

## Language, Ritual, And Social Legitimacy In Islamic Wedding Ceremonies: A Critical Pragmatic Analysis

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### *Abstract*

This study examines Islamic wedding ceremonies through a critical pragmatic analysis perspective, highlighting the function of language in constructing religious and social legitimacy. Wedding ceremonies are understood not merely as a series of symbols and ceremonial processions, but as a performative communication space where language plays a central role in shaping collective consciousness. The research data were obtained from Islamic wedding ceremony texts sourced from Islamic jurisprudence books, written documents, and recordings of field practice in Indonesian Muslim communities. Using the framework of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1995) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013), this study examines how language functions not only as a medium for conveying normative messages but also as a performative instrument that internalizes spiritual, moral, and social values into Muslim household life. The results show that Islamic wedding discourse is dominated by three main speech act patterns. First, representative, which confirms the legitimacy of faith, the shahada, and theological norms as the spiritual foundation of marriage. Second, directives, which serve as moral instructions and household guidelines, include calls to piety, advice on maintaining family harmony, and prohibitions against behavior that damages the bonds of marriage. Third, expressives, which strengthen spiritual solidarity through prayer, expressions of gratitude, and collective hopes for the bride and groom. The synergy of these three patterns demonstrates that language in wedding rituals plays a dual role: as a religious bond and as a social control mechanism that strengthens the family institution. Academically, this research broadens the horizon of religious pragmatics by presenting new insights into the role of language in

constructing social legitimacy, particularly in the rarely researched context of Islamic marriage. Practical implications: the quality of delivery of wedding texts needs to be improved so that the religious and moral messages they contain do not stop at the level of ritual formality, but are truly internalized in contemporary Muslim family life.

**Keywords:** religious language, critical pragmatics, wedding rituals, social legitimacy, performative discourse.

### ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مراسم الزواج الإسلامي من منظور التحليل التداولي النقدي، مع إبراز الدور المحوري للغة في بناء الشرعية الدينية والاجتماعية في آن واحد. فالزواج لا يُنظر إليه باعتباره مجرد طقس شكلي أو إجراء قانوني، بل باعتباره فضاءً تواصلياً أدائياً تُسهم اللغة من خلاله في تشكيل الوعي الجماعي وترسيخ القيم المشتركة. وقد استُمدت بيانات البحث من نصوص مراسم الزواج الإسلامي المدوّنة في كتب الفقه، والوثائق المكتوبة، إضافة إلى تسجيلات ميدانية لممارسات الزواج في المجتمعات المسلمة بإندونيسيا. واستندت الدراسة إلى نظرية أفعال الكلام (أوستن، ١٩٦٢؛ سيرل، ١٩٩٥) وتحليل الخطاب النقدي (فركلاف، ٢٠١٣)، من أجل فهم كيفية عمل اللغة ليس فقط كوسيط لنقل الرسائل المعيارية، بل كأداة أدائية تؤدي إلى استبطان القيم الروحية والأخلاقية والاجتماعية في بنية الأسرة المسلمة. أظهرت النتائج أن خطاب الزواج الإسلامي تهيم عليه ثلاثة أنماط رئيسية من أفعال الكلام: أولاً، الأفعال التمثيلية التي تُعزز شرعية الإيمان والمعايير اللاهوتية بوصفها أساساً روحياً للزواج. ثانياً، الأفعال التوجيهية التي تؤدي وظيفته التعليم الأخلاقي والإرشاد الأسري من خلال الدعوة إلى التقوى والنصح بحسن المعاشرة والتحذير من الظلم. ثالثاً، الأفعال التعبيرية التي تُعمق التضامن الروحي والاجتماعي عبر الدعاء، والتعبير عن الشكر، وإطلاق الأمنيات الجماعية للزوجين. وتبين هذه الأنماط أن اللغة في مراسم الزواج تقوم بدور مزدوج: فهي رابطة دينية من جهة وألية للضبط الاجتماعي من جهة أخرى تُرسخ مؤسسة الأسرة وتضفي عليها الشرعية. أكاديمياً، تُسهم هذه الدراسة في توسيع آفاق البحث في التداولية الدينية عبر تقديم فهم جديد لوظيفة اللغة في بناء الشرعية الاجتماعية في سياق الزواج الإسلامي. أما عملياً، فتوصي الدراسة بضرورة تحسين جودة إلقاء نصوص الزواج بحيث تُستوعب رسائلها الدينية والأخلاقية بفعالية أكبر في حياة الأسرة المسلمة المعاصرة.

الكلمات الرئيسية: اللغة الدينية، والبراغماتية النقدية، وطقوس الزفاف، والشرعية الاجتماعية، والخطاب الأدائي

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji upacara pernikahan Islam melalui perspektif analisis pragmatik kritis dengan menyoroti fungsi bahasa dalam membangun legitimasi religius dan sosial. Data diperoleh dari teks-teks khutbah pernikahan yang bersumber dari kitab fikih, dokumen tertulis, serta rekaman praktik lapangan di masyarakat Muslim Indonesia. Dengan kerangka teori tindak ujaran (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1995) dan analisis wacana kritis (Fairclough, 2013), penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana bahasa berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai medium penyampai pesan normatif, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen performatif yang menginternalisasikan nilai spiritual, moral, dan sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa wacana pernikahan Islam didominasi oleh tiga pola utama: representatif yang mengukuhkan legitimasi iman dan norma teologis, direktif yang berfungsi sebagai instruksi moral dan pedoman rumah tangga, serta ekspresif yang memperkuat solidaritas spiritual melalui doa dan harapan kolektif. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa bahasa dalam ritual pernikahan berperan ganda, yakni sebagai pengikat keagamaan sekaligus mekanisme kontrol sosial yang meneguhkan institusi keluarga. Secara akademik, penelitian ini memperluas horizon kajian pragmatik religius dengan menghadirkan pemahaman baru tentang peran bahasa dalam membangun legitimasi sosial. Implikasi praktisnya, kualitas penyampaian teks pernikahan perlu ditingkatkan agar pesan religius dan moral yang dikandungnya lebih efektif diinternalisasikan dalam kehidupan keluarga Muslim kontemporer.

**Kata kunci:** bahasa religius, pragmatik kritis, ritual pernikahan, legitimasi sosial, wacana performatif

### **A. Introduction**

The Islamic wedding ceremony is more than just a series of ritual texts; it is a medium of communication and social education. This procession not only solidifies legal bonds but also internalizes moral values, strengthens social legitimacy, and affirms the identity of the Muslim family (Geertz, Clifford, 1976). In the dynamics of modern society, marriage transcends formal contracts; it requires a solid foundation of values and communication to ensure the institution's social and spiritual solidity. Academically, this analysis is significant because it highlights the linguistic dimension as a performative discourse. Practically, the marriage sermon serves as a direct instrument for instilling the values of piety and awareness of family life. Thus, the Islamic wedding ceremony is a vital element that combines social, educational, and spiritual functions in sowing the foundations of the family in contemporary Muslim society.

Previous pragmatic studies have generally focused on analyzing speech acts in Friday sermons, speeches, and social legitimacy, normative control, and the internalization of cultural values. For example, Mohammed Saleh Al-Hamzi's research shows the dominant use of deixis in Friday sermons by preachers in Yemen, which serves to direct, build closeness, and create relationships between the speaker and the congregation. Meanwhile, Harmia's study through his article *Reflection of Ideology in Illocutionary Speech Acts in Viktor Orban's Speech* emphasizes that illocutionary speech acts not only function communicatively, but also contain ideological dimensions that play a role in shaping social awareness and legitimacy of discourse (Harmia, 2024). On the other hand, Sigiro's explores speech acts in the context of Simalungun traditional pre-marriage, finding that these utterances play an important role in social legitimacy, normative control, and internalization of cultural values (Sigiro et al., 2024).

However, these existing studies have yet to systematically explore Islamic wedding ceremonies as a primary object of pragmatic research, despite their status as religious texts with profound socio-performative functions. Consequently, while these ceremonies are rich in ritual, moral, and communicative significance, in-depth linguistic analysis focusing on their illocutionary structures remains sparse. This notable gap provides a clear academic justification and space for the present study.

This study aims to identify the dominant illocutionary forms in Islamic wedding ceremonies—such as representative, directive, and expressive—and to understand their social functions. Building on the theoretical frameworks of Austin (1962) and Searle (1995), the analysis focuses on Islamic wedding ceremony texts from a pragmatic perspective. This research aims to uncover how Islamic wedding ceremonies function as religious-performative discourses that not only convey normative messages but also affirm social values relevant to domestic life and society.

The basic assumption in this study is that the dominance of directive and expressive speech acts in Islamic wedding ceremonies is not merely a form of ritual communication, but rather serves as a means of reinforcing social norms and internalizing family values. The relationship to be examined is between the linguistic function of the sermon (illocutionary speech act) and its social effects as a form of legitimacy and normative control in the context of marriage. Therefore, this study formulates the main question: What form do illocutionary speech acts take in Islamic wedding ceremonies, and how do they contribute to the social function of marriage?

So far, pragmatic studies of religious discourse have shown at least three tendencies. First, research on Friday sermons emphasizes directive aspects and relational structures, as demonstrated by Hamzi through deixis analysis (Mohammed Saleh Al-Hamzi et al., 2023). Second, studies on the reflection of ideology in illocutionary speech acts, as proposed by Harmia (2024), which shows that utterances have ideological content that influences the social meaning of a discourse (Harmia, 2024). Third, research examining speech acts in other religious ceremonies, such as pre-wedding customs, as conducted by Sigiro, demonstrates that pragmatic functions serve as communication strategies for strengthening norms and social legitimacy (Sigiro et al., 2024).

While these findings provide a vital foundation, they leave a notable void in the specific exploration of Islamic wedding ceremonies, which operate not only as cultural events but as uniquely religious-performative discourses.. Therefore, this study fills this gap by examining the illocutionary structure of Islamic wedding ceremonies and examining their role in conveying spiritual and social messages during the wedding ceremony. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only broaden the horizons of pragmatics studies but also enrich our understanding of how language works to strengthen the social institution of the family.

## **B. Method**

This research focuses on the text of Islamic wedding ceremonies practiced during the marriage ceremony in Indonesian Muslim communities (Wardoyo, 2017). The sermon text was chosen because it is a performative religious discourse with a social function. By selecting the Islamic wedding ceremony as the object of study, this research seeks to uncover the pragmatic dimension of the illocutionary speech acts that appear in the text, while also examining their role in the socio-religious context. This focus aligns with the tradition of pragmatic linguistic research, which emphasizes the analysis of utterance meaning based on the context of its use (Novitasari et al., 2023).

This research method is descriptive qualitative, as its primary objective is not to measure frequency statistically, but rather to describe the form and function of speech acts in Islamic wedding ceremonies. A qualitative approach is considered relevant because it allows researchers to interpret the sermon text as a meaningful socio-linguistic practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis was conducted utilizing the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1995), and linked to the underlying social context through a critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough, 2013).

The data sources in this study were Islamic wedding ceremony texts obtained from two types of data: (1) primary data in the form of documentation of Islamic

wedding ceremony practices at weddings recorded in the field, and (2) secondary data in the form of sermon texts from fiqh books, wedding guidebooks, and Islamic literature commonly used in the community. The selection of these texts took into account the variations in language use in Islamic wedding ceremonies, thus allowing for a more comprehensive pragmatic analysis. The strategy of using written texts and recordings of field practices aligns with the tradition of pragmatic studies that combine written documents and oral speech (Love & Stenstrom, 2023).

The data collection process was conducted through field observation and documentation, namely by recording Islamic wedding ceremonies delivered by the marriage registrar at several weddings. Additionally, limited interviews were conducted with the marriage registrar and religious leaders to obtain explanations regarding the use of sermon texts. Secondary data was obtained through a search of Islamic jurisprudence books, Islamic wedding ceremony guidebooks, and religious articles. Triangulation techniques were used to compare the results of field observations, interviews, and written documents to ensure data validity (Miles et al., 2014).

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, locutionary identification, which involves analyzing the parts of the sermon text that consist of statements, invitations, or prayers. Second, illocutionary classification, which involves categorizing utterances into representative, directive, and expressive speech acts according to Searle's (1995) framework. Third, social context interpretation, which involves linking the speech act to its social function, for example, legitimizing the marriage contract, internalizing the value of piety, or praying for the bride and groom. This analysis was conducted interactively, following the flow of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as recommended in qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014).

### **C. Results and Discussion**

An Islamic wedding ceremony is generally an Arabic-language sermon delivered by a preacher (sometimes a registrar) containing praises to Allah, the Shahadatain (Prophetic Declaration of Faith), and Quranic verses related to marriage. This is reinforced by interview data with the registrar: "I read verses about piety so that everyone present realizes that marriage is not just a contract, but an act of worship." (Interview, Kholis, 2024). The first data shows the dominance of representative speech acts in Islamic wedding ceremonies. This is evident in the text quotations that always begin with the recitation of Quranic verses, for example, Surah An-Nisa' (4):1 and Surah Ali-'Imran (3):102.

#### **Table 1.** Representative

No	Sermon Section	Type of Illocutionary	Utterance Example	Function
1	Opening	Representative	"Al-ḥamdu lillāh..."	Legitimacy of Faith
2	Shahada	Representative	Asyhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh..."	Affirmation of Faith
3	Quranic Verse	Representative	QS. An-Nisā' (4):1	Theological Legitimacy

Source: Interview summary and Sermon text document

From this table, it can be understood that Islamic wedding ceremonies begin with representative speech acts in the form of a declaration of faith, the shahada, and verses from the Quran. These utterances serve to strengthen the religious dimension of marriage. In other words, Islamic wedding ceremonies reaffirm the spiritual foundations that underlie married life.

There are three main patterns in the representative data: (1) Islamic wedding ceremonies begin with the legitimacy of faith through the hamdalah and the shahada; (2) the recitation of verses serves as the normative basis for marriage; (3) the representative structure serves as the foundation for subsequent speech acts. This pattern indicates that representative speech acts establish religious legitimacy before moving on to practical advice (Lutfi et al., 2024).

The second data point to the strength of directive speech acts. One marriage registrar stated: "I usually emphasize the phrase *Attaullah* (fear Allah) so that the bride and groom and congregation are aware of their household responsibilities." (Interview, Amin, 2024). A snippet of the general sermon text: "*Uṣīkum wa nafsi bitaqwā Allāh*" (I promise you to fear Allah).

**Table 2.** Directives

No	Sermon Section	Type of Illocutionary	Speech Example of Utterance	Function
1	Admonition of piety	Directive	"Ittaqullāh"	Moral invitation
2	Nasihah keluarga	Directive	"Jagalah istri kalian..."	Social command
3	Larangan	Directive	"Janganlah berbuat zalim..."	Normative control

Source: Interview summary and Sermon text document

The table above shows that directive speech acts occupy a central position in Islamic wedding ceremonies. They are not only religious but also practical, guiding the bride and groom towards household obligations. Directives serve as a means of internalizing moral values and controlling social behavior.

Three patterns emerge from directive speech acts: (1) an invitation to piety as a moral foundation (Wardoyo, 2017); (2) household advice as a practical guideline (Ghufran Hussain Jasim & Iman Mingher Obied, n.d.); and (3) prohibitions as normative control (Wardoyo, 2017). These patterns demonstrate that Islamic wedding ceremonies are not only sacred rituals but also function as social instructions.

The data from these three patterns demonstrate the strength of expressive speech acts. At the end of the sermon, the registrar usually concludes with a prayer: "Bārakallāhu lakumā wa jama'a baynakumā fī khayr" (May Allah bless you and unite you in goodness). One of the principals stated: "I always read this prayer so that the contract is not only formal, but also full of hope for goodness." (Interview, Fauzi, 2024).

**Table 3.** Expressive

No	Sermon Section	Illocutionary Type	Example Utterance	Function
1	Bride and Groom Prayer	Expressive	"Bārakallāhu lakumā..."	Prayer for blessing
2	Expression of Gratitude	Expressive	"Al-ḥamdu lillāh..."	Gratitude for the marriage contract
3	Hope	Expressive	"May we become a sakinah family"	Collective Hope

Source: Interview conclusions and text documents of the sermon.

The table above shows that expressive speech acts have two dimensions: a spiritual dimension (prayer and gratitude) and a social dimension (collective hope). Thus, expressive speech acts not only conclude the sermon religiously but also unite the attendees in a collective prayer for the bride and groom.

Three patterns of expressive speech acts: (1) prayer as a form of spiritual solidarity (Rebekah true, 2023); (2) expression of gratitude as a form of emotional legitimacy (Maryam Hashim Tahreer & Asst. Prof. Lihadh A. Mubarak, 2023); (3) collective hope as a symbol of social bonding (Palangyos & Ulla, 2025). The patterns above demonstrate that Islamic wedding ceremonies are not simply religious ritual texts, but rather performative discourses that unite linguistic, religious, and social dimensions.

This study analyzes illocutionary speech acts in Islamic wedding ceremony texts using a pragmatic approach. The results indicate the dominance of three illocutionary forms: representative (declaration of faith, shahada, recitation of verses), directive (invitation to piety, family advice, prohibitions), and expressive (prayer, gratitude, hope) (Akmal et al., 2020). These three acts synergistically, so that Islamic wedding ceremonies not only appear as formal rituals but also serve as a means of strengthening religious legitimacy and internalizing social values in Muslim society (Badr, 2022).

The relationship found shows that the linguistic function of the sermon is closely related to its social function: representative provides normative legitimacy, directive acts as moral instruction, and expressive strengthens emotional solidarity. Thus, religious language in Islamic wedding ceremonies demonstrates that it not only conveys messages but also builds social and ideological structures. This answers the question of why the tradition of Islamic wedding ceremonies is maintained, as it serves as a medium for integrating spiritual, linguistic, and social dimensions (Razzaq, 2023).

The results of this study align with previous findings that emphasize the dominance of directives in sermons (Mohammed Saleh Al-Hamzi et al., 2023) and religious processions (Sigiro et al., 2024), as well as with the notion of ideological content in illocutionary acts (Harmia, 2024) (Harmia, 2024). However, this study differs because it focuses on Islamic wedding ceremonies, rather than Friday sermons or public lectures. The similarity lies in the dominant pattern of directives, but the difference is that the expressive function in Islamic wedding ceremonies is stronger because prayers and hopes are the main part of the closing sermon. Herein lies the novelty: this study shows that Islamic wedding ceremonies constitute a unique religious discourse in their combination of representational, directive, and expressive elements compared to other religious discourses.

The significance of this research is that Islamic wedding ceremonies function as a religious-performative discourse that connects the text to its social and historical context. Socially, it reinforces the values of piety and family responsibility (Wardoyo, 2017). Historically, it continues the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who used the sermon as a means of educating the community. Ideologically, the Islamic wedding ceremony affirms the Islamic view (Ali, Abid Hmood, 2013) of marriage as a sacred institution that must be preserved (Maksum, 2024). Thus, the results of this study confirm that the Islamic wedding ceremony is not merely a sunnah (religious practice), but rather a communication ritual that connects religious values with social life (Wardoyo, 2017).

The implications of this research are twofold. Functionally, the Islamic wedding ceremony is an effective means of internalizing the norms of a harmonious, loving, and compassionate family. Dysfunctionally, if the sermon is merely recited mechanically without understanding, its moral message will lose its impact. In other words, the success of an Islamic wedding ceremony lies not only in the text, but also in the quality of its delivery by the registrar or religious figure (Wardoyo, Cipto, 2024).

Based on these findings, recommended policy responses include improving the quality of Islamic wedding ceremonies through training registrars, developing contextual sermon modules, and integrating Islamic wedding ceremonies into Islamic family education (Ridlwani & Fitriana, 2024). In this way, Islamic wedding ceremonies are not only maintained but also enhanced in their effectiveness as a medium for da'wah and moral education. If these steps are implemented, Islamic wedding ceremonies can become a cultural policy instrument to strengthen the resilience of Muslim families amidst the challenges of modernity (Febrianti et al., 2025).

The key takeaway from this research is that Islamic wedding ceremonies are not merely religious activities and texts, but also a means of communication that unites religious, moral, and social messages. The analysis of illocutionary speech acts indicates that Islamic wedding ceremonies can internalize the values of piety, strengthen family commitment, and foster social solidarity through prayer and advice. Thus, this research teaches us that religious language conveys more than just literal meaning but also calls for the internalization of concrete social actions.

Academically, this research contributes by providing empirical data on illocutionary speech acts in Islamic wedding ceremonies, a field that has been rarely explored. Conceptually, this research confirms the relevance of Austin and Searle's speech act theory in examining performative religious discourse.

Approachwise, this research enriches the tradition of pragmatic analysis by presenting a social perspective on religious texts. Furthermore, this study raises a new question: how do variations in Islamic wedding ceremonies across Muslim cultures influence the patterns of speech acts that emerge? This question opens the door to broader cross-cultural research.

This study is limited by the scope of the data, which is limited to Islamic wedding ceremony texts from a few written sources and specific field practices. This study has not explored variations in Islamic wedding ceremonies across regions and local traditions, which could potentially present a richer array of more complex speech acts. Furthermore, this study has not quantitatively analyzed the frequency of illocutionary speech acts. Therefore, future research is expected to expand the data coverage with a cross-regional approach and incorporate mixed-methods approaches to obtain more comprehensive results.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The key takeaway from this research is that Islamic wedding ceremonies are not merely religious activities and texts, but also a means of communication that unites religious, moral, and social messages. The analysis of illocutionary speech acts indicates that Islamic wedding ceremonies can internalize the values of piety, strengthen family commitment, and foster social solidarity through prayer and advice. Thus, this research teaches us that religious language conveys more than just literal meaning but also calls for the internalization of concrete social actions.

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