

# **The Semantics, Pragmatics and Translation of Speech Acts**

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## **Introduction**

Apparently , both semantics and pragmatics appear to deal with the question of meaning but differ in the way they consider the type of meaning. On the one hand , semantics is often employed to account for the truth – condition of an utterance in the abstraction from the context in which this utterance occurs , as it plays an important role in determining the truth – conditional meaning on basis of the formal elements constituting this utterance ( Blakemore , 1987 : 11 ). That is , semantics is concerned with “ what does x mean” as Leech (1983:6) puts it . On the other hand , pragmatics is concerned with those aspects of meaning attributed to a user of language , or as Leech(ibid.) terms it , “ what did you mean by x ”.

Speech acts are considered as a kind of pragmatic meaning . They characterize utterances in terms of what they do- their illocution – rather than what they literally say – their locution . Speech act theory does not study the structure of language but its function , the structure being only the vehicle to express the function (meaning) . This paper aims to give a thorough and comprehensive picture of the semantics and pragmatics of speech acts and their realizations in English and Arabic . The paper also aims to look into some problems encountered by translation Arab students in English / Arabic translation .

### **1. Speech Acts in English:**

#### **1.1 Pragmatics of Speech Acts:**

The theory of speech acts has been initiated as a reaction to many earlier linguistic theories which disregard language as action . This theory had its origin in the British philosophy. It was initiated as a theory of thinking by the British philosopher J.L. Austin (1911-1960) .

Austin presented his theory of speech acts in a series of lectures delivered in 1955 which were published in a book after his death in 1962, entitled “How to Do Things with Words”. Austin’s theory has been modified and developed in the course of time to be known as “ speech act

theory”, and later adopted and further developed by the American philosopher Searle (1969) . (See , Mey 1993:109).

The most essential motivation leading to the discovery of the speech act theory is that the limitation of semantic analysis based on truth – condition; restriction of semantic treatment to a mere class of sentences, the so called “statements” or declaratives whose existence requires that a sentence be verified as true or false according to certain truths about the world . If one says :

(1.) It’s cold outside, we can verify the truth of this sentence by going outside and checking whether it is true or not . However , we cannot do so in:

(2.) Have a nice time .

We cannot talk in (2) about the truth or falsity of this utterance as we realize that the speaker is not here stating something, rather , he wants to express his feeling or wish towards a particular person or persons (Adams ,1985:4) . Austin (1962:12) argues that we often do things with words, when we use them to perform actions such as promising, welcoming, boasting, affirming, advising, etc. Mey (ibid:110) adds that in addition to the particular class of statements , there are other types of utterances that are issued to perform certain actions in the world which constitute an integral part of how language is used in a community; such lists of sentences are speech acts since their occurrence requires performing or doing things .

Moreover , Adams (ibid:46) confirms that the interpretation of speech act is often governed by the fact that the speaker intends to achieve a certain effect on the hearer by utilizing the social convention. He(ibid.) distinguishes between intentional and conventional speech acts. He believes that most speech acts are intentional in the sense that they are communicative . In making promise , for instance , the speaker intends to oblige himself to the future act . It is his intention rather than convention that obligates him to the future act . Conventional speech acts are greatly influenced by the circumstances in which speech acts occur . They are often not difficult to understand , i.e. we can make promises to people in different situations but we only ‘fire’ certain people under certain circumstances. Compare:

(3.) You’ll be fired .

(4.) You are fired.

Each of (3) and (4) represents a different interpretation :(3) is considered an intentional speech act since it is open to interpretation and misunderstanding ,whereas (4) which is conventional speech act , uttered under the appropriate circumstances, is not open to such interpretation and misunderstanding. The hearer in (4), as said by that angry boss,

recognizes that he is fired . Thus , conventional speech acts must often be defined in terms of the contexts in which they are exploited (ibid.) .

Searle (1969:16;1979:39) stresses the significance and importance of the analysis of speech acts since “speaking a language is performing speech acts”, such as promising, swearing, commanding, requesting, etc.

To conclude, speech acts theory is a theory that involves a communicative activity achieved in relation to the speaker’s intention and the hearer’s interpretation in a certain situation under certain social conventions or rules .

## **1.2 Performatives vs Constatives:**

Austin (1962:10) distinguishes between performatives and constatives . He argues that constatives are propositions which can be stated positively or negatively, i.e., they are statements of facts which could be right or wrong , e.g.

( 5 . ) She is my sister .

One can assess the truth or falsity of this sentence in reference to the information in the world . Unlike constatives , performatives are formulated , under appropriate conditions not to describe something but to achieve something . For example , by saying :

( 6 . ) I bequeath my car to my brother.

The speaker is not stating a fact about the world , rather he is performing the act of bequeathing .

## **2.1 Structure of Performatives:**

Performatives may have two grammatical forms . The first form comprises the first person singular ‘ I ’ plus a verb in the simple present indicative active , with or without an indirect object ‘ you’ . Levinson (ibid:244) reduces this grammatical form to the following structure in English : **I (hereby) V per you (that) S’** where V per is a performative verb and S’ is a complement sentence . The second form uses verb in the passive voice as in the following example (Austin ,1962:57) :

( 7 . ) Passengers are warned to cross the track by the bridge only .

To distinguish performative utterances from non - performative ones , Austin suggests that we insert the word ‘ hereby ’ . The hereby – insertion fits only the performative utterances . Compare :

( 8 . ) I ( hereby ) advise you to change your plan .

( 9 . ) John ( hereby ) describes his plan to his friend .

Thus, (9) is ungrammatical because “ hereby ” is inserted to introduce a non – performative verb .

Austin (ibid:15) believes that if the two above mentioned English grammatical structures are violated , the utterance will no longer be a performative one . Note the following:

( 10. ) I promise you .

( 11. ) He promised her .

In (10) we are performing the act of promising , whereas in (11) we are merely describing the act of promising or reporting that a promise has been made .

### **1.2.2 Types of Performatives:**

Most pragmaticists such as Austin (1962) , searle , (1969;1975), Bach and Harnish (1979) , Leech (1983), Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996) have specified two types of performatives : explicit performatives and implicit (primary) performatives . Explicit performatives occur “when a speaker needs to define his act as belonging to a particular category” (Leech ,ibid:181) . However , speakers might appeal to various means to identify their speech acts as belonging to this or that category. One of these means is the use of performative verbs (e.g. order , request, name, etc.) These explicit performative verbs name the illocutionary force the utterance . Implicit (primary) performatives , on the other hand , are those cases in which performativity is achieved through utterances that have no performative expressions , i.e. , they do contain an explicit performative verb naming the illocutionary force of the utterance . To clarify this distinction , consider the following : the act of promising in English , for example , can be shown in two ways :

( 12. ) I'll be there at two o'clock . ( primary performative )

( 13. ) I promise to be there at two o'clock . ( Explicit performative ) .

(12) is a primary performative as it is commonly exploited to indicate a speech act of **promise** and that no other interpretation be accepted, whereas (13) is clearly seen as an explicit performative as it contains the performative verb **promise** in the simple present indicative with the first person subject . Although both sentences (12) and (13) are used to perform the same speech act (of promising) , (13) seems to be more specific in meaning than (12) (Lyons ,1977 : 728) .

### **1.3 Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts:**

Although different points of view towards the analysis of speech acts have been forwarded to further this subject , the present paper will be based in the main on Bach and Harnish's (1979) exploration of speech acts .

Bach and Harnish (ibid:3) believe that speech acts should be studied in terms of communicative purposes . They think that a speaker conveying something to a hearer has a certain intention and that an act of communication cannot be said felicitously or successfully unless this intention is identified by the hearer. They stress the fact that the successful issuance of an illocutionary act requires that this intention be

recognized by the hearer . Indeed , Bach and Harnish have adopted an elaborate model (of both Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969;1979)in which a communicative speech act is seen as composed of four further acts :

**1. Utterance Act**

Speaker utters expression from language to hearer in context of utterance .

**2. Locutionary Act**

Speaker says to hearer in context of utterance so – and – so.

**3. Illocutionary Act**

Speaker does such – and – such in context of utterance .

**4. Perlocutionary Act**

Speaker affects hearer in a certain way .

(ibid : 3)

Before preceding , it is important to emphasize an essential distinction to a clear discussion of speech acts. To account for the distinction between locutionary , illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, let's study the following example .

(14 .) Shoot her !

The locutionary act of this utterance represents the uttering of **shoot her** ; illocutionary act , in appropriate circumstances , is that of , variously, ordering , urging , advising the hearer to shoot her; but the perlocutionary act is the effect of persuading , forcing or frightening the hearer into shooting her (Levinson , 1983:236 – 37) . (For more on this distinction, see Van Dijk , 1976 : 29 and Leech , 1983 : 199f ) .

**1.3.1 Classification of Speech Acts:**

Bach and Harnish (ibid: 44-55) have adopted a more comprehensive detailed scheme in their taxonomy of speech acts in which a great many types of illocutionary acts are described . They have recognized six general classes on the basis of the speaker's psychological state which they call speaker's " attitude " . Two of these classes are conventional : " effectives " and "verdictives"<sup>(1)</sup> . The other four types are communicative speech acts : constatives , directives , commissives and acknowledgements<sup>(2)</sup> . Conventional speech acts are performed successfully by satisfying a convention, whereas communicative ones are done so by means of recognition of intention (ibid:110) . The six classes are the following :

**1. Constatives**

Constatives express the speaker's belief and his intention or desire that the hearer have or form a like belief . They include the following subgroups: assertives<sup>(3)</sup>, perdictives, retrodictives, descriptives, ascriptives, informatives, confirmatives, concessives, retractives,

assentives, dissentives, disputatives, responsives, suggestives and suppositives , e.g. assert , affirm , report , conclude, suppose , suggest , etc . (pp.42 – 6) .

## **2. Directives**

Directives , correlated with Searle’s , express the speaker’s attitude and intention towards some prospective action by the hearer that his utterance or the attitude it expresses , be taken as reason for the hearer’s action , e.g. request , ask , demand , advise , warn ,etc.(pp.47-9).

## **3. Commissives**

Commissives<sup>(4)</sup> are speech acts in which the speaker is committed to some future course of action . The promiser attempts to make the world fit his words . The issuer of a promise intends to do something by uttering his words , e.g. promise , swear , plan , bet , guarantee , vow, commit , etc . (pp. 49\_51) .

## **4. Acknowledgements**

This class had its origin in Austin’s behabitives. Acknowledgements express a certain feeling towards the hearer, especially in cases where the utterance is obviously perfunctory or formal. This class embraces expressions of attitude and social behavior, e.g. welcome, congratulate, thank, apologize, greet, accept, compliment, etc. (pp. 51 – 55) .

## **5. Effectives**

These conventional speech acts affect some change in institutional states of affairs . For example :

( 15 ) A student is graduated .

( 16 ) A bill is voted .

Verbs denoting effective acts are: resign, vote,bequeath ,etc.(pp.110-11).

## **6. Verdictives**

This class of verbs is used to give verdicts , findings or judgements, e.g. estimate , value , appreciate , assess , etc. ( pp. 111ff ) .

### **1.4 Direct and Indirect Speech Acts:**

Speech acts that are obtained via the straightforward relationship between a form (structure) and a function (communicative function) are described as “ direct speech acts ” , e.g.

	<u>Forms</u>	<u>Functions</u>
( 17. ) Did you eat the food ?	Interrogative	Question .
( 18. ) Eat the food ( please ) .	Imperative	Command .

An indirect speech act , on the other hand, is often indirectly obtained through different sentence types or as Leech (1983:195) puts it: “an indirect illocution is a case of sentence ‘ masquerading ‘ as a sentence of different type”. Consider the following example quoted form Ackmajian et al. (1995 : 350):

( 19. ) My car has a flat tire .

This utterance recognized through declarative structure is not to be taken as a statement when said by “ Smith ” to a gas station attendant, rather, it is a request for the attendant to do something (repairing the tire).

By and large , in utterances of indirect speech acts , three basic ingredients can be distinguished, the literal force of the utterance (i.e., the direct act), the non literal force of the utterance (i.e. , the indirect act) and the relation between them. The direct speech act is here of a secondary importance for the speaker because it is not the one that is intended by the speaker.

In some instances of indirect speech acts , the relation between the direct and indirect acts is more regular and systematic than others because the meaning of the indirect illocution is effectively determined by the literal meaning of the utterance. Thus, Bach and Harnish (ibid:70) confirm that the hearer can identify the indirect act through the first act.

Consequently, these instances are considered as “conventionally indirect”. The direct illocutionary force here is only incidental and the speaker does not mean it . Note the following example which is similar to example ( 19 ) above .

( 20. ) Tom : I would like the salt . (As uttered at a dinner table by Tom to Alice who is close to the salt) .

The issuer of this utterance ( Tom) does not intend to inform Alice about his wish while taking his dinner , rather , he wants her to interpret it merely as a request to do something (passing the salt) .

Mey (ibid:145) , Yule (1996 a:55) and Crystal (1997:12) argue that in English people prefer to use indirect commands and requests since they are often seen gentler and more polite than direct ones . That’s why we find speakers start their requests with expressions such as will you.....?, would you.....?, can you....?, etc . Compare .

( 21.a ) Close the door .

( 21.b ) Would you mind closing the door , please ?

In (21.a) the imperative construction might be rude ; therefore , it is usually replaced by an interrogative construction in (21.b) , and this is a matter of politeness .

Bach and Harnish (ibid:10) strongly justify the indirectness of speech acts . They stress that the speaker can mean more than he says , and that the meaning of what is said does not always determine the performance of some illocutionary acts , since he can use the same sentence literally or non – literally, and hence , his intention is not usually determined by what he says .

## **2.0 Speech Acts in Arabic:**

Arab linguists , rhetoricians and scholars such as ابن قتيبة (born in 276 A.H.), ابن فارس (born in 395 A. H.) and السكاكي (1980) have fully investigated the pragmatic meaning as an integral part of the meaning of the utterance , in addition to the semantic meaning . They have built their speech theory on the pragmatic meaning of an utterance as the product of the speaker's intention , hearer's comprehension , the context of situation and the speaker – hearer relation . However , they have accommodated the theory of speech acts within the general theory of rhetoric rather than pragmatics. They have distinguished utterance meaning as either constative (الخبر) or performative ( الإنشاء ) ( عباس , 1982: 33 ; عبا, 1989:145 ) .

### **2.1 Classification of Speech Acts in Arabic:**

According to Arab rhetoricians such as الجرجاني ( 1964 ) , العسكري ( 1977 ) and السكاكي ( 1980 ) , ' constative ' الخبر ' is an utterance meaning in which a speaker issues his utterance to tell his addressee something . ) ( الإنشاء ' performative ' on the other hand , is that kind of meaning in which the speaker asks his addressee to do something , e.g.

( 22. ) ( constative ) لاستسهلن المصاعب أو أحقق هدفي )

( I'll consider all difficulties until I achieve my aim )

( 23. ) ( performative : command ) وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ )

(النور : ٦٥)

“ So establish regular prayer and give regular charity ”

( The Glorious Qur'an 24 : 56 ) .

In this respect, مطلوب والبصير ( 1999 : 103 ) confirm that الخبر utterance can be true or false in respect to the speaker's judgment and the reality in the world . This view , which distinguishes الخبر utterance form الإنشاء utterance , might be accredited to an Islamic group known as ( المعتزلة ) . They have come to this conclusion depending on the belief that the Glorious Qur'an is composed of three main speech acts: exercitives ( الأمر ) , prohibitives ( النهي ) and constatives ( الخبر ) (ibid.).

#### **2.1.1 The Structure of Performative ( الإنشاء )**

Semantically , an utterance not likely to be true or false in itself is often referred to as الإنشاء أو الطلب ( القزويني : 13 as cited in مطلوب والبصير , 1999: 121 ) . الإنشاء utterance is usually divided into two main classes :

( a ) ' Directive ' الإنشاء الطلبي which involves the fulfillment of action not at the time of enunciating an utterance .

( b ) ' Non – directive ' الإنشاء غير الطلبي which does not involve the fulfillment of an action .



Arabic performatives are syntactically characterized by the following markers :

1. The subject is in the first person singular . It has the marker/ أ , /أ .
2. The verb is in the simple present indicative active .
3. The verb has an indirect object / لك / .
4. It is sometimes possible to insert the word “ بهذا<sup>(5)</sup> ” which can be considered as an equivalent to the English word “ hereby ” . Consider the following examples :

( 24. ) أعدك أن احضر غداً ( I promise you to come tomorrow ) .

(24.a) أعدك ( بهذا ) أن أحضر غداً ( I (hereby) promise you to come tomorrow).

(25.) أراهنك على أنه سينجح ( I bet you he will pass).

From looking at the above examples, one may notice that the difference between English and Arabic performatives lies in the syntactic form of each , but semantically speaking no difference can be observed. Significantly , the performative utterance in Arabic can be achieved by using the past tense form , e.g.

( 26. ) وهبتك هذا الدار ( I gave you this house free as a gift).

## **2.2 Directive Utterances:**

Arab linguists and rhetoricians such as سيبويه (born in 130 A.H.), ابن قتيبة (born in 276 A.H.) and ابن فارس (1964) have classified speech acts into a small number of types . However , the classification adopted in this paper is that of الجرجاني (1977) and السكاكي (1980) as they proved to be more detailed and refined . Arabic directives are classified into five communicative speech acts : “command”, “prohibition”, “ optative ” , “question ” and “ vocative” . The five classes are the following :

### **1. الأمر Command**

This speech act may be realized through the following linguistic forms ( 50 – 47 : 1982 , الاوسي ) .

#### **a. فعل الأمر The verb of command , e.g.**

( 27. ) " أقم الصلاة لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ " ( الإسراء : ٧٨ )

“ Establish regular prayers at the sun’s decline ”

( The Glorious Qur’an 17 : 78 )

#### **b. The imperfect form beginning with لام الأمر**

“ the particle لـ / li / of command” which is usually prefixed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. of the jussive to give it an imperative sense (Wright, 1974: 291 , e.g. )

( 28. ) ليطب قلبك ( Let their heart be at ease )

#### **c. The form of اسم فعل**

“ nomina verbi ” of the imperative verb , e.g. صه which has the meaning of أسكت “ hush ” , مه which means أكف “ stop ; give up”. However , these forms are rarely used nowadays . For more on these forms , see مطلوب والبصير ( 1999 : 124 ) .

## 2. النهي Prohibition

It is realized in the imperfect form beginning with the particle لا /laa/ of prohibition 'لا الناهية' as لا يفعل ، لا تفعل ، e.g.

لاتنه عن خلق وتأتي مثله (29.)

(Don't preach against what you yourself practice.)

## 3. التمني Optative

This speech act is realized via the following particles : " ليت " would that " , " هل " wish " , " لعل " perhaps " and " لو " if " which may be used with or without the verb " وَدَّ " to love " , e.g.

" (العلم : ٩ ) " وَدَّوْا لَوْ تُذْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ " ( 30. )

" Their desire is that thou shouldst be pliant : So would they be pliant . " ( The Glorious Qur'an , 68 : 9 )

" يا ليت شعري ، ولم نعتب أعاذكم هل نال حظاً من العتبي أعاذينا؟ " ( 31. )

( ابن زيدون : أضحى التنائي )

O would that I knew , seeing that  
we have not satisfied your enemies ,  
whether our enemies have obtained  
any measure of satisfaction [ from you ] .

( ابن زيدون : أضحى التنائي )

(Translated by : James T. Monroe )

Arab rhetoricians distinguish between two types of optative utterances : the first type is where the speaker wishes that something wanted should happen though he knows that it would never happen for it is impossible , e.g.

" (النساء : ٧٣ ) " يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزاً عَظِيماً " ( 32. )

" Oh ! I wish I had been with them ; a fine thing should I then have made of it " . ( The Glorious Qur'an , 4: 73 )

Whereas in the second type , the speaker wishes that something wanted should happen for he knows that it is possible , at least to some extent ( السكاكي , 1980 : 420 ) . e.g.

ليت هذه السيارة لنا ( 33. ) ( O would that this car were ours ! )

## 4. الاستفهام Question

This speech act is achieved through the particles " أ " , " هل " and some question words such as " من " " who " , " أي " " which " , " كيف " , how , " أين " " where " , " متى " " when " , " ما " " what " , " كم " , " how many " ( Wright , 1974 : 14 ) . e.g.

" هل تحسن الأداء ؟ " ( 34. ) ( Did the performance improve ? )

## 5. النداء Vocative

Vocative in Arabic may be realized by the following particles : ( يا ، أ ، وا ، هيا ، أيا ، آ ، أ . e.g. )

" أفاطم مهلا بعض هذا التدلل وأن كنت قد أزمعت صرحي فاجملي " ( 35. )

( ND : 19 ) ( الزوزاني )

( O Fatim , easy with your coquetry . If you had decided to desert me, do it kindly ) .

The most common particle is يا " O " , e.g.

( 36. ) " يا آدمُ أسكنُ أنتَ وَزَوْجَكَ الْجَنَّةَ " ( البقرة : ٣٥ )

" O Adam ! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden . "

( The Glorious Qur'an , 2 : 35 )

However , the particle ( يا ) may sometimes be deleted as in :

( 37. ) " يُوسُفَ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا " ( يوسف : ٢٩ )

" O Joseph , pass this over ! " ( The Glorious Qur'an 12 : 29 )

### **2.3 Non- directive Utterances:**

Non-directive utterances can be subclassified into the following speech acts :

#### **1. المدح والذم Praise and Vilification**

This speech act is expressed via special group of verbs called أفعال المدح والذم , "the verbs of praise and vilification (blame)" (Wright, 1974: 97) . These include نِعَمَ " to be good " , بئسَ , " to be bad " , ساءَ " to be bad or evil " . In addition , we sometimes use the verb form فَعَلَ to express praise , e.g.

( 38 ) نِعِمَ الصَّاحِبُ أَنْتَ ( You are an excellent companion )

( 39 ) وَحَسُنَ أَوْلَئِكَ رَفِيقًا ( النساء : ٦٩ )

"Ah ! what a beautiful fellowship! " ( The Glorious Qur'an 4: 69)

#### **2. التعجب Exclamation**

Exclamation is expressed in Arabic by employing two regular forms of expressions called أفعال التعجب "verbs of surprise or wonder". The first is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular masculine perfect preceded by ما ( ما , التعجبية , the ma` expressive of surprise ) , and followed by the accusative of the object that causes surprise :

( 39. ) ما أعذبَ شعاع القمر راقداً على هذا الشاطئ !

( How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank ! )

The second is the 2nd pers . sing. masc. imperfect followed by the preposition , بِـ with the genitive , with the same signification as before .

( 40. ) أشدُّ بأبيه ! ( How strong his father is ! )

#### **3. القسم Oath**

Oath in Arabic may be expressed in two ways :

A : The use of particles such as وَ ، تَدْ ، بَدْ ، e.g.

( 41. ) والله لا يهلك المؤمن ( By God , the believer shall not perish ) .

B : The use of the expressions " أقسم " " I swear " and " لعمر "

( 42. ) أقسم أنه بريء ( I swear he is innocent ( not guilty) .

#### **4. الرجاء Invocation**

This speech act is realized through the particle لعل " perhaps " and the verbs of invocation عسى , "perhaps", حري , "likely", and أخلوق "likely" ( مطلوب والبصير , 1999 : 123 ; Wright , 1974 : 108 ) . , e.g. .

- ( 43. ) عسى ربكم أن يرحمكم (Perhaps your Lord may have mercy on you .)  
( 44. ) أخلو لقت السماء أن تمطر ( It is likely to rain ) .

### 5. صيغ العقود Contract Forms

These are achieved by using the past tense form as in :

بعث ، قبلت ، وهبت ، اشتريت ، etc.

- ( 45. ) زوجتك نفسي ( I married myself to you )

### Direct and Indirect Speech Acts:

As is the case in English , there is an easily recognized correlation between the three common speech acts of statement , question and command ( request ) and their normal structural realization ( by means of sentence–type): declarative, interrogative and imperative structures, respectively :

- ( 46. ) Statement : يتألف الكتاب من جزئين (The book is in two parts.)  
(47.) Question: من هو مؤلف "سوق الأضاليل"؟ (Who wrote “ Vanity Fair”?)  
( 48. ) Command : تعال مبكراً ( Come early . )

However , there are a lot of examples which express indirect relationship between a given speech act and its syntactic form. Let’s study the following illustrative examples :

- (49.) "إذا لم تستحي فافعل ما شئت"

(If you are shameless, do whatever you like.)

Linguistically speaking , this utterance , which is extracted from the Prophetic Traditions (Hadiths) of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), is an example of imperative sentence , but pragmatically, it has the illocutionary force of warning ( العسقلاني 2000:642). In the following example, we have an imperative construction expressing the illocutionary force of **prayer** :

- ( 50. ) ربنا أعفر لنا ( O our Lord ! Forgive us . )

In certain contexts a declarative construction may be exploited to a achieve an indirect speech act in certain appropriate conditions . Let’s have a look at (51) and (52) below and see how Arabic makes use of declarative constructions .

- ( 51. ) أمرني المعلم أن أخرج من الصف

( The teacher ordered me to leave the class . )

- ( 52. ) " سيذكرني قومي إذا جد جداهم وفي الليلة الظلماء يفقد البدر "

(My tribe (or my people) will remember me when they face hard times: (in the same way as) the full moon is missed in a dark night) .

(51) has the illocutionary force of command , whereas (52) expresses praise (self praise) . For more examples on indirect speech acts in Arabic, see (السامرائي , 2000:20–27 and لاشين,1987:166–91)

### **3.0 The Translation of Speech Acts:**

#### **3.1 Preliminaries:**

There is no need to labour the point, though a fundamental issue in translation, that every language is unique by itself, i.e., the patterns and systems a language manifests characterize that language as being distinct from other languages. From a purely linguistic viewpoint, this fact is well elucidated by Beaugrande (1994:2) who considers the uniqueness of language as an axiom through maintaining that every natural language can be envisaged as a specific abstract system of forms organized in a specific way with each form standing in an arbitrary relation to its meaning.

To these characteristics others could be added, such as tendency, preference, frequency, etc. since uniqueness of language, in its broader sense, embodies the patterns of thinking of the society that speaks it.

English and Arabic belong to different language families. English belongs to the Indo-European family, whereas Arabic belongs to the Semitic family of language. Thus, they exhibit gaps<sup>(6)</sup>. The more the languages are distant in membership, the more the gaps are. The field that is expected to bridge the gaps and secure communication is translation. The core of translation is equivalence; it is “a central concept” in translation (Munday, 2001:49). There are three major types of equivalence as forwarded by translation theories; these are formal, dynamic and functional.

#### **3.2 Formal, Dynamic and Functional Equivalence:**

Formal equivalence gives priority to form (syntax), but not at the expense of content. This entails that in this kind of equivalence both form and content are considered (Munday, *ibid*:37-41). Thus formal equivalence seeks the closest possible match of formal and semantic features between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) (Al-Hajjaj, 1995:219).

Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, has been developed to productively take care of what formal equivalence neglects. Precisely dynamic equivalence is message-oriented. It entirely centers around the notion of “equivalent effect”. This equivalent effect (which is so loose and highly subjective) is believed to be fulfilled through naturalness of expressions that fits the target language (TL) culture. (Hatim and Munday, 2004:40-2). This type of equivalence is based on three linguistic levels: syntactic, lexical and semantic. Nida (1964:166) suggests making relatively free adjustments to the ST to match the linguistic and non-linguistic features of the TL.

On the syntactic level , it is recommended that syntactic structures should be modified and adjusted to suit the TT so that they look natural to the TL readers . This would include , for example , a high mobility in the position of constituting items . On the lexical level , it is recommended that choice of items guarantees effectiveness . On the semantic level , it is recommended that TT structures should imply a semantic value similar to that of the ST (Kachru ,1984 as cited in Farghal ,1995:55) .

To conclude, one may immediately notice that dynamic equivalence is characterized by the high degree of subjectivity it practices over the text . This is evident from the fact that the whole notion of dynamic equivalence depends on the translator's perception of the ST and his attitude towards the TL , i.e. the whole notion of dynamic equivalence is translator – centered .

Functional equivalence is the result of the progress achieved in the field of text linguistics (House ,1977:28) . The unit of translation , has, then become the text which functions in a certain situation , or culture and not in others . The establishment of the functional equivalence , then, results from the analysis of the whole text , each as a unit connected to what precedes and what follows. The SL text is, therefore, comprehensively analyzed stressing its intention and functional aspects.

To determine about functional equivalence , the ST is analyzed from a semiotic point of view . In semiotic perspective the text is seen as one interwoven entity . In this perspective , a text is analyzed in terms of three components : pragmatics , semantics and syntax . (Hatim and Munday ,ibid : ch.7) .It first analyzes the text in pragmatic terms (i.e., to elicit the author's intention and the way he expresses his intention) . In this respect , a competent translator is required to remould this intention in the TL in a way that serves the same function of the ST in the SL. Concerning semantic and syntactic levels the strategies suggested in discussing dynamic equivalence are recommended here .

Accordingly , functional equivalence within a semiotic perspective is perceived to consist of three sub-equivalents , each corresponding to one of the three levels mentioned above . These are : semantic equivalence which is concerned with the relations between linguistic expressions and objects or events in the real world which such expressions refer to or describe ; syntactic equivalence which relates to the relation of these expressions to each other ; and pragmatic equivalence which relates to the utility of the speaker of the various situational components and how he uses the expressions in a way that explicitly or implicitly reflects these situational features (Crystal , 1980:317as cited in Al-Hajjaj , 1995:224-5).

As it stands, functional equivalence is then an ideal approach to the rendition of speech acts, for more important than deciding upon the exact

meaning of an utterance in semantic terms is the pragmatic function of the utterance and to see whether the TL shows a similar tendency or not .

Therefore this approach is recommended in the translation of speech acts between English and Arabic . The function of the speech act is first decided , then one must decide upon the strategies followed in its rendition whether into direct or indirect speech act .

### **3.3 The Rendition of Speech Acts:**

When grammatical rules and orderings are violated, ill-formed expressions result, but when pragmatic rules are violated, ambiguities are often caused which lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications. Thus, when we are in the process of rendering texts, we should keep abreast within pragmatic interpretations and should endeavor to put them forth. Utterances, may, semantically speaking, mean something, but pragmatically convey a totally different thing. To clarify this point, consider the following examples which illustrate the illocutionary forces which are not represented in the words and forms but are implied from the text as a whole .

" الهَي وَرَبِّي مَنْ لِي غَيْرِكَ أَسْئَلُهُ كَشْفُ ضَرِي وَالنَّظَرُ فِي أَمْرِي (7) "..... ( 53. )

( My God and my Lord ! Have I any but Thee from whom to ask removal of my affection and regard for my affairs ? )

In the same supplication we read :

" لا أَجِدُ مَفْرَأَ مَنْي وَلَا مَفْرَعًا أَتَوَجَّهُ إِلَيْهِ فِي أَمْرِي غَيْرَ قَبُولِكَ عَذْرِي وَأَدْخَالَكَ إِيَّاي فِي ( 54. )  
سَعَةً مِنْ رَحْمَتِكَ . اللَّهُمَّ فَاقْبَلْ عَذْرِي "

(I find no place to free form what occurred through me . Nor any place of escape to which I may turn in my affairs other than the acceptance of my excuse and Thy entering me into the compass of Thy mercy. Oh God, **so accept my excuse !**)

The final sentence , namely **فاقبل عذري** (accept my excuse) determines that the initial sentence **من لي غيرك أسئله** (Have I any but the from whom to ask...) is a question form in the format but Thee illocutionary force is to state , " I (i.e. , the repentee) have no one but Thee " .....

Hatim and Mason (1997:57) confirm that pragmatic meaning would provide the translator with insights into intentionality (The intended meaning) . They cite the following example :

( 55. ) نحن مستضعفون

When this utterance is said by ordinary group of people , it has a semantic meaning and it is rendered into English in one of the following ways:

( 55.a ) ( We are hopeless ) .

( 55.b ) ( We are helpless ) .

( 55.c ) ( We are hopeless and helpless ) .

However, when the above utterance is said by an Arab political reader, for example , who is speaking about his people , then it has a pragmatic meaning (intended meaning); so it should be rendered as follows: ( 55.d ) (We are victimized).

Quranic aayas (verses) are full of pragmatic utterances in which messages are expressed in forms not usually used for those purposes , i.e., in some cases, question – type utterances are used not to ask for information but to warn people of their misbehavior and what consequences they might expect otherwise . Note the following aaya where a rhetorical question is used as a linguistic form expressing the speech act of prohibition ( الخن , 1972 : 328 ) .

( يونس : ٩٩ ) " أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ " ( 56. )

“ Wilt thou then compel mankind against their will , to believe ! ”

(The Glorious Qur'an , 10 : 99) .

Moreover, we can find examples showing the speech act of “command” realized by the declarative clause, as in the following aaya (حمودة,1983:67) .

( البقرة : ٢٢٨ ) " وَالْمَطْلُوقَاتُ يُنْبِرِيصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ " ( 57. )

“ Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods ” . (The Glorious Qur'an , 2 : 228 )

So, translators should pay special attention to such intended meanings. For more on the translation of Quranic provisions as speech acts , see Hatim and Mason ( 1997 : 117 – 21 ) .

Now, let's study the following traditional example of request in English and see how it could be rendered into Arabic .

( 58. ) Can you pass the salt , please ?

It is either rendered into :

( 58.a ) . ناولني الملح رجاء .

Or less commonly into .

(58.b) هل تستطيع أن تناوليني الملح رجاء

The English utterance in ( 58 ) is often interpreted as a request for the salt, but not as a question about the addressee's ability to do something (passing the salt) (Yule , 1996 b:133) .

In Arabic, on the other hand , the speech act of request is directly maintained. This feature of directness possessed by Arabic is frequently observed and has even been put into a rule by Emery (1986: 172) who states: **As a general Arabic tends to be more explicit than English; what is implicit in English often has to be spelled out in Arabic** . Thus, if the English request mentioned above in ( 58 ) is rendered into Arabic using what is less common in Arabic ( the form of question ) then the translator will establish what is called pragmalinguistic failure .



Accordingly, as far as speech acts are concerned, there are two important points which have significance in English/Arabic translation. First, the two languages often use different structures to perform certain speech acts. English normally tends to use a greater degree of indirectness realized by grammatical devices. Arabic, on the other side, often makes use of lexical and other devices to achieve indirectness. This difference is significant for translation; it requires a shift in grammatical structure, as in :

( 59. ) Can I have two kilos of sugar ?

Here, English uses a question to perform the speech act of request. This would normally be rendered into Arabic as a declarative or even imperative structure .

( 59.a ) أريد كيلوين من السكر

(59.b) اعطني كيلوين من السكر

Hence , ( 59 ) , ( 59.a ) and ( 59.b ) are equivalent ; they perform the same speech act of request .

Secondly, English makes frequent use of implicit (primary performatives) (see section 1.4. above) , whereas Arabic tends more often to use explicit performatives . This would mean that translation would involve a shift from implicit to explicit performatives or vice versa, depending on the direction of translation . Consider the following example from English .

( 60.a ) I'll be there at 8.00 o'clock .

( 60.b ) أعدك بأنني سوف أكون هناك في الساعة الثامنة

( 60.a ) expresses an implicit promise in English , which is rendered in Arabic by an explicit promise ( 60.b ) أعدك . To support our point of view , let's study the following example taken from Mahfuz's **Awladu Haaratina** , translated by Stewart ( 1981 ) .

( 61.a ) ( p.99 ) نادى خادمة وأمره أن يدعو إليه المعلم كرشه

( 61.b ) ( He called his servant and asked him fetch Kirsha) . (p.103)

The illocutionary force of the Arabic verb أمره (ordered him) is that of command (order) which falls into Bach and Harnish's class of directives<sup>(8)</sup>. This is translated into English by the verb **asked** . So , here we have two different constructions used to realize the same speech act. Translation here involves replacing one structure by another, i.e., we shift from explicit performative أمره to implicit one **asked** in order to supply the closest and most distinguishable equivalent , both semantically and pragmatically .

### **Conclusions:**

In the light of the previous analysis and application to translation, the following conclusions have been arrived at :

1. As a notion , speech acts theory characterizes utterances in terms of what they do – their illocution rather than what they literally say – their locution .
2. Semantically , no difference can be seen between English and Arabic as far as speech acts are concerned .
3. In terms of realization , English and Arabic differ considerably in the expression of speech acts . Speech acts in English are essentially grammaticalized , whereas in Arabic they are basically lexicalized . This puts upon translators the requirement of specifying what particular illocutionary force is intended by the use of a particular structure so that the appropriate translation is made .
4. In the two languages , the use of indirect speech acts is more favored in speech than direct speech acts , particularly those acts that are associated with politeness .
5. Of the three types of equivalence discussed , functional equivalence is the most appropriate type in the translation of speech acts , because this approach of translation seeks to render the function first .
6. In terms of tendency towards expressing performative utterances, English and Arabic show different tendencies. English is implicit performative–oriented, whereas Arabic is explicit performative–oriented. Translators should be aware of these tendencies so that the naturalness of expression is maintained .

**Notes:**

1. Both of these classes belong to Seale’s “ declaratives ” .
2. These four classes roughly correspond to Austin’s expositives, exercitives , commisives , and behabitives , respectively , and are close to Searle’s representatives , commissives and expressives .
3. This terminology is also used by Searle in his 1979 revision of the 1975 article “ A taxonomy of illocutionary acts ” .
4. This class had its origin in Austin’s taxonomy .
5. However , this is generally peculiar to legal language.
6. The word ‘ gaps ’ is used as a cover term to designate all the differences among languages which represent an obstacle to smoth contact .
7. Examples (53) and (54) are taken form supplication (Dua`’a Kumayl) translated by William C.Chittick ( cited in Miremadi , 2001 : 187 ) .
8. Bach and Harnish (1979:47) , adopting a more comprehensive taxonomy , classify command as a member of the category of “requirements ” (as a subcategory of directives) .

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