**A Pragmatic Analysis of Expressive Speech Acts on WhatsApp Profile Statuses Among Iraqi Users**

Corresponding Author: Mushtaq Abdulrazzaq Abdulzahra

Affiliation: University of Al-Qadisiyah, Diwaniyah, Iraq

ORCID: 0000-0003-1186-8334

Phone: +9647816234291

Rank: Assistant professor of English Language and Linguistics

E-mail: [sharqawi.mushtaq@qu.edu.iq](mailto:sharqawi.mushtaq@qu.edu.iq)

**Abstract**

Although the use of WhatsApp status, like other social media, emerged as a platform to reveal cultural and emotional expressions by Iraqi users, the pragmatic functions of expressive speech acts (SAs) in this context remain underexplored. The overall objective of this study is twofold: (1) To explore the forms of expressive acts (EAs) used by Iraqi users in WhatsApp and (2) to know how the contextual and cultural factors contribute to shaping the Iraqis’ dialectal expressions. The study employed a mixed-methods approach sampling 212 statuses that were obtained from 50 Iraqi users. A framework of SA by Searle (1975) was adapted for SAs categorization. The data were analyzed thematically in respect to variation of age and gender. SPSS software was utilized to generate descriptive statistics and statistical tests. Results revealed that complaints were the most frequent acts followed by gratitude expressions. In terms of gender, male users posted more complaints and sarcasms, while the female users posted more mourning expressions and affections. In terms of age, younger users posted more emotional openness, while the older posted gratitude and religious expressions. All users employed emojis, dialectal idioms, and the EAs in order to culturally reveal their rich emotion, functioning as embedded mini-performances. Their statuses also reflect social commentary, identity, and coping mechanisms in digital pragmatics.

**Keyword:** WhatsApp status, expressive acts, Iraqi users, dialect, gratitude

# 1. Introduction

With the development of recent internet technologies, many platforms of social media were developed as the main medium for identity construction, public and personal interaction, and self-expression (Zhang, 2023). One of these platforms is WhatsApp, which is recently regarded as the first application for interaction in the Arab world, including Iraq (Sami, 2021). According to Johns et al. (2023), WhatsApp is not only being used for messaging but also as a main stage for emotional display and self-presentation. The profile status, in fact, is one of WhatsApp's most common and interesting features. To define it, it is a short text and/or image posted by the user to express an asynchronous message directed to the public or a specific person.

In spite of being short and sometimes overlooked, the status, pragmatically, according to Marwick (2013), delivers rich content that reveals a user’s beliefs, emotions, social stances, and ideologies. WhatsApp status updates are commonly written in the Iraqi Arabic dialect, where language serves as both a communication tool and a symbol of cultural identity and solidarity.

There are many culturally specific expressions and idioms in WhatsApp status updates. With its many cultural allusions, implied meanings, and frequently emotional overtones, the status feature functions as a communicative act (Shahbaz et al., 2024). One of the most interesting things about these textual moments is that they let people show their feelings like happiness, sadness, gratitude, frustration, and love, all in a single line or phrase (Pattusamy & Chopdar, 2024). From a pragmatic standpoint, these statuses offer a rich environment for examining Searle's (1975) definition of expressive SAs. According to Yule (2020), EAs, as opposed to directions or assertives, center on the speaker's mental state. Expressive SAs do not modify the external environment; instead, they articulate the speaker's emotions regarding a circumstance or someone. In Iraqi digital discourse, the intricate interweaving of colloquialisms, religious references, and emotive idioms in WhatsApp statuses reveals how expressive SAs adapt to new communicative circumstances.

Although SAs have been extensively examined in both traditional and digital communication, there is a clear lack of research on EAs in regional dialects on social media platforms. Despite the existence of studies on classical Arabic pragmatics in Iraq, there is a paucity of research that investigates the pragmatic encoding of emotive and social meanings in WhatsApp statuses by Iraqi users (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2020; Abdel-Raheem, 2021; Al-Ghazalli & Abbas, 2023). Consequently, it is essential to analyze the construction and interpretation of expressive SAs in Iraqi Arabic WhatsApp statuses, especially considering the dialect's distinctive syntactic, semantic, and cultural aspects.

The overall objective of this study is to pragmatically analyze expressive SAs that are present in Iraqi users' WhatsApp profile statuses. The emphasis will be on recognizing, classifying, and analyzing the various EAs used, as well as comprehending how these actions represent the emotional landscapes, interactional styles, and sociocultural norms of Iraqi digital communicators.

To accomplish this objective, two key research questions were posed accordingly.

1. What are the most common EAs in WhatsApp statuses employed by the Iraqi users and how are these statuses constructed in the Ira qi dialect?
2. How do emotional, contextual and cultural factors affect the structure and interpretation of these EAs?

As far as the limitation, this study focuses only on WhatsApp statuses posted in the Iraqi Arabic dialect by Iraqi users, not stories or communications. The sample size will be limited to a set number of statuses obtained from voluntary participants (male and female) of various ages.

Regarding the significance, this study is set to enrich the domains of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and digital discourse analysis by deepening our comprehension of the operation of expressive SAs within a specific, real-world digital context since this study is set to (1) provide pragmatic knowledge into how Iraqi Dialect is used in online communication, (2) present evidence for the cultural and contextual embeddedness of EAs, (3) improve our understanding of identity formation and emotional expression in WhatsApp use, and (4) extend the knowledge of sentiment analysis and natural language processing in context with a dialect.

# 2. Literature review

## 2.1 Sas theory

In his book ‘How to Do Things with Words’ published in 1962, J.L. Austin established the conception of SAs by arguing that utterances are actions in and of themselves rather than just means of conveying information. Austin proposed a three-part model in which he presented three acts: (1) perlocutionary (the impact the utterance has on the listener), (2) illocutionary (the purpose of the utterance), and (3) locutionary (the act of saying something) (Reiland, 2024). On the American continent, John Searle (1969, 1975) developed this idea further by formalizing a typology of illocutionary acts, including directives, expressives, directives, assertives, and declarations (Rahmiddinova, 2025).

This study concentrates exclusively on EAs that communicate the speaker's psychological or emotional condition. Searle (1975) categorizes expressives into acts such as apologizing, congratulating, criticizing, lamenting, and thanking. In contrast to other SAs, expressives neither effectuate change in the world nor solicit actions from others; they articulate the speaker's internal state over a circumstance.

Notably, expressives are often characterized by cultural variances. For instance, expressing gratitude in English may just include saying ‘*Thank you*’ yet, in Iraqi Arabic, one may articulate ‘*جزاك الله خير*’ ‘*May Allah repay you with goodness*’, thereby incorporating both a spiritual and social aspect to the act. Thus, the SA serves as a medium for both emotional expression and the reinforcement of cultural values and social norms. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), SAs, particularly expressives, are influenced by socio-pragmatic norms, which encompass cultural expectations related to formality, politeness, and emotional transparency. EAs are typically highly stylized, metaphorical, and even religious in tone in high-context societies like Iraq, where indirectness and emotional resonance are emphasized.

## 2.2 Pragmatics and computer-mediated communication (CMC)

The transition from face-to-face communication to CMC brings up new challenges as well as possibilities for pragmatic expression. CMC, unlike spoken discourse, does not use nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, intonation, or gestures (Das & Rajkumar, 2023). Thus, in order to convey the pragmatic intention, users of WhatsApp need to depend on linguistic creativity, punctuation, emoticons, repetition, and code-switching (Herring, 2007). Online language is 'written speech' because of its conversational tone (Crystal, 2001). He claims that because users take advantage of the hybridity of the medium, expressiveness in digital speech frequently goes beyond that of formal writing. For example, using emojis '😢' or '💔' frequently in WhatsApp status can, unquestionably, enhance the emotional power of brief statements that could otherwise seem unclear. In her study on mobile messaging, Tagg (2015) developed this idea further by demonstrating that users adopt platform-specific pragmatics, modifying their EAs to fit the constraints and capabilities of a particular app.

With its character constraints and temporary statuses, WhatsApp status fosters concise but powerful self-expressions. Like their Arab peers, Iraqi users use culturally rooted communication techniques to express themselves. For example, status updates like ‘*ماكو وفا بهالزمن*’ *‘There's no loyalty left in this world’* are a mixture of social satire, emotional discontent, and regional idiom in a single sentence.

According to Darwish (2014), Arabic speakers frequently increase the amount of poetic and expressive content they post online to make up for the absence of paralinguistic cues, given that the status is solely written. This is pertinent to Iraqi WhatsApp users who often convey delight, discomfort, nostalgia, or sadness using metaphors, religious expressions, and linguistic constructs strongly embedded in their cultural identity.

## 2.3 EAS In Arabic and the Iraqi dialect

Investigations of expressive SAs are many in Arabic, particularly in its dialectal varieties. Dialects like Iraqi Arabic offer more cultural familiarity and emotional immediacy than Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). According to academics like Abu-Melhim (1991) and Al-Khatib (2001), Arabic emotional expressions are usually high-context, indirect, and heavily dependent on common cultural knowledge.

In the Iraqi dialect, expressive SAs usually include emotive metaphors such as *‘كلبي متعوب’ ‘My heart is tired’*, religious interjections *‘الله كريم’* ‘*Allah is generous'*, and regional slang that expresses both emotion and social alignment. Expressions like *‘الدنيا ظالمة’ ‘life is unjust’* and ‘*مو بيدي’ ‘It is not in my hands’* are commonly observed in WhatsApp statuses as existential reflection or indirect complaint. Research on Arabic SAs frequently regards dialects as secondary; however, dialect is fundamental to emotional communication in everyday interactions.

In this respect, Samarah (2016) adds that Jordanian users perform code-switching between MSA and the dialect when changing between formal and intimate phrases. Iraqi users on WhatsApp frequently favor dialect for expressive statuses, as it facilitates personalized and culturally complex self-disclosure. Here are two examples.

* *‘ما فقدت أحد، بس كلشي بدا يوجع’* *‘I haven’t lost anyone, yet everything began to hurt’* conveys poetic mood, psychological depth and sadness.
* *‘راحو الطيبين’* *‘These good people have gone’* is an evocative nostalgic statement that also conveys social criticism.

It is worth noting that although John Searle (1969, 1975) categorized such acts as expressives in terms of pragmatics, these expressions in their dialectal forms are not only emotional. They are, in the social context, performative acts in nature since they signal group membership, subtle protest, or emotional solidarity.

## 2.4 Previous studies on WhatsApp discourse

Because of its widespread use and hybrid communication features, which include group engagement, private messaging and semi-public status updates, WhatsApp has received a lot of scholarly attention in the last ten years. Here are six related studies in different regional contexts.

Mobile applications such as WhatsApp are said to foster 'ambient affiliation,' that is, a low-effort means for maintaining emotional and social connections (Yus 2011; Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015). Despite being passive in form, WhatsApp status updates are emotive performances that elicit interpretation and reaction. Expressive SAs, which are frequently unrestricted by formal rules of grammar or full sentence structure, flourish in this interpretive digital space.

In the Saudi context, Al-Saqqaf (2016) found that WhatsApp group discussions allow for both official and informal emotions, such as teasing, comforting, and complimenting. She observed that users have a high inclination to code-switch between Modern Standard Arabic and dialect, especially when expressing sentiment. This pattern is likely to be applicable in the Iraqi context, where dialect is the predominant mode of expressive speech.

Samarah (2016) noted that, within the Jordanian and Palestinian contexts, WhatsApp served as a digital refuge for emotional expression, especially among women and youth. Status updates are commonly used by individuals to express emotions such as sorrow, hope, or frustration, frequently integrating Quranic verses or culturally significant idioms. These expressive practices illustrate the intricate relationship between personal emotion and cultural as well as religious frameworks, highlighting that EAs in CMC are not merely individualistic but are also situated within cultural contexts.

However, there has not been much research done in Iraq on WhatsApp as a pragmatic medium. In a small-scale investigation of Iraqi Facebook posts, Kareem & Mahmood (2021) found that emotionally charged dialect phrases were often used. Although their study did not directly look at WhatsApp status updates, it indirectly suggests a possible parallel in WhatsApp use. The expressive depth of Iraqi Arabic, including its religious expressions, fatalistic tones, and emotional metaphors, has not yet been thoroughly examined in WhatsApp discourse.

In their Egyptian and Sudanese study, Hassan & Mahmoud (2018) also found that WhatsApp statuses were used as vehicles for passive emotional broadcasting. For example, the short phrases *‘الحمد لله على كل حال’ ‘Praise be to Allah in all circumstances’* or *‘مافي أمل’ ‘There is no hope’* served as emotive summaries of ongoing emotions. Such status updates frequently attracted sympathetic responses from other users, demonstrating that social support networks and emotional resonance can be activated by even non-interactive features. The type of EAs is also influenced by the language used in WhatsApp status updates.

In relation to the Syrian and Jordanian context, Al-Ali (2014) discovered that elliptical forms, including *‘خلصنا!’ ‘We're done!’*, were frequently used by Jordanian and Syrian users without any context, leaving readers to deduce meaning from common cultural presumptions. This trend is reflected in Iraqi statuses, too. For instance, *‘ما بقيت نفسية اتحمل’ ‘I no longer have the mental power to bear’*, may appear cryptic to outsiders, but it has profound emotional and cultural meaning for those who use it. For a clearer research gap, see the Table 1.

Table 1. Tabulation of the previous studies

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Author and year | Focus of study | Findings of study | Limitations of study | Gains to the current study |
| Yus (2011); Herring & Androutsopoulos (2015) | WhatsApp statuses as background connection and affective performance. | Statuses serve as interpretive digital presentations through mini-EAs. | General/global view; lacking linguistic depth of a specific region. | Provides an analysis of EAs in Iraqi WhatsApp statuses that is specific to the Iraqi dialect. |
| Al-Ali (2014) | Jordanian and Syrian users exhibit elliptical expressions and cultural inferences. | Ellipses in statuses are tied by the emotional meanings and cultural presuppositions | No specific data from Iraqi culture; the findings are deduced from other cultures. | Expands upon elliptical expression analysis within the context of Iraqi dialects. |
| Samarah (2016) | Status-based emotional expression among Palestinian and Jordanian women and young male users. | Statuses convey feelings within cultural and religious idioms, serving as a secure emotional outlet. | Jordan and Palestine are the primary focus; Iraqi dialect is not investigated. | Examines related cultural factors which helps apply them to Iraq. |
| Al-Saqqaf (2016) | Identity and emotion in Saudi Arabian WhatsApp group chats | Users code-switch between their dialects and MSA for depth of feeling. | A focus on group chats rather than status updates | Analyses help look at status updates in the context of Iraq dialect. |
| Hassan & Mahmoud (2018) | Resonance and emotional descriptions in status updates (focus on the Sudanese and Egyptian contexts) | Social and emotional support are activated by brief religious or emotional statuses | Lack of focus on Iraqi dialectal variation | Highlights how Iraqi dialect and culture influence expressive acts |
| Kareem & Mahmood (2021) | Iraqi Facebook posts that use a dialect that is emotionally charged | Although it is emotionally rich, the Iraqi dialect is not widely studied on WhatsApp. | Limited to Analyzing Facebook posts | Helps utilize actual Iraqi dialect data to conduct a direct analysis of WhatsApp statuses |

In conclusion, the studies under discussion highlight how WhatsApp status updates function as emotional capsules that are influenced by social norms, dialect, and culture. However, none of these studies have thoroughly examined the Iraqi context, which is a crucial gap that this study attempts to fill. Scholars have investigated social media discursive, sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects in a variety of international contexts, including the Arab world. There are, however, still few studies that concentrate exclusively on WhatsApp statuses rather than messages or group chats, especially in dialectal Arabic environments like Iraq.

# 3. Methodology

The methodology was built on the principles from SA theory by Searle (1975), supplemented with discourse analysis procedures to examine communication strategies and linguistic patterns employed in Iraqi Arabic WhatsApp statuses.

## 3.1 Research design

Based on the paradigm of pragmatic discourse analysis, this study used a qualitative descriptive research design. Furthermore, content analysis was employed to quantify and categorize the frequency of EAs across various categories such as mourning, complaint and gratitude.

## 3.2 Population and sample

The research focused on Iraqi WhatsApp users, particularly those who utilized the profile status feature to convey emotions, experiences, or personal thoughts. A purposive sampling strategy was used for the selection of the participants to ensure that they are drawn from various demographic and linguistic backgrounds. Both male and female participants from a wide range of ages, urban and rural areas, and various educational levels are included in the target population. Fifty participants were selected; each contributed 3 or 5 statuses. For equal representation of gender, 50% male and 50% female users were included, ranging from 18 to 55 years old.

## 3.3 Data collection procedures

Data was collected over a four-week period using two basic methods: (1) Participants voluntarily shared screenshots of their WhatsApp statuses, and (2) a simple questionnaire was utilized to elicit contextual information. For more details, refer to the questionnaire in the appendix. Social media and personal networks were used to recruit participants. The following ethical norms were rigorously adhered to:

* All participants gave their informed consent, and their identities were anonymized by utilizing numerical numbers or pseudonyms.
* Only status updates that were publicly uploaded and were open to the user's contact list were included.
* This study did not use private discussions or real-time chat messages.

## 3.4 Data analysis framework and tool of analysis

Three stages of analysis drawing on Searle’s (1975) speech act classification in addition to qualitative thematic coding were followed. See Table 2 for the stages.

Table 2. Stages of analysis

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stage | Analysis | Procedure |
| Stage one | Classification of EAs | In this classification, statuses are categorized into seven sub-acts: sarcasm/irony, gratitude, spiritual hope, love/affection, complaint, mourning and congratulation. |
| Stage two | Linguistic and Pragmatic Analysis | In this part, the following procedures are followed: (1) Breaking down the lexical choices, emojis, religious references and metaphors. (2) The emotional expressions are identified into explicit or implicit. |
| Stage three | Sociocultural Interpretation | In this part, three analyses are involved: (1) The cultural values such as collectivism, religiosity and fatalism are explored. (2) The statuses are mapped as either emotional or situational context as they were presented by the users. (3) Comparing the statuses based on gender and age. |

## 3.5 Tools of analysis and generalizability

For ensuring data saturation and analytical depth, every analysis was conducted manually but with NVivo software as a support system for thematic coding. On the other hand, SPSS software was utilized to generate numerical values.

It is worthy to acknowledge generalizability is limited in this study due to the non-random sampling in addition to the subjective nuances during the pragmatic interpretation of the data. Yet, the richness of linguistic and cultural data supports the depth of the study and its relevance to the specific sociolinguistic contexts.

# 4. Data analysis and results

Fifty Iraqi participants, aged from 18 to 55, inhabiting urban and rural areas of Qadisiayh province provided 212 statuses in total. Using a mixed-method approach, the findings were divided into quantitative and qualitative parts as follows:

## 4.1 Quantitative findings

Analysis of the statuses was conducted using a thematic, linguistic, and statistical approach, with a particular emphasis on seven fundamental expressive categories: sarcasm/irony, gratitude, spiritual hope, love/affection, complaint, mourning and congratulation. Here is the tabulation of these acts.

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of the EAS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| EA | | Freq. | Perce. |
| 1 | Sarcasm/Irony | 19 | 9.0% |
| 2 | Religious Hope | 24 | 11.3% |
| 3 | Affection/Love | 27 | 12.7% |
| 4 | Celebration | 29 | 13.7% |
| 5 | Mourning | 31 | 14.6% |
| 6 | Gratitude | 38 | 17.9% |
| 7 | Complaint | 44 | 20.8% |
| Total | | 212 | 100% |

Based on the Table 3, status updates with compliment and gratitude acts were most common, as opposed to sarcasm/irony, followed by religious hope, which were the least. Affection/love, celebration and mourning wave in the middle. From a social perspective, the evidence indicates that Iraqi users have a tendency to achieve social harmony through the use of their status updates.

Table 4. Gender distribution of EAs

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| EA | | 25 Male users | 25 Female users |
| 1 | Sarcasm/Irony | 15 | 4 |
| 2 | Religious Hope | 10 | 14 |
| 3 | Affection/Love | 9 | 18 |
| 4 | Celebration | 12 | 17 |
| 5 | Mourning | 10 | 21 |
| 6 | Gratitude | 14 | 24 |
| 7 | Complaint | 28 | 16 |

According to the highest numbers, the male users produced higher numbers of complaints and sarcasm, while the female users produced higher numbers of gratitude and mourning. But this judgment remains a hypothetical until a statistical test is performed. To this end, a Chi-square test of independence was generated.

Table 5. Results of a chi-square test

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The test | value | DF | Level of Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 13.420 | 6 | 0.037 |
| N of Valid Cases |  |  | 212 |

Since χ² ( 6, N = 212 ) = 13.42 and the p-value = 0.037, the relationship between gender and the acts in question is significant. Thus, the female users produced a significantly higher number of statuses expressing mourning, gratitude, and affection, whereas male users were more likely to communicate feelings of complaint and sarcastic expressions.

Based on the distribution of EAs in Tables 3 and 4, it is confirmed that WhatsApp messages are deeply personal, situational, and culturally embedded digital forms of expression. The fact that users express themselves in both positive and negative ways, with a strong tendency for statuses that indicate commentary, coping, or emotional release, suggests that WhatsApp is more than just a communication medium; rather, it is a microcosm of the social and psychological worlds of its users.

Since the researcher collected data relevant to age groups, it is necessary to analyze the results in terms of age. For this purpose, participants were grouped into two divisions for the purpose of comparison. Group 1 has 26 users aging from 18 to 30, and Group 2 has 24 users aging from 31 to 55. Figure 1 is illustrative of the variations.

Figure 1: Age variations of EAs

It was noticed that Group 1 (the younger) expressed affection, celebration and sarcasm, respectively, which means they are more expressive and emotionally open, while Group 2 (the older) constantly expressed religious hope and gratitude, which means they are more reserved and spiritually and socially reflective.

## 4.2 Qualitative analysis

In this subsection, each EA posted in Iraqi dialect is investigated. The statuses’ equivalents in English and their linguistic interpretations are also provided. Table 6 presents the analyses with details.

Table 6. Qualitative analyses of the statuses

|  | EA |  | Status in Iraqi dialect | Equivalent in English | Interpretation | Remark |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Sarcasm/Irony | e.g.1 | ’الوضع تمام... بس فقط كلشي ضايع ‘🤡 | ‘All is well… except all is lost  🤡.’ | Ironic way to convey complaint and hopelessness. | These are types of indirect emotional disclosures which strongly rely on shared scripts from culture and emoji-enhanced clues. |
| e.g.2 | ’اللي يحبك يختفي بس تحتاجه👻 ‘ | ‘Whoever loves you, will disappear whenever you need him/her 👻.’ | Sarcasm about social relations. |
| 2 | Religious expression | e.g.1 | ’توكلت على الله وما راح أندم‘ | ‘I trust in Allah, and I will not regret it.’ | Determination associated with spirituality. | These status updates demonstrate how EAs call forth the divine presence at vulnerable times. |
| e.g.2 | ’يا رب لا تضيع تعبي‘ | ‘Oh god, don’t let my efforts be wasted.’ | Often posted before exams or interviews. |
| 3 | Affection/Love | e.g.1 | ’كلشي يروح إلا الخوي الوفي‘ | ‘Everything goes away except the devoted brother.’ | A platonic affection based on loyalty discourse that is shared between men. | The majority of affection statuses, especially romantic ones, were more prevalent among women and they frequently avoided naming the beloved in an explicit manner. |
| e.g.2 | ’أحبك بس الظروف أقوى‘ | ‘I love you but the conditions are more hindering.’ | When love is in conflict with the norms or pressures of society. |
| 4 | Celebration | e.g.1 | ’تخرجت أخيراً 🎓 الحمد لله‘ | ‘At last, I graduated 🎓 Thanks be to Allah.’ | Religious closure is common, especially at private festivities. | The status updates share happy life accomplishments, graduation and engagements while expressing appreciation and asking for support. |
| e.g.2 | ’انخطبت 💍 أدعولي بالتوفيق‘ | ‘I got engaged💍Wish me the best.’ | Using emojis strengthens the social message. |
| 5 | Mourning | e.g.1 | ’مرت سنة وما نسيتك لحظة يا يمه‘ | ‘It has been a year but I have not forgotten about you, mom.’ | It serves as a public memorial and an emotional opening. | In mourning state updates, references to mothers were mentioned three times more frequently than fathers. |
| e.g.2 | ’الفراغ كبير، دعواتكم لأبويه‘ | ‘It is a big void. Please, pray for my dad.’ | Contains both mourning and indirect calls for support. |
| 6 | Gratitude | e.g.1 | ’الحمد لله على نعمة الصحة‘ | ‘Thanks be to Allah for the blessings of health.’ | Particularly used after recovering from a disease. It indicates the socially expected humility. | These are speech acts that both convey emotion and maintain face in a collectivist culture that prioritizes modesty in achievement. |
| e.g.2 | ’شكراً ربي، كلشي صار تمام‘ | ‘Thank you, my god, all ended positively.’ | Thankfulness for the divine intervention. |
| 7 | Complaint | e.g.1 | ’الدنيا دوارة، لا تفرح كثير‘ | ‘Life is a cycle; try not to get too excited about it.’ | A philosophical worldview denoting the unpredictability of life. | 1. The use of ellipses, truncation, and spellings that are not conventional.  2. The use of sarcasm as a method of coping with the situation. |
| e.g.2 | ’ما بقى نفسية تتحمل‘ | ‘There is no more mental fortitude to persevere.’ | Colloquial expression; frequently intensified with the emoji😞. |

Based on the analyses, it is concluded that (1) expressive SAs in WhatsApp statuses reveal private emotional landscapes shaped by dialect, culture, and social norms. (2) Complaint and gratitude are the predominant forms of expression, linked to Iraq's socio-political context and religious tradition. (3) Gender and age significantly affect expressive patterns. (4) Users charge emotion and social criticism within micro-texts, employing Iraqi Arabic as a culturally rich medium.

# 5. Discussion

The investigation showed that complaints and expressions of gratitude were the predominant acts in Iraqi WhatsApp statuses, comprising 20.8% and 17.9% of the data, respectively. This emotive duality is indicative of the broader socio-cultural style of Iraqi life, which fluctuates between spiritual resilience and daily adversity. Often, complaints were expressed through idiomatic language and metaphors, such as *‘الدنيا دوارة’ ‘life is a cycle’*, which indicated dissatisfaction with societal instability.

In contrast, expressions of gratitude, which were often positively spiritualized with phrases such as *‘الحمد لله على كل حال’ ‘praise be to Allah in all conditions’*, provided a means of emotional flow and an inclusive affirmation of faith. These results are consistent with Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), who argue that expressive acts serve not only to communicate emotion but also to fulfill strategic social duties in high-context cultures.

Regarding gender, the study revealed substantial disparities in expressive behavior. Women were more likely to post statuses that expressed gratitude, affection, and mourning, frequently accompanied by emoticons and explicit religious references. Conversely, men tended to resort to sarcasm and complaints, utilizing irony to hide weakness or to criticize societal conditions, exemplified by statements such as ‘*🤡 الوضع تمام.. بس كلشي ضايع’ ‘everything is fine… but everything’s lost 🤡’*. This gendered expressiveness confirms sociolinguistic assertions (Holmes, 1995; Tannen, 1990) that women typically exhibit affect more explicitly, whereas men frequently convey emotion through distancing strategies, particularly on public or semi-public digital platforms such as WhatsApp.

Age variation also significantly influenced the framing of emotions. Users of Group 1 preferred expressive behaviors such as affection, celebration, and sarcasm, frequently communicated using emojis and colloquial language, indicating a familiarity with performative digital identities. In contrast, Group 2 users emphasized statements of spiritual hope and gratitude, using religious supplications that reflected seriousness and moral depth. The findings indicate larger trends in CMC research (Herring, 2007; Tagg, 2015), suggesting that younger users utilize the creative possibilities of digital platforms for identity development, whereas older users use them for emotional regulation and value-oriented communication.

Religious language is exhibited in almost all categories of expressive SAs, emphasizing the interconnectedness between spirituality and emotional discourse in Iraqi society. Users constantly maintained divine agency, interpreting emotional situations by means of a religious context, whether expressing joy as in *‘الحمد لله’* ‘*Thank you Allah’* or grief as in *‘رحمك الله’ ‘May Allah have mercy on you’*. Furthermore, expressions like ‘الله كريم’ *'Allah is generous’* served as culturally suitable alternatives to direct complaints, enabling individuals to convey dissatisfaction while preserving social harmony and humility. These patterns validate Wierzbicka’s (1991) assertion that speech acts must be understood within the cultural scripts that contextualize them.

Finally, WhatsApp status updates, in this context, manifest as performative expressions of identity, shaped by Iraq's broader socio-cultural context. These expressive microtexts function not just as reflections of human feeling but also as means for psychological and social signaling. According to Ahmed (2019) and Darwish (2014), Arab digital discourse often combines emotional and religious expression, resulting in a hybridized kind of self-representation. Consequently, WhatsApp statuses are not merely casual updates; they are a crucial, pragmatic context in which Iraqis negotiate the intricacies of cultural continuity, sentiment and identity.

# 6. Conclusion

An examination of 212 status updates obtained from a diverse number of users showed that expressive SAs are overflowing with emotional depth and clearly bound up with Iraqi community norms.

In relation to the first research question, the study found that complaint and appreciation were the most prevalent, illustrating both the challenges of daily existence and the tenacity of spiritual perspectives among Iraqi users. The linguistic forms employed in the statuses are concise, culturally rooted and emotionally resonant.

In relation to the second research question, the study found that EAs are highly influenced by Iraqi cultural values, gender, age, and the impact of religion. Users are able to stylize these expressions as social signals and emotional performances due to WhatsApp's format, which is limited but flexible.

According to the findings of the study, there was also obvious variation in terms of age and gender. The employment of expressive acts that involved mourning and affection was more prominent among women, whereas men were more likely to utilize acts that involved complaint and sarcasm. Younger users frequently utilized expressions that were more informal, coded, and humorous, whereas older users used their status updates as places for spiritual reflection and public faith statements. The Iraqi dialect has emerged as an essential resource for communication that is both emotionally genuine and culturally resonant across all user groups.

# 7. Implications of the study

The study's results provide valuable data for natural language processing exclusively for sentiment analysis practices that usually fall short in understanding the emotional variances among Arabic dialects. The results, also, demonstrate how cultural standards like faith, modesty and fatalism still influence how people express their emotions on contemporary digital platforms.

# 8. Recommendations for future studies

As far as the scope, this study, being limited to the population of Qadisiayh, it is recommended to widen the scope to include larger samples from other governorates with the aim of conducting an inclusive study of all dialects.

Since there is a considerable variation between the very north governorate’s dialects and the very south governorate’s dialects, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study between the Arabic dialects in order to reveal how they employ the acts in question. For instance, Mosul and Kirkuk governorates (from the north) vs. Maysan and Basra governorates (from the south).

# 9. Contribution

This research contributed to the field of digital pragmatics by employing SA theory within a dialectal context, broadening the understanding of EAs in CMC micro-texts. It contributed to the expanding literature of research on Arabic pragmatics, specifically with dialect-specific emotional discourse, a historically underexamined issue.

# 10. **Acknowledgement**

I owe much gratitude to my wife for advising me with the key ideas throughout the research stages. I also acknowledge the role of the dean of the college for encouraging me to do this research.

# References

**Abdel-Raheem, A.** (2021). Language and emotion in digital discourse: Expressive acts and social presence in Arabic WhatsApp messages. Discourse, Context & Media, 41, 100505.

**Abu-Melhim, A. R.** (1991). Strategies and realizations in request behavior. *Anthropological Linguistics, 33*(3), 305-326. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30028823

**Ahmed, L. A.** (2019). The impact of social media on emotional expression in Iraqi youth. *Arab Journal of Media Studies, 11*(2), 78-101.

**Al-Ali, M. N.** (2014). A cross-cultural study of generic structure in Arabic and English short texts in WhatsApp. *Journal of Pragmatics, 67*, 132-147.

**Al-Ghazalli, M. F., & Abbas, N. M.** (2023). The pragmatics of emotion expression in Iraqi Arabic WhatsApp messages. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ), 14(1), 248–264.

**Al-Khatib, M. A.** (2001). The pragmatics of invitation making and acceptance in Jordanian society. *Journal of Pragmatics, 33*(5), 641-661.

**Al-Khawaldeh, N., Zuraidah, M. D., & Al-Zuoud, K.** (2020). Investigating Speech Acts in WhatsApp Statuses among Jordanian Users. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 10(4), 381–388. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1004.06

**Al-Saqqaf, A. H.** (2016). The discourse of WhatsApp: Electronic media and the Arabic language. *Language in Society, 45*(5), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740451600045X

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

**Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G.** (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Ablex Publishing.

**Crystal, D.** (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge University Press.

**Darwish, A.** (2014). Cyber expressionism: The culture of online discourse in Arabic. *Journal of Cyber Culture and Communication, 8*(1), 25-46.

**Das, M., & Rajkumar, R.** (2023). Pragmatic Challenges in Computer-Mediated Communication: A Study of Digital Discourse. International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research, 11(1), 12–26.

**Hassan, S., & Mahmoud, N.** (2018). Expressive behavior in digital Arabic: WhatsApp statuses in Egypt and Sudan. *Arab Media and Society, 27*, 1-18.

**Herring, S. C.** (2007). A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse. *Language@Internet, 4*(1), 1-37. https://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2007/761

**Herring, S. C., & Androutsopoulos, J.** (2015). Computer-mediated discourse. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 127-151). Wiley-Blackwell.

**Holmes, J.** (1995). *Women, men and politeness*. Longman.

**Johns, A., Matamoros-Fernández, A., & Baulch, E.** (2023). WhatsApp: From a one-to-one messaging app to a global communication platform. John Wiley & Sons.

**Kareem, H., & Mahmood, R.** (2021). Emotion and idiomatic usage in Iraqi Facebook discourse. *Iraqi Journal of Linguistics, 9*(2), 102-118.

**Marwick, A. E.** (2013). Status update: Celebrity, publicity, and branding in the social media age. yale university press.

**Pattusamy, M., & Chopdar, P. K.** (2024). What motivates users to keep WhatsApp statuses: A scale development study. Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-06-2023-0529

**Rahmiddinova, M.** (2025). Speech Act Theory and Its Application in Linguistic Communication. Svet Nauki (Science Shine).

**Reiland, I.** (2024). Austin vs. Searle on locutionary and illocutionary acts. Inquiry, Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2024.2380322

**Samarah, A.** (2016). Pragmatic functions of WhatsApp status messages in Jordanian Arabic. *Arab World English Journal, 7*(3), 456-472. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no3.31

**Sami, A. H.** (2021). WhatsApp Messenger as a Collaborative Learning Tool during COVID-19 in Iraq. journal of Language Studies, 4(2), 18-26.

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

**Searle, J. R.** (1975). A taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In K. Gunderson (Ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge* (pp. 344-369). University of Minnesota Press.

**Shahbaz, M., Jahan, J., & Haider, A.** (2024). WhatsApp Language as a Digital Dialect: Examining the Evolution of Distinct Vocabulary, Grammar, and Conventions. Dialogue Social Science Review (DSSR), 2(5), 453-471.

**Tagg, C.** (2015). Discourse practices in digitally mediated communication. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication* (pp. 163-179). Routledge.

**Tannen, D.** (1990). *You just don’t understand: Women and men in conversation*. Ballantine Books.

**Wierzbicka, A.** (1991). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: The semantics of human interaction*. Mouton de Gruyter.

**Yule, G.** (2020). Pragmatics (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

**Yus, F.** (2011). Cyberpragmatics: Internet-mediated communication in context. *John Benjamins Publishing Company*.

**Zhang, W**. (2023). The construction of digital self-identity: with the focus on Chinese social media platform.