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REALIZATION OF PRAISE- AND CURSE-EXPRESSING UNITS IN DIGITAL DISCOURSE: A PRAGMATIC AND DISCOURSE-ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The rapid expansion of social networking platforms has fundamentally transformed the ways in which evaluation, emotion, interpersonal relations, and social identity are communicated. Within digital discourse, praise and curse expressions constitute particularly significant pragmatic resources because they enable users not only to express positive or negative evaluations but also to construct identities, negotiate interpersonal relationships, establish solidarity, challenge social norms, and influence audiences. This article examines the realization of linguistic units expressing praise and curses in digital discourse from pragmatic and discourse-analytical perspectives. The analysis indicates that the interpretation of both categories is strongly dependent on context, interpersonal relationship, platform affordances, communicative intention, and audience design. A central finding of the study is that praise and curses should not be treated as simple opposites of positive and negative vocabulary. In digital environments, the same linguistic form may perform different pragmatic functions depending on interactional context. The article proposes a functional taxonomy of praise- and curse-expressing units and demonstrates how their realization is shaped by the technological environment of contemporary digital communication. The findings contribute to digital pragmatics, discourse studies, computer-mediated communication, and the study of evaluative language.

Keywords: digital discourse, cyberpragmatics, praise, curses, speech acts, evaluation, impoliteness, politeness, social media, pragmatic function, multimodality

INTRODUCTION. Digital communication has become one of the most influential environments for contemporary language use. Social networking platforms, messaging applications, video-sharing services, microblogging websites, and online communities have created communicative spaces in which users continuously evaluate people, events, objects, opinions, performances, and themselves. Unlike traditional written discourse, digital communication is characterized by immediacy, interactivity, multimodality, reduced contextual information, algorithmically mediated visibility, and the possibility of addressing both known interlocutors and large imagined audiences.

In such an environment, evaluative language occupies a central position. Users express approval, admiration, encouragement, solidarity, disagreement, disappointment, anger, contempt, hostility, and emotional involvement through a wide range of linguistic and paralinguistic resources. Among these resources, praise and curse expressions are especially important because they represent two highly salient forms of interpersonal evaluation.

Praise may be defined as a communicative act through which a speaker positively evaluates a person, action, quality, achievement, appearance, product, or event. Contemporary research treats praise as a positive evaluative speech act rather than merely a collection of positive adjectives.

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Curses, by contrast, traditionally belong to the domain of negative verbal action. They may express hostility, anger, rejection, condemnation, frustration, or a wish for misfortune. However, digital communication complicates this traditional interpretation. A curse-like expression may function as a genuine hostile act, but it can also serve as humorous exaggeration, playful teasing, emotional intensification, group bonding, or identity performance. Thus, its pragmatic meaning cannot be determined solely from the lexical meaning of the expression.

Digital discourse provides particularly interesting conditions for the realization of both categories. Hashtags, emojis, capitalization, repeated letters, punctuation, GIFs, memes, tagging, quotation, reaction buttons, and audiovisual content may intensify or modify the pragmatic force of an utterance.

Zappavigna's research on Twitter and social media, for instance, demonstrates the importance of evaluative language and "ambient affiliation" in online communication, where users may construct relationships through searchable and publicly visible discourse. Therefore, studying praise and curses in digital discourse requires an interdisciplinary perspective combining pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and computer-mediated communication studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW. The theoretical foundation of this study is Speech Act Theory, originating primarily from Austin (1962) and further systematized by Searle (1969). The central assumption of the theory is that language is not merely a means of describing states of affairs but also a means of performing social actions.From this perspective, praise is not simply a sentence containing a positive adjective. An utterance such as "You did an amazing job!" performs an evaluative interpersonal action. Similarly, a curse is not merely a negative lexical sequence but may constitute an act of condemnation, rejection, emotional aggression, or an attempt to symbolically affect another person's social or emotional position.

Austin's distinction among locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions is particularly useful. The locutionary level concerns the linguistic content of an utterance; the illocutionary level concerns the communicative act performed; and the perlocutionary level concerns its possible effect on the addressee. **For example: -"You are absolutely brilliant!".**

The literal content represents a negative wish, while the illocutionary force may involve condemnation or hostility. Its perlocutionary effect may be anger, fear, amusement, resistance, or indifference depending on context. This distinction is essential in digital discourse because online utterances frequently rely on indirectness, irony, quotation, memes, and contextual knowledge.

Gasparyan (2024) describes praise as a positive evaluative speech act and emphasizes its communicative purpose, emotional dimension, and potential perlocutionary effect. In digital communication, praise can take multiple forms:

- ***direct praise: "You are amazing!"***
- ***achievement-oriented praise: "You absolutely nailed it!"***
- ***appearance-oriented praise: "You look stunning!"***
- ***moral praise: "Such a kind person!"***
- ***performance praise: "What an incredible performance!"***
- ***group praise: "Proud of everyone!"***
- ***self-praise: "I am finally proud of what I achieved."***
- ***formulaic praise: "Well done!", "Respect!", "Amazing!"***

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- ***multimodal praise: "❤"***
- ***hashtag-based praise: "legend", "queen", "proud"***

The study of self-praise is particularly important for digital discourse. Matley (2018) demonstrates that Instagram hashtags can explicitly mark the illocutionary force of self-praise, while also allowing users to manipulate expectations surrounding self-presentation. Dayter's research similarly demonstrates that social media environments can normalize forms of self-praise that may be considered interactionally delicate in offline communication. A similar process can occur with negative hashtags, insulting labels, or curse-like expressions. The literature demonstrates three major tendencies.

- First, research on praise has increasingly focused on self-praise and it's role in constructing positive self-presentation in social media.
- Second, research on impoliteness has extensively examined offensive and hostile digital discourse. Recent studies continue to investigate sarcasm, mock politeness, and impoliteness in platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X.
- Third, cyberpragmatic research has emphasized that digital meaning depends on interaction between linguistic forms and technological affordances.

Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been paid to the continuum between praise and curse as two forms of evaluative action. This article addresses this gap by proposing a unified framework.

METHODOLOGY. The study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytical design informed by pragmatics and digital discourse studies. The purpose is not to measure the frequency of particular words alone but to investigate how praise- and curse-expressing units acquire communicative force in context.The analytical framework combines four theoretical perspectives:

1. Speech Act Theory – for identifying the action performed through an utterance;

2. Politeness Theory – for analyzing face-enhancing and affiliative functions;

3. Impoliteness Theory – for examining offensive, hostile, and face-threatening behavior;

4. Cyberpragmatics – for explaining the role of digital context and platform affordances.

Platform affordances. Different platforms encourage different realizations of evaluative discourse.

- **Instagram.** Visual content makes praise strongly connected to appearance, achievement, lifestyle, and identity presentation. Hashtags and emojis are particularly important.
- **TikTok.** Short-form video and comment culture encourage highly condensed, humorous, exaggerated, and multimodal evaluation.
- **X.** Public argumentation and rapid interaction may increase the visibility of criticism, sarcasm, praise, and hostile discourse.
- **Telegram and private messaging.** Smaller or semi-private communities may allow more intimate forms of praise, teasing, and curse-like language.

Thus, digital discourse should not be treated as a homogeneous category. Cultural and linguistic variation. Praise and curse expressions are strongly culturally embedded. A form that is acceptable or humorous in one linguistic community may be offensive in another. Religious references, family-related expressions, honor-related vocabulary, and taboo topics have different pragmatic values across

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cultures.This is especially important for English-language digital discourse involving multilingual users.The growing global use of English means that expressions may circulate outside the cultural environment in which they originated. Consequently, users may reinterpret, appropriate, abbreviate, or transform expressions according to local communicative norms.

Praise, curses and identity construction. Digital users do not simply communicate information. They construct public identities. A user who repeatedly praises others may construct an identity of:

- friendliness;
- supportiveness;
- expertise;
- solidarity.

A user who frequently uses aggressive language may construct an identity of:

- toughness;
- rebellion;
- humor;
- group loyalty;
- confrontation.

Thus, evaluative language contributes to digital identity performance. This interpretation corresponds with research emphasizing social media as an environment of self-presentation and identity negotiation. From individual utterance to community norm. Another important observation is that evaluative expressions can become conventional within online communities.

For example, a particular phrase may become a community-specific compliment or insult. Memes can transform ordinary expressions into recognizable pragmatic formulas. Therefore, the interpretation of praise and curses depends partly on community-specific discourse conventions. This reinforces the importance of community of practice identified in research on digital self-praise.

Toward an integrated model. Based on the theoretical discussion, the realization of praise and curse expressions in digital discourse can be represented through five interacting layers:

✓ **Layer 1: Linguistic form.** Words, phrases, clauses, interjections, and formulaic expressions.
✓ **Layer 2: Digital form.** Capitalization, repetition, punctuation, emojis, hashtags, GIFs, memes, and tagging.
✓ **Layer 3: Pragmatic intention.** Praise, encouragement, criticism, condemnation, humor, solidarity, self-presentation, or emotional release.
✓ **Layer 4: Interactional context.** Relationship, previous discourse, audience, platform, and community norms.
✓ **Layer 5: Perlocutionary effect.** Motivation, emotional support, amusement, offense, anger, solidarity, identity reinforcement, or behavioral change.

The model can be expressed as:

Form + Digital Affordance + Intention + Context → Pragmatic Force → Interactional Effect

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This formula demonstrates why digital evaluative language cannot be adequately explained through lexical semantics alone.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY. The study has implications for several fields.

✓ **Digital pragmatics.** The findings demonstrate that pragmatic interpretation in digital environments requires attention to multimodal and technological resources.

✓ **Discourse analysis.** Praise and curses can be investigated as discourse strategies for identity construction, social alignment, conflict, and evaluation.

✓ **Language teaching.** English-language learners need to understand that expressions such as You're amazing, Respect, You're crazy, You're an idiot, and Go to hell cannot be interpreted independently of context.Teaching pragmatic competence should therefore include digital discourse.

✓ **Computational linguistics.** Automated systems for sentiment analysis, toxicity detection, and hate-speech detection may benefit from distinguishing:

- literal polarity;
- pragmatic polarity;
- irony;
- interpersonal relationship;
- multimodal cues.

A purely lexical approach may incorrectly classify playful insults as hostile or sarcastic praise as positive. Recent computational work on interpersonal pragmatics similarly demonstrates that context-sensitive pragmatic interpretation remains challenging for language technologies.

CONCLUSION. This study has examined the realization of praise- and curse-expressing units in digital discourse from pragmatic and discourse-analytical perspectives. The analysis demonstrates that praise and curses constitute important forms of digital evaluation and interpersonal action.Praise may be realized through individual lexical items, formulaic phrases, syntactic constructions, hashtags, emojis, capitalization, repetition, and multimodal combinations. It may function as positive evaluation, encouragement, solidarity, identity construction, recognition, or self-presentation. The study therefore proposes that praise and curses be conceptualized as points on a broader continuum of digital evaluation rather than as isolated linguistic categories. Their realization emerges through the interaction of linguistic form, digital affordances, communicative intention, interpersonal relationship, audience, cultural expectations, and perlocutionary effect.

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