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Speech Acts in English WhatsApp and Private Messaging: A Pragmatic Investigation of Semi-Private Digital Discourse

الأفعال الكلامية في محادثات واتساب والرسائل الخاصة باللغة الإنجليزية:

دراسة تداولية للخطاب الرقمي شبه الخاص

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Abstract:

The present study analyzes how speech acts are pragmatically organized in WhatsApp conversations that are taking place in different versions of English due to them being conducted through a site that impinge on semi-private digital discourses. There are (844) instances of naturally occurring talk recorded from (60) dyadic and group chats. All of these conversations were analyzed according to (1) Austin's (1962) performative framework; (2) Searle's (1969) illocutionary taxonomy; (3) Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory; and (4) Herring's (2007) (CMDA) and (5) Page et al.'s (2014) social media language analysis frameworks. The quantitative frequency analysis was triangulated with a qualitative discursive analysis of selected exchanges to elucidate the distributional, realization strategies and pragmatic functions of directives, expressive, commissive, assertive and declaration speech acts. The findings indicate that the semi-private architecture of WhatsApp encourages the direct and phatic forms of communication while facilitating the performance of face-threatening acts that would have otherwise been mitigated in formal registers. Additionally, the using of multimodal resources, such as emoji, GIF and voice notes, are a systematic co-construction of illocutionary force. Lastly, the study introduces the term distributed illocution to explain how a single speech act may be distributed across non-continuous message units within asynchronous threads. The implications of this study are relevant to areas such as digital pragmatics, second language pragmatic competence, and forensic linguistics.

Keywords: speech acts; WhatsApp pragmatics; computer-mediated discourse; digital politeness; illocutionary force; semi-private discourse; emoji; distributed illocution

الملخص:

تقوم الدراسة بتحليل الكيفية التي تنظم بها الأفعال الكلامية تداوليًا في المحادثات الخاصة بتطبيق واتساب و التي توظف تنوعات مختلفة للغة الإنجليزية، وذلك لكونها تتم عبر منصة تؤثر في طبيعة الخطابات الرقمية شبه الخاصة. وتستند الدراسة إلى (844) حالة من المحادثات الطبيعية التي تم استخلاصصها من (60) محادثة ثنائية وجماعية. وقد تم تحليل هذه المحادثات وفقًا لما يأتي: (1) الإطار الأدائي لـ أوستن (1962)، و(2) تصنيف سير(1969) للقوة الإنجازية، و (3) نظرية براون وليفنسون (1987) في التأدب، و(4) إطار هيرينغ (2007) لتحليل الخطاب الحاسوبي المتوسَّط (CMDA)، و(5) إطار بيج وزملائه (2014) لتحليل لغة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. حضيَ تحليل التكرارات الكمية بتدعيم يتضمن تحليل خطابي نوعي لمجموعة منتقاة من التبادلات الحوارية، بهدف توضيح أنماط التوزيع، واستراتيجيات التحقق اللغوي، والوظائف التداولية للأفعال الكلامية من نوع التوجيهات، والتعبيريات، والالتزاميات، والإخباريات، والإعلانيات. وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن البنية شبه الخاصة لتطبيق واتساب تشجع أشكال التواصل المباشرة والوظيفة التواصلية المحافظة على الصلة الاجتماعية (الفاتية)، مع إتاحة أداء الأفعال المهدِّدة للوجه بدرجة أكبر مما هو مألوف في السجلات اللغوية الرسمية، إذ أن مثل هذه الأفعال كان من الممكن أن تُلطَّف الخاطب عادةً في سياقات أكثر رسمية. كما تُظهر النتائج أن توظيف الموارد متعددة الوسائط، مثل الرموز التعبيرية (Emoji) ، والصور المتحركة (GIF)، والملاحظات الصوتية، تساهم بصورة منهجية في البنية المشتركة للقوة الإنجازية للفعل الكلامي. وأخيرًا، تقدم الدراسة مصطلح الإنجازية الموزعة (Distributed Illocution) لتفسير الكيفية التي يمكن بها توزيع فعل كلامي واحد عبر وحدات رسائل غير متتابعة داخل سلاسل المحادثات غير المتزامنة. وتكتسب نتائج هذه الدراسة أهمية خاصة في مجالات التداولية الرقمية، والكفاية التداولية في اللغة الثانية، واللسانيات الجنائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : أفعال الكلام؛ تداوليات تطبيق واتساب؛ الخطاب عبر الحاسوب؛ اللباقة الرقمية؛ القوة الإنجازية؛ الخطاب شبه الخاص؛ الرموز التعبيرية؛ الإنجاز الموزع.

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1. Introduction

Mobile messaging applications have led to new types of communication that challenge traditional categories in linguistic pragmatics. WhatsApp Messenger has become one of the most widely used forms of everyday language since its launch in 2014 and it continues to be used by over 2 billion people every month (Statista, 2024). However, WhatsApp as a form of communication has received less attention than the significance of this site in regards to language use in contemporary society. Unlike social media platforms which send messages to a wide audience and formal email communication which adheres to written format, in a unique method, WhatsApp is situated in the middle: it is digital but conversational; written but contains grammatical errors; private but determinedly saved. Thus, this study considers how speech acts are systematized and function within this semi-private context. In the beginning hypothesized by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), speech act theory offers the foundational structure for understanding how people complete actions (requesting/acting, giving greetings, making promises, stating facts, making declarations) through the use of speech acts beyond the utterance meaning. This framework, however, was developed to account for both spoken language and written formal language, and therefore needs amendment when applied to CMC, as the nature of WhatsApp has three unique features that give rise to pragmatic theory not fully captured by old-style speech act theory: 1) multiple forms of communication exist within a single message (i.e. images, emojis, text) , 2) asynchrony of turn taking, and 3) there is a mark of closeness between the listener and. Speaker.

This study provides an analysis of the distribution of speech acts in WhatsApp using a corpus-based frequency analysis. The new theoretical construct of "dispersed illocution" is introduced, whereby the illocutionary forces attached to a single speech act are dispersed across temporally non-contiguous message units in WhatsApp communication. The study demonstrates how emoji and other multimodal resources can be used to adapt illocutionary force systematically and the level of threat to face. Thus, the study provides a framework to understand the communicative nature of WhatsApp as semi-private communication, taking into account its unique pragmatic features**.**

1.1 Scope and Delimitations

The limitations of this study are that it only focuses on English-language communications on WhatsApp between bilingual and multilingual participants that consider English as their primary or dominant language of digital communication. Additionally, code-switching is not the focus of this study, although instances are noted. While both one-on-one (dyadic) chat and group chat are analyzed, they are analyzed comparatively across audience configuration. The dataset consists of conversations collected in the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates from January to December 2023, thus providing a culturally diverse but predominantly English sample.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Speech Act Theory: From Austin To Digital Contexts

Three dimensions of speech were proposed by Austin (1962) to classify an utterance – locutionary (the meaning), illocutionary (the action that is performed), and perlocutionary (an effect in the audience). The framework was elaborated upon by Searle (1969, 1979) who suggested felicity conditions for achieving the success of the act and classified speech acts into five macro categories (Searle's taxonomy): assertives (commitment to the truth of a proposition stated), directives (action aimed at getting the addressee perform an action), commissives (commitment to some future action), expressives (communicating the speaker's psychological state) and declarations (producing a new state). The

classification applies to face-to-face communication and formal writing; in order to use it in regard to digital media, adjustments are needed.

Androutsopoulos (2014) emphasizes that the need for a sociolinguistics of writing to capture the stylistic choices that digital writers make, choices that in WhatsApp are pragmatically meaningful. Speech act theory as applied to digital writing is widely discussed in the existing literature. In particular, according to Yus (2011), relevance theory should be used in conjunction with speech act theory because CMC needs additional inferential enrichment due to the absence of prosodic, kinetic and contextual information available to speakers. Moreover, Herring (2007) introduces computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) as a methodology that provides the strictness of discourse analysis while taking into consideration the features specific for online communication such as disrupted turn adjacency, multiple simultaneous threads, and persistence of text. More recently,

2.2 Politeness Theory and Face-Threatening Acts

The second major theoretical framework upon which this study is founded is Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, based on Goffman's (1967) sociological concept of face. Brown and Levinson define positive face, the desire to be liked and admired, and negative face, the desire to have freedom and be autonomous. Any act that threatens these two faces in any way is called a face-threatening act (FTA), and one chooses one of the four types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, or off-record, depending on the amount of imposition, power difference, and social distance between interlocutors.

However, the situation becomes more complicated when using WhatsApp since in a digital setting, the assessment of FTAs is changed. According to Darics (2014), the lack of paralinguistic information about the speaker's tone makes it harder to avoid misinterpretation of face-threatening moves since what appears to be a bald on-record face-threatening act in a text can actually be meant as either humor or a sign of intimacy. On the other hand, the intimacy created by private conversations on WhatsApp can justify what would be considered a face-threatening act in public speech. Relational work (Locher & Watts, 2005) as a concept is especially appropriate for WhatsApp chats due to their relational nature.

2.3 Semi-Private Discourse: A Theoretical Construct

This analysis builds on and adjusts the language of social media framework by Page et al. (2014) to advance the idea of semi-private discourse in regard to WhatsApp. Semi-private discourse can be defined as the mode of communication intended for an identifiable and limited audience, but still documented, forwardable, and accessible in some way, separating it from private talk (conversations conducted without documenting), as well as public discourse (social media broadcast). The semi-private nature of WhatsApp generates unique pragmatic demands, in that the informality allowed by the channel's familiarity is tempered by the possibility of an unintentional audience as a result of the archivable and forwardable nature of its messages.

This theoretical concept can be compared to the backstage or frontstage dichotomy developed by Goffman (1959), who states that WhatsApp communication happens backstage, in relation to institutional communication, but it is not entirely devoid of performance before a real or fictive audience. As a consequence, the semi-private discourse framework expects a unique combination of bald on-record directness, phatic intensity, multimodality, and facework, all of which are supported by the corpus data.

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3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus Design and Data Collection

The corpus consists of 60 WhatsApp chat logs containing 36 one-to-one conversations (D1-D36) and 24 group chats (G1-G24). The number of message units and codable speech act occurrences total 14,320 and 844 respectively after excluding all logistical communication (e.g., sending a link without text or sending stickers alone). Participants were recruited through purposeful snowball sampling from three sociolinguistic groups: native speakers of British English in London (n=24), Arabic speakers using English in Abu Dhabi and Dubai (n=22), and South Asian English speakers in Birmingham (n=14).

The collection of the corpus happens between January and December 2023. All participants were 18-45 years old and had WhatsApp as their preferred real-time messaging service. Ethical clearance was granted in compliance with BAAL ethical guidelines and the institutional research ethics policy [withheld for blind review]. Participants could choose to remove any part of their logs before submitting them. Personal identifiers (names, places, and references to other people) were replaced with pseudonyms or categorical labels in the transcripts.

3.2 Analytical Procedure

Data analysis was conducted in 3 steps. All message units were divided into illocutionary units (IUs), which are defined as the smallest unit of completion and have an illocutionary force, in this first step. A message unit can contain more than one IU (for example, if a message contains an assertion of a proposition and requests a response from the reader) or an IU may consist of several message units (due to the phenomenon known as 'distributed' IUs, which are discussed in Section 5.4).

In the second step of the analysis IUs were each coded using Searle's (1969) five category taxonomy and additional subcategories were created from the data through inductive analysis (e.g. the subcategories to which directives were coded were requests, commands, suggestions, invitations and questions). Inter-rater reliability was determined through another person who had received training and performed the coding of a 15% of a randomly selected sample of the IUs (Cohen's Kappa coefficient $\kappa = 0.82$ indicates strong agreement, see Landis & Koch, 1977).

In the final stage of the data analysis selected exchanges were subjected to close analysis of discourse. This included examining the selection of politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), the pragmatic function of emojis and other multimodal elements (Vásquez & Creel, 2017; Herring & Dainas, 2017) and the use of adjacency pairs and preference structures within an asynchronous medium (Stivers & Enfield, 2010). Analysis of frequency data was done with the use of AntConc 4.2.4 (corpus concordance software) and qualitative coding was conducted by using the software program MAXQDA 22.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

All excerpts in this study are lightly anonymized, participant identifiers have been replaced with letter codes (A, B, C), and any proper nouns that might identify individuals or third parties have been replaced with category labels in square brackets. In accordance with established practice in the study of digital discourse (Bechar-Israeli, 1995; Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Finally, the study systematically addressed some of the specific ethical issues raised by digital data collection. Data were not collected without written informed consent, and participants were fully debriefed regarding the aims of the study.

4. Results: Frequency And Distribution

4.1 Overall Speech Act Distribution

the frequency distribution of the five Searlean speech act categories through the full corpus of 844 illocutionary units are shown in *Table 1*.

Speech Act Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Primary Strategy
Directives	248	29.4	Imperatives / Interrogatives
Expressive	213	25.2	Formulaic / Emotive
Commissive	187	22.2	Future-oriented statements
Assertive	143	16.9	Declarative / Hedged
Declarations	53	6.3	Performative formulae
TOTAL	844	100.0	—

Table 1. Distribution of Speech Act Categories in the WhatsApp Corpus "N = 844"

Directives made up the biggest category (29.4%, n=248) – unsurprising given the interactionally goal-directed nature of most everyday communication: participants make plans, seek information, request actions. Expressives are the next largest (25.2%, n=213); the expressive function of WhatsApp (as a social-bonding medium involving greetings, thanks, apologies, exclamation) clearly played a pragmatically dominant part. Commissives (22.2%, n=187) typically involved promises, offers, and intentions, again fitting in with WhatsApp's usage for social planning and making commitments. Assertives (16.9%, n=143) contained information, opinions, and evaluations. Declarations (6.3%, n=53) made up the smallest category, their low number predictable given the dependence of this act type on authority not commonly afforded by private digital interaction.

4.2 Dyadic Versus Group Chat Distribution

There are marked distributional differences when comparing the dyadic (D1-D36) and group (G1-G24) conversations. In dyadic conversations, the directives used are most frequently requests and questions (82% of all directives within the dyadic sub-corpus) whereas in group conversations suggestions and commands predominate (47% combined). This difference supports Brown and Levinson's (1987) forecast that degree of directness is modified according to relative power and social distance; while bold requests are neutralized face-preserving manner in dyadic intimate dyads, suggestions and commands operate in the group to facilitate coordination. Expressive utterances occur in greater proportion in the dyadic conversations (28.3%) than in the group conversations (21.4%).

5. Discursive Analysis Of Selected Exchanges

5.1 Analytical Framework for Exchange Analysis

The following sections present close discursive analyses of representative exchanges drawn from the corpus. Each analysis attends to: (a) the illocutionary classification of each turn; (b) the politeness strategy deployed; (c) the role of multimodal resources (emoji, capitalization, punctuation) in construing illocutionary force; and (d) the management of face in the semi-private discourse frame. Table 2 presents a schematic analysis of Exchange D-07, which exemplifies several key phenomena.

Speaker	Utterance (Original)	Speech Act	FTA Level	Politeness Strategy
A	*r u coming tmrw or nah?*	Directive	Moderate	Negative pol.
B	*inshallah lol* 🙏	Commissive	Low	Hedging + Humor
A	*bro u always do this* 😭	Expressive	High	Bald on-record
B	*ok ok I'll b there 7pm*	Commissive	Low	Promise + Precision
A	*bet* 🤜	Assertive	Minimal	Phatic / Ratification

Table 2. Pragmatic Analysis of Exchange D-07 (Dyadic Chat, Planning Context)

5.2 Directive Realization Strategies

Turn A1 in Table 2 illustrates a directive understood as a glacial questioning with bad particle (“or nah?”), a structure recognized by Koenig and Kuhn (2018) as a low-commitment tag that instantaneously makes a request and pre-empts a negative response, thereby reducing the requestor's face vulnerability. The thoughtful orthographic reduction (“r u” for 'are you', “tmrw” for 'tomorrow') interprets harmony and records the communicative context as casual and warm, functioning as a formula of positive politeness through in-group coding (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 107).

The following exchanges from the corpus further illustrate directive realization:

(1a) can u send me that thing we talked abt? 🙏

[can you / send me / that thing / we talked about / PRAYER-HANDS]

'Directive: request, mitigated by hedge ('can you'), vague reference, and supplicatory emoji'

(1b) CALL ME when u land ok

[CALL ME / when you land / ok]

'Directive: command, intensified by capitalization, softened by relational tag 'ok"

(1c) maybe we could do Thursday if ur free?

[maybe / we could / do Thursday / if you're free /?]

'Directive: invitation-as-suggestion, triply hedged (maybe, could, if-clause)'

Examples (1a)–(1c) illustrate the continuum of FTA severity management in directives: from mitigated request through intensified command to multiply-hedged invitation. Notably, in (1b), capitalization performs a paralinguistic amplification function analogous to vocal stress in speech; this prosodic transfer to writing is a well-attested phenomenon in CMC (Darics, 2014) but here carries pragmatic implications for illocutionary force, intensifying the directive and potentially increasing face-threat. The speaker simultaneously deploys the relational tag "ok" to partially repair this threat, a strategy we term intensification-with-repair.

5.3 Expressive and Multimodal Co-Construction of Illocutionary Force

Expressive constitute the most multimodally complex speech act category in the corpus. The following exchange (G-14, group chat) illustrates how emoji systematically co-construct expressive illocutionary force:

(2a) omg happy birthday babe!!!! 🎂🥰🎉💖

[oh my God / happy birthday / babe /!!!! / BIRTHDAY-CAKE / SMILING-FACE-WITH-HEARTS / PARTY-POPPER / SPARKLING-HEART]

'Expressive: congratulation, amplified by exclamation marks and four emojis encoding celebration and affection'

(2b) sorryyyyy was at work 😭🙏💔

[sorry+ iteration / was at work / LOUDLY-CRYING-FACE / FOLDED-HANDS / RED-HEART]

'Expressive: apology, with account and three emojis encoding distress, supplication, and love-repair'

In (2a), the expressive is realized through a conventional formula ("happy birthday") intensified by the address term "babe" (positive politeness: in-group identity), four exclamation marks, and four emojis whose collective semantic load encodes celebration (🎂🎉), romantic affection (🥰💖), and energetic sincerity. Herring and Dainas (2017) propose that emoji function as pragmatic markers that modify the illocutionary force of accompanying text; our data extend this to show that emoji clusters create composite expressive meanings that no single element could encode, a process we term emoji stacking.

In (2b), the apology ("sorryyyyy") deploys vowel lengthening as a form of textual prosody indexing emotional intensity (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018). The account ("was at work") functions as a face-saving explanation that mitigates the FTA of having been absent. The three-emoji sequence crying face, creased hands, red heart creates an overhaul order in miniature: suffering, supplication, and relational rejoining, accomplished totally through multimodal properties. This finding underlines the need of multimodal investigation in WhatsApp pragmatics.

5.4 Distributed Illocution: A New Pragmatic Phenomenon

Possibly the most theoretically relevant result of this study is the reliable construction of what we call dispersed illocution, which is a single illocutionary act that is "distributed" across multiple non-adjacent message segments in time. WhatsApp's architecture directly allows for this type of message splitting

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and its design incentives immediate transmission over utterance completeness. The following exchange from D-22 exemplifies this:

(3a) ok so

(3b) I was thinking

(3c) could we maybe do Saturday instead of Sunday?

'Distributed directive: request realized across three messages (3a)–(3c)'

Messages (3a) and (3b) function as pre-sequences (Schegloff, 2007) that project an upcoming action and create interactional space for the request in (3c). In spoken chat, pre-orders happen within a single turn; in WhatsApp, the asynchronous average permits them to be shown as self-governing communications, successfully serializing what would be a single turn-constructional unit in speech. Each message is sent before compositional completion, generating a form of incremental illocution that has no precise analogue in classical speech act theory.

Distributed illocution has pragmatic implications for face management: the pre-sequence messages allow the requester to assess the recipient's engagement (signaled by read receipts or rapid typing indicators) before committing to the FTA of the request. The distributed form thus constitutes a face-protective strategy unique to asynchronous CMC.

5.5 Commissive and Digital Promise-Making

Commissive in the corpus overwhelmingly take the form of future-oriented statements (“I'll be there at 7”, “I'll call u later”), promises of action (“I'll do it don't worry”), and offers (“want me to pick u up?”). A distinctive feature of WhatsApp commissive is the use of hedging devices that undermine the full commissive force, producing what we term soft commissive:

(4a) inshallah I'll try to make it 🙏

[inshallah / I'll try / to make it / FOLDED-HANDS]

'Soft commissive: culturally-grounded hedging (inshallah = 'if God wills') + volitional hedge (try) + supplicatory emoji'

(4b) yeah probably around 8ish

[yeah / probably / around / 8-ish]

'Soft commissive: four successive hedges (yeah, probably, around, -ish) collectively qualify commitment'

These soft commissive are pragmatically significant because they occupy a grey zone between Searle's commissive and assertive categories: the speaker makes a future-oriented statement (assertive) while also projecting a degree of commitment (commissive), but hedges both sufficiently that the utterance cannot be held as a promise. In Arabic-English bilingual contexts specifically, the pragmatic borrowing of “inshallah” as a discourse hedge rather than as an honest religious declaration establishes a code-switching act of pragmatic variation that reproduces the participants' bilingual pragmatic repertoire.

6. WhatsApp Speech Acts In Cross-Medium Perspective

Table 3 puts WhatsApp pragmatics within a comparative framework of talkative manners, drawing on the structures identified in this corpus analysis along with recognized classifications of spoken conversation (Chafe, 1982), official written address (Biber, 1988), and CMC generally (Herring, 2007).

Feature	**Spoken Conv.**	**Written Formal**	**CMC General**	**WhatsApp 1-to-1**	**WhatsApp Group**
Directness	High	Low	Variable	High	Moderate
FTA Redress	High	High	Low	Low	Moderate
Emoji use	N/A	N/A	Moderate	High	High
Turn-taking	Strict	N/A	Loose	Flexible	Loose
Hedge freq.	Moderate	High	Low	Low	Moderate
Phatic acts	High	Low	Moderate	High	High

Table 3. Pragmatic Feature Comparison Across Communicative Modes

The comparison discloses that WhatsApp populates a distinctive pragmatic function: As a result, what emerges is an intriguing picture where WhatsApp mirrors the directness and phaticity of face-to-face talk as well as the use of emojis and fluid turn-taking of general CMC, yet is distinguished from both of those by a reduced degree of hedging and the systematically lower level of redress of FTAs used in dyadic conversations. It appears that the semi-private discourse frame, specifically in terms of relational closeness and bounded audiences, acts as a key contextual variable to license the features of high directness, high phaticity, high use of emojis, fluid turn-taking, lower hedging and lower levels of redress of FTAs.

7. Discussion

This study has numerous vital theoretical implications. First, it shows that Searle's (1969) five-category taxonomy has value in analyzing digital discourse, for which, in addition to distributed illocution, Searle's taxonomy would also be complemented by multimodal co-construction analysis, to capture a fuller scope of illocution in WhatsApp. Traditional speech act theory recommends that a comprehensive spoken unit is realized in synchronous interactions. Given WhatsApp's asynchronous and disorganized messaging, a theory of illocution that distances across several messages is essential.

The study also confirms the Locher and Watts's (2005) relational work framework, the findings on WhatsApp show that relational work is more than just a matter of managing face-threats; it is the steady building of social ties by means of phatic communion, soft commissive and other expressive acts. By this the way, emoji are stacked with such regularity and the sheer number of expressives used, which points to WhatsApp being a kind of digital grooming, or what is call a technology for the continuous maintenance of relations in the sociolinguistic sense.

Then there is the semi-private discourse model we put forward. It carves out a theoretical middle ground between the public and private spheres that has been something of an oversight in pragmatics up to now. The Goffmanian backstage is no pragmatic annulled. It is an interpersonal space subject to its own rules of register and illocutionary repertoire, as well as a distinct face-economy.

The study highlights the significance of digital discourse competence within the wide-ranging framework of communicative competence, particularly for applied linguistics and L2 pragmatics. Exactly, English language learners lacking familiarity with WhatsApp's pragmatic conventions such as those governing soft commissives, distributed illocution, emoji stacking, and orthographically-based intensity modification are vulnerable to considerable pragmatic susceptibilities, especially in social contexts where WhatsApp serves as the key mode of management. Consequently, instructional materials have to participate authentic computer-mediated communication (CMC) data and tasks designed to promote and considering of these agreements.

The characteristic determination and easy duplicability of WhatsApp messages discuss a distinct forensic dimension upon speech acts executed via this medium, a characteristic generally absent in spoken utterances. For instance, a promise articulated within WhatsApp, even one categorized as a soft commissive, establishes a documentary record potentially admissible as evidence in legal contexts. Consequently, the pragmatic analysis of these digital records surrounding the reorganizations of illocutionary force, hedging strategies, and contextual mitigation—represents a nascent domain within forensic linguistics (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007). This current study provides empirical support for this developing area.

8. CONCLUSION

There are three additional theoretical contributions of this study: the expansion of speech act theory by way of the feature of distributed illocution; the formalization of the semi-private discourse design as a theoretically robust communicative domain; and the suggestion that emoji stacking is a systematic multimodal device for the co-formation of illocutionary force. Further studies should broaden the data set to include non-English CMC, through exploring the significance of voice notes as spoken speech acts in digital threads, and formulating computational strategies for the automatic identification of illocutionary categories in CMC data.

This study has assumed a corpus-based pragmatic analysis of the speech acts in English WhatsApp discourse, as a semi-private online text-based virtual community. Through a corpus of 844 illocutionary units from 60 Conversation Logs, it has revealed that the English WhatsApp discourse upholds high speaker-orientation and high thematic for the pragmatic ecology, maintains a non-proto-politic dense phatic communion, and finally , co-hypotheses multimodal expressive and evaded commissive by introducing the new thing of distributed illocution, which is interacted with the semi-private discourse context, namely audience boundedness, social relationship polarity, and textual barrier.

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