

Speech Acts in Abu al-Ala al-Ma'arri's poem "Ala fi Sabil al-Majd" in light of Searle's theory

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Introduction

In the contemporary era, new linguistic knowledge emerged in the world of language and literature, and each of them gained a place and interest among researchers. Among these knowledges is pragmatics, which has different tendencies, and among these tendencies is speech acts. «Speech acts are a concept that emerged from a general philosophical space, namely the analytic philosophy movement, with its various methods, trends, and issues» (Sahrawi, 2005: 17). The theory of speech acts was born and emerged with Austin and was adited by the efforts of John Searle, who placed it in new divisions into five main parts and classified verbs accordingly. The poems of Abu'l-Ala'a Ma'ari, one of the most well-known poets of the Abbasid period, clearly show the variety of speech acts used in them, making them a worthy subject for research.

Methodology

This research relies on a descriptive-analytical approach in which the study of speech acts based on John Searle's theory in a poem by Abu al-Ala Ma'ari is discussed. The poem analyzed in this research is the poem "A la fi sabil al-majd" from the Divan of Saqt al-zend by Abu al-Ala Ma'ari, a poet of the Abbasid period. This research includes the analysis and study of this poem from the perspective of John Searle. The purpose of this research is to examine the speech acts used in the poem "A la fi sabil al-majd" in the light of John Searle's theory for analyzing verbs and the purpose of using them by the poet in this poem. This poem is clearly seen in the variety of verbs used.

Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that Abu al-Ala al-Ma'arri employed assertive verbs extensively in this poem to inform the addressee or describe something. He also used directive, commissive, and expressive verbs, but declarative verbs did not appear in this poem.

Assertive Verbs: These verbs, characterized by the word-to-world direction of fit and the sincerity condition of belief, dominated the poem. In the verse "And my fame has traveled through the lands, so who can conceal a sun whose light is complete?" (Al-Ma'arri, 1957: 193), the verb "has traveled (سار)" functions as an assertive act describing the widespread renown of the poet. Another example appears in "My sins are counted by a people as many, yet I have no sin but high rank and virtues" (ibid.: 193), where "are counted (تُعد)" reports others' judgments while the negation "no sin (لا ذنب)" asserts the poet's moral purity. The verse "If the north wind blows between me and you, then the least important thing is what the blameworthy say" (ibid.: 193) employs the assertive "blows (هَبَّت)" to describe a conditional situation, reflecting the poet's philosophical indifference to others' criticisms. The poet also uses assertive verbs to express pride and self-worth: "And I am a noble steed whose bridle has not been adorned, and a Yemeni

sword neglected by polishers" (ibid.: 194), where the negations "has not been adorned (لم يُخَلَّ)" and "neglected (أُغفلت)" assert the poet's intrinsic value despite outward neglect. In "Though I am the latest of my time, I shall bring what the ancients could not" (ibid.: 193), the assertive "I shall bring (لأتِ)" reports a future achievement while carrying commissive force. Through the conditional "If you seek honor, seek moderation, for at extremes the ambitious fall short" (ibid.: 196), the poet employs assertive content to convey a philosophical proposition about moderation.

Directive Verbs: These verbs, characterized by the world-to-word direction of fit and the sincerity condition of desire, are employed to direct the addressee's action. In the rhetorical question "Do I, having experienced every hidden thing, have a tale-bearer believed or a questioner disappointed?" (Al-Ma'arri, 1957: 193), the interrogative "Do I (أعندي)" functions as a directive, prompting the addressee to reflect on the poet's wisdom. The rhetorical question "How can birds sleep in their nests when snares have been set for the two stars?" (ibid.: 194) employs the interrogative "How (كيف)" to challenge the addressee's perception, creating a dynamic and interactive quality. The imperative "O death, visit me, for life is despicable; and O soul, strive, for your time is in vain" (ibid.: 195) uses the commands "visit (زُر)" and "strive (جِدِّي)" to directly urge the addressee toward action, reflecting the poet's despair and wish for deliverance. In "If you seek honor, seek moderation" (ibid.: 196), the directive "seek (فابغ)" advises the addressee to adopt a balanced approach, carrying an educational and guiding function.

Commissive Verbs: These verbs, characterized by the world-to-word direction of fit and the sincerity condition of intention, commit the speaker to future action. In "Though I am the latest of my time, I shall bring what the ancients could not" (Al-Ma'arri, 1957: 193), "I shall bring (لأتِ)" functions as a commissive act, expressing the poet's determination to achieve something unique despite being a latecomer. The verse "I set out at dawn, even if morning were sharp swords, and travel at night, even if darkness were vast armies" (ibid.: 194) uses "I set out (أغدو)" and "I travel (أسري)" as commissive acts, asserting the poet's steadfast resolve regardless of dangers. In "When I saw ignorance spreading among people, I feigned ignorance until I was thought to be ignorant" (ibid.: 194), the commissive "I feigned (تجاهلت)" reflects the poet's commitment to adopt a strategic response to societal ignorance.

Expressive Verbs: These verbs, characterized by the null direction of fit and varying sincerity conditions, express the speaker's psychological state. In the verse "At a homeland that every master longs for, and which the seeker falls short of reaching" (Al-Ma'arri, 1957: 194), "longs for (يشتاق)" expresses the poet's deep emotional attachment to the homeland. The verse "And in the heart of every fear, the companion of night journeys, not cleansed of noble qualities, gives me comfort" (ibid.: 196) employs "gives me comfort (يؤنسني)" to express the poet's inner tranquility and psychological strength in confronting fears.

Conclusion

Verbs of speech are clearly seen in the poem "A la fi sabil al-Majd", the verbs used in this poem are diverse and are widely visible throughout the poem. In this poem, assertive verbs constitute a large part of the verbs used to describe or inform, and it also uses directives, commissives and expressive verbs, and on the other hand, no declarative verbs are used in this poem.

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