

## A pragmatic Analysis of the Interrogative Illocutionary Acts with Reference to Arabic Text of Surah As- Saffat in the Holy Qur'an

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**Abstract:** This study aims at investigating the illocutionary acts (pragmatic meanings) of Qur'anic interrogations in Surah As- Saffat. In addition, it examines the correspondence level of such illocutionary acts according to Searle (1976) classifications of illocutionary acts. Since most of the Qur'anic interrogations are not used to indicate their basic meanings, but to indicate pragmatic meanings, interpreting and analyzing such utterances may pose a problem and sometimes brings about misunderstanding, especially when they are rendered from Arabic into another language. The data of the study are 28 interrogations collected from the original Qur'anic Arabic text of Surah As- Saffat. Qualitative content analysis has been used to examine the data by consulting well- known classical and modern Islamic books of exegesis (Tafsir) to determine the intended pragmatic meanings of such Qur'anic utterances. The present study proved that all the Qur'anic interrogations in Surah As- Saffat go beyond their basic meanings to indicate different pragmatic meanings that are not said directly in the text. Those pragmatic meanings include affirmation, disaffirmation, exclamation, disdain, consulting, advice, offering, rebuke, warning, negation and threatening. Some of these illocutionary acts correspond to three types of illocutionary speech acts proposed by Searle, namely, assertives, directives and commissives. The study findings show that the illocutionary acts of such Qur'anic interrogations are determined by their situational contexts. The study concluded that the illocutionary acts of these Qur'anic interrogations are pragmatically rather than syntactically determined. Thus, it is strongly recommended to employ Speech Act Theory in interpreting and analyzing Qur'anic interrogations, and other Qur'anic speech acts.

**Keywords:** Illocutionary Act, Interrogations, Speech Act Theory, Surah As- Saffat.

### تحليل تداولي للفعل الإنجازي للاستفهام استنادا للنص العربي لسورة الصافات في القرآن الكريم

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**المستخلص:** هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تفحص الأفعال الإنجازية (المعاني التداولية) للألفاظ القرآنية الاستفهامية في سورة الصافات ومدى تطابقها مع تقسيمات سيرل (1976) للأفعال الإنجازية. ولكون معظم الألفاظ القرآنية الاستفهامية لا تُستخدم للدلالة على معانيها الأساسية بل على معاني تداولية، فتحليل وتفسير مثل هذه الألفاظ قد يسبب مشكلة وأحياناً سوء فهم وخاصةً إذا ما تم ترجمتها من اللغة العربية إلى لغة أخرى. ولإنجاز هذه الدراسة فقد تم جمع 28 آية قرآنية استفهامية وردت في سورة الصافات. استخدمت الدراسة التحليل النوعي لفحص محتوى بيانات الدراسة، حيث تم الاستعانة بكتب التفسير القديمة والحديثة لتحديد الأفعال الإنجازية (المعاني التداولية) لهذه الألفاظ القرآنية. أثبتت الدراسة أنَّ الألفاظ القرآنية الاستفهامية في سورة الصافات لم تدل على معانيها الأساسية بل دلت على وظائف ومعاني تداولية مختلفة غير مصرح بها في النص القرآني. من ضمن هذه الأفعال الإنجازية (المعاني التداولية): التقرير، الإنكار، التعجب، التهمك، الاستشارة، النصيح، العرض، التوبيخ، التحذير، النفي والتهديد. حيث توافق بعض من هذه الأفعال الإنجازية مع ثلاثة من تقسيمات سيرل للأفعال الإنجازية وخاصة التقريرية، والتوجيهية، والإلزامية. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن المعاني التداولية لمثل هذه الألفاظ القرآنية يتم تحديدها وفقاً لسياق النص القرآني للآيات. كما أنه يتم تحديدها تداولياً وليس نحوياً. وبناءً عليه فإن الدراسة تُوصي بتوظيف نظرية الفعل الكلامي في تفسير وتحليل الاستفهام القرآني وغيره من الألفاظ القرآنية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الألفاظ الاستفهامية، الفعل الإنجازي، سورة الصافات، نظرية الفعل الكلامي.

## 1. Introduction.

Pragmatics is a new discipline in language study which studies the intended meaning of utterances in relation to context. Some of its concerns are analyzing speech acts and the importance of context. Fasold (1999: 1), emphasizing the significance of context from a pragmatic point of view, states that “pragmatics is the study of the use of context to make references about meaning”.

At any rate, pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning and it can be roughly defined as the study of language meaning in context as opposed to semantics which studies language meaning independent of context. Hence, pragmatics studies meaning that is inferred based on contextual factors rather than being conventionally associated with a particular utterance. In this connection, Mey (2004: 42) views pragmatics as the study of the conditions of human uses as these are determined by the contexts of society. Consequently, most linguists and pragmatists believe that pragmatics essentially depends on the situational context in which utterances are uttered verbally, which helps in determining the intended meaning assumed by the speaker.

Speech act theory, as one of the current theories in the field of pragmatics, adds a great value to language study in general, and to the Qur’ānic studies in particular. Since pragmatics, as mentioned above, is a new discipline in the field of linguistics, this pragmatic theory is still considered to be new in the linguistic and translation fields, especially in interpreting and translating the meanings of the *Holy Qur’ān* including Qur’ānic interrogative utterances. The most prominent aspects of this theory is Austin’s distinction among three levels of utterances: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Illocutionary acts are the most important among them as they carry the performative functions or the forces of utterances including interrogative utterances, as a sub-type of requests. Interrogative utterances may deviate from their basic meanings (seeking information) to indicate other functions (pragmatic meanings). Qur’ānic interrogations are among those interrogative utterances most of which indicate pragmatic meanings, especially those performed by Allah. This because some Qur’ānic interrogations performed by other speakers may indicate either primary or pragmatic meanings.

Speech act theory focuses mainly on the illocutionary acts of utterances and their subsequent pragmatic functions, the real intended meanings. Thus, grasping the illocutionary acts of Qur’ānic interrogations helps for a better understanding of the purpose of such Qur’ānic utterances in order to realize their intended meanings. This is expected to help non- Arab Muslims and non- Muslims, both readers and translators, understand the implied meanings of the Qur’ānic interrogations. Truly, employing pragmatics in interpreting and translating the meanings of the *Holy Qur’ān* in general, and Qur’ānic interrogations in particular helps producing approximate linguistic, pragmatic and rhetorical patterns for communicative purposes.

Qur’ānic interrogations, as the main concern of this study, are an intricate part of Qur’ānic discourse and interpreting them is not an easy task. Since most of the Qur’ānic interrogations are not used to indicate their basic meanings, but to indicate pragmatic meanings, interpreting and analyzing such

utterances may pose a problem and sometimes brings about misunderstanding, especially when they are rendered from Arabic into another language. In other words, a serious problem may pose if the translator of the *Holy Qur'an* renders the basic meanings of such Qur'anic interrogations disregarding their pragmatic meanings and the purpose behind them as in the original text of the *Holy Qur'an*. Thus, understanding and interpreting such Qur'anic utterances necessitates having a good knowledge of their illocutionary acts (pragmatic functions) in Arabic in general, and in the *Holy Qur'an* in particular. Therefore, this study aims to identify the Qur'anic interrogations in Surah As- Saffat and analyze their various illocutionary acts, and how they correspond to Searle (1976) classifications of illocutionary acts. To address these objectives, the current study attempts to answer the following two questions:

- 1- What are the interrogations in Surah As- Saffat in the Holy Qur'an and what are the various illocutionary acts they perform?
- 2- To what extent the illocutionary acts performed by the Qur'anic interrogations in Surah As- Saffat correspond to Searle classifications of illocutionary acts?

## 2. Literature Review.

### 2.1 Speech Act Theory:

Speech act theory, as the theoretical framework of this study, attempts to explain speaker's meaning. It was founded by the British philosopher John Austin (1962) and developed by his student John Searle (1969). The term "speech act" refers to an action that is performed via language. Austin (2002: 13) defines speech acts as "the actions performed in saying something". He states that sentences are not only used to say things, but they are rather actively do things. Similarly, Yule (2000: 47) states that speech act is "an action which is performed via utterances". Meanwhile, Crystal (2003: 427) defines speech act as a term referring to that theory which "analyzes the role of utterances in relation to the behaviour of the speaker and hearer in personal communication". Stating the same idea, Aitchison (2010: 126) argues that speech act is "an utterance that behaves somewhat like action".

Inspired by Austin's taxonomy of speech acts, Searle introduced his consistent classification of the functions of language usage by dividing illocutionary acts into the following five major categories:

**Representatives/Assertives:** This group includes that speech acts which state what the speaker believes to be the case or not. Here, the illocutionary acts are the commitment of the speaker to the truth of expressed proposition, e.g. asserting, suggesting, stating, denying, boasting, complaining, claiming, reporting, notifying, concluding, confessing and predicting.

**Directives:** This group refers to that speech acts which are performed by the speaker to make the addressee do a future action. This group involves orders, warns, advises, invites or requests in a way that makes the world fits the words via the addressee.

**Commissives:** This group includes that speech acts which express what the speaker intends and can be performed by him/her alone. In performing commissives, the speaker commits himself/herself to some future course of action such as promising, offering, threatening or refusing.

**Expressives:** This group of speech acts expresses the psychological state of the speaker or what he/she feels. In his words, Searle (2014: 12) says expressives “express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional contents”. As the name suggests, they are used to express the speaker’s attitude towards a state of affairs which the speech act presupposes. Thanking, apologizing, congratulating, complaining, praising, blaming and condolence are all examples of this category.

**Declarations:** This is a different category since the speaker has to have a special institutional authority or a role in a specific situation. The term is related to an authoritative role to be played by the speaker to express his/her authoritative role in speech, such as christening, naming, resigning, appointing, declaring and dismissing.

Interrogations, in speech act theory, are classified as directives in which the speaker makes the addressee do something either verbally or nonverbally in future. In this perspective, Austin and Searle have dealt with the illocutionary forces of the interrogative speech acts and the intentions of the speaker; they dealt with the conditions whereby questions could be considered felicitous and with the illocutionary acts behind indirect speech acts. Both of them excluded explanation of the role played by rhetorical questions, and did not mention indirect speech acts which take the form of rhetorical questions. However, one should not interpret each interrogative utterance as a direct speech act of question since not all interrogative utterances perform the speech act of seeking or requesting information. In fact, the number of indirect speech acts performed by interrogative utterances is difficult to determine since these indirect speech acts vary according to the speaker’s intention in a certain context. In other words, an interrogative sentence which is basically used to perform the function of question can be used to indicate different functions.

In Arabic, interrogation is considered as a branch of request composition which mainly revolves around requesting information to reach a practical benefit previously unknown to the inquirer. Arabic interrogation could have different objectives and certain functions to convey different meanings other than the basic meanings (requesting information). Arab rhetoricians defined interrogation as a request for knowledge about something which was unknown before. In this respect, Az- Zarkashy (2006: 515) defines interrogation (Istifham) as: “to seek understanding of something unknown”.

However, interrogations in Arabic may deviate from their basic functions (primary meanings) discussed above to indicate other functions (pragmatic meanings). In other words, a speaker may ask some questions for purposes other than seeking information. Such questions are called rhetorical questions. On this basis, a question which is basically formulated to obtain information about a certain thing can be pragmatically used for achieving different meanings or functions. Rhetorical questions in

Arabic are tackled under the umbrella of “science of meaning” which is one of three general headings of Arabic rhetoric. Arab linguists study rhetorical questions as the deviation of interrogations from what is normally expected for considerations interpreted by the context (Al- Matani, 2011: 5).

Al- Matani (2011: 414) defines a rhetorical question as “any question asked for a purpose other than obtaining the information the question asks”. Abbas (1997: 199) states that rhetorical questions are referred to as those questions which expect no answer and require a mental response rather than an explicit answer. Stating the same idea, Richards and Schmidt (2002:459) define the rhetorical question as “a forceful statement which has the form of a question but which does not expect an answer”. According to Larson (1998: 257): “the label, rhetorical questions, has often been used to indicate interrogative grammatical forms which are used with a non- question meaning”. It has been agreed that a rhetorical question is used to serve some special purposes in the speaker’s mind, other than asking for information.

As the main focus of this study is the speech acts of interrogations, it is worth, generally, noting that the indirect speech act is normally expressed as a declarative, interrogative, or imperative utterance, and the direct speech act is normally expressed as a statement, question, or command sentence. One of the best- known types of indirect speech acts is the rhetorical question, which involves an interrogative utterance but is not intended to be a genuine request for information. Rhetorical questions are considered as a clear manifestation of indirect speech acts. Haverkate (1997: 222) explains that in formulating rhetorical question, the speaker communicates more than that which he actually states because the literal performance of the interrogative act implies the performance of a non- literal assertive act. That is why the rhetorical question is qualified as an indirect speech act. The present study shows that rhetorical questions do not only convey directive speech acts, but it may also convey either assertive or commissive speech acts.

Arab rhetoricians have made studies on the pragmatic meanings of interrogations. Al- Suyuti (2008), for example, lists 32 pragmatic meanings of the interrogative utterances. These meanings may overlap with each other. In the *Holy Qur’ān*, there is a great deal of rhetorical questions. Some of the major pragmatic meanings of the Arabic interrogations which are widely used in the *Holy Qur’ān* are affirmation, disaffirmation, exclamation, advice, scorn, disdain, threatening, negation, warning, improbability, order, fascination and rebuke.

## 2.2 Previous related studies:

This section provides a brief critical examination of the previous studies related to the current study. These studies have investigated the performative speech acts in the *Holy Qur’ān* in general, and interrogative speech acts in particular. These related studies are briefly examined in terms of their focus and findings.

Khalil (2011) shed lights on the pragmatic functions of interrogative utterances, known as rhetorical questions, both in English and Arabic. The study examined some Qur’ānic Arabic interrogations selected from different surahs in the *Holy Qur’ān* to show how *Holy Qur’ān* translators handle such a type

of questions. The results revealed that translating rhetorical questions into English is somehow difficult because it necessitates the translator to have a good knowledge of the functions of rhetorical questions in English as well as Arabic to transfer such functions from one language into another successfully. It concluded that different interrogative utterances in the *Holy Qur'ān* can have different pragmatic functions. The study suggested that a special care and tremendous attention should be given when *Holy Qur'ān* translators attempt to translate the rhetorical questions which are enormously found in the *Holy Qur'ān*.

In a relevant study, Faysal (2013) conducted a study on the rhetorical questions in the *Holy Qur'ān* and their realizations in English. The study assumed that Arabic language, especially that of the *Holy Qur'ān*, will be abundant with different functions suggested by rhetorical questions more than that which might be realized in English as their counterparts. The study concluded that the number of functions represented by the two languages differs greatly, which means that it might create problematic area in translation as it leads to loss of meaning.

By the same token, Santosa et. al. (2016) through content analysis, used speech act theory to examine the meaning of questions in the text of the *Holy Qur'ān* contextually. The results of this study showed that questions in the *Holy Qur'ān* are mostly not used in their basic meanings, but they are rather used to convey pragmatic meanings. Accordingly, the functions of questions in the *Holy Qur'ān* are not the same.

Al- Saidi et. al. (2019) studied speech acts in two short surahs of the *Holy Qur'ān*, namely, Ad-Dhuha and Asharah. This study aimed at investigating the illocutionary speech acts and their pragmatic functions in the above two surahs. It also examined whether these speech acts are direct or indirect. The study concluded that two types of illocutionary speech acts which are directives and commissives are performed in these two surahs. Furthermore, only two pragmatic functions which are ordering and promising occurred. All the directives occurred as direct speech acts and all the commissives occurred as indirect speech acts. The situational contexts in these two short surahs determined the occurrence of direct and indirect speech acts.

### **3. Study methodology.**

This study is descriptive and qualitative. It is mainly based on text analysis of the collected data, which will be descriptively examined. Qur'ānic Arabic interrogative verses in Surah As- Saffat in the *Holy Qur'ān* are the main data of the current study. In this surah, there are 28 Qur'ānic interrogative utterances, they are collected from the Arabic text of Surah As- Saffat in the *Holy Qur'ān*. Then, the different pragmatic functions (illocutionary acts) of such Qur'ānic interrogations are gathered according to their situational contexts and in the light of what well- known classical and modern Islamic books of exegesis (Tafsîr) say about each one including: Az- Zamakhshary (2009), Al- Qurtuby (2006), At- Tabarsy (2005), Ibn Uthimeen (2003), Al- Shawkany (2017) and Ibn Ashoor (2020).

For the sake of data analysis, the different illocutionary acts performed in the collected data are gathered according to their situational contexts. The collected illocutionary acts and their pragmatic functions are analyzed according to Searle's (1976) taxonomy model of speech acts which involves five classes of illocutionary speech acts namely; assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

#### 4. Data analysis and discussion.

The illocutionary acts of the Qur'anic interrogations used in Surah As- Saffat in the Holy Qur'an have been thoroughly analysed and investigated according to their situational contexts in the original Qur'anic text. In the following, all the illocutionary acts (pragmatic meanings) performed by the Qur'anic interrogations in Surah As- Saffat are discussed with one illustrative example each.

- 1- **Affirmation** التقرير: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate the meaning of affirmation. This is when the speaker states a well- known fact in the form of a question to emphasize or remind the addressee of such a factual event which he/she might have forgotten. The following example in Surah As- Saffat shows this meaning.

﴿فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مَنْ خَلَقْنَا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ لَازِبٍ﴾ (الصافات: 11)

"So ask them for a pronouncement- Are they stronger in constitution, or those We created? We created them of clinging clay". (Arberry, 2003: 267)

Allah in this verse told His Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) to ask the unbelievers of Mecca by a way of affirmation whether their creation (who were created from sticky clay) is more difficult and harder or Allah's creation of heavens, earth, angels and other creations mentioned in the preceding verses in this surah. Here, Allah used this interrogation as a way to affirm that what He mentioned of creations were harder to create than the addressees' creation, and at the same time to remind them of such a factual event. In the light of what some interpreters of the *Holy Qur'an* say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is affirmation.

Based on Searle's speech acts taxonomy, the pragmatic function of this Arabic interrogative utterance as used in this verse corresponds to his assertive speech act in which 'asserting' is one of its examples.

- 2- **Disaffirmation** الإنكار: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate disaffirmation. This is when the addressee claims an idea or an event and the speaker disaffirms this claim or what the addressee has done either in the past or in the future in the form of a question. The meaning of disaffirmation has two sub- types; 'reproach disaffirmation' (الإنكار التوبيخي) and 'denial disaffirmation' (الإنكار التكميني/الابطالي) which are discussed in the following.

**2.1 Reproach disaffirmation** الإنكار التوبيخي: This type of disaffirmation is used to indicate that the thing which comes after the interrogative particle has already happened or will happen but is a shameful deed. Here, the speaker disaffirms something that has occurred previously by the addressee to

imply that it should not have occurred, and rebukes him/her for it. The following example in Surah As-Saffat shows this meaning.

﴿إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ﴾ (الصافات: 85)

“He said to his father and to his people: What *are these that* you worship?”. (Dawood, 2006: 289)

The context of this verse is part of Prophet Abraham’s story with his people. This is when he said to his father and his people in reproach denying them as the idol worshippers: “مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ”. Here, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) denounced what his people do (worship idols other than Allah) and rebuked them for doing it. According to the majority of the interpreters of the *Holy Qur’ān*, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is reproach disaffirmation. (انكار توبيخي)

Based on Searle’s speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogative utterance as used in this verse corresponds to his assertive speech act in which ‘denying’ and ‘rebuking’ are examples of this category.

**2.2 Denial disaffirmation** الإنكار التكذيبي: This type of disaffirmation may be used by the speaker to disaffirm the thing which the addressee claims has been done or will happen. The meaning of this type in the past is ‘لم يكن’, ‘it has not been’, and in the future is ‘لن يكون’, ‘it will not happen’. Here, the speaker attempts to deny the addressee’s claim and wants to show that such a thing is a lie. The following example in Surah As-Saffat shows this meaning.

﴿فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ﴾ (الصافات: 149)

“AND NOW ask them to enlighten thee: Has thy Sustainer daughters, whereas they would have [only] sons?”. (Asad, 2007: 636)

In this verse, Allah disclaimed an allusion dated to the pre-Islamic Arabian belief, whereby the people of Mecca pretended that angels were Allah’s daughters. Allah told His Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) to ask them by a way of denunciation about their false claim that males (sons) were for them and females (daughters) were for Him. Allah, here, wanted to show that such an action did not take place and those who claimed it happened were liars. In the light of what books of exegesis (Tafsîr) say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance indicates denial disaffirmation (الإنكار التكذيبي).

Based on Searle’s speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogative utterance as used in this verse corresponds to his assertive speech act in which ‘denying’ is one of its examples.

**3- Exclamation** التعجب: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate exclamation. This is when the speaker exclaims and expresses his/her surprise in the form of a question about the matter under concern. The following example in Surah As-Saffat shows this meaning which has been stated together with denial disaffirmation.

﴿أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ﴾ (الصافات: 150)

“Or did We create the angels females, while they were witnesses?”. (Arberry, 2003: 270)



Allah in this verse wanted to confirm that the disbelievers of Mecca were lairs in their claim that He created angels females. Allah denied those disbelievers' presence as eyewitnesses when He created angels, and at the same time exclaimed about their daringness to say such a thing. According to some books of exegesis (Tafsîr), the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is exclamation and denial disaffirmation (التعجب و الإنكار التكنيبي).

With regard to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of (exclamation) as used here does not correspond to any of his speech act categories, while (disaffirmation) as used here corresponds to his assertive speech act in which 'denying' is an example of this category.

- 4- **Disdain** التهمك: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate disdain. This is when the speaker wants to show his/her disdain towards the addressee about the thing under concern. The following example in Surah As- Saffat shows this meaning.

﴿فَرَاغَ إِلَى آلِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ﴾ (الصافات: 91)

"He stole away to their idols and said to them: Will you not eat your offerings?". (Dawood, 2006: 290)

The context of this verse is Prophet Abraham's attitude towards the idols of his people. This is when he did not go with his people to their festival. After they had left, he turned quickly and secretly to their idols where he found a lot of food placed before them as a sacrifice and addressed the idols by a way of disdain saying: "أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ". Undoubtedly, Prophet Abraham did not raise this question in order to get information from inanimate things because he knew in advanced they could not do so. It is clear from the situational context of this verse and to the opinions of the majority of the interpreters of the *Holy Qur'ān* that this interrogative utterance indicates the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of disdain (التهمك).

None of Searle's speech act categories corresponds to the pragmatic meaning of this Qur'anic Arabic interrogation.

- 5- **Consulting and giving opinion** المشورة وإعطاء الرأي: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate consulting. This is when the speaker wants the addressee to give his/her consult and opinion in the form of a question about the matter under consideration. The following example in Surah As- Saffat shows this meaning.

﴿فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيُ قَالَ يَا بُيَّيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى﴾ (الصافات: 102)

"and when he had reached the age of running with him, he said, My son, I see in a dream that I shall sacrifice thee; consider, what thinkest thou?". (Arberry, 2003: 269)

The context of this verse is related to Prophet Abraham's dream of scarifying his son, and also his son's attitude towards that. This was when Prophet Abraham told his son Prophet Ishmael that he dreamt of scarifying him- this dream vision was a command from Allah to sacrifice his son. Upon which he asked him by a way of consulting: "مَاذَا تَرَى", and Ishmael responded: "يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ", "O my father! Do that which you are commanded". According to the given situational context and to what the majority of the interpreters of the *Holy Qur'ān* say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is consulting (المشورة).

None of the categories of Searle's speech act taxonomy corresponds to the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogative utterance.

- 6- **Advice** الحث/النصح : An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate advice. This is when the speaker wants to advise the addressee to do the thing under consideration in the form of a question. The following Qur'anic interrogative instance is used in Surah As- Saffat to indicate advice along with disaffirmation.

﴿ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴾ (الصافات: 124)

"when he spoke[thus] to his people: Will you not remain conscious of God?". (Asad, 2007: 634)

The context of this verse is related to Prophet Elias' attitude towards his people who were not worshipping Allah. Prophet Elias disaffirmed what his people were worshipping and told them by a way of advice: "أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ", which indicates that they should fear and worship Allah alone. From the given situational context and in the light of what some books of exegesis (Tafsîr) say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is advice and disaffirmation (الحث و الإنكار).

With regard to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogative utterance (advice) as used here corresponds to his directive speech act in which 'advising' is one of its examples. However, the pragmatic meaning of disaffirmation as used here corresponds to Searle's assertive speech act in which 'denying' is one of its examples.

- 7- **Warning** التحذير : An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate the meaning of warning. This is when the speaker wants to warn the addressee about the thing under consideration in the form of a question. The following instance is an interrogative utterance used in Surah As- Saffat to indicate warning.

﴿ فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ (الصافات: 87)

"What think you of the Lord of the Worlds?". (Dawood, 2006: 289)

This verse comes directly after Prophet Abraham disaffirmed what his father and his people were worshipping. Here, Prophet Abraham used this interrogative utterance to warn his father and his people of the consequences of worshipping false deities beside Allah. In this verse, Prophet Abraham wanted to tell them what did they think Allah would do to them if they worshipped others than Him, and whether they thought that He would leave them without punishment. Based on the given situational context and on what books of exegesis (Tafsîr) say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is warning (التحذير).

With regard to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogative utterance as used in this verse corresponds to his directive speech act in which 'warning' is one of its examples.

- 8- **Offering** العرض : An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate the meaning of offering. This is when the speaker makes an offer to the addressee in the form of a question about the thing under

consideration. The following Qur'ānic Arabic interrogative instance is used in Surah As- Saffat to indicate offering.

﴿قَالَ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُطَّلِعُونَ﴾ (الصافات: 54)

"[And] he adds: Would you like to look [and see him]?" (Asad, 2007: 630)

In this verse, the believer, who narrated his story with his close unbeliever friend in two preceding verses in this surah, addressed his companions among the people of Paradise by a way of offering to look at the position of his unbeliever friend in the midst of the blazing fire. It is clear from the situational context and on what books of exegesis (Tafsîr) say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this Qur'ānic interrogation is offering (العرض).

Based on Searle's speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogation corresponds to his commissive speech act in which 'offering' is one of its examples.

- 9- **Rebuke** التوبيخ: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate rebuke. This is when the speaker wants to rebuke the addressee for the thing under consideration in the form of a question. The following Qur'ānic Arabic interrogative instance is used in Surah As- Saffat to indicate the meaning of rebuke.

﴿مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنصُرُونَ﴾ (الصافات: 25)

"How *is it that* [now] you cannot succour one another?" (Asad, 2007: 629)

The context of this verse is related to an event that is going to take place on the Hereafter where Allah will address the unbelievers of Mecca by a way of rebuke asking them why they did not help each other as they claimed that they would all help one another in the world life. From the situational context of this verse and to what the majority of the interpreters of the *Holy Qur'ān* say, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this Qur'ānic interrogation indicates rebuke (التوبيخ).

With regard to Searle's speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogation corresponds to his assertive speech act in which 'rebuking' is one of its examples.

- 10- **Negation** النفي: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate negation. This is when it is possible to replace the interrogative particle with one of the Arabic negative particles such as "لن، ما، ليس". The following instance of interrogative verse is used in Surah As- Saffat to indicate negation along with disaffirmation.

﴿وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّا لَتَارِكُو آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ﴾ (الصافات: 36)

"saying, What, shall we forsake our gods for a poet possessed?" (Arberry, 2003: 268)

The context of this verse is the unbelievers of Mecca's rejection to abandon their gods and worship only one God (Allah). In this verse, they denied worshipping Prophet Mohammed's God (Allah), stressing in a way of negation that they would not leave their gods for the words of Prophet Mohammed whom they accused as a mad poet and lies inventor. This means that such a thing would never happen, i.e. "لن نترك الهتنا" meaning 'we will not abandon our gods'. In the light of what books of exegesis (Tafsîr) say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this interrogative utterance is negation with disaffirmation (النفي مع الإنكار).

Based on Searle’s speech act taxonomy, none of his speech act categories corresponds to the pragmatic meaning of negation, while the pragmatic meaning of disaffirmation as used here corresponds to his assertive speech act in which ‘denying’ is one of its examples.

11- **Threatening** الوعيد: An interrogation in Arabic may be used to indicate threatening. This is when the speaker wants to threaten the addressee in the form of a question about the thing under concern. The following is an instance of an interrogative verse used in Surah As- Saffat to indicate threatening.

﴿أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ﴾ (الصفات: 176)

“Do they wish to hurry on Our scourge?”. (Dawood, 2006: 292)

The context of this verse is when Allah replied to the disbelievers of Mecca who used to ask Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) by a way of mockery regarding the time of sending the torment down. Allah in this verse replied to them by a way of threatening that he would make them suffer the consequences of their disbelief and stubbornness referring to their destruction at Badr battle. Based on the situational context, and in the light of what most books of exegesis (Tafsîr) of the *Holy Qur’ân* say about this verse, the pragmatic meaning (illocutionary act) of this Qur’anic interrogative utterance is threatening (الوعيد).

With regard to Searle’s speech act taxonomy, the pragmatic meaning of this Arabic interrogative utterance as used in this verse corresponds to his commissive speech act in which ‘threatening’ is one of its examples.

## 5. Study Findings

The analysis of the study reveals that the 28 Qur’anic Arabic interrogations used in Surah As- Saffat represent 11 different overlapping pragmatic meanings. Table (1) below shows the accurate and validated illocutionary acts (pragmatic meanings) of the 28 Qur’anic Arabic interrogative utterances used in Surah As- Saffat and their frequencies of occurrence.

Table (1) Illocutionary acts of the 28 Qur’anic Arabic interrogations used in Surah As- Saffat and their frequencies of occurrence

Act No	Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Verse No
1	Affirmation	3	11, 58, 62
2	Disaffirmation	11	16, 17, 52, 53, 85, 86, 95, 125, 138, 149, 155
3	Exclamation	3	73, 150, 154
4	Disdain	2	91, 92
5	Offering	1	54
6	Warning	1	87
7	Consulting and giving opinion	1	102
8	Rebuke	2	25, 153
9	Advice	1	124
10	Negation	2	36, 156
11	Threatening	1	176

Act No	Illocutionary Act	Frequency	Verse No
	Total		28

From the above table, it can be clearly seen that the most frequent pragmatic meaning is disaffirmation. It is the most dominant illocutionary act of the Qur'ānic Arabic interrogations used in Surah As- Saffat, it occurred 11 times. However, the second most frequent pragmatic meanings are affirmation and exclamation which occurred three times each. As for rebuke, and disdain they occurred two times each. Finally, the illocutionary acts of offering, warning, consulting, and threatening occurred one time each.

With regard to the correspondence of these illocutionary acts to Searle's categories of illocutionary acts, it has been found that they corresponded to three out of five categories of illocutionary acts in Searle's taxonomy. Three out of 11 illocutionary acts correspond to Searle's assertive speech acts in 16 Qur'ānic interrogations, and two illocutionary acts correspond to his directive speech acts in two Qur'ānic interrogations, while two other illocutionary acts correspond to his commissive speech acts in two Qur'ānic interrogations. Four of these illocutionary acts did not correspond to any of Searle's categories of illocutionary acts in eight Qur'ānic interrogations used in Surah As- Saffat. However, none of these illocutionary acts corresponded to Searle's expressive and declarative speech acts.

Only seven different pragmatic functions were performed by the above three categories of speech acts throughout the whole surah. Pragmatic functions expressed by assertives included the indirect speech acts of asserting, rebuke and denying. As for directives, only the indirect speech acts of advising and warning occurred. Commissives involved only the indirect speech acts of offering and threatening. Table (2) below shows the frequencies of occurrence of the illocutionary acts and the pragmatic functions they perform in Surah As- Saffat in accordance with Searle's categories.

**Table (2) Frequency of the illocutionary acts and their pragmatic functions in Surah As- Saffat in accordance with Searle's categories**

Searle's categories of illocutionary speech acts	Frequency	Pragmatic functions	Frequency	Qur'ānic interrogative verses No
Assertives	16	Asserting	3	11,58,62
		Rebuke	2	25, 153
		Denying	11	16, 17,52, 53, 85, 86, 95, 125, 138, 149, 155
Directives	2	Advising	1	124
		Warning	1	87
Commissives	2	Offering	1	54
		Threatening	1	176

It is clear from the above table that assertives occurred more frequently than directives and commissives. In other words, the frequency of assertives is higher than that of directives and commissives. This might be ascribed to the nature of the main themes involved in this surah such as 'monotheism' (to worship Allah alone), resurrection and punishment after death, the Qur'ānic stories of most Allah's prophets with their people, and finally the unbelievers of Mecca's false claim that Allah created angels

females as His daughters which Allah disclaimed and rebuked them for in six Qur'ānic interrogations in this surah.

## 6. Conclusions.

Generally, Qur'ānic interrogations, as an intricate part of Qur'ānic discourse, have already been studied from a syntactic and semantic perspective; the focus was on the form and content of the Qur'ānic interrogations. Truly, such studies are important for a full understanding of Qur'ānic interrogations, but they are not adequate as they do not reveal how these Qur'ānic interrogations indicate different pragmatic functions. The current study investigates pragmatically the Qur'ānic interrogations collected from Surah As- Saffat in the Holy Qur'ān. The findings of this study corresponded to some previous studies that most Qur'ānic interrogations perform indirect speech acts.

With regard to the different illocutionary acts performed in the Qur'ānic interrogations used in Surah As- Saffat, it has been found that all of these interrogations performed indirect speech acts where the speakers have no intention of eliciting answer or information from the addressees. In relation to speech act theory, the results of the study proved that Qur'ānic interrogations do not only convey the directive speech acts, but they also convey assertive and commissive speech acts.

As this study shed light on the different pragmatic functions of Qur'ānic interrogations, it is worth, generally, noting that understanding the pragmatic meanings of Qur'ānic interrogations is not an easy task. It may cost, in some cases, more efforts, long time and deep investigation to realize the intended meanings of such Qur'ānic utterances. This study concluded that understanding the illocutionary acts (pragmatic meanings) of Qur'ānic interrogations takes much more than merely knowing their lexical meaning or structure because they are pragmatically rather than syntactically determined. Thus, it is strongly recommended to employ speech act theory in further interpreting and analyzing such Qur'ānic utterances.

Furthermore, to have a full account of the pragmatic meanings of Qur'ānic interrogations, situational context should be taken into consideration. For those who are interested in Qur'ānic studies, especially Holy Qur'ān translators, they need to consult some well- known modern books of exegesis (Tafsīr) before analyzing or translating Qur'ānic interrogations. In addition to this, understanding Arabic grammar and mastery of the classical Arabic language facilitate the understanding and translating of the pragmatic meanings of Qur'ānic interrogations.

Finally, as this study does not cover all aspects of requests speech act in Surah As- Saffat in the Holy Qur'ān and only focuses on the interrogative utterances from a pragmatic perspective, similar studies are suggested to be conducted on the other types of request in this surah or other surahs of the Holy Qur'ān from the same or different perspective.

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