

Conversational Implicature in Examples of Malha Abdullah's Plays A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract: This research emerges within the framework of studies concerned with Saudi theater, through a dramatic corpus by an accomplished Saudi female writer: the distinguished author and critic, Dr. Malha Abdullah, a pioneer in Saudi theater both creatively and critically. The study aims to examine conversational implicature in Malha Abdullah's plays by analyzing the principle of cooperation and its sub-maxims, along with their violations in the selected corpus. Subsequently, it seeks to evaluate the efficacy of this pragmatic mechanism in evoking intended meanings and explore how it is strategically deployed within the corpus to gauge its impact on the audience. By decoding the audience's stance toward the social issues addressed in these plays, the research aspires to cultivate an informed audience position that contributes culturally, educationally, and pedagogically to societal advancement. This is achieved by stimulating critical thinking and imagination among viewers, a process that aids in diagnosing civilizational challenges and societal problems. Ultimately, the study endeavors to propose progressive solutions and ideas for building a productive society aligned with human civilization's trajectory. This artistic pursuit echoes theater's elevated status since the Greek era, when it stood at the forefront of the arts in that venerable civilization.

This study is structured into an introduction, preamble, two main sections, and a conclusion. Section I examined the Cooperative Principle and its subordinate maxims. Section II analyzed the evocation of intended meanings and their pragmatic deployment within the corpus. The research will culminate in a set of anticipated findings, including: The characters in their dialogues intentionally embed information through hidden and implicit meanings to indirectly achieve partial and overall communicative goals for the audience, These purposes which are multiple and varied in the corpus most importantly include: The purpose of communication representing the essence and starting point of verbal exchange, The purpose of informing containing information that benefits the recipient and adds to their knowledge driving them to interact with the discourse, The purpose of clarification which is a condition for communication and information to occur, The purpose of self-affirmation which captured the characters' attention in serious persistent and repeated attempts to confirm their existence and achieve their identity, These purposes are controlled by several factors most importantly, The speaker's authority and their scientific and social status, The relationship between the speaker and the addressee, and The time and place of communication. This achieves the artistic value of theater which combines literary creativity and its embodiment on stage in building the social cultural and civilizational systems of Saudi society as portrayed by these plays with all their psychological social and historical dimensions during the various stages of building this blessed entity the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Conversational Implicature, Theater, Malha Abdullah, Pragmatics, Saudi Literature

INTRODUCTION:

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that emerged in the early 1970s, focusing on the study of language within its contextual and situational usage. Among its most prominent areas of inquiry is conversational implicature, which examines the effectiveness of dialogues by uncovering the implicit meanings behind utterances, distinguishing between the literal semantic content of expressions and their underlying communicative intentions.

Since theatrical discourse in general - and Saudi theatrical discourse in particular - is fundamentally a pragmatic-utterance model, it represents the most suitable medium for studying conversational implicature. This can be accomplished by documenting dialogic realities in Malha Abdullah's plays, revealing their communicative functions through conversational implicature analysis, demonstrating the efficacy of these dialogues based on the Cooperative Principle and its subordinate maxims, and uncovering some of the underlying intentions of this discourse.

The study focuses on the theatrical production of the Saudi writer (Malha Abdullah) as a subject for research; due to its artistic distinction, abundance and diversity, and the modernity of its topics and issues that concern Saudi society, and due to the writer's stature and creative and critical abilities, as she wrote more than sixty theatrical texts, starting from 1992 to 2021, a long period of time that allows for monitoring the communicative dimensions of the dialogic implication in her plays.

By reviewing these plays, the study selected twenty plays, and the choice of these texts was due to the language of the writer's theatrical texts, which varied between the classical language, the Saudi dialect, and the Egyptian dialect. The choice came based on this diversity, as well as the keenness, as much as possible, that the number of selected texts be distributed over the period of time from 1992, where their theatrical productions began, to 2021, the year after which no theatrical work was issued, to the best of my knowledge, as well as the multiplicity of discourse patterns and their overlap, which suggests the continuity and effectiveness of their characters in their embodiment of social reality and the attempt to uncover its problems and challenges, and the dialogues that they have vary in their use for dialogue engagement; through the context, the circumstances of speech production and the varying locations of the interlocutors, which made the most appropriate deliberative method for this approach.

II: Research Problem and Questions:

The research seeks to study (Conversational Implicature in Examples of Malha Abdullah's Plays: A Pragmatic Study). As pragmatics embarks on the adventure of this analytical approach, it seeks to address a fundamental problematic: **To what extent has conversational implicature contributed to unveiling intended meanings within the research corpus, actualizing these intentions through theatrical performances, to enlighten audiences, raise societal awareness, and drive developmental progress.**

This problem is bifurcated by a set of the following questions:

1. How can conversational implicature be invested as one of the mechanisms of deliberative analysis in models of urgent plays by Abdullah to achieve the artistic value of the Saudi theater in the service of society?
2. How can the conversational implicature reveal the deliberative purposes in models of Malha Abdullah's plays to achieve the artistic and social outcomes of those plays?
3. How can the intentions reveal the writer's awareness and knowledge, and her ability to present sensitive and thorny social issues and topics; to influence the recipient and try to modify his behavior and beliefs in human reality, in the service of society?

III: The importance and value of the Research:

1. Lack and limitation of deliberative applied studies in the field of Saudi theater, with its artistic, social and cultural importance.
2. Revealing the extent to which the Saudi theatrical discourse can be analyzed by deliberative mechanisms; in the service of society and the achievement of its aspirations.
3. Revealing the richness and value of the Saudi theatrical discourse, and the possibility of reading it through modern critical curricula.

IV: Objectives of the Research:

1. The potential of Employing Conversational implicature as a Pragmatic Analysis Mechanism in selected plays of Malha Abdullah to realize the artistic value of Saudi Theater in serving society.
2. The Potential of Conversational Implicature in revealing pragmatic intentions to achieve artistic and social outcomes in these plays.
3. The potential of revealing the Author's awareness, breadth of knowledge, and ability to address sensitive social issues through pragmatic intentions, Influencing the audience and modifying their behavior and beliefs in human reality to serve society.

V: Previous Studies:

Numerous previous studies have examined conversational implicature in theatrical works including the research by Ihab Saeed Ibrahim titled "Conversational Implicature in Ahmed Shawqi's Majnun Layla" which constitutes an academic study addressing the definition of conversational implicature in pragmatic discourse its origins and the rules established by Grice for successful dialogue then tracing the violation of these rules in the dialogues of the examined play subsequently revealing the conversationally implied meanings resulting from such violations another study by Bushra Al-Abashi "Conversational Implicature in the Poetic Discourse of Mahmoud Darwish Using His Work 'Do Not Apologize for What You Have Done' as a Case Study A Pragmatic Approach" presented as a master's thesis structured in two chapters the first titled Pragmatics A Conceptual Approach and the second titled Forms of Conversational Implicature in 'Do Not Apologize for What You Have Done' additionally the research by Mohamed Ezzat Ismail "Conversational Implicature in Paul Grice's Theory An Analytical Applied Study on the Novel 'I Will Skin His Hide' by Turkish writer Kamal Tahir" represents a scholarly work that documented manifestations of conversational implicature in the novel under investigation clarifying both the literally implied meanings from these dialogues and the performative force derived through contextual analysis. All of these studies intersect with this study in the method followed, but they differ from it in the code under study in application and result.

VI: Research Methodology and Procedures:

The nature of this Research necessitated reliance on the pragmatic approach as the foundational methodology of the study the approach capable of revealing how the author employs the cooperative principle and its subordinate maxims as well as their violations while also demonstrating how pragmatically intended meanings emerge through conversational implicature the study additionally incorporated the descriptive analytical method as most suitable for this type of Research in terms of describing pragmatic dimensions and analyzing evidence according to the mechanisms of the pragmatic approach embodied in conversational implicature.

VII: Research Structure

The research comprises an introduction, a preliminary introduction, and two sections: The section I is titled "Cooperative Principle and its Subordinate Maxims," divides into two parts the first part defines the cooperative principle's maxims including the maxim of Quantity, the maxim of Quality, the maxim of Relation, and the maxim of Manner. While the second part examines violations of these maxims through (conversational implicature) the section II titled Evoking Communicative Intentions explores multiple intentions identified in the research corpus including establishing communication informing and educating facilitating understanding and self-affirmation. Applied examples from the study code, then a conclusion that included a summary of the study's findings and a number of recommendations. Then a list of sources and references.

Preamble:

Conversational implicature is one of the most important aspects of pragmatic studies, being the closest to the nature of research in this field and the farthest from confusion with semantic studies ⁽¹⁾. Nevertheless, it is relatively new compared to other topics in pragmatic studies, as research in this area originated from lectures given by the

(¹) Al-Yaashi Adrawi examines conversational implicature in linguistic pragmatics: from awareness of the specificity of the phenomenon to the formulation of governing laws, Dar Al-Aman, 1st edition, Rabat, 2011, p. 20.

linguistic philosopher **Paul Grice** (Paul Grice) - one of Oxford philosophers specializing in the study of natural language - at Harvard University in 1967. In these lectures, he briefly presented his conception of conversational implicature and the methodological foundations upon which it is based ⁽²⁾. This linguistic theory originated from "Grice's" concept of indirect speech acts, where he expanded this notion based on the principles of conversation, its progression, coherence, and coordination among interlocutors. His aim was to explain the discrepancy between literal meaning and contextually implied meaning through a mechanism employed by the speaker and interpreted by the listener to ensure successful communication between them. ⁽³⁾.

The starting point for "Grice" was when he observed that people in their dialogues may say what they mean, may mean more than what they say, or may mean the opposite of what they say. He thus made it his goal to clarify the difference between what is said and what is meant. Some utterances convey more than what the sum of the words forming the sentence indicates, which implies that the speaker enables the listener to perceive a meaning beyond the literal sense of the sentence, relying on the listener's abilities and their knowledge of linguistic conventions, methods of induction, and means of inference. Grice sought to establish a bridge between the explicit meaning carried by an utterance and its implied meaning, giving rise to his idea of conversational implicature⁽⁴⁾.

Accordingly, conversational implicature is inferred from what is said in speech and arrived at through logical analysis. ⁽⁵⁾. It can be defined as "those utterances that convey more than what the sum of the words forming the sentence indicates" ⁽⁶⁾.

After **Paul Grice** (Paul Grice) identified the phenomenon of conversational implicature, he proceeded to investigate how it occurs, formulating a set of rules consolidated into a general principle he termed the "Cooperative Principle" between speaker and hearer. This principle requires that interlocutors cooperate in achieving the purpose of their conversations and in understanding those implicit conversational meanings embedded in certain discourses, so they can grasp the intended meaning in actual communication ⁽⁷⁾. This general conversational principle is what the current chapter seeks to observe and analyze by examining this principle and its sub-rules, how they are violated in the research corpus, and then assessing the effectiveness of this pragmatic mechanism in evoking intended meanings and exploring how to utilize and apply it in the research corpus.

Section I:

Cooperative Principle and its Subordinate Maxims

The primary pragmatic principle of conversation became known as the "Cooperative Principle", formulated by **Paul Grice** in his seminal 1975 paper titled: "Logic and Conversation", which he formulated as follows: "Your conversational contribution should be as required by the context of the dialogue, in accordance with the conventionally accepted purpose or direction of the conversation"⁽⁸⁾.

(2) See Jacques Moeschler, Anne Reboul, *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pragmatics*, translated by Izz al-Din al-Majdoub (supervision), Dar Sinatra, 1st edition, Tunisia, 2010, pp. 212-213.

(3) See Al-Yaashi, previous reference, p. 95.

(4) Mahmoud Ahmed Nakhla, *New Horizons in Contemporary Linguistic Research*, Dar Al-Ma'rifa Al-Jami'iyah, n.d., Alexandria, 2002, p. 33.

(5) See George Yule, *Pragmatics*, trans. Qusay Al-Atabi, Arab Scientific Publishers, 1st ed., Rabat, 2010, p. 51.

(6) Moeschler & Reboul, op. cit., p. 112.

(7) See Philippe Blanchet, *Pragmatics: From Austin to Goffman*, trans. Saber Al-Habasha, Dar Al-Hiwar, 1st ed., Syria, 2007, op. cit., p. 84.

(8) See Abdulhadi Al-Shehri, *Discourse Strategies: A Pragmatic-Linguistic Approach*, United New Book House, 1st ed., Beirut 2004, p. 96.

The essence of this principle is that dialogue participants must cooperate with each other to achieve the intended purpose ⁽⁹⁾. This means that the speaker and the addressee should cooperate to achieve the goal of the conversation they are engaged in. This goal may be predetermined before they begin speaking or may be defined during the course of speech ⁽¹⁰⁾. It describes what should be rather than what actually is in most human conversations and interactions ⁽¹¹⁾.

After "Grace" determined the general principle, he subdivided it into a set of dialogical rules, namely: (maxim of Quantity, the maxim of Quality, the maxim of Relation, the maxim of Manner, and Maxim of Relation⁽¹²⁾.

He then placed under each of these rules a set of recommendations. Grice maintained that adherence to these maxims - or their strategic violation - is capable of conveying meaning and facilitating conversation toward mutual understanding and achieving shared communicative goals. This process fundamentally relies on the cooperative engagement between both participants in the discourse. ⁽¹³⁾.

A. The Maxims of the Cooperative Principle:

What preoccupied Grice was: How can it be possible for a speaker to say one thing and mean another? And likewise, how can it be possible for the listener to hear one thing and understand something else? He found the solution to this dilemma in the "Cooperative Principle" and its subordinate maxims ⁽¹⁴⁾, which are ⁽¹⁵⁾:

1) Maxim of Quantity:

This is one of the most important maxims a speaker observes when producing discourse. It serves as a semantic boundary to prevent interlocutors from exceeding or falling short of the required informative value. It branches into:

A) Speak as much as needed.

B) Do not exceed the required limit in your speech.

2) Maxim of Quality:

Its purpose is to prevent false claims or the assertion of untruths. Therefore, the speaker is required to only utter statements they believe to be true and for which they have evidence. It is subdivided into:

A) Do not say what you believe to be false.

B) Do not say what you lack evidence for.

3) Maxim of Relation:

This serves as a purposive boundary aimed at preventing the speaker from deviating into intentions contrary to those of the discourse—i.e., maintaining the relevance of the utterance to the context. This maxim states: (Let your speech suit the situation.) It ensures that the utterance aligns with what is required at each stage, meaning the information must be contextually appropriate. It is considered the central axis around which other maxims revolve, ensuring that interlocutors' speech remains relevant to the topic, suitable to the situational context, and based on shared knowledge between them.

4) Maxim of Manner:

⁽⁹⁾ See Al-Ayyashi Adraoui, op. cit., p. 96.

⁽¹⁰⁾ See Al-Shehri, op. cit., p. 97.

⁽¹¹⁾ See Bahaa El-Din Mohammed Mazid, *Simplifying Pragmatics: From Speech Acts to the Rhetoric of Political Discourse*, Shams Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., Cairo, 2010, p. 40.

⁽¹²⁾ See the previous reference, p. 97.

⁽¹³⁾ See Al-Shehri, p. 97.

⁽¹⁴⁾ See Nakhla, op. cit., p. 34.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See Moeschler & Reboul, pp. 214–215; Al-Ayyashi, op. cit., pp. 98–99; and Nakhla, op. cit., pp. 34–35.

What distinguishes it from the previous maxims is that it is not concerned with what is said but rather how it is said. The manner in which the utterance should be delivered. Its goal is to avoid confusion, monotony, or excessive brevity in speech. It is thus tied to the fundamental rule we express as "Commit to clarity" and branches into:

- A) Avoid ambiguity.
- B) Avoid vagueness.
- C) Be brief.
- D) Be orderly in your speech.

From Grice's perspective, these maxims serve as regulatory principles for every communicative act, and both interlocutors must adhere to them to achieve productive dialogue.

Below, we attempt to observe examples of the writer Malha Abdullah's adherence to the four cooperative maxims in the dialogic structure of the research corpus. For instance, consider the dialogue between Haya and Noura in the play "Banat Al-Bayt" (Girls of the House):

- Haya: "Masha Allah, your daughters are lovely!"
- Noura: "God bless you, you're the lovely one! May God grant them good spouses and grant them success."
- Haya: "Why do you say that about your daughters?"
- Noura: "Girls are the ones who carry the family's honor."
- Haya: "Are they educated?"
- Noura: "They're all university graduates."
- Haya: "Masha Allah, how old are they?"
- Noura: "The eldest is past thirty."
- Haya: "And still unmarried?"
- Noura: "No, by God. They say suitors don't want a university-educated girl."
- Haya: "How so?"
- Noura: "A girl graduates and develops an open-minded, independent personality—but men don't want a woman with a personality. Still, she's engaged to a married man."⁽¹⁶⁾

The appearance of dialogue suggests that both interlocutors adhere to the Maxim of Quality in their questions and answers, as the questioner genuinely seeks answers, while the respondent appears to state what she believes to be true. Noura's adherence to the Maxim of Quality enriches the information, fulfilling the questioner's (Haya's) need for answers, increasing the quantity of well-supported statements, and making the discourse clearer and more transparent, thereby achieving the Maxim of Manner. By using an appropriate amount of topic-related words, the Maxim of Quantity and Maxim of Relation are also fulfilled.

Another example can be found in the dialogue between "the Son" and "the Daughter" in the play "The Mill":

- Son: For ten years, I wasn't living with him.
- Daughter: What do you mean?
- Son: I was in prison.
- Daughter: Why?

Son: That old man accused me of stealing his money"⁽¹⁷⁾.

The previous dialogue demonstrates that the Cooperative Principle and all its subordinate conversational maxims are fulfilled. The Son used the required amount of words without excess, fulfilling the Maxim of Quantity.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Malha Abdullah, *Banat Al-Bayt, Complete Dramatic Works 1992–2021*, Vol. 1–5, reviewed by Abdulaziz Abdulghani Asiri, Taif Literary and Cultural Club, 1st ed., Taif, 2023, Vol. 5, pp. 138–139:

⁽¹⁷⁾ Malha Abdullah, *The Mill*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 13

He was truthful in his speech, fulfilling the Maxim of Quality. His answer was closely related to the question, fulfilling the Maxim of Relation. Moreover, the answer was clear and concise, fulfilling the Maxim of Manner. Consequently, the Son's statement did not generate any conversational implicature because he said exactly what he meant.

Such examples built on the Cooperative Principle and its subordinate maxims are abundant in the corpus. However, I have chosen to limit the discussion to selected models due to considerations related to the study's structure and limited scope.

B. Violation of the Cooperative Principle Maxims (Conversational Implicature):

From "Grice's" perspective, the maxims of the Cooperative Principle aim at a single objective: regulating the course of dialogue to ensure that adhering to these maxims, along with the general principle, is the key to achieving our communicative goals⁽¹⁸⁾. But what if one of these maxims is violated? Or if all of them are violated? How would Grice's Cooperative Principle, essential for successful communication, be realized? To answer these questions, "Grice" proposed the concept of **conversational implicature**, which is "the act of meaning, or the implication of something through saying something else. It is what the speaker means, suggests, or implies without being part of the literal meaning of the sentence"⁽¹⁹⁾. This means that violating the Cooperative Principle maxims generates conversational implicature, and this violation inevitably occurs in all discourses that go beyond literal meaning to implied meanings understood by the recipient through interpretation and reliance on prior experiences in grasping the intended meanings in discourse.

Below, we will examine the phenomenon of conversational implicature in the research corpus by observing examples of violations of the Cooperative Principle maxims in dialogue structures and the resulting implied meanings that contextual clues help convey. For instance, consider the dialogue between "the Journalist" and "Naeem" in the play "The Touch":

- Journalist: If we wanted to give your new poetry collection a specific title, what name could we give it?

- Naeem: Names don't matter to me. I start from a certain emotion and then let the pen flow with inspiration"⁽²⁰⁾.

In the above dialogue, conversational implicature arose from Naeem's violation of the Maxim of Quantity. The expected answer to the Journalist's question was the title of the collection (if he had chosen one). However, the response exceeded what the question required, thus violating the Maxim of Quantity. This violation led to discourse interaction, sustained cooperation, and opened the dialogue to branching meanings that contributed to its development.

In another dialogue from the play "Miya Aragouz" between "Louza" and "Ali Al-Nazir":

- Louza: You're selfish. You sold me after you'd had your fill of me and longed for your old life.

Ali Al-Nazir: I love you, Louza, but I hated groveling in the dirt every day.

- Louza: So you stopped loving me."⁽²¹⁾.

Here, the implicature is clear. Ali Al-Nazir's indirect response ("but I hated groveling in the dirt every day") violated the Maxim of Relation, conveying meaning implicitly. Ali expressed his love for Louza but implied he was unwilling to sacrifice his dignity and life for it. Louza, however, understood love as inherently requiring sacrifice—even to the point of "groveling in the dirt" metaphorically. Thus, the Maxim of Relation was violated in this dialogue. Although the first part of Ali's reply ("I love you") was direct and brief, the second part ("but I hated

(18) See Al-Ayyashi, op. cit., p. 100.

(19) Salah Ismail, *The Theory of Meaning in Paul Grice's Philosophy*, Dar Quba Al-Haditha, 1st ed., Cairo, 2007, p. 78.

(20) Malha Abdullah, *The Touch*, op. cit., p. 206..

(21) Malha Abdullah, *Miya Aragouz*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 275.

groveling in the dirt every day") contained ambiguity, violating the Maxim of Manner due to its indirectness. This prompted Louza to infer the implicature and retort directly: "So you stopped loving me."

Section II:

Evoking Intentions

Intentions hold significant importance as they represent the core of the communication process. No communication through signs occurs without intentionality, which is why the study of intentions intersects with fields like philosophy of language, pragmatics, cognitive sciences, and psychology⁽²²⁾. Intentions are "the ultimate purpose of speech, its communicative goal, and the final outcome of the speaker's intended meaning, whether through omission or mention, foregrounding or backgrounding, activation or neglect, while considering the addressee's circumstances, knowledge, and prior understanding of the discourse's content"⁽²³⁾.

Intentions are "psychological, unspoken matters; like meaning, they are transformed by the speaker into utterances"⁽²⁴⁾. Al-Shehri argues that the concept of intentions pertains to one of three matters: I, they indicate volition (the will to speak a word by choice); II, they indicate meaning; and third, they indicate the purpose of discourse. Thus, discourse production between interlocutors depends on the sender's intentions, whether as volition, meaning, or communicative goal. The speaker must intend to utter the word for discourse to occur, and must also intend its implications⁽²⁵⁾.

The focus on intentions is central to **Paul Grice's** theory, when he postulated a general conversational principle that establishes successful interaction between discourse participants: the Cooperative Principle⁽²⁶⁾. The speaker expresses their intention by adhering to these maxims at times and by violating or ignoring them at others. Here, the intention becomes what Grice and others call speaker's meaning, which the recipient can infer by assuming the speaker's adherence to the Cooperative Principle. Thus, deducing the speaker's intention is governed by this principle⁽²⁷⁾. As stated: "Without knowing intentions, one cannot infer what the speaker wants; for while convention is necessary to make speech useful, it is insufficient unless the speaker, i.e., their intention, is considered"⁽²⁸⁾.

Thus, intentions hold a central position in pragmatics, as understanding and interpreting them ensures the success of the communicative process. Comprehending the speaker's intentions is governed by contextual determinants that help the recipient uncover those intentions. Interpreting intentions is impossible without referring to the communicative context from which the discourse emerges. It is insufficient to rely solely on speech systems and their knowledge to understand utterances and their embedded intentions; rather, these utterances must be linked to their contexts. Discourse has both literal and pragmatic meanings, which vary depending on contextual determinants, the most important of which is "convention," which determines the type of utterances⁽²⁹⁾.

(22) See Mohamed Bakay, Pragmatic Conceptions of Intentionality, Arabic and Translation Journal, Lebanon, Issue 21, March 2015.

(23) Ali bin Musa Shubayr, The Speaker's Will and Speech Intentions in Sibawayh's Book (A Pragmatic Approach), Journal of Arabic Linguistics, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Arabic Language, Issue 4, November 2016, p. 22.

(24) Bakay, op. cit., p. 192.

(25) See Al-Shehri, op. cit., pp. 189, 211.

(26) See the previous reference, p. 197.

(27) See Al-Shehri, op. cit., p. 198.

(28) Mohammed Al-Jabri, The Structure of the Arab Mind (An Analytical Critical Study of Knowledge Systems in Arab Culture), Arab Cultural Center, 3rd ed., Casablanca, 1993, p. 69.

(29) See Bakay, op. cit., p. 202.

such as statements, commands, questions, and other speech acts—that transform linguistic formulations from an informative function to a performative one ⁽³⁰⁾.

The analysis of the corpus in the previous section revealed the characters' adherence to or violation of the Cooperative Principle and its subordinate maxims. This adherence or violation carries within it countless partial intentions, which helped identify overarching universal intentions in the corpus. These can be categorized into four primary intentions:

- 1- Achieving Communication
- 2- Informing and Educating
- 3- Ensuring Understanding
- 4- Self-Affirmation

1) Achieving Communication

Communication is the primary vehicle for social processes that humans need to regulate, organize, and adapt their lives, transmitting their forms and meanings from one generation to another. Without communication, human society would remain static, rigid, and driven by primitive instinctual behavior. Communication is essential for achieving the harmony and understanding required by society from the individual⁽³¹⁾. As is known, the communicative process consists of a speaker who initiates communication and sends a message, a recipient who receives the message, and the message itself, which is transmitted through a medium to produce an effect that confirms the message's delivery and comprehension⁽³²⁾.

For Grice, communicative intention is a reflexive intent between the speaker and the recipient. The speaker intends to communicate with the recipient by ensuring the recipient perceives the speaker's intention. This is why it is said that one of the features of implied meanings in speech is their performance with reflexive intent, they are only successful if the condition of ensuring the recipient's understanding is met, thereby achieving effective communication ⁽³³⁾.

Thus, it can be said that the goal of any discourse is communication, and the core of pragmatic theory is the study of language in use and communication between interlocutors. It focuses on the semantic shifts that discourses produce, transforming language into explicit or implicit speech acts according to the needs of individuals and groups to communicate across various spheres of human activity⁽³⁴⁾. Pragmatic analysis necessitates establishing a connection between interlocutors so that language derives its meanings and effectiveness from them ⁽³⁵⁾.

A reading of the corpus reveals that the intention of communication is largely achieved, as the characters interact with one another, giving and taking, influencing and being influenced, arguing and debating, maintaining the coherence and continuity of communication. This ensures the conversation persists and is exchanged even if the characters differ in their topics and interests. Rarely is the speaker interrupted or silenced to disrupt communication. An example is the dialogue between “Mr. Dou” and “The General” in the play “The Assassination of Citizen Dou”:

⁽³⁰⁾ See Abdessalam El-Mesaddi, *Linguistic Thought in Arab Civilization*, Arab Book House, 1st ed., Tunisia, 1986, p. 146.

⁽³¹⁾ See Sanaa Mohammed Suleiman, *The Psychology of Human Communication and Its Skills*, World of Books, 1st ed., Beirut, 2014, pp. 31–32.

⁽³²⁾ See Sanaa Mohammed Suleiman, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁽³³⁾ See Salah Ismail, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–56.

⁽³⁴⁾ See Saleh Ben Al-Hadi Ramadan, *Literary Communication: From Pragmatics to Cognition*, Arab Cultural Center, 1st ed., Casablanca, 2015, p. 31.

⁽³⁵⁾ See *ibid.*, p. 40.

- The General: "Shut up. Don't speak to me in that tone."
- Mr. Dou: "No, I'll speak as I wish. Why don't you want to hear the truth?"
- The General: "Silence, Dou! Sit back down on your bench behind the piano."⁽³⁶⁾

In the above discourse, Mr. Dou attempted to argue using an insistent, explicit question ("Why don't you want to hear the truth?") to obtain a clear reason for the General's attempt to silence him. However, he failed to get an answer, as the General quickly issued commands ("Silence, sit down") to prevent Mr. Dou from continuing and cornering him with questions, thereby thwarting communication.

Discussion of communication is only justified if it is directed from a speaker to an addressee with the intention of informing or transmitting information ⁽³⁷⁾. Hence, informing also becomes one of the key universal intentions in the corpus.

2) Informing and Educating

This is one of the major intentions underlying the discourse in the research corpus. Through it, ideas are presented to the recipient with the aim of raising awareness, educating, and providing them with previously unknown knowledge and information. The characters inform the recipient about their past experiences, the emotions they feel, the mistakes they have made, the torments of conscience, social relationships, and complex circumstances. They may reject or pass judgments on various situations, or they may adopt logic and use it as a basis for deriving conclusions that can change the recipient's beliefs and enrich their intellectual repertoire. Accordingly, "the element of possessing unique knowledge is a necessary condition to entice the interlocutor to transmit this knowledge to others, persuading them to accept it and acknowledging the interlocutor's precedence in acquiring it" ⁽³⁸⁾. If "the speaker does not possess knowledge, they will not hold a position of strength in the communicative cycle, as they control the transmission and type of information sent, information that the recipient must acknowledge as beneficial. Otherwise, there is no value in the news or the act of informing, leading to negative reactions from the recipient, such as boredom or indifference to the discourse addressed to them."⁽³⁹⁾

The research corpus reveals various methods for conveying the intention of informing, including the use of narration as a means to inform the recipient about the character's circumstances, as seen in monologues. An example can be found in the play "Miya Aragouz":

- Ali Al-Nazir: At this festival, I feel myself, I feel my existence. Do you know what my late father used to do?
- Louza: What did he do?
- Ali Al-Nazir: He was a Rifa'i (snake charmer).
- Louza: You mean a magician?
- Ali Al-Nazir: Like you said, a magician—but one who charms snakes and vipers.
- Louza: So what's your connection to magicians?
- Ali Al-Nazir: "I used to walk with my father through festivals, surrounded by snakes and scorpions. I was afraid, but I sought protection in the Quran. I saw my father die a thousand deaths, once from the cruelty of the road, a thousand times from the brutality of the guards. The snakes were kinder than their whips. We worked for our

⁽³⁶⁾ Malha Abdullah, *The Assassination of Citizen Dou*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 450–451.

⁽³⁷⁾ See Mohammed Tahami Al-Amari, *An Introduction to Reading Theatrical Performance*, Dar Al-Aman Publications, 1st ed., Rabat, 2006, p. 132.

⁽³⁸⁾ Mahmoud Yaacoubi, *Fundamentals of Philosophical Discourse*, University Publications Office, 1st ed., Algeria, 1995, p. 15.

⁽³⁹⁾ Dhabiya Hamou El-Haj, op. cit., pp. 168–169.

living from the north to the south of the country... Every festival had a home next to it, And every home had a thousand watchful eyes. Every eye was a bottomless well, guards, rulers, thugs, and informers. We ate dry bread dipped in a thousand pains, and my heart ached from their whips on my father's back."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Here, Ali Al-Nazir narrates his history, memories, and experiences as a way of self-disclosure, revealing the life lessons he has endured and his relationship with society. This allows the recipient to analyze his character deeply, uncovering its fractures and complexities. The act of narration grants the speaking character self-awareness and spiritual clarity, fostering harmony and self-understanding.

(3) Ensuring Understanding

It is an important and basic purpose implied by the implicit meanings in the research code. If the basis on which the discourse is considered is the principle of intention, then it is necessary to understand the recipient to reach the intention, thus understanding becomes the goal that the text intends to achieve for the recipient. According to this perspective, the text is designed to understand intentionally, as the purposes cannot be interpreted without understanding ⁽⁴¹⁾.

As Hamadi Sammoud states: "Understanding is the ladder of functions performed by language in various communications and texts, including literary ones. All forms of verbal art and unconventional expressive methods serve meaning, making comprehension the primary function to which all linguistic levels contribute. Other functions, such as the literary function, are secondary, reinforcing the main purpose and striving to make it more effective in conveying meaning and impacting the recipient."⁽⁴²⁾

The corpus employs several methods to ensure understanding, including:

A) Explanation

Explanation is an effective method for clarification, as it helps reveal reality and highlight issues the recipient might not grasp alone. It also stimulates intellectual engagement and is suitable for discussing deep experiences and complex perspectives. Through explanation, the speaker uses hypotheses, formulates facts, and draws inferences to simplify their viewpoint, ensuring the recipient comprehends the intended meaning ⁽⁴³⁾.

Examples of speeches that meant understanding by supporting her words with explanation include the speech of "Zubaydah" in the play "Kalam Setat" when she touched on the subject of her voice and its impact on her life :
" Zubaydah: The sharpness of my voice faded. Something inside me was withering, I knew it, I felt it. My voice began to cling to the walls, never straying far... Oh God, how deeply the war affected my voice! I lost many things, but none hurt as much as losing my voice. My voice was my most precious possession, my homeland, my identity, the details of my stories. A life without a voice is unbearable."⁽⁴⁴⁾

Here, Zubaydah articulates her thoughts on her voice's power and its symbolic value, reinforcing her argument with explanations that enhance clarity and persuasion.

B) Narration

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Malha Abdullah, Miya Aragouz, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 253–254.

⁽⁴¹⁾ See Abd El-Ghani Bara, *The Linguistic Basis of Understanding the Qur'an in the Works of Fundamentalists*, 4th International Conference on the Arabic Language, Dubai, 2015, pp. 193–194.

⁽⁴²⁾ Hamadi Sammoud, *Arab Rhetorical Thought: Its Foundations and Evolution to the 4th Century*, Tunisian University Publications, 1st ed., Tunisia, 1981, p. 35.

⁽⁴³⁾ See Dhabiya Hamou El-Haj, *Linguistics of Utterance and Discourse Pragmatics*, Dar El-Amal, 2nd ed., Algeria, 2012, p. 185.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Malha Abdullah, *Kalam Stat*, op. cit., Vol. 5, p. 84.

Narration is a powerful tool for conveying meaning. As Said Benkrad notes: “We can understand a story even if it’s steeped in strangeness, there’s no harm in a ghoulish backward-facing udders that drip milk!”⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The corpus is rich in narration, which aids comprehension. A striking example is from *A Night in Frankfurt*:

“- Woman 2: I was the opposite of you. I loved and betrayed. I didn’t wait for a man to betray me, I beat him to it. I embraced every ideology: Marxist for a while, secular for a while, Islamist for a while. I drifted between Sufism, Salafism, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Then I abandoned it all. Now, I belong to nothing.”⁽⁴⁶⁾.

The narration here reveals a liberated “I” free from emotional attachments, political affiliations, or philosophical/religious beliefs, as if the world holds no meaning for her. What matters is the assertion of this “self,” evident in the profusion of verbal clauses (“I was, I loved, I betrayed, I waited, I rushed, I embraced, I drifted, I converted, I abandoned”). This linguistic choice injects the narrative with dynamism, exposing both her vitality and her exercised freedom of action and will. This rhetorical strategy aligns with what Abdullah Al-Mihna identifies as: “A subjectivity that borders, in some women, on narcissistic self-absorption, a natural reaction to cultural marginalization.”⁽⁴⁷⁾ Woman 2 does not merely narrate her hidden depths; she verges on confession, violating religious, moral, and social norms despite knowing such admissions are fraught with risks and consequences.

C) Argumentation

Jürgen Habermas posits that language is fundamentally rooted in rational communication and argumentation: “Language is a dialogue between interlocutors’ minds aimed at mutual understanding of issues” ⁽⁴⁸⁾ . Argumentation primarily serves a pragmatic discursive purpose—interaction that achieves comprehension, making understanding (or making understood) the core function around which all other linguistic functions revolve.⁽⁴⁹⁾.

The research corpus extensively employs argumentation for clarity. For instance, in *Test Case*, the female character expresses emotional distress, while the male character adopts a rational approach to make her understand logically:

“ Woman: Yesterday’s mistake was unbearable, it pained me deeply.

Man: I warned you, but you didn’t stop. You rushed headlong into a situation no one would envy.

Woman: “I didn’t expect things to escalate this way. I spoke spontaneously, in good faith, I wanted simplicity, not complexity.”

Man: “My voice screamed inside you, but you didn’t listen. You know my feelings well, they don’t lie.”

Woman: Not always. Your feelings have deceived me many times ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The dialogue began from the “woman” side, who preferred to present results over introductions to avoid questioning and reproach (“Yesterday’s mistake was unbearable”). She relied on an argumentative strategy based on two stages. In the first stage, she depicted her psychological suffering in the hope of stirring up the “man’s” emotions and making him feel affected (“It hurt me a lot”). In the second stage, she focused on her spontaneity,

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Said Benkrad, *Narrative, Probability, and Words*, Al-Ittihad Newspaper, Cultural Supplement, Feb. 14, 2017.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Malha Abdullah, *A Night in Frankfurt*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 24.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Abdullah Ahmed Al-Mihanna, *The Rebellion of a Gulf Woman (A Critical Study of Suad Al-Sabah's Poetry)*, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Foundation for Poetic Creativity, 1st ed., Kuwait, 2015, p. 37.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Hassan Masdaq, *Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School (Critical Communicative Theory)*, Arab Cultural Center, 1st ed., Beirut, p. 106.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ See Abd al-Ghani Bara, op. cit., p. 198.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Malha Abdullah, *Test Case*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 305–306.

good intentions, and sound purpose in the hope of proving her innocence ("I spoke spontaneously, in good faith"). She used an explicit verbal act in which she acknowledged the mistake and denied the ability to bear it. She wanted to gain the man's sympathy through the acts of confession and pain. However, her goal failed, as the "man" responded to her with harsh blame, a behavior that was justified, as he had previously warned and forbidden her, but she did not stop, which caused harm to both of them. The "man" relies on the link (but) to establish an argumentative relationship that refutes the argument of the "woman" by saying: "I warned you, but you didn't stop," he said. "My voice screamed inside you, but you didn't listen", and the place of the argument (but) comes from being "mediating between two heterogeneous words, negative and positive, by which the negative is corrected by positive and negative"⁽⁵¹⁾ and its value is shown in linking it between two opposing or incompatible arguments, which results in alerting the addressee and causing persuasion and influence ⁽⁵²⁾ and regret for not responding to the warning.

(4) Self-Affirmation

The purpose of self-affirmation is evident through the existential dilemmas experienced by the characters in the corpus, which revealed an internal conflict directed towards the self, and an external conflict directed towards fighting authority in all its forms to affirm that self and its right to will and choice. Therefore, the corpus's discourse aims to increase the self's ability to express various negative feelings such as anger, disgust, and rejection, as well as various positive feelings associated with self-confidence, reassurance, and love. The meaning of all this is to revive the characters' feeling that they are present and socially accepted selves, as "self-affirmation is a means of treating weak self-confidence, feelings of anxiety, withdrawal from social situations and apathy, and loss of purpose in life. It helps express feelings and thoughts, and demand legitimate rights."⁽⁵³⁾

The characters in the corpus followed several methods to assert their identities, the most important of which are ⁽⁵⁴⁾:

1) **Free Expression of Feelings:** By voicing them openly without suppression, such as "Mariam" raising her voice to declare her love for Salem, or expressing rejection to Khalid: "I hate you, and I hate living with you" ⁽⁵⁵⁾. This increases psychological freedom that helps affirm the self, releasing emotions and transforming them into explicit verbal expressions.

2) **Positive Self-Talk:** Through words that provide moral motivation and emotional energy, such as Ali Al-Nazir's statement in Miya Aragouz:

"- Ali Al-Nazir: I will marry you, Louza, and we'll have a dozen children, and I'll teach them how to resist injustice and uproot all forms of racism."⁽⁵⁶⁾

3) **Escalation Tactics:** Through words that indicate challenge, threat, or warning, instilling values of independence and self-control, as seen in Umm al-Fas:

⁽⁵¹⁾ Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Isa al-Rumani, *The Meanings of Particles*, ed. Irfan Hassouna, Modern Library, 1st ed., Beirut, 2005, p. 196.

⁽⁵²⁾ See Abu Bakr al-Azzawi, *Language and Argumentation*, Dar al-Umda, 1st ed., Casablanca, 2006, p. 57.

⁽⁵³⁾ Judet Abdel Hadi and Saeed Hassani, *Modification of Human Behavior*, Dar Al-Thaqafa for Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., Amman, 2005, p. 105.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ For more on these methods of self-affirmation, see Shaimaa Abdul Aziz and Iman Hassan, *The Effect of Self-Affirmation Style on Developing the Sense of Existential Meaning in Life*, *Journal of Basic Education College, Babylon*, Issue 12, June 2013, pp. 35-36.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Malha Abdullah, *Mariam*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 353.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, Miya Aragouz, Vol. 3, p. 287.

“- Umm al-Fas: No peace and no talk. Mind your own business, son of Adam, or you'll be the one to blame, (...). Stay away from me, or your end will be at the edge of this axe.”⁽⁵⁷⁾.

4) Social Reinforcement: This involves supporting the acceptable responses demonstrated by the character and reinforcing them through words of encouragement and moral motivation from those around them, as seen in Ghoul al-Mongol:

“- The Caliph: We will do what we can, even if I have to give up my throne and wealth to protect this people.

- Judge: And we stand with you, Commander of the Faithful.

- Hossam: And I am with you, along with some armed soldiers. I will prepare weapons for confrontation, and we will turn into resistance armies if the Caliph's reconciliation plan fails.”⁽⁵⁸⁾.

The research corpus includes a number of characters who vary in their pursuit of self-affirmation and its expression in ways that reflect their goals and demands. These selves differ in their purposes and objectives, including, for example:

A) The Transcendent Self:

This reflects a rebellious ego aspiring to transform surrounding circumstances, social, economic, or political, to bring about radical change in its environment. The corpus includes several such characters with a transcendent reformist purpose, such as "Badr" in Shabah al-Nar (The Fire Simulacrum), who embodies the classic hero. His speech paints the image of a noble knight: “I am the knight of the tribe's knights, the noblest of its men. I elevate myself above all vices and flaws, so that I may lead the Arab tribes with my chivalry, morals, and generosity.”⁽⁵⁹⁾.

B) The Confessional Self:

This Self undertakes the function of disclosing psychological worlds that are socially taboo to discuss. This is the most difficult level of self-revelation because it involves the hidden or painful emotional aspects of experiences that may be shameful, flawed, or socially undesirable⁽⁶⁰⁾. This Self dissects its inner world through confession or revelation, as seen in the characters of Kalam Stat (Women's Talk):

“- Woman 3: We throw ourselves into emptiness. Our hopes become a disgrace upon us, and our different makeup becomes a disgrace upon society and our ticketless traveling dreams.

- Woman 4: I remember when I was a child playing in the schoolyard, sharing with my poor, marginalized friends the harshness of circumstances, the whispers burned by winter and dried by summer.

- Woman 2: I no longer inhabit houses. Houses were the ones that inhabited me, then abandoned me, without the slightest concern for me.

- Woman 1: Everything tastes bland without him. I was afraid for him. I thought he couldn't live without me, but he managed to live without me and with someone else”⁽⁶¹⁾.

This confession serves as a dissection of the reality faced by these troubled, pained selves. Their self-affirmation lies in abandoning repressed emotions and feeling accepted through the sense that others listen to and accept them, or finding solace in hearing similar experiences, which comforts and reassures them emotionally, making them feel socially accepted.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Ibid., Umm al-Fas, Vol. 3, pp. 26-27.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Malha Abdullah, Ghoul al-Mongol, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 302-303.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Malha Abdullah, Shabah al-Nar, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 332.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ See Hamed Zahran, Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Alam al-Kutub, 3rd ed., Cairo, 2002, p. 100.

⁽⁶¹⁾ Malha Abdullah, Kalam Stat, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 56-57.

C) The Rebellious Self:

This Self rejects its reality and attempts to break away from it. It arises from societal hegemony that dictates paths for each gender, draws boundaries for their freedom, and imposes fixed behaviors they must adhere to. For instance, men are granted privileges tied to virility and responsibilities centered on asserting dominance, while women are confined to roles of obedience and submission, without regard for their roles as mothers, daughters, or wives, which have significant impact both within and outside the family. This is evident in the suffering of "Mariam," who refused to yield to threats and warnings, rebelling against her reality and her society's traditions. An example from the play *Mariam* is when the teacher asked Mariam her name, and she replied:

- Mariam: Mariam Noura.
- The Teacher: Your name on the paper in front of me is Noura. Where did you get the name Mariam?
- Mariam: My father named me Noura, and my mother named me Mariam.
- The Teacher: (Smiling) Perhaps you gave yourself two names as a compromise between your parents. But you shouldn't have a compound name.
- Mariam: Why not?
- The Teacher: Because you're a girl.
- Mariam: Then I'll be the first girl to have a compound name."⁽⁶²⁾

In this dialogue, Mariam reveals her defiance and rebellion against society. She imposes her opinion and clings to it with confidence and steadfastness, even if it is unconventional and rejected by everyone. She understands that the word "girl" carries more than just a classification of human gender, it is laden with customary social burdens that Mariam cannot bear or remain silent about. She will continue to rebel and resist to lift these constraints.

CONCLUSION

Results:

This study aimed to examine conversational implicature in selected plays by Malha Abdullah using a pragmatic approach, culminating in several key findings:

- The discourse in the corpus included violations of all the cooperative principle rules established by Grice - violations of the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relation. This gave rise to the phenomenon of conversational implicature, which carried multiple meanings not limited to its formal structure or apparent meanings alone, but also included implicit, underlying meanings clarified by the general context of the texts. This served to discuss sensitive and taboo topics in society indirectly, while avoiding responsibility, representing unannounced communication and implicit understanding between speaker and recipient.
- Conversational implicature elevated the discourse of the corpus to a deeper level of reception that considers contextual variations to safeguard against impossibility and non-realization. It relies on social and cultural context to understand discursive purposes, along with recognizing situational appropriateness for speech or silence, for providing or withholding information, and when to resume, continue, obstruct, or redirect dialogue. This reveals the reality of humans in their societal context - their suffering, interactions, and the struggles and clamor of life around them and within them.
- The study revealed that characters in their dialogues deliberately embedded information through implicit meanings to indirectly achieve partial and overall communicative goals for the recipient. This endowed the discourse with an impactful spirit when presented, free from rigid instruction or overt direct guidance, while carrying persuasive techniques capable of influencing and motivating the recipient to act or refrain, thereby positively affecting society.
- The intentions in the corpus were diverse, with the most significant being: the communicative intent representing the essence and starting point of verbal exchange; the informative intent conveying knowledge relevant to the recipient; the intent of understanding as a prerequisite for communication and information; and the self-

⁽⁶²⁾ Malha Abdullah, *Mariam*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 335.

affirmation intent that preoccupied characters through serious, persistent efforts to confirm their existence and realize their being. The characters' dialogues in their fictional worlds paralleled societal reality, addressing issues that resonate with contemporary human aspirations and reveal their concerns and problems.

- These intentions demonstrated the author's awareness, broad knowledge, and ability to present sensitive and complex issues. Through these intentions, the author sought to influence society and modify behaviors and beliefs. We hope these words transcend their fictional textual state to be realized by recipients in human reality. Thus, the corpus can be seen as a dialogue between theater and social reality.

Thus concludes the study by elucidating the phenomenon of conversational implicature in selected plays by Malha Abdullah according to the pragmatic approach. It has revealed aspects that can launch further readings, such as studying conversational implicature in other human discourses to delve deeper into texts and uncover their implicit meanings through careful, conscious reading. We also recommend employing theater to serve the Arabic language as it represents an educational gateway to contribute to societal development and its components, while deepening its linguistic and cultural identity.

Acknowledgment:

The authors gratefully acknowledge Qassim University, represented by the Deanship of Graduate studies and Scientific Research, on the financial support for this research under the number (QU-f-PG2-2025- 551 57) during the academic year 1446 AH /2024 AD.

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