



ISSN: 2663-8118 (Online) | ISSN: 2074-9554 (Print)

Journal of Al-Frahedis Arts

Article Available Online: Iraqi Scientific Academic Journals, Open Journals System

Tikrit University

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College of Arts

Journal of Al-Frahedis Arts

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Keywords:

- Imperative Sentences
- English Language
- Arabic Language

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted: 09/02/2021

Accepted: 03/03/2021

Published: 04/04/2021

Tikrit University / College of Arts / Journal of Al-Frahedis Arts

The Imperative Sentences in English and Arabic

ABSTRACT

Various imperative sentences of English and Arabic are put under discussion and analysis according to their occurrence in different situations. Form, structure and semantics of the Arabic imperative are compared with their closest English counterparts. English and Arabic imperatives are equally exposed and studied with their shades of meaning. Graded levels of command which extend from mild request to the strong tone of order are clearly shown and carefully examined. The current study exhibits the similarities and differences between English and Arabic in regard to imperatives. The differences are certainly more difficult to learn than the similarities; but partial similarities are considered most difficult for learners of English.

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1. Introduction:

The grammatical subject of the present research is treated contrastively between English and Arabic in an important area of grammar. Significant writings and researches in regard to subject "imperative" denote its necessity in daily communication. This topic indeed has been discussed and explained by so many writers of grammar and researchers whether in English or Arabic.

This paper is intended to uncover the differences and the similarities between English and Arabic regarding the subject of the study 'imperative'. It is expected that the differences are great between the two languages since they belong to different origins.

Following the abstract, the introduction is dealt with which implies the subtitles: the problem, aims to be realized, procedures adopted in the study, the value of the study and scope of the study. The introduction and its subtitles represent the first section of the research. The second section includes the following headings: types of sentences which imply declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, imperative sentences and exclamatory sentences. Definition of the term 'imperative' comes next followed by form and uses of the imperative verb. Section (3) has the following headings: command in linguistics, definitions of command, forms, the meaning of command and tenses indicated by command. Conclusions and outcomes reached at the topic are included in the final part of the research. Points of similarities and differences are totally offered.

It is a due duty to express gratitude and thanks to Dr. Hussain Kh. Salih who has helped in supplying this research with proper material on the Arabic section. The material given by him is written in Arabic. Proper parts of it are translated into English so as to suit the research purposes.

1. 1. Problem:

Learners of English in the Arab homeland in general and in Iraq in particular encounter some difficulties of how to form a sentence including the imperative verb, besides they make errors in using the imperative constructions, especially with sentences including a third person subject, e.g.

1. Somebody give me the pen
2. Those in the classroom clap for her

The learners may not realize how the incident of command is taking place in the above sentences.

The difference between English and Arabic seems to be great since they don't share the same linguistic history. Therefore, the structure of English differs from that of Arabic totally and this brings about difficulty for the learners of English. This great difference between English and Arabic makes English hard to learn by the learners of English, of course.

1. 2. Aims to Be Realized:

The study aims at:

1. Exposing the learners of English in particular and the readers in general to total information about command in English and Arabic. It is a theoretical presentation which can be useful practically.
2. Finding out the similarities and differences related to English and Arabic represents an important objective behind writing the research. The differences are anticipated to be wide between the two languages.
3. Above all reaching conclusions and outcomes on the subject are listed at the end of the paper. This part includes the points of similarities and differences concerning the imperative.

1. 3. Procedures Adopted in This Study:

Procedures to be adopted in this study include the following steps:

1. The material taken from the available literature of grammar relative to both English and Arabic is set under discussion and analysis besides necessary explanations and comments are offered.
2. Comparing the Arabic imperative sentences with their English closest counterparts in regard to form, structure and semantics is achieved.
3. Conclusions are listed in the final part of the research via which the similarities and differences are clearly shown. The research is really an attempt to answer the question: How far does Arabic differ or resemble the linguistic behavior of English concerning the subject under study?

1. 4. Value of The Study:

From the researchers' perspective, this work can be considered of great value to the learners of English and the teachers who are specialized in English as well. This research is supposed to meet the learners' linguistic needs in this area of grammar. Teachers of English can have enough information about this subject. After reading this paper fully, they could develop a proper method of teaching in their career. This study can be useful to the translators in their work since it contains comparison between English and Arabic in respect to the imperative mode. Understanding the content of this research helps the learners of English improve their skills in speech and writing.

This research includes many language aspects that ensure the improvement of these two implant skills.

1. 5. Scope of The Study:

The present research is confined to the imperative sentences in English and Arabic. The material of both languages is taken from the books of grammar in addition to some interviews which are organized with an instructor who is specialized in Arabic grammar.

The research adopts a comparison between the two languages in regard to the imperative sentences only. In doing so, similarities and differences are amply detected. All the grammatical points in this research are within the scope of the very topic of imperative.

2. Types of Sentences:

Four key types of sentences are distinguished in English:

2. 1. Declarative Sentences:

As Greenbaum and Nelson (2009: 124) assure that these sentences are statements used basically to give information, e.g.

3. She has made great efforts to get the job.

2. 2. Interrogative Sentences:

These sentences are the same as questions which are basically used to ask for information, e.g.

4. what do you do for a living?

Two kinds of questions are encountered in English:

A. Yes / No Questions:

This type of questions are featured by placing the operator before the subject, e.g.,

5. Is she in the living room?

Since the answer is either "yes" or "no", they are named as "yes" or "no" questions. Sometimes such questions are answered by using words, such as: surely, certainly, maybe or what do you think? (Ibid: 145).

B. Wh-Questions:

They start with a question word or even with a phrase set before the question. Notice the examples below:

6. What are you doing now?

7. I don't know who won the prize?

Questions with question words are used to show that a piece of information is missing which the listener is required to supply (Ibid: 125). Other types of questions are available in the English language too.

C. Declarative Sentences:

These are questions in the statement word order. Such questions require rising intonation when they are uttered like.

8. You speak English?

D. Alternative Questions:

In such questions, two or more choices are given to the listener who is expected to answer with one choice like:

9. How do you like tea (strong or weak?) (Ibid: 126)

E. Tail Questions:

Tail questions are made up of an auxiliary (operator) and a pronoun subject that are available in the main sentence. If the sentence is positive, the tail question is negative and vice versa. Indeed, tail questions are usually

attached to the declarative sentences. The listener is required to show agreement with the speaker, e.g.

10. You haven't studied English, have you?

The tail of the tail question with "will you" or "won't you" is usually attached to imperative sentences.

11. Manage a piece of cake, won't you?

12. Don't touch the wire, will you?

F. Rhetorical Questions:

Questions of this type don't anticipate an answer because they carry influential statements. These questions are similar to the yes-no questions or wh-questions, see below:

13. Is there anything comforting than a sauna? ("surely there isn't...").

14. Who could support such a claim? ("surely no one could...").

2. 3. Exclamatory Sentences:

Exclamatory sentences are similar to exclamations which are basically used to express strong emotions and feelings like:

15. How beautiful she is!

16. What a great parade it is!

2. 4. Imperative Sentences:

These sentences are similar to commands which are mainly used to request someone to do something immediately, e.g.

17. Be seated.

18. Keep quiet.

This last type mentioned above is the main concern in this study.

2. 4. 1. Definitions:

Several definitions of imperative (sentences) are found in the literature of grammar. The imperative verb is that verb which is in the base form with no subject. The imperative sentence is used to give order, request, advice, suggestion, encouragement and entreat in English. Another definition of the imperative verb is that verb which is in the infinitive form or simple form of it. It is the uninflected simple present form of the verb. As for the imperative sentences, they are imperative statements which give someone an order to do or not to do something. Sometimes they are used to express requests for the listeners.

19. Do it perfectly.

20. Don't stand in front of the moving cars. (Eckersley and Eckersley, 1963: 255).

Hartmann and Stork (1972:41) give their own definition claiming that they are utterances of commands used to request doing an action or forbid doing something.

It is reasonable to show what Crystal (2007: 83) says about command:

A term used in classification of sentence functions, and defined sometimes on grammatical and sometimes on semantic or sociological

ground. Syntactically a command is a sentence which typically has no subject and where the verb in the imperative mood, e.g. Come here. Semantically it is primarily used to tell someone to do (or not to do) something.

Crystal assures the grammaticality and semantics of the imperative. The text given by this writer is quite clear and all notions mentioned in it have previously been dealt with somewhere in this section of the research.

2. 4. 2. Uses of The Imperative:

The imperative has many uses in English. These uses will be well illustrated in the following paragraphs:

The imperative is used to tell someone to do something, e.g.,

21. Do it well.

The subject is usually absent in the imperative sentence. The imperative sometimes is used for giving a piece of advice like.

22. It is raining, take an umbrella with you.

To prohibit doing an action is made through the use of 'don't', for example:

23. Don't eat too much.

This prohibition includes some advice given to the listener. The use of imperative sometimes ensures suggesting to do something like:

24. Let us (let's) go to London.

To offer an invitation, to encourage people and to show wishes are ways expressed by the imperative in English, as in:

25. Have a piece of cake. (offer).

26. Try it again. (encouragement).

27. Have a good weekend. (wishing people welfare)

In fact, no imperative in sentence (27). It is just a matter of wishing welfare. As noticed earlier, different meanings are expressed by a single imperative sentence. Anyhow, the situation decides which meaning is intended. Context clarifies the wanted meaning in written texts.

2. 4. 3. The Emphatically Expressed Imperative:

On and off the auxiliary do is introduced before the imperative verb usually at the beginning of the sentence as saying: Do sit down. This inserted do is used to make the request more polite. Or it shows that the speaker is insisting on having a cup of coffee as in the following sentence.

28. Do have a cup of coffee.

2. 4. 4. Imperative in The Passive:

The construction of the passive imperative is realized via the use of get + past participle. This construction is utilized to ask people to make preparations for an action to be done for the speaker like:

29. Get prepared for the interview.

2. 4. 5. Negated Imperative With "Don't":

30. Don't eat the candy.

31. Don't put your feet on the table.

In these sentences, an order not to do something is given to the listener. Someone is forbidden to do something; so, something is not permitted to be done. 'Don't' is used before the imperative verb. Sometimes some advice is given to someone by the speaker like

32. Don't live in London, it is expensive.

Don't can be used before be in negative imperative e.g.,

33. Don't be angry easily.

34. Don't be conceited. (Leech and Svartic, 1994: 252).

2. 4. 6. Always and Never in The Imperative Sentence:

These two adverbs can be used with the imperative verbs; they usually occupy position before the imperative verbs at the beginning of the imperative sentence, e.g.,

35. Never argue violently.

36. Always give advice to your children.

2. 4. 7. Imperative with "Let":

First person with (Let) gives instruction to yourself, e.g.,

37. a. Let me see, b. Let me think.

Let me followed by the imperative verb is talking to yourself or arranging your thoughts.

38. Let us (let's) go abroad.

In the example (38), "I am suggesting to go abroad." The negative of the sentence is made by inserting the particle "not" before the imperative verb like:

39. Let us (let's) not fight.

2. 4. 8. The Imperative Verb Working As "If Clause":

Off and on the imperative does the same as "if clause". It compensates for "if clause". In this case, the imperative is followed by "and" or "or".

40. Visit (if you visit...) the Hyde-park on Sundays and you will see the people gathering for political purposes.

41. Don't interrupt (if you interrupt...) the chairman too much or you will be sent away the meeting.

42. Wear (if you don't...) a mask outside home or you will catch corona virus.

Regarding the sentences (41) and (42), if the imperative sentence is negative, the "if clause" should be positive and vice versa (Swan, 2006: 242).

3. Command in Arabic:

3. 1. Command in Arabic Linguistics:

Command الأمر is a largely-known subject by specialists in Arabic studies and even by non-specialists in the language. A command is a directive or instruction given to the listener to do something. This is an order given by the speaker and received by the listener so as to be done.

The prevention of doing an action is to stop its accomplishment (Al-Awsi, 1988: 83).

From the Arabic linguists' point of view, a command is a request given to the hearer to do an action (Al-Nahwy, 1928: 215), or a request coming from high to low rank person to fulfill an action or doing something (Al-Jorjani, 1989: 38). In this case, the request may take a form of order.

3. 2. The Term "Command" Defined:

Ibn Yaesh (604 H. 5817) assures that command is a request to do something ordered by the speaker which is given to the listener. This writer thinks that doing something needs to be achieved obligatorily by the hearer though the action is not guaranteed to be done. Some grammarians like Bin Masood (2002: 70) suggests that command is the way of asking someone to do something, e.g.: "to beat" "liyadhrib" and "beat" "ldhrib". Al-Saadi (1997: 29) proposes that a command is requesting the addressee to do an action which in a form of order or obligation given by the speaker.

All the definitions given earlier agree on basic ideas, such as: there are a speaker and a hearer or listener and there is an action which is required to be done by the hearer. A command is a form of order needs to be fulfilled at specified time.

3. 3. Forms of Imperative:

Arabic has five forms of command:

A. Forming command through using the grammatical verbal scale (if9al) أفعل to the verb like the imperative verb, as in: اركع (Irka')

43. Kneel on the ground.

B. Command derived by using the present simple form of the verb preceded by لام الأمر so the grammatical verbal scale will be (liyaf9al) like:
ليدرس الطلاب الدرس

C. The base form that refers to command, such as: (صبراً) → (sabras) and (ضرباً) → (dharban) →

كقول الرسول (ﷺ) لآل ياسر (صبراً آل ياسر فإن موعدكم الجنة).

As the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Be patient Yasir's family, you are promised with paradise".

D. Command made use of names of verbs.

They are utterances originally created in the course of time by old speakers of Arabic to meet their linguistic needs.

E. Command by using predictive form. (Al-Awsi, 1982: 213-214).

3. 4. Other Meanings Expressed by Commands:

The Arabic command is not confined only to the meanings expressed earlier, but it goes beyond these semantic limits.

These meaning are usually obtained via collocations and the context like:

1. Praying call: الدعاء

This idea is well-represented by the sentence:

"God forgive me".

2. Begging: **الالتماس**

This means when a friend tells another to do or to avoid doing something. This takes place among persons having the same rank, e.g.,

44. Give the pen.

3. Guidance: **الارشاد**

This case is best represented by advice given from the old to the young like.

45. Be careful of sins.

46. Keep this information in mind.

4. Threat

This is well-clarified in the following Example:

47. Do according to your desires and you will regret.

5. Giving permission: **الاذن**

As saying to someone who knocks at the door: "Come in".

6. Requesting others to choose. (Al-saadi, 1997: 29-30).

3. 5. Tenses Indicated by Command:

The Arabic command now and then carries other denotations besides the future, i.e., the command form expresses tenses other than the future.

1. Open Future: two types of future exist in English: the near and far future. "Close the door" refers to near future, whereas "Oh God, protect us from the hell" is an example of far future.

2. Present: command may semantically be used to denote present, as in:

48. Eat before you drink water.

Eating in this sentence indicates present and drinking comes in the future.

3. Command in The Past: Command in the past as saying to somebody who got murdered due to doing something wrong already, he had committed: "Taste what you have done", which is translated into Arabic: **ذُق عاقبة ما فعلت**.

This means he received a compensation for what he already made. These actions were all done before the time of speaking.

4. Continuous Command: The command verb may sometimes be used to refer to continuing activities or actions like God's orders to his creature, the prophet's orders, the old people's advice and those who have experience in life which has been passed down to next generations like.

49. Fear God: **اتق الله**.

This is an imperative order which includes present, future and continuity and these all shown and understood in the aforementioned example. (Al-Samarie, 1990: 410-413).

4. Conclusions:

The present study talks about the subject of imperative in the English and Arabic languages. The Arabic imperative is compared with the same English topic in regard to form, structure and semantics. The researchers do believe that the subject of this kind deserves the effort and time spent on it because it could be useful for learners of English in addition to those whose work is related contrastive studies, such as: researchers, translators and

even the teachers of English. The coming points represent the similarities and differences between English and Arabic concerning the subject under study. The dissimilarities between the two languages seem to be more important to notice than the similarities which are easier to learn, of course.

Differences:

1. English and Arabic don't share the same linguistic history; therefore, they do have different forms and structures in expressing the imperative idea. The two languages have distant origins. English belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and it is a developed branch of this family, whereas Arabic is a branch of the Semitic family; so, they have two different structures in two different languages and these differences definitely make different language functions. The differences between English and Arabic are expected to be wide regarding imperative and even other grammatical themes.
2. English is mainly affected by languages like Latin, French, Germany etc. Arabic, however is chiefly affected by the Turkish and Persian languages besides the African languages as well. Each language is affected by the languages of neighboring nations. So, the differences are definitely great between the two languages.
3. Imperative in English is studied and taught within the topic of "sentence types". The same subject is mainly studied and taught in Arabic within the subject of "tenses" which include perfect, imperfect besides imperative. Very occasionally the Arabic imperative is mentioned within the types of sentences.
4. Another feature limited to Arabic is that there are the name of the verbs which semantically give the meaning of command like: (stop, for example, speaking), (keep silent صه), (take مہ), (stay away اليك عني).

The above words were originally-created in the course of time by old speakers of Arabic to meet their linguistic needs. There is another set of name of the verbs which are formulated according to the word of the verbal scale (fi9aalii) like: → فعالي

(Leave تراكي), (Kill قتالي), (Get Down ونزالي), (Perceive ادراكي).

Arabic is considered as unique in regard to this feature. All these items are not available in English.

5. The imperative verb is often used alone without subject in English, whereas Arabic uses attached pronouns and each of which represents the subject of the verb in the imperative. Arabic uses Jessive (sukuun) to indicate (sing. Masc. you) الياء to represent (sing. Fem. You). is used to show duality, النون to refer to (plu. Fem. You) and الالف to denote (plu. Masc. fem. You). Notice the الواو translation of the following English sentence: 50. Draw a camel on the whiteboard.

The above sentence could be translated in one of the following probabilities:

ارسم جَمَلا على السبورة.

ارسم جَمَلا على السبورة.

أرسما جملاً على السبورة.

ارسمن جملاً على السبورة.

أرسموا جملاً على السبورة.

6. The English imperative verb sometimes has another semantic use when it works as "if clause". The imperative is used to compensate for "If clause".

This characteristic is not available in Arabic. It is confined only to English.

7. The negation of the imperative verb in Arabic is fulfilled by introducing before it and the prefix لا should be linked to the التاء verb of command in addition to the following same rules regarding the pronominal suffixes.

Anyhow, the imperative in English is made negative by don't before the verb and sometimes the particle never is used before the verb. This is a clear distinction between the two languages, indeed. 8. The emphasis with do before the imperative verb in English is not available in Arabic. English is considered unique in this feature. It is confined only to English.

9. Always and never can exist before the English imperative verb. As for the Arabic equivalent of always, the word دائماً can be situated in more than one place in the sentence. It can occur at the beginning of the sentence, after the imperative verb directly or at the end of the sentence. The Arabic use of this word is more flexible than in English. In regard to never, it is used at the beginning of the sentence before the imperative verb in English. Arabic, however, has several equivalents to the English particle never. They are:

لا، لا ... أبداً، لا ... إطلاقاً، لا ... نهائياً، لا ... بالمرة

The full word in these expressions can be used at the beginning of the sentence, in the middle of the sentence after the imperative verb or at the end of it. The particle, however, is always fixed directly before the Arabic imperative verb.

10. The imperative verb in English sometimes expresses wishes when wishing people's welfare, e.g.,

51. Enjoy the meal!

52. Have a good day!

The imperative verb "enjoy" and "have" are used for wishing people welfare. Indeed, there is no imperative meaning in these verbs since they are just used to offer wishes. Such a use is not available in Arabic. In other words, Arabic lacks this linguistic use of imperative. Wishing people welfare in Arabic is always expressed without verbs. The sentences mentioned above are translated into Arabic in the following way:

٥٣. وجبة طعام ممتعة!

٥٤. يوم سعيد؟

Similarities

1. The imperative verb denotes immediate commands, requests or prohibitions. A command is an order given to the listener that requires to be done. On the other hand, prohibition takes place when the listener is forbidden to do something. The action of the verb, in this case, is not allowed to be done. Arabic has the same denotation.

2. In English in addition to many languages, using the base form of the verb makes the imperative verb. Other languages have special operative forms.

3. The imperative verb in the command sentence in all over the world languages including English and Arabic refers to an incident in the future time. The incident is really not achieved when the imperative sentence is uttered.

4. In both English and Arabic, the situation decides which imperative shade of meaning is intended by the speaker since different meanings are expressed by a single imperative verb which seem to be overlapped. Context clarifies the required meaning in the written language.

5. Both English and Arabic often use the imperative verb at the beginning of the sentence unless sometimes it is preceded by word, like please in English أرجوك or من فضلك in Arabic.

The deletion of these expressions don't change the actual meaning of imperative but they are used to make mild orders or directives.

6. The researchers of this study can categorically assure that the subject of imperative is universal in all languages of the globe. Definitely, no Language is void of the concept of command since human beings need to give commands in everyday communication. Therefore, no one can escape it in speech and writing.

7. The definition of imperative (command) carries the same idea or meaning in both languages. Even the uses of command nearly are alike in the two languages. So, one can suggest that the elements of command in English and Arabic are nearly the same. We can, however, recognize slight differences in this respect. In fine, both languages have the same thought for the definition and uses of command.

8. First person (whether singular or plural) with let (let me and let us (let's)) for short are similarly used in both languages. Let me is used for thinking to yourself in order to decide something like:

55. a. Let me see دعني أرى. b. Let me think دعني أفكر.

Let us (often let's) is used to suggest an invitation. We use let's when something is suggested like:

56. Let us (let's) travel by train. دعنا نسافر بالقطار

Let us (let's) usually involves the second person in the imperative

9. The topic under study is considered one of the most-tackled one by grammarians and researchers in English and Arabic since it is amply used by the speakers whether they are specialist or non-specialists.

10. The modal verbs can't occur in the imperative mood although they are studied and taught as main verbs in English. It is worth mentioning that some Arabic counterparts to the English models are not put in the imperative either though they are verbs, such as: يستطيع the exact translation of can.

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