

Deontic Modality Meanings of Imperative Sentences in Selected Quranic Verses

Asst. Prof. Mahdi Mohsin Mohammed
College of Education for Human Sciences
University of Basrah

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Abstract :

The purpose of this paper is to show that the imperative sentences in the selected Quranic verses do have the same modal force of English deontic modal sentences. It is argued, here, that the imperative sentences in the selected verses contribute to express similar illocutionary forces to that of the English deontic modal sentences. Results have shown that the imperative sentences are used to express various illocutionary forces other than the deontic obligative one. It is found that they express a range of 20 meanings like; advice, counseling and supplication...etc. So, the paper concluded that the imperative sentences in the Arabic language in general and in the Holy Quran in particular are like the English deontic modal sentences as they indicate the illocutionary force of obligation. Like English imperatives, the imperatives of the Holy Qura'n have a wide range of non-deontic meanings. However, they don't express the same meanings exactly.

1. Introduction

The study of modality hasn't received significant attention in Arabic linguistics. It is still an under researched area of investigation in Arabic. Some Arab researchers described the under exploration state of modality in Arabic as "an almost untrodden area of investigation" Al-Karooni (1996:76) and "unsystematic and reductionist" Kahlaoui

(2015:215). The somehow little literature available was able, to some extent, to show that the scope of modality in Arabic is as broad as its English counterpart. Irrespective of the fact that Arabic language doesn't have modal verbs corresponding to the English modals, it is capable of expressing modal meanings broadly through a wide range of expressions that signal modality. Because of the vast variety of expressions and particles signaling modality, Arabic is said to be a "highly modalizing language".

Previous studies accounted for a variety of markers signaling epistemic and deontic modality in Arabic. However, these studies neglected considering the imperative as having a deontic force. This negligence, we believe, could be a result of the Arab grammarians' classification of the imperative into real and unreal. It is believed that real imperative only expresses deontic meaning because Arab grammarians place meanings of permissibility and advisability under unreal imperative. Irrespective of placing these meanings under unreal imperative, we believe that the imperative in Arabic is capable of signaling the deontic meanings of permission and advice.

In this study, we try to explore the deontic and non-deontic meanings expressed by imperative sentences in some selected Qura'nic verses.

2. Hypothesis

The present paper hypothesizes that the imperative sentences in the verses of the Holy Qura'n express the deontic meanings of obligation and permission in the same way as they are expressed in English imperative sentences. However, a vast variety of meanings beyond obligation and permission are also conveyed in the imperative in English as well as Arabic. In the case of the Qura'nic verses, it is not easy sometimes to tell for sure what the intended meaning of the imperative is because of the overlap that might occur between some meanings. This conflict of meanings is resolved from the context.

3. The importance of the study

Plenty of studies addressed numerous linguistic and semantic phenomena in the Holy Qura'n. However, we can hardly find a study that accounts for deontic modality meanings of the imperative sentences in this divine book. The rarity of such a study elevates the importance of our study. In addition, it takes its importance from the fact that it brings light to the Qura'nic imperative sentences which happen to have overt obligative force as well as some other covert meanings. A wide range of illocutionary forces are aesthetically conveyed through the structure of the imperative.

4. The questions of the study

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What deontic meanings do Qura'nic imperative sentences convey?
2. How deontically different from or similar to English deontic sentences are the Qura'nic imperative sentences?
3. What other meanings beyond deontic ones do Qura'nic imperative sentences convey?

5. Deontic Modality

The term "deontic modality" has undergone heated debates among linguists who tried to formulate a definition that best describes it. Traditionally, it is linked to the notions of "permission" and "obligation" and some other related notions such as "interdiction", "advice",...etc (Nuyts & Auwera, 2011:37). Murphy & Koskela (2010:105) also adopt a traditionalist view as they believe that deontic modality is a type of modality which covers obligation and permission. Such a definition implicates a narrow capturing of expressions as it fails to account for expressions like (1) below:

- 1) a. We **cannot** fire him just like that; he's been our best employee for years.
- b. This initiative by the government is highly **deplorable**.
- c. We **applaud** this local community initiative.

The above definition's failure to account for expressions like the ones in (1) above urged linguists like Palmer (2001:9) to adopt a definition that asserts that obligation and permission emanate from an external source. For Palmer (2001:10) Deontic

modality stems from some kind of external authority such as rules or the law, typically and frequently the authority is the actual speaker, who gives permission to, or lays an obligation on, the addressee. (Nuyts & Auwera, 2011:37) adopt a similar yet not identical view to Palmer's. They think of deontic modality as an indication of the degree of moral desirability of the state of affairs expressed in the utterance. In general terms, the concept of "morality" referred to in this definition should be thought of to include "societal norms" as well as personal "ethical" criteria of the person responsible for the deontic assessment. The examples in (1) above are straightforward illustrations of the concept of morality. This definition also entails the involvement of a gradual scale going from absolute moral necessity via degrees of desirability to moral acceptability. The view of the involvement of such a gradual scale is understood to extend to the degrees of obligation too.

Palmer (2001:89) states that the most common types of deontic modality are the "directives", where we try to get others do things. The deontic permissive and obligative charge can be interpreted in terms of what is deontically possible and deontically necessary.

- 2) a. You may/can go now. (deontic possibility/permission)
- b. You must go now. (deontic necessity)

6. Deontic modality Versus Other Modality Types

Deontic modality, which is concerned with the logic of obligation and permission, contrasts with **Alethic** and **Epistemic** modality. Alethic modality and epistemic modality are closely related to each other, yet they are distinct. Alethic modality concerns itself with the necessary or contingent truth of propositions. In other words, it is concerned with the modes of truth (Nuyts & Auwera, 2011:52). Leibniz quoted in Lyons (1977:791) believes that the propositions involved in this type of modality are necessarily true in all logically possible worlds. This leads us to conclude that alethic modality is that type of modality which connotes the speaker's estimation of the logical

necessity or possibility of the proposition expressed by his utterance. Consider the example in (3) below:

3) Alfred is a bachelor; thus he must be unmarried.

In the above example, the speaker depends on the fact that all bachelors are unmarried, which is a true logical necessity.

Epistemic modality, however, is concerned with the logical structure of statements which assert or imply that propositions are known or believed (Crystal, 2008:197). Nuyts & Auwera's (2011:52) agree with Crystal as they describe epistemic modality as the state of a proposition in terms of knowledge and belief (i.e. ((modes of knowing").

Consider the example in (4) below:

4) The car must be ready.

In the above example the speaker depends on the knowledge that he gets either from an outside source or he himself gains it. The meaning is it is surely the case that the car is ready.

It is obvious from the above discussion that there are certain differences between alethic and epistemic necessity, on the one hand, and deontic necessity on the other hand. Alethic and epistemic necessity are concerned with the truth of the propositions; while deontic modality is concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents. When we oblige someone to perform or prohibit from getting a particular act performed, we are actually not describing the agent's present or future performance of that act. We are, in fact, expressing a proposition that is intended not to describe the act itself, but it is intended to describe the resulted state of affairs if the act is performed (Lyons, 1977:823).

The intrinsic connection between deontic modality and futurity is another difference between it and epistemic necessity. The truth value of the proposition in deontic modality is connected to some state of the world later than the one in which the obligation holds (Lyons, 1977:824).

7. Forms of Deontic Modality

Deontic modality is signaled by grammatical devices and lexical items so as to express a speaker's degree of commitment to the expressed proposition's obligation or permission. Through these various ways, speakers aim to influence and control others, and commit themselves to certain courses of action. If the obligations they express, the permissions they give, the promises they keep and so on are fulfilled, they may cause changes in their surroundings (Downing and Locke, 2006:385). Deontic modality meanings are expressed by the following:

7.1 Modal Verbs

According to Downing and Locke (2006:385-393) English modal verbs are used to express meanings of obligation, necessity, advisability, and possibility.

Deontic obligation is realized by the modal verb (*must*), in which case the modal can have the force of a direct command as the speaker has an institutional or some other authority over the addressee. Consider the example in (5) below:

5) You must submit your assignment next Monday. (Deontic obligation)

The force of the modal (*must*) in (5) suggests that the speaker has an authority over the addressee who can't escape the obligation at all. Consequently, the addressee finds himself/herself obliged to fulfill the obligation and that choosing not to fulfill it is not an option for it will result in a punishment.

Deontic necessity is also realized by the modal verb (*must*), in which case no human control is involved; hence no man's authority is involved, the meaning is that of intrinsic necessity, as in the example in (6) below:

6) Bears must hibernate if they are to survive winter. (Deontic necessity)

Deontic advisability is realized by the modals (*should and ought*). These two modals express an unbinding obligation that may be unfulfilled. Consider the examples in (7) below:

7) a. People should avoid eating high-carb foods.

b. You ought to cut saturated fats from your diet.

In the above examples, the speaker lacks the authority to impose an obligation over the addressees.

Deontic possibility is usually expressed by the use of the modal verbs (*may and can*), which convey the meaning of granting permission. Consider the examples in (8) below:

8) a. You can smoke in here.

b. You may go now.

In the above examples, the two modal verbs express deontic possibility in the sense of giving permission.

7.2 Lexical Modals

The two lexical modals combinations (*have to and Have got to*) are used to express the meanings of deontic obligation and deontic necessity (Downing and Locke, 2006: 320, 385). Consider the examples in (9) below:

9) a. You have to upload these files. (Deontic obligation)

b. There has to be a solution. (Deontic necessity)

c. You have got to upload these files. (Deontic obligation)

d. There has got to be a solution. (Deontic necessity)

In the above examples, the lexical modals express the meaning of obligation as in (9.a) and (9.c) where the speaker seems to have an authority over the addressee to the extent that he can drive him to do the intended action in the proposition. They are also capable of expressing the meaning of necessity, in which case the proposition is devoid of human control. It is a matter of intrinsic necessity imposed by the actual need for the fulfillment of the proposition.

7.3 Had better (the modal idiom)

The modal idiom (*had better*) expresses the deontic meaning of advisability only. Consider the example in (10) below:

10) You had better to re-arrange your priorities.

The fulfillment of the proposition in the above example is not guaranteed because the speaker does not have an authority over the addressee, he only advises the addressee to do what is better for him.

7.4 Lexical Verbs

A number of lexical verbs in the passive voice followed either by *to-infinitive* or *that-clause* are used to express the meanings of deontic *advising, expecting, permitting and requesting*. Consider the examples in (11) below:

- 11) a. You are advised to book your flight early.
- b. You are requested to stand behind the red line.
- c. You are supposed to stick to speed limit.
- d. You are allowed to open your books.
- e. It is suggested that you submit your assignments tomorrow.

7.5 Modal Adjectives

The Modal adjective *possible* is used to convey the meaning of deontic possibility. Consider the examples in (12) below:

- 12) a. It is possible for you to leave now.
- b. It is possible that you sign in today.

7.6 The Imperative

Palmer (2001: 98) indicates that the imperative is notionally closely associated with deontic modals. He adds that the imperative is a directive that usually portrays a command. As a matter of fact, it is the "strongest of directives" as it is issued by an authoritative person, which makes difficult for the addressee to reject or express compliance.

The illocutionary force of the deontic modality types is limited to the meanings of *obligation, necessity, permission and advice*. However, the imperatives have a wider range of illocutionary acts. Quirk et al (1985: 831-832) summarize these illocutionary acts as follows:

- 1) Order/command as in: *Jump!*

- 2) Request as in: *keep silence, please.*
- 3) Plea as in: *Help!*
- 4) Advice/Recommendation as in: *Take an aspirin for your headache.*
- 5) Warning as in: *Look out!*
- 6) Suggestion: *Let's go the movies!*
- 7) Instruction as in: *Check oil before you start the engine.*
- 8) Invitation as in: *Make yourself at home.*
- 9) Offer as in: *Have another piece of cake.*
- 10) Granting permission as in: *Serve yourself.*
- 11) Good wishes as in: *Have a nice day.*
- 12) Imprecation as in: *Go to hell!*
- 13) Incredulous rejection as in: *Oh, come now.*
- 14) Self-deliberation as in: *Let me see now.*
- 15) Prohibition as in: Don't touch!

It is concluded that both imperative sentences and modal verbs expressing deontic meanings share conveying meanings of *obligation, permission, and advice.* However, the imperatives do have a wider range of meanings that are not within the coverage area of modal verbs and other constructions expressing deontic modality. In addition, in imperative sentences, the issuer of the obligation or permission is always the speaker him/herself, but the case is not the same with sentences in deontic modality, where the issuer of the obligation or permission may be another person, law, institutional rules, morality and so on.

8. Imperative Mood in Arabic

Arab grammarians define the imperative as "an order issued by a superior to an inferior to perform an action" (Haroon, 1979:14). We notice that the rank of the issuer of the order should be higher than that of the addressee who is ordered to perform the intended action. The command is real as long as the issuer is superior in rank to the addressee. However, if the issuer's rank is inferior to the addressee, the imperative

should not be interpreted as a real one. In such case the imperative may refer to some meaning other than that of obligation.

The imperative in Arabic language has four realizations. Matloob and Baseer (1999:124) summarize these four realizations as follows:

1. Imperative verb as in Surat Al-Noor, verse 56: *"And perform Salat, and give Zakat, and obey the Messenger of Allah that you may receive mercy"* .
". وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ"
2. Present verb prefixed with the *Lam of the Imperative* as in Surat At-Talaq, verse 7:
". لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ "
3. Verbal noun of the imperative as in Surat Al-Ma'idah, verse 105: *" O you who believe! Take care of your own selves"* .
". يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ "
4. Infinitive replacing a deleted imperative verb as in Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 83: *"and be dutiful and do good to your parents"*
". وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا "

For the purpose of the study, our concentration will be directed to the imperative verb only. Thus, the other realizations of the imperative will be neglected.

9. Data Collection

The data of the study consists of (22) Qura'nic verses extracted from (15) chapters (Surahs). These Qura'nic verses were specifically chosen because each one of them represents a different imperative purpose. Figure (1) below summarizes the data of the study:

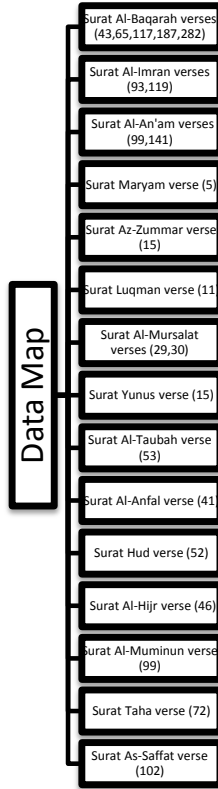


Figure (1) Data Map

10. Data Analysis and discussion

Arab rhetoricians affirm that the structure of imperative style in Arabic should not be taken as being obligative only, it should be thought of as being generative for it, sometimes, does not preserve the actual meaning but rather it depart to generate some other meanings. It follows then that the imperative has two significances; one is real and the other is unreal (metaphoric or rhetorical) that is understood from the context. The real meaning of the imperative involves the meaning of obligation as in Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 43: *"And perform As-Salat and give Zakat and bow down along with those who bow down to Allah"* "وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ". The

people being addressed by the commands here are obliged to perform the activities referred to. They can't refuse performing these activities for they will be prone to severe punishment in judgment day.

Beside their real obligative force, the Qura'nic verses in the imperative mood have conveyed a variety of illocutionary forces (meanings). Figure (2) below summarizes these meanings:

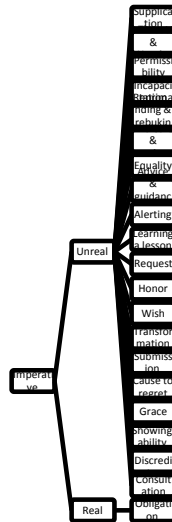


Figure (2) Meanings of the Imperative in the Qura'n

1. Supplication

The imperative might be semantically oriented to convey the meaning of supplication rather than that of obligation. This happens when the addressee has a higher rank than the speaker. As in verse 5, Surat Maryam "..... so give me from Yourself an heir" "فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا". The speaker here is the prophet Zechariah who is obviously of a lower rank than the addressee, Almighty Allah. So, as there is rank inequality, the imperative shouldn't be taken as real with obligative force.

2. Threat and warning

Giving the addressee the freedom to choose what to do is a sign of indifference on the part of the speaker which implies threat and warning. As in verse 15, Surat Az-Zummar "So worship what you like beside Him" "فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ". Almighty Allah is giving the disbelievers the freedom to worship what they like beside Him, however, the major meaning He is conveying is that of threat and warning which can be clearly seen at the closure of the verse ".....that will be a manifest loss" "ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ".

3. Permissibility

The imperative could provide the meaning of permissibility as the addressee is given the freedom to do or not to do certain activity. As in verse 187, Surat Al-Baqarah "...and eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread" "وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ". The purpose of the command in this verse is permissibility as Allah glory to Him permitted Muslims to eat and drink until the time they can distinguish between the white thread and the dark thread.

4. Incapacitation

When the speaker commands the addressees to perform certain activity that they are not likely or impossibly able to perform, it means that he is incapacitating them rather than obliging them to perform the required action. This meaning is reflected in many Qura'nic imperative sentences, as in verse 11, Surat Luqman "This is the creation of Allah. So, show Me that which those (whom you worship) beside Him have created" "هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ". Hence, the imperative in the verse has departed the meaning of obligation to that of incapacitating the disbelievers and show their incapability.

5. Reprimanding and rebuking

The imperative may also depart from its real obligative force to the rhetorical force of reprimanding and rebuking. The wrong doers are rebuked for their evil deeds and disobedience to believe in Allah. As in Surat Al-Mursalat verses 29 and 30: "

"أَمَّنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ يَدَيْنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَآكُتُبُوهُ". The people being addressed in this verse are obviously advised to (write the debt contract down) for their own interest as the written contract ensures preserving the lender's lawful right to collect his debt.

9. Alerting

The imperative verb may have an alerting meaning rather than obligative one. The addressees are alerted to take care of the thing they are being alerted of, as in Surat Al-Anfal, verse 41: " *And know that whatever of war-booty you may gain, verily one-fifth of it is assigned to Allah...*" "وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ" .

10. Learning a lesson

The imperative in some Qura'nic verses is used in the sense of urging people to learn a lesson of the thing they are referred to, as in Surat Al-An'am, verse 99: " *Look at their fruits when they begin to bear, and the ripeness thereof.....*" "انظُرُوا إِلَىٰ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ"

11. Request

Requesting in Arabic language extends between people of equal status like peers and co-workers. However, it might be extended from a person of a higher status to others whose status is lower, when he chooses to behave modestly. The imperative, in similar contexts, does have a tendency to convey the meaning of request, as in Surat Hud, verse 52: " *And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him.....*"

"وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ". Verily, though prophet Hud's status is higher than that of his fellow people, he used the imperative modestly to request them ask for Allah's forgiveness.

12. Honoring

The imperative verb in Arabic may refer to (honoring) the addressee if the issuer is of a higher rank than the addressee, as in Surat Al-Hijr, verse 46: " *Enter therein (paradise) in peace and security*". "ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ"

13. Wishing

The imperative deflects from its real obligative force to the meaning of (wish) especially when this wish is impossible to be fulfilled, as in Surat Al-Mu'minin, verse 99: " *Until, when death comes to one of them, he says: My Lord! Send me back* ", " حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ". Undoubtedly, the rhetorical significance of the imperative verb (send) is unreal as the characteristic features of real imperative are not found here. The imperative is issued from a lower rank towards a higher one; the addressee is not obliged to fulfill what he is asked to. So, the meaning of the imperative verb here is to be interpreted as a meaning of (wish) that is unlikely or impossibly achieved.

14. Transformation

Transformation happens when the addressee finds himself changed unwillingly to what he was ordered to be. In such context the imperative verb refers to the process of transforming the addressees to what they were ordered to be, as in Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 65: " *We said to them: Be you monkeys, despised and rejected* " فَكُنَّا " *لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ* .

15. Submission

The meaning of submission takes place when the issuer of the imperative verb shows full surrender, as in Surat Taha, verse 72: " *So decree whatever you desire to decree* " فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ .

16. Cause to regret

The imperative verb is used to cause regret on the part of the addressee, as in Surat Al-Imran, verse 119: " *Say: Perish in your rage* ". قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ .

17. Grace

The imperative is used to reflect the grace granted by the commander to the commanded, as in Surat Al-An'am, verse 141: " *Eat of their fruit when they ripen* " كُلُوا " *مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ* .

18. Showing ability

The imperative is used also to show the Creator's ability to create things that never existed before, as in Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 117: *"When He decrees a matter, He only says: Be! and it is"* **وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ** *"Be! and it is"*.

19. Discrediting

The imperative verb might be used to discredit the addressees, as in Surat Al-Imran, verse 93: *"Say: Bring here the Torah and recite it, if you are truthful"* **قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالتَّوْرَةِ** *"Say: Bring here the Torah and recite it, if you are truthful"* **قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالتَّوْرَةِ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ**.

20. Consultation

The imperative verb may be used to express the meaning of consultation, where the speaker uses the imperative to ask for consultation, as in Surat As-Saffat, verse 102: *"...O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you. So look what you think"* **يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ**.

11. Conclusions

The analysis of the selected Qura'nic verses has revealed that the imperative in the language of the Holy Qur'an is a directive whose real non-rhetorical reference mainly reflects the deontic meaning of obligation. The deontic meanings of permission and advice are also signaled in the verses. The deontic nature of the Qura'nic imperative sentences corresponds to the deontic nature of English directive statements and imperatives.

Qura'nic imperative sentences quite often depart the deontic obligative and permissive meanings to reflect a very wide range of meanings. Some of these meanings are similar to the meanings of the English imperatives like requesting and warning. Meanings of supplication, reprimanding and rebuking, ridicule and mockery, equality, alerting, learning a lesson, honoring, wishing, transformation, submission, cause of regret, grace, showing ability, discrediting and consultation prevail in the Qura'nic imperative sentences. However, English imperatives are incapable of expressing such meanings. This leads us to conclude that the Qura'nic imperatives are very dynamic with great generative capability.

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معاني الصيغة الوجودية في جمل الأمر في آيات قرآنية مختارة

الملخص:

إن الغرض من هذا البحث هو تبيان كيف أن جمل الأمر في مختارات من الآيات القرآنية لها نفس القوة الشكلية للجمل الأنجليزية ذات الصيغة الوجودية. ناقشنا هنا كيف أن جمل الأمر في الآيات المختارة تسهم في تحقيق ما يقابل الصيغة الوجودية في الجمل الأنجليزية. بينت النتائج بأن استخدام جمل الأمر جاء ليؤدي أغراض الإلزام والوجوب على وجه الإستعلاء. لذلك فقد استنتجت الدراسة بأن جمل الأمر في اللغة العربية على وجه العموم وفي آيات القرآن الكريم على وجه الخصوص تعبر عن معنى الوجوب كما في الجمل الأنجليزية إلا إن هناك إختلاف في عدم وقوع معنى الرخصة ضمن حدود الصيغة الوجودية في اللغة العربية. كما أن هناك تشابه آخر فيما يخص سعة المعاني غير ذات الصيغة الوجودية لجمل الأمر في اللغتين العربية والأنجليزية ومع ذلك فليس هناك تشابه في جميع المعاني التي تعبر عنها جمل الأمر.