

Speech acts in Akkadian in the first millennium BCE

In every language there exist expressions that don't just describe reality as it is but *do something with words*. Speech acts – and this is what we call them – engender new facts in the reality that surrounds us. Thus, saying the words „I will come tomorrow” creates a promise. My project proposes to investigate speech acts in Akkadian in the first millennium BCE. Akkadian itself is one of the oldest languages currently known to humanity, and was spoken and written between the 4th millennium BCE and the beginning of our era. Although rediscovered by modern science in the middle of the 19th century, the understanding of all its nuances can still be a challenge to researchers. Decipherers of Akkadian have above all focused on the ascertaining of meanings of single lexical items, while the meanings that are created by the use of language in context have largely been forgotten and therefore still often remain unclear.

The systematic investigation of speech acts by the means of identifying them in individual textual genres, comparisons between their form and content in various genres and the analysis of their co-occurrences will allow to find out what was actually being said on many of the millennia old cuneiform tablets. Additionally, such a research programme will enable us to gather what rules (or at least patterns) are present in the communication of Akkadian speakers in the first millennium BCE. Finally, the facts thus established will make it possible for Akkadian to be put in its proper context in the history of Semitic languages.