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## Invitation and Intimidation Through the Use of Speech Acts in Selected English and Arabic Religious Sermons

Younis Ibrahim Bany Weis

Zainab Hashim Majeed

Department of English, College of Languages and Human Sciences, University of Garmian

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### Corresponding Author

[younis.ibrahim@garmian.edu.krd](mailto:younis.ibrahim@garmian.edu.krd)

[zainab.hashim@garmian.edu.krd](mailto:zainab.hashim@garmian.edu.krd)

### Abstract

Religious sermons are used to influence the audience to familiarize, reinforce and modify certain beliefs and redirect people to do good deeds. Religious discourse exhibits many features that make it an interesting area for linguists to study and dig deep through its characteristics.

In addition, religious men try to use special words to invite people to or intimidate people from doing things that are forbidden by religion principles. Clergymen believe that they have the authority to teach people according to their understanding of the subject and this might be a double-edged sword.

The present contrastive study aims at finding out the functions of invitation and intimidation expressions and how they are identified and presented by using speech acts in both English and Arabic religious discourse at pragmatic level.

The data were selected randomly from authentic websites, one English and one Arabic religious speech. Synthesizing a model which is based on what is presented by Searle (1979). The sermons are brought under contrastive analysis to show the differences and similarities between them in a pragmatic perspective.

The study proves that Arabic sermons tend to use more devices and they are more exaggerated than English sermons. Generally speaking, Arabic preachers used more intimidation expressions than English preachers and their speech tends to be stronger due to society and culture. It also can be concluded that Arabic preachers used speech acts more than English preachers. They used speech acts in invitations more than intimidations in both English and Arabic speeches.

## 1- Introduction

Religious discourse refers to the written and spoken language used by the believers when they talk about their religious beliefs and experiences. It is described as "one of the most distinctive varieties of language a speech community uses for the expression of its religious beliefs on public occasions". It covers a wide range of activities such as liturgical forms, preaching, ritual forms, readings, etc.

It is noticeable that religious speeches have a great effect on people from different religious backgrounds. Thus, a study of the text of the speeches is important to know how religious men use language and play with words to make their speech more acceptable and perceptible by the listeners and to drive them to their side by using invitation and intimidation expressions.

The study is an investigation of how speech acts can be manipulated to realise invitation and intimidation expressions both in English and Arabic.

## 2-Theoretical Background

### 2-1 What is Religious discourse?

Generally speaking, the term "religious language" refers to statements or claims made about God or gods. It can be divided into several "provinces" and "modalities" as Crystal and Davy (1969,p.148) suggested: the religious language of Scripture does not operate like the religious language of prayers, hymns, or radio broadcasts. For example, the language of sermons that is qualified as religious language has a register and a rhetorical structure of its own (Crystal, 1970,p.96).

Different points of view were set concerning the nature and features of religious language. According to Donovan (1976,p.412), a religious language is a special language used separately in special situations, such as Hebrew for

Jews, Arabic for Muslims. This view is not completely acceptable because it means that all Arab countries speak with religiousness, even when they are speaking with each other for their routine affairs and so do Jews. Another problem with this point is that it limits the religious countries just to those countries which have a divine book and those people who speak with the languages of those books such as Islam, Christian and Jew.

There is another point of view according to Donovan (1976,p.412) who claimed that religious languages use special words like "Apocalypse", "Incarnation", and "Revelation." This is more acceptable compared to the preceding view because a religious person, a religious sermon or a religious text must contain special words. On the other hand, it is not necessary for them to use special words in their texts and speeches unless they need them.

### 2.2 Types of Religious Discourse

There was a lot of controversy among linguists whether religious language carries variation or not. Some of them stated that there are no differences in the linguistic features of the different varieties of religious speech. Others said that religious speech shows a lot of varieties having such factors as function, style, context, interaction with other texts, etc. A balanced approach was set by Holt (2006, pp.1-14). According to him, religious discourse is "a kind of constellation of discourse held in balance by two opposing forces." One of them is 'uniformity and generality' (homogeneity), and another the other force pulls for 'individuality and particularity' (heterogeneity). Crystal (1987,p.385) clarified that there are several types of religious discourse which are distinctive in the use of linguistic structure.

(1) Liturgical forms A liturgical language is defined by Crystal

(1965,p.151) as "a particular set of forms, either a style or a whole language, used in official public worship on behalf of a religion"; and it has four main elements: formal stylistic features (e.g. complex sentences, careful statements, and conservative syntactic forms), features of register which comprise archaisms (both in grammar and lexis), formulaic utterance, and specialized non-archaic vocabulary. They have many types such as invocations, petitions, doxologies (statement of glory or praise), intercessions, thanksgiving, rosaries, litanies, chants, hymns, psalms, and canticles.

(2) Preaching

It involves formal written sermon and spontaneous monologues or dialogues, and may sometimes involve elements of song or chant.

(3) Ritual forms

They are cultural or social practices such as baptisms, funerals, confessions, meal-times, remembrance services, weddings, initiation ceremonies, circumcisions, meditations, cleansing rites, oaths, vows, exorcisms, and blessings.

(4) Readings

(5) Doctrinal statements

Examples of this type are canonical documents, creeds, articles of faith, and expository pamphlets, courses of instructions, catechisms, and teachings on cable television.

(6) Private affirmations

They are the beliefs in supernatural beings, expressions of mystical power, expressions of identity and conversion, ecstatic prayers, prophesying, oracles, spirit possession, and testimony giving.

### 2.3 Religious Language in English and Arabic

A religious speech, generally, (Islamic Friday/ Christian Sunday sermon, in particular) expresses the fears, hopes, and attitudes of people who hear it. It directs people to the right path of religion and conveys the knowledge of that religion in the houses of worship on a fixed weekly worship day. These sermons are meant to present a religious point of view in connection to the social and political issue those days. The religious speaker (the imam or priest) must have knowledge about people's needs and problems and provide good and new ways to achieve his goal.

#### 2.3.1 English Religious Sermons

Historically speaking, the word 'sermon' came from the Latin word 'Sermo' which means 'discourse' or 'conversation' (because the early sermons were delivered in the form of question and answer. But later on, it comes to mean a monologue (Etter,1988,p.117). Sermons are designed to help those who have not yet believed in Christianity, and to explain and clarify to those who admit it, it is "an oral address to the popular mind, upon religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view to persuasion." (ibid,p.118)

According to Davis (1924,p.184), a sermon "They involve things such as parables, psalms, his into an order of worship, on a religious truth, directed to the popular mind with a view to a decision of the hearers which shall lead them into the Christian experience individually and socially."

Muessig (2002,p.76) defined the sermon as "an oral discourse based on sacred text spoken by a preacher to an audience; the sermon is meant to instruct the audience on faith and morals."

Sermons were not more than simple addresses at the beginning. They were called 'homily' that took the form of conversation between a speaker and a

hearer attempting to teach the principles of the new religion.

Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) was preaching Christianity in any place and at any time. For instance, on Sunday, he began to preach every Sunday. So, the first church was born in Jerusalem, and then flourished in other parts of Palestine, (Lebreton and Zeiller, 1944,p.83).

Sunday sermon was a tradition which is originated from the day of Jesus' resurrection. Accordingly, this day and the glorification of Jesus, (D' Souza, 1964,p.280).

### 2.3.2 Arabic Religious Sermons

Sermon, according to Al-Shalabi (1981,p.195), is an oration which invites people to a religious deed, such as enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, calling to follow the pillars of religion like prayer, pilgrimage, or reciting Quran, illustrating a legal ruling, reconciling the disputes, or reminding the people of the nearness of death and life after death.

According to Qutbuddin (2008,p.180), a sermon is "an official discourse (for various purposes and containing diverse themes) which was extemporaneously composed and orally delivered in formal language to a large , live public audience , with the orator standing on a high place (later named as the pulpit) and facing the audience."

The word 'oration' was used in history to refer to numerous kinds of speeches and sermons, expounding a variety of political, liturgical, religious, military, social, economic, legislative, and ethical themes. Through the passage of time, the word came to mean the ritual sermon that forms part of the Friday service, and the two festival days (Eids) as well as sermons called for in response to an eclipse or drought (Khutba,2012).

'Khutba' or oration's starting point goes back to the pre-Islamic period where the tribal leaders felt the need to be eloquent to urge the members of the tribe to do their social or military duties. Every tribe was having an orator to encourage the

members of the tribe (Qutbulddin, 2008,p.192).

Christianity and the presence of the Arabic identity and their enthusiasm and leadership was the main cause of the development of Arabic oratory at that time. It was flourished after the rightful message of Mohammed (peace be upon him) and the day of his resurrection. Accordingly, this day and intellectual change that happened then when the orators began to compete between them supporting or opposing the new religion (Darwish, 1968,p.100).

Muslims are gathered in mosques, the sermons are delivered and then prayer is carried out. Friday sermons are not only talking about religious and moral themes, but also themes related to the political aspects of the society that contribute to the social and spiritual aspects of life.

It has been noticed that Friday sermon has gone through three important stages which have been contributed to its development; they are the pre-Islamic era, the Omayyad era and the Abbasid era. It is important to note that Friday sermon today deals with the same thing namely establishing religion and following its instructions regarding all fields of life.

### 2.4 Religious Speeches and Pragmatics

Religious speeches differ from everyday speeches in many ways. Religious speeches challenge ordinary habits as well as theoretical models of speeches that are predicated on them. Everyday conversations depend on the shared assumptions between the identity of participants and what is the subject matter of the context. On the other hand, religious speeches frequently occur in situations in which these assumptions are suspended. In everyday conversation, usually there is a face to face conversation, while the engagement, presence, and identity of spiritual partakers in the speech event cannot always be presupposed. The belief in the omnipresence of Divinity does not mean

that the participant can interact with it. Spirits may be the real audience, even those people who agree on the way they pray, they may disagree on how their spirits and souls carry out their pray, i.e., some people might be absent minded in fulfilling their pray. There must be a clear reference to the participant, since there is usually an addressing of invisible interlocutors. In contrast, in everyday conversation, these matters can be tacitly assumed. In religious texts, narratives are recontextualized as metapragmatic statements; their functions shift, but their linguistic forms remain the same. For example, in Islam when the S spells passages from the Quran that describe events in which certain powers were given to characterise the text, the S may obtain these powers in turn (Kane, 1997,p.50). Sacred texts are God's message to the whole mankind in every age and culture. These texts were written by their authors at a certain point in history and in particular culture. Thus, they are conditioned by language, time and circumstances in which they were originally written. To understand what these texts mean for the people here and now, it is necessary to discover what they originally meant, then and there, so that people could identify the original intended meaning (Fee and Stuart, 1981, Pp.13-19).

### 2.5 Invitation and Intimidation

The human being is a combination of body, soul, and big amount of emotions. Thus, he likes things that have a big amount of emotions. One of the best ways to direct people to the right path of a religion is invitation and intimidation. Invitation is anything that holds the interest of the listener to accept the principles of a religion. It is a kind of a religious speech which is done in a religious ceremony. Intimidation is anything that frightened the listener from not accepting his following the instructions of a religious prophet in the following ways:

1. Invite and intimidate by mentioning the reward in the Hereafter. The preacher tells people about the act whether it is rewarded with heaven or Hell.
2. Invite and intimidate by mentioning the love or wrath of God. The preacher focuses on whether this act makes God loves

the doer or brings the wrath of Him.

3. Invite and intimidate by mentioning the advantages and disadvantages of the act. The preacher clarifies the good and bad consequences behind doing certain act in order to get people to focus on doing good deeds.
4. Invite and intimidate by praising and dispraising. The preacher praises the good deed and its doer even by a smile, and dispraises the bad deed and its doer.

There are many factors of a successful invitation and intimidation. These factors are the following: (ibid,p.61)

1. The speech should be balanced. The preacher should not use only invitation neither only intimidation, he should alternate between both of them in order not to get people to one side more than the other.
2. The speech should address the emotions because they are the most influential thing on people.
3. The speech should suite the state of the audience. Audience differ in their capacity of accepting the speech. The preacher may face a type of audience that are too open to the invitation of God and they accept it gladly, and he may face a type that ignore and disobey God.

3. Model of Analysis  
In discourse analysis, the study of pragmatics occupies a primary position because it focuses on the contextual dimension of language use and connects

language to its users under different circumstances. The aspects of pragmatics such as reference, presupposition, implicature are used in the analysis of discourse.

Only one concept of pragmatic aspects will be dealt with in the analysis of the data which is speech acts based on Searle's model (1979).

### 3.1 Speech Acts

Speech act theory argues that language is not used just to say things, i.e. describe states of affairs, but rather to do things, i.e. perform actions. A most widely used classification of speech acts is that proposed by J.R. Searle (1979). Searle (1979, Pp.1-5) classifies the speech acts into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations which are adopted in analyzing the data.

#### (1) Assertives (representatives)

It is to commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. Examples: state, affirm, believe, conclude, deny, report...etc.

#### (2) Directives

It is to get the hearer to do something. Examples: request, ask, command, warn, advice...etc.

#### (3) Commissives

The speaker commits her/himself to some future course of action. Examples: promise, offer, guarantee, swear, vow, pledge...etc.

#### (4) Expressives

They refer to the speaker's emotional attitude about a state of affairs. Examples: apologize, congratulate, thank, welcome...etc.

#### (5) Declarations

It is to bring about a change in reality, i.e., to realize the state described in the proposition. Examples: declare, name, call, give, appoint...etc.

Fig (1): Model of Analysis Pragmatic Level

-	A	-	Co	-	D	-	E	-	De
	ss		m		ir		x		cla
	er		mi		e		pr		rat
	ti		ssi		ct		es		io
	v		ve		i		si		ns
	e		s		v		v		
	s				e		e		
					s				

### 4. Data Analysis

This chapter analyzes the selected sermons which constitute the corpus of the study at a pragmatic level.

The sermons are chosen from different authentic websites and have been written by preachers and pastors. The data of the study comprise two sermons, one English and one Arabic.

#### 4.1 English Data Analysis

##### 4.1.1 Assertives

Example (1): *Our sins will find us and testify against us on the last day if we do not untie every cord of sins in us.*

A clear intimidation is shown through this statement that if one has sins, they will testify against him when he dies, that's why the idea of clearing ourselves from sins before death is being focused on.

##### 4.1.2 Directives

Example (2): *God wants us to prepare to die because when we are prepared to die, only then are we prepared to live.*

It is a directive speech act used by the speaker to invite people to be prepared before death as God wants.

##### 4.1.3 Commissives,

##### 4.1.4 Expressives

##### 4.1.5 Declarations

They are rarely used in religious speeches and they are not found in our sample.

The following table is displaying the frequency of occurrence of the speech acts in the data under analysis.

Table (1): Breakdown of the Types of Speech Acts and their Function

Speech Acts	Invitati on	Intimidati on	Tot al
Assertives	3	1	4
Directives	10	3	13
Commissiv es	0	0	0
Expressive s	0	0	0
Declaratio ns	0	0	0
Total	13	4	17

The table reveals that Directive speech acts have the highest frequency of occurrence, they appeared (13) times, Assertives appeared (4) times, and Commissives, Expressives, and Declarations did not appear through the sermon at all.

The preacher used speech acts in his speech to invite more than to intimidate with a total of (13, 4) respectively. Assertives were used (3) times to indicate invitation and (1) time to indicate intimidation. Directives were used (10) times to invite and (3) times to intimidate.

## 4.2 Arabic Data Analysis

### 4.2.1 Assertives

Example (3):

فكل ما نعانیه من شقاء سببه البعد عن هدی الله وسنة نبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم

- *All that we suffer from is because the distance from the guidance of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet peace be upon him.*

Apparently, this sentence is constative one but according to performative hypothesis even a constative utterance implicitly performative one. It is a surface structure and the assertive verb “be” is omitted. The underlying structure of this example is: I assert you that the reason of

all our suffering is.....etc. It is an invitation to follow Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon Him).

### 4.2.2. Directives

Example (4):

( إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ )

- *“Surely those who say: our Lord is Allah, and then remained upright, on them the angels will descend, saying: fear not, nor grieve. But receive glad tidings of the Paradise which you were promised”.*

The Directive form of the verb is used three times to invite people who believe in Allah of not to be afraid, not to be sad, and be happy.

### 4.2.3 Expressives

Example (5):

فالمؤمن عند اللقاء يُبَشِّرُ وَيُطْمَئِنُّ

- *The believer at the meeting is preached and be calmed.*

The speaker here says that the believer becomes happy when he knows that he will meet Allah because he is sure that Heaven is waiting for him. The use of the expressive verbs supports this idea “ يبشّر، ” “يطمأن”.

Table (2): Breakdown of the Types of Speech Acts and their Function

Speech Acts	Invitati on	Intimidati on	total
Assertives	41	7	48
Directives	11	1	12
Commissiv es	0	0	0
Expressive s	2	0	2
Declaration s	0	0	0
Total	54	8	62

The table clarifies that Assertive speech acts have the highest frequency of occurrence, they appeared (48) times, Directives appeared (12) times,

Expressives (2) times, Commissives and Declarations did not appear through the sermon at all.

The preacher used speech acts in his speech to invite more than to intimidate with a total of (54, 8) respectively. Assertives were used (41) times to indicate invitation and (7) time to indicate intimidation, Directives were used (11) times to invite and (1) times to intimidate, while Expressives were used only in invitation for (2) times.

### 5. Conclusion

In the light of the study, it can be concluded that Arabic sermons tend to use more devices and they are more exaggerated than English sermons. This is because of the effect of society on their speech. Arabic sermons tend to be heavy in invitations and intimidations more than English sermons. Both English and Arabic sermons used invitations more than intimidations but with different rates. Generally speaking, Arabic preachers used more intimidation expressions than English preachers and their speech tends to be stronger due to society and culture. It also can be concluded that Arabic preachers used speech acts more than English preachers. They used speech acts in invitations more than intimidations in both English and Arabic speeches.

It is obvious that preachers used assertives more than the other types in forming invitation and intimidation to assert the ideas of religion to people. They also used directives more to direct people to the

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right way that makes God loves them and to the instructions of the religion they represent. They avoided expressing themselves and their ideas; they avoided declaring any personal ideas, that's why the use of commissives, expressives, and declaratives were less in both languages.

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