

Speech Acts in Qur'anic Verses of *Iftirā'*: Meccan vs. Medinan Contexts

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ABSTRACT:

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This study examines the use of speech acts in Qur'anic verses addressing the concept of *iftirā'* (slander), emphasizing the contextual and thematic distinctions between the Meccan and Medinan periods. Employing a descriptive-analytical method and drawing on Searle's classification of speech acts, the analysis identifies expressive acts as the most prevalent, followed by assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative acts. The study contextualizes these speech acts within the socio-religious frameworks of Mecca and Medina, demonstrating how the Qur'an's rhetorical strategies evolved to meet the distinct needs and challenges of each period. The findings categorize the sources of *iftirā'* into three primary groups, with the highest incidence attributed to disbelievers, followed by Jews, and then hypocrites. The themes of *iftirā'* in the analyzed verses include slanders about divine unity, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), divine signs, the truth of prophethood, the Qur'an, the miracles of the prophets, the reality of resurrection, and human relationships. This research underscores the Qur'an's dynamic communicative approach, illustrating how its discourse effectively engaged diverse audiences while addressing theological, and social dimensions of slander. The study offers valuable insights into Qur'anic rhetoric and its broader application in contemporary discourse analysis.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, *Iftirā'*, Slander, Searle's Theory, Speech Act, Linguistic pragmatics, Meccan and Medinan Verses

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1. Introduction

The Qur'anic text encompasses profound layers of meaning and can be examined through diverse analytical approaches. Undoubtedly, employing prominent theories from the field of pragmatics, which offer various methods for analyzing and interpreting linguistic data, can significantly enhance the understanding of Qur'anic meanings. Patte (1988), the author of Speech act theory and Biblical exegesis, argues that based on speech act theory, all texts should be considered as acts, and religious texts, in particular, should be viewed as religious acts. This perspective of treating texts as acts has enabled scholars to interpret the sacred nature of religious texts in a more systematic manner. Buss (1988) maintains that in certain periods, studies of sacred texts, directly or indirectly influenced by such approaches, have overlooked the supralinguistic truths governing these texts.

The Speech Act Theory has drawn significant attention in the fields of linguistics, language studies, and the study of religion, serving as a serious and effective analytical tool for examining religious texts. Pragmaticians focus less on syntactic relations between words and more on the characteristics of the speaker and listener, as well as the conditions of communication and the contextual environment (Cutting 2005). According to Searle, studying language as an independent subject and examining it in a detailed and thoughtful manner reveals that language is not as simple and straightforward as it initially appears; rather, it is highly complex and challenging. For this reason, many philosophical studies in the twentieth century were dedicated to this topic. In Searle's view, speaking a language entails engaging in a type of rule-governed and intricate behavior. Learning a language and gaining proficiency in it depend on acquiring its rules (Searle 1985).

Given the importance of this approach in text analysis, the present study aims to examine Qur'anic verses addressing the concept of *ifṭirā'* (slander) through the lens of this theory. The term *ifṭirā'*, derived from the root F,R,Y, appears 61 times in the Qur'an. *Ifṭirā'* refers to a reprehensible social behavior that has existed across human societies, with individuals and groups committing it for various motives. The Qur'an extensively addresses this issue in multiple verses, exploring its various aspects. This study seeks to analyze the verses concerning *ifṭirā'* using textual analysis and speech act theory, focusing on identifying the responses to *ifṭirā'* based on the types of speech acts. This is achieved by categorizing and examining the five types of speech acts. Additionally, this research provides the opportunity to statistically compare the prevalence of each type of speech act in these

verses and assess the appropriateness of the speech acts employed in these verses in relation to their contextual setting. Thus, it can be stated that the present research aims to answer the question of how the utterances containing *iftirā'* in Qur'anic verses can be categorized based on the speaker and the subject of the *iftirā'*. Additionally, what is the frequency of application of each type of speech act in the utterances involving *iftirā'* in Meccan and Medinan verses?

2. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach to investigate the use of speech acts in Qur'anic verses addressing the concept of *iftirā'* (slander). The methodology was structured in several phases, each designed to systematically analyze the verses and interpret the findings based on Searle's Speech Act Theory. The first phase of the study involved the collection of all Qur'anic verses containing the term *iftirā'* or its variants, using a library-based approach. These verses were then categorized based on their place of revelation, distinguishing between Meccan and Medinan contexts. In the second phase, the study focused on identifying the key elements of speech acts within each verse. The verses were linguistically analyzed, and the speech acts were classified according to Searle's theory (1969). Each verse was examined for the presence and frequency of these speech acts, and thematic categories were developed based on the subject matter of *iftirā'*. The next step involved identifying the primary speakers involved in the acts of *iftirā'*, as outlined in the Qur'anic verses. These speakers were categorized into three main groups: disbelievers, Jews, and hypocrites. Each group was analyzed in terms of their role in propagating slander within the Meccan and Medinan contexts, with a focus on the specific ways in which the Qur'anic discourse addressed their actions and responses. Subsequently, the frequency of different speech acts within the verses of *iftirā'* was determined. The distribution of these speech acts across Meccan and Medinan verses was analyzed to identify patterns and to understand how the Qur'an's rhetorical approach adapted to the varying socio-political contexts of these two periods. Finally, the study synthesized the findings to interpret how the Qur'anic discourse on *iftirā'* employed speech acts to address the theological and social implications of slander.

3. Literature Review

Research on the application of speech act theory to Qur'anic texts has garnered increasing attention in recent years. Delafkar et al. (2014) analyzed

the structure of speech act of warning in the Holy Qur'an. Santosa et al. (2016) categorized directive speech acts into commands, questions, requirements, and advisories, emphasizing their role in the moral and spiritual guidance in Qur'anic stories. Hassanvand (2019) concluded that assertive and directive speech acts were used more frequently than other types of speech acts in surah Maryam, primarily to inform the audience about the stories of previous nations. Dastranj and Arab (2020) applied the theory to both explicit and implicit Qur'anic references to *jihād*. They found that half of the instances involved assertive acts, followed by directive, declarative, expressive, and commissive acts in descending order of frequency. Taghavi (2020) analyzed the Prophet Abraham's speech acts with his opponents within Searle's theoretical framework. The study found that assertive acts, aimed at introducing and propagating the concept of monotheism, were the most frequent, while declarative acts were the least frequent. Tajabadi and Pourmohammad (2022) extracted verses containing commissive acts through a library-based method using syntactic, lexical, and semantic criteria. They analyzed the discourse framework of these acts, identified the committing individuals, and outlined the content of the commitments. Khazaleh et al. (2023) used Searle's taxonomy to explore the speech act of supplication in the Qur'an. Despite the growing body of research on Qur'anic speech acts, the specific analysis in verses associated with *iftirā'* has not yet been undertaken. This context underscores the significance of this paper as a potentially innovative contribution to the field.

4. Speech Act Theory

The Speech Act Theory is one of the prominent theories in the field of linguistic pragmatics. Viewing religious texts as acts allows for a systematic interpretation of their nature, considering the educational, social, historical, and literary contexts of these texts. According to Searle, language, as a social phenomenon, encompasses speech acts that are produced in alignment with the speaker's mental state and in correspondence with the external world (Searle 1969). Searle, a renowned student of Austin—the pioneer of the philosophy of language—explored the role of speech in relation to the behavior of the speaker and the listener, categorizing speech acts into five types:

- **Assertive Acts:** The language user employs words with meanings of explanation, negation, critique, objection, reporting, or reasoning to express their beliefs about the truth of matters, emphasize a topic, or conclude an argument.
- **Directive Acts:** The language user utilizes words with meanings of

command, request, suggestion, or reassurance to encourage the audience to perform or refrain from an action.

- Expressive Acts: The language user conveys positive or negative emotions regarding events through words.
- Commissive Acts: The language user, through words of promise or agreement, declares their commitment to performing an action in the future.
- Declarative Acts: The language user uses words with meanings of appointing, dismissing, annulling, or naming to announce a new event (Searle 1979).

While the framework of speech acts in contemporary linguistics appears to share similarities with traditional rhetoric themes such as context and situation (*hāl wa maqām*), secondary meanings of speech, and the order of speech components, it can be asserted that the classification provided by this model offers a more comprehensive framework for analyzing acts based on context and situational factors.

5. Analysis of Verses of *Iftirā'*

This section presents a detailed analysis of Qur'anic verses related to the concept of *iftirā'*. The primary objective is to identify the frequency of various speech acts within these verses and to classify their themes, speakers, and contextual factors. In total, there are 53 verses associated with *iftirā'* in the Qur'an, distributed across the Meccan and Medinan surahs, as illustrated in Figure 1.

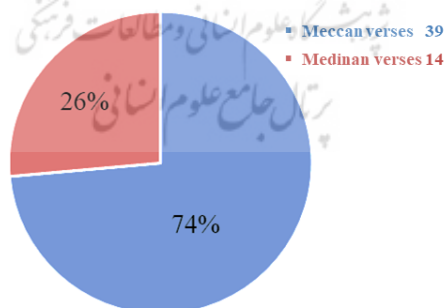


Figure 1. Distribution of verses of *iftirā'* in the Meccan and Medinan contexts

This distribution indicates a stronger emphasis on the concept of *iftirā'* in Meccan verses, likely due to the unique socio-cultural and religious

challenges faced during the early period of Islam in Mecca. The prevalence of false accusations about the Prophet and the divine message necessitated addressing this issue extensively during that era.

In these verses, the concept of *iftirā'* is addressed in relation to various themes. As shown in Figure 2, the highest frequency pertains to the subject of divine unity. These verses often refer to the accusations and distortions made by polytheists against the concept of monotheism. Other themes related to slander, in order of frequency, include the Prophet Muhammad, divine signs, prophethood, the Qur'an, the miracles of the prophets, resurrection, and human relations.

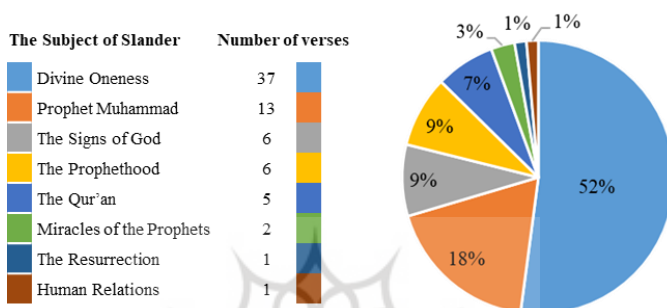


Figure 2. Distribution of themes in the verses of *iftirā'*

The frequency of various themes in the verses of *iftirā'*, categorized by Meccan and Medinan verses, is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. This indicates that the theme of divine oneness remains the foremost topic of slander in both categories of verses. However, it is noteworthy that in the Meccan verses, 28 verses (54%) address this theme, whereas in the Medinan verses, 9 verses (48%), encompass this theme. The distribution of other themes related to *iftirā'* in the Meccan and Medinan verses is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

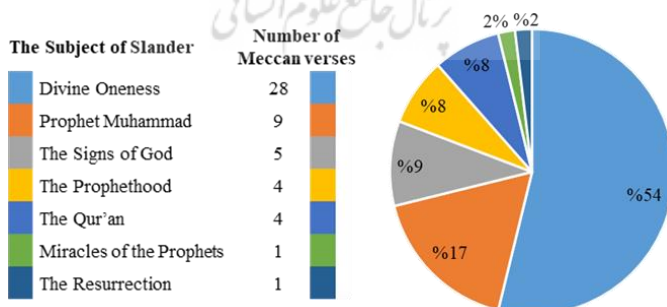


Figure 3. Distribution of themes in the Meccan verses of *iftirā'*

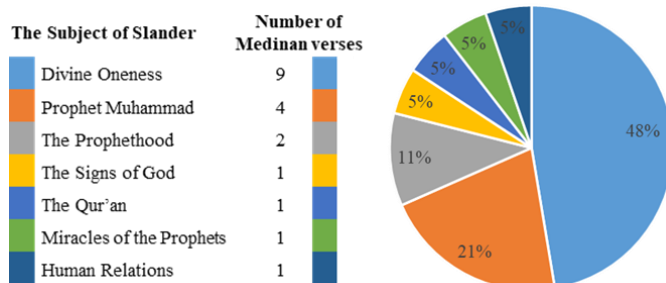


Figure 4. Distribution of themes in the Medinan verses of *iftirā'*

5.1. Speakers of Slander in the Verses of *iftirā'*

Based on the analysis of the verses, the speakers of slander can be classified into three primary categories: disbelievers, Jews, and hypocrites. Each group plays a distinct role in propagating slander within the Qur'anic narrative (Figure 5).

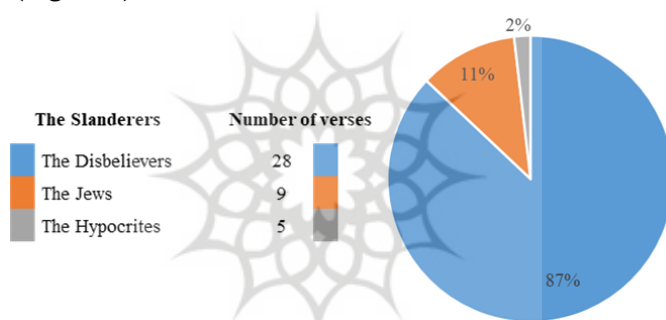


Figure 5. Speakers of Slander in the Verses of *iftirā'*

5.1.1. The Disbelievers

Disbelief, in its essence, constitutes a rejection of the fundamental tenets of a religion, encompassing its symbolic representations and core faith elements. This denial, often fueled by hostility, obstinacy, self-interest, and other such motivations, fundamentally separates the individual from the embraced faith (Alizadeh Mousavi 2014). This antagonism can escalate to such an extent that the individual, blinded by their hostility, actively shuns the truth, preferring suffering and even death to its acceptance. This denial can manifest in various forms, including the denial of God with all His existential dimensions and attributes, the denial of prophethood, the denial of the unseen, and the denial of the hereafter.

For instance, according to verse Q. 7:37, disbelievers, by associating

partners with God and denying monotheism, falsely slander God and refuse to act according to religion, and instead of accepting the religion of monotheism to which the prophets invite, they attribute another religion to God (Tabataba'i 1996). In another verse, God Almighty says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ
(العنكبوت/68)

Who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah, or denies the truth when it comes to him? Is not the [final] abode of the faithless in hell? (Q. 29:68)

The disbelievers, by denying the great blessing of the security of Mecca and believing in superstitions and idols that have nothing but the name of God, have trampled on the truths and slandered the divine essence. This is because they have introduced false gods as partners to Him (Tabataba'i 1996). Pagan disbelievers, in their pursuit of divine intercession, blessings, and protection from evil, venerated and worshipped idols. By attributing partners to God, they engaged in false accusations against the Almighty (Q. 10:17). They presented inappropriate suggestions regarding the divine scripture, requesting the Prophet to alter the verses of the Qur'an. Furthermore, verse Q. 25:4 recounts the taunts and slander that the disbelievers directed towards the Prophet concerning the Qur'an, claiming that he fabricated it and attributed it to God. In their persistent resistance against the truth and divine revelations, they labeled the Prophet a slanderer and groundlessly dismissed the truth as mere sorcery (Q. 34:43) (Tabataba'i 1996).

5.1.2. The Jews

The Children of Israel were among the nations to whom God gave special favors, and through this, God's proof was completed upon them (Q. 2:47). But instead of being grateful for the divine favors and blessings, they considered this favor of God to be due to their racial superiority and inherent privilege (Haji Sadeqi 2011). They harassed their prophets and denied or killed many of them (Q. 2:61). The Qur'an has mentioned in many verses the Jews who slander the God and make false accusations. For instance, they slandered God and said that they will not be punished except for a few days:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ وَغَرَّهُمْ فِي دِينِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (آل عمران/24)

That is because they say, "The Fire shall not touch us except for a number of days," and they have been misled in their religion by what they used to fabricate (Q. 3:24).

The Jews believed that certain foods were initially forbidden to them, but

God refutes this claim, stating that all foods were permissible before the revelation of the Torah. Those later prohibited were due to their transgressions (Q. 3:93-94). Additionally, their self-aggrandizement, claiming to be sons of God and His beloved allies (Q. 4:50), along with their idolatry of the calf (Q. 7:152), are among the calumnies they attributed to the Almighty. Moreover, when Jesus, son of Mary, said, "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God sent to you, confirming the Torah that was revealed before me and giving glad tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad," the Jews denied him and deemed his clear proofs and miracles to be sorcery. Thus, by rejecting the true religion, they once again slandered God (Q. 61:6-7) (Tabataba'i 1996; Makarem Shirazi 1995).

5.1.3. *The Hypocrites*

Hypocrites are the most dangerous individuals in any society because firstly, they live within the community and are privy to all its secrets. Secondly, identifying them is not always easy, as they often present themselves in the guise of friends, making their true nature difficult to discern. Thirdly, since their true face remains hidden from many, direct confrontation and open conflict with them become challenging. Fourthly, they have various familial and social ties with believers, and these connections further complicate efforts to combat their influence. Fifthly, their attacks are often unexpected and catch people off guard. These factors, among others, enable them to inflict irreparable damage upon communities. Therefore, a comprehensive and meticulously planned strategy is necessary to neutralize their threat. The Qur'an extensively discusses hypocrites, exposing their characteristics, actions, and dangers. This significant attention devoted to them in the Qur'an underscores the profound threat they pose (Farazmand 2008).

Due to the inherent contradiction between their inner selves and their outward appearances, hypocrites sought to conceal their malicious intentions for fear of exposure and the potential repercussions that might befall their lives, possessions, status, and families. To maintain their facade, they resorted to various justifications for their actions. They exercised extreme caution, particularly with regard to slander, to prevent anyone from discovering their secrets and true nature. Consequently, the reason why hypocrites were less frequently identified as the source of slander in the Medinan verses, compared to the disbelievers and the Jews, is their reluctance to reveal their true colors through open opposition to God, the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, and the basic tenets of the Islamic faith. This explains why the hypocrites, as propagators of slander, are less

prominent in the Medinan verses compared to the disbelievers and the Jews.

Furthermore, hypocrites engaged in various subversive activities to undermine the Muslim community. These include obstructing and defying the Prophet's commands, employing deception and trickery, forming alliances to inflict harm upon Islam, befriending disbelievers and the Jews, exhibiting duplicity in relationships, spreading corruption and discord, and breaking covenants. In the investigations conducted in this study, it was clearly demonstrated a correlation between the Qur'an's discourse strategies and the targeted audience during the period of revelation. This correlation indicates that the Qur'an offers a model for engaging with various audiences, particularly those who engage in slander. This approach can serve as a timeless and universal guide, adaptable to different contexts and circumstances. The Meccan period necessitated that the disbelievers, far more than the Jews and hypocrites, be identified as the primary source of slander. Therefore, the fact that expressive speech acts comprise the highest frequency (39%) of speech acts in the Meccan verses reflects the specific requirements of that era. The prevalence of slander attributed to the disbelievers during the Meccan period also arises from the unique circumstances of that time, influencing the style and tone of the Qur'anic discourse.

5.2. *Situational Context of the verses of Iftirā'*

To understand the situational context of the verses of *iftirā'*, it is essential to first examine the content characteristics of the Meccan and Medinan verses in the Qur'an. The Meccan society was a polytheistic society deeply entrenched in idolatrous beliefs. Consequently, the Meccan verses of the Qur'an directly challenge the foundations of polytheism and idolatry, confronting their psychological and intellectual underpinnings, as well as their ethical and social consequences. Moreover, since Meccan society did not worship the One God, the Meccan verses emphasize the wonders of creation as evidence of the Creator. These verses also highlight the unseen world, resurrection and judgment, revelation, and the prophets, along with the supporting arguments and proofs. Thus, the Meccan verses focus on establishing these fundamental principles and explaining their broader concepts, aligning with the nature of the Meccan period as the initial phase of the Prophet's mission. This emphasis on foundational principles in the Meccan phase obviates the need for their repetition in the subsequent Medinan phase.

Furthermore, the Meccan verses address morality in its entirety, examining the practical manifestations of ethical concepts and outlining

how to establish and implement moral laws within society. They warn against various forms of deviation, rebellion, and the pursuit of worldly desires, including disbelief, disobedience, ignorance, arrogance, burying female infants alive, consuming the wealth of orphans, shortchanging and so forth. Alongside these admonitions, they illuminate the true nature of morality and the paths to righteousness (Hakim 1999).

Another prominent feature of the Meccan verses, as highlighted by Kafafi and Sharif (1972), is their recounting of the stories of prophets and messengers. These narratives depict the various challenges they faced in their struggles against disbelief within their communities and offer lessons and admonitions to be drawn from their experiences. The Meccan verses are further distinguished by their concise style, their resonant tone, and their captivating rhythm and rhyme. The Meccan period was a phase that required breaking the shackles of ignorance that bound society. This sharp and impactful approach, akin to thunderbolts, played a crucial role in overcoming obstacles and shattering the resolve of staunch opponents and saboteurs.

This analysis of the characteristics of the Meccan verses sets the stage for understanding the features of the Medinan verses. In Medinan society, Islam had become the dominant force, and the concept of revelation and communication with the divine was widely accepted. The social landscape of Medina had transformed, necessitating a different approach to presenting ideas and addressing issues. The Medinan verses delve into the details of religious rulings and social systems. They engage in debates with the People of the Book regarding their beliefs and deviations. They address the conditions of Islamic governance in Medina, the confrontation with the polytheists' stances, the concept of jihad and warfare, and the political and social positions of the Islamic call. They also explore the phenomenon of hypocrisy within the Muslim community, its causes, and strategies for dealing with it. Furthermore, they expound on political relations, the role of the leader in Islamic society, and the regulation of interpersonal interactions and transactions. All these factors necessitate that the Medinan verses elaborate on laws, systems, and related matters. Thus, the focus in Medina shifted from the fundamental principles of Islamic monotheism to its secondary aspects and details. The Medinan verses emphasize the boundaries and definitions of the monotheistic school of thought and strive to correct the deviations of the People of the Book concerning monotheism. They also address the threats that could potentially undermine the Islamic community under its new governance and the pressures exerted by opposing systems (Hakim 1999). Considering the situational contexts governing the Meccan and Medinan verses, it is natural that the prevalence of slander is

higher in the Meccan context, and the response to it is more forceful. Consequently, the frequency of each speech act in the Meccan verses differs significantly from that in the Medinan verses.

5.3. The Use of Speech Acts in the Verses of *Iftirā'*

In the verses of *iftirā'*, specific types of speech acts are employed to establish effective communication with the audience and leverage literary features. Based on Searle's classification, the most frequently employed speech acts are primarily expressive acts, followed by assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative acts in descending order of frequency.

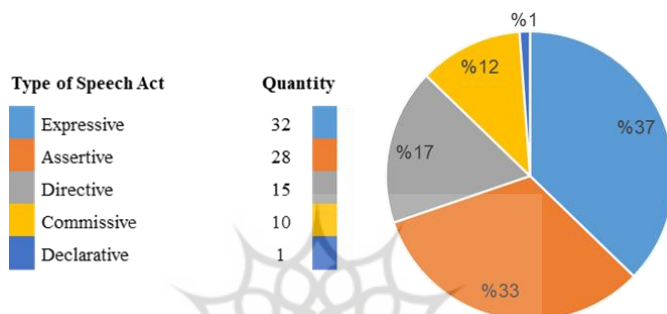


Figure 6. The frequency of application of various speech acts in verses of *iftirā'*

As shown in Figure 6, expressive speech acts are the most prevalent in the divine discourse of verses of *iftirā'*. An examination of their usage reveals that God, in addition to expressing His emotions regarding the prevailing circumstances, also engages in threatening and rebuking those who engage in slander. The second most frequent speech act is the assertive, comprising 33% of all applications. God addresses the slanders and demonstrates His commitment to the truth of the propositions He puts forth. He also aligns the propositional content with the external world and reveals His beliefs. In the context of the verses of *iftirā'*, one of the prominent characteristics of those who engage in slander is their ignorance, stubbornness, and arrogance in rejecting the truth. It appears that this very factor has prompted God to utilize this speech act to enlighten people. In essence, God's primary objective is to illuminate and inform people about their neglect of the truth, while also presenting arguments for the oneness of God, His control over all affairs, and His limitless knowledge and power. This serves to distinguish the Oneness and Lordship of God from the idols and imaginary deities of those who engage in slander. This objective is achieved through the employment of assertive speech acts.

Directive speech acts are the third most frequent type of speech act in the

verses on slander, accounting for 17%. God, in His address, utilizes directive speech acts to encourage the audience to take action. He warns, questions, requests, and challenges those who engage in slander. He also employs motivational aspects, such as urging them to provide conclusive evidence for their slanderous accusations if they are truthful, aiming to persuade the audience and inspire a change in their behavior. God utilizes directive speech act to capture the attention of those who engage in slander and to guide them towards compliance. Essentially, God's aim in employing this speech act is to call for adherence to righteous beliefs, to challenge and confront, to request proof and to remind those who engage in slander. In commissive speech acts, God, aiming to align the world with the propositional content, commits to punish and misguide those who engage in slander in the future, using expressions such as promising and swearing. The fulfillment of this type of speech act occurs over time. Declarative speech acts are the least frequent in God's discourse in the verses of *iftirā'*. In this speech act, God, possessing the necessary authority and qualifications, by revealing His command, brings about new changes and conditions for the audience (slanderer) in relation to the external world. Through this speech act, He emphasizes the consequences of the slander perpetrated by the disbelievers about the divine oneness, the divine signs, and the Qur'an, declaring that they have committed a grave offense through their slander.

Regarding the reasons for the high or low frequency of each speech act in the verses on slander, it can be stated that the frequency of speech acts in these verses is influenced by the main theme and aim of the text and its situational context. In the verses of *iftirā'*, it seems that the purpose of expressing slander is to instill fear in the audience regarding the consequences of such actions and the misguidance that results from it. Therefore, the use of expressive speech acts is consistent with this objective, which is why it has the highest frequency. Following this, the assertive speech act, which pertains to denying and rejecting the slander, as well as articulating, proving, and providing arguments against the slander in these verses, ranks next. Considering the differences and similarities in speech acts in the verses of *iftirā'*, it can be said that similar situational contexts typically lead to similar speech acts. In addition to situational context, the speaker's purpose, choice of vocabulary and the text structure significantly influence the speech acts. For example, in the two verses Q. 6:137 and Q. 6:138, both address the issue of slander against God in a similar situational context (Mecca). However, the speech act in the first verse is assertive, while in the second verse, it is commissive-expressive.

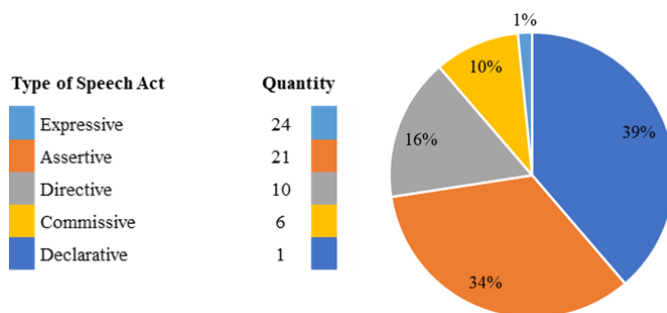


Figure 7. The frequency of application of various speech acts in Meccan verses of iftirā'

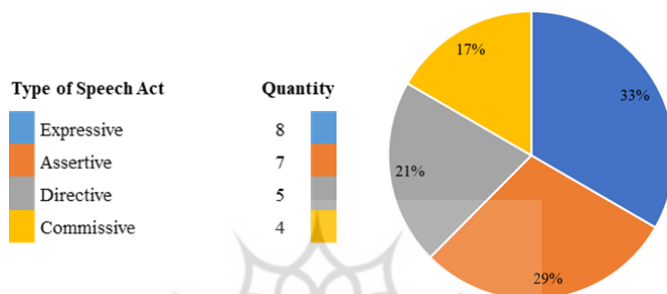


Figure 8. The frequency of application of various speech acts in Medinan verses of iftirā'

The frequency of each of the aforementioned speech acts, categorized by Meccan and Medinan verses, is illustrated in Figures 7 and 8. The higher frequency of speech acts in the Meccan verses compared to the Medinan verses is primarily due to the greater proportion of Meccan verses addressing the theme of slander—74% of the total verses are Meccan, while only 26% are Medinan. Additionally, the Meccan verses were revealed in a context of intense opposition to monotheism, requiring more frequent use of confrontational and persuasive speech acts, such as expressive and assertive acts, to refute falsehoods, warn of consequences, and encourage repentance. In contrast, the Medinan verses focus more on community guidance and legislation, resulting in a lower overall frequency of speech acts.

Despite these differences in frequency, the order of prevalence of speech acts in both Meccan and Medinan verses remains the same: expressive acts are the most frequent, followed by assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative acts. The main difference lies in the percentages of usage, as shown in Figures 7 and 8. This consistency in the order of speech act usage reflects the overarching thematic and rhetorical goals in both types of verses, while the differences in frequency are shaped by the contextual and quantitative factors mentioned above.

6. Conclusion

The present study highlights the profound interplay between linguistic pragmatics and the Qur'anic discourse, particularly through the analysis of verses addressing *iftirā'* (slander) using Searle's speech act theory. By categorizing the speech acts into expressive, assertive, directive, commissive, and declarative types, and contextualizing their usage in Meccan and Medinan verses, this research unveils the nuanced strategies of divine communication aimed at confronting social and theological deviations.

The findings reveal that *iftirā'* primarily targets core Islamic tenets, including the oneness of God, the prophethood of Muhammad, the authenticity of the Qur'an, and the reality of resurrection. The expressive speech act, characterized by emotional intensity and divine rebuke, emerges as the most frequent, particularly in addressing the slanders of disbelievers during the Meccan period. This frequency underscores the Qur'an's intent to evoke awareness, instill fear of consequences, and counteract slander with clarity and resolve. Meanwhile, the declarative act, being the least frequent, reflects the selective use of authoritative declarations to emphasize the gravity of specific offenses.

A notable insight is the parallelism in the order of speech act usage across Meccan and Medinan verses, despite differences in frequency. The higher prevalence of speech acts in the Meccan verses is explained not only by their contextual demands but also by their greater numerical representation—74% of the verses on *iftirā'* are Meccan, compared to 26% Medinan. This distribution aligns with the early Qur'anic emphasis on confronting polytheism and establishing foundational beliefs. Ultimately, this study underscores the Qur'an's strategic deployment of linguistic tools to address *iftirā'* across diverse social and theological contexts. It highlights how divine discourse employs tailored speech acts to engage different audiences, refute falsehoods, and guide humanity toward truth and righteousness. The integration of speech act theory into Qur'anic studies thus offers a powerful lens for appreciating the dynamic interplay between language, context, and divine purpose in the sacred text.

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