

- Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 1- 14 .
- Schiffrin, D. (1994) : *Approaches to Discourse*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd .
- Searle, J.R. (1969) : *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Searle, J.R. (1972) : "What is a speech act?" . In : Giglioli, P.P. (ed.), *Language and Social Context*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin Books Ltd., pp. 136- 154 .
- Searle, J.R. (ed.) (1979) : *Expression and Meaning*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Searle, J.R. (1983) : *Intentionality : An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Searle, J.R. (1991) : "Response: Meaning, Intentionality, and Speech Acts". In : Lepore, E. & van Gulick, R. (eds.) *John Searle and His Critics*, Oxford Basil Blackwell Ltd., pp. 81- 102 .
- Searle, J.R. & Vanderveken, D. (1985) : *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Al- Sulaimaan, M.M. (1997) : *A Study of Three Speech Acts: Promise, Threat, and Warning in Three Shakespearean Tragedies with Reference to Their Realizations in Arabic*, (Unpublished Ph.D. These), University of Mosul.
- Traugott, E.C & Pratt, M.L (1980) : *Linguistics for Students of Literature*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch .
- Trosborg, A. (1995) : *Interlanguage Pragmatics : Requests, Complaints and Apologies*, Berlin : Mouton de Gruyter .
- Vanderveken, D. (1990) : *Meaning and Speech Acts : Vol. 1; Principles of Language Use*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Vanderveken, D. (1994) : *Principles of Speech Act Theory*, Montreal: Publication de Group de Recherche en Epistemologie, Comparee, Universite du Quebec a Montreal, pp. 3- 88 .

semantic analyses of this paper predict for Arabic commissive illocutionary forces by presenting the following diagram(1) .

### Conclusions and Suggestions :

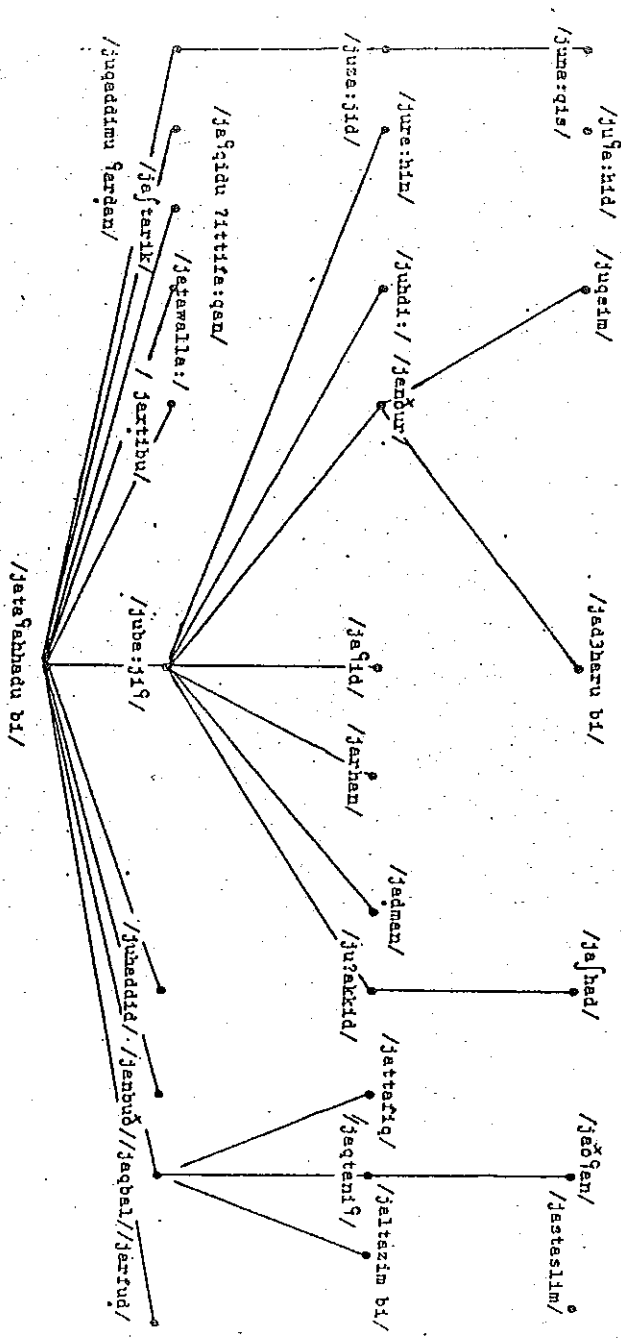
1. Our semantic analyses show the relations of comparative strength between Arabic commissive illocutionary forces correctly ordered in order to predict actual illocutionary entailments and incompatibilities between commissive performatives. (see also Vanderveken, 1990) .
2. Our descriptive list shows how the set of commissive illocutionary forces is lexicalized in the Arabic vocabulary . This will enable semanticists to make a reasoned dictionary of illocutionary verbs of actual natural languages by way of a systematic breakdown of lexicalized forces into their components .
3. Further research can also be carried out to give semantic analyses of other types of performative verbs such as "assertives", "directives", "declaratives" and "expressives" .

### REFERENCES

- Austin, J.L. (1962) : *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press .
- Bach, K. & Harnish, R.M. (1979) : *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, Cambridge: Mass : The MIT Press .
- Crystal, D. (1985): *A Dictionary of Phonetics and Linguistics*, Oxford : Basil Blackwell Ltd .
- Fraser, B. (1996): "Pragmatic Markers". In : *Pragmatics*, Vol.6, No. 2, pp. 167-190.
- Haverkate, W.H. (1984) : *Speech Acts, Speakers and Hearers*, Amsterdam : John Benjamins Publishing Company .
- Hickey, R. (1986) : "A Promise : On Speech Acts of Commitment in English" . In : *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, Vol. 18, pp. 69- 80 .
- Lecch, G.N. (1983) : *Pragmatics*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Levinson, S. (1983) : *Pragmatics*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Mey, J.L. (1994) : *Pragmatics : An Introduction*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd .
- Recanati, F. (1987) : *Meaning and Force; The Pragmatics of Performative Utterances*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .
- Sbisa, M. (1995) : "Speech Act Theory" . In : Verschueren, J., Ostman, J.O., & Blomert, J. (eds.) , *IPra Handbook of Pragmatics*, Amsterdam : John

---

(1) All nodes of our diagram are speech act verbs naming illocutionary forces with the same designated illocutionary point . A verb is the immediate successor of another verb in our diagram if and only if the force that it names can be obtained from the force named by the other verb by adding new components or increasing the degree of strength . (Our diagram is based on vanderveken's diagramy 1990)



A Semantic Diagram for Arabic Commissive Verbs

- ʔal- muza: jada(tu)/* is judged successful, the article is declared to have been sold (generally "to the highest */muza:jjid/* "bidder").
- (24) */juna : qis/* "thender" : It means to put in or submit such a bid in the formal context of tendering *ʔal- muna: qasa(tu)/* for a contract (as in construction, for example) . Again, there are rules that determine *ʔal- fa:ʔiz/* "the winner" (preparatory and propositional content conditions) .
- (25) */juhdi/* "dedicate" : This means to commit oneself to such and such a task or way of life with a propositional content condition to the effect that it is for a long time . Generally, there is a mode of achievement such that the commitment comes from an ethical motivation . That condition gives it a higher degree of strength than a commitment per se .
- (26) */jura: hin/* "bet" : This means a mutual commitment between the speaker and hearer . In */riha:n/* "betting", the one party promises to pay the other party something if, the other party or team wins . *ʔal- riha:n/* "betting" can in fact be on the outcome of virtually anything .
- ʔal- riha :n/* is a joint conditional promise that is generally performed in the course of a two step speech activity . First, one speaker makes an offer of *ʔal- riha:n/* "a bet" with a performative use of the verb . Second, the other speaker makes the proposed */riha:n/* "bet" binding by accepting the offer .
- (27) */jaʔqidu* (*ʔitifa : qan/* "contract" : *ʔaqqdu ʔitifa : qin/* "contracting" means making mutual commitments by two (or more) parties (propositional content conditions) . These commitments are related at least in the sense that the commitment is mutual, and that if one team fails the commitment, the other is released from his (preparatory condition) . Thus , the two joint commitments are not independent in a genuine contract, as is shown by the fact that a (*ʔal- ʔaqqdul- maktu:b/* "a written contract" only becomes binding after the signatures of both parties .
- (28) */juʔa : hid/* "covenant" : The commitment is mutual, but the obligation tends to be more moral, ethical and religious than legal (propositional content and mode of achievement) . For example, a marriage contract *ʔaqqdu zawa: d3in/* deals with the legalities of shared property , whereas *ʔaqqdu zawa: d3in* "the covenant of marriage" deals with the integrity of the relationship .
- (29) */jaʔtarik/* "subscribe" : Formerly, */jaʔtarik/* "subscribe" means to commit oneself to pay a certain amount of money in return for goods or services by signing a document (mode of achievement) . The common use is still similar, in that one signs a *ʔal- ʔaʔtira:k/* "a subscription" request for a magazine or something else, and that act (mode) engages the commitment . *ʔal- ʔaʔtira: k/* "a subscription" has propositional content conditions upon the sort of things one normally */jaʔtariku/* "subscribes: to (magazines, certain periodicals, season tickets for a sporting event, etc.) .
- Finally, one can show the relations of comparative degree of strength that the

- (17) /jāḥḥan/ "comply" : It means to act in accordance with a demand, order, rule, etc., i.e., to agree, often, unwillingly, without raising an argument . (mode of achievement and sincerity condition) .
- (18) /jastaslim/ "surrender" : It means to yield to the power of (especially an enemy) as a sign of defeat . (mode of achievement) .
- (19) /jalazim bi/ "abide" : It means to put up with a request of a very high degree of strength, generally in the sense of "abiding" by a ruling, and accepting a course of action or a decision . This is usually with deep regret (sincerity condition) . This latter depends on whether the ruling is general (in which case one may abide by it with out much personal feeling at stake) or specially "ruled" in order to force my consent (in which case the feelings of regret will be present) .
- (20) /jarfud/ "refuse" or "reject" : In Arabic, one can say /jarfudu talaban/ "refuse a request" or /jarfud ardan/ "reject an offer", whereas in English, there are two verbs such as "refuse", and "reject" . "Rejections" and "refusals" are the negative counterparts of "acceptances" and "consents" (Vanderveken, 1990: 185) . A rejection is the illocutionary denegation of the acceptance of an offer, while a refusal is the illocutionary denegation of the acceptance of the acceptance of a request . Like acceptances, rejections and refusals have the additional preparatory condition that one has the option of accepting or rejecting /refusing .
- (21) /janbuḍ/ "renounce" : One can renounce something simply by no longer seeking it or trying to get it . One might also renounce something that one already has, simply by giving it up without a word . But, here, in the commissive use of /nabḍ/ "renouncing", to renounce something in an appropriate context is to commit oneself to pursue no longer certain activities (as in / nabḍul- kutu:l/ "renouncing alcohol", the Devil and all his works", etc. /nabḍ / "renunciation" therefore requires a propositional content condition to the effect that it is a negative commitment .
- (22) /juqaddimu ḥardan/ "offer" : /taqdimu ḥardin/ "an offer" is a promise that is conditional upon the hearer's acceptance . To make an offer is to put something forward for another's choice (of acceptance or refusal) . Thus, to offer is to perform a conditional commissive : to offer something is to promise something on condition that the hearer accept this thing . Often an offer is bound (propositional content condition) by a definitive time frame . When this time has expired (as in the offer to purchase a house), if it has not been accepted, the offer "expires" and the speaker is no longer bound by it . The hearer's response can be to accept, to refuse or to make a counter-offer .
- (23) /juza: jid/ "bid" : /ʔal- muza: jada (tu) / "bidding: is an offer generally made under the particular conditions of an auction, which is a special form of structured offer in which goods are sold to the person judged to have offered the highest amount of money within rules .

- waqd/ or /ʔattahdi:d/. One may/ janur/ "vow" to perform something good for himself or someone else . /janur/, in fact, may be solemn (e.g. /naru- ʔaha: raiʔawi- ʔa:ʔati "a vow of chastity or of obedience")
- (10) /jadeharu bi/: It means "to avow". It may be in public or it is a solemn vow . This solemnity and seriousness are modes of achievement .
- (11) /juqsim/: This commissive verb is taken from the primitive commissive in the same way in which the assertive /juqsim/ is taken from the primitive assertive (Vanderveken, 1990: 183 /juqsim/ "to swear" is to commit oneself to future action in virtue of a solemn, public evocation of a sacred person, object or institution . /juqsim/ may be accompanied by raising the hand and putting it on the holy Quran to express with a strong degree of strength an intention to accomplish a certain act or to stress something . There is thus both a more heightened degree of strength and a more restricted mode of achievement than in the case of /ʔal- dahr/ .
- (12) /juʔakkid/: "assure" : It means to commit oneself to something with the intention of satisfying somebody who has some doubts . This attempt to have the hearer "feel sure" of the commitment is, as in the assertive use, a "sure" of the commitment is, as in the assertive use, a special mode of achievement in giving assurance . The presupposition of these doubts is a preparatory condition .
- (13) /jaʔhad/ "certify" : It means to commit oneself to doing something (or seeing to it that something gets done) with the heightened degree of strength such that the hearer feels "certain" that something will be done . Formal attestations (as a special mode of achievement) may be "certificates" of commitment, authenticity, etc .
- (14) /jaqbal/ "accept" : This means to respond favourably to an offer /qard/, an invitation da watun/, a request/ talabun/etc . committing oneself to a favourable course of action . One can accept a suggestion/ jaqbalu iqtira :han/, one can accept a gift /jaqbalu hadijatan/ , etc. In general, to accept something is to commit ourselves to do something (or accept that something be done) while presupposing (or accept that something be done) while presupposing (as a preparatory condition) that the hearer has requested something in previous conversation .
- (15) /jattafiqu ma c/ "agree": It means to accept /jaqbal/ with the added sincerity condition to the effect that one is ʔala ʔittifa: qin maʔa/ "in agreement with" the content of proposition . One can accept proposition with or without being ʔala tifa: qin/ "in agreement" that it is a good idea, but to agree is to accept with that sincerity condition being expressed (Vanderveken, 1990: 184) .
- (16) /jaqtanif/ "consent" : It means to accept to perform some thing with the additional preparatory condition that one has obvious reasons for not doing it and therefore would not probably perform it if it is not for some degree of convincing in the request .

- (1) /jata qhhadu bi/ : It means "to commit" (especially oneself) to a certain course of action, i.e., to promise (especially oneself, one's property, etc.) to a certain position, opinion, or course of action . This commissive verb names the primitive commissive force .
- (2) /juba: jiç/ : It means "to pledge". This commissive verb is to commit oneself to doing something strongly . Thus, the illocutionary force of it, can be obtained by increasing the degree of strength of a commitment . Sometimes, /juba: jiç/ can be a solemn promise, as in /juba: jiçu bajqatan/ "a pledge of allegiance" .
- (3) /jatawalla:/ "undertake" : It means to commit oneself to perform a clearly defined task that it is at hand (propositional content condition) . One might /jatawalla:/ "undertake" to do something on somebody's behalf, i.e., he promises to do something on somebody's behalf .
- (4) /jaxtibu (fata: tan/ : It means engaging oneself oneself in a task or direction so as to immediate action . The speaker binds himself by a promise to immediate action (as a propositional content condition) . The starting point of the engagement is the starting point of the enactment of the commitment
- (5) /jaqid/ : It means "to promise" . It is considered the paradigm of Arabic commissive verbs . It is characterized by special features that distinguish it from the primitive /jata q ahhadu bi/ . First, it is always hearer- oriented and has the special preparatory condition to the effect that it is good for the hearer . Second, it involves a special kind of commitment, namely the explicit undertaking of an obligation that may remain tacit in other kinds of commitment . It is this explicit undertaking of an obligation that increases the degree of strength of the sincerity conditions . (for further details, see Al- Sulaimaan, 1997: 52- 69) .
- (6) /jarhan/ : It means "to hypothecate". It involves a conditioned promise of some sort of security for credit, debt or liability (propositional content condition) . The mode of achievement is more or less formal . So to /jarhan/ something (a house, for example) is to promise to give it should one fail to meet financial obligations .
- (7) /jadman/ : It means "to guarantee" . This performative verb involves a complex speech act that is both /?atta?ki:d/ "an assertion" and /?al- waçd- l- ?içira: ti/ "a conditional promise" . A speaker who guarantees /jadman/ a proposition (p) both asserts P and promises simultaneously some (moral or other) compensation in the action that his utterance turns out not to be true or (some commitment is not carried out, etc.) .
- (8) /juhaddid/ or /jatawa ççad/ : It means "to threaten". This means to commit oneself to doing something to someone with the intention of terrifying the hearer (mode of achievement) and with the preparatory condition that it is bad for him .
- (9) /jarður/ : It means "to vow" . It is not essentially hearer directed as is /?al-

commissives are considered convivial in nature, performed as they are in the interest of someone other than the speaker .

After this brief review, we will present the main theoretical distinctions in the analysis of English speech act verbs that have been made by Searle and Vanderveken (1985), and Vanderveken (1990). Some of these distinctions derive from the fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between actual illocutionary forces and speech act verbs. Others are relative to linguistically important aspects of utterances. (see Vanderveken, 1990 : 167). These distinctions are as follows :

- (1) Many performative verbs do not name an illocutionary force, but rather a kind or a set of illocutionary act .
- (2) Some performative verbs like "swear" and "vow", which name the same illocutionary force, are not synonymous. Their difference of meaning derives from "conversational features" which are independent of their logical forms .
- (3) Some speech act which name illocutionary forces do not have a "performative use" .
- (4) Many speech act verbs have several uses and can name different illocutionary forces .
- (5) Some performative verbs are systematically ambiguous between several illocutionary points .
- (6) One must distinguish between speech act verbs like "order" and "promise" that are "essentially hearer directed" and others like "assert" and "conjecture" which name illocutionary forces of speech acts that are not necessarily aimed at someone in particular .
- (7) One must also distinguish between speech act verbs like "accuse" which name illocutionary acts which can only be performed in public and those like "blame" which can be performed in "thought" alone and in silent soliloquy .
- (8) Some illocutionary verbs like "bet" and "contract" name speech acts which cannot be performed by the speaker alone but which require " a mutual joint performance" by both a speaker and a hearer .
- (9) Finally, performative verbs can have non- illocutionary meanings . For example, the verb "allow", which has performative uses , can also name events which are not speech acts .

Our concern here is the "paradigmatic central illocutionary meanings" of Arabic commissive speech act verbs, and the idealization of these meanings somewhat in our semantic analysis . The important thing, from a logical point of view, is to get the relations of comparative strength between Arabic illocutionary forces correctly ordered so as to predict actual illocutionary entailments and incompatibilities between performative sentences . (for English commissives, see vanderveken, 1990) .

#### **The Description of Arabic Commissive Verbs :**

Our list of Arabic commissive verbs includes :



(1980), Levinson (1983), Crystal (1985) and Recanati (1987) adopt Austin's definition and say that commissives commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases are : promising, threatening, offering, etc.).

Other philosophers and linguists adopt the same definition with some modifications. For instance, Bach and Harnish (1979 : 49 - 50) define commissives as " acts of obligating one self or of proposing to obligate oneself to do something specified in the propositional content".

Leech (1983 : 106) takes the degree of strength into consideration and says that commissives commit speaker (to a greater or lesser degree) to some future action ; e. g., promising, vowing, offering. He believes that these tend to be convivial rather than competitive being performed in the interests of someone other than the speaker (for the same view, see also Schiffrin, 1994 : 58).

Haverkate (1984 : 21 - 22) gives a much more comprehensive definition saying that "by performing a commissive act the speaker places him- / herself under the commitment to perform, for the benefit of the hearer, the act specified by the proposition. By virtue of their illocutionary point, therefore, commissive acts are typically "speaker - centered".

Hickey (1986 : 70) defines the notion of commitment by saying "commitment is basically the binding of oneself to a certain course of action. This binding is usually of a moral nature, that is one sees it as one's more responsibility to fulfill that to which one has committed oneself. It can, however, also be a legal responsibility".

Vanderveken (1990 : 125 and 1994 : 8) points out that the primitive commissive illocutionary force has the commissive point in which the speaker commits himself to doing something. It has the neutral mode of achievement and degree of strength, the condition that the propositional content represents a future course of action of the speaker, the preparatory condition that the speaker is capable of carrying out that action, and the sincerity condition that he intends to carry it out (see Vanderveken, 1990 : 103 - 129). This primitive commissive force is not realized syntactically in a sentential type in English, but is named by the performed verb 'commit' (Vanderveken, 1990 : 162 and Fraser, 1996 : 172). As for the direction of fit, commissives have world - to words direction of fit . Concerning the expressed psychological state, commissives express an intention (for further details, see Searle, 1979 : 22 ; 1983 : 11 and 1991 : 85 ; Mey, 1994 : 131 and Sbisà, 1995 : 7).

Mey (1994 : 131) says that other preparatory conditions of commissive illocutionary forces are special conditions for these forces. For instance, the illocutionary force of a promise has the special preparatory condition that the future course of action represented by the propositional content is good for the hearer .

Trosborg (1995 : 14) says that in "commissives the speaker commits him- / herself in varying degrees to some future course of action. Commissives are made for the purpose of creating expectations". She also believes that Searle's class of

# A Semantic Analysis of Arabic Commissive Verbs

By

Dr. Jasim M. Hassan & Dr - Misbah M. D. AL- Sulaimaan.

## INTRODUCTION

Contrary to what Saussure tried to "establish with his distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', the nature of the primary speech acts that are performed in the use of a natural language is determined by the semantic structure of that language" (Vanderveken, 1990 : 166). Actual natural languages like English and Arabic offer a great number of speech act verbs whose meanings serve to identify the possible illocutionary forces of the utterances of their sentences . (Vanderveken, 1990 : 166).

In this paper, we will apply the illocutionary logic of general semantics to Arabic and to proceed to the lexical analysis of about thirty important commissive verbs "/ʔaf ʔa:l - ul - wu ʔu:d/" which have an illocutionary point as part of their meaning. We will give a description of their meaning and confine ourselves to a 'direct semantic analysis' of these verbs. We will also give a description of their logical form and specify the actual components of the illocutionary forces or acts which they name .

In analysing Arabic commissive verbs "/ʔaf ʔa:l - ul - wu ʔu:d/", our aim is to study how the set of illocutionary forces is lexicalized in the Arabic vocabulary. Our paper will be based on some theoretical distinctions in the analysis of English speech act verbs that have been made by Searle and Vanderveken (1985), and Vanderveken (1990).

### The Concept of Commissives :

Commissives have been recognized since the early days of speech act theory as being a well - defined subset and are given this name by Austin (see Austin, 1962 : 156 ff.) They have been the object of attention at least in the formal sense of specifying preconditions and contexts for their occurrence and success (Searle, 1969 : 57 ff., and 1972 : 146 ff.). The class of commissives is a very - wide ranging phenomenon, and their expressions can take on a variety of linguistic manifestations (Searle, 1979 : 22 - 25).

Austin (1962 : 151 - 152) says that 'commissives, are typified by promising or otherwise undertaking ; they commit someone to doing something, but include also declarations or announcements of intention, which are not promises, and rather vague things which (we) may call espousals, as for example, siding with". Austin believes that the whole point of a commissive is " to commit the speaker to some future course of action" (e. g. promise, swear, contract, bind myself, threaten, vow, etc.). Searle (1979), Traugott and Pratt