A Speech Act Analysis of Bedouin Proverbs in Jordan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The main aim of this study is to investigate Bedouin proverbs in Jordan in accordance with Speech Act Theory. More specifically, it attempts to determine the illocutionary acts as well as the illocutionary forces in the selected contextualized proverbs. More importantly, it targets to test the applicability of specifying the perlocutionary acts of Bedouin proverbs as it tries to explore the possible perlocutionary acts that Bedouin proverbs can accomplish in their real contexts. The study revealed that the illocutionary acts performed by using Bedouin proverbs are representatives, commissives expressives and directives, while the illocutionary acts are scolding, threating, advising, criticizing, requesting and asking. It also proved that it is applicable to determine the perlocutionary acts of Bedouin proverbs. It showed that the perlocutionary acts are categorized into two levels: the psychological consequence (insulting, scaring, convincing, angering, motivating and persuading) and getting the hearer to do something.

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs like any other traditional verbal folklore genres, e.g. folktales, riddles, legends, stories and jokes exist in every society as part of that society's folklore. A proverb is a short statement or phrase that encodes people's ideas, feelings, traditions, habits, beliefs and experiences. Mollanazar (2001) defined the proverb as "a unit of meaning in a specific context through which the speaker and hearer arrive at the same meaning" (p. 53). Mieder (2004) pointed out that "proverbs fulfill the human need to summarize experiences and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs" (p. 1).

When people interact with each other, they usually use proverbs in their daily speech in order to perform a wide variety of functions; they use proverbs to give a piece of advice, to criticize, to threaten, to request and many other communicative functions. Such functions of language were called illocutionary forces by Austin (1962). Moreover, by using a proverb in a certain context it can have a specific effect on the hearer. This effect was called the perllocutionary act by Austin. In few words, whenever a proverb appears in communication, it will contain *illocutionary act*,

illocutionary force and *perlocutionary* act. In order to find out the illocutionary act, illocutionary force and perlocutionary act a proverb can achieve, it is essential to take the context into consideration. Yan (1996) states that "when contexts are taken into consideration in the study of meanings, pragmatics hence comes into existence" (p. 11).

Although much ink has been poured on Arabic proverbs, no single study has examined the perlocutionary effect, which is a neglected component in Speech Act Theory. In this study, a number of Bedouin proverbs were investigated as per the speech act theory to explore not only the illocutionary acts and forces of Bedouin proverbs but more importantly the perlocutionary effect of these proverbs. Accordingly, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the kinds of the illocutionary acts of Bedouin proverbs?
2. What are the illocutionary forces of Bedouin proverbs?
3. What are the possible perlocutionary acts of Bedouin Proverbs?

To the researcher's best knowledge; there was no single study that investigated the perlocutionary acts of proverbs in general and Bedouin proverbs in particular. Therefore, this study comes to fill in this gap in literature. What is more, the fruits of the study will benefit second language learners as well as

linguists. In this study, only Bedouin Proverbs were investigated. Moreover, the researcher applied Searle's classification of speech acts on the collected data. Accordingly, the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the study.

2. RELATED LITERARURE

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Speech Act Theory is one of the most important theories that falls under a branch of linguistics called *pragmatics*, which has been defined by many scholars and researchers. Levinson (1983) defined pragmatics as "the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language" (p. 9). Mey (2001) also defined it as "the use of language in human communication" (p. 6). Furthermore, Leech (1983) described pragmatics as "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations" (p. 6). In pragmatics, the context is significant to determine the meaning of an utterance.

Speech Act Theory was firstly proposed by John Austin (1962) and then elaborated by John Searle (1976, 1969). Both Austin and Searle believed that language can be used not only to say things but also to perform actions.

Austin distinguished between direct and indirect speech acts. Yule (1996) states that direct speech act means the direct relationship between form and function, and the indirect speech act means the indirect relationship between form and function.

Austin (1962, 94-108) proposed three kinds of acts: the locutionary act which is the actual words uttered, the illocutionary act which is the intended meaning and the perlocutionary act which is the effect of the utterance on the hearer. According to Seale (1969), the perlocutionary acts include the act of *persuading, amusing, embarrassing, boring, intimating*, or *inspiring* the addressee.

Austin also made a clear distinction between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. He stated that the former is a conventional linguistic act, whereas, the latter is non-linguistic act. He reported that the illocutionary act is under the control of the speaker, while the perlocutionary act is more related to the hearer. The distinction between the two has been illustrated by contrasting lists of illocutionary and perlocutionary verbs. Accordingly, to embarrass, persuade, frighten or get the hearer to do something/realize something are perlocutionary, not illocutionary. This is because such acts cannot be used performatively. To under understand this. Consider the following examples.

*1. I hereby embarrass you.

*2. I hereby persuade you

*3. I hereby get you to do something.

According to Austin, a speaker cannot say (1, 2 and 3) above, as such verbs cannot figure in explicit forms. Unlike the illocutionary verbs that can be used performatively. In order to make the distinction clearer, Austin classified the illocutionary verbs by using the explicit performative test and a concise dictionary. He comes up with five main classes: verdictives, excercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives.

Searle (1976) criticized Austin's taxonomy and proposed an alternative taxonomy of illocutionary acts:

1. Assertives (representatives): acts which commit the speaker to the truth of the proposition such as claiming and reporting.
2. Directives: acts in which the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something such as asking, requesting and advising.
3. Commissives: acts which commit the speaker to some future act such as promising and offering.
4. Expressives: acts in which the speaker makes his attitude about a proposition such as thanking, apologizing, and congratulating.
5. Declarations: acts which bring about correspondence between the propositional content and the reality such as naming and appointing.

2.2 Previous Studies

Lawal, Ajayi and Raji (1997) investigate the illocutionary acts implemented through the use of twelve Yoruba proverbs and analyze the kinds of pragmatic context and competence which the listeners have to invoke and deploy respectively to interpret them appropriately and to resolve the overt contradiction in each of the six selected pairs of proverbs. The researchers interpret proverbs according to speech act theory. They aim to answer why and how these proverbs are used. The data were collected from literary texts and native speakers of the language. Each proverb is analyzed pragmatically by stating the direct and indirect illocutionary acts. They find out that the direct performative illocutionary force of Yoruba proverbs tends to be "assertive". The indirect illocutionary forces vary and include the "expressive act of blaming".

Ali and Makhlef (2001) carries out a study to analyze the speech acts of the English and Arabic proverbs.

They deal with the problem that both English and Arabic proverbs express the literal meaning of their words while they bear indirect/metaphorical meanings which are not explicit for the hearers. They also limited their study to the analysis of 59 English and Arabic proverbs, following Searle's model of speech acts. Their study has shown that the "commissive" speech acts type and "representative" speech acts type are the most occurring types of speech acts. The "commissive" speech acts represent the first occurrence, whereas, the "representative" speech acts represent the second occurrence. Moreover, it has shown that the most of the English and Arabic proverbs have the occurrence of warning acts more than others. The asserting acts have the second occurrence while the advising acts have the third occurrence. It also has shown that there are some other acts such as threatening, requesting and wisdom acts but they represent the lower percentage.

Yan (2006) studies English proverbs in terms of Speech Act Theory. She focuses on how speech act theory can be applied to the understanding of English proverbs and how the illocutionary forces produced in proverbs function in different contexts. She also hopes that her views about proverbs can attribute to a better understanding of how proverbs can be employed to perform different illocutionary acts and how they function to effect successful communication. She finds that the majority of proverbs are "directive", "expressive" and "representative".

Hor, G and Jamal, H. (2007) conduct a study entitled *A Test of Searle's Speech Act Theory: A Case Study of Lebanese Religious Proverbs*. Their study aims at testing, with a platform of selected Lebanese Arabic Religious Proverbs, the validity of Searle's theory when applied within a culturally specific context. The study reveals the success of Searle's speech act theory when applied on Lebanese religious proverbs and it is applicability of this theory on Non-western communication mode. They find that the percentage of the occurrence of "representatives" is (43%) and "commissives" is (30%) and the non-applicability of declarative speech acts.

Lutfi (2007) applies speech acts to weather proverbs. The main concern of his paper is to demonstrate that weather proverbs are often intended to be speech acts rather than statements about atmospheric settings. The study has noted that weather proverbs are always indirectly exploited to express the direct speech acts of warning, advising, exhorting, urging, prophesying, etc. He found that weather proverbs are special cases of indirect speech acts which are associated with atmospheric conditions. These acts are uttered and performed on the condition that they are related to instances of weather broadcasting, i.e., generally, they either urge their hearers to make use of a fine weather or to avoid unhappy weather.

Abdul Jabbar (2008) applies the speech act theory to the American English proverbs and analyzes them in a way similar to that used in conversational speech acts in spoken language. The study focuses on the speech acts of advice to show whether it is subjected to certain rules and distinctive semantic meanings that prevent it from becoming pragmatically fail. The study is limited to the study of *Harry Collies' book 101 American English Proverbs* and this study follows Wierzbeck's model. The analysis shows that the highest score recorded is the *suggest* speech act. Next in the scores recorded is the *recommend* speech act. No score is given to the speech act of *consult*. All other speech acts: *advice1, advice2 advocate, propose*, and *counsel* are equally scored.

Dairo (2010) examines 30 different Yoruba proverbs in terms of speech act analysis. He classifies these proverbs according to their illocutionary acts for interpretation and he examines how proverbs are used to perform several acts. He concludes that "any utterance made by language users in whatever form are speech acts; therefore, a proverb, as a rhetical variable, is used to perform certain acts" (p. 441). In this paper, the analysis of proverbs has shown that proverbs are used severally to achieve acts of adjudication, expression of facts, warning or admonition, giving advice, issuing caution and giving directives.

Ayeni (2011) conducts a study under the title of A *pragmatic Analysis of Nigerian Proverbs in Wole Soyinka's the Lion and the Jewel*. The study aims at: firstly, examining how meaning is generated from the use of proverbs and beyond the level of general conversational meaning. Secondly, surveying the importance of proverbs in Nigerian culture. Thirdly, showcasing Wole Soyinka as a competent writer whose work is relevant to the Nigerian society. He uses speech act theory to give an account of the speech act/ illocutionary act. He finds that all proverbs are "assertives", because they commit someone to something being the case, the truth of the expressed proposition.

Jombadi, A. and Juliana, J. (2014) carries out a study to examine the validity of Searle's theory when applied within the Yoruba proverbial context. For the purpose of the study, they collect 25 proverbs from two resources, written text and home video. Moreover, they classify these proverbs according to nine aspects, that is, social relation, justice and ethics, religion, philosophy, life and death, beauty, faith, agriculture and game. Their study provides an

empirical account of the significance, essence and functions of proverbs within the Yoruba culture. Moreover, their study finds out that four proverbs have two different speech acts while the others vary and include "assertives" and "directives".

Alshorafat (2016) examines North-Eastern Badia's proverbs in light of Speech Act theory. It aims at highlighting and exploring the types of illocutionary acts found in North-Eastern Badia's proverbs and identifying the pragmatic functions of these proverbs. It also targets at explaining why Non-Bedouins may fail to understand and interpret these proverbs outside and inside their real contexts. The study has revealed that there are three prevalent types of speech acts that occur in these proverbs. They are *expressives* (45%), *directives* (30%) and *representatives* (25%). It also has explored ten pragmatic functions of these proverbs: *scolding, blaming, scorning, advising, complaining, ridiculing, criticizing, vilifying, praising and asserting.* Moreover, the study has revealed that Non-Bedouins (outsiders) face some problems in understanding many Bedouin Proverbs due to some factors: First, they lack semantic knowledge of the lexical items found in proverbs (lexical gap). Second, they lack pragmatic knowledge. Third, most of the proverbs are restricted only to Bedouins (culture-specifics). Fourth, there are intrinsic cultural differences between Bedouins' culture and Non–Bedouins'. Fifth, many informants have not been in close contact with Bedouins' traditions, customs, beliefs, etc. Sixth, most of these proverbs use metaphorical language; their meaning cannot be lexically predictable. Seventh, there is a phonological variation between Bedouins and Non-Bedouins that may trigger such a pragmatic failure.

The present study differs from all the above studies in that it has explored the perlocutionary acts of Bedouin proverbs in their real contexts, which is the central concern of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY
The researcher interviewed 10 Bedouin native speakers who reside in different parts in the city of Mafraq and who are 40 years and more. They are all educated. The researcher chose those people due to the fact that they are familiar enough with Bedouin proverbs and their usage.

The researcher collected the data of the present study by interviewing 10 people individually. In the interview, the researcher asked the interviewees to give him a proverb and a real situation in which it can be used. The researcher was recording and taking notes during the interview. This procedure helped the researcher immensely to obtain the data needed for this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The data is categorized according to the act that is produced which is either a <u>psychological consequence</u> or <u>getting the hearer to do something</u>.
Psychological Consequence

1. بدأ ناصرٌ بحزمِ أمتعته، قبلَ سفره بدقائقَ قليلةٍ. فعندما راهُ ابوهُ قالَ لهُ: **"انت مثل الي يعقب الشتوية بفروة"**.

Naser started to pack his luggage before travelling in few minutes. When his father saw him, he said to him: "**You are like the one who wears furs after winter**"

*Func. "**Close the stable door before the horse has bolted**".*

The above proverb is metaphorically said to an individual who is too late in doing or accomplishing an activity. Thus, when this proverb is used in different social contexts, it can perform various communicative meanings such as advising, criticizing and many others. After considering the contextual clues, the proverb user employed this particular locution (the proverb) in this situation to implement the illocutionary force of *scolding*, which is categorized as *expressives* speech acts as the speaker makes his attitude toward a proposition. It clearly can be noted that the possible perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the hearer) could be "*insulting*" the hearer. This is the overall meaning of the proverb above.

2. قال قاسمٌ لجاره الذي يؤذيه باستمرار: لا تجعلني **"احط راسه عند رجليه"**.

Qasim said to his neighbor who is always hurting him: do not make me "**Put its tail near its head**".

Func. "**Make the situation get worse**"

The above underlined proverb is said by Bedouins mainly to threaten the hearer. Similarly, in the context at hand the speaker used this proverb in order to threaten the addressee. In terms of pragmatics, the illocutionary force that is achieved just by uttering this proverb is *threatening*, which falls under the illocutionary act *commissives* as the speaker commits himself to some future act. In this case, the utterance can have perlocutionary act of *"scaring"* the addressee.

3. لاحظَ المعلمُ أن اجابةَ الطالبِ كانت مبهمةً، فقالَ لهُ: اجابتك **"سيل ظهرة"**

The teacher noticed that the student's answer was vague. Then, he said to him: your answer "**is a flood on a very low hillock**".

Func. ***It is unclear.***

Bedouins cite the above proverb when commenting on an individual's response or attitude that is not clear enough. Actually, this proverb when it is used in different occasions can achieve a variety of pragmatic functions. After taking the context at hand into consideration, it can be seen that the illocutionary force of this utterance is *criticizing*, which belongs to the speech acts of *representatives* as the speaker tells others how things are, while the apparent perlocutionary effect (psychological consequence) that the utterance might bring about is "*insulting*" the hearer. In brief, the act of insulting is the result of saying that proverb in that situation.

٤. عملَ سلامةُ حادث سيرٍ، وهو لا يملك رخصة سواقة فطلب من خالد ان يدعي انه هو السائقُ، فرد عليه خالدٌ: لا، "**مية عين تبكي ولا عيني**"

Salameh, who does not have a driving license, made a car accident, and he asked Khaled to claim that he was the driver. Khaled replied: no "**One hundred eyes cry but not mine**".

Func. ***It is better to avoid danger (do not put your head in the lions' mouth.***

Bedouins have been using the above underlined proverbs to indicate that they do not prefer to put themselves in troubles. In other words, they often say this proverb when they fear from claiming to say that they commit a problem to save the true committer. According to the above situation, they speaker performed the illocutionary force of *refusing*, which falls within the speech acts of *commissives*. As noted, the effect performed by the speaker upon a listener by means of this proverb is "*convincing*". Put it differently, what can be done just by uttering this proverb is "*convincing*" the hearer.

٥. كان أبو صالح صديقاً للشيخ، فلذلك يحترمهُ الناس كما يحترمون الشيخ، فقال لهُ علي يوماً: "**كلب الشيخ شيخ**".

Abu Saleh was a friend of the Sheikh, the chef of the tribe, so that people respect him as they respect the Sheikh. One day, Ali said to him: "**The Sheikh's dog is a dog**".

Func. "**Like master like dog**"

Bedouins have been saying the above proverb to describe a person who is a friend of another person who has an authority. They try to give the high value of that person (the master) to the other person who does not actually have. According to the situation

above, the speaker wanted to criticize the listener indirectly. Pragmatically speaking, the proverb user achieved the pragmatic function of *criticizing*, which falls under the illocutionary act of *expressives*. While, "*angering*" the addressee can be counted as the potential perlocutionary act.

٦. كان ابن ابي محمدٍ كسولاً ولا يودي الواجبات المطلوبة منهُ، فقال لهُ ابوهُ: انت "**حمل على الركاب وقطيعة للزهاب**".

Abu Mohammad had a son who was too lazy and who did not do what he is asked to do. Then, his father said to him: "**you are too heavy on vehicles and you are food consumer**".

*Func." **Good-for nothing**".*

Bedouins have been using the above proverb to describe a person who is not doing or achieving what is needed or wanted. Thus, when it is contextualized, it can bear several pragmatic functions such scolding, criticizing, and many others. According to the context at hand, the interlocutor (Abu Mohammad) used the locution (the proverb) in order to perform the illocutionary force of *scolding*, which falls within the speech acts of expressives. Clearly, the perlocutionary act related to that illocution might be "*motivating*" the addressee (the son) not to be lazy anymore.

٧. قِيلَ ان يتقدمَ زيدٌ لخطبةِ ايمان بشكل رسمي بدأ يسال عن ماضيها كل انسان يلتقي به، فنصحهُ أحدهم قائلا: يا زيد "**ترى الزاد لا تفتش ما ينوكل**".

Before Zayed asked Eman's hand, he had begun digging deep into her history. Then, a person advised him by saying "**if food is looked over, it can't be accepted to be eaten**".

Func. "**Do not exaggerate a lot in doing things**".

Actually, it is a custom that Bedouins do not look deeply over food to see how clear or dirt it is. This is because that they believe if food is examined carefully, it may not be edible because the foreign particles it may contain. Accordingly, it is better to accept food as it is. As the passage of time, people started applying the utterance "ترى الزاد لا تفتش ما ينوكل" to many situations to mean that a very careful examination of something is not praised until it became a proverb. Thus, the speaker uttered the above proverb in this certain context to implement the illocutionary meaning of *advising*, which falls within the speech acts of *directives* as the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something, and to "*persuade*" the hearer not to asking about Eman's record more and more, this is the most possible perlocutionary effect of the utterance.

Getting the Hearer to Do Something

8. كان محمدٌ جالساً في بيت خالد، وكان الجو باردا جدا فقال محمدٌ لخالدٍ: "**النار ولا المعزب الردي**".

Mohammad was sitting at Khaled's house and it was too cold. Then, Mohammad said to Khaled: "**Fire is but not a bad host**"

*Func. "**Kindle the fire**".*

Bedouins often cite the underlined proverb above when asking the host to kindle a fire. Accordingly, when this proverb is used, it can tolerate many pragmatic functions depending on the context in which it is employed. In terms of pragmatic, the speaker cited this proverb to accomplish the illocutionary force of *requesting*, which belongs to the speech acts of *directives*. In this case, the perlocutionary effect might be "*causing*" the hearer to kindle a fire. This is the overall meaning of the proverb.

كانت زياراتُ محمدٍ طويلةً جداً، فقال لهُ صديقه: "**الزيارة**
9. **غارة**".

Mohammad's visits were too long and his friend said to him: "**The visit is a raid**".

*Func. "**Make your visits short**".*

The above idiomatic expression indicates that a visit should be similar to a raid in its shortness, to not annoy the host. As the passage of time, people started quoting this expression to achieve several pragmatic functions. Based on the context above, the speaker wanted to give a piece of advice to his friend, not to make his visits too long. In terms of pragmatics, the illocutionary force is *advising*, which falls under the illocutionary act of *directives*. While, the perlocutionary act that the speaker may produce on the hearer is to get the him make his visits short.

10. أخبر أبو محمدٍ أصدقاءُه بالقصة، ورفضَ ان يكملها، فقال له أحدهم: انت " **مثل الي يطلع راسه ويضب ذيله**".

Abu Mohammad told the story to his friends and refused to complete its rest. Then, one of them said to him: "**You are like the one who shows its head and hides its tail**".

Func. *"**Make something incomplete**".*

This proverb can be said to a person who does not give the full story that he has already told. By examining the context above, the speaker criticized the addressee indirectly for not telling the entire story. Pragmatically, the illocutionary force in quoting that proverb in this specific situation is to *criticize*, falling under the speech acts of *expressives*,

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the hearer. By saying the proverb, the noticeable perlocutionary effect the proverb may have is getting the hearer to complete the rest of the story.

5. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the speech acts of Bedouin proverbs in Jordan. It tried to explore the illocutionary acts and the illocutionary forces of those proverbs. More importantly, it aimed to test the applicability of finding the possible perlocutionary acts of those proverbs. Based on the analysis of 10 contextualized proverbs, several conclusions can be drawn.

1. There are four illocutionary acts performed, namely, *representatives, commissives, expressives and directives*.
2. There are many illocutionary forces accomplished. They are *scolding, threatening, criticizing, asking, requesting and advising*.
3. There are two kinds of effects proverbs can produce on the hearer. They can be either psychological consequences such as *insulting, scaring, angering, motivating, convincing and persuading or getting the hearer to do something or realize something*.

Based on the data analysis and findings of the study, researchers similar in fields should apply other pragmatic applications on Bedouin proverbs. For example, they should investigate these proverbs to find out the politeness strategies used in them.

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