Pragmatic Functions of Devil-Related Expressions: Communicative Strategies in Social Media Discourse

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This article aims to provide an account of the major pragmatic and communicative functions of devil-related expressions in Facebook and Instagram posts and comments written in Jordanian Arabic. A function-based approach, which incorporates quantitative and qualitative measures, was used to analyse a sample of 335 posts and comments. Three major pragmatic functions of devil-related expressions were identified: conveying expressive meanings (i.e., astonishment and disapproval), manifesting mock-impoliteness, and expressing unattainability and infeasibility. A systematic pattern between the type of religious expression and the communicative function is found. For example, the devil-related expression ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih 'Satan's dream of Heaven' is exclusively used to express unattainability or infeasibility. A discussion of these functions, supported by illustrative examples, is presented. The study concludes with implications for the relation between the expression of language and religion, whose effects are found to be strongly rooted in Arabic discourse.

Keywords: *communicative functions; devil-related expressions; Jordanian Arabic; mock impoliteness; religion.*

1 Introduction

Theolinguistics, the study of the relationship between language and religious thought and practice, has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years. It explores how religious beliefs, rituals, and doctrines influence language use across various domains, including sacred texts, preaching, and everyday communication (McGuire 2008; Crystal 2018; Hobbs 2020). While foundational works such as Crystal (2008, 2018) emphasize the interdisciplinary significance of theolinguistics, research in this field remains relatively underdeveloped compared to other branches of applied linguistics. Crystal (2018) notes that while applied linguistics has extensively examined language in relation to law, education, and disability, the study of religion and language remains underexplored. Despite this gap, recent scholarship (e.g., Pihlaja & Ringrow 2024) highlights the profound role religion plays in shaping linguistic expression, structuring not only spiritual discourse but also broader sociocultural interactions (see Kumar & Prakash 2023).

Religious language, particularly terms associated with supernatural or malevolent figures, exhibits fascinating cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variations. Many languages incorporate religiously charged expressions related to evil, demonic figures, and supernatural entities, reflecting cultural perceptions of morality, power, and fear. Studies on Hebrew (Badder & Avni 2024) and Yiddish (Avineri 2014) have demonstrated how religious concepts are embedded in linguistic structures and pragmatic functions. The intersection of religion and language in Arabic also provides a rich domain for exploring how religious beliefs influence linguistic practices. Arabic, as a language deeply intertwined with Islamic culture, incorporates

a vast array of expressions drawn from theological concepts, many of which are used in everyday conversation (Migdadi et al. 2010). This linguistic phenomenon reflects the societal prominence of religion, particularly Islam, in the Arab world (Jarrah & Alghazo 2023). Religious expressions in Arabic are often employed not only for devotional purposes but also for pragmatic communication in a variety of contexts, from the formal to the colloquial. Previous studies, such as those by Farghal (1995) and Migdadi et al. (2010), focused on the pragmatics of divine references, examining how expressions related to Allah and the Prophet are used metaphorically or pragmatically in discourse. These studies highlight the dynamic role of religious terms in shaping communicative intentions, illustrating how expressions can extend beyond their original theological meanings to serve pragmatic functions, such as politeness, emphasis, or condemnation. Despite the extensive research on religious expressions relating to Allah and the Prophet, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the use of Satanic expressions in Arabic. The figure of Satan, or Shaytan, is deeply embedded in Islamic theology as an antagonist to divine will, but the way in which Satan-related expressions are pragmatically used in Arabic remains underexplored. While there has been some scholarly work on the metaphoric and figurative use of religious terminology, expressions involving Satan are often overshadowed by the more prominent theological figures of Allah and the Prophet (see Farghal 1995; Migdadi et al., 2010; El-Wahsh 2024). Given the cultural and religious significance of Satan in Islamic tradition, exploring these expressions can provide valuable insights into how religious concepts are manifested in Arabic discourse.

This gap in the literature is particularly intriguing given the prominent role that Satan and evil figures play in other religious traditions, as well as their linguistic manifestations across various cultures. While much scholarly attention has been given to expressions involving divine figures, Satan-related expressions in Arabic could reveal deeper insights into cultural perceptions of Satan as a representation of evil, temptation, deception, rebellion, and complexity in moral narratives. Furthermore, a pragmatic study of satanic expressions in Arabic could illuminate how these terms are used to communicate not only theological ideas but also social and moral judgments.

This article examines expressions in Jordanian Arabic (JA) that reference Satan *ʔibliːs* or the devil *ʔaffaytˁaːn*.[1] These expressions often carry strong sociocultural and pragmatic functions, ranging from warnings and criticisms to humour and skepticism. Despite their prevalence in everyday communication, they remain under-researched, likely due to cultural sensitivities surrounding the discussion of demonic figures. The reluctance to explore such expressions aligns with broader cultural taboos, as referencing the devil is often associated with bad luck or moral transgression (Sayilgan 2023). As Piamenta (1979) observes, expressions involving divine or demonic entities not only serve religious functions but also navigate social boundaries, reflecting collective attitudes toward morality and supernatural beliefs. This study investigates the communicative functions of devil-related expressions in Jordanian Arabic, with a particular focus on their usage in Facebook and Instagram posts and comments. While these expressions are often perceived as blasphemous or offensive, we demonstrate that they

[1] It is important to note that while the terms *ʔaffaytˁaːn* and *ʔibliːs* are often used interchangeably in Arabic, there are subtle distinctions between the two terms. *ʔibliːs* refers specifically to the devil, particularly in Islamic theology, as the name of the figure who defied Allah and was cast out of Heaven. On the other hand, *ʔaffaytˁaːn* is a more general term used to describe a devilish or rebellious being, often used to refer to Satan or any evil entity. Despite these distinctions, in everyday usage and in religious discourse, these terms are frequently used interchangeably. This study does not draw a strict line between the two, as both are used to refer to the devil in various expressions, and their differences do not significantly alter the focus of our analysis.

have undergone semantic shifts and developed pragmatic meanings that extend beyond their literal interpretation. For instance, the JA expression *ħilim ʔibliːs bidʒdʒannih* ('Satan's dream of Heaven') conveys impossibility or unattainability. The current study contributes to ongoing discussions on the pragmatics of religious language and the sociocultural dynamics of linguistic taboo.

An important aspect that is worth mentioning here pertains to the fact that the concept of jinn is indeed significant in Arabic culture and often carries a sense of sensitivity or taboo in folktales, proverbs, and casual conversations, as rightfully pointed out by an anonymous reviewer. The prominence of jinn in cultural and linguistic discussions is certainly valid, particularly with respect to its deeper associations with supernatural beliefs and taboos. Moreover, while references to Satan '*ʔaʃʃaytˁaːn*' are commonly employed in moral and religious discussions, the term *jinn* has an equally significant, though different, conceptual and linguistic role in Arabic. Jinn are often seen as spiritually potent, capable of influencing individuals in subtle ways, and are thus surrounded by a sense of caution and superstition. However, the scope of this study is limited to expressions invoking Satan, which are commonly found in religious texts, sermons, and everyday discourse. Although jinn and Satan share some conceptual and linguistic overlap, this paper does not investigate jinn-related expressions, focusing solely on how the figure of Satan is represented in Jordanian Arabic expressions and idioms.

The structure of the discussion is as follows. Section 2 examines how different cultures conceptualize and linguistically represent devil-related terms, alongside studies on the pragmatic functions of religious expressions in Arabic. Section 3 details the methods of data collection and analysis. Sections 4 and 5 present the study's findings and discussion. Finally, Section 6 concludes the article by highlighting implications for future research.

2 Literature review

This section explores the conceptualization and linguistic representation of devil-related terminology across different cultures, with a focus on comparative perspectives. It also explores previous studies examining the pragmatic use of religious expressions in Arabic, highlighting how these terms influence communication within religious and cultural contexts. Together, these subsections provide a comprehensive backdrop for understanding the nuanced roles of religious expressions in language.

2.1 *The conceptualization of devil-related terminology*

The literature on religious language has often cantered on expressions of sanctity and piety, yet a complementary body of work examines the devil and Satan from historical and literary perspectives. Early studies by Jeffrey Burton Russell in *The devil: Perceptions of evil from antiquity to primitive Christianity* (1987) and Elaine Pagels in *The Origin of Satan* (1996) trace the evolution of these terms, revealing that their semantic scope extends beyond the mere representation of evil. These works illustrate how the figure of the devil has been constructed, deconstructed, and reinterpreted across cultures and epochs. Historical and literary analyses have also shown that devil-related terms function as potent cultural symbols. Russell's work, for instance, portrays the devil not solely as a supernatural antagonist but also as a figure emblematic of transgression and resistance against established norms. Likewise, Pagels' study

highlights how early religious texts conceptualized Satan to serve both doctrinal and socio-political purposes. Moreover, Henry Ansgar Kelly's *Satan: A Biography* (2006) deepens this inquiry by investigating the narrative and linguistic strategies that have historically shaped the discourse surrounding Satan, offering insights that can be extended to the study of Arabic expressions.

The exploration of devil-related terms across different religions and cultures reveals significant insights into how linguistic expressions are shaped by religious beliefs and cultural norms. For example, while the Arabic Satan *ʔibliːs* or the devil *ʔaffaytˁaːn* are often interchangeable in common usage, these terms have distinct theological implications, with the former being more closely associated with the Islamic narrative of the fallen angel. In contrast, in Christianity, Satan often embodies a more personal, adversarial figure in the narrative of salvation (Farrar 2018). Similar figures in Judaism, such as Satan or the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, represent antagonistic forces that challenge human righteousness and divine order. Comparative studies, like those by Wuthnow (1992) and Horne (2003), explored how these representations of evil vary across traditions, emphasizing the role of culture and theology in shaping the language used to describe such figures.

Additionally, the study of devil-related linguistic expressions extends beyond the Abrahamic traditions to offer valuable insights into the conceptualization of evil in non-Abrahamic religions. In Hinduism, figures like Maya (illusion) and Asuras (antagonistic deities) challenge human perception of reality but are framed within a polytheistic cosmology, which significantly alters their role in moral discourse compared to monotheistic religions (Flood 1996). Similarly, in Buddhism, Mara represents the temptation to deviate from the path of enlightenment, and the linguistic framing of Mara provides a distinct perspective on the relationship between moral action and spiritual development (Gombrich 1996). The portrayal of evil figures in these traditions often serves as a means of articulating cultural anxieties and moral dilemmas, which are then encoded into the languages of the societies that uphold them (see Horne 2003).

2.2 *Previous studies on the pragmatic uses of religious expressions in Arabic*

Arabic theolinguistic research has been recently concerned with the communicative functions of certain religious expressions and formulas (Ferguson 1983; Gilsenan 1983; Farghal 1995; Nazzal 2005; Al-Hawi 2018; De Ruiter & Farrag Attwa 2021; al-Rojaie 2021). A key focus here is how certain religious expressions acquire new pragmatic meanings and functions through the process of pragmaticization (Aijmer 1997), whereby semantically contentful expressions have developed into markers of discourse structure (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1996). For instance, the religious expression *ʔinʃaːllah* 'if God permits', a prominent religious expression used by both Arabs and non-Arab Muslims, is shown to have "drifted extensively from its semantic import … [and become] a pragmatically multi-purpose expression" (Farghal: 1995, p. 253). Farghal (1995) proposes that *ʔinʃaːllah* is used in JA as a directive, commissive or expressive marker. Nazzal (2005) proposes that *ʔinʃaːllah* is used by the speaker in order to convince the hearer to embrace his/her assertion or suggestion. Nazzal (2005) argues *ʔinʃaːllah* can also be used as a hedge which reduces one's commitment to take a future action or not in order to keep one's commitment.

Migdadi et al. (2010) discuss the pragmatic and communicative functions of the religious expression *maašaallah* 'What God wishes (Shall come true)' in JA. *maašaallah* is found to express several pragmatic meanings such as "an invocation, a compliment, an

expression of gladness, an expression of modesty, a marker of sarcasm, and a conversational backchannel" (p. 480). *Maašaallah* serves as a protective mechanism against the evil eye, counteracting its harmful effects. When referencing a person or object of positive social value, it is used to safeguard them from potential harm (see also Al-Khawaldeh et al 2023). *maašaallah* can also be a mitigating device, which softens face-threatening acts such as refusals, complaints, and criticisms.

Migdadi and Badarneh (2013) examine the pragmatic uses and functions of prophet-praise formulas: *ʔallahumma sˁalli ʕala sayyidna muhammad* 'May God's blessings be bestowed upon our Prophet Muhammad' and *sˁalli ʕannabi* 'bestow blessings upon the Prophet'). Migdadi and Badarneh (2013) propose that these formulas are used in "culturally stabilized interaction rituals with conventionalized formulae". However, prophet-praise formulas are found to perform specific communicative functions. They can be used as a floor-claiming tactic, a function that serves as a prime illustration of "how more gets communicated than is said" (Yule, 1996, p. 3). Additionally, prophet-praise formulas are used to request divine protection from the evil eye.[2]

Jarrah and Alghazo (2023) investigate the pragmatic use of the religious expression *la: ʔila:ha ʔilla ʔalla:h* 'No god except Allah' in JA, which was found to convey four major pragmatic functions and uses. The first function is manifested in the expression of astonishment or surprise. It is also found to manifest disagreement (and rejection) of the hearer's previous statement. *la: ʔila:ha ʔilla ʔalla:h* is also shown to function as a turn-taking device. Although this expression enforces interruption, it indexes no threat to the face of the hearer "due to its semantic value as a religious formula" (p. 84). *la: ʔila:ha ʔilla ʔalla:h* is also found to be employed as a request to cancel information. In other words, the speaker uses this expression as a request for the hearer to prevent the listener from talking about a particular topic because the information being disclosed might be sensitive and should remain unstated from the speaker's point of view.

This study investigates the pragmatic functions of religious expressions that explicitly reference the devil. Our analysis identifies three core functions of these expressions: encoding expressive meanings (e.g., astonishment and disapproval), enacting mock-impoliteness, and signaling unattainability or infeasibility.

3 Methodology

The analysis of the present article is synchronic, and pragmatic functions of the formulas are investigated as a phenomenon of current usage. It draws on a dataset of 335 Facebook and Instagram posts and comments. Our selection criteria of these posts and comments were based on three factors. First, the selected post/comment must contain an explicit reference to a devil-related expression. Second, the post/comment should be written in JA. Third, it should be used in a context, so a precise interpretation of its use can be determined. It should be highlighted that we, over the period of five months, collected 500 posts and comments on various social, economic, and political topics. Upon initial analysis, we excluded 165 posts and comments due to significant absence of contextual factors which can assist us with the interpretation of the intended meaning of the devil-related expressions.

[2] See also Sadiq (2022) for a relevant study based on Egyptian Arabic.

To ensure that the collected expressions are representative of Jordanian Arabic (JA), we exclusively analyzed posts and comments from social media pages with a predominantly Jordanian user base. Additionally, we relied on phonological, morphological, and lexical markers distinctive to JA to filter out non-Jordanian usages. Expressions with ambiguous dialectal affiliation were either excluded or verified through consultations with twenty native speakers of JA, all specialists in Arabic dialectology and discourse analysis.

While we argue that devil-related expressions are preponderant in everyday Arabic, it is important to clarify that the study concentrated on expressions commonly used in public, digital contexts. Language in these spaces tends to be more standardized and less colloquial due to the public and often permanent nature of posts. Social media platforms, therefore, may not fully capture the nuances of everyday spoken interactions, as online communication often reflects more cautious or edited linguistic practices. The study prioritized quality and context over sheer quantity, focusing on instances where expressions carried clear pragmatic or cultural significance. Thus, the exclusion of additional expressions was not an oversight but a deliberate methodological choice aimed at ensuring consistency in analysis within a manageable scope.

Regarding demographic variables such as religion, age, gender, education, or nationality, the study acknowledges the difficulties in obtaining such information from anonymous or semi-anonymous social media data. While these factors undeniably shape language use, the study's primary objective was to explore the general pragmatic functions and sociocultural implications of devil-related expressions in modern Arabic, rather than dissecting the influences of specific social categories. By treating these expressions as a broader cultural phenomenon, the study aimed to identify overarching patterns and themes that transcend individual demographics.

The collected data were analysed in two phases. In the first phase, devil-related utterances were categorized according to their pragmatic and communicative functions. All researchers analysed the selected posts and comments to assure objectivity and agreement on the intended use of the expression.[3] We followed a coding technique based on qualitative content analysis. Saldana (2009: 3) argues that "[a] code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data". We also adopted the inductive qualitative design, which is a "systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives" (Thomas, 2006: 238). For each expression, we identified its meaning and function(s) as used in its context.

In the second phase, twenty adult native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (age 40-50) who are all established in Amman were consulted to judge our interpretation of the data and further establish the credibility of our analysis. All participants are highly proficient in the language, as they hold advanced degrees in linguistic aspects of Arabic, primarily in dialectology and discourse analysis. Specifically, eight participants hold MA degrees, while twelve have PhDs. The participants were given a scale of acceptability and were asked to indicate their (dis)agreement with the assigned function by rating their level of agreement on a scale from 1 to 10. The majority rated the acceptability between 8 and 10, demonstrating strong agreement with our analysis. Some participants requested additional contextual information before determining their acceptability rate. Once this information was provided, all respondents confirmed our interpretation of the data.

[3] The authors share the same social and religious background. They are familiar with the beliefs and assumptions of Jordanian society.

While Table 2 below offers a simplified one-to-one form-function mapping, it was intended as a heuristic tool to illustrate the dominant functions observed in the dataset rather than an exhaustive representation of all possible uses. For instance, the expression *ʔalla:h jixzi ʔaʃʃe:tˤa:n* ('May God shame the Devil'), which can convey both negative astonishment and disapproval, underscores this complexity. The paper explicitly acknowledges that such expressions are polysemous and context-sensitive, permitting varied interpretations depending on situational factors. The high level of agreement among participants (8–10 on a 1–10 scale) reflects the most commonly understood interpretations within specific contexts, rather than suggesting fixed or universal meanings. This consistency likely stems from the participants' shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which may have mitigated variability in their responses. The study employed contextualized examples derived from real-world social media posts, which participants evaluated within the scenarios provided. This method aimed to replicate authentic usage and minimize interpretative ambiguity.

Additionally, future iterations of the study could expand the range of contexts and participant demographics to capture a broader spectrum of interpretations. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of the polysemous and context-sensitive nature of these expressions and reflect their multifaceted roles in natural discourse. Incorporating such diversity would further strengthen the study's contribution to understanding the interplay between linguistic forms, functions, and sociocultural contexts.

4 Findings

In this section, we present the findings of the current article. Table 1 below presents the frequencies and percentages of the devil-related expressions found in our dataset.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of devil-related expressions in the dataset

No.	**The religious expression**	The literal meaning	Token	%
	ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih	Satan's dream of Heaven	65	19.4
	jiχrib beit ʃe:tˁa:nak	May your devil's house be ruined	54	16.1
	(ʔalla:h) jilʕan ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n	May God curse (your) devil	45	13.4
	(ʔalla:h)jiχzi ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n/ ʔibli:s	May God shame the devil/Satan	43	12.8
	ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n bitʕallam minnak	The devil learns from you.	32	9.5
	ʔinta ʃi:tˁa:n/ʔibli:s	You are a devil/Satan	27	8
	ra:kbuh ʔibli:s	Satan rides him.	25	7.4
	ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s	He is smarter than Satan	12	3.5
	ma buxtˁur ʕala ba:l ʔibli:s	It wouldn't even cross the Satan's mind.	12	3.5
	jiħrig (beit) ʃe:tˁa:nak	May God burn your devil('s house)	10	3
	ʕanduh χubuθ ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n	He has the Devil's cunning	10	3
	Σ		335	99.6%

As can be seen from Table 1, eleven devil-related expressions were identified in our dataset, which consists of a collection of social media posts and comments compiled as described above. The most common devil-related expression is *ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih* 'Satan's dream of Heaven' with 65 tokens accounting for 19.4% of all occurrences of devil-related expressions in the dataset. By contrast, *jiħrig (beit) ʃe:tˁa:nak* 'May God burn your devil('s house)' and *ʕanduh χubuθ ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n* 'He has the Devil's cunning' are found to be the least frequent in our data, each accounting for 10 tokens (3%).

Table 2 below presents the functions of devil-related expressions found in our dataset.

Table 2: The communicative functions of devil-related expressions in JA

No.	he religious expression	he literal meaning	he communicative function
	ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih	Satan's dream of Heaven	Unattainability or infeasibility (factual)
	jiχrib beit ʃe:tˁa:nak	May your devil's house be ruined	Mock impoliteness (factual)
	(ʔalla:h) jilʕan ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n	May God curse (your) devil	Expressive meaning
	(ʔalla:h)jiχzi ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n/ ʔibli:s	May God shame the devil/Satan	Expressive meaning
	ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n bitʕallam minnak	The devil learns from you.	Mock impoliteness (factual)
	ʔinta ʃi:tˁa:n/ʔibli:s	You are a devil/Satan	Mock impoliteness
	ra:kbuh ʔibli:s	Satan rides him.	Expressive meaning
	ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s	He is smarter than Satan	Expressive meaning
	ma buxtˁur ʕala ba:l ʔibli:s	It wouldn't even cross the Satan's mind.	Expressive meaning
	jiħrig (beit) ʃe:tˁa:nak	May God burn your devil('s house)	Mock impoliteness (factual)
	ʕanduh χubuθ ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n	He has the Devil's cunning	Expressive meaning

It should be noted that expressive meanings are intended to serve to convey the speaker's emotions, attitudes, or personal stance toward a given situation. In our dataset, devil-related expressions frequently function expressively to signal astonishment or disapproval. For instance, certain expressions intensify a speaker's surprise, while others mark strong disapproval of an event or action. This expressive use highlights the speaker's subjective evaluation rather than a literal reference to religious notions. Consequently, these expressions are integral to understanding how emotion-laden language operates in everyday Jordanian Arabic communication.

Note also that the classification of devil-related expressions into factual/propositional versus expressive meanings is based on their pragmatic function within discourse. Expressions categorized as expressive primarily convey the speaker's emotional stance, such as disapproval, astonishment, or emphasis, rather than stating objective information. For example, *ra:kbuh ʔibli:s* 'Satan rides him' does not describe an actual event but rather expresses a strong evaluative stance about someone's behavior. Conversely, factual/propositional expressions provide information or convey a widely accepted truth about a situation, such as *ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih* 'Satan's dream of Heaven', which metaphorically conveys impossibility. This classification is supported by contextual analysis of social media interactions, where users employ these expressions to express emotions or assert factual claims based on discourse context.

Table 3 presents the major pragmatic functions of devil-related expressions in JA in terms of their frequency in the dataset.

Table 3: Frequency of the communicative functions of devil-related expressions in JA[4]

Function	Token	**%**
Expressive Meanings	147	43.88
Mock Impoliteness	123	36.71
Expressing unattainability or infeasibility	65	19.40
Σ	335	99.99

Table 3 shows that the predominant role of devil-related expressions in JA involves conveying specific expressive (affective) meanings from the speaker towards the event, the responses or comments of the interlocutor. As shown in the table, the dataset consists of 335 instances of devil-related expressions, systematically analysed for their pragmatic functions. For example, the category of *Expressive Meanings* includes 147 occurrences, indicating that these expressions were used expressively in 147 instances. The emotive meanings include astonishment and disapproval. The second communicative function of devil-related expressions in JA is mock-impoliteness, followed by unattainability or infeasibility. Analysis of Tables 2 and 3 unveils a critical insight: each devil-related expression is precisely aligned with a specific communicative function. Our data highlight that each devil-related expression is associated with only one communicative function. This generally demonstrates a correspondence between the communicative function and the specific type of devil-related expression employed. However, as we mentioned above, such expressions are in fact polysemous and context-sensitive, permitting varied interpretations depending on situational factors.

The communicative roles of devil-related expressions provide compelling evidence that these expressions have undergone grammaticalization.[5] They are used to manifest various non-literal communicative functions and purposes in social interactions. Devil-related expressions encompass rich layers of meaning, cultural significance, and contextual nuances that go beyond the literal interpretation of the utterance. For the most part (with the exclusion of *ħilim ʔibliːs bidʒdʒannih*), the semantic value of the devil-related expression does not play a crucial role in determining the implied meaning of the utterance, whose total meanings are more sensitive to the context where their accompanying utterances are produced. For instance, the literal meaning of *jiχrib beit ʃeːtˁaːnak* which literally means ‘May your devil's house be ruined’ has no bearing on the fact that the speaker intentionally uses his utterance which appears impolite or offensive as a playful or affectionate technique to reinforce social bonds.

In the following subsections, we discuss each function of devil-related expressions with illustrative instances from our dataset.

4.1 *Devil-related expressions as expressive formulas*

In pragmatics, the expressive function, also known as the emotive function or the speaker's attitude (Foolen 1997), refers to one of the five primary speech acts or communicative functions

[4] To ensure that the collected expressions reflect Jordanian Arabic, we examined linguistic markers specific to JA, such as phonological and morphological features distinct from other Levantine varieties. Additionally, we cross-checked user-generated metadata, including self-reported location tags and dialectal cues within conversations. While some expressions may be shared across Levantine dialects, we have focused on those that exhibit structural or lexical patterns more frequently associated with Jordanian Arabic.

[5] See Al-Shawashreh et al. (2022), Hamdieh, et al. (2022), Alshaboul, et al. (2022) and Jarrah and Harb (2022) for further discussion of grammaticalization in JA.

of language identified by Roman (1960). These functions are proposed to help understand the different purposes and intentions behind language use in communication (see, for example, Benyakoub et al., 2022). The expressive function primarily focuses on the speaker or writer's emotions, attitudes, and personal feelings (Pavlenko 2008, 2014; Pérez-Luzardo Díaz & Schmidt 2016). It is used to convey the speaker's or writer's emotional state or attitude towards the subject matter or the message being conveyed. This function enables individuals to convey their feelings, viewpoints, or stances, frequently employing linguistic tools like adjectives, adverbs, interjections, and other language elements that mirror the speaker's emotional state. For example, when someone says: *I am so excited about the party tonight* the expressive function is at play, as the speaker expresses their excitement. The expressive function plays a crucial role in communication, as it encodes not just propositional content but also the speaker's evaluative stance and affective positioning. As a core mechanism of pragmatic meaning, it facilitates the articulation of subjective attitudes and emotional alignments (Potts 2007). Our data reveal that several devil-related expressions pragmatically instantiate expressive meanings, specifically conveying astonishment and disapproval.

Astonishment refers to the expression of extreme surprise, shock, or disbelief in a conversation or text. This function can accomplish various communicative objectives by conveying the speaker's emotional response to specific information, occasions, or situations. One of the devil-related expression found in our dataset to express astonishment is *ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s* '(He is) smarter than Satan'. It is essentially an exclamation or an intensifier which expresses surprise or strong emotions.[6] Consider the following example. (The devil-related expression is underlined).

Extract (1)

ʃu: halmaka:n ʔaldʒami:l ...walla:hi ʔinhum <u>ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s</u>

Literal meaning: 'What a beautiful place!''Indeed, they are smarter than Satan.'

Communicative meaning: 'What a beautiful place! I am speechless!'

The expression *ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s* in its literal meaning is a statement that someone is *smarter than Satan.* Nevertheless, this expression predominantly harbours feelings towards the the hearer's statement or acts. In example (1), the speaker is pleasantly astonished by the beauty of the place he is observing.

The use of *ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s* to express astonishment can be attributed to the cultural and religious beliefs related to Satan or the devil, whose mentioning can evoke astonishment due to the inherent associations of unpredictability attributed to these figures. For example, in Islam, the devil is conceived as a formidable and malevolent force, capable of instigating mischief and wreaking havoc, which serves to emphasize the unexpected or extraordinary nature of events, evoking a sense of awe or astonishment. In the Quran, the holy book of Muslims, there are verses which recount instances where Satan's deceptive tactics and manipulative schemes leave believers astounded at his cunning and deceit (Quran 7:22-23). Therefore, the mention of Satan or the devil can be taken as a sign of astonishment by invoking the awe-inspiring and often terrifying qualities associated with these iconic figures. Additionally, the expression *ʔaðka minn ʔibli:s* is often used to describe someone who exhibits a form of cunning intelligence or craftiness, where such 'genius' is closely tied to deception.

[6] Astonishment in this article is categorized as an emotional pragmatic-linguistic category, which is realized in both speech and written texts.

This reflects the devil's association with manipulation and trickery, where genius is not merely about brilliance but also about the ability to deceive. The expression, therefore, highlights how exceptional cleverness can sometimes be perceived as suspicious or morally questionable, emphasizing the moral ambiguity of using intelligence for deceitful purposes.

The Qur'anic depiction of the Devil as a deceiver and adversary of humanity aligns with the theological view. Example 1 above demonstrates the adaptability of cultural idioms in everyday language. This does not necessarily indicate a conflict between theology and culture but highlights the pragmatic repurposing of religious symbols. Such expressions often serve to convey humour, irony, or other pragmatic effects, distancing themselves from strictly theological interpretations while retaining their symbolic resonance.

In the following example (Extract 2), the speaker expresses his feeling of astonishment about what he just witnessed, so he uses *ʔalla:h jixzi ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n* (literally, 'May God shame the devil!') in order to express his negative astonishment towards the relevant accident, which is for him caused by the devil.

Extract (2)

ʔalla:h jiχzi ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n wallahi ħa:diθ maʔsa:wi

Literal meaning: 'May God shame the devil. I swear it is a horrible accident.'

Communicative meaning: 'I am devastated! It is such a horrible accident.'

In Extract (2), the speaker expresses his own negative astonishment towards the horrible accident, which should be caused by wreaking havoc and evil power, normally affiliated with the devil in the Islamic culture.

Furthermore, devil-related expressions are employed to convey disapproval, a pragmatic function which implicates expressing negative opinions or criticisms. It serves to communicate disagreement, dissatisfaction, or displeasure with a particular action, behaviour, idea, or situation. Conventionally, there are several ways to convey disapproval such as the use of explicit language using terms such as: *no, I disagree*, and *I strongly disagree*. Another way to express disapproval is by using constructive criticism, where the speaker provides suggestions for improvement or alternative solutions, indicating an active effort to address the issue constructively (Molodcha & Khilkovska, 2022).[7] According to our data, three religious expressions are used to express disapproval, namely *ʔalla:h jilʕan ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n* 'May God curse the devil', *ʔalla:h jiχzi ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n/ʔibli:s* 'May God shame/humiliate the devil/Satan', and *ra:kbuh ʔibli:s* 'Satan rides him'. Consider the following extract as an example.

Extract (3)

A woman shared her feelings on Facebook by writing:

nakad, nakad, nakad, ʔalla:h jilʕan ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n

Literal meaning: 'Gloom, gloom, gloom. May God curse the devil!'

Communicative meaning: 'I am very sad.'

The woman's Facebook post appears to be expressing her aggravating feelings of depression and invoking God to curse the devil. The repeated word *depression* indicates that

[7] Disapproval, like astonishment, may be expressed through appropriate paralinguistic features by showing refusal using facial expressions, gestures or body language (Payrató & Clemente 2019).

the woman is emphasizing her feelings of hopelessness, sadness, or emotional distress. The religious expression *ʔalla:h jilʕan ʔaʃʃi:tʿa:n* 'May God curse the devil!' expresses this distress unequivocally.

Another example of this function using a variant of *ra:kbuh ʔibli:s* is given in (4).

Extract (4)
A person shared a post expressing his feelings about the scary stories that he hears every day such as youth suicide, murder, and kidnapping. He also expressed his disapproval of a mother who can kill her kids because she has a boyfriend. He said:

> *ʔilʔum jalli ʔibtiqtul ʔawla:dha kirma:l zalamih maʕna:tu ha:j miʃ ʔum! <u>waħdih ra:kibha ʔibli:s</u>*
> Literal meaning: 'A mother who kills her kids because of a man means that she is not a mother, but the devil rides her!'
> Communicative meaning: 'I strongly condemn this situation that a mother ….'

The extract above includes a vehement disapproval and condemnation towards the mother's act of murdering her children due to her relationship with a man. The writer intends to employ this expression as a derogatory term to condemn the woman. The phrase *A mother who kills her kids because of a man* underscores the particular action the individual finds profoundly disturbing and morally reprehensible. The devil-related expression *ra:kibha ʔibli:s* 'the devil rides her' accentuates the intensity of the disapproval. The interpretation of idiomatic expressions, such as *ra:kibha ʔibli:s* (literally 'the devil rides her'), as an act of mitigation illustrates the polysemy and context-dependency inherent in such phrases. In the cited example, where the woman is portrayed as being influenced by the Devil, the expression shifts responsibility from the individual to an external, metaphorical force, resonating with cultural beliefs about the Devil's influence on human behaviour.

The use of some devil-related expressions as expressions of disapproval is strongly rooted in Islamic theology and culture. *ʔibli:s*, Satan, herein serves as a powerful symbol of disapproval and moral corruption. The Quran portrays ʔibli:s as the ultimate adversary of humanity, whose disobedience and arrogance led to his expulsion from Heaven (Quran 7:11-18). His relentless efforts to tempt humans away from the path of righteousness are seen as emblematic of evil and moral depravity (Quran 15:39-42). Islamic teachings warn believers against Satan's deceptive tactics and emphasize the importance of resisting his influence (Quran 7:200-201). Consequently, references to *ʔibli:s* or the devil in Islamic discourse often convey a sense of moral condemnation and spiritual danger. The devil serves as a potent symbol of disapproval, underscoring the importance of adhering to moral principles and avoiding sinful behaviour. Additionally, *ʔibli:s* embodies rebellion, as his refusal to submit to God's will—manifested in his refusal to bow to Adam—symbolizes a rejection of divine authority and an assertion of individual pride. This act of rebellion against God's command is seen as the root of his moral corruption, making him a representation of the dangers of defying higher principles. Therefore, devil-related expressions not only reflect moral disapproval but also convey the consequences of rebellion against divine law and order. Such rebellion is often depicted in religious expressions like *ra:kibha ʔibli:s* ('the devil rides her'), illustrating how defiance of moral principles is symbolized by the devil's influence over one's actions or behaviour

In the next section, we address the second function of devil-related expressions in JA, namely the expression of mock impoliteness.

4.2 *Expressing Mock Impoliteness*

The exploitation of jocular/humorous insults to create solidarity was termed as ‘‘mock impoliteness’’ by Leech (1983), who proposed mock impoliteness constitutes a form of ‘‘underpoliteness’’ which has the effect of ‘‘establishing or maintaining a bond of familiarity’’ (p. 144). The notion of mock impoliteness was later refined by Culpeper (1996, 2005), who defines it as ‘‘impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence’’ (1996: 352), which ‘‘reflects and fosters social intimacy’’ (p. 352). For Culpeper (1996), ‘mock impoliteness’ is a type of “impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence” (p. 352). The notion of mock-impoliteness was further revisited by Haugh and Bousfield (2012) who proposed that it “constitutes an evaluation (by both the producer and at least one recipient), and thus it should be theorised separately from the social actions or practices which occasion such evaluations. This means, in other words, that we treat mock impoliteness and banter as linked, but discrete concepts. The former constitutes an evaluation while the latter constitutes an action” (p. 1102-1103). For Haugh and Bousfield (2012), mock impoliteness is not an evaluation of politeness or impoliteness. It is conceptually distinct, namely, non-impoliteness, which is viewed as an ‘allowable offence’, which is evaluated as neither polite nor impolite. Haugh and Bousfield (2012) mention that mock impoliteness “involves evaluations of talk or conduct that are potentially open to evaluation as impolite by at least one of the participants in an interaction, and/or as non-impolite by at least two participants” (p. 1103). Haugh and Bousfield (2012) discussed jocular mockery and jocular abuse as two forms of mock-impoliteness in samples of male-male interactions amongst Australian and Northern British English speakers.

We propose that a number of devil-related expressions are employed in JA to manifest mock impoliteness. These expressions include the second-person pronoun, including i.e. *jiχrib beit ʃe:tˁa:nak* ‘May your devil’s house be ruined’, *ʔaʃʃe:tˁa:n bitʕallam minnak* ‘The devil learns from you’ , *ʔinta ʃi:tˁa:n/ʔibli:s* ‘You are a devil/Satan’, and *jiħrig beit ʃi:tˁa:nak* ‘May God burn your devil’s house’. These formulaic expressions are communicatively used as jocular abuse, which is intended to mean “a specific form of insulting where the speaker casts the target into an undesirable category or as having undesirable attributes using a conventionally offensive expression within a non-serious or jocular frame” (Haugh and Bousfield 2012: 1108). Given the fact that the devil and Satan carry symbolism of evil in Islamic beliefs, calling somebody using these figures is considered as an insult. This can be strongly corroborated by the fact that using these figures in interactions between previously unacquainted speakers would cause communication breakdowns and failures. However, between friends, these expressions index *intimate interaction* (see also Glenn 2003; Jefferson et al. 1987). The use of these figures in such cases appears to have been evaluated as supportive of relational connection across the group of participants. The use of second-person reference on social media fosters a direct and immediate interpersonal dynamic, often amplifying the playful or humorous tone of interactions. This supports the idea that mock impoliteness thrives within a framework of social intimacy or shared understanding, where both speaker and listener acknowledge the non-serious intent of what might otherwise be face-threatening expressions. Instances of third-person reference functioning as mock impoliteness underscore the flexible and context-sensitive nature of these expressions.

Consider the following extract.

Extract (5)

Someone posted on Facebook about how a girl looked after wearing her new sunglasses.

Speaker A: *ki:f ʔinnaðˁara:t*
'How do my glasses look?'
Speaker B: *jiχrib beit ʃe:tˁa:nak ʃu: ha:d hhhh*
Lit. 'May your devil's house be ruined! What is this?' Hhhhhh
Communicative meaning: 'Your glasses are not good.'

In this extract, Speaker B's response to Speaker A's question is intended as a humorous and playful remark, but it carries an element of impoliteness due to its presupposition that Speaker A has a devil. By using the devil-related expression *jiχrib beit ʃe:tˁa:nak* 'May your devil's house be ruined', Speaker B infers an association of Speaker A with the devil in a non-serious, jocular way. This presupposition itself is mildly impolite because it humorously implies that Speaker A possesses a negative trait, in this case, the devil, but the tone and delivery suggest that the insult is not meant to be taken seriously.

Speaker B's use of the expression is modulated with laughter, signalling that it is not intended as a genuine insult but rather as a form of friendly mockery. The vocalization 'hhhhhhh' following the expression further emphasizes the light-hearted nature of the interaction, indexing an intimate and playful relationship between the speakers. This laughter is a common feature in exchanges of jocular abuse between friends, signalling that the remark is meant in a teasing rather than hostile manner.

According to Culpeper's (1996) framework on impoliteness strategies, this type of interaction can be categorized as an instance of "explicitly associating the other with a negative aspect"—in this case, the devil. Although the devil-related expression itself is conventionally offensive, it is rendered non-serious through its playful delivery and the mutual understanding between the speakers. Native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (JA) would likely interpret this as a form of jocular abuse, where Speaker B humorously casts Speaker A into an undesirable category, but with no real intention of causing offense. This usage exemplifies how devil-related expressions can be deployed as mock impoliteness, relying on context, tone, and social intimacy to transform potentially offensive language into playful banter.

Another example can be given the following extract.

Extract (6)

Someone posted on Facebook about cracking a joke with his friend.
Speaker A: *ʃu: ʔalfa:kiha ʔalmufaðˁalah ʕind ʔaʃʃba:ħ?*
'What is the ghost's favourite fruit?'
Speaker B: *boooomgranait*
'Pomegranate!'
Speaker A: *jiħrig beit ʃe:tˁa:nak. ʔikti:r ħilwih*
Lit. 'May God burn your devil's house' It is very nice!
Communicative meaning: 'It is very nice!.'

In this extract, Speaker A uses the devil-related expression *jiħrig beit ʃe:tˁa:nak* ('May God burn your devil's house') in response to Speaker B's seemingly indifferent reply of 'pomegranate.' This quick, offhand response from Speaker B is perceived by Speaker A as dismissive, signaling a lack of interest or attention. Speaker A, interpreting this as a face-

threatening act, implicitly critiques Speaker B's response by attributing devilish qualities to Speaker B through the expression *jiħrig beit ʃe:tˁa:nak*. This marks an insult, suggesting that Speaker B's indifference or trivial response aligns with negative, 'devilish' behaviour.

However, while the expression initially threatens to damage the relational connection between the two speakers by insulting Speaker B, it is ultimately softened and contextualized in a way that supports the relationship. This is largely due to the tone and subsequent use of the phrase *ʔikti:r ħilwah* ('it's very good'), which mitigates the potential threat to Speaker B's face. The phrase *ʔikti:r ħilwah* acts as a form of politeness, lightening the impact of the insult and signaling that the critique is not meant to be taken as deeply offensive but rather as playful banter.

Thus, while the devil-related expression *jiħrig beit ʃe:tˁa:nak* can be seen as a face-threatening act, it is delivered in a context where the relational dynamics between Speaker A and Speaker B are not seriously harmed. The overall interaction, despite the impoliteness inherent in the devil-related insult, is evaluated as supporting the social bond between the two speakers, who engage in a form of jocular mockery that relies on shared understanding and mutual familiarity. The interplay between insult and mitigation demonstrates how devil-related expressions can be used as mock impoliteness, balancing both relational threat and solidarity.

Therefore, devil-related expressions serve as linguistic tools which permit speakers to convey emotions or reactions in a playful or humorous manner while still adhering to social norms and mitigating potential face threats. These expressions leverage the strong negative associations typically attributed to the devil, such as evil or punishment, to create a sense of mock impoliteness, showing that the speaker and the hearer share a common ground and are likely to establish or index solidarity. These expressions serve as pragmatic devices which enable individuals to navigate delicate social interactions by providing a humorous or exaggerated outlet for conveying emotions or reactions without causing genuine offense.

4.3 *Expressing unattainability and infeasibility*

The pragmatic function of expressing unattainability or infeasibility involves the use of linguistic structures and strategies that express the notion that something is impossible to take place. In this respect, we found that there exists one specific devil-related expression, exclusively used to express unattainability or infeasibility, namely *ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih* 'Satan's dream of Heaven'. In Islamic culture, the devil or Satan refused to bow to Adam as commanded by God, leading to his expulsion from Paradise. His disobedience and pride made him unworthy of Paradise, a place of purity and submission to God (Quran 7:18). Paradise or Heaven is described as a place of absolute purity, devoid of any evil or corruption. According to Islamic culture, the Devil, embodying disobedience and corruption, cannot coexist with the sanctity of Paradise. In JA, the phrase *'ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih'* (translated as 'Satan's dream of Heaven') is commonly used to express the utter impossibility or infeasibility of an event. This idiom reflects the deep cultural belief that such a scenario is entirely unachievable. The following examples showcase how this expression is employed to emphasize that a particular event is deemed impossible from the speaker's perspective, drawing on the powerful imagery of Satan being barred from Paradise to underscore its point.

Extract (7)

Someone shared a post about buying an apartment in Jordan:
ʔinnak tiʃtari ʃaqqah bilʔurdun sˁa:r miθil ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih.
Literal meaning: 'Buying an apartment in Jordan has become like the devil's dream of Heaven.'
Communicative meaning: 'It has become impossible to buy an apartment in Jordan.'

Extract (8)

A student shared a post on a faculty group on Facebook:
mumkin ʔitfahmu:ni ʔalʔa:lijjeh la fatiħ ʔaʃʃuʕab, jaʕni lamma tku:n ʔaʃʃuʕbah ʔimsakrah ʃu: mniʕmal bihaj ʔalħalih ɣeir tˁalab fatiħ ʃuʕbah. tˁabaʕan baʕraf ʔinnu had ʔilʔiʃi ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih bas ʔiħku:li.
Literal meaning: 'Can you explain to me the mechanism for opening the course? When the course is full, what should we do in this case other than requesting that the course be reopened? Of course, I know it is the Devil's dream of Heaven, but just tell me!'
Communicative meaning: 'I know it is impossible to re-open the course.'

Extracts (7-8) use the devil-related expression ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih to convey the speaker's emphatic assertion that the events or states under discussion are impossible or unattainable. This expression not only conveys impossibility but also amplifies the force of the message in the utterance. A key point here is that the pragmatic meaning of the devil-related expression *ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih* is deeply tied to its canonical semantic meaning—that the Devil would never enter paradise. The pragmatic use of this expression draws on its semantic content, thus supporting the argument that the semantic meaning of an expression can constrain its pragmatic interpretation and communicative function. The semantic content of *ħilim ʔibli:s bidʒdʒannih* narrows the range of possible interpretations, limiting its flexibility in different contexts. This is consistent with the broader observation that the semantic content of religious expressions often restricts their pragmatic functions. While religious expressions, as noted by Farghal (1995), can shift and acquire new pragmatic uses—such as *ʔinʃa:llah* 'if God wills' becoming a multi-purpose expression used for directives, commissives, or even mitigators—the devil-related expression examined here demonstrates that the original semantic content can still play a significant role in constraining its potential pragmatic functions. Despite the broader understanding that religious expressions can serve various pragmatic roles, this study offers compelling evidence that the semantic content of an expression can indeed influence, and sometimes restrict, its pragmatic use. This finding challenges the notion that the pragmatic meanings of religious expressions are entirely unconstrained by their semantic meanings.

5 Final remarks

Migdadi & Badarneh (2013) mention that 'while the relevance of the sociocultural macro-context to religious formulas in Arabic speech is generally recognized (Piamenta 1979, 1983), there has been relatively little detailed analysis of how these formulas function in microcontexts of social interaction, and such analysis has not had much impact on discourse and communication studies' (p. 61). The current article investigates the communicative functions of devil-related formulas in microcontexts of social interaction, hence contributing to this line of research. The analysis presented above provides evidence of pragmaticalisation of formulaic

devil-related expressions, which are shown to project pragmatic functions in JA interactions. The findings of the study point to the fact that the propositional content of the expressions might determine the scope of their pragmatic uses. Devil-related expressions are found to express layers of meaning, which are strongly influenced by cultural and religious beliefs. Affective expressive meanings of these expressions are based on the belief that the devil is an ultimate representation of evil according to the Islamic culture, which is prevalent in Jordan. Yet, certain expressions of them can be used to express positively-flavoured expressive meanings, including astonishment, driven by the fact that the devil is a supernatural creature which holds supernatural power. Therefore, it is not unusual that they are totally unexpected actions or achievements of individuals.

The use of devil-related expressions is deeply rooted in the broader sociocultural context, given the diversity of situations in which they are used. Cultural norms, social conventions, and shared experiences (or what Clark 1996 calls communal common ground) shape how JA speakers use and interpret utterances with devil-related expressions, a matter that actually emphasizes the notion that the cultural relativity is inherent in language understanding (Danesi 2021). Therefore, understanding the pragmatics of devil-related expressions is instrumental for unravelling the subtle intricacies that influence the communication of beliefs, fostering a deeper comprehension of the multifaceted nature of discourse that involves the use of religious expressions (see Pihlaja & Ringrow 2023).

The communicative functions of devil-related expressions supply evidence in favour of the interplay between religious expressions and language. Language is not a tool for conveying religious ideas, but it is also affected by the religious belief system, which is shown to be one major factor behind the use of religious expressions as pragmatic messages. Devil-related expressions function as “a cultural index of the community”; they “reflect the cultural patterns, values and themes that are dominant in this community” (Abdel-Jawad 2000: 217). They are conventionally used to “index participants’ social relationships, their identity and values, and cultural scripts” (Badarneh et al. 2022: 180). Therefore, ignoring these expressions (and their pragmatic drift) may result in communication breakdown and/or distortion of the original message (Farghal & Borini 1997), linguistic and cultural decontextualization which may lead to increased intercultural misunderstanding (Stock, 1997), or difficulty for learners of Arabic (Davies 1987) (see Migdadi et al. 2010).

6 Conclusion

This study investigated a range of devil-related expressions in Jordanian Arabic (JA), revealing the complexity of their use in various communicative contexts. The research provided evidence that these expressions fulfil three major functions: conveying expressive meanings such as astonishment and disapproval, manifesting mock-impoliteness, and expressing unattainability or infeasibility. The study underscores the multidimensionality of religious expressions by exploring their diverse pragmatic extensions. These findings emphasize the importance of examining the relationship between religious expressions and their pragmatic and communicative meanings to better understand the intricate ties between religion, culture, and language. The study also highlights how features of religious discourse, including the use of such expressions, influence religious identity, community interactions, and public religious discourse. This connection, referred to as "revolutionary we-ness" (Reed & Pitcher, 2015: 477), demonstrates the complex interplay between spoken words and broader cultural and social

dynamics. While some devil-related expressions retain a peripheral role in their interpretation, their pragmatic illocutionary force remains central, requiring a nuanced understanding of the cultural context in which they are used. These expressions are socio-cultural and pragmatic manifestations of religious interpretations. A pragmatically-based approach to these religious formulas offers valuable insights into their usage, which is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication, second or foreign language learning, and translation. To deepen our understanding of the relationship between religion, culture, and language, further research into the linguistic uses of other religious expressions and the impact of social variables—such as gender, age, locality, and educational level—on their use is highly recommended.

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In SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics [online]. 2025, vol. 22, no. 1 [cit. 2025-06-30]. Available on web page http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL58/08.pdf. ISSN 1336-782X