Speech Acts Used in Covid-19 English and Arabic News Reports: Contrastive Study

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ABSTRACT:
For the past three years, Covid-19 has been the dominant topic in international media. It has been the central topic of various researches and studies. Accordingly, this study aims at presenting the theoretical background of pragmatics, media discourse, and the relation between the two. In addition, it aims at identifying and uncovering the speech acts used in selected Covid-19 English and Arabic news articles following Searle (1979) taxonomy. The selected articles are published by different local and international digital newspapers, including USA Today, The Guardian, Daily Mail, Almada Newspaper, BAGHDADTODAY.NEWS, and Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper. The findings of the study prove that speech acts are used more in the English reports than in the Arabic reports. Also, the most frequently used category is assertive speech acts in the two types of data.
Key Words: Speech Acts, Covid-19 News Articles, Pragmatics

1. Theoretical Background
1.2. Pragmatics, Aspects, and Theories

Historically, pragmatics dates back to the work of the American philosopher and semiotician Charles Morris, in 1938, in outlining the general form of semiotics, i.e. the science of signs. Morris classified three branches of inquiry; syntax, semantics, and pragmatics "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (Levinson, 1983, p. 1).

As Meaning is not delivered and comprehended merely by words (semantics), nor by their structure (syntax), it is quite significant to differentiate between the literal meaning and the intended meaning of an utterance. To interpret meaning accurately, other aspects need to be considered, including the speaker/writer, the listener/reader, and the context in which a certain expression is uttered, which is the main domain of pragmatics. That is, "pragmatics has to do with the meaning that is non-literal, context-dependent, inferential, and/or not truth-conditional" (Birner, 2013, p. 11-12).

Accordingly, Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as "the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)" (p. 3).

Likewise, Thomas (2013) defines pragmatics as "meaning in interaction" emphasizing the view of meaning as a "dynamic process" that involves not only the context of an utterance, but also the role of both the speaker and the hearer (p. 22).

Thus, pragmatics takes into account the speaker/writer's intentions in delivering certain utterances and the listener/reader's viewpoints in interpreting the meaning along with the physical, social, and linguistic context.

As pointed out by Yule (1996) and several other linguists including, (Ariel, 2008; Archer et.al, 2012; Senft, 2014; Rühlemann, 2019) the canonic key topics and theories of pragmatics are deixis and indexicality, reference, inference, and anaphora, speech acts, implicature, and presupposition, pragmatic markers, speech act theory, relevance theory, Grice's maxim, and the theory of conversational implicature.

1.3. Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory (SAT) focuses mainly on the relationship between language and acts. It draws attention to the fact that people not only use language to produce sentences, but they also use it to perform different actions. Such actions can be accomplished by the speaker or the listener, e.g., thanking, requesting, apologizing, etc. (Yule, 1996, p. 47).

Drawing from the idea of 'language as action,' the British philosopher John L. Austin introduced and coined the concept of 'speech acts' in 1962. Austin presented his ideas about language in his lectures, which he gave at Oxford University (1952-1954). Later, he delivered a version of his lectures as the William James Lectures at Harvard in 1955. After his death in 1960, J. O. Urmson collected notes and recordings of Austin's lectures in a book form. Therefore, "How to Do Things with Words" is regarded as an informal book (Thomas, 2013, p. 29).

After the publication of Austin's most influential work, "How to Do Things with Words", the American philosopher John Searle, who was one of Austin's students, continued, developed, and extended the work that Austin originated in his book "Speech Acts" in 1969 (Archer et al, 2012, p. 37).

Both Austin and Searle tackled, studied, and analyzed how specific actions can be performed with different utterances or sentences. The two following sections tackle how the two philosophers, Austin and Searle, analyzed this phenomenon – doing things with words.

1.4. Austin's Speech Act Theory

The British philosopher John L. Austin points out the fact that sentences are not only used to judge whether they are true or false. He draws attention to the fact that sentences can be used to perform different actions (Archer et al., 2012, p. 37). According to Austin, language has much more than saying things and considering the meaning of words and phrases. Language can be used to 'do things, and these things may succeed

or fail. He clarifies the distinction between analyzing sentences or utterances based on the truth-conditional approach and his view of 'words as actions' (Thomas, 2013, p. 31-32).

Based on this distinction, Austin begins his hypothesis by classifying utterances according to their verbs into two main types performatives and constatives. A performative utterance or sentence indicates that the purpose of an utterance is to perform an action – it is not used to say or state things, as in the example: I apologize. Such utterance cannot be judged as true or false, but it is understood as performing the action of apologizing (Austin, 1976, p. 163). On the other hand, a constative utterance or sentence is used to state things and can be judged as true or false as in: I have two cars. Such utterance performs no action. Instead, it is mainly used to state or describe different things, situations, or incidents that can be analyzed based on the truth-conditional approach (Thomas, 2013, p. 32).

Austin elucidates the distinction between the two types by stating that performative utterances have specific linguistic characteristics, such as the possibility of inserting hereby before the verb in addition to the present tense form of the verb associated with the action (Archer et al., 2012, p. 35). Such distinction is made clear in the following examples:

   I hereby apologize.
* I hereby have two cars.

Moreover, Austin states that a performative utterance is successful if certain conditions are fulfilled. These conditions are called 'felicity conditions' and are described as follows:

a. There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.
b. The circumstances and persons must be appropriate.
c. The procedure must be executed (i) correctly, and (ii) completely.
d. Often, the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings, and intentions, and if consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must do it.

Based on the conditions mentioned above, an utterance can be judged as being felicitous or not (Kreidler, 1998, p. 181). That is, if a sentence like 'I pronounce you husband and wife is not uttered by a priest to a woman and man in a church in the presence of witnesses, it is 'infelicitous,' i.e., "the circumstances and people are not appropriate" (Archer et al., 2012, p. 36).

However, Austin's concept that only in performing actions only performative verbs can be used was unjustified. His performative hypothesis collapsed for a number of different reasons:

a. There is no formal (grammatical) way of distinguishing performative verbs from other sorts of verbs.
b. The presence of a performative verb does not guarantee that the specified action is performed.
c. There are ways of 'doing things with words' which do not involve using performative verbs.

Autsin abandoned his performative hypothesis in a later lecture and introduced a new framework for the study of language based on speech acts theory as well. In his lecture, he identified three types of acts which can be performed by different utterances. These acts are locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.

Yule (1996) defines a locutionary act as "the basic act of uttering a meaningful linguistic form" (p. 131). That is, it refers to "the actual words uttered" (Archer et al, 2012, p. 37). Accordingly, Fogal et al (2018) state that "locutionary acts are merely utterances of meaningful expressions" (p.12). Thus, locutionary acts are "equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference" (Leech, 1983, p. 176). As Austin argues that locutionary acts contain 'meaning', this utterance can be regarded as a locutionary act when it is uttered with no purpose (Langigan, 1977, p. 54).

Yule (1996), moreover, defines an illocutionary act as "the communicative force an utterance", i.e. performing actions by saying things (p. 48). The same example mentioned above can be considered as an illocutionary act (meaning I want some fresh air). That is, an illocutionary act has a certain 'force' (Thomas, 2013, p. 49). According to Archer et al (2012) Austin classifies 'five general classes' of illocutionary verbs, which are:

a. **Verdicatives** 'declare a verdict', which include estimating, reckoning, or appraising, e.g. I now, pronounce you husband and wife.

b. **Exercitives** 'the exercising of authority, rights, or influencing' which include appointing, voting, ordering, advising, warning, e.g. I (hereby) order you to appear in court next Monday at 10 a.m.

c. **Commissives** which include promises, pledges, vows, threats, and refusals, e.g. I promise I will be back by midnight.

d. **Behabitives** 'reactions to events or behaviours' which include apologizing, and congratulating, e.g. congratulations!

e. **Expositives** 'expending of view', which include expressions such as 'I reply', 'I agree', 'I concede', etc. (p. 39).

As for perlocutionary act, Austin (1960) as cited in Langigan (1977) states that a perlocutionary act is an act in which "saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (p. 67) Moreover, Yule (1996) defines a perlocutionary act as "the effect of an utterance used to perform a speech act" (p. 133). That is, "what we bring about or achieve by saying something", i.e. a perlocutionary act has an effect on the listener's feelings, thoughts or actions (Leech, 1983, p. 176). Furthermore, Austin (1976) asserts that perlocutionary acts can be accomplished intentionally or unintentionally (p. 67). Thus, an utterance such as it is hot here can be considered to have a perlocutionary effect in the listener's actions if the listener opens the window, and it can both intended and unintended depending on the speaker (Thomas, 2013, p. 49).

In addition, an utterance such 'hands up' is considered as a command from the speaker's perspective and as a threat from the hearer's perspective. Therefore, the perlocutionary effect must match the intended

perlocuntionary act, in order to be regarded as felicitous. That is, "an insult will only be an insult if the hearer hears it as such" (Archer et al, 2012, p. 37).

1.5. Searle's Speech Act Theory

Searle' primary focus is on illocutionary acts. He identifies five classes which parallel Austin's identified five general classes of illocutionary acts. These acts are the following:

a. **Representatives** (or assertive) (cf. Austin's expositives), which include stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, claiming, concluding, and deducing. These acts express "the speaker's belief that something is true" (Archer et al, 2012, p. 39). By using representatives, the speaker makes his words fit the world (of belief) as in it is warm today (Yule, 1996, p. 53).

b. **Directives** (cf. Austin's exercitives), which include actions such as asking, ordering, commanding, requesting, begging, pleading, praying, entreating, inviting, permitting, and advising. These acts are used when the speaker wants to get the hearer to do something and normally the hearer is supposed carry out the intended action as in Give me a cup of tea (Archer et al, 2012, p. 39). By using directives, the speaker tries to make the world fit the words (through the hearer) (Yule, 1996, p. 54).

c. **Commissives** (cf. Austin's commissives), which include promises, vows, and pledges, e.g. I'm going to get it right next time (Archer et al, 2012, p. 39). By using commissives, the speaker tries to make the world fit the words (through the speaker) (Yule, 1996, p. 54).

d. **Expressives** (cf. Austin's behabitives), which include thanking, congratulating, apologizing, condoling, deploring, and welcoming as in I'm really sorry. They represent the speaker's psychological state towards the hearer. That is, in apologizing the speaker feels sorry (Archer et al, 2012, p. 39).

e. **Declarations** (cf. Austin's verdicatives), which include judges sentencing offenders, priests baptizing a child, etc. (Archer et al, 2012, p. 39). Such utterances change the world by being uttered, e.g. Priest: I now pronounce you husband and wife, when this statement is uttered to two persons, their marital status will change from being single to married (Yule, 1996, p.53).

According to these five classes of illocutionary acts, Searle proposed felicity conditions as well. However, Searle's felicity conditions are quite different from the conditions proposed by Austin.

a. Propositional content condition; which considers "restrictions on the content of the sentence"(Archer et al, 2012, p. 38). That is, the content of an utterance that is a promise or a threat must be about a future event, and that event must be fulfilled by the speaker (Yule, 1996, p.50).

b. Preparatory condition; which differs according to the action being performed (preparatory condition of a promise is quite different from that of a threat). That is, by promising, the event will not happen by itself, and it

will have a beneficial effect, while by threatening, the speaker knows that the event will take place, but it is not clear whether the hearer knows that or not. Moreover, it has no beneficial effect (Yule, 1996, pp.50-51).

c. Sincerity condition; which represents the feelings, beliefs, and the intentions of the speaker (Archer et al, 2012, p. 38). That is, for a promise, the speaker is required to carry out a future action to show his/her genuine intentions (Yule, 1996, p. 51).

d. Essential condition; which is as Yule (1996) defines it "in performing a speech act, a requirement that the utterance commits the speaker to the act performed" (p. 129).

1.6. Media Discourse

Media is a wide and complex mode of communication. Nowadays, modern communication is made up mostly of digital media, as it is easily accessible by everyone. People can simply communicate with one another and check online websites to get information. It is uncontrovertibly important in influencing people's views and perspectives.

Larrazabal and Korta (2002) draw the attention to the importance of today's modern means of communication in shaping people's opinions and views. That is to say, having different modes of communication creates and forms different and new types of audiences, specifically, 'media' (p. 7).

They acknowledge the importance of today's modes of communication by claiming that "a new reading is required if we enlarge the notion of discourse from the classical Greek tradition to current everyday discourses in extensively information-technology based communications" (Larrazabal & Korta, 2002, p. 9).

Bednarek & Caple (2012) identify three reasons and motivations for studying media discourse. They assert that the great influence that media discourse has over people is the most significant reason for studying it, in addition to its large existence and easy accessibility (p. 6).

They further stress the power of media in that people sometimes modify and navigate their attitudes, views, and beliefs based on they read or hear in news (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 6).

Media discourse has been studied and investigated in relation to other fields and approaches, including, Journalism, Sociology, Linguistics and Semiotics. Thus, researchers have been interested in studying and tackling media discourse from various linguistic approaches, including the sociolinguistic approach, the conversation analytical approach, the systemic functional linguistic approach, the pragmatic/stylistic approach, the diachronic approach, and most prominently, the critical approach (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 7 – 11).

From this standpoint, media discourse has been the interest of researchers and scholars of different fields. As a multidisciplinary overlapping field, Talbot (2007) views media discourse as "the subject of scrutiny in linguistics - particularly conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, ethnography of communication, linguistic anthropology, pragmatic and sociolinguistics - and also in cultural geography, psychology, sociology and tourism studies" (p.3).

According to Van Dijk (1988), media discourse involves a plenty of lexical choices that are used in relevance to the topic being discussed. He also affirms that certain use of lexical content implies certain suggestions, or presupposed information that might be inferred by the listeners/readers for full comprehension (p. 69).

Moreover, Van Dijk (1988) describes the news as a 'public discourse' in the sense that mass-mediated discourse readers are large groups of people sharing similar ideological allegiance. In other words, shared knowledge, views, and norms must be presupposed for news to be comprehensible and intelligible (p. 74).

He further emphasizes the description of media discourse as 'impersonal.' That is, although they are mostly written by a single journalist or reporter, they are produced by institutionalized organizations. Thus, they do not reflect personal or private views and beliefs. Also, the lexical choice of news discourse is determined by the topics under discussion. For example, political news reports involve political words and expressions that are not commonly used in sports or art news reports (p. 75).

1.7. News Language and Pragmatics

According to van Dijk (1988), the term 'discourse' is the result of the production of overt systematic description of units of language, which is done by discourse analysis (p. 24).

The description of units of language is done using various linguistic approaches including pragmatics. Using and analysing speech acts, specifically, found in discourses has shown the need for a pragmatic component of language description. That is to say, it is not describing merely the structure and meaning of verbal utterances, but rather, describing the social acts accomplished by using linguistic utterances – which are Speech Acts (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 26).

Accordingly, studying and investigating the language used in media, specifically, news language, in terms of speech acts contributes to the study of language, particularly, pragmatics.

2. Data Analysis and Discussion

2.1. The Analysis of the English Data

This section provides an example of the pragmatic analysis of an English article published by USA TODAY.

China admits 'shortcomings' in response to coronavirus; WHO denies pandemic. Death toll nears 500

The above is the headline of the article in which three assertive speech acts are used, as in 'China admits . . . coronavirus,' 'WHO denies pandemic,' and Death toll nears 500.' The writer explicitly asserts and states what both China and WHO affirm or claim – the shortcomings on the one hand and the pandemic denial on the other hand. Such speech acts are powerful in drawing the readers' attention and perception of the discussed topic, affecting and altering their views.

Chinese health officials acknowledged "shortcomings and difficulties" in their initial response to a fast-spreading new virus as the death toll soared to nearly 500 Tuesday. The powerful Standing

Committee of the Politburo issued a statement saying officials who had failed in their duties would face discipline.

Here, the writer uses an assertive speech act to inform the readers about the Chinses health officials acknowledgment of the shortcoming facing them as dealing with Covid-19. In addition, an indirect directive speech act is used to advise officials to fulfill their duties, as in 'The powerful . . . face discipline.'

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned that failing to halt the outbreak could erode social stability in the nation of more than 1.4 billion people.

According to Searle (1975), the verb 'warn' falls within two categories of speech acts: assertive and directives. It is an assertive speech act used merely to inform, as in the above example. The Chinese President clearly informs what not stopping the outbreak would cause – which is eroding social stability. However, it is a directive speech act when used to suggest or advise. (p. 369).

"The outbreak is a major test of China's system and capacity for governance," Xi said, according to state media.

The above is a quotation in which the Chinese president is stating that the virus outbreak is a significant challenge to China's power and ability, which is an assertive speech act by which the writer is informing the audience of what President Xi affirms.

More than 20,000 cases of the virus have been confirmed around the world, fewer than 300 of them outside mainland China. Eleven of them are in the U.S.

Negatively, both 'More than . . . confirmed around the world' and 'Elven of them are in the U.S.' are assertive speech acts by which the writer focuses on informing the readers of the number of cases spreading.

The death toll was at 492, all in mainland China except for one in Hong Kong and one in the Philippines. More than 2,000 hospital workers in Hong Kong went on strike for a second day Tuesday to demand that the border with mainland China be closed in response to the outbreak.

Two assertive speech acts are detected in the above statements. The writer uses them to inform the audience about the number of people who died as well as the number of workers who protest, as in 'The death toll was at 492,' and 'More than . . . went on strike . . . to the outbreak.'

The total number of cases worldwide stands at 23,892. Based on the latest figures, the coronavirus fatality rate is 2.1%, a figure that has been holding steady throughout the epidemic. Overall, that compares with a fatality rate of 9.6% for SARS.

All of the above-stated utterances are examples of assertive speech acts, as in 'The total number of cases worldwide stands at 23,892,' 'coronavirus fatality rate is 2.1%,' and 'that compare with . . . for SARA.' The writer primarily and directly informs the reader about the number of cases spreading globally along with the virus' fatality rate.

The virus has had the harshest impact among the elderly and those with other health problems. Jiao Yahui, a National Health Commission official in China, said more than 80% of those who have died were older than 60, and more than 75% had an underlying disease.

The above statements merely inform the audience of the virus' impact on people, specifically older adults, along with stating what a National Health Commission official said. Thus, the two sentences are examples of assertive speech acts.

Sylvie Birand, director for global infections hazard preparedness at the World Health Organization, said it was "very early" in the outbreak. She said it remained mostly contained in China.

Here, Sylvie Birand states and describes her views regarding the outbreak by saying 'it was very early' and 'it remained mostly contained in China,' which are two assertive speech acts.

"Currently we are not in a pandemic," Birand said. "We are at a phase where we have an epidemic of coronavirus with multiple foci and we try to extinguish each of these foci."

Continually, Birand remarks and comments on the 'epidemic' as she refers to it using different types of speech acts. Two assertive speech acts are used as in 'Currently we are . . . a pandemic,' and 'We are at . . . foci.' Additionally, she commits herself to future action by saying, 'we try to extinguish each of these foci,' which is a commissive speech act.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday that it does not recommend face masks to help prevent the virus, saying it is not spreading in communities in the U.S. Rather, the CDC urged precautions common for combating the flu, such as washing hands often and avoiding contact with people who are sick.

The above statements 'it does not recommend face masks,' and 'urged precautions common for combating the flu . . . are sick' are indirect directive speech acts. Such utterances implicitly instruct people on how to act and what to do facing this virus.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, on Tuesday reiterated his call to all countries not to impose restrictions that" unnecessarily interfere" with international travel and trade.

Ghebreyesus' call 'not to impose restrictions' is a direct directive speech act by which Ghebreyesus overtly orders all countries to follow his instruction and not affect the flow of travel and trade internationally.

"Such restrictions can have the effect of increasing fear and stigma, with little public health benefit," Tedros said. "Where such measures have been implemented, we urge that they are short in duration, proportionate to the public health risks, and are reconsidered regularly as the situation evolves."

In the above text, Tedros uses an assertive speech act to comment on the restrictions imposed by saying 'Such restrictions . . . benefit.' He further uses two directive speech acts that suggest applying them for a short period

of time, as in 'we urge that they are short in duration' as well as reconsidering them regularly.

On Friday, the Trump administration declared the coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency in the United States. U.S. citizens who have been in China's Hubei province and are returning to the U.S. will undergo health screenings and be monitored during mandatory quarantines of up to 14 days, officials said.

The writer uses an assertive speech act to cite Trump's declaration for coronavirus 'a public health emergency' to update and inform the readers about the latest Covid-19-related resolutions. Moreover, mentioning that certain citizens 'will undergo health screening and be monitored . . . 14 days' is a directive speech act pointing out the instructions returners will undergo when going back to the U.S.

The U.S. also announced a suspension of entry into the United States of foreign nationals who pose a risk for the transmission of the virus. And multiple airlines have halted or curtailed China flights.

Similarly, the writer uses assertive speech acts to inform and enlighten the readers with more details about the U.S. latest resolutions, as in 'The U.S. also announced . . . the virus,' and 'multiple airlines have halted . . . flights.'

France, which has six confirmed cases of the virus and has evacuated hundreds of people citizens on two flights, on Tuesday joined Britain in warning against any non-essential travel to China and suggesting that all its citizens in China leave while the coronavirus is still spreading.

Finally, an indirect directive speech act is used to mention France's suggestion to its citizens regarding travelling to China and directing its citizens to leave China, as in 'France . . . joined Britain in warning . . . still spreading.'

2.2. The Analysis of the Arabic Data

This section presents an example of the pragmatic analysis of an Arabic article published by Almada Newspaper.

الحكومة تطلق مبالغ الصحة والمحافظات لمكافحة كورونا

The above is the headline of the article. The writer uses an assertive speech act to inform and enlighten the readers about the content of the presented article, which is recent governmental Covid-19-related actions.

وجه مجلس الوزراء امس الثلاثاء، وزارة المالية بإطلاق المبالغ اللازمة لوزارة الصحة والمحافظات لمكافحة فيروس كورونا، الذي سجلت حالات إصابة به في محافظتي النجف وكركوك.

To start with, the writer exploits a directive speech act to refer to the Council of Ministers' response to the spreading of Covid-19. The Council of Ministers 'directed' the Ministry of Finance to fund the Ministry of Health and provinces to stop the spreading of Covid-19.

ناقش مجلس الوزراء في جلسته الاعتيادية التي عقدت امس برئاسة عادل عبد المهدي، الاجراءات المتخذة لمواجهة خطر فيروس كورونا في عموم البلاد.

An assertive speech act is used in the above statement, as in " ناقش البلاد . . . مجلس". The writer aims to inform and update the readers about the latest governmental decisions regarding Covid-19.

واستمع مجلس الوزراء لشرح تفصيلي قدمه وزير الصحة والبيئة جعفر صادق علاوي عن الواقع الصحي في البلاد واجراءات الوزارة وخلية الازمة التي شكلت بموجب الامر الديواني رقم ٥٥، وما تم انجازه خلال الايام الاخيرة الماضية من اجراءات عملية وحملات توعية، وعن احتياجات الوزارة والفرق الصحية.

Continually, the writer uses an assertive speech act to clarify and give the readers more details about the governmental resolutions concerning Covid-19, as in "استمع مجلس الوزراء . . . الفرق الصحية".

وأكد مجلس الوزراء، بحسب بيان نقلته (المدى)، على "ايلاء موضوع مكافحة انتشار فايروس كورونا أهمية قصوى واعلى درجات الاهتمام"، كما اعرب عن دعمه لعمل خلية الازمة ومتابعتها للتطورات الصحية أولا باول، "مشيرا الى ضرورة استمرار التعاون والتنسيق مع دول الجوار ومنظمة الصحة العالمية."

An assertive speech act is used to cite what the Council of Ministers affirmed regarding the crisis of Covid-19 spreading in different regions of the country as in "أكد مجلس الوزراء . . اعلى درجات الاهتمام", and " . . اعرب عن دعمه منظمة الصحة العالمية".

وأعرب مجلس الوزراء عن تقديره لـ"جهود وسائل الاعلام وحملات التوعية التي تطلقها لمواجهة هذا الخطر، وأهاب بالمواطنين الالتزام بالتعليمات والارشادات التي تصدرها الجهات الصحية المسؤولة".

Lastly, the writer ends the article with two different speech acts. The first is an expressive speech act by which the writer denotes that the Council of Ministers thanked and appreciated the media's efforts in carrying out awareness campaigns on facing Covid-19. The second is a directive speech act by which the Council of Ministers called on people to abide by the instructions and guidelines issued by health authorities.

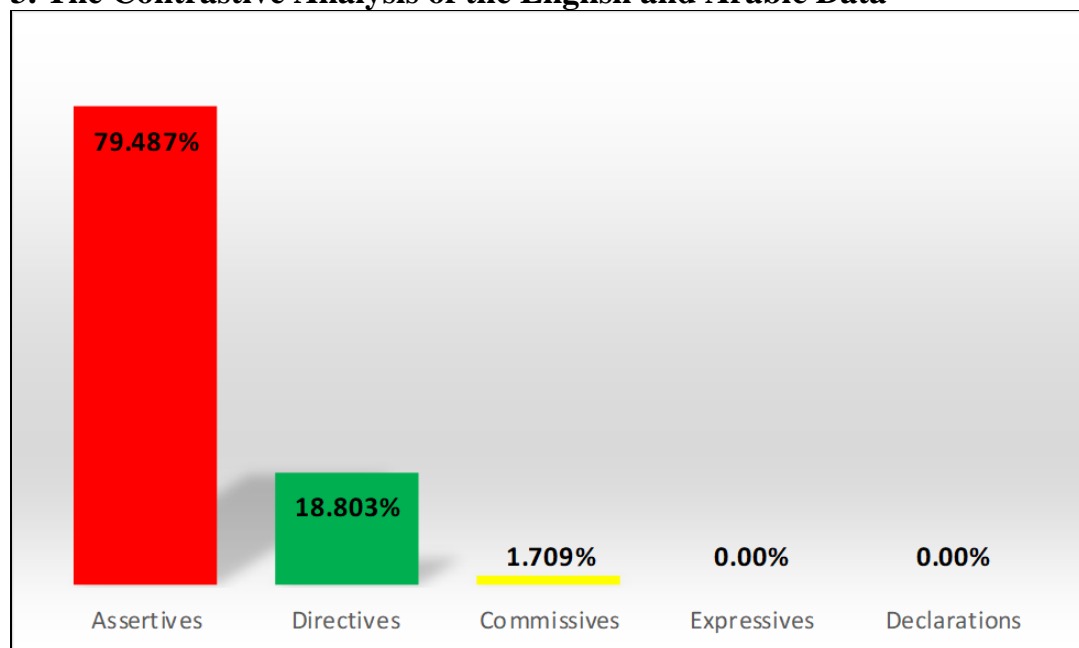## 3. The Contrastive Analysis of the English and Arabic Data

Figure 3.1 *The Frequencies of Speech Acts Categories in the English Data*

According to Figure 3.1, assertive speech acts are the most frequently used category in the English data with 93 instances (79.487%). It used to state and inform the readers about what the writer believes is the case. Next in frequency is directive speech acts with 22 instances (18.803%), which is used both explicitly and implicitly to get the hearer/reader to do something. The third frequently used category is commissive speech acts with 2 instances (1.709%) detected. Commissive speech acts are used when the speaker/writer commits himself/herself to a future action. As for expressive and declaration speech acts, no instances are detected throughout the five articles discussed earlier.
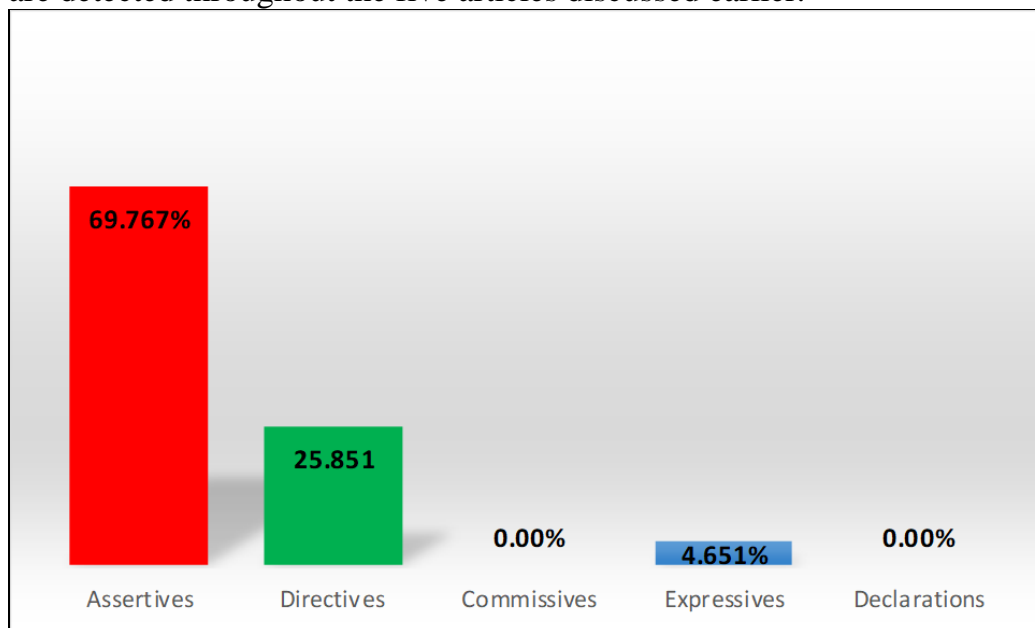

Figure 3.2 *The Frequencies of Speech Acts Categories in the Arabic Data*

According to Figure 3.2, the most frequently used category of speech acts is Assertives with 30 instances detected (69.77%) followed by Directives with 11 instances (25.58%). Whereas assertive speech acts are exploited to enlighten and provide information to the readers, directive speech acts are exploited by the speaker/writer to get the readers to do something. The third most frequently used category of speech is expressive speech acts with 2 instances only (4.65%). However, no instances of Commissives or Decalrations are found throughout the five articles discussed earlier.

The figure below displays the differences of the five categories of speech acts found in the English and Arabic data. As demonstrated, the assertive speech acts in the English data are more frequently used than in the Arabic data by 9.72%. Conversely, the directive speech acts are more frequently used than in Arabic data than in the English data by 6.78%. As for the commossive speech acts, they are only found in the Arabic data with 1.71%. Likewise, the expressive speech acts are only found in the English data. Accordingly, the only two shared and the most frequently used categories in the two types of data are Assertives and Directives.
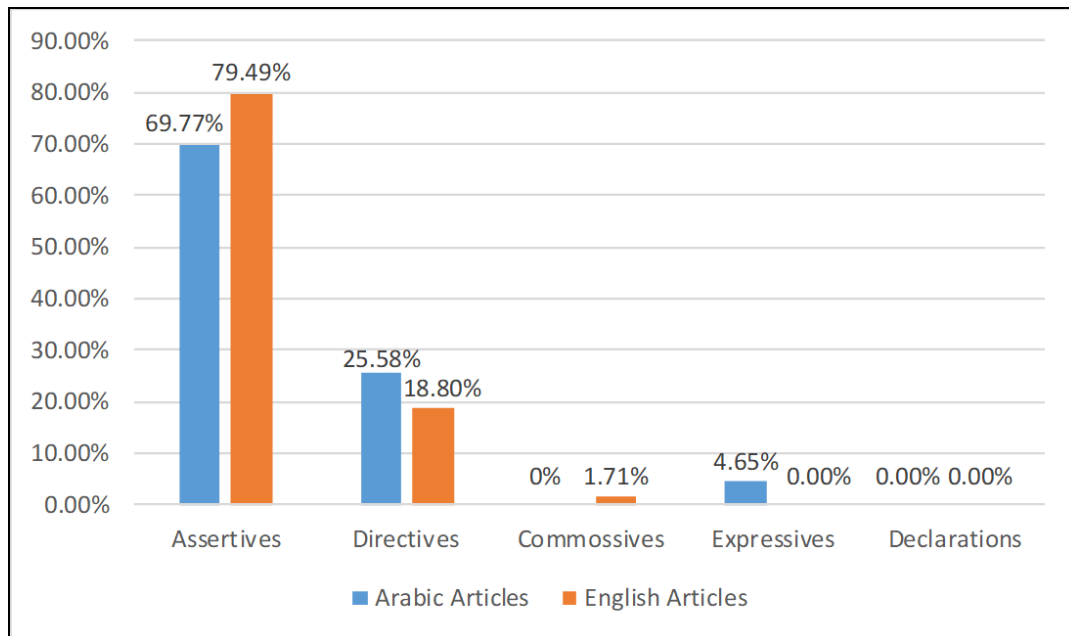
Figure 3.3 *The Difference Between the Frequencies of Speech Acts Categories in the English and Arabic Data*

4. Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative analyses presented above reveal that both English and Arabic data use different types of speech acts in delivering Covid-19 related news. the analysis of this study reveals the following: 1. Speech acts are more frequently used in the English data in comparison to the Arabic data. The quantitative analysis of this study also reveals that assertive speech acts are the most frequently used category of speech acts, in the two types of data – English and Arabic. This is due to the type of texts analysed, as informative texts are expected to have assertive speech acts more than any other category of speech acts, as the main aim of them is to inform and educate the readers. The assertive speech acts have higher percentage in the English articles in comparison to the Arabic articles. As for the Arabic data, directive speech acts are more frequently used in comparison to the English data. Nonetheless, assertive and directive speech acts are the only two mutual categories of speech acts found in the two types of data. That is to say, commissive speech acts are only used in the English articles, and expressive speech acts are only used in the Arabic articles. As the texts analysed are informative texts, no instances of Declarations are detected in the two types of data.

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