



Manifestations of Pragmatic Discourse in Educational Poetry: "Speech Acts in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's Lamiyyah"

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Abstract:

Pragmatic discourse, in both poetry and prose, has witnessed deep transformations in response to the diversity of situational contexts and differing conditions of communication. This discourse is based on performing the linguistic act, which is considered a central element in discursive interaction, according to the speakers' purposes and the listeners' conditions, aiming at persuasion and influence.

Within this framework, this study, titled "Manifestations of Pragmatic Discourse in Educational Poetry: Speech Acts in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's Lamiyyah", seeks to enrich the educational field and highlight the importance of pragmatic discourse in educational poetry by uncovering the aesthetics and techniques of the Arabic poem and demonstrating its impact in instilling educational and pedagogical values in learners.

The study aims to analyze this poem from a pragmatic perspective to answer fundamental questions such as: What does Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri do when he speaks? What exactly does he say? Who is the speaker? To whom is the discourse addressed? Why? And how does he employ language to achieve his educational purposes? The study thus seeks to build a bridge between the linguistic and literary approaches in analyzing Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's discourse, deepening the pragmatic understanding of Arabic educational poetry.

Keywords: Pragmatic discourse, speech acts, Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri, educational poetry, persuasion

Manifestations du discours pragmatique dans la poésie éducative : « Les actes de langage dans Lamiyyah d'Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri »

Résumé :

Le discours pragmatique, tant dans la poésie que dans la prose, a connu de profondes transformations en réponse à la diversité des contextes situationnels et aux différentes conditions de communication. Ce discours repose sur la réalisation de l'acte linguistique, considéré comme un élément central de l'interaction discursive, en fonction des intentions des locuteurs et des conditions des auditeurs, dans le but de persuader et d'influencer.

Dans ce cadre, cette étude, intitulée « Manifestations du discours pragmatique dans la poésie éducative : les actes de langage dans Lamiyyah d'Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri », vise à enrichir le domaine éducatif et à souligner l'importance du discours pragmatique dans la poésie éducative en dévoilant l'esthétique et les techniques du poème arabe et en démontrant son impact dans l'inculcation de valeurs éducatives et pédagogiques aux apprenants.

L'étude vise à analyser ce poème d'un point de vue pragmatique afin de répondre à des questions fondamentales telles que : Que fait Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri lorsqu'il s'exprime ? Que dit-il exactement ? Qui est le locuteur ? À qui s'adresse le discours ? Pourquoi ? Et comment utilise-t-il le langage pour atteindre ses objectifs éducatifs ? L'étude cherche ainsi à établir un pont entre les approches linguistique et littéraire dans l'analyse du discours d'Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri, approfondissant la compréhension pragmatique de la poésie éducative arabe.

Mots-clés : *Discours pragmatique, actes de langage, Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri, poésie éducative, persuasion*



Introduction:

Today, the process of communication has become essential in various fields of life, particularly in education, due to its effective role in constructing and exchanging knowledge. Within this context, pragmatics studies language in use, focusing on the participants in the communicative process, taking into account the speaker and their intentions, as well as the listener's state during discourse, while also considering the external circumstances and contexts accompanying communication.

Pragmatics relies on a set of fundamental mechanisms in its analysis, including conversational implicature, presupposition, intentionality, and speech acts, the latter being the central pillar of pragmatic theory.

Accordingly, the researcher focused on analyzing speech acts according to John Searle and linking them to educational poetry in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri, aiming to uncover the aesthetics of the Arabic poem, its pedagogical and educational functions, and its impact on instilling educational values in learners.

This study, titled "*Manifestations of Pragmatic Discourse in Educational Poetry: Speech Acts in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's Lamiyyah*", falls within this framework, aiming to analyze the poem from a pragmatic perspective that highlights the interaction of language with both educational and artistic contexts.

1. Conceptual Terms:

1.1. Concept of Pragmatics:

1.1.1. Linguistic Definition:

The term pragmatics derives from the root "دَوَّلَ" (dawla): "We circulated the matter, we took it in turns, and they said 'dawalik' meaning alternating on the matter... Days revolve, and God circulates them among people."

In the *Contemporary Arabic Dictionary*, it is noted: "The hands circulated something: they took it this time and that time. The people circulated the matter: they exchanged opinions about it."

The term pragmatics in language derives from the root "دَوَّلَ" (dawala), indicating alternation, exchange, and succession. It means circulating something among people or transferring from one state to another.

1.1.2. Terminological Definition:

Pragmatics remains a concept surrounded by ambiguity, with various definitions across different fields, including:

- The study of linguistic use by people with specific knowledge and social context.
- The study of phenomena in linguistic discourse structure, including implicatures, entailments, or what are called speech acts.

In the educational field, pragmatics is the execution of language in its context of use, considering the circumstances surrounding the message, sender, and receiver. It focuses on the relationship between speaker and listener and the situational contexts in which discourse occurs, examining the speaker's intentions and the mechanisms for achieving linguistic acts such as conversational implicature, presupposition, intentionality, and speech acts.



1.2. Concept of Discourse:

Discourse is defined as any written text that forms a complete communicative unit. The goal of discourse is to achieve communication, whether spoken or written, requiring at least two people.

In this study, we examine Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's discourse and the extent to which intentionality is achieved and linguistic acts are performed to persuade the listener, particularly the learner in an educational context.

1.3. Concept of Educational Poetry:

Educational poetry is a type of literary art that appeals to reason and avoids emotion and imagination. In Arabic, it is called *nazm* and also *arajiz*. Shukri Dief notes that *aragiz*, filled with unusual words and styles, were composed for those proficient in language.

Educational poetry within an educational framework aims to develop learners' knowledge and instill pedagogical values through selected poems conveying educational and moral content, belonging to specific literary eras that represent part of the targeted cultural and linguistic heritage.

1.4. Speech Acts:

"When people attempt to express themselves, they do not merely create words with grammatical structures, but rather perform acts through these words known as speech acts. In English and Arabic, these are often specified more precisely as apology, complaint, praise, invitation, promise, request, etc., applying to the speaker's communicative intention in producing the utterance."

A speech act consists of three related acts:

1. **Locutionary act:** expressing a meaningful sentence based on its words (the act of saying).
2. **Illocutionary act:** performing an act such as ordering, questioning, requesting, or expressing wonder (the act of performing).
3. **Perlocutionary act:** influencing or persuading someone through speech (the act and effect of performing).

Based on the concept of performative force, Austin distinguished five types of speech acts:

1. **Verdictive acts:** declaring a judgment about a value or event, e.g., promise, description, analysis, assessment.
2. **Exercitive acts:** issuing a decision for or against a series of actions, e.g., commanding, guiding, defending, requesting, advising.
3. **Commissive acts:** committing the speaker to an action, e.g., promising, wishing, undertaking a contract, swearing.
4. **Expositive acts:** presenting separate concepts, e.g., confirming, denying, responding, granting.
5. **Behavioral acts:** reactions or expressions toward behavior, e.g., apologizing, congratulating, greeting, welcoming.

Austin's idea, further developed by Searle in *Speech Acts* (1969, translated into French 1972), emphasized that a locutionary act cannot occur without performative force and proposed five categories:

1. **Assertives:** conveying information or confirming reality.



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2. **Directives:** prompting the addressee to act, including questioning, commanding, requesting, advising.
3. **Commissives:** committing the speaker to a specific act.
4. **Expressives:** expressing psychological states with truth conditions, e.g., apology, complaint, congratulation.
5. **Declarations:** acts performed by the utterance itself, e.g., contracts, sales, marriage.

Austin and Searle's work clarified that language functions to affect the world, not merely to think, emphasizing speech acts, particularly persuasive functions, as in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's discourse.

2. Speech Acts in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's Discourse and Their Impact on the Learner:

2.1. About the Author (Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri):

Ahmad ibn Abdullah ibn Sulayman al-Tanukhi al-Ma'arri (363-449 AH / 973-1057 CE), a prominent Arab poet, philosopher, and writer, was born and died in Ma'arra. He was blinded by smallpox at age four and began composing poetry at eleven. He belonged to a scholarly family and traveled to Baghdad in 398 AH, staying about a year and a half. Known for his asceticism and humility, he avoided meat for over forty years, prohibited harming animals, and had Ali ibn Abdullah ibn Abi Hashim as his scribe. Remarkably, he wrote from the last line to the first. Al-Ma'arri left a significant impact on Arabic literature, with major works including *Saqt al-Zand*, *Luzum ma la Yalzam* (Al-Luzumiyyat), *Daw' al-Saqt*, and numerous philosophical, literary, and critical texts such as *Risalat al-Ghufran*, *Al-Lami'*

al-'Azizi, 'Abath al-Waleed, Taj al-Hurra, and Al-Rasa'il al-Manbijyya. His literary correspondence was highly esteemed, preserved in libraries, and his satirical philosophical works critiqued society and influenced later thinkers like Taha Hussein and Zaki al-Muhasni.

2.2. About the Poem (Lamiyyah):

The Lamiyyah consists of forty-one lines of poetry in the *Tawil* meter, focusing on the pursuit of true glory based on knowledge, ethics, and virtue, not wealth or transient appearances. Al-Ma'arri reflects on the value of life and human excellence, promoting rationality, knowledge, and morality. The poem carries ascetic and philosophical pessimism, advocating a life of effort, sacrifice, and moral instruction.

Poem: Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri (Ala Fi Sabil al-Majd Ma Ana Fa'il)

1. Ala fi sabil al-majd ma ana fa'il, 'afaf wa iqdam wa hazm wa na'il
2. ... [Lines 2–16 continue as in the original]

2.3. Method of Analysis:

This study adopts a pragmatic approach to analyze Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's Lamiyyah, distinguishing between language as a system and language in use. Lexical meaning is fixed in words and structures, while pragmatic meaning depends on contextual use, leading to varied interpretations. Based on Austin and Searle's classification of speech acts, the study first analyzes the poem's title and the speech acts it contains, then conducts a detailed pragmatic analysis of selected lines to identify the five categories of speech acts, as



classified by Searle, and their educational and cognitive significance.

2.4. Analysis:

a. *Title of the Poem: Ala Fi Sabil al-Majd Ma Ana Fa'il*

- **Speech Acts Identified:**

1. **Locutionary act:** represented in the title at the phonetic, syntactic, and semantic levels.
2. **Illocutionary act:** recording the poem in various literary and educational sources, expressing the poem's value and pedagogical significance.
3. **Perlocutionary act:** affecting listeners, whether secondary school learners (as the poem targets the baccalaureate) or other audiences who are persuaded by the message and apply al-Ma'arri's guidance in daily life.

Author (Sender 1): Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri

Sender 2: Teacher or admirer reading the poem

Receiver 1: Learner

Receiver 2: Listener, the audience

Message: Al-Ma'arri's purpose in this Lamiyyah is to gather philosophical wisdom and life lessons, revealing contradictions that surprise us daily and challenge our expectations.

2.5. Argumentative Nature of Speech Acts in Al-Ma'arri's Pedagogical Discourse:

The following explains the lines with extracted speech acts according to Searle, based on the Lamiyyah:

1. **Assertive acts (informative or reportive):** intended by al-Ma'arri to convey information or represent reality,

also called confirmations or verdictive acts, present in the following lines:

*And my reputation has traveled through the lands, so who among
them
Can hide the sun whose light is complete?
Some of what I harbor burdens the nights,
And Mount Radwa is weighed down less than what I carry.
And even if I am the last of my time,
I shall come with what the predecessors could not accomplish.
And I advance, even if the morning is filled with swords,
And travel, even if darkness is made of armies.
And I am a steed whose reins have never been loosened,
And a noble steed that the bravest have overlooked.
And if there is honor in the attire of a youth,
The sword is but its sheath and its hilt.
And I have a status that no one has approved of in my dwelling,
Even though I descend among the prominent.
At a place that every noble longs for,
Yet those reaching for it fall short.*

In these verses, the poet describes himself with pride and dignity, emphasizing with a single tool of affirmation throughout most verses ("Qad", "Inna", "Anna") a declarative-request style, indicating that his reputation spans the lands and cannot be ignored, like the sun whose light no one can hide. Some of the burdens he harbors sadden the nights, and the least of his concerns outweighs Mount Radwa. Then the poet comes with a verse following the proverb in self-praise and pride, for the strength of its meaning and solidity of its structure: the poet says that even if he comes in the last of times, he will bring what the predecessors could not achieve.



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Through these verses, using declaratives that convey information intended to inform or influence the recipient, the poet portrays a heroic image of himself, displaying courage and boldness, relying on metaphors and eloquent figures of speech that reveal strength of character and lofty ambition. He depicts himself advancing unafraid of the morning, even if it were sharp as swords, and walking in the darkness of night undaunted even if darkness were embodied as vast armies, indicating his courage and steadfastness in the face of danger. He sees himself as a horse whose neigh has not been calmed and a sword whose metal has not yet been tested, meaning he is still capable of achievement and glory. In this context, the apparent information conveys initiative and fearlessness; its pragmatic purpose: to persuade regarding the poet's courage and steadfastness, emphasizing that honor is not in outward appearance such as clothing and adornments, for the sword—despite its status—is but a sheath and hilt, symbolically implying that true value lies in essence, not appearance.

The poet asserts his elevated status, attaining a rank “between the prominent” (a metaphor for height and excellence), and that his dwelling is longed for by every noble in his people, indicating pride, belonging, and a prestigious position not easily attained.

The declaratives, which aim to establish truth or solidify the poet's stance, then move to describe his horse and the heroic atmosphere surrounding him, using suggestive vocabulary and refined imagery combining metaphor and metonymy, giving the text artistic beauty and deep

significance expressing heroism and determination in the poet's character.

All these declaratives contain numerous educational and pedagogical values from which the learner benefits. Despite their descriptive appearance, they serve indirect speech acts, including:

- **Persuasion:** Establishing Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's value, glory, and courage.
- **Self-praise:** In the context of challenge and heroism.
- **Influence:** Affecting the recipient through strong imagery that generates admiration and amazement.
- **Asceticism in appearances:** Promoting high moral values and implicitly advising the recipient that honor lies in action, not in appearance.

3. Promissives or Committals:

*"Indeed, in the path of glory, what I do is
Chastity, courage, determination, and attainment.
I have, and have practiced all that is hidden,
Believed by an informer or disappointed by an inquirer.
My coldness is least that I am hateful to you,
And my departure is easiest that I leave you."*

These verses continue what the poet began in his poem, starting with immense self-confidence. The opening of the poem is among the most magnificent openings of the poet, and indeed one of the finest in Arabic poetry. The first verse contains the phrase "what I do" as an implicit commitment by the poet to exert effort to achieve glory; he undertakes action for this noble purpose, committed to seeking glory without retreat. The poet's actions in life aim to attain glory and ensure his reputation endures after death, with deeds



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characterized by chastity, courage in undertaking matters, and determination in difficult situations.

The rhetorical question in the following verse, “I have, and have practiced all that is hidden: Believed by an informer or disappointed by an inquirer?” is not a request for an answer but a denial and astonishment that anyone would doubt his truthfulness or competence, carrying a tone of challenge. These verses are not merely artistic description but a pragmatic discourse aiming to convince the recipient of the poet’s glory and noble morals.

4. Directives or Requests:

Directing the addressee to perform an action, represented by will and correct desire, realized when the listener acts in the future, including interrogation, command, prohibition, request, and advice.

It appears in the second verse in the rhetorical question “I have...” as an indirect directive, rejecting belief in informers and demonstrating awareness of self; thus, it is an implicit guidance to the recipient not to believe rumors and to judge carefully. Similarly, in the line “Oh, how wondrously the unworthy claim virtue,” it is an indirect directive inviting reflection on social contradictions and criticism of falsehood, instilling an educational value rejecting the claim to perfection by the morally or consciously deficient.

5. Expressives:

*"If adversity arises between me and you,
The least is what the fault-finders say.
My sins are many in the eyes of many people,
Yet I have no sin except in loftiness and virtues.*

As if, when I surpass the people of my time,

I return with long-standing achievements to the world."

In these verses, Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri expresses pain and longing, stating that if enmity ignites between him and his adversaries, the least of it is what the blame-givers say, and he does not care for their reproach, demonstrating firmness and courage. He expresses self-assertion against criticism and portrays the people perceiving him as guilty in many matters, which are the virtuous actions elevating him. He describes surpassing his contemporaries as if taking something from their failure, conveying bitterness, protest, pride, and honor, as well as hope, generosity, and magnanimity, reinforcing educational values for the learner.

6. Declarations:

*"And when I saw ignorance widespread among the people,
I ignored it until it was thought that I was ignorant.
Oh, how wondrously the deficient claim virtue,
And alas, how the virtuous show deficiency."*

A declaration of intellectual reality that man is deficient regardless of virtue, expressing grief and sorrow. This verse announces a new reality simply through speech.

Hence, Searle's declarations are speech acts that change reality through utterance, and in Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri's poetry, the poetic language itself announces philosophical truths, making the utterance an influential intellectual and ethical act.



Conclusion:

Through this study, we reached several results, the most important of which are:

- The pragmatic approach, based on language use, utilizes educational poetry in the pedagogical field to impart life values and educational behaviors to the learner.
- Declaratives and promises in al-Ma'arri's poetry carry multiple educational values, notably persuasion regarding his status and courage, self-praise, influencing the recipient through admiration, promoting asceticism in appearances, and instilling ethical values.
- Al-Ma'arri employs rhetorical questions and indirect directives to encourage careful judgment and critique of social falsehood, instilling educational values of awareness and rejection of claimed perfection.
- He expresses pride and disregard for blame, affirming that what people see as sin is virtue, and that his superiority elicits envy, demonstrating pride, patience, and noble educational values through expressives.
- Searle's declarations are speech acts that change reality through speech; in al-Ma'arri's poetry, language becomes an intellectual and ethical act that declares philosophical stances.
- The use of Arabic literary texts in pragmatics today is highly important for developing learners' communicative competence across educational stages.

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