

The Pragmatics of bas in Jordanian Arabic

Wafa Moh'd Qtaishat
Faculty of Arts
The University of Jordan
Wmas84@hotmail.com

Dania Ahmad Al-Hyari
Language Center
The University of Jordan
dania_hyari@yahoo.com

Received :13/09/2021

Accepted :16/03/2022

Abstract

The term bas 'enough' is used in JSA for different pragmatic meanings. In this paper, data were collected from 52 Jordanian university students in October 2019 at the University of Jordan by asking the participants when and why they use bas in their daily interactions. The study found that bas pragmatic meanings can be classified under 10 functions: threatening, exception, tempting and promising, condition, conjunction (with four meanings and, but, although, and only), objection, challenging, preferring, ending a conversation, and reasoning. The researchers support each category with illustrative examples along with their translations. The study also concludes that the term bas is functional in JSA. In addition, the term bas can be used syntactically in seven different tenses: simple present, simple past, simple future, present continuous, past continuous, past perfect, and future perfect.

Keywords: Pragmatic Meanings, Context, Bas, Tenses.

Introduction:

Brown and Yule (1983) explained that Discourse Analysis is concerned with the analysis of language in use. In addition, they clarified that Discourse Analysis studies the purpose and functions of linguistic forms. Fraser (2009) stated that every language has a functional class of lexical expressions which is called Pragmatic Markers. In addition, Fraser (2009) illustrated that Pragmatic Markers are expressions which occur as part of discourse segment but not as part of the propositional content of the conveyed message, "and they do not contribute to the meaning of the proposition, per se. However, they do signal aspects of the message the speaker wishes to convey" (2009, 295). Therefore, Pragmatics studies meaning in relation to the context in which the person is speaking or writing. Fraser adds that there are four different types of Pragmatic Markers; Basic Pragmatic Markers, Commentary Pragmatic Markers, Discourse Markers, and Discourse Structure Markers (ibid). This paper, will focus on the third type. Discourse Markers "typically signal a relation between the discourse segment which hosts them and the prior discourse segment, perhaps produced by another speaker" (Fraser 2009, 296). Furthermore, Fraser (2009) mentioned three classes for Discourse Markers. The first class is Contrastive Discourse Markers which is illustrated in this sentence;

1. Sara bint kwiseh bas habla

Sara girl good but fool

'Sara is a good girl. However, she is a fool'.

Therefore, Bas in the Jordanian spoken Arabic is a Contrastive Discourse Marker. In addition, the Jordanian spoken Arabic bas is an Elaborative Discourse Marker.

2. Maa ba3taqid ?inno raH ji-ndjah

NEG think-I that will 3sm-pass

Bas xalli:na na-3Ti:-h fursa

But let's Ipl-give-him a chance

I don't think he is going to pass. Anyway, let's give him a chance'.

Finally, the third class is called Inferential Discourse Markers. This class is not represented by the Jordanian spoken Arabic bas.

This study focuses on the discourse analysis and pragmatic meanings of bas in the Jordanian spoken Arabic. Wittgenstein (1953) argues that the meaning of any word is its use in the language. Consequently, one can notice different interpretations for the same word in different social, situational, and textual contexts. Similarly, Yule (2008, 3) points out that "Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)". Accordingly, the term bas would have many different meanings depending on the different contexts it appears in. Poltridge (2012) states that the communicative function of an utterance is very important, that is, "what it is 'doing' in the particular setting in order to assign a discourse label to the utterance in the place of overall discourse." In other words, understanding the word or expression in an utterance will lead us beyond their literal meaning and "go for certain holistic meaning that fulfill specific pragmatic function" (Elshamy 2016, 14). It may be very logical to relate analyzing the pragmatic functions of idiomatic expressions to illocutionary acts of speech act theory.

Literature Review

Kanakri & Al-Harabsheh (2013) examined the pragmatic functions of the Jordanian spoken Arabic term ʕa:di 'normally'. They found that ʕa:di has several functions depending on the context in which it is used; it is used to soften "the effects of sad news,

to ask for a permission to do something, to express the meaning of disapproval or rebuke, to show disappointment regarding a certain action, to express contempt, to express courtesy, to show acceptance, to save one's face, to show indifference and to express an indirect criticism".

Al Harahsheh & Kanakri (2013) studied the pragmatic functions of the Jordanian spoken Arabic *tayyib* 'okay', and its cognate *tabb*. They founded that these terms have twelve "different pragmatic functions: to mark back channel with what precedes them, to mean stop or let us understand the matter, to show an objection to what has been said, to introduce a new topic, to be used as mitigating term for disagreement, to express challenge or confrontation, to signal the end of discourse, to send a message to the interlocutor to be patient, to give permission and to be used as gap fillers". The researchers concluded that *tayyib* and many other Arabic terms reflect different Arabic cultural values. Finally, they suggested doing similar studies on different terms in order to "envisage a full-fledged picture of the Arabic culture with its various dimensions" (p. 199).

Al-Khawaldeh (2018) examined the functions of the term *kama* and its frequency in Arabic journalistic discourse from the perspective of Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) proposed by Mann and Thompson, based on corpus-based analysis. Al-Khawaldeh found that *kama* has four functions in the Arabic journalistic discourse: elaboration (50%), similarity (19%), evidence (15%), and exemplification (13%), respectively.

Furthermore, Mehawesh and Jaradat (2015) studied the functions of the religious expression *inshallah* 'God willing' in the Jordanian spoken Arabic according to Grice's cooperative principle (1975). They concluded that *inshallah* has different pragmatic meanings besides its semantic meaning which indicate irony, threatening, prohibition, wonder, wishing, and a positive reply. In addition, they found that this Discourse Marker flouts the maxim of quality in order to serve various meanings or functions other than its literal content.

Hamdan and Abu Rumman (2020) investigated the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *Yahummali* in Jordanian spoken Arabic. This study showed that *Yahummali* has nineteen pragmatic functions; expressing dismay and disapproval, fear, condemnation, disappointment, mitigating exaggerated claims, wishing, expressing sadness, regret, dissatisfaction, shock, making threats, ridiculing, expressing anger, jealousy, desperation, surprise, sarcasm, indecisiveness, and doubt or uncertainty. Hamdan and Abu Rumman (2020, 339) showed that "the discourse marker *Yahummali* tends to express rather negative pragmatic functions". In addition, the researchers concluded that the context is very important because it determines the pragmatic function of *Yahummali*.

Al Rousan et al. (2020) investigated the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *bas* (but) in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. The researchers recorded 24 dyadic natural conversations between Jordanian students who are Arabic native speakers. The word *bas* was recoded in 1113 instances. Al Rousan et al. (2020) concluded the pragmatic word *bas* has sixteen functions; "initiate a topic, signal topic change, close a turn, end a conversation, indicate speaker's hesitancy, mitigate FTAs, make a correction, attracts hearer's attention, express restrictions and conditions, show disbelief and indicate a question, provide interpretation, show contrast, express regret, show agreement, indicate emphasis, and interjection" (p.141). The researchers found that *bas* is functional and fulfills a plethora of pragmatic functions. Therefore, the word *bas* is very important in people's daily conversations. Al Rousan et al. (2020) recommended scholars to study and investigate the word *bas* because it can be used to convey lots of meanings hence it "should not be neglected by linguists" (p.130). Therefore, the present study investigates the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *bas*. According to this investigation, two new pragmatic functions can be added to Al Rousan et al.'s (2020) study. Firstly, the discourse marker *bas* can be used as a conjunction that connects two phrases together. *Bas* can be used instead of four coordinating conjunctions: and, but, although and only. Secondly, the discourse marker *bas* can be used to reflect that someone or something is the best. In addition, this study finds that the term *bas* can be used syntactically in seven different tenses: simple present, simple past, simple future, present continuous, past continuous, past perfect, and future perfect.

Methodology Tool

The methodology of the present study draws on the pragmatic analysis of the Jordanian spoken Arabic term *bas* 'enough'. The researchers, who are native speakers of JSA, collected the data from Jordanian native speakers. The participants were 52 university students of both genders. It was conducted in October 2019 at the University of Jordan (Amman, Jordan). The researchers asked the participants when and why they use *bas* in their daily interactions. The participants were asked to report all the different uses of *bas* they could think of. They were also asked to support these uses with relevant examples. Then, the researchers analyzed the utterances they collected from the participants according to the meanings and functions the word *bas* may carry. They gave 12 pragmatic functions for *bas*. After that, these pragmatic functions, presented in scenarios, were offered to 20 other students from the same university in order to test the acceptability of these meanings and to exclude the least acceptable meanings. Therefore, this task was tested against a five-point

Likert scale in which the students were asked to rate the given pragmatic meanings on a level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, indeterminate, disagree and strongly disagree). However, two pragmatic functions were excluded from the study. These two functions were judged unacceptable because the participants rated them as (i.e. strongly disagree or disagree).

1. Participants

The participants of the study were 52 native speakers of Jordanian Arabic. They were University students of both genders studying different majors. Their ages ranged between 18-26. These participants gave 12 pragmatic functions for *bas*. Then, the researchers tested these 12 functions by giving them to 20 other students of both genders studying different majors from the University of Jordan. These 20 students were native speakers of Jordanian Arabic.

2. Discussion and Findings

As mentioned before, there is a difference between illocutionary and locutionary communication. Therefore, the most important thing in analyzing a term is the intention of a speaker. The findings show that the term *bas* is used in JSA for different pragmatic meanings. These pragmatic meanings were classified under 10 functions. The table below presents the pragmatic meanings of *bas* in JSA that were agreed on by the participants.

The pragmatic functions of *bas* and their acceptability judgement

No.	Pragmatic function	Acceptability %
1	Threatening	88%
2	Exception	94%
3	Tempting and promising	96%
4	Condition	95%
5	Conjunction	And 63%
		But 89%
		Although 84%
		Only 89%
6	Objection	30%
7	Challenging	36%
8	Preferring	93%
9	Ending a conversation	45%
10	Reasoning	37%

In this section, the researchers support each category with illustrative examples along with their transliterations and translations.

Pragmatic Functions of *bas*

1. Threatening

Background: an employee is talking with his boss complaining about the over commands. The boss is not convinced with this discussion so he said to the employee "stop talking!"

4. *bas* Haki:
Stop talk

Stop talking!"

In this situation, the boss is not convinced at all with the employee's complaint. Therefore, he is threatening the employee by ordering him to stop talking. The use of this term is connected with negative words and attitudes. For example, a mother is telling her daughter to stop destroying her toys. It is worth mentioning here that the percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* for threatening is 88%.

2. Exception

Background: a teacher is telling her students to use all the colors except the black color.

5. ?istaxdim-u kull al-?alwa:n *bas* el-loun
el-aswad la?
Use-pl all the-colors except the
color the-black no
'Use all the colors but not the black one.'

In this context, the use of *bas* has the pragmatic meaning of exception. The percentage of of the acceptability using *bas* for exception is 94%.

3. Tempting and Promising

Background: a mother is telling her son that they are going to the park after he studies.

6. rah n-iTla3 *bas* tu-drus
Will pl-go out after you-study
'We will go out after you study.'

In this situation, the mother is tempting her son to finish his homework by promising him to go to the park. It is worth mentioning that the use of *bas* in this situation is related to the time expression 'after'. The percentage of of the acceptability of using *bas* for tempting and promising is 96%.

4. Conditioning

Background: a teacher is telling her pupils that "if you study, you will pass."

7. Bas tu-drus-u: raH tinjaH-u:
When you-study-pl will succeed-pl
'If you study, you will pass.'

In this situation, the term *bas* appears at the beginning of the statement. Here, *bas* gives a meaning similar to the conditional *if*. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* for conditioning is 95%.

5. Conjunction

The Arabic term *bas* can be used as a conjunction that connects two phrases together. *Bas* can be used instead of four coordinating conjunctions: and, but, although, and only. The first example illustrates the use of 'and'.

a. And

Background: a shopper is talking about the properties and attributes of a suitcase. He is telling the customer that this bag is foldable and it has spinner wheels for easier mobility.

8. El-shanTa btinTawi *bas* kama:n ?il-ha 3ja:l
The-bag foldable but also to-I wheels

The bag is foldable and it also has wheels.’
In this context, the word *bas* adds strength and emphasis to the word *kaman*. Accordingly, the shopper wants to persuade the customer by adding more strength and emphasis to his sentence. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* to express the conjunction ‘and’ is 63%.

b. But

Background: a student is telling his teacher "I studied the whole subject but I did not understand it."

9. ?ana daras-t el-mawDu:3 kulluh bas ma: fhimi-tu-h

I studied-1s the-subject whole but not understand-it

I studied the whole subject but I did not understand it.’

The use of *bas* emphasizes the joining of two contrasting ideas. Therefore, *bas* reflects an unexpected result or a result which is in contrast to our expectations. It must be noticed here that the percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* for giving the meaning of ‘but’ is 89%.

c. Although

Background: a girl is describing a game at an amusement park, she says: "that game is very amazing although it is scary."

10. el-li3beh kti:r Helwe bas bitxawwif

The-game very amazing although it-frightens

The game is very amazing although it is scary.’

d. Only

Background: a customer is asking about the end date of promotions: "Till when are these promotions valid?"

Salesman said: "Only for tomorrow."

Bas la-bukra

Only for tomorrow

For tomorrow only.’

In this context, *bas* functions as the conjunction *only* as it restricts the time by ‘tomorrow’. Therefore, *bas* shows that the next day is the last and the only day for the promotions. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* as ‘only’ is 93%.

6. Objection

Background: two friends want to go out for a trip:

A: Let us go this weekend to Aqaba.

B: No, it is not my due date for salary payment.

11. Bas lissa ra:tb-i ma: nizil

Not yet salary-my not go down

‘My salary is not due yet.’

In this context, speaker B is rejecting the suggestion of speaker A by using a polite strategy that a speaker can resort to when he/she does not want to be rude or impolite. Therefore, the term *bas* shows objection to what has been said in a polite way. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* as an objection is 30%.

7. Challenging

Background: two employees are talking and the

senior employee is telling the junior: "when you become a senior as me you will understand."

12. Bas t-si:r zayy-i b-t-ifham

When you-become as me asp-you -understand

‘When you become senior, you will understand.’

In this situation, *bas* functions as a challenge in which the senior is challenging the junior if he can understand his point of view. It must be mentioned here that the percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* for challenging is 36%.

8. Preferring

Background: two football teams are playing and one of the fans says: "Messi is the greatest!"

13. Messi w-bas

Messi and-that’s it

‘Messi only!’

Intended: ‘Messi is the greatest!’

In this context, *bas* is used to mean Messi is the best and greatest player and no other player can be like him. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* for preferring is 93%.

9. Ending a conversation

Background: a speaker on a TV show wants to end his show, he says: "finally I want to say the last word."

14. Bas bididi ?a-Hki kilmeh ?axi:ra

Just I want 1s-say word last

‘Finally, I want to say the last word.’

Here, the term *bas* is used to tell the audience that the speaker is going to conclude his/her speech. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* to end a conversation is 45%.

10. Reasoning

Background: a political analyst is describing the people in his country, saying: "We are people who need sympathy because our main goal is to make problems."

15. ?iHna sha3b bi-nHazzin bas ham-na

We people asp-need sympathy asconcern-our

ni-3mal masha:kil

1pl-make problems

‘We are people who need sympathy because our main goal is to make problems.’

In this context, the term *bas* functions as the word ‘because’. So, the clause after *bas* clarifies the reason of the first part of the sentence. The percentage of the acceptability of using *bas* for reasoning is 37%.

Using bas in different tenses

The term *bas* can be used in different tenses. The next subsection illustrates how *bas* is used in seven different time tenses.

A. Simple Present

Bas here is followed by a second person present

16. Bas ti-l3ab bi-l-maTbax

don’t 2s-play in-the-kitchen

'Do not play in the kitchen!'

B. Simple Past

Here *bas* is followed by a past tense clause:

17. Ruhi-t 3ind beit jidd-i *bas* ka:n Ta:li3
Go-I to house grandfather my but was out
'I went to my grandfather's house but he was not there.'

C. Simple Future:

There are two clauses here; one of them is contingent by the occurrence of the other in the future.

18. *Bas* ?a-xalliS dra:she ba-ru:h 3a-l-Hafleh
After1 s-finish studying asp: 1-go on-the-party
'After I finish studying, I will go to the party.'

D. Present continuous

A present continuous reading is attained when *bas* is followed by a deverbal noun:

19. Samar *bas* li3ib
Samar! Stop playing
'Samar, stop playing!'

E. Past continuous

Bas here is followed by the past tense copula and an imperfective verb:

20. *Bas* lamma kunt ?a-mshi la-l-beit shufi-t 3ali
But when be: 1s 1s-walk to-the-house see-1s Ali
'While I was walking to my house, I met Ali.'

F. Past Perfect

In this case, *bas* is followed by two consecutive past tense clauses:

21. *Bas* xallaS-t wa:jiba:t-i Hadar-t tilivizion
After finish-1s homework-my watch-1s television
'After I had finished my homework, I watched TV.'

G. Future Perfect

Bas is followed here by two clauses, one of them has a present copula and a past tense:

22. *Bas* lamma ti-rja3 min ?amri:ka bi-t-ku:n
But after 2s-return from America asp-2s-be:present
Hassan-t lughat-ak l-ingli:ziyyeh
Improve-2s language-your the-English
When you come back from the USA, you will have improved your English language.'

Conclusion

The term *bas* 'enough' is used in JSA for different pragmatic functions. These pragmatic meanings were classified under 10 functions: threatening, exception, tempting and promising, condition, conjunction (with four meaning and, but, although and only), objection, challenging, preferring, ending a conversation, and reasoning. Additionally, this study concluded that the term *bas* is functional in JSA and occurs sentence initially, medially, and finally only when it expresses preference. Syntactically, the term *bas* was used in seven different tenses.

References

1. Al-Khawaldeh, Asem. (2018). "Discourse Functions of *Kama* in Arabic Journalistic Discourse from the Perspective of Rhetorical Structure Theory". *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English literature*, 7(3), 206-213.
2. Al-Harabsheh, A., & Kanakri, M. (2013). "The Pragmatic Functions and the Translatability of "Tayib" in Jordanian Spoken Arabic". *US-China Foreign Language*, 11(3), 196-202.
3. Al Rousan, R., Al Harabshe, A., Huwari, F. (2020). "The Pragmatic Functions of the Discourse Marker *Bas* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic: Evidence from a Corpus". *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 10 (1), 130-142
4. Brown, L., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805226>
5. Elshamy, Hala. (2016). "An Analysis of the Pragmatic Functions of Idiomatic Expressions in the Egyptian Novel 'Taxi'". MA. Thesis. The American University in Cairo, Cairo, Egypt.
6. Fraser, Bruce. (2009). "An Account of Discourse Markers". *International Review of Pragmatics*, 1(3), 293-320.
7. Hamdan, J., & Abu Rumman, R. (2020). "The Pragmatic Functions of *Yahummali* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic". *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, 12, 327-345.
8. Kanakri, M., & Al-Harabsheh, A. (2013). "The Discourse Analysis of "?a:di" in Jordanian Spoken Arabic". *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(6), 59-63.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v3n6p59>
9. Mehawesh, M & Jaradat, A. (2015). "Inshallah: Extensive Flouting of Grice's Maxim of Quality". *Asian Social Science*; 11(4), 319-327.
10. Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse Analysis: An introduction*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
11. Wittgenstein, L. (1958). *Philosophical Investigations* (2nd ed., G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.

المعاني الدلالية لكلمة (بس) في اللهجة الأردنية

دانيا أحمد الحباري

مركز اللغات

الجامعة الأردنية

danial_hyari@yahoo.com

قبول البحث 2022/03/16

وفاء محمد قطيشات

كلية الآداب

الجامعة الأردنية

Wmas84@hotmail.com

استلام البحث: 2021/09/13

الملخص:

يستخدم مصطلح "بس" في تحليل الأداء الاستراتيجي لمعاني براغماتية مختلفة. تم في هذه الدراسة جمع البيانات من 52 طالبًا جامعيًا أردنيًا في أكتوبر 2019 في الجامعة الأردنية عن طريق سؤال المشاركين متى ولماذا يستخدمون "بس" في تفاعلاتهم اليومية. وجدت الدراسة أن المعاني البراغماتية الأساسية يمكن تصنيفها تحت 10 وظائف: التهديد، الاستثناء، الأغراء والواعد، الشرط، الاقتراح (بأربعة معانٍ: و، لكن، على الرغم من، فقط)، الاعتراض، التحدي، التفضيل، إنهاء المحادثة، والاستدلال. يدعم الباحثون كل فئة بأمثلة توضيحية مع ترجماتهم. وخلصت الدراسة أيضًا إلى أن مصطلح "بس" وظيفي في تحليل سلامة العمل. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يمكن استخدام المصطلح "بس" بشكل نحوي في سبعة أزمنة مختلفة: المضارع البسيط، الماضي البسيط، المستقبل البسيط، المضارع المستمر، الماضي المستمر، الماضي التام، والمستقبل التام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المعاني الواقعية، السياق، الأساس، الأزمنة..