

Directive Speech Acts of Literary Texts with their Translations (Human vs. AI)

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Abstract : This research aims to study the directive speech acts in literary texts and translate them using humans and AI tools based on Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) for determining the illocutionary force of speech acts in general and in the light of the basic characteristics of directive acts. Analyze AI-generated translations and human translations to see the differences. Testing if the performative verbs or expressions can use the same form and meaning in the Arabic translations. This study hypothesizes that the directive speech acts in literary texts are not just language-specific; they are context-specific also. The more cultural the pattern, the more tactful the forms of directive speech acts will be. There is no one-to-one formal correspondence between directive speech acts and their translations in both human and AI-generated texts. The study involved translating and analyzing directive speech acts in the literary texts used as data, with five subjects participating: four M.A. students and one AI tool. These texts will be analyzed in terms of performativity, agent, voice, time of action, tense, type of translation, and social status. The analysis revealed that directive speech acts can be analyzed systematically according to pragmatic and semantic strategies and grammatical variables. Differences appeared between human translations and AI-generated texts in their ability to preserve the pragmatic meaning, the intended meaning, and the contextual suitability.

Keywords: Speech Act Theory, Pragmatics, Human Translation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translation, Illocutionary Force.

أفعال الكلام التوجيهية في النصوص الأدبية وترجماتها (البشرية مقابل الذكاء الاصطناعي)

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المستخلص : يهدف هذا البحث لدراسة أفعال الكلام التوجيهية في النصوص الأدبية وترجماتها البشرية والمولدة بالذكاء الصناعي استناداً إلى أوستن (١٩٦٢) وسيرل (١٩٦٩) لتحديد القوة الإنجازية لأفعال الكلام بشكل عام وفي ضوء الخصائص الأساسية لأفعال التوجيه، بالإضافة لتحليل هذه الترجمات لرؤية أوجه الاختلاف بينها، كما يهدف إلى اختبار إمكانية استخدام الأفعال أو التعبيرات الإنجازية بالشكل والمعنى نفسه بالترجمات العربية. تفترض هذه الدراسة أن أفعال الكلام التوجيهية في النصوص الأدبية ليست مرتبطة باللغة فقط، إنما تتأثر بالسياق أيضاً فكلما كانت الخصوصية الثقافية عالية، كلما كانت الصيغ التوجيهية أكثر لباقة. لا توجد مطابقة شكلية بنسبة متكاملة بين أفعال التوجيه وترجماتها في كلا الحالتين البشرية والمولدة بالذكاء الصناعي. تضمنت إجراءات هذا البحث بعض البيانات كترجمة وتحليل أفعال الكلام التوجيهية في النصوص

الأدبية وترجمتها إلى خمسة ترجمات، أربعة منها ترجمت بواسطة طلاب الماجستير في قسم الترجمة وواحدة مولدة باداء الذكاء الصناعي. حللت هذه النصوص وفق مجموعة من المتغيرات مثل الانجازية والفاعل والبناء للمعلوم والمجهول ووزمن الفعل ونوع الترجمة والمكانة الاجتماعية. اهم الاستنتاجات لهذه الدراسة انه بالامكان تحليل افعال الكلام التوجيهية بصورة منهجية ضمن الجوانب التداولية والدلالية والمتغيرات النحوية. كما وتظهر بعض الفروقات بين الترجمات البشرية والترجمات المولدة بالذكاء الصناعي من حيث قابلية الحفاظ على المعنى التداولي والمعنى المقصود بالاضافة الى ملائمة السياق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية أفعال الكلام، علم التداولية، الترجمة البشرية، ترجمة الذكاء الاصطناعي، القوة الإنجازية.

1. Introduction

This study is based on the two main approaches of linguistics, namely semantics and pragmatics, and aims to highlight the differences between them as well as their importance in the language and its use. There is a comparison between the two dimensions of meaning and a demonstration of how they can be interpreted differently according to different factors. Semantics deals with the meaning encoded in language in an isolated way, independent of context or situation; instead, it focuses on the lexical meaning of the word itself and systematic relations. In contrast, pragmatics examines how meaning is constructed and interpreted in context, viewing it as something dynamic, interactional, and context-dependent. The role of pragmatics is particularly significant in the literary texts due to their reliance on contexts, indirectness, and complex relationships. Furthermore, it explores the nature of implicit meaning, how it is created, and how it is interpreted through the interactional phenomenon between the mind, language, and context. It also addresses the concept of speech act context and its influence on textual interpretation, emphasizing the importance of situational context. Overall, this research provides theoretical background knowledge to understand what is said, what is meant, and how meaning is interpreted.

2. Literature Review

According to most scholars, semantics is defined as the study of meaning that is independent of context, specifically the fixed dictionary meaning of a word. John Lyons (Lyons, 1977, p. 115) mentions that semantics is the study of the relationship between the linguistic signs and the objects they refer to in the external world (how the signs are related to things). So far, (Leech, 1985, p. 337) finds that semantics and pragmatics are intertwined fields; he identifies three logically distinct positions:

1. Semantics should be encompassed under pragmatics.
2. Pragmatics should be included as a part of semantics.
3. Semantics and pragmatics are independent fields and complementary for study.

Posteriorly, (Kroeger, 2018, p. 4) mentions an example that explains the concepts of semantics and pragmatics by indicating that most learners do not only acquire the lexicons (vocabularies) of the language and combine them together to produce sentences; rather, they learn the rules that govern the relationships between language and meaning, which is the core of semantics. Kroeger also points out that the learners could interpret the expressions in the real-life situations and how the vocabularies work differently according to their use, which is actually the role of pragmatics. (Kroeger, 2018)

a. The Notion of Semantics

The general meaning of semantics, as we know, is that it is the scientific study of meaning. During the 20th century, (Ullmann, 1962, pp. 6-7) states that semantics “stresses not only the meanings of the words but also how their meanings change over time,” anchoring semantics in the study of language evolution. This helps (Leech, 1981, p. 9) who expands the field by “classifying meaning into seven categories, namely, conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic, thus highlighting the richness and multidimensionality of meaning.” Finally, according to (Al-Sulaimaan, 2016, p. 29), semantics is the study of the meaning of every unit that belongs to linguistic expressions like phonemes, words, phrases, and sentences. It can be applied to entire texts or words. For instance, the terms “destination” and “last stop” are technically equivalent; however, semantics students analyze their slight variations of meaning. He mentions that there are many branches of semantics, namely, cognitive semantics, generative semantics, lexical semantics, structural semantics, and speech act semantics.

b. The Notion of Pragmatics

(Grice, 1975, p. 49) introduces implicature theory, which helps the listener to infer the intended meaning. Grice’s main idea is that people often imply their intentions rather than state them explicitly, and people can grasp these intentions for various reasons (such as their background knowledge, relations, context of situation, etc.). So far, pragmatics, according to Grice, is “the study of how people interpret what is meant beyond what is said.” In 1983, two researchers emerge as major figures in the development of modern pragmatics: Stephen C. Levinson and Geoffrey N. Leech; they work on pragmatics at the same time but from different perspectives. (Levinson, 1983, p. 54) investigates several topics, including deixis (words that require contextual information to be understood), presupposition (background assumptions for sentences must be true to make sense), implicature, and speech acts, to explain that in order to understand meaning, the hearer must go beyond what sentences literally mean. While (Leech, 1983, p. 45) focuses on the social and interactional side of pragmatics through his expansion of Grice’s cooperative principle (quantity, quality, relation, and manner,) he also introduces the politeness

principles (when people try to be polite and avoid conflict in communication to maintain harmony in society.) These principles facilitate communication between people in a more polite and smooth way. Leech shows us that pragmatics deals with how language shapes and changes depending on real-life situations and being affected by social values. Anyhow, both believe that pragmatics is fundamental to understanding the meaning beyond the literal utterances and that the meaning is shaped by the context of the situation. (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983)

c. Semantics vs. Pragmatics

According to (Al-Hamadani, 2024, p. 61), he provides a very insightful and well-articulated comparative analysis of this topic starting with the most distinguished features of semantics, which is one of the linguistic levels that deals with the study of meaning. The central form of semantics is the sentence, which is the theoretical linguistic unit. In addition, semantics is known as the study of the literal meaning that is based on co-text (linguistic context). Since semantics is after what is said, then it is after locutionary acts (the direct meaning of the sentence); also, it studies only language without its context and seeks after the meaning of the propositional clause. Semantics follows segmental and suprasegmental features of language, which can change the meaning of an utterance by changing how it is said, not the words. As for pragmatics, he says that it's the branch of linguistics that concerns how speakers use language to convey meaning in actual communicative contexts. The primary unit of analysis in pragmatics is the utterance, representing language as a physical, concrete entity. Pragmatics also aims to cover the intentional meaning of the speaker by focusing on what is meant rather than just what is said, which relates to illocutionary acts (the indirect meanings of utterances). Moreover, pragmatics studies how language is used and works in reality based on the context of the situation. Subsequently, pragmatics is concerned with how performative clauses convey their intended communicative force. The field of pragmatics explores the philosophical dimensions of how language is used, interpreted, and functions in communication. (Al-Hamadani, 2024)

3. Speech Act Context

(Austin, 1962, p. 51) is one of the earliest scholars who argues that speech acts cannot be understood only from sentence form. Austin's main contribution is that utterances do not describe reality; they also perform actions. He does not talk about context directly; instead, he demonstrates that the force of the utterances depends on the speaker's act of saying something, the occasion of use, and the surrounding circumstances (which count all as the context of the situation). After Austin, his student (John, 1975, p. 59) presents a significant concept that discusses the indirect speech acts. His idea clarifies that the context helps the hearers to grasp the speakers' meaning behind their explicit meaning. (Levinson, 1983, p. 276) adds

that speech acts do not express meaning only; they also change the context during the conversation. Levinson also says that the speech acts can be treated as “the functions from context to context,” which means that:

1. First, there is a context before the utterances.
2. Second, the utterances occur.
3. Last, there is the context that is shaped after the affection of utterances.

So far, speech acts here are working as an operation that changes the state of the discourse from one to another. (Levinson, 1983)

4. Implicit Meaning

Implicit meaning is a significant form of meaning that handles the speaker's meaning without being explicitly stated. (Grice, 1975, p. 43), in his work, discusses that the meaning can split into the explicit meaning (the speaker's utterance) and the implicit meaning (implied meaning beyond what is said). He dives into the implicit meaning via expounding the concept of implicature and describes the implicature as the meaning that has not been uttered by the speaker but could be understood by the listener, which is called the implicit or implied meaning. (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, p. 22) build on Grice's work that the hearer can catch the intentions of the speaker through evidence of intention they call “ostensive-inferential.” “Ostension,” such as the facial expressions (wink, eye movement, body language) or the tone of the voice (for instance, saying you have a sore throat by saying “good morning” with a hoarse voice). Whereas “inference” is about the ability of the hearer to infer the meaning relying on the context, relevance expectations, or shared knowledge. (Bach, 1994, p. 140) provides a clear comparison to differentiate the implied meaning (implicature) from the implicit meaning (implicature). He says that even if they are both looking after the explicit utterance, both are cancellable, and both are context-dependent. But there are differences between them; implicature is inferred from the act of saying something, and it is conceptually independent from the explicit utterance (outside, not internal). Whereas the implicature is totally different; it is built on the same utterance, with nothing new added. It is neither explicit nor implied; rather, it is the middle layer between them (internal, not outside). (Bach, 1994)

5. The Concept of AI

It is the abbreviation of “artificial intelligence,” which means the simulation of intelligence that was formed via human-to-computer systems that allows persons to know everything, such as reasons, results, and problem-solving, as well as making decisions. One can say that AI is a set of technologies that empowers computers to perform many tasks that previously required human intelligence, such as understanding language, analyzing words and sentences, and processing data in various scientific fields. (Russell et al., 2021, p. 4) state that AI is the capability of computational systems to perform tasks typically associated with human

intelligence, like learning and reasoning, as well as the solving of problems. According to (Badaoui et al., 2022, p. 22), different subfields of AI research can focus on various goals and tools. The goals consist of planning, learning, processing, and the representation of knowledge. For this reason, AI researchers adapted a wide range of techniques, such as search, logic, and statistics. According to tools, they are Google Search, YouTube, Netflix, and Amazon. (Russell et al., 2021, p. 18) added that AI was founded as a discipline in 1956, which went through many different cycles via history and was followed by periods of disappointment. Finally, one can conclude that learning AI is the study of programs that improve the performance of specific problems automatically, which is a part of AI. (Russell et al., 2021)

6. AI Translation

It is called machine translation (MT) or automated translation (AuT), which uses all models of AI as well as neural networks and the processing of natural language to be able to translate text and sentences. It works via transformer models by breaking text into many sentences to get the best translation. It has advantages and disadvantages. Its advantages include quickly translating text and sentences, while its disadvantage is that it sometimes lacks the nuance of a native speaker, especially for complex and compound sentences.

(Charles-Kenechi, 2024, p. 10) states many disadvantages of AI translation:

1. It confused the context of translation in some texts because there is no meaning without context.
2. The system fails to understand the content in certain texts due to complex grammar rules.
3. It may misunderstand the accurate meaning of a word when the word has more than one meaning.
4. It can't get the meaning for idiomatic expressions of many idioms.
5. Each culture has its roles and should be considered, so it can't be bicultural.

Finally, AI translation is an incredibly powerful tool that can help the translator. However, it's essential to realize its current limitations, particularly when it comes to context, culture, and idiomatic expressions. To create accurate translations, we should combine the strength of AI with human expertise. (Charles-Kenechi, 2024)

7. Human Translation

Translation in general is replacing a text in one language with another text in another language. According to (Al-Hamadani, 2024, p. 159), he states that translation is the analysis of lexicons, syntactic structure, semantic elements, stylistic elements, pragmatic elements, and cultural norms; then it will be a transfer in the mind of the translator, and then there should be a synthesis of lexicons, pragmatic elements, and cultural norms to get an accurate translation. As for

(Catford, 1965, p. 33), he views translation in terms of extent, level, and rank. (Nida, 1964, p. 68) views translation in terms of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, whereas (Robinson, 1997, p. 34) studied translation in terms of performance in language. Therefore, in general, human translation means to translate something by a human, not by AI, and it is the oldest type of translation, which depends upon human intelligence to transfer text from one language into another. Finally, human translation uses professional human translators who are highly qualified in translating languages. They are about to be native speakers and understand the nuance of the original text. Thus, the translator must be bilingual and bicultural, as each culture plays a role in accurate translation. (Robinson, 1997)

8. Practical Analysis

The practical analysis aims to present two data sets collected from literary books to analyze the differences in the translations of the directive speech acts between humans and AI tools.

8.1. Data Analysis

Context (wife to husband)

Preach! Write! Act! Do any thing, save to lie down and die! **Give up** this name of Arthur Dimmesdale, and make thyself another.

TL Texts:

١. بالوعظ او بالكتابة او بالفعل! **افعل** اي شيء إلا ان تستلقي وتموت! **اترك** اسم آرثر ديمزديل، وانتحل لنفسك اسم آخر.
٢. بريج! **اكتب! مثل! اعمل** اي شيء، وفر الراحة ومت. **وتخلي** عن اسمه آرثر ديمزديل، واجعل من نفسك شخصاً آخر.
٣. **بشري. اكتبى. افعل** اي شيء، لا تستسلمي **تخلي** عن اسم زوجك، واصنعي اسم آخر.
٤. **عظ! اكتب! افعل** اي شيء، ما عدا ان تستلقي وتموت **تخل** عن هذا الاسم لآرثر ديمسديل واصنع لنفسك اسماً آخر.
٥. **واعظ! اكتب! مثل! افعل** اي شيء، حافظ على ان تستلقي وتموت! **تخل** عن الاسن لآرثر ديمسديل، واصنع لك اسماً آخر. (٢٠٢٦/٦/١٢)

Establishing the speech act of directive (cast):

1. The Contact Code Conditions: The wife and the husband both share the same linguistic code and clearly understand the directive utterance. The husband is expected to understand and follow his wife's directive to get up again and not give in to the illness.

2. The Propositional Conditions: The wife conveys her utterance and directs her husband to stand up again, encouraging him to fight the disease and start a new chapter in his life. The wife expects her man to follow her directive and carry out this action.

3. The Preparatory Conditions: The wife believes that her husband can understand and follow this directive, which was issued for his benefit to help him let go of the past and start anew.

4. The Sincerity Conditions: The wife sincerely wants her husband to follow her directive to push him to do anything that makes him feel better and start again as someone else. At the same time, the husband realizes that the directive issued by his wife reflects her sincere desire and was entirely for his benefit.

5. The Essential Conditions: The wife makes a serious attempt to persuade her husband to follow this directive in order to encourage him to stand up and fight his illness; this utterance counts as an order, and the husband has to take it into his consideration and do it.

Contrastive and Translation Analysis

The Proposed Rendering:

PR: عظ! اكتب! اعمل! افعل! اي شيء إلا الاستسلام للموت! تخلّ عن أسم آرثر ديمسديل، وابدأ حياةً جديدة.

Contrastive Analysis:

A partial compatibility between SLT and TLTs: From the presented data in the table, we can find out that the performativity is realized explicitly in both SLT and TLTs; all are expressed as explicit directives, but in the 1st translation, the performativity is realized implicitly. In all translations, the agent is determined as a second person who expects to perform the action, but in the first translation, the agent is determined as a third person. In all translations, the time of action is clearly indicated as a future action. In both the source and target languages, the voice is realized as active, and the social relationship is perceived as solidarity. The translations of the source sentence show a contrast between semantic and communicative; some of them, like the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and AI translations, appear as

Title		SL English	TL Arabic				
			1	2	3	4	AI TRANS.
Performativity	Explicit	+		+	+	+	+
	Implicit		+				
Agent	First						
	Second	+		+	+	+	+
	Third		+				
Time of Action	Future	+	+	+	+	+	+
Voice	Active	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Passive						
Social Status	Power						
	Solidarity	+	+	+	+	+	+
Translation	Semantic		+	+		+	+
	Communicative				+		
	Appropriateness						
Tense	Present	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Past	١٩٤					

semantic translations, whereas the 3rd translation is considered a communicative one. We can find that none of the translated sentences hold the core idea of the SLT, so we brought the proposed rendering translation that can convey almost the same meaning as the original sentence and considered it appropriate. Finally, the tense appears as a present in both languages.

8.2 Data Analysis : Context (mother to daughter)

Yo'd better take the little umbrella, dear; it looks like rain.

TL Texts:

١. يا عزيزتي، من الأفضل لك أن تأخذي المظلة الصغيرة معكِ. يبدو أنها ستمطر قريباً.
٢. يُفضل أن تأخذي المظلة الصغيرة يا عزيزتي فيبدو أن المطر سيهطل علينا.
٣. انصحك بأن تأخذي مظلة صغيرة معكِ، فمن المُحتمل أن تمطر.
٤. يُستحسن أن تأخذي المظلة الصغيرة يا عزيزتي، يبدو أنها تمطر.
٥. من الأفضل أن تأخذي المظلة الصغيرة يا عزيزتي، يبدو ان الجو سيمطر. (٢٠٢٦/٦/١٥)

Establishing the speech act of directive (cast):

1. The Contact Code Conditions:

The mother and her daughter both share the same linguistic code and clearly understand the directive utterance. The daughter is expected to understand and attempt to follow the directive given by her mother, which advises her to take the umbrella because of the cloudy weather.

2. The Propositional Conditions:

The mother conveys her utterance and directs her daughter to take the little umbrella to save her from the weather. The mother expects her daughter to follow her directive and carry out this action.

3. The Preparatory Conditions:

The mother believes that her daughter is able to understand and follow this directive, and the daughter should know that this directive was issued by her mother for her benefit and safety to prevent her from getting wet in the rain.

4. The Sincerity Conditions:

The mother sincerely wants her daughter to follow her directive to push her to take the umbrella with her. At the same time, the daughter realizes that the issued directive utterance reflects her mother's sincere desire to protect her daughter and help her.

5. The Essential Conditions:

The mother makes a serious attempt to persuade her daughter to follow this directive, explaining that taking the umbrella outside would be beneficial, and the daughter needs to consider and act on this advice.

Contrastive and Translation Analysis

The Proposed Rendering:

انصحك بأن تأخذي مظلة صغيرة معكِ، فمن المُحتمل أن تمطر.

Contrastive Analysis:

A partial compatibility between SLT and TLTs: From the data presented in the table, we can find that performativity is realized implicitly in both SLT and TLTs; all are expressed as implicit directives, but in the third, there is a performative verb, so we consider it explicit. The agent in all translations is determined as a second person who expects to perform the action, whereas the time of action is clearly shown as a future action in all translations. In both the source and target languages, the voice is realized as active, and the social relationship is perceived as power, showing that the mother has a parent's authority in the family hierarchy, even though the utterance is softened and polite. The translations of the source sentence show a contrast between semantic and communicative; some of them, like the fourth and AI translations, appear as semantic translations, whereas the first and second translations are considered communicative ones. We can see that the third translation contains the core idea of the SLT and is considered appropriate. Finally, the tense appears as a present in both languages.

9. Conclusion:

The human's translations of the directive speech acts in the practical section of this thesis are not looking for the best word equivalents; instead, they focus on translating the function of the sentence. This study shows that the AI and human translators both successfully capture the basic directives' meaning of the source texts. The human translations were better in conveying the intentional meaning of the speaker, while the AI translations were good at choosing the words and connecting them grammatically, but they were less flexible in the implicit orientation.

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