

The Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics of *?a:di* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic

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Abstract

The present paper aims at studying the discourse functions of the discourse marker “*?a:di*” in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. The data analyzed consisted of 20 video-taped dyadic conversations in Jordanian Arabic. These conversations were transliterated and then translated into English. Discourse analysis is employed as a theoretical framework for the current study. The study concludes that the adjective “*?a:di*” has many discoursal functions, its pragmatic meaning relies on the context of situation and its translatability is cultural specific.

Keywords: discourse analysis, discourse markers “*?a:di*”, Jordanian spoken Arabic, discourse markers, translation

1. Introduction

Language, regardless of its type and family, comprises an invaluable treasure of linguistic and social terms that serve numerous functions and purposes. Such terms are usually spoken, rather than written and this probably explains the reason that they are often ignored. Stubbs (1983) expresses his surprise of eschewing a rich area of linguistic fact for the mere fact that it is only spoken and calls for more attention to it. Still there are others who feel that research on non-standard forms of Arabic is daunting and call for turning down such research and create stumbling blocks in the way of its publication. Despite such circumstances research on such terms has started to appear belatedly.

Spoken Arabic is a rich area of investigation. It includes an unlimited set of social and linguistic terms that awaits serious research and investigation. One of such terms is *?a:di*, which literally means ‘normally, usually’. This term draws our attention due to its high frequency in the Jordanian Spoken Arabic (hence JSA). However, researching on this term and others requires, as Aitchison (1994, p. 83) pointed out, recognizing and grasping: recognizing refers to the exact word or term that a speaker utters as this is associated with the speed of speech and acoustic variance. Recognizing a word depends on two points, the first of which is one’s knowledge of the language in question. The second pertains to the surrounding context of the uttered word. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) call for the relatedness of discourse and identity in the sense of displaying that they are when they communicate with each other.

This research is based on answers to intriguing and important questions that pertain to how people communicate and employ words to serve numerous functions (For more interesting questions, see Wardhaugh 1993, p. 8). In addition, studying and interpreting what participants say in conversation is crucial. However, the translatability of casual conversations is problematic; few studies tackle this pivotal phenomenon in the Arab world, as translators focus their attention on written and spoken discourse rather than on casual conversations in Jordanian Arabic. After reviewing the literature, we have not found a single paper that tackles the translatability of discourse markers in casual discourse in Jordanian Arabic. This study tries to investigate one of the most common frequent discourse marker *?a:di* in JSA. The interpretations of *?a:di* depends on the context where it occurs as well as the cultural background of both speaker and interlocutor. In other words, the meanings of *?a:di* (probably similar to okay in English) is different from that in English. It has different pragmatic meanings and interpretation in different contexts.

Discourse markers are placed in discourse and they show that discourse is organized and processed (Aijmeir,

2002), (cited in Moore, 2007). Discourse markers can be defined structurally and functionally. The former means that discourse markers are short element of language that are often prosodically subordinate to another word; they seem to be deleted from the rest of other utterance (Ostman, 1995), (Cited in Moore, 2007).

Discourse markers are derived from lexical items which have clear semantic meanings, but when employing as discourse markers, their semantic meanings will be ambiguous or they are propositionally empty (Ostman, 1995), [cited in Moore, 2007]. The functional component of discourse markers includes implicit and explicit pragmatic roles involving ‘discourse organization and attitude signaling’ (Ostman, 1995), (Cited in Moore, 2007, p. 6). Fraser (1999) states that a discourse marker that has a meaning may relate the meaning of the preceding element to the following one in discourse. In addition, the pragmatic meaning of discourse markers can be attained from the conceptual context. Therefore, discourse markers do not carry a semantic content (Moore, 2007). However, they have pragmatic, expressive, and textual functions (Schifrin, 1987). Urgelles-Coll (2010) explains that discourse markers, syntactically speaking, occur initially in a sentence; they appear to be syntactically separated from the sentence or they are loosely attached to the sentence. Semantically, their employment does not affect the truth condition of an utterance (Urgelles-Coll, 2010).

Newmark (1988, p. 4) defines translation as “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”. Therefore, translation means to render the meaning of a certain message (written or spoken) of the Source Language into the Target Language (TL). Therefore, the main purpose behind this study is to remove ambiguity and misconception when translating casual conversations in JSA. This study can also be applicable in consecutive interpretation. Furthermore, the translatability of discourse markers is also influential for the non-speakers of JSA so that they can avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding. This study is original and distinguished, as it combines two kinds of translation, intralingual translation, translation with the same language, i.e., interpreting or explaining, and interlingual translation, translation a certain text from a SL into a TL (Jakobson, 1956). Wittgenstein (1953, p. 43) said, “The meaning of a word is its use in the language.” As a way of illustration, the same word has different interpretations in different contexts. Therefore, translators should be aware of that, especially when translating JSA.

Culture and language are related, and they have to be taken equally in the process of translation. Not only should translators concentrate on the same conceptual meaning of the text but also on the differences between two cultural perspectives (Abbasi et al., 2012). Put in other words, culture and language are complementary in the process of translation, so in their work translators transform the cultural perspectives of a text into the Target Language. Translation therefore has a significant role in the process globalization of cultures in terms of transferring customs, ethnic, social habits or religious values (Abbasi et al., 2012).

According to Komissarov (1991), people of the same linguistic community share the same culture, i.e., traditions, habits and ways of doing and saying things, so this bit of information is the basis of the interlocutors’ presupposition that enables them to produce and understand messages in their linguistic form. Consequently, this common piece of information is required when communication takes place between two members of different cultures and it may become an obstacle to understand (Komissarov, 1991). Komissarov (1991, p. 34) states “to overcome the linguistic barrier, the translator has to surmount the cultural barrier, to make sure that the receptors of the target text are provided with the presuppositions required for their access to the message contents.”

The translation of discourse markers is cultural specific because they have different semantic and pragmatic meanings in different contexts, on one hand, and their meanings depend on the facial expressions that accompany their production in discourse, on the other. Because of its various meanings the translatability of *?a:di* into English is problematic, even if the translation is performed by Arabic native speakers. Moreover, its translatability is a clear example that supports the notion that the process of translation should provide presuppositions which are needed for understanding the content of the message in the Source Language (SL).

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The present study draws on discourse analysis, conversation analysis and translation theory as a theoretical framework. When translating, we have to take the following three-stratum level analysis into consideration: semantic analysis, textual analysis and pragmatic analysis. The translation of the meanings of *?a:di* depends on pragmatic strategy.

The data of the current study were collected in February 2010 at Yarmouk University. Twenty dyadic conversations were video-taped and then transliterated into Jordanian Arabic, and then they were translated into English. A basic quantitative analysis was done to count the number of occurrences of *?a:di* in the analyzed data. Subsequently, the pragmatic meanings of *?a:di* were grouped and translated under different categories. The discourse marker “*?a:di*” occurs 105 times in the analyzed data.

3. Analysis

After a thorough scrutinization of the compiled data, we found that the Arabic discourse marker *?a:di* serves the following pragmatic functions:

First, it can be employed to express the meaning of consolation or mitigating the effect of a sad piece of news, as in the following example:

- (1) **Background:** a merchant was complaining to his friend about a deal that he lost in the market. His friend said to him:

[Arabic Text] يا صديقي عادي لا تضائق ولا تنهض. ان شا الله ربنا يعوضك عن كل اللي اخسرته

[Transliteration] Ya, sadiqi, ?a:di. La tadhayig wa la tihtamm. Insha Allah rabina yaCwadak Can kul ?illi Xsirtu.

[English Translation] Dear friend, ?a:di, Don't worry. In Allah's (God's) will, He will compensate you for all the losses

The friend says here that the loss of merchants is common or *?a:di* as it is the usual news that merchants hear. By employing or referring to *?a:di*, the speaker tries to mitigate the effect of the merchant's losses. It usually works well.

Second, *?a:di* can be used to ask for a permission to do something, or to check whether it is allowed to do something. Example (2) below talks about a student asking her instructor to allow her to leave class before the end of the lecture. The instructor replies with *?a:di*, which expresses her approval or consent.

- (2) [Arabic Text] اسراء : دكتوره لو سمحت عادي لو طلعت قبل ما تخلص المحاضرة؟

[Transliteration] دكتوره: عادي, طبعاً ولا يهمك

[Transliteration] Isra: ductoura, law samhtri, ?a:di law TliCit gabil ma tixlah-l-muhadar?

Ductoura: ?a:di, TabCan, wala yhimmik

[Translation] Isra: Doctor, sorry, Is it ?a:di if I leave class before the end of it?

Doctor: ?a:di, of course. Don't worry.

Third, *?a:di* can be employed to express the meaning of disapproval or rebuke, i.e., a feeling that someone behaved badly. In example (3), two friends (Ali and Ahmad) were sitting with each other talking about a certain matter. Suddenly Ahmad picked the mobile of Ali, but it fell into the ground causing it to break into pieces. Thus Ali felt angry and said to him: ?a:di what you did?! And also you laugh, too?! ?a:di in this context expresses rebuke of the person who committed the mistake or error.

- (3) [Arabic Text] علي: يا زميلي، كمان بضحك؟ يعني عادي اللي اعملته؟

[Transliterated] Ali: ya zalamiy, kaman bidhhak?! YaChi ?a:di ?illi Cimiltuh?!

[Translation] Ali: Oh, man. You laugh too?! Is it ?a:di what you did?!

Four, a further meaning that *?a:di* reveals is to show disappointment regarding a certain action or piece of news, as in the following example

- (4) [Arabic Text] علي: احمد ما سمعت اللي صار؟

[Transliteration] احمد: شو صار؟

[Arabic Text] علي : الدكتور رسيك في مادة تحليل الخطاب

[Transliteration] احمد : عادي(تهيءه) شو بدبي اعمل؟

- (5) [Transliteration] Ali: Ahmad, ma simiCit ?illi Sa:r?

Ahmad: Ia? Shou Sa:r?

Ali: ?iddaktour rasabak fi madit taHili:l xiTa:b

Ahmad: ?a:di (with sigh). Show biddi ?aCmal?

[Translation] Ali: Ahmad, did you hear what happened?

Ahmad: No, what happened?

Ali: The doctor failed you in the course of Discourse Analysis.

Ahmad: ?a:di (with sigh). What can I do?

In the above example, Ahmad expresses his disappointment that he failed in the course of Discourse Analysis. He cannot do anything now as the result has been announced. But he definitely feels disappointed regarding his result in the course. Remember that Ahmad said *?a:di* with a sigh, which expresses his negative feelings.

Five, *?a:di* can be used to express the meaning of contempt, disdain, or scorn. In the following example (5), Mohammad uses the term *?a:di* to express his contempt of his friend Ali who was called 'stupid'.

- (6) [Arabic Text] محمد : تعالى يا غبي نروح عند احمد

[Transliteration] علي: ليش بحكيلي غبي.

[Transliteration]Mohammad: taCal ya ghabi nrOUH nishar Cind Ahmad

Ali: laysh bitHkili ghabi?

[Translation]Mohammad: laysh zaClan?! ?a:di, ma ?intih hayk!

Mohammad: Come here, you chump. Can we spend some time at Ahmad's house tonight?

Ali: Why do you call me chump?

Mohammad: Why are you angry?! But you are really a chump!

Six, ?a:di can be used to express courtesy. Consider the following example:

(7) [AT] علي: مرحباً كيفك أحمد؟ هاي هاي لا غراض اللي وصيتي عليهم

أحمد: يسلمو إيديك.

علي: لا عادي ولا يهمك.

Ali: MarHaba, keyfak Ahmad? Hay lighradh ?illi waSeitni Calayhum.

Ahmad: Yaslmu ?ideik. Ghallabtak maCi.

Ali: La, ?a:di, wa yihammuk

Ali: Hello, How are you Ahmad? These are the things you asked me to bring for you.

Ahmad: Thank you so much. Sorry for bothering you.

Ali: ?a:di, don't worry.

Seven, ?a:di may be used to express or show acceptance of what happened without bearing any responsibility of the other partner. Example (7) talks about a car accident where one driver hit another car. The driver tried to apologize for what happened. The owner of the other car said that it was ?a:di as the losses were probably trivial.

(8) [AT] سامر: اسف يا أخي مش قصدي.

خالد: عادي.

[Transliteration]Samir: ?asif, ya ?axi. Mish gaSdi

[Translation]Samir: Sorry, brother. I did not mean that.

Khalid: ?a:di.

Eight, ?a:di can also be employed to save one's face in speech or in front of other people in a certain situation. Example (8) describes a situation where one person was waiting for his friend, but the latter arrived late. The latter person tried to apologize for the delay, but his friend saved his face by saying ?a:di, as he tried to meet a third party:

(9) [AT] أ: إتأخرت عليكي ، أنا عارف إنك مستعجله

ب: لا عادي بس والله تأخرت عن موعدك

[Transliteration]A: ?itaxarit Caleik. ?ana Carif ?innak mistaCjileh

B: la, ?a:di, bas wa-llahi taxarit Can-l-mawCidi

[Translation]A: I am late. I know that you are in a hurry

B: No, ?a:di, but in Allah's Name I was late as I had another appointment.

Nine, ?a:di may be used to express an indirect criticism or questioning about a certain behavior or deed. In example (9) below, a woman is planning to travel to one emirate in the United Arab Emirates when her friend asked her if this could be ?a:di to do it alone. Her friend said that her brother is there and will be waiting for her in the airport.

(10) [AT] أ: عادي انك تسافري للخليج لحالك؟

ب: لا ماهو أخوي هناك وراح يستناني بالمطار

[Transliteration]A: ?a:di ?innik tsa:fri llixalij laHalik?

B: No, mahu ?axu:I hna:k w-raH yastanani bil-maTa:r

[Translation]A: ?a:di that you travel to the Gulf alone

B: No, but my brother is there and will be waiting for me at the airport.

?a:di may also be used to express other pragmatic functions such as indifference, to hide one's real feelings, prefabricated filler and the tendency of a speaker not to participate in a certain conversation.

4. Discussion

From the above examples, it is crystal clear that the Arabic adjective ?a:di serves various functions in different contexts and situations. However, this should not lead us to a number of misleading inferences that include; first, discourse analysts should not follow the pervasive illusion that we can understand discourse based on our understanding the meaning of some words or certain syntactic structures. This means that the hearer and the speaker have to resort to other discourse essential elements such as setting, social roles, deictic markers and others (Brown and Yule, 1986). These scholars (1986, p. 225) gave a summary of other elements for the

interpretation of a message. These include: (1) computing the communicative function (how to take the message), (2) using general socio-cultural knowledge (facts about the world) and (3) determining the inferences to be made. The present writers stress the fact the for communication to proceed smoothly, there must be common grounds shared by both the speaker and the hearer or writer and reader, and there should be agreement on global perspectives. It is this shared cultural and social ground, beside global perspectives, that enabled us to interpret the occurrence of *?a:di* or other discourse markers in different contexts. This implies that the discourse analyst cannot remain intimated by the discourse he analyzes. He has to use what we know as encyclopedic knowledge to interpret the message or discourse. However, the discourse analyst has to be limited and circumspect in his interrelations of any discourse.

5. Conclusion

Similar to other Arabic spoken dialects, Jordanian Spoken Arabic is a rich area of research. It includes various topics that await more research. The present paper is one of many studies that are required, though it is limited to the occurrence of the Arabic Adjective *?a:di* and its functions only. We hope that the present study motivates many scholars to tackle many similar linguistic issues and phenomena in Arabic.

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