

Speech Act of Prohibition in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study on Selected Biblical and Quranic Verses

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Abstract

Speech act theory has played an interesting role in the philosophy of language recently and has drawn great interest among pragmaticists, anthropologists, philosophers, linguists, and semanticists. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to investigate the speech act of prohibition as one of the most essential communicative uses of language. It is defined as a desire or a wish to forbid someone from doing something. The researchers attempt to show how the speech act of prohibition can be used in both English and Arabic at various levels of analysis. Specifically, a three-level analytical framework, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic, is suggested for textual analysis through a set of linguistic devices. This means that in performing a linguistic act, we often do further things. The data of this paper consists of a number of verses from the Glorious Quran and the Holy Bible. The main findings of this paper indicate that prohibition in English is most commonly realized by using a syntactic device, namely declarative sentences. Whilst prohibition in Arabic is expressed by the negative imperative “do not do”. In addition, prohibition can be expressed explicitly and implicitly in both languages. However, it was found that Arabic is distinguished from English by its heavy use of explicit and implicit devices expressing the speech act of prohibition.

Keywords: pragmatics, prohibition, semantics, speech act theory, syntax.