

Republic of Yemen
Ministry of Higher Education and
Scientific Research
Yemen Academy for Graduate Studies
Department of Languages



Speech Acts in English and Arabic:
A Comparative Study with Shakespeare's *King Lear* and its
Arabic Translation by Jabra as a Case Study

By
Khulood Khaled Abdulwali Al-Ademi

Supervisor
Dr. Amin Al-Mekhlafi
Associate Professor of
Applied Linguistics
Sana'a University

Co-supervisor
Dr. Abdullah Al-Eryani
Associate Professor of
Applied Linguistics
Thamar University

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Linguistics

Yemen Academy for Graduate Studies

Sana'a - Yemen

16, April, 2020

DEDICATION

To those who have sacrificed a lot just to see me the best.

To those who have advised me regularly to keep me away from risks.

To those whose prayers supported and provided me with strength and confidence from the beginning until the end of my research.

To those who are the pulses of my heart and the source of tenderness, my lovely parents.

To those who have enlightened my life to be on the best track.

To those who embodied all the meanings of diligence and success.

To those who are in the position of prophets, my respectable supervisors, professors, doctors, and teachers.

To those who have shared me happiness and sadness truly and sincerely, my darling brother.

To those who wished me to be successful, to the best companions, my precious colleagues and friends.

To the great edifice who have welcomed me during conducting this research, the librarians of Yemen Academy for Graduate Studies, University of Science and Technology, and Sana'a University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, all praise and thanks go to Allah the Lord and the Almighty of the universe for providing me with faith, patience and strength to come up with this work.

I am indebted to my parents and brother who have always been with me by their endless encouragement, unforgettable support, and endurance during the long journey of having Master Degree.

Special gratitude and sincere appreciation go to my supervisors; Dr. Amin Al-Mekhlafi and Dr. Abdullah Al-Eryani for their patience, generosity, encouragement, helpful notifications, and valuable suggestions for improving this thesis.

I am also very grateful to Dr. Ibrahim Taj-Adeen, the head of Languages Department at Yemen Academy for Graduate Studies, for his cooperation and support during my study.

My sincere thanks also should be extended to Dr. Abdulsalam Al-Ghurafi; Sana'a University, Dr. Ali Al-Ward and Dr. Waleed Al-Qadasi; University of Science and Technology, and Dr. Abdulmalik Saif; Queen Arwa University who have evaluated the tool of the present study with comments and suggestions that have greatly contributed to the refinement of this wo

Abstract

This study intended to identify the types of speech acts with their illocutionary forces in English and Arabic languages as presented in Act I of Shakespeare's play '*King Lear*' and its translation by Jabra. It also intended to investigate the aspects of similarities and differences in speech acts between English and Arabic with reference to Shakespeare's '*King Lear*' Act I and its Jabra's Arabic translation. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher followed the comparative, descriptive and analytic approaches. A table was designed as an instrument for data collection and analysis for the speech acts used by the characters of the play's Act I in the two languages. Forty-five speech acts were collected from the play, Act I, with their translations by Jabra. These speech acts were analyzed and discussed in terms of their types of speech acts and their locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The main findings of this study indicated that the most common types of speech acts used in the play were directives of asking, ordering, and requestive in English and imperative الأمر and interrogation الاستفهام in Arabic. Moreover, speech acts in Arabic were found to be realized by the use of certain particles and verbs / expressions, such as "يا Ya" for vocative, "لو Law" for wish, etc. whereas in English they were realized by the use of explicit or implicit performative verbs. The study concluded with some recommendations for students of translation, linguistics, and literature and provided suggestions for further future studies.

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Chapter One

Chapter One

Introduction and Background Information

1.1 Prelimaniries

Many scholars of linguistics define pragmatics in many different ways. Levinson (1983), one of these scholars, proposes many definitions for the term pragmatics. It is, (1) “the study of language usage” (p.5); (2) “the study of language from a functional perspective” (p.7); (3) “the study of those relations between language and context” (p.9), and (4) “the study of deixis ..., presupposition and speech acts” (p.9). While Leech defines it as, “the study of meaning in relation to speech situations” (1983, p.6) and Yule (1996, p.4) as, “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms.” To sum up, pragmatics studies the relationship between language and its social context in the process of communication between a speaker and listener.

Speech acts are one of the main aspects of pragmatics. They are concerned with what people do with a language; inform, perform actions, and effect on listener. Korta and Perry state that:

Pragmatics is the theory of communicative intentions and speech acts; that is, of the way speakers use language in communicative situations to plan and execute utterances in the light of semantic properties, and other properties, of the expressions they use; that is how speakers do things with words. (2011, p.140)

A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication. By each utterance a speaker not only says something, but also performs certain action like requesting, asking, greeting, inviting, complaining, advising, etc. (Austin, 1962 and Searle, 1969). Schiffrin (1994, p.60) indicates that the theory of speech act is concerned

with, “what people ‘do’ with language – with the functions of language.” Akmajian, et al. (2010, p.395) define speech acts as the, “acts performed in uttering expressions.” This theory goes through two major phases; (1) the phase of appearance and foundation by the English philosopher J.L. Austin. His book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) explains this pragmatic theory. And (2) the phase of development and systemic adjustment by his student J.R. Searle (1969) who has known more for his works on speech acts. The theory of speech act has been discussed not only by Austin (1962) and his student Searle (1969, 1975, 1976), but also by other linguists who made linguistic studies and surveys like Sadock (1974), Cole and Morgan (1975), Bach and Harnish (1979), Gazdar (1981) and Sadock and Zwicky (1985) (Saeed, 2003).

Speech act theory is not about the truth condition of language as whether it is true or false. Austin (1962) was opposed the traditional view of language as having the only function of producing true or false statements. He refers to this view as the descriptive fallacy. Lyons (1995, p.237) states that, “Austin’s main purpose, originally at least, was to challenge what he regarded as the descriptive fallacy: the view that the only philosophically interesting function of language was that of making true or false statements.” However, this theory is about the function of language as communicated in context following the speaker’s intention and the effect on listener (Austin, 1962). The most important distinction in this theory is the distinction Austin makes between constatives and performatives:

The original distinction was drawn between performative utterances and constative utterances: the later are descriptive statements which can be analyzed in terms of truth values; performatives, on the other hand, are expressions of activity which are not analyzable in truth – value terms. Performative verbs (apologize, etc.) have a particular significance in speech-act theory, as they mark the illocutionary force of an utterance in explicit way. (Crystal, 2008, p.357)

Intentions are the center of communication. When a speaker makes an utterance, he / she has two intentions; the informative intention and the communicative intention. In the informative intention, the speaker wants to convey a piece of information to the listener and the speaker's communicative intention is to have the informative intention recognized by the listener (Allot, 2010). In any communicative utterance, the speaker has an intention and a goal to achieve whereas the hearer has to decode that intention following the cultural, personal, and interpersonal dimensions of the utterance. Both sides are helped by the circumstances surrounding the utterance which are called the speech events (Mey, 2001). It is the sum of the interlocutors who use the speech act for the purpose of interaction with others in the society. The collaboration of the hearer is necessary in order to make the speech act successful. The hearer's interpretation should match the speaker's intention. In brief, the pragmatic meaning of speech acts is built on the context on which an utterance is uttered, the speaker's intention, hearer's comprehension, and speaker-hearer relationship.

Hymes (as cited in Schmidt and Richards (1980)) has suggested a clear distinction between speech situations, speech events, and speech acts:

Within a community one finds many *situations* associated with speech, such as fights, hunts, meals, parties, etc. ... The term *speech event* can be restricted to activities that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech, events as two party conversations (face-to-face or on the telephone), lectures, introductions, religious rites, and the like. *Speech acts* (in a narrow sense now) are the minimal terms of the set: speech situation/event/act. When we speak, we perform acts such as giving reports, making statements, asking questions, giving warnings, making promises, approving, regretting, and apologizing. (p.130)

The theory of speech acts is not exclusive to one language like English. For its prominent role in analyzing and understanding communicative interactions, it can be applicable to any other language. By producing an utterance, the speaker performs three

acts namely locutionary act; the act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression, illocutionary act; the act of doing something, such as stating, commanding, confirming, etc., and perlocutionary act; the reaction of the hearer which depends on what the speaker says (Yule, 1996). According to Searle, speech acts can be grouped into five basic types on the basis of speaker's intention; representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Schmidt and Richard, 1980). Within each class, there are sub-types to perform various functions depending on the context where they appear, such as asserting, reporting, questioning, thanking, blaming, agreeing, apologizing, dismissing, informing, etc. (Bach, 2006).

For Arabic, speech acts are many, such as imperative الأمر, interrogation الاستفهام, prohibition النهي, vocative النداء, praise and blame المدح والذم, oath القسم, etc. These types of speech acts in Arabic are grouped under two main kinds of performatives; requestive performatives الإنشاء الطلبي and non-requestive performatives الإنشاء غير الطلبي (Abu Saree', 1989).

To sum up, broadly speaking, languages might be different or similar in using this pragmatic aspect, i.e. speech acts. Hence, a comparison is needed to investigate whether English and Arabic are alike or different in using speech acts. Normally, speech acts can be found in conversations. The dialogues in drama provide us with many good examples of speech acts. In this regard, the present study aims at comparing speech acts in English and Arabic depending on the English text of Shakespeare's '*King Lear*' Act I and its Jabra's Arabic translation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and meanings, they, also, perform actions within

those utterances. In many ways, it is the nature of the speech event that determines the interpretation of an utterance performing a particular speech act. To do so, there is a crucial need for understating the use of utterances in context; how to manage conveying more than what is literary encoded by the semantics of sentences. Languages are similar in principles but different in parameters. As both Arabic and English are similar in having speech acts, they might be more or less different in their use of these kinds of communicative utterances. Such diversity could be attributed to the different cultural, social and conversational norms between the two languages.

Speech acts in English, then, might be difficult for many second language learners/ speakers to recognize as they may necessarily know that in English '*This room is a real mess*' might be a request for someone to help in tidying up that room, or an order to tidy up the room, rather than an informative sentence. They also may not realize that an expression, such as '*Would you mind helping me moving the table?*' is not asking about the ability of someone to move the table or not. However, it is a request for someone to do something.

In this vein, this study comes as an attempt to identify the types of speech acts and their illocutionary forces. Moreover, it investigates the aspects of similarities and differences in speech acts in English and Arabic through analyzing the use of speech acts by the characters of Shakespeare's Act I of his play '*King Lear*' in both languages; English as a source text and its Arabic translation as a target text.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. Identifying the types of speech acts and their illocutionary forces in English and Arabic as presented in Act I of Shakespeare's play '*King Lear*' and its Jabra's Arabic translation.
2. Investigating the aspects of similarities and differences in speech acts between English and Arabic with a special reference to the two texts.

1.4 Questions of the Study

This research attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the types of speech acts and their illocutionary forces of English and Arabic as presented in Act I of Shakespeare's play '*King Lear*' and its Jabra's Arabic translation?
2. What are the aspects of similarities and differences in speech acts between English and Arabic with a special reference to the two texts?

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد أنواع أفعال الكلام مع قواهم الإنجازية باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية كما هو موضح في الفصل الأول من مسرحية شكسبير "الملك لير" وترجمتها من قبل جبرا. كما أيضاً تهدف الدراسة إلى التحقق من أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في أفعال الكلام بين اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية بالإشارة إلى مسرحية شكسبير "الملك لير" وترجمة جبرا لها.

لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، اتبع الباحث المنهج المقارن والوصفي والتحليلي. تم تصميم جدول كأداة لجمع البيانات وتحليلها لأفعال الكلام المستخدمة من قبل شخصيات الفصل الأول من المسرحية باللغتين. جمع الباحث خمسة وأربعون فعلاً كلامياً من الفصل الأول من المسرحية مع ترجماتها من قبل جبرا. تم تحليل هذه الأفعال الكلامية ومناقشتها من حيث نوع الأفعال الكلامية وأفعالهم اللغوية والانجازية والتأثيرية. أشارت النتائج الرئيسية لهذه الدراسة إلى أن الأفعال الكلامية الأكثر شيوعاً في المسرحية هي توجيهات الاستجواب والأمر والطلب في اللغة الإنجليزية والأمر والاستفهام في اللغة العربية. إضافةً إلى ذلك تم العثور على أن أفعال الكلام باللغة العربية يتم إنجازها من خلال استخدام أفعال / تعبيرات معينة مثل "يا" للنداء، و "لو" للتمني وغيرها، في حين أن اللغة الإنجليزية تتحقق من خلال استخدام أفعال تنفيذية صريحة أو ضمنية.

اختتمت الدراسة ببعض التوصيات لطلاب الترجمة واللغويات والأدب وقدمت اقتراحات لمزيد من الدراسات

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إعداد

خلود خالد عبدالولي الأديمي

المشرف المشارك

د/ عبدالله الإيراني

أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية المشارك

جامعة ذمار

المشرف الرئيس

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جامعة صنعاء

رسالة مقدمة إلى قسم اللغات كجزء من متطلبات نيل درجة الماجستير في تخصص اللغويات

صنعاء - اليمن

16- أبريل - 2020م