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**ARTICLE**

# The Pragmatic Functions of *Xalasʿ* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and classify the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *Xalasʿ* (literally "enough") in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (henceforth JSA), a frequently used yet underexamined linguistic element. Despite its high frequency and wide functional range in everyday communication, *Xalasʿ* remains largely unexplored in existing research, which has primarily focused on other Jordanian discourse markers. The data for the present study were gathered through a mini-questionnaire, an extended questionnaire, and an acceptability judgment task, all validated by experts to ensure content and face validity. The findings reveal that *Xalasʿ* serves 14 distinct pragmatic functions, namely expressing approval, signaling the end of an action, ending a conversation, expressing reassurance, disapproval, anger, relief, surrender, understanding, ridicule, boredom, jealousy, fear, and attention-getting. However, these functions vary in frequency and acceptability across different speakers of Jordanian Arabic. The study concludes that *Xalasʿ* is a multifunctional discourse marker whose usage is highly context-dependent. The results hold significant implications for Arabic language instruction and intercultural communication. As the focus of this study is on JSA, future research may examine the pragmatic functions of *Xalasʿ* in other Arabic dialects (e.g., Syrian, Iraqi, and Egyptian) and investigate the role of non-verbal cues in shaping its pragmatic functions.

***Keywords:*** Context; Discourse Marker; Pragmatic Functions; Jordanian Spoken Arabic; *Xalasʿ*

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# 1. Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool for social interaction, serving as the primary medium through which individuals express their needs, desires, feelings, and attitudes. It is not only a vehicle for communication but also a means of constructing meaning, negotiating relationships, and performing a range of social acts, such as criticizing, apologizing, and complaining, among others. Each social context carries its own linguistic norms, expressions, and expectations. Notably, the same word or expression can convey different pragmatic functions in different contexts, depending on the speaker's intention and the communicative situation. This variation highlights the speaker's ability to select appropriate language for the context in order to establish or maintain social relationships.

Building on this context-sensitive nature of language, two key branches of linguistics, namely discourse analysis and pragmatics, offer valuable insights into how meaning is shaped by use. Discourse analysis, on the one hand, investigates how language is structured beyond the sentence level and how it reflects and shapes social and cultural realities (Paltridge, p. 2[1]). Pragmatics, on the other hand, examines how speakers convey meanings that extend beyond the literal interpretation of utterances[2]. Both disciplines prioritize understanding language in use, attending not only to structural form but also to communicative function and contextual meanings (Brown and Yule, p. 1[3]).

Within these two fields, one linguistic phenomenon that has garnered considerable scholarly attention is the use of discourse markers (henceforth DMs), which play a vital role in facilitating everyday communication. Over the years, various terms have been proposed to describe these linguistic elements, including discourse markers (Schiffrin[4]), pragmatic markers (Fraser[5], Brinton[6]), discourse particles (Schourup[7], Abraham[8]), pragmatic particles (Östman[9]), pragmatic expressions (Erman[10]), and discourse connectives (Blakemore[11]). Among these, Schiffrin[4] contends that "discourse marker" is the most appropriate term as it encompasses a broad array of linguistic items within a single conceptual framework. This contrasts with narrower terms like discourse connective (e.g., so, therefore) or pragmatic expression (e.g., you know, you see), which tend to refer to more specific categories of linking words or fixed multi-word expressions with limited pragmatic functions (Jucker and Ziv[12]).

Given this conceptual diversity, numerous definitions of DMs have emerged, each emphasizing different aspects of their communicative role. For example, Schiffrin[4] highlights their function in discourse structure as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (p. 31). Fraser[13] views them as pragmatic markers indicating relationships between discourse segments, while Blakemore[11] stresses their interpretative function as "constraints on interpretation." Brinton[6] offers a more comprehensive definition, identifying them as lexical expressions that perform a range of pragmatic functions in both spoken and written language. Despite differing perspectives, there is a broad scholarly consensus that DMs serve as essential tools for maintaining coherence, managing interaction, and expressing subtle speaker intentions.

To further understand the nature of DMs, researchers have identified several key features that characterize their usage. These include connectivity (linking discourse segments), optionality (their removal does not affect grammaticality), non-truth-conditionality (they do not alter the truth value of an utterance), and weak syntactic integration (they lie outside core syntactic structures) (Lenk[14], Fraser[15], Schourup[7]). Additional features include initiality (they often appear at the beginning of utterances), their prevalence in spoken over written discourse, their multi-categorical nature (adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, or phrases), and their multi-functionality (serving both textual and interpersonal functions) (Schiffrin[4], Brinton[6], Halliday and Matthiessen[16]).

These formal and functional properties are supported by empirical studies demonstrating that DMs perform diverse pragmatic roles that vary according to context (Brinton[6], Fraser[13], Redeker[17]). For instance, they enhance discourse coherence by linking current speech to prior turns (Schiffrin[4], Lenk[14]), and they signal relationships between adjacent or even non-adjacent utterances (Fraser[13], Schourup[7]). Additionally, DMs mark important discourse boundaries, such as openings, closings, and topic shifts (Schiffrin[4], Aijmer[18]). They also serve crucial textual roles (e.g., managing turn-taking, topic changes, and repairs) and interpersonal roles (e.g., expressing politeness, agreement, emotion, or speaker stance) (Brinton[6]).

This context-sensitive, multifunctional nature of DMs aligns with Wittgenstein's[19] famous assertion that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language.". This theoretical stance underscores the idea that word meanings are not fixed but rather dynamic, shifting according to the context in which they are used. The behavior of DMs across different languages and dialects exemplifies this principle in action.

The use of DMs in JSA is deeply embedded in cultural and pragmatic norms. Like other Arabic dialects, JSA features a rich inventory of DMs whose meanings extend beyond literal translations. One of the most frequently used DMs in Jordanian Arabic is *Xalasʕ*—literally meaning "enough". Although several studies have addressed DMs in Jordanian Arabic from a pragma-discoursal perspective (e.g., Al-Khawaldeh[20]; Al-Rousan et al.[21] and Hamdan and Abu Rumman[22], among others), there remains a notable gap in focused, in-depth research specifically examining *Xalasʕ*.

To address this gap, the present study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the pragmatic functions of *Xalasʕ* in JSA? Guided by discourse and conversation analysis frameworks, the study argues that *Xalasʕ* is a highly context-dependent and multifunctional discourse marker whose usage reflects speaker intentions, cultural expectations, and conversational goals. By analyzing authentic data from native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, the study reveals several distinct pragmatic functions of the DM *Xalasʕ* and demonstrates how meaning is shaped by context, speaker intention, and non-verbal cues. The findings are hoped to advance theoretical understanding of discourse markers in Jordanian Arabic, inform cross-dialectal and cross-cultural comparisons, and have practical applications in language teaching, translation studies, and intercultural communication.

## 2. Review of Literature

Al-Khawaldeh[20] examined the pragmatic functions of the DM *wallahi* (an oath expression) in JSA. The corpus consisted of eight hours of spoken discourse, including face-to-face and cell phone conversations. The study showed that the DM *wallahi* is pragmatically multifunctional as it serves many pragmatic meanings. This DM is used to introduce an acceptance, an apology, a threat, or a compliment. It is also used as a request softener, an elaboration marker, a continuer, a confirmation marker, a filler marker, and a marker of compliance with a request.

Al-Rousan et al.[21] investigated the pragmatic functions of the DM *bas* (lit. but) in JSA. The 93,313 words in a corpus of 24 dyadic conversations with male and female native speakers of Jordanian Arabic included 113 occurrences of the DM *bas*. The study revealed that the DM *bas* is multifunctional and has a variety of pragmatic uses in Jordanian spoken discourse, including starting a topic, signalling a change in topic, closing a turn, ending a conversation, indicating hesitancy on the speaker's part, preventing face-threatening acts, making a correction, drawing the hearer's attention, expressing restrictions and conditions, expressing disbelief and indicating a question, providing interpretation, expressing contrast, expressing regret, indicating agreement, indicating emphasis, and filling in any gaps in an exchange.

Hamdan and Abu Rumman[22] examined *Yahummalali* (no direct English equivalent) in JSA. They collected a list of 50 scenarios that featured *Yahummalali* based on their experience and knowledge of this DM and its associated contexts in Jordanian society. The study found out that *Yahummalali* serves 19 pragmatic functions. These functions include expressing dismay and disapproval, fear, condemnation, disappointment, mitigating exaggerated claims, wishing, expressing sadness, regret, dissatisfaction, shock, making threats, ridiculing, expressing anger, jealousy, desperation, surprise, sarcasm, indecisiveness, and doubt or uncertainty.

Hamdan[23] examined the pragmatic functions of the five most common emojis used by Jordanian Facebook users. Data were collected through Facebook posts, with participants reporting their most frequently used emojis and explaining the contexts and purposes for their use. The five most common emojis identified were the face with tears of joy, red heart, slightly smiling face, face blowing a kiss, and winking face. Emojis were found out to serve various roles beyond expressing emotions, including marking illocutionary force, saving face, and building rapport. They can perform 19 different illocutionary acts, such as expressing emotions, making directives, and issuing threats. The study concludes that while emojis are evolving, they remain an important non-verbal communication tool within computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Hamdan and Hammouri[24] investigated the pragmatic

functions of the idiomatic expression *Yalla* (lit. "let's") in JSA. The study involved 145 native-speaking university students aged 18–22 from the University of Jordan and Jadara University. Participants were divided into three groups: a mini questionnaire (14 students), an extended questionnaire (86 students), and an acceptability judgment task (45 students). The findings showed that *Yalla* performs 23 pragmatic functions, including expressing approval, initiating actions, urging, suggesting, commanding, reassuring, encouraging, mocking, emphasizing, and signaling boredom or anger. However, these functions differ in frequency and acceptability among Jordanian youth, with some being more deeply entrenched than others.

Hamdan et al.[25] carried out a corpus-based study on the DM *wa* (lit. "and") in Jordanian Arabic. Analysing a corpus of 20,660 words from Jordanian TV and radio conversations, they identified and examined 11 pragmatic functions of *wa*. They are as follows: expressing addition, indicating resumption, swearing an oath, concluding a premise, elaborating on the antecedent sentence, restating, mocking, showing simultaneity, extending congratulations, linking alternative contrasts, and avoiding complete and explicit listing. The study highlighted the complexity and richness of *wa*, while also noting the limitations due to the corpus size and potential media censorship.

Al-Hanaktah and Hamdan[26] investigated the pragmatic functions of *tamam* (lit. "complete") in Jordanian Arabic among university students. The researchers designed an electronic questionnaire comprising 14 different situations or contexts, each exemplifying a specific pragmatic function previously identified by the authors. The questionnaire was disseminated electronically via the WhatsApp application to a sample of 164 undergraduate Jordanian students enrolled at the University of Jordan. In each contextualized scenario, participants were asked to provide their intuitive assessments of the acceptability and appropriateness of the use of *tamam*. According to the findings, at least 70% of the students accepted nine functions, including expressing acceptance, asking for confirmation, and demonstrating understanding. Moreover, 51–68% of participants accepted five additional functions, such as ridiculing and expressing disapproval.

Hamdan et al.[27] explored the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *aywa* in Jordanian Arabic and its role in conversational and social interaction. Using observational data from authentic JA conversations, the study analyzed how *aywa* functions in different contexts, considering tone, setting, and non-verbal cues. The researchers identified recurring patterns of usage and validated their findings through input from native speakers. Results showed that *aywa* performs multiple pragmatic purposes, including confirming information, showing interest, indicating understanding, expressing irritation, and signaling cautious agreement. These functions are context-sensitive and shaped by speaker intent and social norms. The study concluded that *aywa* is a vital discourse marker in JA, offering speakers a flexible tool for conveying subtle emotional and social cues, thus playing a key role in maintaining effective and socially appropriate communication.

Al Hassi and Alshorafat[28] investigated the pragmatic functions of the expression *ʕafiah* (lit. "health") in JSA using Levinson's pragmatic framework. The researchers first compiled a list of contexts in which *ʕafiah* is commonly used, based on their shared knowledge as native speakers of JA. They then analysed its pragmatic functions in each context. Two Arabic language instructors reviewed and suggested revisions to the list, which was subsequently tested against the linguistic intuition of 40 native JSA speakers. The study identified 11 pragmatic functions of *ʕafiah*: expressing praise, happiness, approval, appreciation, mockery, disapproval, surprise, anger, frustration, annoyance, condemnation, and surrender. While the expression can convey both positive and negative meanings, it is more frequently used to express negative ones. The findings emphasized the importance of context in interpreting *ʕafiah* and highlight the need for further research on its use in other Arabic dialects.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, the present study is the first of its kind to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the expression *Xalasˁ* specifically within the Jordanian Arabic context. By focusing exclusively on *Xalasˁ* and examining its diverse pragmatic functions across varied social interactions, this study fills a significant gap in the literature on Arabic pragmatics. It sheds light on how this seemingly simple marker performs various pragmatic functions—ranging from expressing emotion to managing discourse—thereby contributing original insights to the understanding of spoken Jordanian Arabic.

The study is structured as follows: Section 3 outlines

the methodology used in the study, while Section 4 presents the key findings. These findings are analysed and discussed in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 offers the conclusions and highlights the main recommendations.

# 3. Materials and Methods

## 3.1. Participants

A total of 150 native speakers of JSA participated in the study. Participants were selected from four Jordanian cities — Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, and Mafraq — using convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 40 years.

## 3.2. Research Design and Data Collection Tools

The study adopted a mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data collection was conducted in three stages: (1) mini questionnaire, (2) extended data collection questionnaire, and (3) acceptability judgment task. These are described below in detail.

### 3.2.1. Mini Questionnaire

The first group of participants (n = 10) was tasked with completing a mini questionnaire, designed to support data collection. This questionnaire was administered on an individual basis and consisted of two sections. The first section gathered basic demographic information (e.g., age, gender, and educational level), while the second section introduced *Xalasˁ* as a JSA expression and provided one illustrative scenario. This example was intended to refresh participants' understanding of the expression across different contexts. The example was written in JSA. Participants were then asked to recall and describe as many instances of *Xalasˁ*-based interactions from their personal experiences as they could, specifying the pragmatic function of the expression in each case. The provided scenarios were written in JSA, but they were transliterated and translated into English for clarity. The researchers reviewed the participants' scenarios and functions with the help of a panel of two expert linguists, all native speakers of JSA, to ensure data validity. The panel made some recommendations that were used to refine the questionnaire for the next stage.

Example situation:

Expressing relief
(Context) After finishing a difficult exam, a student says to his friend:
Student:
*Xalasˁ* (said with a deep sigh and slumping into the chair) ‿*ilˈħamdulılˈlaːˈxalasna*‿*ilʔɪmtiˈħaːn*
"Xalasˁ, thank God we finished the exam."

The scenarios and functions proposed by the participants underwent a validation process to assess their face and content validity. This was carried out by a panel of two jurors, both of whom are Arabic linguists and native speakers of JSA. The jurors provided feedback and recommended several modifications, which the researchers incorporated when developing the expanded data collection questionnaire. As a result, the researchers proceeded to the next phase using the revised document, which included a variety of scenarios centered around the use of Xalasˁ, each illustrating a distinct pragmatic function. This revised version is referred to as the extended questionnaire for data collection.

The feedback process of the expert linguists followed a semi-structured, iterative format inspired by the Delphi technique. Although not a formal Delphi study, the researchers engaged two expert jurors in multiple rounds of review. In the initial round, the jurors reviewed the scenarios and functions, providing written feedback and recommendations. These were integrated into a revised version, which was then reassessed in a second round. The jurors reached consensus on the final version of the instrument, supporting both face and content validity.

### 3.2.2. Extended Data Collection Questionnaire

The extended data collection questionnaire was completed by 90 participants, selected from the same Jordanian cities as previously mentioned and according to the same selection criteria. This phase aimed to further explore the contexts in which Xalasˁ is used and to identify the range of pragmatic functions it may serve. The following procedure was applied:

Each participant was approached individually and asked if they would be willing to participate by completing a questionnaire. Upon agreement, they were asked to sign an informed consent form before proceeding. The process

closely mirrored that of the earlier mini questionnaire. Participants first provided their basic biographical information. Then, they were introduced to the expression *Xalasʕ* through a number of example scenarios, each representing a distinct pragmatic function. Following this, participants were invited to generate scenarios drawn from their everyday conversational experiences, each involving *Xalasʕ* and specifying its intended pragmatic function. On average, completing the questionnaire required about 25 minutes.

A comprehensive analysis of the responses was then conducted. To move forward, the researchers selected one representative scenario for each identified function. This refined list of functions and corresponding scenarios was submitted to the same panel of jurors for validation. The panel approved most of the content but proposed three additional functions. They also recommended renaming some functions and making slight adjustments to the context of a few scenarios. These suggestions were incorporated, resulting in a finalized set of 14 scenarios, each reflecting a unique pragmatic use of *Xalasʕ*.

### 3.2.3. Acceptability Judgment Task

The final stage of the study involved conducting an acceptability judgment task with 50 new participants. In this phase, participants were presented with 14 carefully refined scenarios, each representing a distinct pragmatic function of *Xalasʕ*, and were asked to evaluate their appropriateness using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to suggest alternative functions if they disagreed with the ones provided. This stage played a crucial role as a validation tool, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the identified pragmatic functions and confirming their acceptability within natural conversational contexts.

The overall design and validation process in this study were adapted from Hamdan and Hammouri [24], whose methodological framework has proven effective for investigating pragmatic functions of DMs in spoken Arabic.

### 3.3. Reliability and Validity

To ensure the quality and robustness of the data, content, and face validity were established through a review conducted by two expert linguists, both native speakers of JSA.

## 4. Results

The present study aims to examine the pragmatic functions of *Xalasʕ* in JSA. According to the data, *Xalasʕ* fulfills 14 distinct pragmatic functions in JSA. **Table 1** below presents the functions of *Xalasʕ* in JSA endorsed by at least 50% of participants. It also shows the proportion of participants who supported each function.

**Table 1.** The Pragmatic Functions of *Xalasʕ* and the Numbers and percentages of participants who accepted each.

| No. | Pragmatic Function | Acceptability judgment No | (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Expressing approval | 48 | 96% |
| 2 | Signalling the end of an action | 48 | 96% |
| 3 | Ending a conversation | 47 | 94% |
| 4 | Expressing reassurance | 46 | 92% |
| 5 | Expressing disapproval | 46 | 92% |
| 6 | Expressing anger | 45 | 90% |
| 7 | Expressing relief | 44 | 88% |
| 8 | Expressing surrender | 42 | 84% |
| 9 | Showing understanding | 42 | 84% |
| 10 | Mocking/ridiculing | 41 | 82% |
| 11 | Expressing boredom | 40 | 80% |
| 12 | Expressing jealousy | 40 | 80% |
| 13 | Expressing fear | 40 | 80% |
| 14 | Attention-getter | 30 | 60% |

Below is a presentation of each pragmatic function in descending order, accompanied by its context and an illustrative example. Each example will be provided in IPA transcription and English translation.

(1) Expressing approval
(Context) Sara and Lina are discussing their plans for the weekend. The following conversation took place between them:

Sara:
ʃu: ra:ʔjk nɪtˤlaʕ nʌtˤʃ ʕala: l-ħadi:ga
"What do you think about going out for a trip to the park?"
Lina:
*Xalasˤ* fikra mumtāza
"Xalasˤ, that's a great idea!"

Here, *Xalasˤ* is used to express approval and agreement with the suggestion made by Sara. Lina uses *Xalasˤ* to show that she fully supports the idea of going to the park, signaling positive acceptance and readiness to proceed.

(2) Signaling the end of an action
(Context) Amir has been working on a project all day. After finishing the last task, he says:
Xalasˤ it ʃˈʃugl
"Xalasˤ, I finished the work."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* functions to signal the completion of an action. Amir uses *Xalasˤ* to mark that he has finished his work, emphasizing finality and closure.

(3) Expressing the end of a conversation
(Context) After a long and somewhat heated discussion among friends, debating about where to go for dinner, one friend says:
Xalasˤ, ʔaʕtɪ.lʊm ra:ʔjɪ, w nʃu:f mɑ bnu:l.
"Xalasˤ, give me your opinions, and let's see what we decide."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* functions as a conversation ender. The speaker uses *Xalasˤ* to signal that the debate should stop and that it is time to wrap up the discussion and move on to making a decision. It signals closure and directs everyone to finalize their input.

(4) Expressing reassurance
(Context) Ali is struggling to deal with syntax. The following conversation took place between Ali and Oday.
Ali:
miʃ ʔa:dɪr ʔafham ma:ddat al-naḥw ʔabadan
"I just cannot grasp syntax at all."
Oday:
Xalasˤ ʔana bəsæ:ʕdək fīhā
"Xalasˤ, I'll help you with it."

In this context, Xalasˤ is used to express reassurance. When Ali expresses his difficulty with syntax, Oday responds with "*Xalasˤ I'll help you with it*" to comfort him and signal that help is on the way. Here, Xalasˤ functions like "don't worry" or "it's okay," easing Ali's frustration and offering emotional support.

(5) Expressing disapproval
(Context) Maher wants to know whether Sami will go to the party or not. The following conversation took place between them:
Maher:
biddak ˈti:dʒi ˈmaʕna
"Do you want to come with us?"
Sami:
Xalasˤ ˈma: ˈbiddi
"Xalasˤ, I do not want to."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* is used to express disapproval or refusal. When Sami replies with *"Xalasˤ, I do not want to*", he shows his disapproval. Thus, the use of *Xalasˤ* here indicates disapproval.

(6) Expressing anger
(Context) A father comes home tired after a long day and finds his kids arguing loudly. He raises his voice angrily:
Xalasˤ kɪˈfa:je ʃu:ˈʃara ʔisˈkutu fu:rˤan
"Xalasˤ (said with furrowed brows), Stop the noise! Be quiet immediately!"

*Xalasˤ* is often used to convey anger. In this context, the father says *Xalasˤ* to express his irritation at his children's loud arguing. His furrowed brows reinforce the anger behind the word, adding a strong nonverbal cue that emphasizes his demand for immediate silence.

(7) Expressing relief
(Context) After finishing a difficult exam, a student says to his friend:
Xalasˤ (said with a deep sigh and slumping into the chair)
‿ilˈħamdulɪlˈla: ˈxalasna‿ilʔɪmtiˈħa:n
"Xalasˤ, thank God we finished the exam."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* expresses relief that a challenging task is finally over. The deep sigh and relaxed posture re-

inforce the sense of emotional release and exhaustion, marking the end of stress and the return to comfort. This nonverbal cue helps convey the speaker's transition from tension to calm more vividly.

(8) Expressing surrender
(Context) Malik informed Ra'ad that the company he works for has banned unpaid leave.
Ra'ad said:
Xalasˤ ˈʔana heːk faˈʔadt ilˈʔamr bisˈsafar lis-saʕuˈdijje
"Xalasˤ that means I've lost the chance to travel to Saudi Arabia."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* expresses surrender, where the speaker accepts an unfortunate situation as final and beyond their control. Ra'ad uses *Xalasˤ* to acknowledge that his chance to travel is lost, showing he gives up trying to change it.

(9) Showing understanding
(Context) Laila is explaining a complicated problem to Omar. The following conversation took place between them:
Laila:
ilmawˈdˤuːʕ mʕaʕˈɣad ʃway bas ˈlaːzem nˈlaːʔi ħal saˈriːʕ.
"The issue is a bit complicated, but we need to find a quick solution."
Omar:
Xalasˤ (said while the speaker nods his head slowly) ˈfaːhim ʕaˈleːk raħ ˈniʃtiɣil ʕaˈleːha ˈħaːlan
"*Xalasˤ*, I understand you; we'll work on it immediately."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* is used to show understanding and acknowledgment of what the speaker has said. It signals that the listener has grasped the situation and is ready to respond appropriately. Thus, *Xalasˤ* is used in this context to show understanding. The nonverbal cue of slow nodding reinforces the showing understanding function of the DM in this context.

(10) Mocking/ridiculing
(Context) A student keeps showing off after answering very easy questions correctly in class. The following conversation took place:
ʃaːjˈfiːn ja ʃaˈbaːb | ˈʔana ˈdaːjman ˈbaʕref ildʒaˈwaːb | ətˈtˤaːlib
"See, guys? I always know the answer!"
Xalasˤ (said with a smile)ʔınta ʕabˈqari zamaːnak
"Xalasˤ, you're a genius of your time, huh?"

*Xalasˤ* can also be used to mock or ridicule someone. In the situation above, the speaker uses *Xalasˤ* sarcastically to make fun of a classmate who boasts after answering very easy questions. The smile that accompanies the word strengthens its mocking tone, making it clear that the speaker is not genuinely impressed, but rather playfully ridiculing the exaggerated self-confidence.

(11) Expressing boredom
(Context) Two siblings (Mohammad and Hamzah) are watching a TV show. The following conversation took place between them:
Mohammad:
ʃuː ˈraʔjak ˈħilwe‿lˈħalʔa ilˈjoːm
"What do you think? Was today's episode good?"
Hamzah:
Xalasˤ (said while sighing deeply and rolling his eyes) nafs ilˈʔısˤsˤa kill ˈmarra
"Xalasˤ, it's the same story every time."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* conveys boredom. The added sigh and eye-roll amplify Hamzah's impatience and lack of interest, clearly emphasizing his dissatisfaction with the repetitive storyline.

(12) Expressing jealousy
(Context) A sibling sees his brother being praised by his parents and feels jealous. He snaps:
ˈXalasˤ ˈdaːjman huː lʔafḍal w ʔanaː ʃuː
"Xalasˤ! He's always the best, and what about me?"

In this situation, *Xalasˤ* is used by the speaker to express jealousy by interrupting the conversation to highlight feelings of unfairness.

(13) Expressing fear
(Context) Huda is watching a horror movie and gets very frightened by a sudden jump scare. She urgently tells her brother:
Xalasˤ (said with a panicked tone, clutching her chest and pulling the blanket up to her face) wiːf ilˈfilm ˈqalbi

ˈtˤaːħ min ilˈxawf miʃ ˈʔaːdra ʔakˈkammil
"Xalasˤ, stop the movie! My heart dropped from fear—I can't keep watching."

In this context, *Xalasˤ* expresses fear and emotional overwhelm. The added nonverbal cue—clutching the chest and pulling the blanket up—intensifies the emotional response, clearly signaling that the speaker is genuinely frightened and urgently wants the situation to end. It reinforces the plea as sincere and immediate.

(14) Attention-getter
(Context) During a noisy family gathering, a father wants everyone to listen before making an important announcement. Therefore, he say:
Xalasˤ ˈʔɪs.kʊ.tu ˈkʊl.kʊ.kʊm wɪsˈmɑ.ʕu ʔɪˈl.li
"Xalasˤ! Everyone, be quiet and listen to me!"

In this context, *Xalasˤ* functions as an attention-getter. The father uses *Xalasˤ* in order to attract the attention of the family. The use of *Xalasˤ* here signals that what follows requires immediate attention and stops all other activities.

# 5. Discussion

The findings of the present study revealed that the DM *Xalasˤ* is pragmatically multifunctional in JSA as it serves a wide range of pragmatic functions across various social contexts. In this regard, the majority of proposed functions were accepted by 70 percent (or more) of the participants. These functions included expressing approval, signalling the end of an action, ending a conversation, expressing reassurance, disapproval, anger, relief, surrender, understanding, mockery, boredom, jealousy, and fear. Only one function, attention-getter, was agreed upon by a relatively low percentage of participants (60%).

Nonverbal cues play a crucial role in reinforcing the pragmatic functions of the DM *Xalasˤ*, amplifying its pragmatic meaning beyond words. In example (6), the father's furrowed brows and raised voice intensify the expression of anger, turning *Xalasˤ* into a forceful command for silence. In situation (7), a deep sigh and slumping into the chair reflect relief, physically embodying the emotional release after a stressful exam. In example (9), slow head nodding while saying *Xalasˤ* enhances the meaning of understanding, showing active listening and mental processing. In scenario (10), the smile accompanying *Xalasˤ* conveys mockery, signalling the speaker's sarcastic tone and indicating that the praise is not sincere. Lastly, in situation (13), a panicked tone, clutching the chest, and pulling the blanket up vividly express fear, reinforcing the urgency and emotional weight behind the plea to stop the movie. These nonverbal cues anchor *Xalasˤ* more firmly in its intended function, making the speaker's emotional state clearer to the listener.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the pragmatic versatility of *Xalasˤ*, documenting its role in expressing both emotion and structure in spoken interaction. The findings reinforce the idea that discourse markers are culturally grounded and context-sensitive, shaped by both linguistic and social factors. Additionally, the study provides empirical evidence that expands the theoretical understanding of how a single discourse marker can perform a wide range of functions depending on the context in which it is said.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of teaching discourse markers like *Xalasˤ* in Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) programs. Because its pragmatic functions cannot be captured through direct translation (e.g., "enough"), learners risk pragmatic failure if they apply inappropriate meanings in certain contexts. Similarly, translators face challenges in rendering *Xalasˤ* accurately into English or other languages, as its function often depends on tone, gesture, and situational context. Incorporating authentic conversational examples, such as those used in this study, could enhance learners' ability to navigate Jordanian communicative norms and produce more culturally appropriate interpretations.

A Final Note: We invested considerable effort in identifying, labeling, and validating the set of pragmatic functions associated with *Xalasˤ*. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the proposed classifications may not receive unanimous acceptance, neither from native speakers of Jordanian Arabic nor from academic peers. Inevitably, a degree of subjectivity influenced both the analysis and the interpretation. Achieving complete consensus in such matters is unlikely. In fact, revisiting the proposed functions may inspire alternative labels that seem just as appropriate. This kind of scholarly ambiguity is both expected and understood. It can only be managed through a reasonable degree of openness and flexibility on the part of readers and reviewers.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has shed light on the pragmatic functions of the DM *Xalasʕ* in JSA. The analysis revealed that *Xalasʕ* serves 14 distinct pragmatic functions, including expressing approval, signalling the end of an action, ending a conversation, expressing reassurance, disapproval, anger, relief, surrender, understanding, mockery, boredom, jealousy, fear, and attracting attention. However, these functions differ in frequency and acceptability among Jordanian native speakers. The findings demonstrate that *Xalasʕ* goes far beyond its literal meaning of "enough"; it is a multifunctional pragmatic tool deeply embedded in everyday Jordanian communication.

The analysis also highlighted the crucial role of context in shaping and reshaping the pragmatic function (illocutionary force) of the DM *Xalasʕ* in Jordanian spoken language. This aligns with Alshorafat and Al Hassi's[29] finding that it is primarily the context, rather than the inherent content, that determines the pragmatic function (illocution) of any linguistic element. In this way, context not only influences the interpretation but also provides a framework within which the speaker's intent can be more accurately understood.

By focusing specifically on *Xalasʕ*, this study fills a significant gap in the literature on Jordanian Arabic pragmatics and discourse analysis. The findings also carry practical implications for several fields. For language teaching, understanding the cultural embeddedness of expressions like *Xalasʕ* can help Arabic learners master authentic conversational usage, allowing them to navigate social contexts more naturally. For cross-cultural communication, the study enhances awareness of Jordanian communication norms, enabling speakers from different cultural backgrounds to better interpret intentions, manage interactions, and avoid potential misunderstandings.

Future research could further explore the pragmatic functions of *Xalasʕ* across other Arabic dialects (e.g., Egyptian, Iraqi, and Yemeni) to uncover regional similarities and differences. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to examine the influence of non-verbal cues, such as intonation, gesture, and facial expression, in shaping or reinforcing the meaning of *Xalasʕ* in spoken interaction. Beyond everyday conversation, future studies might also investigate how *Xalasʕ* functions in media discourse, social media interactions, and folk narratives, thereby expanding our understanding of its evolving role in modern Arabic communication.

## Author Contributions

Author Contributions Conceptualization, O.A. and M.A; methodology, O.A.; software, M.A.; validation, O.A. and M.A..; formal analysis, O.A.; investigation, M.A.; resources, O.A.; data curation, M.A.; writing original draft preparation, O.A.; writing review and editing, M.A.; visualization, O.A.; supervision, M.A..; project administration, M.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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