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Ethnopragmatic Analysis of Selected Jordanian Proverbs

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs are replete with a rhetorical force and polymorphous nature which may result in misinterpretation of proverbs or the main essence of a proverb not being fully captured. Technically, such linguistic lacunae and drawbacks jeopardize the chances of conveying the intended message appropriately. This can give rise to a state of imbalance in the scale of communication and understanding. The audience, therefore, needs a sociopragmatic competence to be able to interpret proverbs properly. The purpose of this study is to examine the subtle implications and cryptic meaning of Jordanian proverbs from a sociopragmatic perspective. An attempt is made by the researchers to show the main ethnolinguistic factors that might give rise to difficulty in understanding Jordanian proverbs. Data was collected orally by employing the ethnographic approach. The data was studied and analysed in terms of pragmatic and sociolinguistic views. On the basis of the findings, recommendations were introduced towards more sociopragmatic studies to unravel the cryptic meaning embedded in proverbs. The research shows that ethnolinguistic factors and linguistic competencies seem to play a vital role in deciphering the cryptic meaning of proverbs.

Keywords: Cosmological, ethnolinguistics, pragmatics, proverbs, sociological

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are considered as the mirror of a culture as they encompass many ethical values, traditions, and conventions. It is widely acknowledged that proverbs exist in any culture to deliver particular messages such as criticizing a situation, giving a piece of advice, or indicating a stinging satire on a given situation. Like other people in all societies, Jordanian people pay great attention to proverbs in their speech. In other words, Jordanians usually punctuate their speech with some proverbs in order to drive their messages home. Interestingly enough, they see proverbs in speech as 'salt in food'. Furthermore, there are proverbs

about proverbs, namely 'the proverb has left nothing unsaid or 'say your word and wait for its proverb' (Al-Awawdeh, 2013).

Research Problem and Objectives

The current study is motivated by the researchers' observation that some proverbs are usually misunderstood by language users. Consequently, the intended meaning of a proverb is not fully grasped. Basically, such linguistic drawbacks and lacunae can be conducive to impeding the language user form deciphering the hidden meaning of a proverb. Moreover, those interlocutors or language users who are unable to cope with such proverbs cannot grasp the ethical values encapsulated in these proverbs. Consequently, proverbs will lose their basic functions and values. It almost goes without saying that if this case persists in the long run, the essence of proverbs will gradually fade away in the repertoire of Jordanians especially the young ones. This scenario imposes a great burden on Jordanians' shoulders to handle this problem. That is to say, there is a need for research that highlights this problem and tackles the various aspects of Jordanian proverbs.

In light of such a problem, this study seeks to examine the cryptic meaning and subtle implications of Jordanian proverbs from a sociopragmatic perspective. Moreover, the study is an attempt to identify the main ethnolinguistic factors that contribute to impeding the process of misinterpreting proverbs. Putting it differently, the present study examines Jordanian proverbs in terms of a pragma-

linguistic analysis with an emphasis on the ethnography of proverbs in order to achieve a better understanding of proverbs.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it attempts to diagnose the problem of proverbs misinterpretation and determine the main ethnolinguistic factors that might be conducive to impeding the interpretation of Jordanian proverbs properly. To put it another way, the present study seeks to shed light upon this problem with some real examples in order to raise Jordanians' awareness towards proverbs. Moreover, the linguistic analysis adopted in this study will offer some significant insights to achieve the sustainability of the cultural and ethical values encapsulated in proverbs.

Theoretical Background

Review of Previous Literature. A considerable number of scholars (for instance anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, linguists, and folklorists) found in proverbs an interesting area of research. Accordingly, there was no consensus among these scholars about the definition of a proverb. However, many scholars have reached a compromise that a proverb can be defined as a brief sentence of folk which has wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a memorizable metaphorical and fixed formula that is transmitted orally from one generation to another (Meider, 1985; Norrick, 1985; Taylor, 2003). As for the characteristic

features of a proverb, acceptance and popularity are the two most essential features of any proverb. On his own, Trench (1853) argued that there were three main features that had to be included in any proverb, namely sense, shortness, and salt.

From the outset, we can see that much ink has been spilt about proverbs as a linguistic phenomenon. More strictly speaking, many studies have been carried out to investigate the syntactic features of proverbs (Jaradat, 2007; Migdadi, 2013), while other studies have been conducted on proverbs in terms of the hindrances and difficulties that translators encounter while rendering proverbs (Al-Azzam, 2018; Fahmi, 2016; Farghal & Hamly, 2015; Farghal, 1995). Some studies also deal with proverbs from other linguistic points of view such as the psycholinguistic aspect of proverbs (Alaba, 1996; Dabaghi et al., 2010). Additionally, there are some studies that have focused on the figurative and symbolic form of proverbs (Badarneh, 2016; Omoera & Inegbeboh, 2013; Wu, 2004). It is worthwhile to mention that the previous research (Cristina, 2015; Nwankwo, 2015; Yassin, 1988) has also paid some attention to the functions of proverbs. According to these studies, proverbs can serve different purposes such as discouragement, reprimand, praise and instruction.

Most importantly, a considerable number of researchers hint at the fact that the cryptic meaning and the implications of proverbs can be recognised in terms of sociopragmatic perspectives. Strictly speaking, based upon Halliday's language

functions, Yassin (1988) believed that proverbs served three different functions which were ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Similarly, Ashipu and Amende (2013) indicated that grasping the hidden meaning of proverbs could be best achieved in terms of three basic factors: first, the situation in which a proverb took place; second, the shared previous knowledge among interlocutors (which is common cultural background among interlocutors), and finally, the linguistic environment where a particular proverbial speech was used.

Having a thorough look upon the previous literature conducted on proverbs, one can realize that there is a scarcity of literature, and that little attention has been paid to Jordanian proverbs from a sociopragmatic perspective. Therefore, the current study attempts to examine Jordanian proverbs from a sociopragmatic perspective. As the present study comes under the umbrella of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, it will be of some help and benefit to shed light upon the two linguistic theories.

Sociolinguistics and Ethnography of Communication. The fact that Hymes is considered as one of the most eminent scholars in the field of sociolinguistics is quite noticeable. He is the founder of 'Ethnography of Communication'. Indeed, through a wealth of research (Hymes, 1977, 1974, 1972a, 1972b, 1967), Hymes revolutionized the realm of sociolinguistics and methodology as he came up with some new ideas and concepts about ethnography of communication. One of his main aims

was to come up with a theory that helped researchers to study language use in specific contexts.

In his insightful theory, Hymes (1974) made use of the letters S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G as an acronym to refer to a speaking model. The components of this model can be recapped as follows: setting, participants, ends, acts sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. As a matter of fact, this linguistic model has three core issues (for instance, setting, norms and end) which will be highly workable for scrutinizing proverbs from a sociolinguistic point of view. That is, this model can be fruitful in providing a suitable descriptive examination of proverbs with an emphasis on the environment in which such a proverb has been instantiated. By and large, Hymes (1974) proposed this linguistic model that took into consideration many various aspects that were involved in speaking. Most importantly, using this valuable model in analyzing any folklore item (proverbs, folktales, anecdotes, riddles… and others) can be fruitful as it enables researchers to identify and label the linguistic components of any genre (Coulthard, 1977)

Pragmatics. As far as pragmatics is concerned, it should be kept in mind that one of the basic concerns of pragmatics is to understand the mechanisms that aid language users to work out the hidden or implied meanings of any utterance. For his part, Verschueren (2009) defined pragmatics as the social, cognitive and cultural science of language and communication. He also believed that pragmatics displayed a close relationship with context speech acts and implicitness. In this regard, Yule (1996) claimed that one of the main tenets of pragmatics was to enable language users to talk about intended meanings, utterance functions, and assumptions made by the speakers as well as the kinds of actions they aimed to perform while speaking.

As for speech act theory, it is a pragmatic premise advanced by Austin (1962), and it can be recognized in the light of three main related dimensions which are locutionary speech acts, illocutionary speech acts and perlocutionary speech acts. Searle (1976), for his part, offered a more thorough account and description of direct and indirect speech acts. It is apparent that his classification is not accurate enough as there is a kind of overlap between some of his categories. He contended that direct and indirect speech acts could be divided into six types which are representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, declarative and verdictives.

Having said that, the two pragmatic notions presupposition and implicature are brought to the scene at this level. Presupposition differs from implicature as the former tackles what the speaker assumes his/her addressee already knows. Pragmatic presupposition, therefore, touches upon those assumptions and beliefs which the speaker takes for granted about the hearer. This is because both of them share many common beliefs. The latter, implicature, is a pragmatic term which is mainly concerned with what is essentially suggested by an utterance.

It can be inferred then that implicature deals with the deep layer of meaning that is not overtly expressed or stated. In fact, implicature can be seen as a basic component of a speaker's intended meaning. In a similar vein, Grice (1975) proposed the 'Cooperative Principle' and its four conversational maxims namely the maxim of Quality, the maxim of Quantity, the maxim of Relevance and maxim of Manner. These maxims play a crucial role in our daily discourse (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

Partly related to the notions of implicature and presupposition is the notion of 'Mutual Contextual Beliefs' (MCBs). Bach and Harnish (1979) advanced this notion as it was somewhat related to the speaker's intention and the addressee's inference. Indeed, any sort of speech act can be performed with an intention that addressees will be able to understand and identify the intended meaning of the speakers. Putting it differently, addressees make use of some facts that will help them identify the speaker's intended meaning.

More clearly, Levinson (1980) asserted that the pragmatic theory had to explicate four core issues which were speech act, presupposition, implicature, as well as background competence. More subtly, relying on Levinson's views, Lawal et al. (1997) attempted to build a very comprehensive linguistic framework that could be useful for conducting pragmatic research. In a nutshell, Lawal et al. (1997) touched upon the fact that the cryptic or implied meaning of an utterance could be understood if the language user employed

and made use of some competencies such as context, linguistic, situational, cosmological, psychological and sociological.

Before moving on any further, it is a good idea to explain this model is slightly more detail because it is useful for our subsequent analysis. To start with, the 'linguistic context' is mainly concerned with lexical, phonological, and syntactic components of the sentence. Furthermore, it takes into considerations the semantic and pragmatic aspects employed in an utterance. Pertaining to 'the situational context', it deals with the central topic of conversation as well as the factors of the physical occasion. As for the 'psychological context', it revolves around the background of the mood and personal beliefs. With regard to the 'social context', it has to do with interpersonal relationships between the language users. As far as 'sociological context' is concerned, it aims to describe historical settings and socio-cultural conventions. Last but not least, 'cosmological context' is concerned with some implied references to certain universally established facts and truths (Lawal et al., 1997)

By and large, the two main linguistic notions namely, communicative competence and pragmatic competence play a significant role in diagnosing the research problem and answering the research questions. Strictly speaking, the communicative competence was proposed by Hymes (1972b) who argued that any native speaker of a language must had a knowledge of certain rules in order to be able to understand and produce both the referential and social meaning

of language. If such competence is not acquired in the appropriate way, a gap in communication will exist.

It is pretty valid that communicative competence was suggested by Hymes as a counter-concept to Chomsky's linguistic competence which focuses on an ideal hearer-speakers' knowledge of grammaticality of sentences in their native language. Gumperz (1970) indicated that whereas linguistic competence covered the speaker's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, communicative competence described his ability to select, from the totality of grammatically correct expressions available to him, forms which appropriately reflected the social norms governing behaviour in specific encounters. As for pragmatic competence, it refers to cultural aspects of the language. In other words, it is a linguistic notion that encompasses and captures all aspects of knowledge that competent language users make use of in order to encode and decode meaning and sense relation in linguistic communication.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology used in the current study was interviews and self-report observations. Interviews were conducted with Jordanians to get more information about the cryptic meaning of proverbs. Indeed, the interpretations made by participants were helpful and informative in that they gave room to much deeper analysis in this study. As for the respondents, the present research was based on data collected from 100 respondents, all of them were Jordanians

who spoke the Arabic language as their native language, were born locally, and lived in Jordan for a long period of time.

It is widely acknowledged that the corpus of ethnographic research can be either written or oral. So, the proverbs in this study were collected from various sources. It is worth mentioning that the oral subset of data was collected by following the ethnographic communication approach proposed by Hymes (1972) and followed by others (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). Specifically, the data were collected by means of interviews. In order to collect sufficient and adequate corpus of data, the researchers had to participate in many conversations. The procedure employed was to ask the participants about the latest proverb that they heard of, then stimulating their appetite to tell us more proverbs. After that, the interviewees were asked to mention some proverbs that are difficult to be understood by them. All proverbs were written down after the meeting was completed.

It is worth noting here that some proverbs that seem to be difficult to be understood were also collected from articles, magazines, books, and television programs and so on. By employing these two methods in data collection, the researchers were able to collect 290 proverbs. These proverbs are in line with the research problem due to the fact that the respondents experience some difficulties in understanding these proverbs. Ten proverbs were randomly selected to be investigated from a sociopragmatic perspective. The selected proverbs are

presented in their original and English-translated forms. In other words, while translating, the researchers did their best to preserve the original point of view of each proverb as much as possible.

The selected proverbs were thoroughly examined and analysed qualitatively in terms of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic views of Lawal et al. (1997) and Hymes (1974). Specifically, the sociopragmatic analysis is done according to three main stages. First, the proverbs are linguistically examined. That is, some core linguistic issues embedded in proverbs such as polysemy, heteronomy, wordplay, lexical repetition, exaggeration or hyperbole, metaphor, lexical relations, pun have to be examined and analysed. The second stage of analysis is 'sociological'. In this stage, the proverb is examined and analysed in terms of the sociocultural as well as historical backgrounds of Jordanian society. In so doing, the sociological analysis reflects the conventions and values of Jordanian society encapsulated in proverbs.

In the last stage of analysis, the cosmological analysis will play a pivotal role in reflecting the universal theme of a proverb. Strictly speaking, it is widely accepted that proverbs are universal in their themes. Accordingly, proverbs touch upon certain worldly beliefs and facts. It is assumed the cosmological analysis can demystify the intricacies of Jordanian proverbs due to the fact that this way of cosmological analysis is concerned with universally established facts that are related to common sense.

Data Analysis

1 - ما بحرث البلاد الا عجولها 'Ma behroth albelad ila ojulha' (None ploughs the field but its calves)

Linguistic: The problem arises because of the misinterpretation of the word عجولها (calves). It is considered inappropriate among some Jordanians to describe someone as a calf. Nevertheless, the connotative meaning of this word refers to good and positive traits in Arab culture. Precisely, Arabs use the word فحول 'Fohoul', which is close in meaning to عجل 'calf', to describe the greatest poets; they called them '*Fohoul Al-Shu'ara*' which means 'the greatest poets ever'. Moreover, this word فحول was used to describe the bravest knights in the Arab tribe. Pragmatically speaking, the Arabic word فحول '« Fohoul» entails the word عجول 'calves' in the sense that the word فحول denotes 'the strongest male animal'. To recapitulate, the connotative meaning of عجول in such a context is related to a good attribute used by Arabs to praise the greatest people in a way that distinguishes them from other people. Having said that, one can infer that in order for this proverb to be interpreted properly, it is fundamentally essential for the language used to decode the lexical and word-play embodied in the proverb. If a language user is unable to interpret the word عجولها '*ojolha*' and its lexical relations properly, there will be a pragmatic failure in deciphering the positive attribute that resides in the proverb as a whole.

Sociological: The language user has to be well aware of the fact that the value of work is something of great importance to Jordanians. Moreover, the land for farmers is highly valued as it is something which cannot be sold or neglected regardless of whatever challenges or difficulties they encounter. Suffice it to say, Jordanians look at 'land' as something equal to honour as they repeatedly say 'he who sells his land, sells his honour'.

Cosmological: This proverb refers to the general belief that it will be much better for someone to do something by himself than relying on others or asking them to do it for him.

2 – كلب صديق خير من صديق كلب 'Kalb sadeeq their men sadeeq kalb' (A friend dog is better than a dog friend)

Linguistic: This proverb can be problematic due to the linguistic phenomenon in Arabic 'precedence and delay'. This phenomenon plays an essential role not only in the process of creating the proverb but also in the process of interpreting it properly. The phrase صديق كلب 'friend dog' represents a positive attribute. This is because the word كلب 'dog' is used as a noun and صديق 'friend' is used as an adjective to describe the dog. However, in the second part of the proverb, it is clear that the phrase صديق كلب 'dog friend' refers to a bad attribute, since the noun صديق 'friend' is described as an animal.

Sociological: The dog in old Arab culture symbolize for esteemed virtues such as faithfulness, loyalty and self-sacrifice. Suffice to say, some Arab poets praise princes and leaders' faithfulness, saying that "you are as faithful as a dog". Yet, this word that is dog, in the modern Islamic Arab society, is used negatively because many Arabs believe that the dog is unclean and impure.

Cosmological: The language user has to employ his worldly knowledge and competence of the fact that dogs are usually characterised by faithfulness and loyalty to the one who looks after and takes care of them. It is also common that dogs will never betray or stab someone in his back as some friends do.

3 – كلهم دارسين عند شيخ واحد 'Kolhum darseen ind Sheikh wahed' (All of them were educated by the same sheikh)

Linguistic: The use of polysemous Arabic word شيخ 'sheikh' in this proverb gives rise to a kind of difficulty in understanding the proverb. This word can mean both 'teacher' and 'religious man'. The language user has to interpret the polysomic word 'sheikh' in a proper way. Needless to say that this word is mostly used by Arabs to refer to a 'religious man'. Though, in this context, it has another meaning. It means 'teacher'. In old Arab times, there were no real professional teachers; rather, children used to go to the mosque to get taught by sheikhs.

Sociological: The stereotypical image about Jordanian community is clearly reflected in this proverb. This proverb is also indicative of the traditional Arab way of teaching in the past. Every sheikh adopted a certain method and way of teaching his students. Interestingly enough, when people see a student discussing some issues and matters in a certain way, people can easily infer the name of his sheikh from the way he deals with certain issues. By and large, this proverb reflects the idea that the students who are taught by the same sheikh are supposed to have the same information or way of thinking.

Cosmological: Awareness of the fact that teachers in the past have little information gained from limited sources of knowledge. Subsequently, it will be a fruitless and redundant effort if you ask the same question to all students who were educated by the same sheikh and expect a different answer from each one of them. This is because they 'read from the same page' so automatically you will get the same answer.

4 - مثل قلب النهار 'mithel qalb Alnahar' (Like the heart of the day)

Linguistic: There is a basic semantic requirement for interpreting this proverb properly. Strictly speaking, the word النهار 'daylight' can serve as a metonym for beauty, purity and clarity. Consequently, this intended meaning of this proverb is somewhat not easy to be grasped due to the fact that it can be interpreted in two different ways: 'the heart of a sandgrouse' or 'like the

middle of the day'. To put in another way, the Arabic word قلب 'heart' can be of two different meanings: either 'the real heart' or 'middle'. Furthermore, the word نهار 'day' can mean either 'bird' or 'day'. As a matter of fact, the language user who opts for the first interpretation will misinterpret the proverb and will not capture its real essence.

Sociological: Jordanians usually tend to make use of the day as a symbol of clarity and beauty**.**

Cosmological: It is a universal fact that people tend to utilize sunlight as a symbol of beauty. The daylight or sunlight is something that evokes beautiful memories that reside inside people.

5 - بكانون حضر الجفت والفحمات والكانون 'In Kanoon hadir eljifet wal fahmaat wal Kanoon' (In December and January, prepare the peat, coal and brazier)

Linguistic: The polysemous Arabic word كانون 'Kanoon' can cause misunderstanding for this proverb. Therefore, any language user has to appreciate the significance of the polysemic pun on كانون, meaning the two months 'December & January' and also 'brazier' respectively. It should be noted here that at the non-pragmatic level, the two interpretations can be valid. Subsequently, lacking pragmatic competence in deciphering the word كانون will lead to misinterpretation of the proverb.

Sociological: Knowledge of the Jordanian conventions embodied in this proverb can facilitate the process of figuring out the

meaning of this proverb. In other words, this proverb encompasses words like 'peat and brazier' which are stereotyped as being the prime way of heating for the needy people in the coldest months of the year. It is assumed that many Jordanians are unfamiliar with this old way of heating by using 'peat and brazier' due to the fact that it is no longer used nowadays.

Cosmological: Being well-aware of the fact that people all over the word take certain preparations and actions as to cope with the coldest months of the year.

6 - عرس وهص ما بيصير 'ors w hs ma beseir' (A wedding party and keeping silent do not coincide)

Linguistic: The difficulty in understanding this proverb stems from a popular linguistic phenomenon called metathesis. Metathesis can be defined as an alternation in the sequence of two adjacent sounds according to certain conditions. In this proverb, the two neighbouring sounds (/h/ and /S/) replace each other. The word صه /s h/ which means 'to stop talking' is pronounced in terms of metathesis as هص / h s/. To wrap up this point, if the listener or the language user is unfamiliar with this phonological process, he will encounter some difficulties in grasping the implications of this proverb.

Sociological: The traditional wedding ceremonies in Jordan are subtly indicated in this proverb. These ceremonies are replete with dancing, drums, loud music, the Arabic flute, and also the use of firearms and fireworks to express great joy. So, it would

be unacceptable to ask the audience to keep silent and quiet in such ceremonies.

Cosmological: It is well known that wedding parties all over the world have some noisy ceremonies, and it is of strange nature to ask people to be quiet and silent during these ceremonies.

7- بعد ما شاب ودوه الكتاب 'baed ma shab wdouh alkutaab' (After he had been white-haired, they sent him to the school.)

Linguistic: The difficulty in understanding this proverb arises from the fact that the proverb makes use of heteronomy. This semantic notion plays a significant role in interpreting the word 'الكتاب' 'alkutaab'. In other words, the word 'الكتاب' is of two different pronunciations that result in two different meanings regardless of the fact that they have identical spelling. Precisely, if this word is pronounced as /*alkuttab*/, as the case in this proverb, it means 'place where students gather to be educated or taught by teachers' it is something similar to a school. In contrast, if this word 'الكتاب' is pronounced as /*alkitab*/, it means 'book'. Once again, the language users and interlocutors will not identify the real meaning of this proverb in case they are not aware of this semantic notion.

Sociological: Knowledge of the immense importance the Jordanian people pay to literacy can be helpful in understanding the real meaning of this proverb. That is, Jordanians believe that it will be already too late to send old people to the school because

they will experience great difficulties to get literate at this age. Suffice it to say, Jordanian people believe that learning at a young age is like 'carving in a stone' in the sense that what is learned at a young age will stay in the mind for a long time and cannot be forgotten. The proverb has also been used widely in a metaphorical form as it is used to mock people who take too late action for any problem. Putting it differently, teaching old people is like 'closing the door of the stable after the horse has bolted'.

Cosmological: This proverb emphasizes the universal fact that teaching at a younger age is more fruitful and effective than teaching at an old-age.

8 - لبس العود بجود 'labis aloud bejoud' (Wear the wood, it will look nice)

Linguistic: To grasp the intended meaning of this proverb, one has to identify the personification that resides in this proverb. The wood here is personified as an ugly man. If this ugly man wears beautiful clothes, he will look nice.

Sociological: Jordanians pay attention not only to the essence of things but also to the appearances because they give you an initial impression of something or someone. Also, they believe that if you take care of someone who is ugly and give him beautiful clothes, his look and appearance will become much better.

Cosmological: It is widely known that 'a good countenance is a letter of recommendation'.

9 - كثير الكارات قليل البارات 'ktheer alkaraat qaleel albaraat.' (The man who often changes jobs gains little money)

Linguistic: The difficulty in understanding this proverb is attributed to the fact that it is 'injected' with a Turkish word البارات 'albaraat' (in Turkish - Para) which means money /coins. So, the language user who is not familiar with this word will experience some difficulties in capturing proverb meaning.

Sociological: Jordanian people look at those people who frequently change their jobs and do not settle in one place as careless people because of the assumption that they will not be able to gain much money or master any job.

Cosmological: The common belief demonstrated in this proverb is that the quality or the state of being likely to change unexpectedly and repeatedly rarely prospers. The meaning of this proverb is close to this universal image represented in these two sayings: 'rolling stone gathers no mosses' or 'Jack of all trades master of none'

10 - الطبع غلب التطبع 'Altaba ghalba altataba' (Nature overcomes nurture)

Linguistic: The closeness in pronunciation of the two words الطبع /Altaba/ and التطبع / altataba/ makes some kind of confusion as it makes the listener think that these two words are identical. In fact, the two mentioned words are derived from the same root. However, the sense of each word is different from the other. The former الطبع

means 'human nature', while the latter التطبع means **'nurture'.** This difference in meaning is ascribed to the well-known Arabic rule which shows that any addition to a word root will lead to a change in the meaning of that word.

Sociological: Jordanians think that inherent traits, values and habits in a person will remain as they are even if he/she actively seeks to change or pretends otherwise. That is, people cannot change their inborn nature, regardless of how much hard they try.

Cosmological: This proverb highlights the fact that custom is considered second nature in the sense that what is bred in the bone cannot easily go out of the flesh. In other words, the nature that someone is born with can beat any adopted behavioural patterns**.**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned earlier, the chief concern of pragmatics is to tackle the subtle implications and cryptic meanings. In fact, Jordanian society is regarded as a 'high-context culture', (Hall, 1976) as indirectness is highly appreciated by Jordanians. This very idea was manifested by one of the respondents who reported that "I use proverbs in my speech because I prefer saying things in an indirect way''. Technically, in high context interaction, the recipient has to decode the message and infer the hidden or contextual meanings of the message. Additionally, the interaction can be of different multilayered contexts (for instance social norms, historical context,

relational and situational contexts), and these multilayered contexts govern the encounter (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Accordingly, it is inferred that proverbs with a rhetorical force are instantiated by Jordanians to deliver a message indirectly. Strictly speaking, a thorough examination of the data reveals that the cryptic meaning of Jordanian proverbs serves different purposes: blaming, advising, criticizing, reprimanding, mocking, or indicating a stinging satire on a situation.

It has also been noticed that Jordanian proverbs tend to communicate a great deal of information about the cultural norms of Jordanian society. Accordingly, one can safely claim that these proverbs are a rich source of information about how the language interacts with culture and society. Specifically, the subject matter of Jordanian proverbs and their subtle implications can also touch upon various themes such as caring for others and cooperation, loyalty to the land and home, warning and conflict resolution, just to name a few. Moreover, many Jordanian proverbs are replete with conventions and culture-bound values which reflect the way of life in the traditional Jordanian community. The following words that are mentioned in the previous proverbs demonstrate this phenomenon (brazier, peat, Alkutaab, wedding party)

It is also worth noting here that many proverbs contain cultural references. These cultural references were so common among people in the past, but nowadays they no longer exist. Consequently, these cultural references can impede the process of interpreting proverbs properly. One of the

interviewees commented on this issue by saying that ''some proverbs have many cultural references that I am not familiar with''. These findings seem to be in line with those of Blom and Gumperz (1972) who stressed that in order to be able to interpret what we heard, we must have both solid background knowledge of the local culture and of the processes which governed and created the social meaning. In the same way, Hymes (1972b) emphasized that native speakers of any language must have a solid knowledge of certain rules in order to be able to produce and understand both the social and referential meaning of language.

Having said that, it would be a safe assumption to claim that the adherence of people to their cultural norms can give rise to the creation of a set of stereotypical conceptions. That is, each community has its own distinctive stereotypes. Generally, stereotypes can be identified in terms of different kinds such as religious, communal, individual, intrinsic, and others. Based upon the above explanations, one can argue that many stereotypical beliefs are usually employed by proverbs and could be misinterpreted if the language used is unfamiliar with these stereotypical beliefs of society.

It should be pointed out that the analysis shows that the difficulty experienced by language users in understanding proverbs is ascribed to many reasons. First, the heavy use of word-play and lexical relations, for instance, homophony, polysemy, heteronym of a proverb (as shown in Proverbs 1, 2, 5) Furthermore, it is noticed that some proverbs employ rhetorical devices that govern the process of selection and arrangement of phonological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical features. This was clarified to us by one of the respondents who says that "the nature of the language used in proverbs is not easy to be understood.''

It has also been noted that some proverbs have archaic and difficult vocabularies, some of which are not from Arabic origin (as in proverb 9). Apparently, facing such words by the language used might result in difficulty in understanding the message of a proverb. One of the respondents, for instance, affirmed that "I do not know the meaning of words in many proverbs". Moreover, connotative meaning of a proverb's words is something of paramount importance. That is to say, linguists assert that meaning can be either denotative or connotative. The former deals with the conceptual meaning of a word that is dictionary meaning, while the latter is mainly concerned with the shades of meaning that could be added to the denotation of a word (Farghal & Abdullah, 1999).

It must be kept in mind that the hidden meaning cannot be unravelled unless the language users thoroughly scrutinize the deep layer of meaning in a proverb. This is because the cryptic meaning of a proverb does not only tackle the surface layer of meaning but rather it relies on the deep layer of meaning. This very idea seems to be in agreement with Musa (2006) who claimed that the relationships between the surface structure or the words that made up the expression and deep meaning, or the message of the proverb, were interconnected.

To recapitulate, having a knowledge of the linguistic norms is not enough to grasp and identify the cryptic meaning of a proverb; rather an interpretation of a proverb should go hand in hand with a solid knowledge of the socio-cultural background of the society. It also assumed that the ethnolinguistic analysis adopted in this study (that is pragmatics and ethnography of speaking) can be conducive to figuring out the cryptic meaning of proverbs as it facilitates the process of decoding and interpreting proverbs properly.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the subtle implications of Jordanian proverbs. It also attempted to determine the ethnolinguistic factors that hinder the process of understanding proverbs. The selected proverbs were examined from a sociopragmatic perspective. The findings of this paper show that there are some ethnolinguistic factors of great effect in understanding proverbs. Furthermore, this study stresses the fact that there are certain linguistic and social competencies need to be deployed by the language used to be able to capture the intended meaning of a proverb. By and large, this study is expected to be of great value to other forms of folklore. That is to say, investigating proverbs in terms of sociolinguistics will give rise to bring back the cultural values not only for proverbs but also for other short forms of folklore such as folktales, jokes, parables, and riddles. Lastly, it is hoped that the ethnolinguistic analysis adopted in this study contributes

significantly to the sustainability of cultural values encapsulated in proverbs and to the process of capturing the intended meaning of proverbs.

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