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Abstract

The present study is limited to ten common moral topics from the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) in Arabic and the New Testament in English. This limitation is necessary owing to the large number of moral topics that religions deal with. These topics have been selected with a view to achieving the closest possible correspondence between the texts of the two languages studied.

The treatment of the subject in this study has been conducted on the basis of four hypotheses: (1) Speech act theory can be applied to moral religious texts, (2) Effective moral teaching requires the use of different types of speech acts, (3) Prophet Muhammad's Traditions and the New Testament must have shown such uses, (4) The speech acts utilized in both texts show correspondence in their types.

The model of analysis adopted for this study is the rules set by Searle (1969: 54 ff.) for certain types of illocutionary acts and the felicity conditions from which these rules are extracted.

To investigate the validity of these hypotheses, fifteen Prophetic Traditions in Arabic and fifteen New Testament verses in English have been examined.

The analysis of the texts is supported by a statistical analysis constructed to find out the frequency of each type of speech act in each moral teaching in both texts. The use of "a rank-difference correlation" theory proves that any increase in types and frequencies of speech acts in Arabic texts are accompanied by an increase in types and frequencies of speech acts in English texts. This fact justifies the limited number of traditions and verses examined in this study.

Then, these frequencies have been converted into percentages by which the researcher has made a comparison that contains the type of each speech act and its frequency and the percentage it represents in both texts.

The findings of this study have proved the validity of all hypotheses of the research. They have revealed the applicability of speech act theory to religious language; they have shown the correspondence between the speech act types in both texts; different types of speech acts have been found and; the Prophetic Traditions and the New Testament have shown the uses of these types.