Empathetic Shift in the Pragmatic Interpretation of Certain Constructions in Arabic and English

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ABSTRACT

The functions of syntactic structures have not been examined in terms of empathetic shift, a notion used throughout this work. The data collected from the Holy Quran, Arabic poetry and pragmatics books, which are analyzed here to fill in this gap, elucidate the functions of empathetic shifts occurring in English and Arabic interrogatives, vocatives and imperatives. Interrogatives in Arabic serve the functions of command, exclamation, approval, instigation, denial, equalization, magnifying, threatening and reprimand. The researcher can add the functions of making familiar, multiplication, suspense and prohibition. Interrogatives in English serve the functions of demand, request, presupposition and reporting. Arabic vocatives express the illocutionary forces (functions) of specification, and instigation in addition to the functions arrived at in this thesis which are the addressee's decency, low status and inattention, the seriousness of the subject matter; asking for help, exclamation, grief, rebuke, and remembering. On the other hand, English vocatives are used to convey addresses, summons and what the researcher calls role remoteness. Arabic imperative empathetic shifts express the functions of wish, threatening, degradation and equalization; this thesis has come up with the functions of permissives, the addressee's inability, mockery, and asking for help. Imperatives in English can express the forces of demand and request. Other functions are explored in this thesis such as wish, permissives, contextual reactions, promises, warning, supposed proposals and instructions. Finally, speech act theory is abundantly exploited to present these functions (illocutionary forces); this finding strengthens the possibility of applying this theory empathetically in researching Arabic and English.