

## **THE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF THE RECITATION OF QUR'ANIC VERSES BY MUSLIMS IN THEIR ORAL GENRE: THE CASE OF INSHA' ALLAH, 'GOD'S WILLING'**

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### **Abstract**

In this study, I set out to investigate the motivations and reasons which induce Muslims to invoke the recitation of Qur'anic verses in their ordinary discourse. Based on the analysis of the data compiled, Muslims seem inclined to recite Qur'anic verses for a host of pragmatic functions. These pragmatic functions range from mitigating one's commitment for carrying out a future action or failing to honor one's commitment, to avoiding the effects and adverse consequences of one's actions on others. In addition, the recitation appears to function as a confirmation of the participants' religious, cultural, and linguistic identities. Furthermore, the findings of this study underlie the multifaceted functions that Muslims attach to and associate with use of Qur'anic verses. Muslims can exonerate themselves from the responsibilities of rejecting directives or turning down offers or avoiding staking the self-image of their recipient particularly when their actions are face-threatening or have undesirable consequences on their recipients. Moreover, the findings of this study reveal that Muslims are inclined to use Qur'anic verses as a rhetorical strategy of indirect persuasion to lend credibility to the claims they wish their prospective audiences to act upon them.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic functions, Communicative practices, Qur'anic verses as rhetorical strategies of persuasion, Indirectness in the oral genre of Muslims' discourse patterns.

### **Introduction**

This study affords one the opportunity to study Muslims who happen to come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds and their worldview through one of their discursive patterns. This study spares one the opportunity to see how the use of the Qur'an, the bedrock of Islam, as a communication resource provides Muslims with an opportunity to execute their action without staking their self-image or their interlocutor's. The significance of this study can be presented in four points: First, it points out the motivations and reasons that induce Muslims to invoke the recitation of Quranic verses in their ordinary discourse. Second, it underlies the multifaceted pragmatic functions that Muslims associate with the use of Quranic verses to further their own personal goals. Third, it underscores the significance that Muslims attach to the use of Quranic language as a communicative resource to guard against staking the self-image of their Muslim interlocutors. And fourth, it spares us the opportunity of minimizing misunderstanding in inter/cross-cultural communication by pointing out the different communicative practices that specific ethnic groups are inclined to use in invoking universal notions such as indirectness and politeness.

### **The research questions:**

The research question that this study attends to is twofold: a) the pragmatic functions of the use of the Quranic verse *Insha'Allah* "God's willing"; b) the instances and contexts in which Muslims are inclined to use *Insha'Allah*. Previous studies have relied solely on anthropological mechanism to define and account for the notion of indirectness as it arises in the oral genre of a particular ethnic group (see, Levine 1985; Hall 1976, 1982, 1959; Gumperz 1982a, 1982b; Gudykunst & Kim 1984, 1997).

To this end, one of the major contributions of this study is that it focuses on defining indirectness linguistically and applying linguistic mechanisms to account for such notion. This study underlies the importance of the linguistic implications that closely pertain to the notion of indirectness on the ground that indirectness is a discourse feature more than it is a cultural variation that manifests itself variably in the utterances of speakers of various cultures.

### **Literature review**

The concept of face and self-image are concepts grounded in one's own culture since to be polite or indirect requires that a person draws on his/her cultural and language conventions so that he/she can be consistent with these values and norms (see, Brown and Levinson 1987; Matsumoto 1989; Gumperz 1982a). In fact, cross-cultural studies have shown that notions of conversational cooperation such as indirectness and politeness are universal notions invoked by strategies that differ cross-culturally and linguistically (see, Gumperz 1982b; Brown and Levinson 1987; Blum-Kulka 1983; Matsumoto 1989). Therefore, the notion of indirectness is not really that different from the notion of politeness since in both situations conversational participants are inclined to use communicative strategies (linguistic devices) that are in accord with their linguistic and cultural norms and conventions. This appears to be consistent with the findings of studies done on politeness and indirectness cross-culturally and cross-linguistically (see, Matsumoto 1989; Gu 1990; Gumperz 1982b; Tannen 1981; Wierzbicka 1985).

This study draws on the literature that focuses on the notion of indirectness on account that the recitation of Quranic verses induces Muslims to glean different interpretations from the same enactment. Therefore, this study considers the recitation of Quranic verses to be a species of indirectness. Based on an extensive research of the literature that I have consulted, the notion of indirectness has been investigated and explored by many scholars from a variety of disciplines, mainly cultural anthropology, socio-linguistic, and discourse-oriented approaches. Each approach looks at the notion of indirectness differently and each approach grounds the analysis of the notion of indirectness in the very perspectives from which each approach has evolved. In this analysis, I provide an overview of the definition of indirectness from the standpoint of these major approaches along with a critical analysis of these perspectives.

The anthropological perspective/approach considers the notion of indirectness to be culture-specific and language-specific and thus this approach analyzes the notion of indirectness as a cultural phenomenon grounded in one's language and culture (see,

Gudykunst & Kim 1997, 1984; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1996, 1988; Gudykunst 1993; Gumperz 1982a; Hall 1982, 1976, 1959; Dodd 1992; Levine 1985; Rosaldo 1973; Keenan 1976, 1974). The proponents of this approach resign themselves to the fact that cultural differences are the primary reason for the way people construct their own perception of the social world that they are part of. Therefore, this approach places greater emphasis on both language and culture in accounting for the notion of indirectness.

The proponents of the anthropological perspective seem to be focused on providing cultural generalizations to account for and capture important and distinctive cultural differences. For instance, they attribute the differences in the speaking mode of a particular ethnic group to the rules of the discourse system of that specific culture. The proponents of this perspective would be inclined to support the proposition that culture imposes some restraints on our communication strategies. And as a result, culture predisposes its speakers to think and speak in a particular mode which is congruent with the very culture that those speakers associate themselves with.

The views of this approach have evolved out of the fact that the inculcation of one's cultural values and assumptions at an early age is likely to compel one to adhere to the rules of the discourse system of one's culture and is likely also to induce one to see and perceive the same social phenomenon by relying on one's cultural frame of reference. For example, the anthropological perspective emphasizes how the impact of culture on the notion of face or politeness predisposes a particular ethnic group to pay greater attention to contextualization cues than other cultural groups. In addition, the anthropological perspective is founded on the premise that some of the distinction between cultures can be manifested in their mode of speaking. For instance it is highly conceivable to see that the speakers of a particular culture may have a propensity to be direct and explicit in their mode of speaking than those of other cultures. This obviously underlies the significance of language as a diagnostic means by which one can account for the cultural differences that distinguish collectivistic cultural groups from individualistic ones on the basis of their speaking style.

While the anthropological perspective gives us some interesting insights about broad cultural differences, its analysis of the notion of indirectness appears to have some inherent flaws and inadequacies. These inadequacies appear to have emanated from the total reliance of this perspective on capturing broadly cultural generalizations and tackling the notion of indirectness from a cultural not linguistic or pragmatic perspective to evaluate the speaking mode of a particular culture or ethnic group. In addition, the anthropological approach has applied cultural mechanisms to account for a notion which is both a linguistic and a cultural one.

Therefore, this perspective falls short of providing an adequate model to help us account for such a notion linguistically or pragmatically. Classifying cultures as "high-context" versus "low-context" or "linear versus nonlinear" or "collectivistic" versus "individualistic", may prove useful only in accounting for cultural reasons not pragmatic ones that induce conversational participants to be indirect in their communicative actions. It is also not helpful to treat language and culture with the same degree of importance and using cultural facets and linguistic items as autonomous entities to account for the notion of indirectness.

Furthermore, the inadequacies in the findings of these anthropological studies emanate from the operational definition that these studies have been used to account for the notion of indirectness. It is lacking because the connection between the conceptual

domain (i.e., in this context, the notion of indirectness) and the empirical one (the measurement or the instrument by which the notion of indirectness can be tested in its proper domain and context) is not tenacious or diagnostic enough to account for the pragmatic or linguistic aspects of the notion of indirectness with its multifaceted forms. Consequently, the findings of these studies fall short of adequately accounting for the notion of indirectness linguistically or pragmatically. Such inherent inadequacies in the anthropological perspective may not be savvy, nor would it be a fruitful avenue for the type of data analysis contained in this study.

The second approach, while acknowledging the impact of culture, tends to place greater emphasis on language as the primary cause for the notion of indirectness. This approach underlies the views and perspectives of a group of socio-linguists (like, Tannen 1981, 1984, 1986; Leech 1983; Wierzbicka 1985; Davies 1987; Bernstein 1973; Almaney and Alwan 1982; Brown and Levinson 1987; Chejne 1965) who claim that the notion of indirectness results primarily from two major sources: First, the notion of indirectness can potentially be enacted when conversational participants intentionally manipulate both the linguistic code and the context in which their communicated messages are produced. For instance, the proponents of this perspective would claim that there is a tendency on the part of conversational participants to construct their communicated messages in ways that serve their own personal goals and by virtue of that they can induce their respective listeners to glean the interpretation they want them to adopt.

The second primary cause for the enactment of indirectness is the propensity that some conversational participants have to using some rhetorical devices which increases the likelihood of making one's communicated messages indirect and ambiguous to some extent. The proponents of this perspective contend that the use of certain linguistic devices such as hints, metaphors, exaggeration and other rhetorical devices are the major cause for indirectness.

There the belief is that language is context-bound and that one's utterance should be treated in the very context in which it is produced. Some of those sociolinguists claim that the notion of indirectness is language-specific and culture-specific since its invocation and perception may prove to require the use of language conventions that vary cross-culturally and cross-linguistically (Wierzbicka 1985; Tannen 1981; Gumperz 1982b).

While this approach affords one to gain many useful insights about the causes and the devices that are responsible for making our communication strategies indirect, this approach falls short of laying out a clear-cut mechanism by which one can adequately account for the speaker's intention for the enactment of the notion of indirectness. Therefore, this approach can't possibly be used as a model to guide us to pin down the motivations that compel or induce conversational participants to be indirect.

The third approach that has analyzed the notion of indirectness and the motivation for its invocation is the discourse-oriented approach. This approach represents the views and perspectives of Paul Grice (1975) and John Searle (1975, 1969, 1979) on the notion of indirectness. The views expressed by the proponents of this approach appear to be in harmony with those expressed by the sociolinguistic approach on the ground that both approaches subscribe to the assumption that conversational participants enact the notion of indirectness by manipulating the linguistic code that they are using for a variety of reasons.

Therefore, the linguistic system takes precedence over culture according to these two approaches. However, the discourse-oriented approach differs from the previous two approaches on two accounts: First, it looks at the notion of indirectness as an intentional act committed by any speaker regardless of his/her ethnic or cultural background for the sake of conveying some additional information to the addressee; and thus it focuses on the speaker's intention. Second, it distinguishes itself from the previous two approaches – the anthropological and the sociolinguistic ones - by providing a mechanism by which we can account for the speaker's intention adequately.

As a result, the discourse-oriented approach is both a viable and reliable approach on the basis that it lays out an adequate mechanism to enable us to account for the notion of indirectness as an intentional act produced by the speaker to achieve some personal wants. Therefore, it bears out some fruitful results and provides helpful insight as to how one should account for universal notions such as indirectness and politeness. Due to its merits, I relied on the mechanisms used in this approach to analyze the data that I present in this study.

### **Theoretical framework**

The primary research questions that this study investigates thoroughly focus on the pragmatic functions of the recitation of some Qur'anic verses, primarily the recitation of *Insha'Allah* and the motivations that induce Muslims to enact such Qur'anic verses in a variety of social contexts. Since my analysis of the data presented in this paper is grounded in the Searlean framework for indirect speech act theory, I provided an overview of his theory and its overall significance to the type of data I am presenting in this paper.

In accounting for the pragmatic meaning of the “illocutionary act” of any “speech act”, John Searle (1969: 48) states,

On the speaker's side, saying something and meaning it are closely connected with intending to produce certain effects on the hearer. On the hearer's side, understanding the speaker's utterance is closely connected with recognizing his intentions. In the case of literal utterances the bridge between the speaker's side and the hearer's side is provided by their common language.

The “common language” that Searle talks about underscores the pragmatic and socio-cultural dimensions that conversational participants ought to have in order to minimize misunderstanding. This can potentially refer to the Quranic language that Muslims share in expressing their perception of the social world which they are part of. The tendency of some Muslims to enact Quranic verses in their ordinary conversation is an indication that this linguistic code is the common language that they share with one another. This linguistic code in this particular context is a restrictive linguistic code in the sense that it is only intelligible and accessible to those who are versed and have an adequate knowledge in Quranic linguistics.

In the data analysis section, I point out how Muslims have a tendency to use certain communicative practices to either mitigate their commitments to carry out future actions or to express their perception of the social world that they are trying to make sense of. I also show how Muslims use certain linguistic devices not as a mere tool of communication to display their religious identity but rather as a social conduit to

perform action, or to exert some influence on each other's attitude and behavior, and thus bringing about some change in the behavior of their interlocutors.

I attempt to show that the use of such a linguistic device is, in my opinion, a form of indirectness since the recitation of *Insha'Allah* (a) tentatively induces one to glean more than one particular interpretation from the same recitation itself and therefore it (b) requires one to rely on some linguistic mechanisms to account adequately for the intended interpretation that the initiator wishes his/her addressee to infer from the enactment of the Quranic verses, *Insha'Allah*.

One of the insightful things that John Searle's speech act theory is intended to capture and shed light on is the performative aspect that appears to be inherent in the function of all natural languages with no exception. By and large, speech act theory encompasses a set of insightful notions that deal with our utterances not only in terms of their meaning but also of the action that each speaker or writer performs in producing these communicated utterances.

Thus, speech act theory is a theory that accounts for the number of ways speakers or writers can potentially perform a set of actions in saying or writing something.

There are certain notions or concepts that are key to understanding Searle's taxonomy of speech act theory. One of these concepts is the "illocutionary act." To illustrate what the concept of illocutionary act means, I provide an example so that I can explicate its meaning. For instance, if I say to one of my students, "*I will see you in my office this afternoon*," I have done more than one thing simultaneously according to Searle. First, I have communicated a meaningful sentence or utterance. In addition, I have also performed an action. This action, according to Searle is "an illocutionary act." Searle calls this illocutionary act an act of promising.

Searle states that there are five illocutionary acts in any natural language: The directives, assertives, expressives, declarations, and commissives. These five illocutionary acts are governed by what he calls constitutive rules. These constitutive rules define the very conditions that make a particular act an act of command or assertion rather than a declarative act, for example. Let me apply some of these constitutive rules to my previous sentence so that I can illustrate the function and role of these rules in accounting for the action that our linguistic utterances are presumed to perform.

According to Searle, these constitutive rules are as follows: The propositional content rule, the preparatory rule, the sincerity rule, and the essential rule (also called illocutionary point). Although these constitutive rules apply to all illocutionary acts, they vary in their individual requirements when applied across the five categories of the illocutionary acts. Going back to my initial example of the act of promising, the propositional content rule that applies to my sentence, "*I will see you in my office this afternoon*," would state that the propositional content of that very utterance should be about a future action performed by the speaker. The second constitutive rule called preparatory condition deals with the context in which the utterance is being performed. This rule states that in order for the act of promising to be performed with full intent there has to be some sufficient reason for the listener to believe that the speaker is able to perform what he obligates himself to do and that the listener is willing and receptive of the speaker's future action. In this particular instance, the preparatory condition consists of saying that I should be able to see my students this afternoon.

As for the sincerity condition, it requires that the speaker have the intent to carry out his promise. In this case this means that I should be willing to see my student this afternoon. If the speaker is perceived to be dishonest by the hearer, then there is no reason for the hearer to believe that the speaker has fulfilled the sincerity condition of the act of promising and this in turn makes the act of promising vacuous. The last condition for the fulfillment of the act of promising is the satisfaction of the essential condition, which states that the speaker intends to perform the act of promising and live up to his obligation.

What probably prompted Searle to construct his speech act theory is his strong belief that one of the essential functions of any natural language is the performance of action. According to him, the utterances that we frequently produce can be analyzed into speech acts. While conversing with others, we have a tendency to produce many sentences or utterances. And in so doing, we are bound to make statements, ask questions, or make requests. To Searle, these very acts constitute what he calls illocutionary acts. These illocutionary acts are rule-governed and intentional since they express whatever intention the speaker bears for his/her recipient. They are an essential component of all natural languages.

As we will see in the data analysis section the enactment of Qur'anic verses in and of itself embodies the cultural and religious identities of those who enact them since the enactment speaks broadly of this specific religious culture. In addition, the enactment of these Qur'anic verses appears to be enacted as a communicative phenomenon for the achievement of certain things that the initiator intends to accomplish by virtue of the enactment of Quranic verses. This involves that Muslims rely on religious and cultural background information to draw inferences so that they can pin down the intended purpose of the enactment of Quranic verses in certain social contexts.

In accounting for the comprehension of the notion indirectness as it arises in our communicated messages, Searle (1975: 61) claims that,

In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer. To be more specific, the apparatus necessary to explain the indirect speech act includes a theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation (some of which have been discussed by Grice), and mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and the hearer, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inference.

Searle's (1979) notion of indirectness thus stipulates that in some cases speakers design their utterances in such a way that they mean more than what these utterances literally mean. This implies that an indirect speech act is made of two distinct "illocutionary acts". Performing a secondary act functions as a means through which the speaker conveys the primary illocutionary act to his/her addressee. Searle provided a mechanism to show how conversational partners account for the disparity between these two distinct illocutionary points. Searle's mechanism stipulates that conversational partners draw on both linguistic and non-linguistic information to be able to account for the disparity between what Searle calls "the primary and secondary illocution" in the speaker's utterance.

If we have to apply Searle's mechanism to the notion of indirectness, we have first to show that there is a disparity between two illocutionary acts in the speaker's

utterance or that the speaker's utterance communicates much more than what his/her utterance literally means. Once we establish such a disparity, then we can conclude that the utterance itself constitutes an act of indirectness.

The notion of indirectness that I am referring to in this paper is borrowed from Searle. In the following verbal exchange one can easily note that one of the spouses is able to mitigate the pragmatic force of his communicated utterance by being implicit in his refusal.

1. *wife: we ran out of milk and bread.*
2. *Hus: I have not finished my work at the university yet.*

If we have to apply Searle's mechanism to the notion of indirectness that appears to manifest itself in the above exchange, we have first to show by the application of Searle's mechanism that there is a disparity between two distinct acts in the communicated utterance performed by the husband in line 2. Apparently, in the above exchange the wife has basically stated that they ran out of milk and bread and to that effect she expected her husband to respond positively to her indirect request in line 1.

If we pay closer attention to the husband's response in line 2, the wife is very likely to conclude that her husband's response is an implicit refusal of her request. The wife is able to establish such a disparity between what the husband has communicated in line 2 (the secondary illocutionary act) and what the husband in fact wishes his wife to glean from his assertion (the primary illocutionary act).

The wife is inclined to interpret her husband's response to contain much more information than the mere assertion of a state of affair. Indeed, in saying: 'I have not finished my work at the university yet', her husband is basically telling her that the preparatory condition of a commitment on his part doesn't obtain. In other words, he is not able to get milk and bread for her because he has not finished his work. Therefore, the primary point of her husband's utterance in line 2 is likely to be a mitigated rejection of her request in line 1. It would have been impolite and overbearing for the husband to be too explicit in rejecting his wife's request.

So by being indirect in his response, the husband appears to be able to mitigate the consequence of his unjustified action and at the same time to mitigate the consequences of his implicit rejection of his wife's request. As one can note, the issue at heart when one tries to account for the notion of indirectness or the speaker's intention hinges on one's ability to draw the line between the literal meaning (secondary) and the intended one (primary illocutionary act). Without being able to pin down such an important distinction, the process becomes quite slippery particularly in accounting for the notion of indirectness.

### **Data analysis**

The following is an English translation of an excerpt of an Arabic tape-recorded conversation in which the participants (two spouses: Husband is referred to hereafter as speaker H and wife is referred to hereafter as speaker W) use *Insha'Allah* as both a communicative resource and mitigating device for rejecting or turning down a request.



That is to say, one of the major pragmatic functions of the recitation is used as an indirect speech act of rejection.

The discussion that transpires between the participants in the following tape-recorded material occurred as a result of the husband's reluctance to use his van on an impending trip from Albany, New York to New Jersey. The wife wants to go to New Jersey to buy some items from an Arab market in Paterson, since she expects some company and wants to buy them some nice gifts. Apparently, H's reluctance to go on this trip has angered W who seems eager to go on this trip. It seems that H's reluctance is due to his apprehension that his van is too old and may break down on the highway. As we read the following excerpt, we realize that the debate between the spouses becomes so heated to the point that the wife accuses her husband of ruining everything. That is to say, the wife asserts that her husband's reluctance to use his van on that very day has apparently spoiled the atmosphere in her house. The most interesting instance in this tape-recorded interview is the instance in which the husband uses many Quranic verses, primarily the recitation of *Insha'Allah* in line 6, as a mitigating device to turn down his wife's request.

1. W. You ruined everything.
2. H. May God forgive you. I did not ruin anything.
3. Don't say you wanted to go. Say everything is in the hand of God.
4. W. Of course.
5. H. Don't say I want to go. Everything is in the hand of God and you should not say you want to go. *You should say If God wills (Insha'Allah) that is all.*
6. *(Insha'Allah) that is all.*
7. I did not interfere or say anything and as you told me to warm up the van
8. which I did so that they could drive it instead of overusing their car
9. W. Our car is more spacious than theirs.
10. H. I started the van and warmed it up and gave it to them.
11. W. But why
12. Did you change your mind?
13. H. I did not change my mind or said anything.
14. W. You kept saying the van the van.

Before analyzing the participants' use of *Insha'Allah*, I would like to dwell on the talk (primarily the recitation of other Quranic verses that appear to be relevant to the recitation of *Insha'Allah*) that has preceded in order to provide the social context or matrix that has prompted the husband H to recite *Insha'Allah*. As we pay closer attention to what has transpired between the two spouses in the above tape-recorded conversation, we become more convinced that the participants seem to be aware of the pragmatic functions of the Quranic verses they are enacting.

It is rather obvious from the way the participants use these Quranic verses that they are aware of the fact they can be used to perform specific actions which are destined to produce some effect on the behavior of the participants. By virtue of that, the initiator appears to be able to mitigate the force and consequences of his/her action on the addressee, which may result in producing some influence on the addressee's

behavior. Therefore, the enactment in and of itself is being used as a powerful strategy with which one participant exerts some influence on others' action and perception and at the same time skews one's understanding and perception of the social world in a way one would like it to be.

Such rationale seems to resonate with Austin's (1975) concept that one of the primary functions of language is the performance of action. Such an awareness of the performative aspect of language appears to manifest itself in the participants' use of certain communicative devices in the hope of bringing about an important change in one's behavior. This inclines us to conceive of language not merely as an entity with a referential function or a means of communication, but also as a tool with which one can change someone's attitude towards a particular state of affairs.

I attempt to show in the course of this analysis that H has enacted *Insha'Allah* skillfully to serve his own personal agenda. Let me first draw on W's statement in line 1, in which she expresses her frustration over H's refusal to go to New Jersey when she says, "*You ruined everything.*" Of course, one is inclined to think that H must have done something appalling to have ignited speaker W's anger, otherwise W would not have accused speaker H of ruining everything.

Just to follow the stream of events as they unfold in the above excerpt, W's ultimate goal seems to induce H to go on this trip. In fact, W cannot go on this trip without the company of H. H knows very well that W eagerly wants him to use his van on this trip. However, H for some reason, is hesitant to use his van probably on account that it is too old and it may break down on the way to New Jersey.

Another important point that needs to be emphasized here is how the use of Quranic verses empowers one conversational participant over the other regardless of whether there is a disparity in the social status of the participants involved or not. The enactment of the recitation in and of itself appears to have empowered H over W. Speaker H remarks as he is responding to W's accusation by saying, "*Say everything is in the hands of God.*"

The hearer (W) is likely to think that H's unequivocal acknowledgment of how our action lies in the hands of God is some sort of a double-edged sword. He can't possibly be giving her a lecture on the philosophy of Islam by his use of the word of God. He must be saying something else to her other than what the literal meaning of his use of the word of God implies. That is to say, H's use of the word of God has probably some important pragmatic functions. What H is trying to convey to W through his utterance is to prove W is wrong in her accusation of H's disinclination to use his van and probably to justify his unwillingness to use his van on the trip by deflecting the cause of what has happened on God.

Like that of all Muslims, H's action appears to be unrealistic particularly to a non-Muslim audience in terms of not being able to take a stance on this issue. What he has done so far is to show that we are all at the mercy of God and that no matter how hard we try everything is in God's hands and that everything depends on God's will. This may sound self-defeating to non-Muslims to surrender one's will or one's destiny to the existing circumstances. Of course, all Muslims are conscious of the fact that they are responsible for the actions they themselves intend to undertake but they strongly believe that their will is contingent upon God's will.

At this point, the distinctive role or pragmatic function of the recitation of the word of God by H whether in line 2, 3 or 5 is probably to mitigate one's responsibility or commitment for whatever action one embarks upon. What H appears to be saying in

his recitation of these Quranic verses in line 2-3 and 5-6 is that while we are responsible for the actions we engage in, we are not always able to control the circumstances that determine our success or failure in executing these actions.

Now I come to the most important point, which is the interpretation of the recitation of *Insha'Allah*. It is worth mentioning that, based on the data that I analyzed so far, the recitation of the word of God whether in line 2-3 or 5 appears to function as a counter attack to W's accusation and possibly to mitigate H's commitment and responsibility for something.

The recitation of *Insha'Allah* in that particular instance (in line 6) appears to have a dual function: It functions as a countermove to W's accusation and an implicit turndown of W's initial request for H to use his van. H is probably trying to mitigate his commitment for the assignment that W is asking him to execute which is carrying out her request.

As one can note, the recitation in and of itself constitutes an act of indirectness since the initiator may be enacting the recitation for more than one reason and by virtue of that the recitation leaves the recipient the strenuous task to work out which of these two distinct interpretations the initiator is trying to convey in reciting the word of God to his interlocutor.

The recitation of *Insha'Allah* that speaker H enacts in line 6 is an inseparable component of the initial talk (from line 1-6). A thorough examination of what H has said in line 6 is likely to induce one to think that H is probably trying to convey a couple of things. Let's first take a closer look at H's response in line 6 in which he says, "*You should not say you want to go. You should say if God wills, Insha'Allah that is all.*"

Now the first question that arises in one's mind is whom H is talking to and in response to what? We ought to understand that what is at stake here is not what the spouses are talking about but rather the actions that H is ultimately performing in order to consummate his plan or to convince W that she is not behaving like what a genuine Muslim would/should behave. This is indeed the focal point in this particular context. What H is doing by virtue of his recitation is a clear construction of his perception and an elaborate attempt on his part to dissuade W from holding firm onto her initial request.

I will ignore the first part of H's response in line 6 and focus on the second part since it is the part where H uses the recitation of *Insha'Allah*. Again, H appears to convey something in his performance of the recitation of *Insha'Allah*. W would probably resign herself to the fact that H's performance in line 6 is an assertive statement since the psychological state that is being expressed in that statement is a belief that H holds firmly about the contingency of one's action and it does not directly pertain to the accusation W has made against him.

In light of all this, the hearer (W) is probably inclined to say that if H's statement in line 6 does not pertain directly to the accusation made against him in line 1, then it must relate to something that the hearer (W) has said previously to H. Therefore, the hearer (W) is probably tempted to think that H's response appears to be relevant to the state of affairs that the hearer discussed with H previously (presumably W's initial request to use H's van). Of course, W would still assume that H is still cooperating since he is attending to the talk at hand whether explicitly or implicitly and his assertive statement seems to address something that has been the cause of her accusation of him. Therefore, if H's statement in line 6 is not directly pointed at her accusation, then H is probably implying more than what he is saying in his statement (potentially one can

consider it an assertion since H appears to be committed to the belief and truth of the expressed proposition or the state of affairs he is making).

W would be inclined to assume that H's response in line 6 could contain more than one important action. That is to say, H's response seems to represent a belief that Muslims are supposed to cherish wholeheartedly and that this belief deals with how the success or failure of one's actions is dependent on God's will. But the hearer (W) is likely to wonder the reasons for not using his van on the trip. W could then understand H's recitation as a speech act by way of which a primary act is produced and in that case a mitigated rejection. What could H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* (representative) imply if it is not directly about the accusation the hearer (W) has made against H in line 1? W is bound to realize that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* is enacted to show that one is not really sure of one's action unless one has God's blessing. W is inclined to realize also that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* appears to lessen his commitment for what he has been initially asked to do. W would probably arrive at this conclusion by drawing on several observations.

First, the hearer (W) would probably say that H's recitation (assertive) in line 6 does not directly pertain to the accusation W has made against H in line 1. Therefore, H's recitation probably refers to something else that the hearer (W) has previously asked H to do and H has shown a great deal of reluctance. W would be tempted to think that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* has resulted from H's disinclination to use his van since if he is really committed to using his van, he would be much more explicit and forthcoming in his statement. Therefore, the hearer (W) is inclined to say that the primary point of H's recitation in line 6 is probably to turn down the hearer's (W) request and his use of *Insha'Allah* in and of itself is probably done to mitigate his commitment or rejection.

As I said, W would arrive at this conclusion by drawing on the factual background information that is at her disposal and her knowledge that the preparatory condition on the acceptance of a request is contingent upon one's ability to perform the action predicated in the propositional content of any request. H's enactment of *Insha'Allah* has resulted from H's reluctance or inability to carry out an action or to mitigate his commitment for a specific action that he is not sure that he could carry it out without God's blessing.

H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* in line 6 differs from H's recitation of the word of God in the first two instances (in line 2-3 and in line 5). W is likely to assume that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* in line 6 could not possibly be a counter attack to the accusation she has made against H in line 1. Therefore, if it does not directly pertain to the accusation she has made against H, then it has to pertain indirectly to something that W has asked H to do or to a suggestion that pertains to H personally.

W is probably inclined to say that H is again trying to convey something else through his recitation of *Insha'Allah* other than saying that one's action is contingent upon God's will. W is likely to realize that H's recitation in line 6 does not pertain directly to the accusation. As a result of that, W is inclined to realize that the primary point of H's response in line 6 appears to differ from the literal point expressed in his recitation.

W is inclined to assume that if the first two recitations of the word of God are performed to counter the accusation she has made against H, H's recitation in line 6 then must have been enacted for something other than the accusation she has made in line 1.

W would probably arrive at such a conclusion by relying on the following factors: First, W and H mutually share background information whether linguistic or non-linguistic about each other and the state of affairs they are talking about. Second, W knows very well that the main reason for her accusation of H is H's reluctance to commit himself for the impending trip which W is attempting to make it happen. W is also inclined to assume that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* appears to pertain to how the execution of a future action is dependent on God's blessing of that action rather than on the person who intends to execute or carry that action. So if H's recitation is attending to such matters, then W is likely to think that the purpose of H's recitation is not only to counter W's accusation, but also to attend to W's initial request.

This sounds pretty bizarre and fatalistic to a non-Muslim audience. It is fatalistic in the sense that it is inconsistent with the accepted belief that man possesses a free will and has the ability to do whatever he/she determines to do, provided that the circumstances are propitious for the action to be executed. Of course, we all know that we have to work as assiduously as possible to achieve whatever action we wish to achieve. But it is fatalistic to leave one's freewill and action to be decided upon by one's creator.

The essential point of all this is that Muslims are inclined to enact these Quranic verses in the wake of unfavorable circumstances on account that the initiator could and would be in a position to mitigate his/her losses and as a result there are lots of payoffs to claim credit for. One of these payoffs is that the recitation is performed and enacted as a communicative resource which allows Muslims to mitigate the undesirable consequences of their offensive actions whether in the form of turning down a request or failure to honor their commitment to carry out specific future actions. This allows those who resort to such a communication resource to safeguard themselves when being asked to honor certain commitments that they cannot fulfill.

The second payoffs that Muslims gain by resorting to such a communication resource is that it protects the self-image of both the issuer of the recitation-if God wills or *Insha'allah* - and the addressee from further embarrassment or damage to one's face or self-image. Muslims are probably inclined to enact the recitation of *Insha'Allah* since by doing that they can avoid staking the self-image of each other and as a consequence they preserve the maintenance of face. Based on the analysis of the verbal exchanges that transpired between the participants, Muslims appear to be conscious of the merits of the enactment particularly when their actions may have some adverse consequences on the self-image of their addressees. By virtue of performing the recitation, the initiator is opting for one of two possibilities, one of which has to do with mitigating his/her rejection of something like a request or an offer.

Analysis of excerpt # 2

*An implicit acceptance*

1. G1: It is all right. Nothing has happened really.
2. H: This is the first time that I woke up on Saturday and I got out of bed and she
3. saw me dressed up and ready to go which was very unusual for me to do on a
4. Saturday or Sunday morning.
- 5.G2: It is okay really. May be there is no chance this time for us to go.
6. H: But for Ladies whether you make a right or a left turn it makes no difference
- 7 for them. You just never satisfy them.

8. G1: Laughter...
9. G2: Because we were ready to go
10. H: She saw me dressed up as if I was going to work.
11. Don't you agree? So why do you blame me for what has happened?
12. G2: That's okay. May be there is no chance for us to go this time.
13. W: Samia wants to go there because she has lots of items to buy from there.
14. G2: Laughter
1. **H:** *If Gods wills and the weather is nice, we will definitely go either next week or Some other time.*
- 16 W: We want meat also for the guests who are coming next week.
17. H: We will get meat also.
18. W: I don't want it. That's it.
19. H: It does not have to be this week. We can go next week.
20. W: The invitation is next week.
21. H: Change it. Postpone it. Every thing is possible.
22. W: I don't want to go next week. That's it.
23. Lapse of time. (5.0) Seconds.

Before analyzing the recitation of *Insha'Allah* in the above excerpt, I would like to provide an overview of what could have prompted and induced the husband (hereafter referred to as speaker H) to enact the recitation. In the above excerpt, the verbal exchange between the two spouses continues regarding the impending trip to N.J. Since the wife (hereafter referred to as speaker W) appears to be skeptical about H's intention and willingness to go on this impending trip, speaker H has feverishly tried to cast speaker W's skepticism away. As the data reveal, speaker W appears to be unconvinced with speaker H's rationale. For example in line 2-3, speaker H tries to show his willingness and readiness for the impending trip to N.J.

So what speaker H is saying is that he was ready to go on this impending trip since he woke up on Saturday and got dressed up which he normally does not do. Of course, H's complaining is pointed and directed at speaker W because of her skepticism. In fact, one can easily note that speaker H is quite dismayed with the way speaker W is treating him. One can see that in their respective communicative actions in line 6-7 and in line 11 in the above excerpt.

Now let me turn to the analysis of the recitation of *Insha'Allah* in order to find out the primary purpose and the motivation behind its enactment. The recitation of *Insha'Allah* in and of itself can be potentially considered a meaningful utterance whose interpretation seems to depend on the social context in which it is being expressed and partially on the participants involved in the verbal exchange. As we can note the recitation is a meaningful utterance since it imparts an important message for us to consider seriously. For instance, upon hearing it, the recipient treats it as a complete response whether it implies a mitigating device for a rejection of something or a mitigating device for one's commitment to accept an invitation or carry out a request.

Therefore, besides its being a meaningful utterance, the performance of the recitation of *Insha'Allah* by speaker H is probably done intentionally to perform some sort of an action or a speech act in the Searlean's terms. The purpose of H's recitation appears to mitigate his full commitment for using his van. One can argue that if H's real intention is to go on this trip and use his van, he could have said so explicitly. However, H has chosen not only to enact the recitation as a tactical strategy for the consummation of his own hidden agenda, but also to impose some conditions for his approval to use

his van. Having said that, then it is very likely that H's recitation and the conditions that he attaches to his using his van are an implicit disinclination for using his van.

The question that arises in one's mind then is for what purpose has H enacted the recitation of *Insha'Allah*? One can probably assume that H's communicative action is carried out to induce W and the guests to believe that he wants to go on the impending trip, provided that the circumstances which are beyond his control would allow him to do so and this is why his remarks in line 15 in the above excerpt seem to caution speaker W that unless the circumstances are propitious for this impending trip, he may not consider it seriously.

*"If God wills and the weather is nice we will definitely go either next week or some other time."*

Unless we pay closer attention to the communicative actions that occur in line 13 where W poses an indirect request to her husband (H) to use his van on that very day and in turn H responds to W's request in line 15 by invoking the recitation. W's statement in line 13 is, in my opinion, an implicit request in which she is trying to induce her husband to use his van by saying that one of the guests wants to buy some items from NJ. In turn, H's statement could be construed as saying, *"I will use my van, Insha'Allah, to go to NJ next week or some other time so long as the weather conditions permit."*

Let me continue to ground my analysis in the Searlean framework so that I can make sense of the entire episode that involves W's statement (implicit request) in line 13 and H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* in line 15 in the above excerpt. The hearer (W) is very likely to say that she has made an implicit request to the speaker (H) and in response the speaker (H) responded as cooperatively as he conceives his utterance to be seemly for the occasion.

Furthermore, the hearer is inclined to say that the speaker's response falls short of being precise and definite. For example, the hearer is most likely to assume that the recitation of *Insha'Allah* coupled with the conditions that speaker H is talking about inclines the hearer to think that the speaker is not quite committed to carrying out the action predicated in the prepositional content of her request. The hearer is bound to think that H's communicative action in line 15 has conveyed more than one message.

Just as the person who speaks is likely to produce an utterance and in so doing that utterance is carried out probably to perform some sort of an action. The hearer is likely to say that the speaker is not interested in going on the trip today even though he appears to be willing to consider it seriously next week or some other time. In addition, the hearer is likely to think that if the speaker seems to be willing to go on this trip next week or some other time in the future, then what is the purpose of his enactment of the recitation?

The hearer knows very well that carrying out a future action requires that the person carrying out that specific action is able to do so. The hearer (W) is quite sure and certain that H is capable of carrying out the request since he possesses the ability and competence for the action to be carried out. But the hearer is inclined to infer that H's enactment of the recitation pertains directly or indirectly to his willingness and commitment for the impending trip. That is to say, for what purpose has H enacted the recitation if he is indeed committed to using his van on the impending trip? H could have committed himself without enacting the recitation. But the fact that he enacted the

recitation has probably aroused W's curiosity about H's real commitment for the impending trip.

Since W and H are aware of what the recitation implies, the hearer is likely to infer that H's enactment of the recitation is probably performed to mitigate his commitment for the impending trip. Furthermore, the hearer is bound to say that the recitation of *Insha'Allah* along with conditions that H attaches to his going on this trip makes one question his real commitment. As we all know, the preparatory condition for the accomplishment of a request involves that the person carrying out such a request is able to do so and based on H's statement in line 15, it is not obvious that he will do the expected action. As a consequence, the preparatory condition may not obtain since by his recitation of *Insha'Allah*, H is not fully sure of his full commitment for the accomplishment of the request. Of course, the hearer is likely to arrive at this conclusion by drawing on her knowledge of the social context and her possession of the mutually shared background information that both W and H have at their disposal.

The hearer is inclined also to arrive at the conclusion that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* has resulted from his being less certain of his full commitment for the impending trip. That is to say, the hearer (W) is inclined to understand H's statement in line 15 as some sort of commitment mitigated by the recitation of *Insha'Allah*.

My first reading and interpretation of H's recitation in line 15 induces me to think that it implies an implicit acceptance mitigated by the recitation. But then H's recitation and the conditions he attaches to his going and using his van on the impending trip arouses one's curiosity about his genuine willingness and commitment for such a trip. H appears to mitigate his commitment for using his van when he says, "If God wills and the weather is nice we will definitely go either this week or some other time." But if one takes a closer look at what precedes and follows H's recitation in line 15, one is hard pressed to assume that H's recitation in line 15 is a mitigated acceptance to using his van on this impending trip.

I am opting to claim that H's motivation for enactment of the recitation in line 15 is probably used to mitigate his commitment for carrying out W's request based on the fact that he is not refusing to carry out W's request but rather attaches some conditions such as the weather factors and the time element to accepting W's implicit request in line 13. Therefore, one can infer that H's recitation of *Insha'Allah* is a mitigating commitment (which is an acceptance) of using his van next week. What prompted W to overreact angrily at H is his postponement of the trip considering that W wants it on the same day whereas H wants it to be next week or in the near future? In the eyes of W, H appears to have shown no strong commitment to use his van. This has prompted H to enact recitation of *Insha'Allah* as a tactful strategy to mitigate his commitment for using his van. This inclines one to analyze the recitation in this particular instance as an implicit acceptance mitigated by the recitation for H's commitment for the impending trip.

One can say that the recitation of *Insha'Allah* in this instance (second excerpt) is solely performed and enacted as an implicit acceptance since its purpose is to mitigate H's commitment for carrying out W's request. In fact, the very reason for H's enactment of the recitation is probably to lessen his fear of the likelihood that he may not be able to use his van and that some circumstances may in fact undermine his ability to carry out such an action and therefore he invoked the recitation as a means or something to fall back on in the event that he can't honor his commitment. The recitation of *Insha'Allah* in the above excerpt appears to function as a mitigating device



for accepting a request. Or it induces the hearer to think that the second pragmatic function of the recitation is that it implies an implicit acceptance.

In the following excerpt (excerpt # 3) we will see that the enactment and performance of the recitation of *Insha'Allah* appears to function as a mitigating device of one's prediction of the future and it can have nothing to do with acceptance or rejection of a particular future action or an offer.

### Analysis of excerpt # 3

#### *Mitigating a future commitment*

The following is an English translation of an excerpt of an Arabic verbal exchange of an Egyptian couple that resides in Albany County, in New York State. This conversation was tape-recorded in the first week of April of 2001, at the residence of the participants. The debate between the spouses is focused on whether to settle in the U.S., or to go back to Egypt. While the wife seems to be eager to go back to her native country, the husband is quite pleased with the idea of making this country a home to his family.

1. H: But people are sick because of the pollution
2. W: My daughter wants to go back to Egypt because of the cold weather/climate here.
3. H: No your daughter is not going back to Egypt because the weather there is polluted.
4.     And she got sick because of that and she does not like it either.
5.     So how do you say that your daughter wants to go back to Egypt?
6. W: No, she does not want to settle here in the U.S.
7. H: That is up to her.
8. W: It is very clear that she does not want live here in America
9. H: That is up to her really.
10. W: It is better for here there.
11. H: Do you want to go back to Egypt too.
12. W: *Insha'allah and with his permission insha'allah*
13. H: *Insha'allah.*

The focal point of the debate between the spouses is whether to settle in America or go back to Egypt. As one can see in her communicative actions, the wife is eager to go back to Egypt for a variety of reasons. However, her husband, who seems much more grateful and pleased with living in America, disagrees with his wife. As a result, he prefers for his children to settle here and make this country their home.

As the debate between the spouses unfolds, there is an instance where the wife enacts *Insha'Allah* in response to her husband's request (the request is an inquiry made by the husband to find out whether his wife plans to settle in the U.S., or to go back to Egypt). This is an interesting instance for several reasons: First, it underlies the importance of the pragmatic functions of the recitation of *Insha'Allah*. Second, it underscores the significance that Muslims attach to the enactment of the recitation when confronting unfavorable circumstances. Third, it points out how the performance of the recitation in and of itself constitutes a communicative resource from which the initiator draws power and credibility to buttress the proposition he/she is expecting the addressee

to act upon. That is to say, the enactment of the recitation seems to empower the initiator in producing some change in the addressee's mindset.

The enactment of the recitation in this particular instance differs from its enactment in the previous instances which I have already presented and in which the recitation is used as a mitigating commitment to carry out a future action and not as an implicit acceptance or rejection as one has noted in the previous excerpt. In this particular instance, the enactment of the recitation by the wife in line 12 appears to have been performed as a mitigating device for the prediction that she is making in her statement in the same line-12.

As one can infer from the debate between the spouses, the wife is eager to settle in Egypt for several reasons. The enactment of the recitation can also be construed as a plea for God's blessings. Since the wife is eager to live in Egypt, she displays her need for God's blessing.

If one has to apply Searle's (1979) mechanism for indirect speech acts theory, then one has to follow the following steps: The husband has made a request to his wife and as a consequence the wife has adequately responded to her husband's request (facts about the conversation). The husband, having heard his wife response, appears to be satisfied with his wife's response on account of their being Muslims and since it seems relevant to the discussion at hand (principles of conversational cooperation).

But the husband is very likely to say that his wife's response is not explicit enough to the question he posed to her in line 11 and therefore she must be trying to convey some important or extra information in her recitation of *Insha'Allah*. The expectation is that the wife could have responded positively or negatively and expressed her response in a clear-cut way. The fact that she has chosen to be implicit makes it obvious that she wishes her husband to glean a particular interpretation.

At this point, the hearer (H) is inclined to say that the wife's response is potentially and tentatively an indirect speech of predicting something or doing some sort of an action in the future but because she is not sure of what the future carries for her she enacted the recitation as a way to mitigate her prediction of the future. The hearer (the husband) is very likely to say that the literal meaning of his wife's response does not explicitly attend to his question and therefore the wife's response must have been performed to imply something else other than the plea for God's will since all believers particularly Muslims are conscious of God's blessing.

Based on the amount of background information that both spouses possess, they know that relocating from one city to another city is highly troublesome. The husband is probably aware that if his wife's real intention is not to live in America, then this requires a firm commitment on his wife's part. But he knows his wife well and realizes that the primary reason for her enactment of *Insha'Allah* is probably to mitigate the awesome responsibility (preparatory condition for making a future commitment or prediction) to carry out a future action which obviously requires the person who intends to carry out such an action or to honor such a commitment to have some valid evidence about the state of affairs that he/she is embarking upon. That is to say, the wife has to provide some sort of assurances that she will be relocating which is obviously not possible for her to do and this induced her to enact the recitation to mitigate her prediction of a future commitment.

Therefore, it seems obvious that the enactment of the recitation by the wife in the above instance has resulted from her apprehension that she may not live up to her prediction or commitment otherwise she could have been much more explicit and

forthcoming in her response. The main point is that the recitation in and of itself appears to have been performed as an action that could potentially be the primary act that the wife wishes to convey to her husband without directly and explicitly admitting that. As a consequence, one can assume that the wife's response could be construed as a short version of saying, 'I will live in Egypt, *Insha'Allah*,' which could be considered a prediction or commitment.

If she is making a prediction about some future action, then the preparatory condition requires that one has substantial evidence about the state of affairs that one is making prediction about. That is to say, if I predict that the stock market is likely to crash in 2003, I should provide some convincing reasons to buttress the proposition I am making otherwise my prediction would not stand a chance or hold up. If she is embarking on predicting a future action, then she has to prove that she has the ability and capacity to carry out such action or predict the state of affairs of her prediction. Since the wife is not really sure of anything, she enacted the recitation as a means to mitigate the prediction she has made so that she would safeguard herself from any criticism or embarrassment from her husband in the event that she can't live up to her expectation.

Therefore, the enactment of the recitation of *Insha'Allah* in the above excerpt appears to have several payoffs that induce Muslims to draw on in situations where the stakes are high for them or when they want to maintain harmony and avoid social disputes. Furthermore, the enactment of the recitation by the wife in line 12 can be construed by others as a tactful strategy that the wife employs to guard against unnecessary embarrassment in the event that she would not be able to live up to her prediction. Moreover, the enactment of *Insha'Allah* appears to afford Muslims the opportunity to mitigate their commitment for whatever action they set out to achieve and at the same time to deflect their responsibility to achieve these actions on God's will.

Overall the findings of data that I have presented in this paper indicate that Muslims have a proclivity to enact the Quranic verse *Insha'Allah* in certain circumstances where one is not sure of the outcome of one's action or in instances in which one finds himself or herself to be at the mercy of unforeseeable circumstances. In addition, the findings indicate that Muslims are inclined to invoke the same Quranic verse to accomplish one of several things. For instance, the recitation can be enacted in certain social contexts as an indirect speech act of rejection. This instance occurs when the addressee is not interested in carrying out the speaker's request or accepting an offer or invitation for some unknown reasons or for reasons that the addressee would not be privy on.

In enacting the recitation, the initiator is opting to mitigate the force of his/her communicative action, particularly if the intended action deals with a rejection to carry out the speaker's request or if the intended action is about turning down an invitation. So instead of rejecting the speaker's request flatly and directly, the addressee finds it fitting and seemingly to enact the recitation as a means to mitigate the force of rejecting the speaker's request or an invitation and by virtue of the enactment, the addressee lessens the consequences of his/her action.

Muslims are very much induced to the enactment of the recitation on the ground that there are lots of merits and payoffs for both participants (speaker & addressee) in the enactment of *Insha'Allah*. One of these payoffs is that the initiator of the recitation accomplishes his/her personal goals without incurring any cost or staking the

addressee's self-image. Therefore, the recitation of *Insha'Allah* in and of itself is a communicative resource and its enactment functions as a mitigating device for the preservation of social harmony, the avoidance of undesirable consequences of one's actions, and the maintenance of the self-image of the participants.

It is highly important to point out that Muslims are probably inclined to enact the recitation of *Insha'Allah* since by doing that they can avoid staking the self-image of each other. Based on the analysis of the verbal exchanges that transpired between the participants, Muslims appear to be conscious of the merits of the enactment particularly when their actions may have some adverse consequences on the self-image of their addressees.

It is worth mentioning that such an observation is consistent with Gudykunst's & Ting-Toomey's (1996, 1988) concept of self-image and maintenance of face cross-culturally. They claim that the concept of self-image and maintenance of face varies from one culture to another and that in individualistic cultures (i.e. American) the primary concern is the maintenance of one's face (self-image). In contrast, the primary concern in collectivistic cultures (i.e. Arab, Chinese, Japanese) is the maintenance of both the speaker's and his/her addressee's face. This appears to impose some restraints on the structure and content of the participants' communicative practices.

The third reason for the enactment of the recitation by Muslims is to mitigate one's commitment for whatever action is asked to carry out. The addressee enacts the recitation in this particular instance not for rejecting the speaker's request but rather to mitigate the consequences of his/her being unable to honor the speaker's request. That is to say, the addressee is implicitly accepting the speaker's request but because he/she is not so sure of the circumstances, he/she is likely to enact the recitation of *Insha'Allah* as a means to mitigate commitment - his/her failure to carry out a particular action.

It is worth pointing out that the enactment of the recitation in the second instance seems to be tied up with the notion of fatalism that appears to manifest itself in the behavior of some Muslims. Even though the addressee is interested in carrying out the speaker's request, he/she is induced to enact the recitation, as a means to implicitly accept the request but at the same time leaves room for the possibility of one's being unable to carry out the request. Therefore, there appears to be some pragmatic functions for the enactment of *Insha'Allah* in both the first instance where the addressee appears to implicitly reject the speaker's request or in the second instance in which the addressee appears to implicitly accept the speaker's request but uses *Insha'Allah* to exonerate himself/herself from the responsibility for not being able to carry out the speaker's request.

The third payoffs that seem to induce Muslims to opt for the use of Quranic verses is that the enactment of Quranic verses increases and enhances the credibility of one's message since what one is citing represents the word of God which Muslims passionately identify with and by virtue of that Muslims are inclined to use the recitation as a powerful strategy to produce some effect on their interlocutors' attitudes and behaviors.

### **Conclusion**

What I have presented in this paper is the findings of a study conducted on the pragmatic functions of the use of Quranic verses as a communicative resource that

Muslims are inclined to use to gain adherence for the assertions they make. The insightful thing about the use of Quranic verses is that the person who is reciting them is relying on God's credibility to appeal to his/her interlocutor's understanding and acceptance whatever assertion he/she is making. Therefore, such a study is quite warranted on the bases that the use of such a communication resource has several pragmatic functions that are worth exploring since they underlie some of the values that Muslims embrace so passionately of their unshakable belief in the Quran.

The findings of this study have revealed that Muslims can resort to the use of this communicative strategy for a host of pragmatic functions. These pragmatic functions range from mitigating one's commitment for carrying out a future action or failing to honor one's commitment, to avoiding the effects and adverse consequences of one's specific action on others. In addition, the recitation appears to function as a confirmation of one's religious, linguistic, and cultural identity. Furthermore, the findings of this study underlie the multifaceted functions that Muslims attach to and associate with the use of Quranic language. The import and significance that induce Muslims to use Quranic language in their oral genre emanate from their firm belief of the import and power of the Quran as the bedrock of Islam. And most importantly, Muslims seem to be able to exonerate themselves from the responsibility of rejecting directives or turning down offers, or avoiding staking the self-image of their recipients particularly when their action has undesirable consequences on their recipients.

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