

Speech Acts as a Tool for Social Criticism in Abdel Rahman Munif's Novel "Cities of Salt": An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Language in literary works is a powerful tool that goes beyond its communicative function to become an effective means of social criticism and revealing societal contradictions. Abdelrahman Munif's novel "Cities of Salt" stands out as one of the most important literary models that employs language to portray the radical transformations witnessed in the Persian Gulf region following the discovery of oil. This study aims to analyze how speech acts are transformed into tools for social criticism in the novel "Cities of Salt," based on the theories of John Austin and John Searle in the field of linguistic pragmatics. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, where fifty cases of speech acts found in the novel were extracted and analyzed, classified according to Searle's five categories (directive, representative, expressive, commissive, and declarative), and then their critical function was examined in five main areas including environmental, cultural, economic, political, and social criticism. The research results showed that directive and expressive acts were the most frequent in the novel, reflecting the power structure and social tensions dominating the narrative, while the absence of declarative acts revealed the characters' inability to influence their social reality. This study demonstrates that Munif used speech acts with exceptional skill to transform language into a critical weapon that exposes power structures, social contradictions, and the devastating effects of oil transformations on traditional society. It also presents an innovative methodology for analyzing literary works from an applied linguistics perspective that can be applied in future studies of contemporary Arabic literature.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics, Social Criticism, Speech Acts, Abdelrahman Munif, Cities of Salt.

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