The Pragmatic Functions of \textit{wa} in Jordanian Arabic: A Corpus-based Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. This paper examines the pragmatic functions of wa, the most frequently used discourse marker in the daily interactions of speakers of Jordanian Arabic (JA).

Procedure. The principal researcher built with the help of a research assistant a small-size corpus from conversations and talks presented by Jordanian TV and Radio Jordan in JA. The recordings ran for 194 minutes and covered multiple aspects of Jordanian life and culture such as traffic and safety, water and agriculture, education, tourism and environment, health, mountaineering and social topics. The recordings were transcribed for analysis by two of the four researchers and verified by the other two. The transcripts comprised 20660 words with 1229 instances of wa. To identify the pragmatic functions of wa, the researchers worked in groups of two and screened and examined independently a different 50 percent of the transcribed data and proposed their own list of identified functions along with at least two illustrative examples for each pragmatic function. Once done, they held a number of successive meetings to review the outcome with a view to reaching consensus judgments on the identified functions and examples. They were able to agree on eight of the 12 suggested labels. For the remaining four, they invited a focus group of 10 postgraduate students of linguistics whose native language was JA to examine and discuss the disputed material. This intensive and laborious work had reduced the list of functions to 11.

Results. The findings of the study show that wa has 11 pragmatic functions. It is mainly used for expressing addition, indicating resumption, swearing an oath, concluding a premise, elaborating on the antecedent sentence, restating, mocking, showing simultaneity, extending congratulations, linking alternative contrasts, and avoiding complete and explicit listing.

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Conclusions. The paper identified 11 pragmatic functions of wa in Jordanian Arabic. However, the paper has made no claims that these functions are conclusive as the corpus is small and is collected from officially channeled media that had to pass censorship before being released. Another thing of importance is the extent to which the proposed labels for the functions is agreed by the readers of this paper, including academic colleagues. Once again, we cannot argue that the given names of the functions are unequivocally sound and acceptable. A reader may suggest another label here and there and this temptation cannot be easily suppressed.

Key words: corpus-based research, Jordanian Arabic, pragmatic functions, psycholinguistics, wa.

Introduction

There has been considerable interest in the study of discourse markers (DMs), particularly in terms of definition, classification and pragmatic functions (Schiffrin, 1987, 2001; Fraser, 1999, 2006; Hamdan & Fareh, 1999; Aijmer, 2002; Hamdan & Abu Rumman, 2020, Hamdan, 2021, 2021; Hamdan & Hammouri, 2022, among others). Schiffrin (1987) defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (p. 31). Fraser (1999) looks at them as “a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal a relationship between the interpretations of the segment they introduce, S2 and the prior segment, S1” (p. 950). S2 and S1 refer to the current segment of discourse and the previous one, respectively. The use of discourse markers lies at the heart of psycholinguistics as they are used to consciously or subconsciously organize and manage what speakers want to say to connect ideas and to express how they feel about what they are saying. Put another way, the proper use of DMs or lack of it, is doomed to impact the quality and effectiveness of communication, a major concern of pragmatics and psycholinguistics.

Further, studying the communicative functions of DMs is closely intertwined with psycholinguistics as it examines how language is processed in the human mind. In this context, such markers play a vital role in guiding comprehension, highlighting relationships between ideas, and managing discourse structure. Thus, their examination sheds light on cognitive processes, memory retention, and attention allocation.
during communication. Accordingly highlighting their pragmatic functions from a psycholinguistic perspective offers valuable insights into how our brains navigate the intricate web of language.

Actually, the *wa*, roughly ‘and’, the focus of this study is a dependent lexical expression in Arabic, whether Jordanian or otherwise, mainly drawn from the syntactic class of conjunctions. Unlike other lexical items, it cannot stand on its own in writing and thus cannot be separated from the following element by a space; together they form and count as one word. Although a pause is possible after *wa* in spoken Arabic and in Jordanian Arabic (JA) in particular, probably as an indicator of hesitation, the pause hardly suggests a change of meaning or communicative function.

In 2014, Al-Khawaldeh, Awal and Zainudin offered a corpus-based description of discourse markers (DMs) in Arabic sport journalistic texts. The researchers were able to identify 73 DMs which were subsequently classified into four classes: elaborative, contrastive, inferential, and temporal. The findings indicated that DMs relate text units to each other by highlighting the communicative relationships between them. Moreover, the study showed that the identified DMs belong to different word categories such as conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions. As for their position, the DMs tended to occur sentence-initially. Further, Al-Khawaldeh (2018) examines the functions of *kama*, which in one of its senses can alternate with *wa*, in the Arabic journalistic discourse using a small-scale corpus of journalistic discourse (with 290 occurrences of *kama*) taken from two prominent Arabic news websites: Aljazeera.net and Alarabia.net. The corpus covers opinion articles, news reports, and sport reports. The study reveals that *kama* is used to serve four common functions: elaboration, similarity, evidence and exemplification.

The Arabic *wa* has received considerable attention in the literature. In Arabic, it mainly subsumes under a class of DMs referred to as huru:fat al-atf “conjunctive particles” (Abdel-Hameed, 2019; Maghalseh, 1991). Further, of all Arabic DMs, *wa* is considered the most frequently used one which links words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs (Al-Batal, 1990). In the same vein, Hamdan and Fareh (1999: 201) report that “a random check of the first five pages of 10 Arabic books showed that *wa* occurred at least 12 times a page, whereas *laakin* ‘but’ and *aw* ‘or’, for instance, did not occur even once on some pages”. To contextualize the current study in the literature, a review of studies on *wa* and other
DMs in Arabic in general and the Jordanian context in particular is due. Emphasis will be placed on the pragmatic functions of such devices.

Fareh (1998) is among the early studies which highlights some functions of *wa* as a cohesive device in Arabic. However, it is different from the one reported here in two respects. First, its primary interest is in the functions of the English conjunction ‘and’ and how they compare and contrast with those of its nearest equivalent *wa*; in contrast, the current paper is wholly devoted to identifying and analyzing the pragmatic functions of *wa* in JA in its own right. Second, while Fareh (1998) has based his analysis on written discourse, ours is based on a spoken corpus built by the principal researcher. In this context, it is worth noting that the meanings of *wa* in written discourse have already been discussed by many grammarians and rhetoricians (e.g. Abdel-Hameed, 2019; Al-Hamad, 1984, among others). Fareh (1998), on the basis of available literature, lists nine functions of ‘and’, i.e. consequence, sequence, contrast, simultaneity, concession, condition, addition, explanation and comment. When he turns to *wa*, Fareh suggests some seven functions/uses, namely, to show resumption, to indicate circumstance (adverbial), to preface oath, to show togetherness or simultaneity (waw al-maʕiyya), to offer alternation, to indicate praise or admiration, and to introduce threat/contempt/underestimation. Actually, Fareh was interested in contrasting the English ‘and’ with the Arabic *wa* for translation purposes.

Another earlier study driven by a similar intention, i.e. to assist Arabic-speaking EFL learners to correctly translate constructions with *wa* into English, is Hamdan and Fareh (1999). However, the study tests only six semantic functions/types of *wa*, namely, the resumptive, the sequential/additive, the alternative, the comitative, the adversative and the circumstantial. The writers report that the selection of these types is mainly based on their belief that these are among the most frequent ones in written discourse. The elicitation task items are not drawn from a specific corpus; they are prepared and suggested by the authors for the purpose of the study. The study concludes that the comitative, the circumstantial and the resumptive *wa* more difficult to translate than the sequential, the adversative and the alternative *wa*.

As is clear, the studies so far have highlighted how this conjunction compares in English and Arabic, but emphasis seems to have been placed on the syntactic and semantic levels (e.g. Holes, 2004) in addition
to the textual level (e.g. Al-Batal, 1990; Fareh, 1998). In contrast, Yagi and Ali (2008) is probably the first to draw attention to pragmatics, particularly the Gricean cooperative principle, while interacting with wa in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Their study whose sole focus is on wa as a logical conjunction sets out to examine whether wa is used to indicate sequence or otherwise. As background information, the paper suggests that the conjunctions wa, fa, and thumma in MSA are used to link one item to another to convey a specific relationship: fa ‘next’ is used when succession and immediacy are in focus, while thumma ‘then’ is employed when succession and non-immediacy are sought. The third one wa ‘and’ is used in a wider sense, i.e. when general coordination is intended. Thus, they pose the question: “What makes Arabic speakers use the conjunction wa to imply sequence when they have at their disposal fa and thumma that are specifically marked for sequence?” (Yagi & Ali, 2008: 618) The paper offers an extensive review of opinions supporting the contention that wa does not imply sequence (e.g. ʔɪxtalafa zajdʊn wa ʕamrʊn ‘Zayd and Amr disagreed’ and opinions that insist on the sequence as ultimate function of wa (e.g. ʔɪnna ss̴afa: wa lmarwata mn fa:ʃaːʔɪrɪ llaːh ‘Safa and Marwa are among the waymarks of God’; put another way, pilgrims should start from Safa and end at Marwa). Each group sought evidence from the Qur’an (the holy book of Moslems) or Arabic poetry to defend their argument. In this context, the study proposes that logic and pragmatics may contribute to resolving this conflict. The researchers cited the logic formula p & q ≡ q & p to support the argument that wa does not imply sequence. If this is the case, then the wa conjunction “is simply unmarked for temporality; i.e., sequentiality and synchronicity are not parts of the entailment of this conjunction. Any indication of sequence or synchronicity is only inferred pragmatically”. The authors provide some made-up examples to support their argument, i.e. “wa implies sequence only pragmatically”. They argue that (1) below is acceptable while (2) is odd because the latter violates the maxim of manner, i.e. the speaker fails to order the events (get in the car, close the door and tear off).

(1) ركب داوودُ سيارته، وأغلق بابها، وانطلق بها مسرعا

rakiba da:wu:du sajja:ratahu wa ʔaɣlaqa ba:baha wa ntalaqa biha: musriʕan
‘David got in his car, closed the door, and tore off’. 
انطلق داوودُ بسيارته، وأغلق بابها، وركبها
(2)
ʔin
talaqa da:wu:du bisajja:ratih wa ʔaylaqa ba:baha wa rakibaha:
‘David tore off in his car, closed its door, and got in’.

Actually, (2) is odd because it is semantically and syntactically unacceptable; the wa position in the sentence is governed by semantic and syntactic constraints. The sequence of events in (1) is crucial for the correctness and appropriateness of the sentence. It is not pragmatics per se that makes (2) unacceptable. For pragmatics to do its job properly, the utterance has to meet all the requirements of Arabic phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax, which is not the case in (2). The speaker in (1) has intended to show sequence and has succeeded whereas the speaker in (2) has failed to observe sequence requirements, i.e. temporality, and thus misplaced the wa associated phrases, which has made the utterance unacceptable. The fact that the speaker in (1) could have used other conjunctions to show sequence as the authors suggest is simply irrelevant. The study concludes that “context and the realization that language is a reconstruction of reality” are more important for interpreting messages with wa than the Gricean cooperative principle and the conventionally reported functions of this discourse marker (Yagi & Ali, 2008: 626).

Alazzawie (2014) provides a mainly syntactic analysis of wa in MSA. His findings are not very much different from those cited in Arabic grammar books. However, the writer highlights the following functions of wa: resumption, conjunction, circumstance, oath marker and what he called companionship which is often referred to in the literature as comitative wa (cf. Hamdan & Fareh, 1999).

In 2020, Nasir and Afrawi conducted a contrastive study on connectives in both Standard Arabic and English from syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives. The data were derived from two novels, Qaṣr al-Shawq ‘Palace of Desire’ by Naguib Mahfouz and East of Eden by John Steinbeck. The presentation of Arabic wa was very minimal at the pragmatic level. In particular, only two pragmatic functions are highlighted, namely, to impose condition and to show contrast as in (3) and (4), respectively.

هاتوا سلما وأنا أقبض عليها
(3)
ha:tu: sullaman wa ana: ʔaqbida: ʕalajha
‘Fetch a ladder and I will grab it’.
Some people are born to rule and others to serve.

As for (3), we are inclined to disagree with Nasir and Afrawi’s labeling of the function (Nasir & Afrawi, 2020). We perceive it as conclusion rather than condition, so the sentence could mean ‘Fetch the ladder so that I could grab it’.

In light of the foregoing, we claim that the study reported here is the first to be wholly dedicated to unveiling the pragmatic functions of *wa* in natural contexts derived from a Jordanian Arabic corpus. Thus, it fills a research gap that has been noted in *wa*-related studies.

**Corpus and Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, the principal researcher who is a native speaker of JA and competent in Standard Arabic built with the help of a research assistant of similar language competence a small-size corpus which consisted of conversations and talks presented by Jordanian TV and Radio Jordan in JA. The recordings ran for 194 minutes and covered multiple aspects of Jordanian life and culture such as traffic and safety, water and agriculture, education, tourism and environment, health, mountaineering and social topics, e.g. marriage, friendship, meal recipes, etc. The recordings were transcribed for analysis by two of the four researchers and verified by the other two. The transcripts comprised 20660 words with 1229 instances of *wa*. To identify the pragmatic functions of *wa*, the researchers worked in two teams. Each team screened and examined independently a different 50 percent of the transcribed data and proposed their own list of identified functions along with at least two illustrative examples for each pragmatic function. Once done, they held a number of successive meetings to review the outcome with a view to reaching consensus judgments on the identified functions and examples. They were able to agree on eight of the 12 labels suggested by the two teams. For the remaining four, the researchers invited a focus group of 10 postgraduate students of linguistics whose native language was JA to examine and discuss the disputed material. This intensive and laborious work had reduced the list of functions to 11 as shown in Results and Discussion.
Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data has informed the classification of the pragmatic functions of *wa* into 11; they are as follows:

1. **Expressing Addition**

Addition here implies a participatory relationship in which *wa* is used to add one element or more to a previously mentioned element or elements. The elements which are involved in this relationship are generally constituents of the same type and belong to the same formal category, e.g., noun + noun (John and Mary), verb + verb (eat and drink), etc. Below are illustrative examples from the data.

(5) اسمع يا سمير لازم تشيل الموضوع من مخلك وتبعدو عن تفكيرك بأي طريقة

ʔismaʕ ja: sami:r, la:zm tʃi:li lmawdu:ʃ min muxxak w tibiʃdu ʕan tafki: rak biʔaj ʕar:qa
‘Listen, Sameer, you have to remove the issue from your mind and keep it out of your mind by any means’.

(6) احنا صارلنا سنتين عايشين في بيت واحد، صرنا فاهمين وعارفين بعض كويس

ʔiħna sa:rilna sante:n ʕa:jʃi:n maʕ baʃad fi be:t wa:had, ʕirna fa:hmii:n ʃa:ri:n baʃad kwajjis
‘We have been living in the same house for two years and we understand and know each other well’.

(7) العروس حلفت ما تعمل القهوة الا هي هيها راحت تعملها وتجيبها

lʕaru:s ħalfat ma jiʕmal lɡahwi ʔilla hijji hajha rah tiʃmalha w tdʒi:jbha
‘The bride swears to make the coffee herself; look, she went in to make it and bring it’.

(8) هذا ابني إلي راجح يحمل اسمي واسم العيلة من بعدي

ha:ða ʔibni ʔilli ra:jih jiʃmil ʔismi w ʔisim ʕe:lti min baʃdi
‘This is my son, who is going to carry my name and the name of the family as well.’

A careful examination of (5) and (6) shows that the participatory relation of the items conjoined with *wa* does not imply strict sequence neither semantically nor pragmatically. In (5), for instance, one can remove the issue from one’s mind first, which implies that the issue is kept out of his/her mind or can keep the issue out of one’s mind first, an implication that it is not occupying any place in his mind. The same applies to the participatory relationship held between the linked items.
in (6); actually the two items, i.e. understand each other and know each other, can be reversed without any loss of meaning or pragmatics. In contrast, the items linked with *wa* in (7) and (8) seem to indicate a strict sequence and thus if reversed the pragma-semantic participatory relationship will be influenced. In (7), the bride cannot bring the coffee before she makes it; the cruciality of the temporal element cannot be overlooked. The same applies to the linked items in (8): the son will carry the name of the father before he carries the name of the family, at least in the context of the Arab culture.

Further and detailed scrutiny of the data reveals that the overwhelming majority of tokens in the addition category are just like (5) and (6). Apparently, the addition *wa* strictly orders the conjoined items only if they are temporally, spatially or logically constrained. Below is an example that illustrates spatial constraints.

(9)  
فُتِّشْنا الطابق الأول والثاني قبل مئلاقي الحرامي متخلي عالسطح  
fattaʃna ttaːbiɡ lʔawwal w ððaːni gabil ma nlaːɡi lharaːmi mitxabbi ʕassaːtih  
“We searched the first and the second floor before we found the thief hiding on the roof”.

This observation on the generally unsequenced order of the added items is in line with the belief of the majority of Arab grammarians and jurisprudents that the items linked by *wa* “enter into a participatory relationship without any implication of sequence or synchronicity” (cf. Yagi & Ali, 2008: 618).

While illustrating the additive participatory relationship of the conjoined items, it is imperative to report that this relationship showed up in the form of binomials. Malkiel (cited in Hamdan, 2005: 138) used the term binomial to capture lexical pairs conjoined together such as *choice and chance*, *knives and forks* and *facts and figures*. Below is a sample of the binomials linked by *wa* which were attested in the data.

(10)  
a.  
الحجة واللحمئة  
؟ʔildzʔaː dʒ w llahmi ‘chicken and meat’.

b.  
من غير لف ودوران  
min yeːr laff w dawaraːn ‘without circumlocution and cunning’.

c.  
أعمالي وإشغالي  
ʔaʃmaːli w ?afyːaːli ‘my works and businesses’.

d.  
الجزاء وال مجرمين  
ʔalḍzʔuna: w lmudʒrимиːn ‘perpetrators and criminals’.
2. **Indicating Resumption**

The resumptive *wa* tends to connect phrases, clauses, and sentences within an utterance. It is there to maintain topic continuity and ensure coherent transition from one discourse unit into another, hence the label resumption. Below are illustrative examples.

(11) 
`الوصول إلهم` و`جانب من عمل الأمن الجنائي هو تحديد المجرمين والموضوع؛` 
\begin{align*}
\text{džaːnib min ʕamn lʔamn ldʒinaːSi huwa tahdiːd luːmudʒrimiːn w lwusuːl ʕilhum}
\end{align*}

‘Part of the mandate of the criminal police is to identify the criminals and arrest them.’

(12) 
`كل اللي حكيتي فهمنا. شو الموضوع اللي بدك تحكي في؟` و`يا ستي هيّنا تعارفنا.` 
\begin{align*}
\text{jaː sitti hajna tʕaːrafna. w kul ʔilli ḥakitiː fhimna. fuː lmawduːʔ ʔilli biddik tiḥki fi:}
\end{align*}

‘OK dear we have got to know each other. We have also understood what you said. What else do you want to raise?’

(13) 
`حصتك مش ناسيها اشتريتك بيها هدية من عمان` و`اطمن يا سعيد آني قبظت.` 
\begin{align*}
\text{ʔiːtːaman ja ʕaːsiːd ʔaːni gabaʃit w hustak muʃ naːsiːha ʃtareːtlak biːha hadijji min ʕamman}
\end{align*}

‘Set your mind at rest Said. I got my salary. I didn’t forget your share which I used to buy you a gift from Amman’.

(14) 
[This is a follow up of 13 above] و`انت مالك يا مثولي بتي هيك` 
\begin{align*}
\text{w inta maːlak jaː mitwalli bitlid bijji heːk}
\end{align*}

‘What’s wrong with you Mitwalli? Why are you looking at me this way?

It is worth noting that the resumptive *wa* is Arabic-specific and its main purpose is pragmatic, and thus it does not always surface when translated into English. While it translates as *and* in (11), it is lexically rendered as zero in (12–14).

3. **Swearing an Oath**

An important pragmatic function of *wa* is to preface a relatively limited number of words or phrases to indicate oath. The ultimate purpose of the oath taker is to assure the hearer that the content of oath is true. If the swear is to Allah, then the holiness and power of Allah are called as a witness to the truthfulness of the oath. If the swear is by something or somebody, other than Allah, then the greatness and power of this thing or body are called as a witness to the truthfulness
of the oath. Swearing an oath seems to be a common speech act in different communities. Jordan, the cultural and linguistic context of the data of this study, is not an exception. In the Arab Islamic culture, it is commonplace that God swears both by Himself as in (15) and by some of His creations as in (16). Below are illustrative examples from the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims.

(15) 
قُل بلى وَرَبِّي لَتْبَعِثُونَ
qul bala: wa rabbi: latubʕaθun
‘Yes, by my Lord, you will be resurrected’.

(16) 
وَالصَّبحِ إِذَا تَنفَسُ
wa ssusbhi ?iða: tanaffas
‘I swear by the morning when it breathes’.

In these examples, Allah has used wa to convey the oath. However, He has also prefaced wa with fa ‘then’ as in:

(17) 
فَوَرَبَ السمَاء وأَلْرَضَ إِنَّهُ لِحَقٍ
fa wa rabbi ssam?:i w lʔardī ?innahu lahaq
‘Then, by the Lord of heaven and earth, it is the truth (i.e. what has been promised to you)’.

The analysis of data revealed that the phrase walla:hi (i.e. wa plus Allah ‘God’) was the only form Jordanians used to convey their oaths.

(18) 
الله بتعجبني هاي الذكريات القديمة
wa:lla:hi btiʕdʒibni ha:j ʔiðikra:jt lgadimi
‘I swear to Allah I admire those old memories’.

(19) 
والله بالنسبة النا الفلاحين مفيش اشي مستحيل
‘I swear to Allah that for us the peasants, there is nothing called impossible’.

As speakers of Jordanian Arabic, it was not quite clear to us, the authors, at the beginning why walla:hi and its synonym, i.e. wrabbi or wrab lkaʃbi ‘by God of Kaba’ were the only phrases used to convey oaths in the data. We know that Jordanians also indicate oaths by attaching wa to many things which they view as dear, great and honourable, other than Allah (e.g. wra:s ?abu:j ‘by the head of my father’, wrahamit si:di ‘by my late grandpa’, wilmuʃhaʃ ‘by the Quran’, wiʃriftna ‘by our companionship’). However, the puzzle resolves easily when one recalls that swearing in oaths using names other than Allah is
viewed unfavourably by some Islamic jurisprudents and thus is unlikely to pass official media censorship. Apparently, as a precaution, such oaths are avoided by text writers. This unambiguously explains why such popular Jordanian oaths did not surface in the corpus.

This observation is of special implication to researchers who sometimes build and use a small-size corpus, subject to strict examination by the censor before release. Such censorship could have suppressed or at best limited the representation of important data in the corpus on the grounds of religious and cultural sensitivity, among others.

4. Concluding a Premise

A premise is a statement or a proposition that provides evidence or reasons to form a conclusion. It contains information that leads the recipient to believe that the speaker’s conclusion is true. The *wa* here prefaces the conclusion. For instance, ‘Ali has earned a doctoral degree in English’ is a premise which can lead to the conclusion that he can teach at university. Thus, one can say: Ali has a PhD in English and he can teach at university. Below are illustrative examples from the data. Below are illustrative examples from the data.
replaced by *miʃa:n he:k* ‘and (thus) or ‘because of this’. Another feature of this *wa* is that it is optional and thus can be deleted without changing the premise-conclusion relationship. However, its presence intensifies this relationship.

5. **Elaborating on the Antecedent Sentence**

Elaboration is a process by means of which the speaker offers further details on an anteceding proposition. The addition of details to the given information sometimes takes the form of giving a reason (24), provides convincing evidence (25), offers a relevant and timely comment (26), or helps to remove vagueness and enhance clarity (27). Below are illustrative examples of the numbered sub-functions.

(24)  
طبيب كيف انسى وانت عارفة انو متفقين بنت مراد سوزان لسمير؟


‘Fine. How can I forget when you know that we agreed that Suzan, Murad’s daughter will be married to Sameer?’

(25)  
الأمور ماقية مية بالمية

*ʔulʔumu:r ma:jji mijji bilmijji w fathijji mwa:ʃa*

‘Everything is going quite well and Fathiyyi has given her consent.’

(26)

a. مني: وال لحالدرجة ابوك بكرهني؟

*Muna: wal lahaddaradʒi ʔabu:ki bikrahni?’

*Muna: ‘Does dad really hate me to this extent?’.

b. هية: ويمكن أكثر كمان انت بصراحة كنتَ وقحة

*Hiba: w jimkin ʔakθar kama:n ?inti bʃara:ha kunti wiɡha*

*Hiba: ‘Perhaps, even more; you were actually rude’.

(27)  
مش الأصول أخذ موافقة الأولاد وبالذات سعيد السعید لانو الكبير؟

*mif ʔuʃu:l ʔo:xid mwa:ʃa:ɡat iwla:d w biðda:t saʃi:d laʔinnu liki:ɾ*

‘Isn’t the right thing for me to get our sons’ approval, particularly Saːd as he is the eldest?’.

Further examination of the above examples suggests that this *wa* can be dropped without affecting the meaning of the proposition. Its presence, however, tends to intensify the elaboration segment.
6. Restating

Here the *wa* prefaces a clause whose ultimate function is to restate the preceding one; this *wa* can be replaced by the particle *ʔaj* ‘that is’ or ‘namely’. However, restatement may sometimes limit the scope of the first clause or at least intensify it. Below are illustrative examples. (As some examples contain more than one *wa*, the intended *wa* is bold-faced.)

الفلاح بقظي السنة يحرث ويحصد وِهِي شغله (28)

\[\text{ʔilfalla}:h\ biqaddi ssani juhr\(\theta\) w juːguḍ \text{\textit{w}}\ haː\j jayiltu} \]

‘The farmer spends the year plowing and harvesting, and (that is) this is his job’.

خلزنا في سد الموحِب 7 ملايين متر مكعب من أصل 32 مليون متر مكعب وهي السعة التخزينية لسد (29)

\[\text{xazzana fi sad lmuːdʒib sabiʃ malajjiːn mitir mukaʃʕab min ʔaʃl 32 maljoːn \text{\textit{w}} haː\j issiʃa ttaxziːniːjji las-sad} \]

‘We stored 7 million cubic meters in the Mujib Dam out of 32 million cubic meters, i.e. the storage capacity of the Dam’.

في أربع مواد لازم يتعلمها الطالب وهي عربي إنجليزي رياضيات علوم (30)

\[\text{fiː ?arbaʃ mawaːd laːzim jitʕallamh\(\text{a} \text{\textit{t}}\)taːliːb \text{\textit{w}} hiːjji ʕarabi nγliːziː \text{\textit{rijaːdijjat} ʔuluːm}} \]

‘There are four subjects the student must learn, namely, Arabic, English, Mathematics, and Science’.

الطبيب بداول يومين في الأسبوع وهي الاثنين وخميس (31)

\[\text{ʔittabːib bidaːwim joːmeːn fi lʔusbuːʃ ʔiθneːn \text{\textit{w}} xamiːs} \]

‘The doctor reports two days a week, namely, Mondays and Thursdays’.

While this *wa* showed up clearly in our data, Fareh (1998) did not list it among the functions of *wa* probably because his study was not corpus-based nor was it concerned with JA. Further, he was mainly interested in contrasting the syntactic and semantic functions of the English *and* with those of *wa*, which had suppressed in one way or another this important pragmatic function of *wa*.

7. Mocking

The mocking *wa* is attested in sentences, each consisting of two or three clauses. The *wa* prefaces the concluding clause which is intended to mock someone’s position or behavior described in the previous clause(s).
The family suffers. This is highlighted by the first clause (we starve for food). The father is expected to look for a job to assist. His son mocks his dad’s position as his dad is sitting at home without exerting any effort to sustain his family. In this sentence, *wa* translates as *while* but *and* is also possible to show the sarcastic juxtaposition.

8. Simultaneity

The simultaneity *wa* is attested in the context of two clauses or phrases linked together by *wa* and have two simultaneous events.

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The speaker is a woman who announces a mutual and simultaneous love between her and her boyfriend Sami. The two clauses are a paraphrase of Sami and I are in love.

لما شفت الزراعة مجدية كنتي انا بدي استفيد وافيد أولادي (36)

lamma ʃufit ʔizzira:ʕa mudʒdiji kمامalit ʔana biddi ?astafi:d w afi:d wla:di

‘Once I realized that agriculture was productive, I proceeded. I wanted to benefit and benefit my children’.

The farmer who uttered this sentence talked about two simultaneous events. He wanted his investment in agriculture to be beneficial for him and for his children. The wa here can preface the phrase fi: nafs lwaqt ‘at the same time’.

قال انو بحبني وانا سمعتو بس يا ترى صحيح؟ (37)

ɡa:l ʔinnu biḥibni w ʔana smiʕtu bas ja tara sahi:ḥ?

‘He said that he loved me, and I heard him, but did he really mean it?’.

The woman reported two simultaneous events, i.e. his saying that he loved her and her hearing of this. Apparently, the wa intensifies the simultaneity of the two events.

احننا صارلنا سنتين قاعدين وبدون وظيفة (38)

ʔiħna s阿拉伯 sante:n ɡa:ʕdi:n w bidu:n waɗi:fi

‘We have been waiting for two years and we have not found a job’.

The speaker was a young man who voiced the concern of the youth. Two years had passed since graduation and we are still idle. The wa can be deleted without affecting the proposition but its presence intensified the fact that unemployment and the postgraduation reality were simultaneous.

9. Extending Congratulations

The pragmatic function of wa below is taken to extend congratulations or season’s greetings on birthdays, religious festivals and marriage anniversaries, among others.

في عيد الأضحى (كل عام وانت بخير) (39)

(ﬁ: ʃi:d ʔal-ʔaɗha:) kul ʕa:m w inta bxe:r

(On al-Adha Eid) ‘Happy eid/I wish you a happy eid.’ (Lit. Every year and you are in good shape).
The speaker conveys his congratulations to a friend on the Al-Adha feast using this canonical and formulaic sentence which cannot be said without *wa*. The word *كاَم* could be replaced by its synonym *سَالَة ‘year’*, particularly in the Jordanian countryside. If this sentence is a congratulation on a birthday occasion, the congratulant tends to add another formulaic phrase which specifies the number of years the speaker wishes the addressee to live, usually 100 as shown in (39).  
\[
\text{كل عام وانت بخير عقبل 100 سنة (40)}
\]

\[
\text{kul ʕa:m w inta bxe:r. ʕuɡba:l 100 sani}
\]

‘Happy birthday. I wish you lived until 100’.

Other examples include the following.

\[
\text{كل عام وانت إلى الله أقرب (41)}
\]

\[
\text{kul ʕa:m w inta ?ila lla:h ʔaqrab}
\]

‘Happy feast.’ (Lit. Every year you become closer to Allah).

\[
\text{ميلاد مجيد. كل عام وانت بخير (42)}
\]

\[
\text{mi:la:d madʒi:d. kul ʕa:m w inta bxe:r}
\]

‘Merry Christmas and Happy New Year’.

The observation that this pragmatic function of *wa* passed unnoticed by previous research is not quite straightforward to account for. One possibility is that the previous focus was on the functions of *wa* as such, which led many researchers to highlight its syntactic and/or semantic functions (e.g. Fareh, 1998, Alazzawie, 2014, among others) and understate its pragmatic ones. This was expected as their analysis was either self-driven, i.e. they were their own informants or was based on written Standard Arabic. In contrast, the analysis in the study reported here was based on a Jordanian Arabic corpus. While we attended to the various meanings of *wa* and its syntactic behavior, we placed special emphasis on its social use and context. For further illustration, the following anecdotal evidence may be helpful. Najih al-Khatib is a Jordanian writer who happened to have developed an interest in *wa*. He published a public post on Facebook in which he presented *kul ʕa:m w inta bxe:r* ‘Happy New Year’ and asked his virtual friends to identify the functions of *wa*; the term function was left as vague as it is (Al-Khatib 2022). We examined the responses and found that around 60 percent of them were syntax oriented (adverbial *wa*); 30 percent irrelevant (personal comments evading the question) and 10 percent
pragmatically driven (season’s greetings and congrats). Actually, these responses could have been influenced by formal language education in Jordan which focuses on grammar and to a lesser extent on meaning. Rhetorics and pragmatics are given a secondary status, to say the least.

10. Linking Alternative Contrasts

The conjunction wa here connects two alternative contrasts and is often attached to the particle la: and appear as one word, viz. willa. It seems that willa is a blend of ʔaw ‘or’ and la: ‘no’. Together, they may translate into English as or. In (43), wa links two possibilities that stand in contrast to each other, i.e. the student’s promise to his mom to focus on his study and her observation that he started lazing. The wa clause highlights the adversely contrast, i.e. he forgot the promise.

(43) ʔum la ʔibinha) lamma daxalt ldʒaːmʕa waʕaditni trakkiz ʔadraːstak w illa nsiːt?
(Mom to her son) ‘When you joined the university, you promised me to focus on your study, (or) did you forget?’

(44) ʔinta biddak tifzim ʔabu ssaʕiːd lahaːlu w illa fiː ʔada maːsa:
‘Do you want to invite Abu Al-Saeed alone, or with other people?’

The two contrasts are inviting Abu Al-Saeed alone and inviting him with some other people. Confirming one of them is important as each alternative determines subsequent requirements, e.g. available space and amount of food to be offered.

(45) ħabbeːt salma ʔdaʕʃar muː sani w santeːn ɡabil ma nitdʒawwaz
‘I have loved Salma for 11 years, not one or two, before we got married’.

The contrasts represent two periods of time, namely, eleven years and a shorter period of one year or two. Note that wa is optionally not amalgamated with la: as is the case in (45) and (46).

(46) ʔiːda btithmall mal inniswaːn btiɡdar tidʒdʒawwaz ʔinteːn w ʔakθar
‘If you can stand women nagging, you can marry two or more’.
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The contrasted alternatives are to marry two women or to marry more. However, there is an implicit constraint on the number of wives at a time in Islam; the number should by no means exceed four.

11. Avoiding Complete and Explicit Listing

The final pragmatic function of wa is to avoid complete and explicit listing. In this case the speaker tends to state two or three items and continues with two or three uninterrupted wa tokens (i.e. wa wa or wa wa wa) without explicitly lexicalizing any listed item. This usage is similar to the Arabic abbreviation إلخ ئيلخ and translates into English as etc or and so on and so forth. Below are illustrative examples.

سلمى موهوبة بتعزف بيانو وكمان وبتغني ووو
Salma mawhu:bi btiʕzif bja:nu w kama:n w bitɣanni wa wa wa
‘Salma is talented, she can play the piano, the violin, and can sing; you name it’.

The implicit list can be easily predicted by the hearer and thus no clarification is requested. The implicit items could be something like بترقص بترقص ‘dance’, بتددبک بتددبک ‘practice dabka’ and بتمثل بتمثل ‘act’.

السابق هامل وكاذاب وحرامي ووو
ʔissajiɡ ha:mil w kaðða:b w ħara:mi wa wa wa
‘The driver is careless, a liar, a thief and you name it’.

The implicit items could be something like مجرم مجرم ‘criminal’, منافق منافق ‘hypocrite’ and ابن حرام ابن حرام ‘bastard’.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper identified 11 pragmatic functions of wa in Jordanian Arabic. However, the paper has made no claims that these functions are conclusive as the corpus is small and is collected from officially channeled media that had to pass censorship before being released. Another thing of importance is the extent to which the proposed labels for the functions is agreed by the readers of this paper, including academic colleagues. Once again, we cannot argue that the given names of the functions are unequivocally sound and acceptable. A reader may
suggest another label here and there. This temptation cannot be easily suppressed but through a margin of readers’ and assessors’ tolerance and respect of difference in perception and interpretation.

The analysis of data was solely qualitative. This is due to the fact that the focus of the study was on the identification of the pragmatic functions of *wa* in one spoken variety of Arabic on the basis of an oral corpus rather than on the basis of invented examples or data extracted from Classical or Standard Arabic texts. To this end, the paper has achieved the set objective. Further, no sooner had we completed the analysis of the data than we realized its limitations. In addition to the small size of the corpus, the censor had apparently suppressed certain forms and expressions that would have otherwise subsumed under certain functions e.g. making an oath due to cultural or religious considerations. In Jordan, it is very common for people to make oaths using names other than Allah but this was not attested in the data. In this context and due to such implicit or explicit constraints, we concluded that quantifying the data will be more of a mechanical task rather than a sensible and productive contribution.

This study has focused on *wa* in Jordanian Arabic. Future research may address the pragmatic functions of this discourse maker in other varieties of Arabic to see if sub-culture has a say in this regard. Other discourse markers such as *bas* ‘but’ and *baʕde:n* ‘then’ can also furnish grounds for future investigations. Finally, the findings may have implications for teaching and learning Arabic as a foreign or second language. Implications for Arabic-English-Arabic translation are also a potential desired output.

**ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL STANDARDS**

**Ethics Declaration.** The set of collected data is open for the public with no restrictions on its use for linguistic description. No human elements are involved in the analysis.

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**Data Availability Statement.** The data set can be accessed in Mendeley Data.

**Author Contributions.** Jihad M. Hamdan, the principal author, suggested the topic of the paper and built with the help of a research assistant a small-size corpus on *wa* by recording conversations and talks presented by Jordanian TV and Radio
Jordan in JA. The recordings were transcribed for analysis by Hady J. Hamdan and Wael J. Hamdan; the transcriptions were verified by Jihad M. Hamdan and Wafa A. Alkhadra. To identify the pragmatic functions of wa, the researchers worked in groups of two and screened and examined independently a different 50 percent of the transcribed data and proposed their own list of identified functions along with at least two illustrative examples for each pragmatic function. Jihad M. Hamdan wrote the first draft of the manuscript and his co-authors reviewed the draft and provided feedback. Hady J. Hamdan enriched the literature review with relevant material. Jihad Hamdan re-examined the manuscript in light of the given feedback and produced the final proofread edited and refined version.

Consent for Publication. All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript and all authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Прагматичні функції wa в йорданській арабській мові...
принесення присяги, завершення передумови, розвитку попереднього речення, переформулювання, глузування, демонстрації одночасності, привітання, поєднання альтернативних контрастів, а також для уникнення повного і явного перелічування.

Висновки. У статті визначено 11 прагматичних функцій wa в йорданській арабській мові. Однак ми не претендуємо на те, що ці функції є остаточними, оскільки корпус невеликий і зібраний з офіційних ЗМІ, які перед виходом у світ проходили цензуру. Важливим є також те, наскільки запропоновані назви функцій узгоджуються з читачами цієї статті, в тому числі з колегами з академічних кіл. Знову ж таки, ми не можемо стверджувати, що наведені назви функцій є однозначно правильними і прийнятними. Читач може запропонувати іншу назву, і цю спокусу нелегко подолати.

Ключові слова: корпусні дослідження, йорданська арабська мова, прагматичні функції, психолінгвістика, wa.