Pragmatic and Semantic Errors of Illocutionary Force Subtitling

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Abstract:
This paper is an interface between speech act theory and audiovisual translation theory. It explores the translation of illocutionary acts in film subtitling from English into Arabic, and looks into the errors that might occur at the level of the illocutionary force of speech acts when subtitled across the two languages. The illocutionary force, that is to say the intention of any speech act as communicated by the speaker, will be assessed in the subtitled American film “Kingdom of Heaven” wherein English speech acts uttered by actors will be contrasted and compared with their corresponding Arabic subtitles on-screen. For this purpose, a pragma-linguistic analysis of speech acts will be undertaken in order to spot the different types of pragmatic and semantic errors that occur in the course of the subtitling process. Subsequently, a typology of shifts will be listed under each error type then explained to figure out how the intentions initially stated in English speech acts are affected during the subtitling process. 

Key words: errors, force, illocutionary shifts, speech acts, subtitling