The pragmatic analysis of the selected oaths explores the performative speech acts adopting Austin's (1962) classification because of its importance in distinguishing the performatives from the constative utterances. The illocutionary act adopts Searle's (1975) classification of speech act in order to set if the text is a "directives", "commissive", "expressives", "assertives", or "declaratives". Another level in pragmatic analysis for the oath's texts is presupposition stated by Yule (1996) since it is specific and variant in a manner that suits the study.

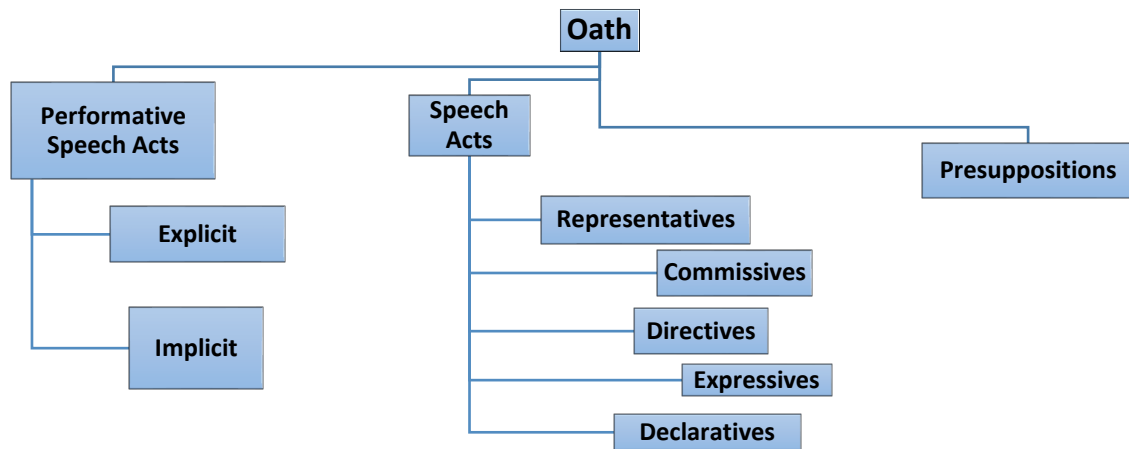
### 3.4 The Procedures of Analysis

The researcher has steps to follow in the process of analyzing:

1. Providing textual and contextual analysis for the selected oath in Arabic ceremonies.
2. Providing the pragmatic analysis based on the aim behind the use of oaths is stated according to Austin's classification of performative acts, Searle's classification of speech acts, and Yule's classification of presupposition. performative acts, Searle's classification

**Figure 1**

*Theoretical Framework of the Model Analysis. [ adopted from Austin's (1962), Searle's (1975), and Yule's (1996)].*



#### 4.0 Data Analysis

##### 4.1 Performative Speech Acts of Arabic Oaths

In Arabic, the oaths contain verbs such as 'اقسم بالله العلي العظيم, نلزم أنفسنا بمحضر الله جلّ جلاله' to function as performative speech. This type of performative is explicit, and it can be interpreted conventionally. Whereas the implicit performative acts of the oath are produced by the framework such as 'و ان نقدم, وان احترم, وان اعمل, ان اكون وفياً' the interpretation will be through its intended meaning. It is supposed to be 'و أقسم أن أحترم, وأقسم ان اعمل, اقسم بأن أكون وفياً', 'و نقسم أن نُقدم'. The concluding meaning requires the context, including time, situation, and a group of people who relate to them, to interpret it. (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*The Explicit and Implicit Performative in Oaths.*

No.	The Explicit Performative	The Implicit Performative
(1)	نلزم أنفسنا بمحضر الله جلّ جلاله و رسوله الاكرم محمد صل الله عليه وسلم وبمحرم الامام الحسين عليه السلام وشعب العراق الكريم والعالم الاجمع	
(2)	اقسم بالله العلي العظيم	
(3)		وان اعمل على صيانة الحريات العامة والخاصة واستقلال القضاء والتزم بتطبيق التشريعات بأمانه و حياد
(4)		وان احترم القانون واتقيد في اعمالي بقواعد الشرف والنزاهه
(5)		و ان نقدم خالص جهودنا بالبناء والتقدم والرفي لبلدنا



## 4.2 Speech Acts of Arabic Oaths

According to Searle's categorization, speech acts of swearing express the speakers' convictions in the truthfulness of the ideas, thoughts, and values. Commissives demonstrate that the speakers of the oath commit to putting it into practice by directing themselves, not the hearer, to follow the principles and standards in their jobs by displaying their behaviours and attitudes toward others. They demonstrate to others the power of acting on words and implementing humanism in their daily lives. Also, the speakers swear that their remarks will transform the world. The difference is in how they express their individuality and professionalism, which distinguishes the personalities of their occupations.

### 4.2.1 Representative Speech Act of Oaths

(6) 'أقسمُ بالله العظيم وبشرفي أن أؤدي واجبي بصدقٍ وأمانه وأخلاصٍ،'

In the previous utterance, the locutionary act is presented in this utterance by 'أقسم بالله العظيم' 'I swear by almighty God (Allah)'. Its intended meaning and conventional meaning is a promise. Its verb is the explicit performative 'أقسم' 'swear'. By the name of God (Allah), the addresser swears to perform his/her tasks 'أن أؤدي واجبي' with honest and loyalty 'وأمانه وأخلاص'. The addresser shows the truthness of behaviour's morality to be accepted in society. The effect of the utterance on the listeners makes them believe that the addresser is committed to her/his words and converts them into actions in practical life.

(7) 'وأَتَقِيدُ فِي أَعْمَالِي بِقَوَاعِدِ الشَّرَفِ وَالنِّزَاهِ،'

In this utterance, the addresser states the fact of that honour and integrity (الشرف والنزاهة) which have existed in the value and norms of the community. These moral features are truths in any society that cannot be avoided or changed. The addresser's intention is a promise to commit his/herself to behave with morality as a professional. The effect of the intention is that the listeners will accept the addresser with trust to fit the career situation.

### 4.2.2 Commissives Speech Act of Oaths

(8) 'وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ عَلَى صَيَانَةِ الْحُرِيَّاتِ الْعَامَةِ وَالْخَاصَّةِ وَإِسْتِقْلَالِ الْقَضَاءِ،'

The addresser gives intention of the swearing obligation 'أقسم' to save the public and personal freedoms and keep the judiciary always independent. The promise structure, in Arabic syntactic, is built with the accusative tool أداة النصب "أَنَّ" with the present tense verb 'أعمل' by which the addresser sends the message to the addressees.

(9) 'وَأَنْ أَحْتَرِمَ الْقَانُونَ وَأَتَقِيدَ فِي أَعْمَالِي بِقَوَاعِدِ الشَّرَفِ وَالنِّزَاهِ،'

The addresser promises to respect the law and work with honesty and integrity. The structure of the speech act utterance 'وَأَنْ أَحْتَرِمَ' which refers to the future actions that the addresser will do; therefore, the accusative tool أداة النصب "أَنَّ" in the Arabic grammar system with the present tense verb 'أحترم' indicates that the utterance of the addresser is a promise. The intended meaning is 'أقسم أن أحترم' shows that the performative act verb is implicit.



#### 4.2.3 Directives Speech Act of Oaths

‘ان لا أفشي سراً عن مريض’ (10)

In the following Arabic speech acts, the addressers instruct themselves to behave in the professional field as secret keepers of their patients to get more confidence in them and be harmless in prescribing the drugs for them.

‘وأرعى مصالح شعبه’ (11)

The addressers direct themselves to act the action of taking care of the people’s interests putting into consideration protecting the country’s atmosphere and its political system. The previous speech acts show that the addressers order their behaviour to fit their career and responsibilities.

#### 4.2.4 Expressives Speech Act of Oaths

‘بأن نكون أمناء للأنسانيه والدين والوطن’ (12) The addresser presents herself/himself to the addressees as a devoted man who bears this ability of approach toward the human, religion, and nation.

‘ان اكون وفيما لمن علمني هذه المهنة وفيما لمتطلباتها وملتزم بقوانينها وادابها’ (13) This speech reveals the addresser's loyal nature in front of the addressees, whom interpret that the promise is directed toward the specialists.

#### 4.2.5 Declaratives Speech Act of Oaths

‘نحن خريجو الكلية العسكرية الاولى الدفعة ١٠٩’ (14) These are the words said by a group of graduated officers as they begin their oath with this presentation about them in order to transmit the message content that we were formerly students in a military academy, but now we are officers after graduation (see table 2)

**Table (2)**

*The Classification of Speech Acts in some Oaths according to Searle's.*

Speech Acts	No.	The Clause
Representatives	(6)	اقسم بالله العظيم وبشرفي ان أودي واجبي بصدق وامانه واخلاص
	(7)	واتقيد في اعمالي بقواعد الشرف والنزاهه
Commissives	(8)	وان اعمل على صيانة الحريات العامة والخاصه واستقلال القضاء
	(9)	وان احترم القانون واتقيد في اعمالي بقواعد الشرف والنزاهه
Directives	(10)	ان لا أفشي سراً عن مريض ولا أعطي دواءً بقصد الأضرار
	(11)	وأرعى مصالح شعبه وأسهر على سلامة أرضه وسمايه وماءه وثرواته ونظامه الديمقراطي الاتحادي
Expressives	(12)	بأن نكون أمناء للأنسانيه والدين والوطن
	(13)	ان اكون وفيما لمن علمني هذه المهنة وفيما لمتطلباتها وملتزم بقوانينها وادابها
Declaratives	(14)	نحن خريجو الكلية العسكرية الاولى الدفعة ١٠٩

### 4.3 Presupposition

The feature of presupposition is consistency under negation, which means that the premise stays unaltered even when the opposing assertion is executed in a negative form. This feature may be observed in the following cases, where the researcher employs the sign to imply assumptions. If the sentence contains the proposition  $p$ , it also contains the proposition  $q$ :

(15) a)  $(=p)$  وأن أعمل على صيانة الحريات العامة والخاصة وأستقلال القضاء -1

$(=q)$  الحريات عامة والقضاء مستقل -2

b)  $(=Not p)$  وأن لا أعمل على صيانة الحريات العامة والخاصة وأستقلال القضاء -1

$(=q)$  الحريات عامة والقضاء مستقل -2

c)  $Not p \Rightarrow q$

#### 4.3.1 Existential Presuppositions

In Arabic oaths, the existential presupposition is presented by using 'ي المتكلم' 'yaa of the speaker and 'نا المتكلم' 'na of the speaker', to show the possessiveness, that is underlined and the definite noun phrase by using 'ال التعريف' 'al altareef' that is written in **Bold** in:

(16) لا اتدخل في معالجة اذا كانت خارج نطاق علمي وعلمي

(17) مراعين القيم والمبادئ الحقه التي ضحى من اجلها الانبياء والمرسلون والائمة الطاهرون

(18) 'ان اؤدي مهامى ومسؤولياتى القانونية بتفان واخلاص'

(19) الامام الحسين عليه السلام وشعب العراق الكريم والعالم الاجمع

### 5.0 Conclusion

The study found that Arabic oaths contain explicit and implicit performative speech act verbs. Explicit performative verbs are used at the start of the oaths and occasionally in the middle to provide a new claim about what the addresser wants to pledge. After each explicit performative verb of promises, fresh thoughts and ideas are exposed to the addressee, carrying the addresser's purpose. The implicit performative verbs are used in the future tense construction (أن تكون، أن نَحْتَرَمَ، أن نُحَافِظَ)، performing the promise implicitly and eliminating the duplication of the promising verbs inside one formation.

Table (3)

*The Frequency of Performative Speech Act in Oaths.*

Type of Performative	Frequency
Explicit	4
Implicit	16
Total	20
Percentage	5%

Note: the table shows the percentage and frequency of four oath ceremonies.

The study's results show that the oaths contain commissives speech acts, as it is known about the promising, and include the four other types of speech acts: Representatives, Expressives, Directives, and Declaratives. Addressers use Speech Act to express their professional behaviour in their employment responsibilities by presenting what they believe is accurate and acceptable society values and standards. They pledge to uphold the reality of the laws and legal principles that characterize the human environment. In the presence of the holy entities mentioned in the speech, they swear in front of the people to carry out what they declare in their vows. Furthermore, they seek to guide both themselves and the recipients. The oaths express the addresser's psychological perspectives on others. They exhibit human characteristics in their communication environments through mercy, feelings, and engaging emotions. They announce themselves by vows, identifying themselves to the public in two ways: by verbs and by describing themselves or their jobs.

**Table (4)**

*The Frequency of Speech Acts in Oaths.*

Speech Act	Representatives	Commissives	Directives	Expressives	Declaratives	Total	Percentage
Frequency	2	5	4	4	1	16	4%

*Note: the table shows the frequency and the percentage of four oath ceremonies.*

The study presents the pragmatic analysis of presuppositions based on the shared background among the addresser and the addressees. The structure of Arabic chosen oaths the construction of possessives is presented in (na of the speaker-نا المتكلم and the letter- yaa (وحرف الياء- لأمتي، جهودنا، بلدنا) and (al- altaareef- التعريف like (الحريات). It assumes that both the addresser and the addressees are aware of the existence of the liberties and that these freedoms must be preserved by the oath utter.

**Table (5)**

*The Frequency of the Presuppositions Types in Oaths.*

Type of presuppositions	Frequency
Existential	
Percentage	

*Note: the table shows the frequency and the percentage of four oath ceremonies.*

## 5. References

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