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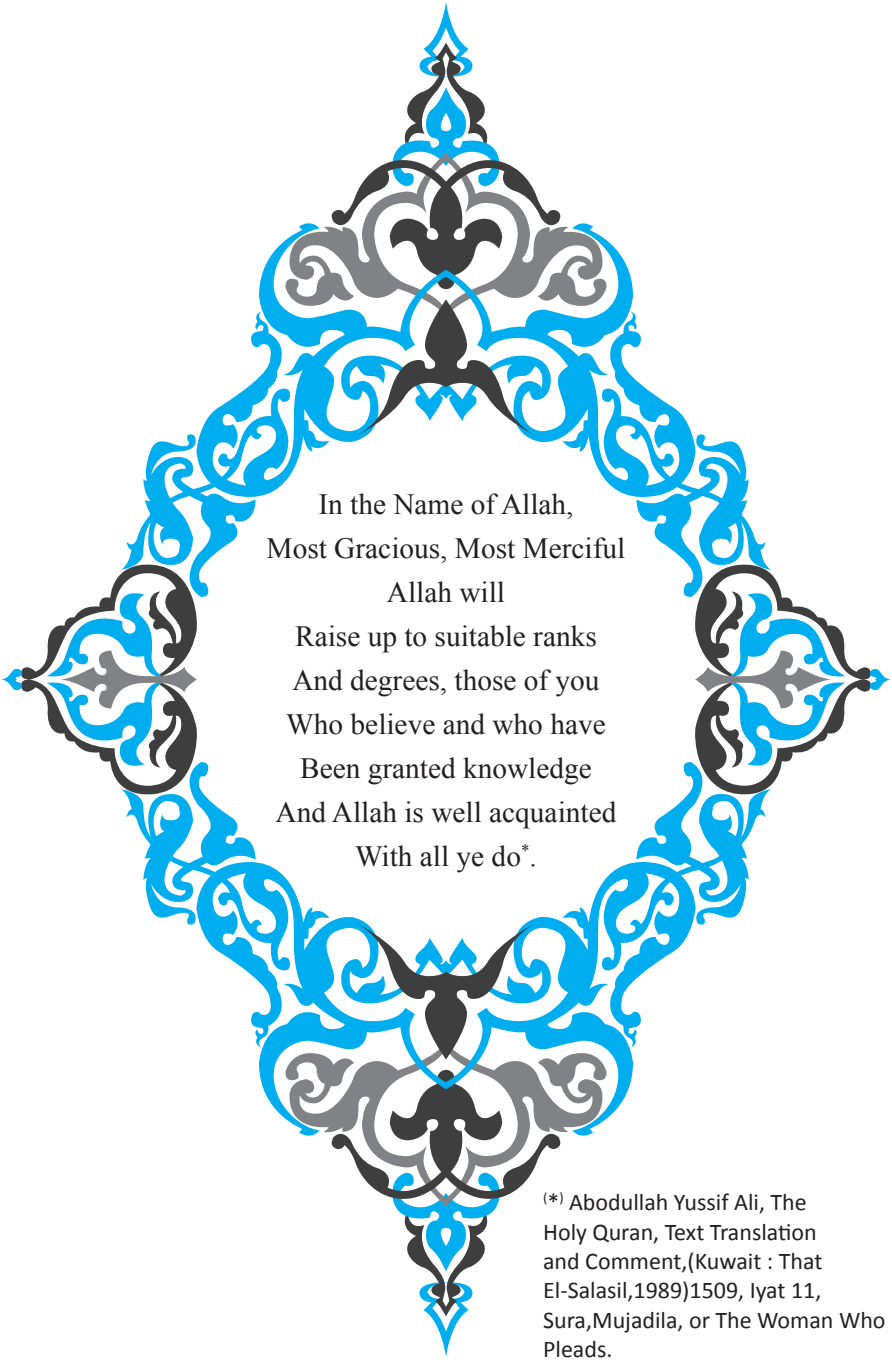

(*) Abodullah Yussif Ali, The Holy Quran, Text Translation and Comment,(Kuwait : That El-Salasil,1989)1509, Iyat 11, Sura,Mujadila, or The Woman Who Pleads.

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Last we do thank Allah , the Evolver of the Worlds , and peace be upon our master Muhammad and his Immaculate progeny .

Prophetic Chronicle Horizons of Contemporary Readings

Cursing and Blessing in English and Arabic:
A Contrastive Study

اللعن والتبريك في الانجليزية والعربيّة
دِراسَةٌ مُقارنة

Asst. Prof. Rajaa M. Flayih Ash–shibani
أ.م. رجاء مردان فليح

Cursing and Blessing in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study

اللعن والتبريك في الانجليزية والعربية

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Abstract

Stemming from the opinion that words have power to influence humans and their relationships, cursing and blessing are chosen to be studied in this research paper. Linguistically, they have not been widely investigated in literature. In most previous studies, they have been represented as social and theological phenomena. They tended to be emotional expressions rather than declarative speech acts. The present study tries to compare them linguistically, in both English and Arabic languages, dealing with their characteristics in depth by using a descriptive method. In addition to its preliminary attempt to assign clearly the felicity conditions of blessing, this paper tries to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between cursing in English and its counterpart in Arabic?

2. Is there a significant difference between blessing in English and its counterpart in Arabic?

3. Is there a similarity between cursing and blessing?

4. Should they be treated as linguistic routines?

This paper is divided into five sections: the first examines cursing in English structurally, semantically and pragmatically. The second deals with it in Arabic. In the third section, a linguistic account is given about blessing in English with an attempt to organize its felicity conditions depending on those given for cursing within Searle Model(1969), while the fourth looks at it in Arabic. Finally, the comparison and the conclusions are given.

ملخص البحث

انطلاقا من الرأي القائل بأن للكلمات القدرة على التأثير على البشر وعلاقاتهم أُختير اللعن والتبريك كموضوع للدراسة في هذا البحث اذ لم يدرسا لغويا على نطاق واسع. عُنيت اغلب الدراسات السابقة بهما كظاهرتين اجتماعيتين ولاهوتيتين وكذلك رُكز عليهما كتعبيرات عاطفية وليس كفعلا كلام للتصريح. يضاف الى ذلك لم يقارنا بنظيريهما في اللغة العربية. بأخذ هذا بعين الاعتبار تحاول الدراسة الحالية مقارنتهما لغويا من خلال تناول خصائصهما باستخدام الطريقة الوصفية. اضافه الى كونها محاوله أوليه لتعيين شروط تحقق التبريك بوضوح تعنى هذه الدراسة بالإجابة على الأسئلة التالية

1. هل هناك اختلاف هام بين اللعن بالإنكليزية ونظيره باللغة العربية؟
2. هل هناك اختلاف هام بين التبريك في الإنكليزية ونظيره باللغة العربية؟
3. هل هناك تشابه بين اللعن والتبريك في كلتا اللغتين؟
4. هل تجب معاملتهما كروتين لغوي؟

تقسم هذه الدراسة الى خمسة اقسام. يدرس القسم الأول اللعن في اللغة الإنكليزية نحويا، دلاليا وتداوليا ويتناوله القسم الثاني في اللغة العربية. يُعطى في القسم الثالث شرحا لغويا للتبريك في اللغة الإنكليزية مع محاوله للوصول الى شروط تحققه اعتمادا على شروط اللعن المعطاة في نموذج سريل (1969). ويدرسه القسم الرابع في اللغة العربية. ويلخص القسم الأخير المقارنة والاستنتاجات.

Transliteration of Arabic Words

ا	ā	ذ	dh	ظ	ẓ	ن	n
ب	b	ر	r	ع	ʻ	ه	h
ت	t	ز	z	غ	gh	و	Consonantal(w)
							Long vowel (ū)
ث	th	س	s	ف	f	ي	ī
ج	j	ش	sh	ق	q	ء	ʼ
ح	ḥ	ص	ṣ	ك	k	fatḥah	a
خ	ḵẖ	ض	ḍ	ل	l	karah	i
د	d	ط	ṭ	م	n	ḍammah	u

1. Cursing in English

1.1. Definition

Cursing is a ritualized, religious act whereby a speaker with special authority declares malediction upon somebody or something. Supernatural powers alone, believers assume, affect the curse. Because its authority originates in an extra-linguistic institution, the utterance of a curse proves a forceful declarative (Vanderveken 1990:203). To perform a curse successfully, the institution of cursing must be evoked. By virtue of his vocation, a minister implicitly calls forth the institution when he declares, even in anger, "God damn you to hell for what you're doing to me"(Frazier 1997:95).

Moreover, cursing is asking God or a supernatural power to harm somebody. As such, it is "an appeal or prayer for evil or misfortune to befall someone or something". Thus, here a curse is actually a prayer but a negative one, which keeps the cursed persons away from merit, bliss and happiness. If a curse is opportune and proper, it may be answered and fulfilled by God. This is in fact mentioned in the Holy Bible in the Proverb 26:2 which lays down the principle, ''a curse without a cause shall not alight'', which rightly interpreted as

follows: ''a curse cannot hurt you unless you deserve it'' (Sharifi and Ebrahimi,2012: 1911). These definitions will lead to different types of cursing, as it will be explained later.

1.2 Syntactic Perspective

Vanci – Osam (1998: 74) states that the structure of cursing is so standard as to appear formulaic. Structurally, cursing can be defined as an expression that can be in the form of a ritualized formula directed to the addressee. However, numerous variants are available and speech acts of cursing can assume various forms. The simplest form for curse utterances is in the first – person singular present tense, active voice, indicative mood:

"… and the one who curses you I will curse" (Genesis, 12:3) .

Nevertheless, it can be very often expressed in the optative subjunctive mood as in;

God damn you.

and it may frequently be put in the passive voice; (Little, 1993:114)

May he be cursed.

Past participle as a predicate of a nominal sentence with marked word order ' predicate + subject' can be used (Merwe, 1999: 394) .This form is recurrent in the Bible such as:

"Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work negligently, and cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood. (Jeremiah 48:10)

Or the noun 'curse' may explicitly be mentioned such as: (Horan, 20 13:285)

" the curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked" (Proverbs, 3:33)

While the simple grammatical structure of these explicit performatives makes it much easier to define and explain the speech act in theory, in practice many performative utterances do not have the same explicit grammatical construction but still produce the same

performative effect. For example, in Henry VI, part 2, Queen Margaret curses King Henry by saying "mischance and sorrow go along with you". Here, it can be counted as a wish for "mischance and sorrow" to befall King Henry (Templin, 2014: 8).

In spite of the serious conventional sound of these propositions, i.e. their form as curse locution, they can be interpreted as emotional outbursts. (Arnovick,1999:75)

1.3. Semantic – pragmatic Perspective

Semantically, two types of curse can be distinguished: ''deontic" or ''execratory'' and ''ludic". The former captures those cases where the speaker believes in the power of his/ her words and intends to cause harm by uttering them. Indeed this meaning is attributed to curse utterances found in Bible:

"Thus says the LORD: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD.'" (Jeremiah 17:5, 6)

Then to Adam He said, "…Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it All the days of your life"(Genesis 3:17).

Ludic curses, on the other hand, are "uttered only in jest or as an expression of anger or frustration" (Culpeper and Semino, 2000: 101). Expressions like 'damn you', 'go to hell', 'blast you', ' curse you', 'God rot your soul' and 'damn your eyes' have a different function and a different perlocutionary effect from those belonging to deontic curses. In fact, they convey a speaker's feelings and emotions, specifically, anger (Arnovick, 1999:76).

Pragmatically, the difference between these two meanings can be expressed in terms of various classifications developed within Speech Act Theory. In his classification of illocutionary forces, Austin(1962:159) places 'curse' within the category of 'behabitives', which are defined as: .

"Behabitives include the notion of reaction to other people's behavior and fortunes and of attitudes and expression of attitudes to

someone's past conduct or imminent conduct".

This clearly captures the fact that in saying," God curses you", the verb expresses reactions, feelings and attitudes, and therefore categorized within the area of 'social behaviour'. (Culpeper and Semino, 2000: 102) The same cannot be said, however, of the meaning of 'curse' in the Holy Bible. The action performed by God utterance is interpreted as much more than a simple expression of His reactions: through His words, He is believed to create the conditions in which a specific negative event must necessarily befall the person against whom the curse is pronounced. As such, this second use of the verb 'curse' cannot satisfactorily be accounted for as behabitives, i.e. behabitives could not fully account for the speech acts that cause a change in the world, such as appointing, marrying, and God's cursing in this study. Accordingly, one could argue that the verbs referring to God's curses fall under the category of exercitives, which is defined as follows: (ibi d:103).

''Exercitives are the exercising of powers, rights or influence… An exercitive is the giving of a decision in favour or against a certain course of action or advocacy of it." (Austin, 1962: 154)

According to Searle's (1979) model, verbs referring to ludic curses can be placed under the class of 'expressives', which is so similar to Austin's behabitives, while verbs referring to God's curses (serious curses) fall under the category of ' declarations'(ibid), which are defined as:

"Declarations bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred to object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed". (Searle,1979:17)

Searle (ibid:18), cited in Culpeper and Semino,2000:104), stresses that declarations depend on the existence of extra–linguistic institutions within which the addresser and addressee occupy specific roles, i.e. a person's words acquire the power to change the world only in virtue of the position that he occupies within an institution. However, within this interest, Searle (ibid.) refers to 'super-

natural declarations'. His own example of them is the point where God in the Holy Bible says' Let there be light', and creates light by means of his utterance. Similarly, it can be argued that God's curses are declarations that depend on the belief that particular words have become powerful due to a supernatural power.

Within Searle's (ibid.) model, expressives (ludic curses) and declaration (deontic curses), also differ in terms of what he calls the ' direction of fit between words and the world'. In performing expressives, there is no direction of fit. In contrast, in the case of declarations, the direction of fit is both ways .i.e., the words are supposed to match the world and they have the power to change it in some respects or other.

The difference in the meaning between the deontic and ludic curses becomes specifically obvious, if one considers their analysis in terms of Searle's (1969) felicity conditions. The felicity conditions for deontic curses are as follows :(Culpeper and Semino, 2000: 106)

Propositional act	Future event(E), malediction, related to hearer(H)
Preparatory condition	E is not in H's interest and Speaker(s)has a supernatural power and is able to use it
Sincerity condition	S wants E to happen
Essential condition	counts as a declaration that E will happen to H.

Those for ludic curses are as follows:

Propositional act	Future event(E) related to hearer(H)
Preparatory condition	E is not in H's interest
Sincerity condition	S desires E to happen
Essential condition	counts as a wish that E will happen to H

Working through these conditions, felicitous curses require the psychological state of desire on the part of the speaker; for the curse to be sincere, the cursers must want to inflict the suffering pro-

posed. Anger and other feelings may accompany desire, but volition itself must motivate the curse. Deontic curse utterances have an ' I say so' element as well as a 'so be it' component in their tropics. The force of these acts is doubly purposeful: the desiderative and instrumental functions of language form the basis of such a curse. Ludic curse utterances, on the other hand, have an ' I say so' element only and the desiderative function, (Culpeper and Semino, 2000: 107). They function as emotives that declaim anger rather than establish volition. Just as a psychological state differs, so too does propositional content: the future state proposed must be taken figuratively rather than literally. As such, any speaker can curse expressively. Such speech act requires no special license for the speaker. Neither does the speaker evoke an extra – linguistic institution with his/her words, (Arnovick, 1999: 90).

Cursing functions as an illocutionary act through its power to produce a result. The act of cursing someone, or even saying, "I curse you," is to give an effect through speech. However, curses also function as perlocutionary speech acts (Butler, 1997:17). Because the intent of a curse is to initiate consequences that will occur later, many curses can be characterized as perlocutionary. The consequences initiated by cursing, combined with the temporal distance between the speech and those consequences imbues curses with both illocutionary and perlocutionary characteristics, (Bitz, 2013: 9).

To say in the most explicitly performative sense, "I curse you with mischance and sorrow," one not only performs the action of the curse, thereby initiating the cursed state in the cursed subject, but also promises a future state of misfortune when the curse eventually takes effect. Using the power of language alone, the curse has the potential to injure both in the moment of cursing and beyond, which makes the curse an especially dangerous speech act because it moves beyond the control of the speaker and presages an unknown future injury, (Templin, 2014: 10 -1).

Unlike deontic cursing, the consequence of ludic cursing utterance is directed towards the speaker not the hearer or the ad-

dressee. This is due to the fact that, as stated by Austin (1962), cursing utterances are uttered to relieve the speakers of anger, in other words, the perlocutionary act is not for the person to whom the curse is directed but for the performer,(Alhossainia and Rasekhb, 2013: 518).

2. Cursing in Arabic

2.1. Definitions

In Arabic,' **لَعْنَةٌ** 'La'nah' is the denouncing or the calling down of evil on someone. Curse is the most widely used equivalent for it. Two formal substitutes for 'curse' in this sense are execration and imprecation. Execration is the face-to-face denunciation or the ill wished, while imprecation is somewhat privately expressed.

Inb Manẓūr (1990:13:387)1 mentions different meanings of ' **لَعْنَة** ' 'la'nah': firstly, it is imploration for withdrawal of God's mercy and being deprived of God's blessing' . In the terminology of shari'ah, when applied to disbelievers, it refers to their being far off from the mercy of Allah; and when it is applied to Muslims , it refers to their having fallen down the level of the righteous. Secondly, it comes also to mean purgatory and torture (al'ḏẖāb wa al ta'ḏẖīb العذاب والتعذيب). Destruction (الهلاكal-halāk) is another meaning added by Inb Manẓūr (ibid.) saying that the cursed one (الملعون) is the one who is destroyed ((المُهلَك. Finally, mentioned by Al- Fayrūzabadī (2005:4: 269), it can mean insult and verbal abuse (alsab wa alshatim (السب والشتم), if it is uttered by humans.

2.2. Syntactic Perspective.

The word ' **لَعْنَةٌ** ' La'nah ' comes in various forms, ('Abd Al – Bāqī, 1980:650):

Present Participle (ism al-fā'l اسم الفاعل)

It is found in the plural form, **اللاَّعِنُونَ**, as in :

8.﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَى مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ **اللاَّعِنُونَ**﴾(البقره:159)

1 13 refers to the volume number and 387 refers to the page number

"Those who conceal the clear [Signs] We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book,- on them shall be Allah's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse"2 (1:159)

Past participle (ism al- maf'ūl اسم المفعول)

It comes either in a singular form as in:

9. ﴿وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّؤْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ **الْمَلْعُونَةَ** فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا﴾(الاسراء:60)

"We granted the vision which We showed thee, but as a trial for men,- as also the Cursed Tree [mentioned] in the Qur'ān: We put terror [and warning] into them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression!" (17:60)

or in the plural form as in:

10. ﴿**مَلْعُونِينَ** ۖ أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا أُخِذُوا وَقُتِّلُوا تَقْتِيلًا﴾ (الأحزاب:61)

"They shall have a curse on them: whenever they are found, they shall be seized and slain[without mercy]"(33: 61)

3. Noun:

It comes in three forms: with the definite article ال, اللَّعْنَةُ and without it , لَعْنَةُ and it can be attached to the pronoun, ي, لَعْنَتِي as shown in the following examples:

11. ﴿وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ **اللَّعْنَةَ** إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾ (الحجر: 35)

"And the curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment." (15:35)

12. ﴿أَنْ **لَعْنَةُ** اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (الأعراف:44)

"The curse of Allah is on the wrong- doers"(7:44)

13. ﴿وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ **لَعْنَتِي** إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾ ص: 78)

"And My curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment."(38: 78)

4. Infinitive (maṣdar مصدر)

The word 'la'nan' لَعْنًا in the qur'ānic verse is infinitive and here it is

2 All Qur'ānic verse translations are taken from Ali,2001

a cognate object used to indicate the type of the verb.

14. (رَبَّنا آتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذابِ وَ**الْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا** كَبِيرًا﴾) الأحزاب:68﴾

"Our Lord! Give them double Penalty and curse them with a very great Curse!"(33:68)

It should be noticed here that the verb 'la'na' occurs in the imperative form الْعَنْ .

5. Past tense form of the verb

The verb ,'la'ana' **لَعَنَ** , is used in the following qur'ānic verse.

15. (إِنَّ اللهَ **لَعَنَ** الْكافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا ﴾ (الأحزاب: 64﴾

"Verily Allah has cursed the Unbelievers and prepared for them a Blazing Fire"(33:64)

It can be in the passive form as in :

16. **لُعِنَ** الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ لِسَانِ دَاوُودَ وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا ﴾ (المائده: 78 وَّكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴾)

"Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected Faith, by the tongue of David and of Jesus the son of Mary: Because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses."(5:78)

6. Present tense form of the verb.

17. (أَوْ **نَلْعَنَهُمْ** كَما لَعَنَّا أَصْحابَ السَّبْتِ وَكانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولا﴾ **النساء**:47 ... ﴾

"or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers, for the decision of Allah Must be carried out." (4:47)

2.3. Semantic Perspective

The word' لعن ' 'la'n' and its derivatives can be used explicitly to be either a declaration of malediction, or prayer for inexistency, misfortune, destruction and perdition to the addressee as indicated in the qur'ānic verse 14 given in the previous section, . Here is another illustration:

18. اللَّهُمَّ فَضَاعِفْ عَلَيْهِمُ اللَّعْنَ مِنْكَ والْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ

O Allah, double up the curse upon them and punishment for them.

اللعنAl - La‘n can also be expressed implicitly. There are different semantic equivalents that can imply it.

1. Verbal abuse (Al-sab wa Al-shatim السب والشتم)

Al–Ṭibarī (2000:2: 260) states that verbal abuse is one of the equivalent meaning for al- La‘n as indicated by the Prophet Muḥammad’s (peace be upon him and his progeny) saying, as found in Al-bukẖārī (1987:5:2228):

انَ مِن أكبَر الكَبائِرِ ان يَلْعَن الرَجُل والديه قِيلَ يا رَسُول الله وَكَيْف يَلعَنُ الرَجُلُ والديه؟ قالَ» يَسبُ الرَجُلُ أَبا الرَجُلِ فيَسبُ اباه...»

One of the greatest sins is that the man curses his parents. It was said, “O, messenger of Allah, how does the man curse his parents?” He said: if the man reviles another man’s father, that man will revile the first man’s father in return.

Soولا تسبوا (do not revile) in the following qur’ānic verse means ولا تلعنوا (do not curse)

19. ﴿108 : الأنعام) ﴾ (وَلاَ **تَسُبُّوا** الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللهِ **فَيَسُبُّوا** اللهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

“ Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance”.(6:108)

2. killing (Al- qatil القتل)

Al – Ṭibarī (2000:14:207) states that the meaning of ‘qatalahum Allah’ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ is لعنهم الله ‘la‘anahum Allah’ and this is emphasized by the Prophet Muḥammad’s (Pease be upon him and his progeny) saying “لعن المؤمن كقتله» “ ‘l‘in al - mu’min kaqatlih’ (cursing a believer is like killing him).

20. ﴿ 4:المنافقون) ﴾ (**قَاتَلَهُمُ** اللَّهُ ۖ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ

“The curse of Allah be on them! How are they deluded [away from the Truth]’’(63:4).

3. Expulsion and deportation (Al- ṭard wa Al- ib‘ād الطرد والابعاد)

21.﴿ 95 :هود)﴾ (كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۗ أَلَا **بُعْدًا** لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِدَتْ ثَمُودُ

“As if, they had never dwelt and flourished there! Ah! Behold! How

the Madyan were removed [from sight] as were removed the Tham ud!"(11:95)

The phrase ' were removed' in this qur'ānic verse designates that Madyan is deprived of Allah's mercy, bliss and merit. This is one of the meanings of curse as indicated by Al- Fayrūzabadī(2005: 17: 342).

4. Being far away (Al – suḥq السحق)

22. ﴿فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ **فَسُحْقًا** لِّأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴾ (الملك: 11)

"They will then confess their sins: but far will be [Forgiveness] from the Companions of the Blazing Fire!" (67:11)

The meaning of Al– suḥq is being destructed and far away which is tantamount to the definition of cursing. So فَسُحْقًا لِّأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ means being far away from Allah's mercy, (Al-Qurṭubī,1988: 294:12).

5. Perdition (Al - tabāb التباب)

Ar-Rāzī (1981:30:166) says that the meaning of perdition is destruction and loss and it is one of the meanings of curse as mentioned previously.

23. ﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَصُدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِي **تَبَابٍ**...﴾ (غافر:37)

"Thus was made alluring, in Pharaoh's eyes, the evil of his deeds, and he was hindered from the Path; and the plot of Pharaoh led to nothing but perdition [for him]."(40:37)

6. Rejection (Ar – rajim الرجم)

According to (Inb Manẓūr ,1990: 216:12) Ar – rajim means expulsion and dismissal and it could also indicate insult and abuse.

24. ﴿فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ **الرَّجِيمِ** ﴾ (النحل: 98) (

"When thou dost read the Qur'an, seek Allah's protection from Satan the rejected one."(16:98)

The meaning of rajīmرجيم in the qur'ānic verse is the

damned one , Satan who is being deprived of God's mercy and being deported.

7. Hideousness (Al– qubḥ القبح)

Al-Farāhīdī (1985:3:53) states that al–qubḥ implies the meaning of being dismissed and deprived of all good. In the following qur'ānic verse, it is indicated by the word الْمَقْبُوحِينَ for which Inb Manẓūr (1990:2:552) gives the meaning of being deported and cursed, al–mub'adīn and al–mal'unīn, المبعدين والملعونين. As such, it is also one of the semantic equivalents of cursing.

25. ﴿ وَأَتْبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ هُم مِّنَ **الْمَقْبُوحِينَ** ﴾ (القصص: 42)

"In this world, we made a curse to follow them and on the Day of Judgment, they will be among the loathed [and despised]."(28:42)

8. Degradation (Al - diḥūr الدحور)

It also gives the meaning of being rejected, disgraced and deprived of mercy and happiness as indicated in the qur'ānic verse ,(Ibn Kathīr,1981: 3:58).

26. ﴿ مَّن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَن نُّرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا **مَّدْحُورًا** ﴾ (الاسراء: 18)

"If any do wish for the transitory things [of this life], We readily grant them - such things as We will, to such person as We will: in the end have We provided Hell for them: they will burn therein, disgraced and rejected."(17:18)

3. Blessing in English

3.1. Definition

Blessing complements cursing, discussed in the previous section , in several ways. Blessing too is a ritualized, religious act. To bless, a speaker with special authority declares benediction upon someone or something desiring a future state that implies protection from harm along with happiness and prosperity (Vanderveken 1990:203). Moreover, to bless is to declare that one accomplishes the religious act of calling God's benediction upon someone or something. The person, who has thus been blessed, is in a state of being in God's grace and favour.

When blessing expressions are used among human beings, they can best be taken as a bestowal of material goods (benefaction), as in saying to a person: "God bless you" as a result of his doing a favour for you.

3.2. Syntactic Perspective

The formulaic subjunctive God bless you is the most common form of blessing. It uses the base form of the verb. Its present equivalent construction is that with 'may' and subject – verb inversion, May God bless you. However, Westermann (1978:78) mentions three forms for expressing blessing in the Holy Bible:

The verb: 'bless'.

27. "I will bless you, and make your name great."(Genesis 12:1-3)

It can also be used in the passive:

28. "and indeed he shall be blessed."(Genesis 27:33)

The noun :' blessing'.

29. "and you shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1-3)

3. The past participle: 'blessed'.

"Blessed be the God…" (Ephesians 1:3)

3.3. Semantic – Pragmatic Perspective

Corresponding to the afore - mentioned definitions, different manifestations of ' bless you' can be yielded: it can be performed as either a religious blessing, an extolling praise, or a secular wish:

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

A blessing like these is supernatural. It is not mere wishful thinking or the expression of human sentiment. It is something supernaturally empowered. It determines the destiny of the one who receives it. Such a blessing is directly associated with God and come from Him.

A blessing as ' blessed be God most high, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand' (Gen., 14:20) indicates the meaning of an extolling praise. When man is blessing God, it is an expression of praising and thankfulness. The verb 'bless' in "you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land He has given you" is virtually identical to 'thank' (Slyke, 2011: 48).

However, in the wish derived from the expressive blessing, an objective declarative is replaced by a subjective expressive. Similarly, its concrete proposition is changed into one that is abstract, just as its lexical meaning is made to serve an interpersonal function (Traugott 1989:35). For example, in saying; ' may you have a blessed Christmas', the speaker expresses his / her individual wish rather than participating in the ritualized institution of blessing. In this way, wishing re-focuses perspective on the speaker, saying to the hearer, in effect, "these are my good feelings for you." Collectively, then, "the movement from blessing to wishing favors an orientation internal to the speaker at the expense of one external to him / her". These semantic processes can be seen to motivate change in the illocutionary forces and discursive functions attached to bless you: it can be either a superstitious blessing, or a wish or polite formula,(Arnovick,1999: 133).

In the case of the "superstitious" illocution, the blessing of God has not been de-institutionalized into a wish for good, a kind of non-

religious blessing. To the extent that its effect relies on some kind of supernatural power — even the magic of the word itself — the "superstitious" utterance remains a kind of blessing. Locution that has the illocutionary force of a wish can result from a deinstitutionalized blessing. Recall that in one respect, a wish looks like a secularized blessing. When non-religious speakers say Bless you and they intend a wish, it is because a secularization has affected the illocutionary context of the original speech act,(Arnovick,1999: 133).

Like cursing in another respect, blessing bases itself in an appeal to a higher authority. As an utterance, it proves a forceful declarative because its authority originates in a powerful extra-linguistic institution (Vanderveken, 1990:198).However, the speaker must "want good things to happen to" the target and pronounce the blessing expressly because he/she wants "to cause it to happen" (Wierzbicka,1987:225). Propositional content is correspondingly limited to calls for benediction. A sincere blessing requires the psychological states of beneficence and desire, for its utterance represents the linguistic expressions of those emotions (Ballmer and Brennenstuhl, 1981:72). As a result, blessing entails a volitional, deontic act. As such, its direction of fit proves both words-to-world and world-to-words, however, because the illocution describes as well as constitutes the blessing once uttered, (Arnovick, 1999:100).

When it is not performed as a religious blessing or a secular wish, then, 'bless you' expresses politeness. Used this way, Bless you constitutes a formulaic expression, a set phrase limited in its application and invariable in its form. It furthers discourse, offers sympathy, maintains interpersonal accord, and reinforces social bonds.(ibid.135)

It should be mentioned here that the connotation of blessing could be indicated implicitly. For instance, the biblical verse "the Lord will make you abound in prosperity" (Deuteronomy, 28:11) expresses blessing indirectly. The same can be said about" May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all" (Thessalonians, 3:11), (Slyke, 2011: 54).

Blessing in Arabic

4.1 Definition

Barakah بَرَكَة generally means the proliferation in quality and quantity of God's bounty to human life. Muslims understand the blessing as a "beneficent force, of divine origin, which causes superabundance in the physical sphere and prosperity and happiness in the psychic order" (The Encyclopedia of Islam, 2007: Barakah entry), As such, for Muslims it is a gift or bounty from God to one whom He chooses out of His love in appreciation of servant's obedience and submission to His will. This gift or bounty could be in many forms. It may be in the form of knowledge, wisdom, qualities, skills, wealth, health, or family. To Ibn 'Abbās, barakah means abundance in every auspicious and good deed (Inb Manẓūr,1990: 10: 395).

Al -'ṣfahānī (n.d:1:83) mentions that the term barakah is originated from the trilateral verb b-r-k that has the meaning of 'kneeling down'. It denotes the large frontal area of a camel that firmly presses the earth below it when it kneels on the ground by folding its legs. Its derivatives imply establishment or staying firmly upon something. Barakah then, is the establishment of divine goodness in something. The knee is often linked to the idea of procreation and power in the Semitic world.

Syntactic Perspective

Different words derived from the root stem, برك, are used in Arabic (Ibn Qayim al-Jawziyah, 1972: 2:410)

Verb

The past form of the verb , bāraka, بَارَكَ

32. ﴿وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِن فَوْقِهَا وَ**بَارَكَ** فِيهَا ...﴾ (فصلت: 10)

"He set on the [earth], mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth,…"(41:10)

It can be attached to the plural pronoun 'nā' نا

33. ﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي **بَارَكْنَا** حَوْلَهُ ... ﴾ (الاسراء:1).

"Glory to [Allah] Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless…"(17:1)

It can occur in the passive :

34. ﴿فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ **بُورِكَ** مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ (النمل :٨)

"But when he came to the [fire], a voice was heard: "Blessed are those in the fire and those around: and glory to Allah, the Lord of the worlds". (27:8)

The quadrilateral form tabāraka (تَبَارَكَ) can also be used:

35. ﴿ **تَبَارَكَ** اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ (الأعراف:54)

"Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!" (7:54)

The imperative form of the verb, bārik, **بارِك** can be used as in saying اللهم **بارِك** لهم فيما رزقتهم, Allahuma bārik lahum fīmā razaqtahum, O God, bless them with their riches.

Noun

It can be used in a singular form as in the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him and his progeny) saying ' تَسَحَرُوا فَإِنَّ فِي السحورِ **بَرَكَه**' 'tasaḥru fa'na fi al-saḥūr barakah' "Eat your meal at saḥūr; hence there is barakah at saḥūr". In the Glorious Qur'ān, it occurs in the plural form بَرَكَاتٍ barakāt

36. ﴿ هود: (48 قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِّنَّا وَ**بَرَكَاتٍ** عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّمَّن مَّعَكَ ۚ ... ﴾

"The word came: "O Noah! Come down [from the Ark] with peace from Us, and blessing on thee and on some of the peoples [who will spring] from those with thee:" (11:48)

Past participle (ism al- maf'ūl) اسم المفعول

It can be used in the masculine form as in

37. ﴿وَهَٰذَا كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ **مُبَارَكٌ** فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ ﴾ (الانعام: 155)

"And this is a Book which We have revealed as a blessing: so follow it and be righteous, that ye may receive mercy". (6: 155)

or in the feminine form as in:

38. ﴿يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ **مُبَارَكَةٍ** زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ﴾ (النور:٣٥)

"Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west."(24:35)

Mubārak can be used to describe object as in the preceding two examples or people as:

39.)وَجَعَلَنِي **مُبَارَكًا** أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا﴾ (مريم:31﴾ .

"And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live;" (19: 31)

or place

40.)انَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ **مُبَارَكًا** وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ (العمران : 96﴾

"The first House [of worship] appointed for men was that at Bakka: Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings:"(3:96)

or periods of time

41.)إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ **مُّبَارَكَةٍ** ۚ﴾ (الدخان :3﴾

"We sent it down during a Blessed Night." (44:3)

Semantic Perspective

Both the verb and participle have different meanings depending on whether they are predicted of God or human beings. The same can be said of the noun that can be either a benediction (from God) or a benefaction (between humans). The contextual meanings and functions of the root, برك, need to be distinguished. However, it has three main senses (Goerling, 2010:2):

With God as the agent, it means 'to endow with power'.

42. ﴿ وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ إِسْحَاقَ ۚ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ﴾ (الصافات : 113)

"We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are [some] that do right, and [some] That obviously do wrong, to their own souls."(37:113)

With a human being as the agent to refer to God as the source of power, it means 'to praise; to thank'.

43. ﴿تبارك الَّذِي بِيدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وهُو على كُلِّ شيْ ءٍ قدِيرٌ﴾ (الملك:1)

"Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion; and He over all things hath Power;"(67:1)

The idea of Allah being blessed occurs here. Since Allah is the Blesser, He should be blessed Himself. So Allah is attributed with barakah by the use of tabāraka (تَبَارَكَ) meaning the Self – Blessed (Al-'ndalusī, 1993:8:342).

When a human being blesses another, it means 'to convey to someone God's beneficent power', to wish or to pray for.

44. بارك الله فيك (bāraka Allah fīk) May Allah bestow his blessing on you))

This sentence is used to wish someone blessings from Allah

especially in return to a favour done by that person.

It can also be used in exchanging the congratulations as in:

45. عيدكم مبارك. اعاده الله عليكم باليمن و البركات ‘idakum Mubārak. ’a‘adahu Allah ‘alykum bilumni wa albarakāt (have a blessed Eid, may God return it back with blessings).

Or in greeting as Muslims greet one another with a blessing every time they meet and depart by saying:

46. السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته Asalamu ‘alykum wa raḥmatu Allah wa barakāta (May peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you)

Relational meaning of the word barakah is growth and increase, anamā’ wa aziyāda النماء و الزياده, happiness, al - sa‘ada السعاده, goodness, al - ḵẖayr الخير and grace, ni‘mah,) النعمه Bin ‘āshūr,n.d. 5:33) and (Al – joharī,1990: 4: 1575) .

The word لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ in the qur’ānic verse 14:7 implies the meaning of barakah since it indicates God’s promise to give more favours to the man if he was grateful. Giving more favours is part of the meaning of barakah.

47. ﴿ وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ ۖ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ﴾ (إبراهيم :7)

“And remember! Your Lord caused to be declared [publicly]:If ye are grateful, I will add more [favours] unto you; But if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed.”(14:7)

While sa‘īd سَعِيدٌ in surah Hud 11:105 indicates the end of humans at the Day of judgment; an eternal wretchedness or happiness . The interpretation of happiness according to the verse is having eternal safety, conformability and prosperity. Such felicity will be uninterrupted. It will not be subject to chances and changes as indicated later by Allah’s saying(عَطَاءً غَيْرَ مَجْذُوذٍ (108:هود, ‘’a gift without break”(11:108) . Such a meaning is involved in the interpretation of barakah.

48.﴿ يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لا تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ إلا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ﴾ (هود :105)

"The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except by His leave: of those [gathered] some will be wretched and some will be blessed."(11 :105)

The words خَيْراً كَثِيراً in the following qur'ānic verse are involved in the meaning of barakah as stated by Ash – shīrāzī (2005:5: 126) .

49.﴿ يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْراً كَثِيراً وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلاَّ أُولُو الأَلْبَابِ﴾ (البقره : 269)

"He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding." (1:269)

The word النعمه is also contained in the interpretation of Barakah. Barakah is not the specific grace , ni'mah, itself, it is a flow of grace. It flows from God to those that are closest to God, such as saints and prophets.

50.﴿ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ﴾ (الزخرف : 59)

"He was no more than a servant: We granted Our favour to him, and We made him an example to

the Children of Israel."(43:59)

5. Comparison and Conclusions

The similarities between cursing and blessing are reflected in the fact that they, in both languages, can be identified by the following characteristics:

They are ritual religious acts.

They can be pragmatically classified as either declarative or expressive acts depending on the agent. i.e. to be felicitous declarative acts, they are in need of special authority.

When used as declarative speech acts, they exhibit a variety of for-

mulas, but when used as expressive acts, they can be described as stereotyped and therefore, formulaic.

Syntactically, a noun, a verb, and a past participle express blessing and cursing, in both languages. However, present participle is a form that is used to express curing in Arabic only.

They differ in their propositional content condition, i.e. cursing is limited to calls for malediction, while blessing is limited to calls for benediction. Accordingly, the felicity conditions of declarative and expressive blessing can be built on those of cursing respectively as follows:

Propositional content condition	Future event(E), benediction, related to hearer(H)
Preparatory condition	E is in H's interest and Speaker(s)has a supernatural power and is able to use it
Sincerity condition	S wants E to happen
Essential condition	counts as a declaration that E will happen to H

Propositional content condition	Future event(E) related to hearer(H)
Preparatory condition	E is in H's interest
Sincerity condition	S desires E to happen
Essential condition	counts as a wish that E will happen to H

Moreover, cursing is a face – threatening act, while blessing is an example of face – saving act.

One significant difference can be outlined between cursing in English and its counterpart in Arabic: declarative cursing in Arabic can be expressed both explicitly, by using the word لعن and its derivatives, and implicitly, by using other words, while that in English is expressed only explicitly. What is more, such implicit implication is

of a deep and high degree of verbal diversity. Different words imply the meaning of لعنه such as: Al-sab wa Al-shatim السب والشتم, Al- qatil القتل , Al- ṭard wa Al- ib'ād الطرد والابعاد, Al – suḥq السحق , Al - tabāb التباب, Ar – rajim الرجم , Al– qubḥ القبح and Al - diḥūr الدحور

Finally, concerning the first three questions raised at the beginning of this research paper, it can be concluded that the similarities between cursing and blessing, in both languages, outweigh the differences. As an answer to the fourth question, it can be said that when used as declarative speech acts, both blessing and cursing cannot be described as linguistic routines. .

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