THE ILLOCUTIONARY FORCES of INTERROGATIVE STRUCTURES in ENGLISH and ARABIC

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1. Introduction:

Before the publication of Austin's "How to Do Things with Words", linguists and philosophers analysed anomalous sentence like: *The idea has a big mouth, depending upon whether there were true or false. However, Austin argues that there are words that do things but do not accept the dichotomy of truth and falsehood. For example:

(1) I apologize.

(2) I advise you to do it.

(Austin, 1962: 3)

Such sentences are analysed in terms of the performance of the action associated with them (ibid.). Austin states that constatives have the property to perform an action. For Example:

(3) It is cold outside

In (3), we can go outside and test whether the sentence is true or false. Such a test is not accessible with the following two sentences:

(4) Congratulations!

(5) Happy birthday to you!

In these examples, we cannot talk about the truth of the wish, simply because wishes are not propositions, but mere acts performed via utterances (Mey, 1983: 110). In other words, there are acts which can be achieved by speech. Such speech acts ate classified by Austin into five categories and each category is given a definition and a list of verbs

which fit in it. He further distinguishes between explicit and implicit performative, i.e. those which contain performative verbs and those which do not. However, if Austin was the originator of Speech Act Theory (SAT). Searle would be its godfather. Searle criticises Austin's taxonomy and refuse his distinction between explicit and implicit performatives (Searle, 1989: 536, and Leech, 1983: 177). But Searle's main contribution is his distinction between direct and indirect speech acts, henceforth DSAs and ISAs, respectively (Searle, 1975: 60). He argues that ISAs are "cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another" (ibid.). In other words, if there is a one-to-one relation between form and function, it will be a DSA, otherwise it will be an ISA. The following two examples illustrate this:

(6) A. What is your name?   B. Layla.

(7) Could you pass the salt?

In (6), the speaker (S) is asking to be told the hearer's (H's) name, but in (7), S is asking to be given the salt by using an interrogative structure. Thus, (6) is considered a DSA, while (7) is an ISA.

The present paper is an attempt to outline the different illocutionary forces (henceforth IFs) achieved by the interrogative constructions in both English and Arabic. It hypothesizes that having an interrogative structure does not necessarily mean that this structure functions as a question, for this only the DSA of the structure, We quite often use interrogative structures for functions other than mere questions. In (7) above, for example, although the structure is interrogative, a yes/no reply will be irrelevant since S is not after whether H has the ability to pass the salt or not, for this is only the DSA of S's utterance. Obviously, S is trying to ask H to do him the favour of passing him the salt. S expects an action from H rather than a statement of whether H has the ability to

do this action or not. That is, the IF of S's utterance is a request rather than a question.

The present paper highlights the different contextual factors that contribute to the identification of the IF of interrogative structures in both English and Arabic. It shows how such factors change the IF of interrogative structures as DSA of questions to different ISAs.

2. The IFs of Interrogative Constructions in English:

English interrogative structures can be used to achieve different IFs. That is to say, there is a coincidence between the sentence type "interrogative" and the IF. Thus, questions and requests are framed by interrogative structures (Allen, 1986: 203). The following two sentences function differently though they both belong to the same sentence-type, viz. interrogative:

(8) What is the time? (question)

(9) Would you open the open? (request)

It should be observed that in (8), S asks H to tell him/her something, whereas in (9), S asks H to do something. The difference is only that a question needs a verbal response, while a request needs a non-verbal response (Ibid.: 207). In other words, in (8) S is asking to be told the time, while in (9) S is asking H to open the door.

Allen (1986: 208) distinguishes between questions and response on the basis of verbal vs. non-verbal responses. He argues that "a purely verbal negative response to a request is appropriate, only positive verbal responses are insufficient unless they are accompanied or followed by non-verbal ones". When S utters a request, he/she asks H to do something and so it does not have the illocutionary force of questions:

(10) Will you write a word on this paper?

[S asks H to write something]

(11) Will you read me this line?

[S asks H to read something]

(12) Would you talk to me?

[S asks H to talk]

(13) Could you raise your voice?

[S asks H to raise his/her voice]

(10-13) above are interrogative in form, but they function as requests. So they will be regarded as ISAs. Yule (1986: 55) says that one of the most common types of ISAs in English is interrogative, in which we do not expect an answer but an action. The important question, however, is how we could interpret such ISAs as request. We could do so by relying on our mutual shared information which enables us to draw inferences (Searle, 1975: 59; Grice, 1975: 41-48; Levinson, 1983: 100; Al-Suleiman, 1977: 18 among others). In technical terms, in ISAs, S communicates to H more than what S he/she actually says depending on the mutually shared background information, together with the general powers of inferences. Let us consider the following examples:

(14) Would you hand em the sugar?

If one says the above sentence, one will not expect a yes/no answer. S may consider it inappropriate. But, of H performs the requested act, S will be happy with his/her reaction. So, S tells H to hand S the sugar indirectly. Hence, such a sentence is an ISA (Mey, 1983: 116). It should be noted in such a sentence that S intends H to realize that the utterance is intended as a request, bearing the message that H is requested to "hand the sugar". This complex intention is S's reflexive intention. Thus, in (14) S reflexively intends H to recognize the IF of a request to hand the sugar (Allen, 1986: 80). Also, in such a situation, the ISA is associated with greater politeness in English than in DSA counterpart (Yule, 1986: 56). Aitchison (1999: 104-105) states that in English, speech acts become less

direct as we move up the politeness scale. Sentence (15) below can be analysed similarly:

(15) Can you close the window?

It is interrogative in form but is also used to perform a request. That is, in (15)S is asking H to close the window. Any verbal response to such a sentence will be inappropriate. Hence, (15) can be paraphrased as "S asks H to close the window".

(16) Have you got a change of ID 1000?

Similarly, in this sentence, S is asking to be given the change of ID 1000 by using the above interrogative structure. S is not expecting a yes/no answer from H; rather, he is waiting to be handed over some money. It should be noted that a reply such as the one given in (17) will be considered hostile, or at least impolite.

(17) No, I haven't.

Hence, (17) expresses unwillingness, i.e. H refuses to cooperate with S.

(18) Do you have to sit in front of the TV?

This interrogative structure is not used as a question; i.e. it is an ISA. Its basic function is "request", i.e. S wants H not to stand in front of the TV.

So far, we have dealt with one IF of an interrogative structure which is "request". Another IF of the same structure can be illustrated in the following examples:

(19) Haven't you been told not to come here again?

(20) Isn't your bed time?

As for (19), let us imagine a situation in which there is a person who visits a company so many times, disturbing the secretary who has previously told not to visit the company again. Thus, although (19) is interrogative in form, its IF is a "warning", i.e. "I warn you not to come here again". Another IF of the interrogative construction can be a 'command', which is illustrated in (20) above. Here, S orders H to go to

bed by uttering indirectly this interrogative structure. S utilizes the interrogative sentence to achieve an order. It can be paraphrased as "I order you to go bed".

3. The IFs of Interrogative Structures in Arabic:

In Arabic, the interrogative structures can be used as DSA to provide the IF of either seeking information, as in:

(21) من جاء؟   (Who came?

علي –   - Ali)   or having yes/no answers, e.g.

(22) أ جاء محمد؟   (Did Mohammed come?

نعم –   - Yes

كلا –   - No

As ISAs, however, these structure can have different IFs employing different particles such as ما، كيف، هل، الهمزة, etc. Al-Samara'ee (1990: 608) states that الهمزة can be utilized to denote affirmation الإثبات, i.e. to affirm something to H, e.g.

(23) ألم يعترف لك لحمد بالجميل؟

(Didn't Ahmed express gratitude to you)

S, in this case, is affirming that Ahmed has actually expressed or acknowledged gratitude to H.

Also, الهمزة can be used to achieve other IFs such as irony, exclamation, warning, and threat as exemplified below:

(24) أِ أخلاقك تسمح لك بذلك؟

(Do your morals allow you to do this?)

(25) قالت سلمى: أَ يعقل هذا؟

(Selma said: "Would that be possible?")

(26) إياك والإفراط بالأكل. ألم أنصحك بذلك قبلاً؟

(Don't eat to much. Haven't I told you this before?)

(27) أ أقدمت على هذا وقد أمرتك بالابتعاد عنه؟

(You did this and I told you to be away from it?)

In (24) above, S is not questioning whether H's morals allow him to behave like this or not. S is merely making irony of H by using an interrogative structure with الهمزة. However, the context may reveal that S is making a DSA of questioning if, and only if, this context contains an indication that S is seeking a peiece of information thae he does not know from H. if such an indication is not avialable in the context, the utterance will be interpreted as being irony on the part of S. In (25), Selma is trying to show that her recognition of what has already been mentioned is hard to believe. But what has just been said about (24) can also apply to (25). That is, it all depends on what is revealed in the context to give the utterance is identity, beinh an act of exclamation or a mere question which seeks a new piece of information. Such an indication is denied in the context of (26) by the clause which preceds الهمزة. In other words, the obvious IF of إياك as a warning extends to the following clause, giving the whole utterance the IF of warning. This is not very different from (27). The contextual indication which pushes the interrogative structure out of its DSA is in the second clause rather than the first. That is, the clause وقد أمرتك بالابتعاد عنه might serve as an indication of the IF of the first clause, making it an SA of threatening. Looking at the utterance withoput the

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second clause could change the whole matter, for it could be viewed, in this case, as an interrogative structure with a DSA.

Just like all the other interrogative particles, هل can be used to introduce interrogative structures of both DSAs and ISAs. The following examples illustrate this:

(28) هل رأيت سها؟

(Did you see Suha?)

(29) هل أنهيت واجباتك البيتية كلها؟

(Did you finish all you howework?)

In both (28) and (29), the particle هل introduces structures of a DSA of questioning. This is very clear from the yes/no expectation of the answers that will presumably follow the two utterances by H, a case which is not available in the following examples:

(30)   "إنما يريد الشيطان أن يوقع بينكم العداوة والبغضاء في الخمر والميسر ويصدكم عن

ذكر الله وعن الصلوة <u>فهل أنتم منتهون</u>"

(المائدة، 91)

(Satan's plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of God, and from prayer: will ye not then abstain?)*

(31)   هل ينظرون ... يوم يأتي تأويله يقول الذين نسوه من قبل قد جاءت رسل ربنا بالحق

<u>فهل لنا من شفعاء فيشفعوا</u> لنا أو نرد فنعمل غير الذي كنا نعمل.

(الأعراف، 53)

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* The translation of the Quranic verses throughout this paper is taken from Ali (1984).

(On the day the event is finally fulfilled, those who disregarded it before will say: "The apostles of our Lord did indeed bring true. Have we no intercessors to intercedes on our behalf? Or could we be sent back? Then should we behave differently from our behaviour in the past").

(32) هل أتاك حديث الغاشية، وجوه يومئذ خاشعة، عاملة ناصبة تصلى ناراً حامية

(الغاشية، 1–4)

(Has the story reached thee, of the overwhelming? Some faces, that Day, will be humiliated, Labouring (hard), weary, the while they enter the Blazing Fire).

In (30), the interrogative structure فهل انتم منتهون is clearly not one expecting a yes/no answer. It expresses a command (Samara'ee: 1990: 613). The context expressed in the clauses preceding the interrogative can promote this assumption. In other words, Allah is commanding His slaves to be away from wine and gambling, for it is the way of Satan, the enemy of Allah and true believers. As for the interrogative structure in (31) فهل لنا من شفعاء; it can only be interpreted as expressing a wish rather than a question expecting a yes/no answer. The preceding and following contexts necessitates this. When the Hereafter will come, the disbelievers will hope for support (from their false gods) which will never come. Similarly, the context expressed in all the clauses following the interrogative structure هل أتاك حديث الغاشية reveals that this structure is not expecting a yes/no reply, it rather carries the IF of frightening slaves of Allah of the terrifying Wrath of Allah in the Overwhelming Event.

Another interrogative particle is كيف which expresses a DSA of questioning (33-35) besides its different IFs with ISAs (36-37):

(33) كيف حالك؟

"How are you?"

(34) كيف جئت؟

"How did you come?"

(35) كيف وجدت علياً؟

"How did you find Ali?"

(36) كيف تكفرون بالله وكنتم أمواتاً فأحياكم.

(البقرة، 28)

(How can ye reject the fath in God? Seeing that ye were without life and He gare you life)

(37) كيف يهدي الله قوماً كفروا بعد إيمانهم.

(آل عمران، 86)

(How shall God guide those who reject faith after they accepted it)

In (36), the particle كيف is showing exclamation rather than questioning a fact (Al-Samara'ee, 1990: 630). It also expresses the negation of a fact rather than questioning it in (37). That is, surely Allah will not guide those who rejected faith after they had accepted it (Al-Samara'ee, 1990: 633).

The argument continues to be open, for كيف carries other IFs depending on the context like reproach, irony, warning and frightening. Let us consider:

(38) ما لكم كيف تحكمون   (القلم، 36)

(What is the matter with you? How judge ye?) (reproach)

(39) كيف نكلم من كان في المهد صبياً   (مريم، 29)

(They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cardle?"

(irony)

(40) (آل عمران، 137)   فانظروا كيف كان عاقبة الكاذبين

(See what was the end of those who rejected truth) (warning)

(41) (آل عمران، 25)   فكيف إذا جمعناهم ليوم لا ريب فيه

(But how will they fare when we gather them together against a Day about which there is no doubt) (frightening)

The last partilce is ما which, as exemplified below, can show different IFs' besides its use within a DSA of questioning, e.g. (cf. Al-Samara'ee, 1990: 634).

(42) ما لون شعره؟

(What is the colour of his hair?)
(DSA of questioning)

(43) (الحاقة 1،2)   الحاقة ما الحاقة

(What is the Sure Reality?) (exaltation) تعظيم

(44) (الواقعة، 27)   وأصحاب اليمين ما أصحاب اليمين

(The companions of the Right Hand, what will be the companions of the Right hand?) (exaltation)

(45) (النساء، 75)   وما لكم لا تقاتلون في سبيل الله

(And why should ye not fight in the cause of God)
(motivation) الحث

(46) ما أنت والأخلاق؟

(How far from morals you are!) (despise) التحقير

4. Conclusions:

(a) In both languages, the interrogative structure functions both as a DSA of questions, and as an ISA of different IFs.

(b) Besides their DSA of questionig, the main IF of interrogative structures as ISA is that of a request. The difference between the two functions lies in the fact that a positive verbal response to a request will be insufficient unless it is accompanied or followed by a non-verbal one, though negative responses do not need such a non-verbal action. Questions, on the other hand, need only verbal responses (see examples 8-18 above).

(c) Other less common IFs than that of "request" are commands and warnings (see examples 19 and 20 above).

(d) The different IFs of Arabic interrogative constructions as ISAs are associated with the use of different particles as listed below:

i. الهمزة is used to express affirmation, irony, exclamation, warning and threatening (see examples 23-27 above).

ii. هل is used to express commands, wishes, and frightening (see example 28-32 above).

iii. كيف is utilized to express exclamation, negation, reproach, irony, warning and frightening (see examples 36-41 above).

iv. ما is used to express exclamation, motivation and despise (see examples, 42-46 above).

(e) The analysis shows that in both languages, only the context can reveal whether the structure functions as a DSA of questioning or as an ISA of different IFs.

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