A Pragmalinguistic Study of Editorial Letters in Selected English Newspapers

A Thesis

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دراسة تداولية ـ لغوية لرسائل التحرير في صحف انكليزية منتقاة

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Abstract

The present study scrutinizes four editorial letters from four selected English newspapers. In the previous studies. editorial letters have been examined from stylistic, comparative and discourse analysis points of view. However, investigating English editorials from a pragmalinguistic perspective has not been conducted yet. Thus, this thesis attempts to bridge this gap by analyzing editorials as linguistic structures and as speech acts. The study aims at identifying the linguistic strategies and analyzing the speech acts that are used in the selected editorial letters to achieve their functions.

In collaboration with the aims, the study sets out seven hypotheses: (1) On the linguistic level, Biber's (1988, 1989) linguistic strategies are useful devices for the analysis of linguistic structures of the editorials from the selected English newspapers. (2) On the pragmatic level, Searle's (1979) Taxonomy of Speech Acts is an appropriate instrument for the analysis of the selected editorials, in terms of their illocutionary acts recognition, interpretation and understanding. (3) In newspaper editorials, the editor uses certain linguistic and pragmatic patterns to influence the target readers. (4) The most frequent linguistic pattern used in the selected editorials is the '*Repetition and Intensifiers*' (R&Is), whereas the least frequent one is the Necessity Modals (NMs). (5) The most frequent class of speech acts used in the selected editorials is '*Representatives*', whereas the least frequent one is '*Commisivess*'. (6) The most frequent illocutionary act used by the writers in the selected editorials is 'Asserting', whereas, the least frequent one is 'Characterizing'. (7) The selected editorial texts contain linguistic patterns more than pragmatic ones.

To achieve the aims and verify these hypotheses, the study adopts a pragmalinguistic model consisting of two layers for the analysis. The

first layer is composed of Biber's linguistic strategies (1988, 1989). The second layer is based on Searle's taxonomy of speech acts (1979), which is composed of the devices that manifest pragmatic strategies in press discourse. On the other hand, a statistical information is used after the data analysis to check the frequency distribution of these strategies for the sake of guaranteeing scientific findings of the study.

Based on these findings, the study encompasses certain conclusions: (1) Biber's (1988, 1989) linguistic strategies and Searle's (1979) Taxonomy of Speech Acts are useful devices for the analysis of the linguistic structures and the pragmatic patterns of the selected English editorials. (2) All linguistic patterns are used except Rhetorical Questions (RQs), whereas all pragmatic patterns in one way or another are employed in this study. (3) The most frequent linguistic pattern is the Repetition and Intensifiers (R&Is), whereas the least frequent linguistic pattern is the Suasive Verbs (SVs). (4) The pragmatic analysis shows that the most frequent type of speech acts is the '*Representatives*', whereas the least frequent type of speech acts is the '*Declarations*'. However, All the hypotheses of the study are verified and proved except that the fourth, fifth and sixth are partially valid. The thesis ends with some recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Editorials are written to show opinions of the editor, committee, newspapers or governments. They may attempt to persuade, argue, criticize, or show agreement with certain ideologies. Editorials can be regarded as a gate through which one can explore the ideology of the newspaper. For this reason, writing editorials is not an easy task but rather a   complex one because it has special language with certain linguistic and pragmatic functions. Their functions as different speech acts with different illocutionary points form difficulty in terms of their interpretation and recognition. Therefore, the challenge lies in the multiple levels of the intended meanings of the editorial structures. The editorial has to be analyzed at the linguistic level (sentences, phrases and words), and also at the pragmatic level (utterances).

The abundance of implicit opinions involving irony, metaphor, sarcasm, etc. adds further complexity to the task of editorial analysis on the part of the readers. Also, there is another difficulty which relates to the strategies used by the editors to impress their readers or at least to convince them to read the whole editorials. Editorials are the ideas of the writers (Van Dijk, 1996), and these ideas about specific events are developed from contexts. Therefore, the researcher should take this into consideration, especially in the pragmatic analysis of editorials. However, there is no a clear-cut framework of analysis for the distinction between illocutionary acts. Here is an evidence from Searle (1979: 19) himself : "Some members of the class of declarations overlap with members of the class as assertives. This is because in certain institutional situations we

not only ascertain the facts but we need an authority to lay down a decision". Accordingly, the current study tries to bridge this gap by following Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts (1979) with the help of lists of verbs collected for this purpose.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study aims at

1. Investigating the selected editorial letters of specific English newspapers from a pragmalingustic point of view.
2. Giving a thorough explanation of how linguistic strategies are used in the editorial texts to achieve their goals.
3. Analyzing the speech acts found in the selected newspaper editorials.
4. Showing how those who are responsible for editorial writing express their opinions towards certain issues in the world.
5. Testing how the adopted models of Biber (1988, 1989) and Searle (1979) are valid to analyze the selected English newspaper editorials, by identifying the linguistic and pragmatic patterns which contribute to the interpretation of these editorials.

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

In this study, it is hypothesized that

1. on the linguistic level, Biber's linguistic strategies are useful devices for the analysis of linguistic structures of the editorials from the selected English newspapers.
2. on the pragmatic level, Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts (1979) is an appropriate instrument for the analysis of the selected editorials, in terms of their illocutionary acts recognition, interpretation and understanding.

3. in newspaper editorials, the editor   uses certain linguistic and pragmatic patterns to influence the public readers.

4. the most frequent linguistic pattern used in the selected editorials is the Repetition and Intensifiers (R&Is), whereas the least frequent one is the Necessity Modals (NMs).

5. the most frequent class of speech acts used in the selected editorials is '*Representatives*', whereas the least frequent one is '*Commisivess*'.

6. the most frequent illocutionary act used by the editors in the selected editorials is 'Asserting', whereas, the least frequent one is 'Characterizing'.

7. the selected editorial texts contain linguistic patterns more than pragmatic ones.

1.4 Procedures of the Study

The procedures of the present study includes the following steps:

1. Presenting a theoretical background about the definitions, types, and characteristics of the newspaper editorial letters, with specific information of the related literature.

2. Collecting data from 4 English newspapers for the linguistic and pragmatic analysis of the editorial letters.

3. Doing a qualitative pragmalinguistic analysis of the editorials from these newspapers.

4. Conducting a statistical analysis on the topic to achieve its aims and to quantitatively support its findings.

5. Stating some conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies. This will be done depending on the findings of the research.

1.5 Limits of the Study

   The study of this thesis is limited to the pragmlinguistic analysis of <u>four</u> editorial letters from the <u>four</u> selected English newspapers, namely, *The Guardian, The Daily Mirror, The Daily Telegraph,* and *The Sun.*

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be significant to

1. students of linguistics in general, and scholar in the field of journalism, in particular.
2. teachers and students who are interested in the art of writing in English from Arabic countries.
3. those who are 'addicted' to reading English newspapers.
4. those who are specialized in mass media concerns, especially publishers, reporters and writers of newspapers.