

Conditionality in the Qur'an: A Speech-Act Approach to Divine Discourse

Bijan Davvaz¹ 

Professor, Department of Mathematical Sciences, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran.

Article History: Received 9 January 2026; Revised 10 April 2026; Accepted 1 May 2026

ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

This study examines conditional sentences in the Qur'an through the lens of speech act theory, offering a novel interdisciplinary approach that integrates classical Islamic insights with contemporary philosophy of language. Moving beyond traditional logical or grammatical analyses, the paper demonstrates that Qur'anic conditionals function not merely as descriptive propositions but as performative acts with diverse illocutionary forces. Drawing on a detailed typology, the study classifies conditionals as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, or hybrid, illustrating how a single sentence may simultaneously convey theological truths, moral exhortation, divine commitment, and evaluative judgment. Case studies of key verses show that the force of these conditionals persists independently of whether their antecedents are fulfilled, highlighting the inadequacy of purely truth-conditional accounts. The paper contributes conceptually, theoretically, and methodologically by reconceptualizing Qur'anic conditionality as conditional speech acts, bridging contemporary philosophical theory with classical Islamic distinctions between declarative (*khabar*) and performative (*inshā'*) discourse. The findings have implications for Qur'anic linguistics, philosophy of language, and the study of divine communication across religious traditions.

KEYWORDS: Qur'anic conditionals, Speech act theory, Divine discourse, Illocutionary force, Conditionality, Philosophy of language, Qur'anic linguistics.

1. Corresponding Author. Email Address: davvaz@yazd.ac.ir

<http://dx.doi.org/10.37264/JIQS.V5I2.3>

1. Introduction

Conditional sentences occupy a central place in human reasoning, argumentation, and communication. They allow speakers to articulate causal relationships, possibilities, obligations, and hypothetical scenarios. In the Qur'an, conditional constructions assume a particularly complex and multifaceted role: they convey not only factual information but also moral exhortation, divine promise or threat, guidance, and evaluative judgment. Unlike ordinary conditional sentences in natural language, Qur'anic conditionals are deeply embedded in a religious, ethical, and metaphysical framework, reflecting the Qur'an's role as a source of normative guidance and divine instruction. Following Tabataba'i (1973, 11: 311), Qur'anic conditional statements may be understood not merely as linguistic or logical constructions, but as expressions of a broader moral and metaphysical order in which human actions are related to divine guidance and the consequences of those actions. In his interpretation of verse Q.13:11, Tabataba'i emphasizes the connection between changes in human spiritual and behavioral conditions and corresponding changes in divine favor, guidance, or deprivation, reflecting an underlying divine order governing the relationship between human agency and divine action.

Conditional sentences are a fundamental linguistic and logical structure in religious and philosophical texts, expressing a causal or dependency-based relationship between two propositions. Generally, a conditional sentence consists of two parts: the antecedent or condition (the "if" clause) and the consequent (the "then" clause). These sentences can be classified into various types, including real and possible conditionals, counterfactual (unreal) conditionals, and contingent conditionals, the fulfillment of which depends on the occurrence of another event. From the perspective of mathematical logic, conditional sentences are often represented by the symbols $\rightarrow$ or $\Rightarrow$, indicating that the truth of the first proposition entails that of the second. In Qur'anic and other religious texts, conditional sentences play a crucial role in illustrating the causal relationship between human actions and their consequences, as well as in conveying divine promises or warnings. Understanding their structure and function is essential for interdisciplinary research that bridges logic, linguistics, and religious studies, allowing for a more precise analysis of textual meaning and argumentative patterns.

Despite extensive grammatical and exegetical studies on Qur'anic conditional constructions, several questions remain unanswered: How do Qur'anic conditionals function performatively? How are moral guidance and divine commitment encoded in conditional structures? And how can

modern linguistic theory illuminate the pragmatic and illocutionary dimensions of these constructions? Understanding these aspects is crucial not only for Qur'anic linguistics but also for the philosophy of language, ethics, and the study of divine communication. The present study addresses these questions by pursuing three primary objectives. First, it analyses the semantic, grammatical, and pragmatic features of conditional particles in Qur'anic Arabic (*'in*, *'idhā*, *law*, and *lawlā*) and their impact on discourse. Second, it proposes a typology of Qur'anic conditionals based on illocutionary function, distinguishing among assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and hybrid forms. Third, it conducts case studies of selected verses to demonstrate how Qur'anic conditional sentences operate as performative acts of divine discourse, rather than being reducible to purely truth-conditional or logical accounts.

By achieving these objectives, the study contributes to the literature by bridging classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary philosophy of language. It highlights the Qur'an not only as a source of normative guidance but also as a complex performative text, in which meaning emerges from what is done through language, not merely from what is stated.

2. Literature Review

The study of Qur'anic conditionals has a long tradition within Islamic scholarship. Early Arabic grammarians, including Sībawayh (2015) and al-Farrā' (1980), examined conditional particles and their syntactic functions in Arabic and Qur'anic usage. These approaches, while foundational, focused primarily on grammar, rhetorical style, or moral interpretation, and did not systematically address the pragmatic or performative dimensions of conditionality in Qur'anic discourse.

Modern scholarship has expanded the study of Qur'anic language through the lenses of semantics, rhetoric, and discourse analysis. Abdel-Haleem (1999) emphasizes the stylistic and rhetorical dimensions of Qur'anic expression. Izutsu (1964) explores the semantic field of Qur'anic vocabulary and its ethical dimensions. Neuwirth (2014), Mir (1986), and Cuypers (2015) highlight coherence, structure, and literary organization in Qur'anic discourse, while Rippin (1988; 1999) underscores the plurality of interpretive traditions. Despite these valuable contributions, the illocutionary and performative dimensions of Qur'anic conditionality remain comparatively limited.

Contemporary philosophy of language offers additional tools for analysis. Austin (1962) demonstrates that language can perform actions,

while Searle (1969; 1979) develops a taxonomy of speech acts, including assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Grice (1975), Levinson (1983), Bach and Harnish (1979), and Stalnaker (1970) further highlight the roles of context, speaker intention, and inference in the construction of meaning. Drawing on these pragmatic and speech-act frameworks, Qur'anic conditionals may be understood as functioning not only as logical structures but also as speech acts with varying illocutionary forces.

Despite these developments, previous studies have largely treated Qur'anic conditionals as grammatical or truth-conditional structures, without fully addressing their performative and normative dimensions. Such approaches, although informative, tend to overlook the performative and normative dimensions of Qur'anic discourse, including the ways in which conditionals convey divine commitment, moral exhortation, or evaluative judgment. Moreover, these studies rarely integrate pragmatic and philosophical insights, leaving the illocutionary force of conditional sentences insufficiently explored. This paper addresses these limitations by adopting a speech-act-theoretic framework, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic conditionals as conditional speech acts, bridging the gap between classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary philosophy of language.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and text-based methodology grounded in contemporary philosophy of language and classical Qur'anic exegesis. The main objective is to analyze Qur'anic conditional sentences as pragmatic and illocutionary acts rather than as purely syntactic or truth-conditional structures. Accordingly, the study integrates speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969; 1979) with classical Islamic interpretive traditions. The study follows a descriptive-analytical design. It does not aim to achieve statistical generalization but to provide a systematic interpretation of Qur'anic conditional structures in their textual and theological contexts. Each conditional sentence is analyzed as a communicative act embedded within divine discourse. The corpus consists of 20 Qur'anic verses containing explicit conditional structures, introduced by conditional particles such as *'in*, *'idhā*, *law*, and *lawlā*. The selected verses were chosen based on the criteria such as presence of an explicit conditional structure; theological or ethical significance; and diversity of conditional functions, including promise, warning, causality, and exhortation. The aim is not to provide exhaustive coverage, but rather to offer representative analytical

coverage of Qur'anic conditionality.

The analysis draws on Austin's (1962) distinction among locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. In this framework, the locutionary act concerns what is said and its propositional meaning, the illocutionary act concerns the communicative force performed in saying it, and the perlocutionary act concerns the effects produced on the hearer. Building on Searle's (1969) taxonomy of illocutionary acts, the present study identifies four principal categories relevant to Qur'anic conditional discourse: Assertive, involving the representation of a state of affairs, divine truth or reality; Directive, involving commands, exhortations, or warnings; Commissive, involving a commitment to a future course of action, including promises and threats; and Expressive, involving the expression of psychological or evaluative attitudes. In addition, the study introduces a Hybrid category for conditional utterances that exhibit two or more overlapping illocutionary forces. Thus, a single Qur'anic conditional may perform multiple illocutionary functions simultaneously.

3.1. Speech-Act Coding Procedure

Each selected verse is analyzed through a structured three-step coding process: Step 1: The conditional structure is identified by examining the conditional particle and the syntactic relationship between the antecedent and the consequent. Step 2: Each conditional sentence is coded according to its dominant illocutionary force, or forces, based on linguistic markers, exegetical interpretation, and its pragmatic function within the discourse. This coding process results in the classification presented in Table 1, which comprises 20 Qur'anic conditional sentences.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study draws on three complementary sources of evidence: classical Qur'anic exegesis, contemporary speech-act and pragmatic theory, and contextual textual analysis. The classification is interpretive but systematically grounded in established linguistic and exegetical frameworks. The coding procedure is applied consistently across all selected verses to ensure internal consistency and coherence.

This study is limited to selected Qur'anic conditional sentences and does not claim to provide exhaustive coverage of all conditional structures in the Qur'an. Furthermore, while illocutionary classification involves interpretive judgment, the use of established exegetical literature and speech act theory reduces arbitrary interpretation and enhances methodological transparency.

4. *Conditionals in Classical Logic and Philosophy of Language*

Conditional sentences occupy a central yet controversial position in classical logic and contemporary philosophy of language. The analysis of conditionals has long raised the question of whether such sentences can be adequately explained in purely truth-functional terms or whether their meaning necessarily encompasses pragmatic, contextual, or action-oriented dimensions. This issue becomes particularly significant when conditionals occur in religious discourse, where acts of guiding, warning, or promising often take precedence over mere description.

4.1. *The Material Conditional in Classical Logic*

In classical propositional logic, a conditional sentence of the form “If P, then Q” is standardly represented by the material conditional, symbolized as $P \rightarrow Q$. On this account, the truth value of the conditional depends solely on the truth values of its antecedent and consequent. In particular, a material conditional is considered true whenever the antecedent is false, regardless of any semantic, causal, or normative connection between P and Q (Quine 1982).

While this formal definition is well suited to axiomatic systems and mathematical reasoning, it generates results that can sharply conflict with ordinary linguistic intuitions. Many conditionals in natural language are not judged true merely because their antecedents are false; rather, they presuppose a meaningful connection between the antecedent and the consequent. Consequently, the material conditional often fails to capture the intended meaning of conditionals as they are actually used in discourse.

4.2. *Critiques of Truth-Functional Accounts*

The inadequacy of the material conditional for natural language analysis has been widely acknowledged. Quine famously criticized truth-functional analyses for rendering a vast number of intuitively unacceptable conditionals true, thereby undermining their semantic relevance for everyday language (Quine 1982).

In response, alternative approaches were developed, most notably the possible-worlds semantics of conditionals and counterfactuals proposed by Stalnaker (1968) and Lewis (1973). According to these theories, the truth of a conditional depends not merely on actual truth values but on what holds in

the closest or most relevant possible worlds in which the antecedent is true. This shift introduces modal and contextual considerations into the analysis of conditionals and offers a more nuanced account of causal and counterfactual reasoning.

Nevertheless, despite their sophistication, these approaches largely retain a propositional focus. They continue to treat conditionals primarily as truth-evaluable statements, leaving aside the possibility that some conditionals function less as descriptions of states of affairs and more as means of action within communicative contexts.

4.3. Conditionals and Speech Act Theory

A major conceptual shift in the philosophy of language occurred with the development of speech act theory, particularly in the work of Austin. Austin (1962) argued that many utterances are not intended merely to describe reality but to perform actions, such as promising, ordering, warning, or advising. From this perspective, the meaning of a sentence cannot be fully understood without considering what the speaker is doing by uttering it.

Searle (1969) further systematized this approach by classifying speech acts into categories such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Within this framework, conditional sentences may perform different illocutionary functions depending on their context. A conditional may appear grammatically assertive while functioning pragmatically as a directive or a commissive. This insight is particularly relevant for the analysis of religious texts, where conditional formulations frequently serve to exhort, threaten, promise, or establish normative expectations rather than merely state factual relations.

4.4. Implications for Religious Language

In religious discourse, and especially in texts presented as instances of divine speech, conditionals often carry illocutionary force that cannot be reduced to truth-functional or even purely modal semantics. As Wolterstorff argues (1995), divine discourse should be understood not merely as conveying information but as performing communicative acts that establish obligations, offer assurances, or issue warnings.

Accordingly, an adequate analysis of conditionals in the Qur'an requires moving beyond classical logical frameworks and incorporating pragmatic and speech-act-oriented perspectives. This theoretical groundwork provides the basis for the subsequent analysis of Qur'anic conditional sentences,

which will be examined not only as semantic structures but also as instances of purposive divine communication.

5. *Conditionality in Qur'anic Arabic*

Any philosophical analysis of Qur'anic conditionals must be grounded in a careful examination of the linguistic forms through which conditionality is expressed in Qur'anic Arabic. Unlike formal languages, Qur'anic Arabic employs a variety of conditional particles, each of which carries distinct semantic, pragmatic, and rhetorical implications. Ignoring these distinctions risks imposing an external logical framework that may obscure the internal dynamics of Qur'anic discourse.

Classical Arabic grammar identifies several particles that introduce conditional constructions, the most prominent of which in the Qur'an are *'in*, *'idhā*, *law*, and *lawlā*. While all of these particles may be translated into English using "if," they are not semantically interchangeable. Traditional grammarians distinguish these particles primarily on the basis of probability, temporality, and counterfactuality. However, from a philosophical-linguistic perspective, these distinctions also correspond to different pragmatic functions within discourse.

5.1. *'In: Open and Normative Conditionals*

The particle *in* typically introduces conditionals whose antecedents are presented as genuinely open possibilities. In Qur'anic usage, *'in*-conditionals frequently appear in exhortative, moral, or normative contexts. For example, in verses that link human action to divine response, the conditional structure does not merely describe a causal relation but also establishes a normative framework within which human agency is evaluated.

From the standpoint of speech act theory, such conditionals often function as directive–commissive hybrids: they direct the addressee toward a course of action while simultaneously committing the speaker—here, the divine speaker—to a corresponding response. This dual function cannot be adequately captured by truth-functional semantics alone, as the conditional performs an action rather than merely stating a fact.

5.2. *'Idhā: Temporal and Predictive Conditionals*

By contrast, *'idhā* is commonly associated with conditions that are expected or assumed to occur. Grammatically, it often conveys a temporal

nuance closer to “when” than to “if.” In the Qur’an, *’idhā* is frequently used in eschatological or descriptive passages, where future events are presented with a high degree of certainty.

Philosophically, such conditionals blur the boundary between conditionality and temporality. While they retain an “if–then” structure, their pragmatic force is often assertive rather than hypothetical. As a result, their function is less to invite deliberation and more to shape the listener’s understanding of an anticipated reality. This reinforces the need to distinguish Qur’anic conditionals not only by their logical form but also by their discourse function.

5.3. *Law: Counterfactual Conditionals*

The particle *law* is typically used to introduce counterfactual or irrealis conditionals, often presenting an antecedent as contrary to fact or unlikely to be realized. In Qur’anic discourse, *law*-conditionals frequently occur in argumentative and theological contexts, where hypothetical situations are invoked to support particular conclusions.

From a philosophical perspective, Qur’anic *law*-conditionals can be fruitfully compared with counterfactual conditionals examined in the possible-worlds approaches of Stalnaker (1968) and Lewis (1973). However, their function in the Qur’an is often argumentative rather than merely speculative. They may invite the addressee to consider a hypothetical situation and draw a theological or metaphysical conclusion from its implications. In this sense, *law*-conditionals can serve both logical and persuasive functions, extending beyond the purely semantic analysis of counterfactuality.

5.4. *Lawlā: Reproach and Moral Prompting*

The particle *lawlā* introduces a distinct type of conditional structure, often translated as “if only” or “were it not for.” In Qur’anic discourse, *lawlā* frequently carries a tone of reproach, urging reflection on missed opportunities or moral failures.

Rather than functioning as truth-evaluable propositions, *lawlā*-conditionals are best understood as expressive speech acts. Their primary role is not to assert or predict but to prompt moral awareness and self-assessment. This further illustrates the inadequacy of purely propositional analyses when applied to Qur’anic conditional language.

5.6. *Classical Islamic Reflections on Conditionality*

Islamic intellectual traditions, particularly in Uṣūl al-Fiqh, have long recognized a fundamental distinction between *khavar* (declarative statements) and *inshā'* (performative or non-declarative utterances). Conditional constructions play a central role in this distinction, especially in legal and ethical reasoning. Exegetes such as Tabataba'i (1973, 12:324) emphasize that Qur'anic language cannot be reduced to descriptive reporting, as it consistently aims at guidance rather than neutral representation. This insight aligns closely with contemporary speech act theory and supports a pragmatic reading of Qur'anic conditionals.

The diversity of conditional particles in Qur'anic Arabic reflects a corresponding diversity of semantic and pragmatic functions. Qur'anic conditionals range from open normative invitations to counterfactual arguments and expressive moral prompts. Any attempt to analyze them within a single logical framework inevitably results in distortion. This linguistic and pragmatic plurality prepares the ground for the next section, where Qur'anic conditionals will be systematically classified according to their speech-act functions, thereby offering a non-reductive philosophical account of conditionality in divine discourse.

6. *Speech Act Theory and Divine Discourse*

The limitations of truth-conditional and purely propositional analyses of conditionals point toward the necessity of a pragmatic framework capable of accounting for the action-oriented nature of language. Speech act theory provides such a framework by shifting the focus from what sentences describe to what speakers do by uttering them. This shift is particularly significant in the context of religious discourse, where language is often used not merely to inform but also to guide, command, promise, warn, and transform the moral orientation of the addressee.

6.1. *From Propositions to Actions: Austin's Framework*

In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin (1962) challenged the assumption that the primary function of language is to state facts that are either true or false. He introduced a threefold distinction between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act consists in producing a meaningful linguistic expression. An illocutionary act concerns what is done in saying something (e.g., asserting, promising, or warning), and a perlocutionary act concerns what is achieved by saying

something (e.g., persuading, frightening, or motivating).

This distinction reveals that sentences sharing the same propositional content may perform radically different actions depending on context. Conditional sentences, therefore, cannot be assumed to have a uniform function simply by virtue of their logical form. A conditional may state a fact, issue a warning, or establish a commitment, even when its surface grammar remains unchanged.

6.2. *Searle's Classification and Conditional Utterances*

John Searle (1969) refined Austin's insights by offering a systematic taxonomy of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This classification is especially useful for analyzing conditional constructions, which frequently operate across multiple illocutionary categories. For instance, a conditional sentence may appear syntactically assertive while functioning pragmatically as a directive ("If you wish to succeed, you must act decisively") or as a commissive ("If you do this, I will do that"). In such cases, the conditional form serves as a vehicle for performing an action rather than merely conveying information.

Importantly, Searle emphasizes that illocutionary force is not reducible to sentence meaning alone but depends on institutional context, speaker authority, and shared background assumptions. These considerations are indispensable when analyzing divine discourse, where the speaker's authority is maximal and the communicative context is normatively charged.

6.3. *Conditional Speech Acts*

Within speech act theory, conditionals can be understood as conditional speech acts, in which the performance of an illocutionary act is made dependent on the satisfaction of a specified condition. A promise, for example, may be issued conditionally, thereby creating a normative commitment that becomes binding only if the antecedent is fulfilled. Such conditional speech acts cannot be adequately represented solely within truth-functional semantics. Their primary function is not to assert a conditional proposition but to establish a structured relationship between actions, obligations, and outcomes. The conditional clause specifies the circumstances under which a particular illocutionary force becomes operative. This insight is crucial for the analysis of Qur'anic conditionals, many of which link human actions to divine responses in ways that are better understood as normative and performative rather than descriptive.

6.4. *Divine Discourse and Illocutionary Authority*

The application of speech act theory to religious language has been most systematically developed by Nicholas Wolterstorff (1995), who argues that divine speech should be understood as a genuine form of illocutionary action. According to this view, when God speaks, He does not merely convey propositions but performs acts such as commanding, promising, forgiving, or warning.

In divine discourse, the illocutionary force of an utterance is inseparable from the authority of the divine speaker. This has important implications for conditional sentences. A divine conditional does not merely state that one event will follow another; it may establish a covenantal structure, articulate moral law, or issue a binding promise or threat. Consequently, evaluating such conditionals solely in terms of truth values risks overlooking their primary function as instruments of guidance and norm formation.

6.5. *Conditionals, Normativity, and Commitment*

One of the defining features of divine conditionals is their normative dimension. Many Qur'anic conditionals articulate relationships between belief, action, and consequence that are not merely causal but also evaluative. They express what ought to be done and what will follow if certain obligations are fulfilled or violated.

From a speech-act-theoretic perspective, these conditionals often function as commissives, in which the divine speaker commits Himself to a particular response, or as directives, in which the addressee is urged toward a specific course of action. In some cases, a single conditional utterance simultaneously performs both functions, creating a tightly integrated normative structure. This dual illocutionary character cannot be captured by classical logic or even by modal semantics alone. It requires an account of language that recognizes commitment, authority, and moral orientation as integral components of meaning.

6.6. *Implications for the Analysis of the Qur'an*

Understanding Qur'anic conditionals as speech acts has far-reaching implications. It explains why many such conditionals resist paraphrase into purely descriptive statements and why their force often persists even when their antecedents are not realized. Their significance lies not only in whether the condition is met, but also in the act of placing the addressee within a moral and spiritual framework.

This perspective also aligns with classical Islamic distinctions between *khavar* (declarative utterance) and *inshā'* (performative utterance), suggesting a deep convergence between contemporary philosophy of language and traditional Islamic thought. Speech act theory thus provides a philosophically robust and culturally sensitive framework for analyzing conditionality in the Qur'an.

7. A Typology of Qur'anic Conditionals

Having established the limitations of truth-functional semantics and outlined the relevance of speech act theory for divine discourse, this section proposes a systematic typology of Qur'anic conditional sentences based on their dominant illocutionary functions. Rather than classifying conditionals solely according to grammatical particles or logical form, this typology focuses on what Qur'anic conditionals do within discourse. The central claim is that Qur'anic conditionals cannot be treated as a homogeneous class. Instead, they instantiate multiple types of speech acts, often combining propositional content with normative, directive, or commissive force. In the Qur'anic framework, conditional statements can be understood as expressing connections between human moral responsibility and divine providence, thereby contributing to both ethical guidance and theological understanding. This perspective supports the identification of hybrid conditionals that simultaneously perform assertive, directive, and commissive functions.

7.1. Assertive Conditionals

Assertive conditionals primarily function to state or affirm a relationship between the antecedent and the consequent. These conditionals are closest to descriptive propositions and are often employed in theological argumentation or cosmological reflection. A paradigmatic example is the well-known counterfactual argument:

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (الأنبياء / 22)

If there had been gods in them other than Allah, they would surely have fallen apart (Q. 21:22).

Here, the conditional functions as a rational demonstration of divine unity. While the antecedent is counterfactual, the illocutionary force of the utterance is assertive: it aims to establish a metaphysical truth. Such conditionals resemble philosophical arguments and can, to some extent, be analyzed using counterfactual semantics (Lewis 1973). Nevertheless, their

rheterical and persuasive role within the Qur'anic revelation exceeds that of mere logical demonstration.

7.2. *Directive Conditionals*

Directive conditionals aim to guide, exhort, or warn the addressee to pursue a particular course of action. In these cases, the conditional form serves as a motivational structure rather than a neutral description. Consider conditionals that link obedience or belief to desirable outcomes. The antecedent specifies an action under the control of the addressee, while the consequent functions as an inducement or warning. From a speech-act perspective, these conditionals primarily perform a directive act, even though they may be grammatically declarative. Such conditionals cannot be reduced to causal predictions. Their purpose is normative: they place the addressee within a form of practical reasoning that invites deliberation, choice, responsibility, and moral agency.

7.3. *Commissive Conditionals (Promises and Threats)*

A significant class of Qur'anic conditionals functions as commissive speech acts, in which the divine speaker commits Himself to a future response contingent upon human action. These include both promises and threats. In commissive conditionals, the antecedent specifies the condition under which a divine commitment becomes operative. The consequent is not merely a predicted outcome but constitutes an act of self-binding on the part of the divine speaker. This feature is especially important for understanding the covenantal structure of Qur'anic discourse.

From a philosophical standpoint, such conditionals pose a challenge to standard semantic theories. The truth of the conditional is not the primary issue; rather, the utterance establishes a normative relationship of commitment and expectation. This supports Wolterstorff's (1995) claim that divine speech should be understood as genuine illocutionary action.

7.4. *Expressive Conditionals*

Expressive conditionals convey evaluative attitudes such as regret, reproach, or moral criticism. These are often introduced by particles such as *lawlā* and are typically directed at prompting reflection rather than describing facts or issuing commands. The primary function of expressive conditionals is not to alter the addressee's beliefs about the world, but to shape the addressee's moral and emotional orientation. They highlight

missed opportunities or failures and implicitly invite repentance or reconsideration.

From the perspective of speech act theory, expressive conditionals are particularly resistant to truth-conditional analysis. Their conditions of success are not tied to factual accuracy but to their appropriateness within a moral and rhetorical context.

7.5. Hybrid and Multi-Force Conditionals

One of the most distinctive features of Qur'anic conditional discourse is the prevalence of hybrid conditionals, which simultaneously perform multiple illocutionary acts. A single conditional may be assertive in form, directive in function, and commissive in implication. For example, a conditional may assert a general principle, direct the addressee toward a moral action, and commit the divine speaker to a corresponding response. Such multi-force conditionals resist classification within any single illocutionary category and instead exemplify the richness of divine discourse. This hybridity explains why attempts to analyze Qur'anic conditionals within a single logical or semantic framework inevitably fall short. A pluralistic, pragmatically informed approach is therefore required.

The proposed typology can be summarized as follows:

- Assertive conditionals establish theological or metaphysical truths;
- Directive conditionals guide or exhort human action;
- Commissive conditionals express divine promises or threats;
- Expressive conditionals convey moral evaluation or reproach;
- Hybrid conditionals combine multiple illocutionary forces.

This classification is not merely descriptive but explanatory. It accounts for why Qur'anic conditionals often remain meaningful even when their antecedents are not realized and why their force cannot be exhausted by truth-conditional semantics.

8. Case Studies

This section applies the proposed typology to a set of representative Qur'anic conditional sentences. The aim is not to offer an exhaustive survey, but to demonstrate, through close analysis, how different types of conditionals operate as distinct speech acts within Qur'anic discourse. Each case illustrates a specific illocutionary profile and highlights the inadequacy of purely truth-conditional interpretations. From this perspective, counterfactual or unrealized conditionals can be read as contributing to

ethical and theological reflection, particularly by highlighting the relationship between human responsibility and divine wisdom.

➤ **Example 1:**

إِنْ تَصُورُوا اللَّهَ يَتَصَرَّكُمْ (محمد/7)

If you help Allah, He will help you (Q. 47:7).

This conditional is frequently cited as a paradigmatic example of divine conditionality. At the surface level, it resembles a causal statement: human support for God leads to divine support. However, a closer philosophical-linguistic analysis reveals a more complex structure.

From a truth-conditional perspective, the sentence would be interpreted as asserting a conditional proposition relating two states of affairs. Yet such an interpretation fails to account for the normative and motivational force of the utterance. The sentence is not primarily concerned with describing an empirical regularity but with exhorting the addressee toward a moral and religious commitment.

From a speech-act perspective, this conditional performs at least two illocutionary acts simultaneously:

- A directive act: it urges believers to “support God,” a phrase that itself presupposes a normative framework of allegiance and obedience.
- A commissive act: it commits the divine speaker to providing support in response.

The conditional structure thus establishes a normative relationship rather than merely expressing a descriptive correlation. Its illocutionary force does not depend solely on the actual fulfillment of the antecedent, indicating that the utterance has a performative dimension in addition to its propositional content (Wolterstorff 1995).

➤ **Example 2:**

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَٰهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (الأنبياء/22)

If there had been gods in them other than Allah, they would surely have fallen apart (Q. 21:22).

This verse exemplifies a counterfactual conditional introduced by *law*. The antecedent is explicitly contrary to fact, and the consequent expresses a hypothetical outcome that underscores the impossibility of the antecedent.

In this case, the conditional functions primarily as an assertive speech act aimed at establishing a metaphysical conclusion: the unity of God. Unlike directive or commissive conditionals, this utterance is argumentative in nature. It invites the addressee to engage in rational reflection by considering a hypothetical scenario whose incoherence reveals a theological truth.

While this conditional can be partially analyzed using counterfactual semantics (Lewis 1973), such an analysis remains incomplete. The utterance is not merely an abstract logical exercise; it plays a persuasive role within revelation, reinforcing belief through rational demonstration. Its illocutionary force is thus assertive with a strong rhetorical dimension.

➤ Example 3:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ (إبراهيم / 7)

If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing] (Q. 14:7)

This conditional is introduced by *la-in*, an emphatic form that intensifies both the antecedent and the consequent. Grammatically, the structure is conditional, but pragmatically it functions as a promise. As Tabataba'i (1973, 12:22) notes, this promise is not merely factual but also illustrates a moral law embedded within divine providence, emphasizing the ethical and spiritual dimension of gratitude.

From the standpoint of speech act theory, this utterance is a clear instance of a commissive conditional. The divine speaker binds Himself to a future action, granting increase, conditional upon human gratitude. The utterance thereby establishes a normative expectation and reinforces a moral attitude rather than merely stating a future possibility. Importantly, the validity of this speech act does not depend on the actual realization of the antecedent at the time of utterance. The promise is in force from the moment it is issued, further confirming that the conditional operates at the level of commitment rather than description.

➤ Example 4:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَ اتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة / 103)

If they Had been faithful and God wary, the reward from Allah would have been better; had they known (Q. 2:103).

This verse illustrates a conditional structure that combines counterfactuality with moral evaluation. The antecedent refers to a course of action that was not taken, while the consequent highlights the superior

outcome that would have followed. Here, the conditional functions primarily as an expressive speech act. Its purpose is not to predict or promise, but to express regret and moral criticism. By drawing attention to a missed opportunity, the utterance implicitly invites self-reflection and repentance. Such conditionals are particularly resistant to formal semantic analysis. Their evaluative force cannot be captured by assigning truth values to propositions; instead, their meaning emerges from their role in shaping the addressee's moral perspective.

➤ **Example 5:**

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (النحل/ 82)

But if they turn their backs [on you], your duty is only to communicate in clear terms (Q. 16:82).

This conditional presents a different configuration. The antecedent concerns the addressee's response to guidance, while the consequent delineates the limits of the Prophet's responsibility. The illocutionary force here is primarily assertive, but with an important pragmatic function: it clarifies normative roles and responsibilities within the communicative situation. The conditional neither threatens nor promises; instead, it frames rejection as a choice whose consequences redefine responsibility. This illustrates that not all Qur'anic conditionals are oriented toward reward and punishment. Some serve a discursively regulative function, structuring expectations and obligations within the communicative act itself. Across these case studies, several patterns emerge:

- Qur'anic conditionals rarely function as neutral descriptions of causal relations.
- Many conditionals simultaneously perform multiple illocutionary acts.
- The force of these conditionals is often independent of the actual realization of their antecedents.
- Speech act theory provides a unifying framework capable of accommodating this diversity without reduction.

These observations confirm the central thesis of this paper: Qur'anic conditional sentences are best understood as performative elements of divine discourse, whose meaning lies as much in what they do as in what they say.

Table 1 presents a systematic analysis of twenty Qur'anic conditional sentences. Each selected instance is examined in terms of its conditional structure, contextual meaning, and illocutionary force.

Table 1. Speech-Act Classification of 20 Qur'anic Conditional Sentences

No.	Conditional Structure	Qur'anic Reference	Brief Contextual Meaning	Speech Act Classification
1	وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَآتَوْا نَصِيحَةً مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ	Q.2:103	faith and piety as a superior moral outcome	Expressive
2	فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ	Q.16:82	rejection of guidance & the Prophet's limited responsibility	Assertive
3	لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا	Q.21:22	divine unity	Assertive
4	إِنْ تَضُرُّوهُ اللَّهُ يُضِرِّكُمْ	Q.47:7	human support for God and divine support in return	Directive Commissive
5	وَإِذَا قُضِيَ أَمْرٌ فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ	Q.2:117	divine creative command	Directive
6	إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ	Q.2:156	believers' response to calamity	Expressive
7	وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ	Q.2:251	divine preservation of social order	Assertive
8	وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَفُتِنْتُمْ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا	Q.4:83	divine grace as protection from following Satan	Assertive
9	وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزِمَا	Q.20:129	divine postponement of punishment	Assertive
10	وَإِنْ تَبَدُّوْا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخَفُّوْا يَحِابِئَكُمْ بِهِنَّ اللَّهُ	Q.2:284	accountability of intentions	Assertive
11	إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي	Q.3:31	love of God condition	Directive
12	إِنْ يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِثْلُهُ	Q.3:140	worldly fluctuation of trials	Assertive
13	إِنْ يَضُرُّكُمْ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ	Q.3:160	divine support promise	Commissive
14	وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ	Q.6:27	hypothetical regret scene	Expressive
15	وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ	Q.7:96	prosperity condition	Assertive
16	إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا	Q.8:29	piety and guidance	Commissive
17	إِلَّا تَضُرُّوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ	Q.9:40	prophetic support condition	Directive
18	لَنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ	Q.14:7	gratitude and increase	Commissive
19	وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُو إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ	Q.17:67	human dependence in hardship	Expressive
20	إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ	Q.39:7	warning and divine independence	Assertive

The classification presented in Table 1 follows the methodological procedure outlined in Section 3. The results presented in Table 1 demonstrate that Qur'anic conditional sentences cannot be adequately

reduced to formal logical or syntactic structures. Instead, they function as dynamic speech acts embedded within a complex theological and pragmatic framework. A significant finding is that many conditional structures carry multiple illocutionary forces, although one dominant speech act is assigned for classification purposes. For instance, divine promises often function as both commissives and directives, indicating that God's speech is not merely descriptive but also action-oriented and normatively binding. This supports the central claim of this study that Qur'anic conditionals operate as conditional speech acts rather than purely truth-conditional propositions.

From a speech-act perspective, Qur'anic conditionals consistently extend beyond locutionary meaning and function as illocutionary acts that guide belief, behavior, and moral orientation. This study has demonstrated that Qur'anic conditional sentences are not merely grammatical or logical structures but complex speech acts with diverse illocutionary forces. By integrating classical Qur'anic exegesis with contemporary speech act theory, the study provides a new interpretive model for understanding conditionality in divine discourse. The findings reveal that conditionality in the Qur'an is inherently performative, with individual conditional utterances exhibiting different illocutionary profiles and, in some cases, involving more than one speech-act force. This supports a shift from truth-conditional semantics toward pragmatic and action-oriented interpretations of sacred texts. The study contributes to Qur'anic linguistics, philosophy of language, and interdisciplinary studies of religious discourse by offering a structured and theoretically grounded model of analysis.

9. Conclusion

This study set out to examine Qur'anic conditional sentences from a philosophical-linguistic perspective, with the aim of moving beyond traditional exegetical, rhetorical, and purely logical approaches. By bringing contemporary philosophy of language, particularly speech act theory, into dialogue with Qur'anic discourse, the paper has argued that conditionality in the Qur'an cannot be adequately captured by truth-functional or purely propositional semantics.

The analysis demonstrated that Qur'anic conditionals constitute a heterogeneous class of linguistic acts. While some conditional sentences function as assertive statements that support theological argumentation, many others operate primarily as directives, commissives, or expressives. In numerous cases, a single conditional performs multiple illocutionary functions simultaneously, combining descriptive content with normative

force and moral orientation. The case studies confirmed that Qur'anic conditionals often retain their communicative force independently of whether their antecedents are fulfilled. This feature is incompatible with classical logical accounts of conditionals but becomes intelligible once conditionals are understood as performative acts embedded in a broader framework of divine communication.

The primary theoretical contribution of this paper lies in its non-reductive account of conditionality in religious language. Rather than rejecting logical analysis altogether, the study has shown that logic must be complemented by pragmatic considerations in order to do justice to the full meaning of Qur'anic discourse. Speech act theory provides the conceptual tools necessary for such an integrated approach. In this respect, the paper contributes to ongoing debates in the philosophy of language concerning the limits of truth-conditional semantics. Qur'anic conditionals serve as a particularly rich test case, revealing dimensions of meaning, such as commitment, authority, and normativity, which remain invisible within strictly propositional frameworks.

Methodologically, the paper advances the field by proposing a speech-act-based typology of Qur'anic conditionals. Unlike existing classifications that rely primarily on grammatical particles or rhetorical categories, the present typology is grounded in illocutionary function. This shift allows for a more precise explanation of why different conditional particles and constructions play distinct roles within Qur'anic discourse. Moreover, the integration of close textual analysis with contemporary philosophical theory exemplifies a genuinely interdisciplinary methodology. The study neither imposes an external framework uncritically nor confines itself to traditional categories, but instead allows insights from both domains to inform and refine one another.

The findings of this study open several promising avenues for future research. First, the proposed framework can be extended to other linguistic structures in the Qur'an, such as imperatives, prohibitions, and interrogatives. Second, comparative studies could explore conditionality in other religious traditions, allowing for a broader comparative philosophy of divine discourse. Finally, further work may investigate the implications of conditional speech acts for Islamic legal theory and moral philosophy.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of ChatGPT (OpenAI) in the transliteration and linguistic standardization of Arabic terms and Qur'anic expressions, as well as in translating portions of the manuscript from Persian into English. The author also extends sincere appreciation to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments,

constructive suggestions, and careful reading of the manuscript, which contributed significantly to improving the clarity, coherence, and overall quality of the paper.

Declarations

Funding: No funding was received for conducting this study.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no competing interests.

References

- Abdel-Haleem, M. A. S. (1999). *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and style*. London: I.B. Tauris. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755610310>
- Al-Farrā', A. (1980). *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*. Cairo: Al-Dār al-Maṣriyyah lil-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjamah.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Bach, K., & Harnish, R. M. (1979). *Linguistic communication and speech acts*. MIT Press.
- Cuypers, M. (2015). *The composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical analysis*. United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Izutsu, T. (1964). *God and man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*. Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, D. (1973). *Counterfactuals*. Harvard University Press.
- Mir, M. (1986). *Coherence in the Qur'an: A study of Iṣlāḥī's concept of naẓm in Tadabbur-i Qur'an*. American Trust Publications.
- Neuwirth, A. (2014). *Scripture, poetry and the making of a community: Reading the Qur'an as a literary text*. Oxford University Press.
- Qarai, A. Q. (2004). *Translation of the Holy Qur'an*. London: ICAS.
- Quine, W. V. O. (1982). *Methods of logic* (4th ed.). Harvard University Press.
- Rippin, A. (Ed.). (1988). *Approaches to the history of the interpretation of the Qur'an*. Clarendon Press.
- Rippin, A. (Ed.). (1999). *The Qur'an: Formative interpretation*. Singapore: Ashgate.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1979). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sībawayh, A. (2015). *Al-Kitāb*. Beirut: Manshūrāt Zīn al-Huqūqiyyah

- Stalnaker, R. (1968). A theory of conditionals. In N. Rescher (Ed.), *Studies in logical theory* (pp. 98–112). Blackwell.
- Stalnaker, R. (1970). Pragmatics. *Synthese*, 22(1–2), 272–289.
- Tabataba'i, M. H. (1973). *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah.
- Wolterstorff, N. (1995). *Divine discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks*. Cambridge University Press.