
Pragmatic Functions of *aḥalakov'allah* (May God elevate you) in Jordanian Spoken Arabic

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to shed some light on the use and pragmatic functions of ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (may God elevate you) in Jordanian spoken Arabic. Based on the findings of the research, Jordanian use ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (God elevate you) when they talk about animals, impure Places and reprehensible situations. The analysis provides us with the major function of ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (God elevate you): Jordanians tend to use ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (God elevate you) when they talk about animals, impure places and reprehensible. The paper suggests that ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (God elevate you) is used in JSA as a politeness strategy when Jordanians talk about topics that are socially tabooed in Jordan in order for the speaker to save face before the addressee. For example, when using al-hammam (bathroom) since it is considered socially tabooed expression in Jordan. Moreover, from Islamic point of view al-hammam (bathroom), kalb (dog) and kondara (shoes) are associated with impurity as well as dirt. Adding expression ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (may God elevate you) is used as an indirect polite speech act to save the face of the speaker. Using ‘aḥalakov'Allah’ (may God elevate you) may rise a cross-cultural problem, because what is socially tabooed in in Jordan. i.e. al-hammam (bathroom) is not socially tabooed in in other culture. To solve this dilemma, learners of Arabic as a foreign language should learn how to use their knowledge in interactive situations, and try to understand not only what ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (God elevate you) mean, but also what the writer or speaker of those words intend to convey, which is the ‘intended speaker meaning’ in pragmatics.*

Key words: *aḥalakov'allah’ (may God elevate you), Islam, Jordanian Spoken Arabic, Pragmatic functions, Politeness strategies, Indirect speech acts*

1. Introduction and Literature Review

Speech acts are inevitable in daily interactions, and it is quite essential to classify different types of them and their intercultural similarities and differences. One of the sources of communication

failure is rooted in not being familiar with direct and indirect speech acts and how each culture favors one form or the other.

A thought-provoking example of indirect speech acts is ‘aḥalakov'allah’ (may God elevate you) which seems to be applied in Jordanian cultures.

Jaradat (2014) studies the widespread use of Allah expressions in Jordanian Arabic as well as other dialects of Arabic. These are expressions that are used repeatedly by Muslims on a daily manner in different venues reflecting their belief that Allah alone is the One who has influence over every aspect of their lives. The researcher draws attention to some expressions containing the word Allah. In some of these expressions, the word Allah has disappeared as a result of being blended into other particles as in the case of jalla meaning “let” and jaallah meaning “barley”. However, in other expression, the word Allah is still witnessed but used in totally new meanings as in expressing astonishment and seeking protection and guidance.

Mehawesh & Jaradat (2015) stated that the expression inshallah is one of the most common expressions in daily interactions among Jordanians. The researchers assume that the expression has various non-literal meanings besides the literal one which is an invocation to Allah to enable the speaker to achieve a positive or a negative action. The non-literal meanings, on the other hand, are all cases of flouting Grice’s maxim of quality, whereby the speaker does not mean what the words literally mean; however, the addressee or the hearer can figure out the message intended by the speaker. The researchers have found out that the various non-literal meanings inshallah serves are: irony, which a typical means for flouting the maxim of quality, threatening, wonder, yes/ok, prohibition, and wishing. Moreover, the study has found out that the utterances containing the expression inshallah will not give the same meaning after the removal of inshallah.

2. Theoretical Background

Politeness theory is one of the basic underlying theories related to the communication strategy. However, before dealing with 'politeness theory', it is very important to identify the notion of 'face' introduced by Goffman (1974). Longcope (1995, p.69) quotes Goffman defining face as a 'positive social value' which is significant in social interactions. Brown and Levinson (1978) expanded this theory and put forward a universal theory 'politeness theory'; in this theory 'face' is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Longcope, 1995, p.70). They stated that face is of two types, 'positive face' and 'negative face'. Positive face is the predilection in individuals for being approved and admired by others, and negative face is their aversion to imposition (Longcope, 1995). Face is a "negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event". Interlocutors must share a mutual understanding of the faces they present in communication to be able to decide on a suitable language to use and to understand the underlying meaning. Therefore, it is important for individuals to make assumptions about faces before beginning the conversation. The theory of politeness and face were studied in many cultures and concluded that face is translated depending on the culture, and translation varies from one culture to another.

Indirect speech acts plays a crucial role in the understanding of "a \bar{z} alakom'allah" (God elevate you). Speech acts are divided into two major types: *direct* and *indirect* speech acts. Chastain (1988) states that direct speech acts are the ones that convey the intended meaning directly. In direct speech acts, "there is a direct correlation in the utterance type and the function"; therefore, utterances are direct since "the type and function are related" (Stapleton, 2004, p.17).

Indirect speech acts do not directly indicate what the speaker means. Borrowing something must be done with caution since it might be necessary not only to be familiar with the language, but also to know the culture. (Cohen & Ishihara, 2005, p.3).

The expression "a \bar{z} alakom'Allah" (God elevate you) is a communication strategy employed in Islamic cultures, which might serve certain purposes. The concept of face and self-image are concepts grounded in one's own culture since to be polite or indirect requires that a person draws on his/her cultural and language conventions so that he/she can be consistent with these values and norms (Brown and Levinson 1987). In fact, cross-cultural studies have shown that notions of conversational cooperation such as indirectness and politeness are universal notions invoked by

strategies that differ cross-culturally and linguistically. Therefore, the notions of indirectness and politeness are the same since in both situations conversational participants are inclined to use communicative strategies (linguistic devices) that are in accord with their linguistic and cultural norms and conventions. This goes along with the findings of research done on politeness and indirectness cross-culturally and cross linguistically.

3.1. Purpose of the Study

The prime purpose of the study is to analyze "a \bar{z} alakom'allah" (God elevate you) produced by Muslim speakers in Jordan to come up with its various functions of "a \bar{z} alakom'allah". Moreover, the notion of indirectness is highlighted which is closely connected to the functions of "a \bar{z} alakom'Allah" (God elevate you).

3.2. Methodology

This research was carried out on Jordanian native speakers of Jordanian spoken Arabic. The participants were about (13) individuals of both genders (male and female), and different age groups (young, middle-aged, and old). The researcher asked the participants when and why they use "a \bar{z} alakom'allah" (God elevate you) in daily interactions.

4. Discussion and Findings

After analyzing the responses of the participants, the researcher states that "a \bar{z} alakom'allah" (God elevate you) is used in JSA for certain functions. For each function, an example is put forward along with the translation of the utterance. **Jordanians use "a \bar{z} alakom'Allah" (God elevate you) in the following situations:**

4.1 When Mentioning some Animals:

foft kalib a \bar{z} alakom'allah.
Saw dog elevate you God
I saw a dog may God elevate you.

In this situation, the word "a \bar{z} alakom'allah" (God elevate you) is used to empower the speaker and to save his face before the addressee. In other words; "a \bar{z} alakom'allah" (God elevate you) is used as a polite strategy to address the speaker. Since the animal mentioned above is associated with impurity and uncleanness in Islam. Traditionally, dogs have been seen as impure, and the Islamic legal tradition has developed several injunctions that warn Muslims against most contact with dogs. Unfortunately, many Muslims have

used this view to justify the abuse and neglect of dogs. Religious traditions hold that if a dog passes in front of you as you prepare to pray, it pollutes your purity and negates your prayer. Dogs are permissible as watchdogs or for other utilitarian purposes but not simply for companionship.

4.2 Impure Places

Wayn al-hammam aḡalakov'allah.

Where bathroom elevate you God

Where is the bathroom may, God elevate you?

The expression "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) is used with impure /unclean places in JSA, because most Jordanians consider *al-hammam* (bathroom) as socially tabooed. In Islam, *al-hammam* (bathroom) is considered to be an unclean place. Muslims used to say *Allahumma inni 'authu bika minal khubthi wal khaba'ith* (Oh Allah, I seek refuge with you from all evil and evil doers) when they enter the bathroom. And *Ghufranak* (I ask Your (Allah's) forgiveness) when they finish using it. It seems that the expression "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) is used when using *al-hammam* (bathroom) since it is considered a taboo socially and from Islamic point of view it is associated with impurity as indirect polite speech act to save the face of the addressee.

4.3 Reprehensible Situations

ijlah kondartak qabil ma to-dxul aḡalaka'allah.

Take off shoes your before you come in elevate you God

Take off your shoes before coming in, May God elevate you.

Shoes are associated with dirt and connote impurity and degradation, showing the sole of your shoe has long been an insult in Arab culture. The shoe is considered dirty because it is on the ground and associated with the foot, the lowest part of the body. Removing shoes before entering a home is more a cultural rather than a religious tradition, it is important to know that some religions require removing shoes before entering a house of worship or a temple: Jordanian Muslims remove their shoes before entering a mosque, Jordanians used to do so for religious reasons will also be more sensible about it in their own house. Many people feel uncomfortable when asked to remove their shoes when entering someone's home. They feel as if it is an imposition, a demand for a level of intimacy that they may not be willing to have with the person they're visiting. Some Jordanians also don't want to show their feet or their socks or stockings, or would even feel mortified to be asked to take off their

shoes in public, simply because in their culture it is not common.

Findings and Discussion

This study was conducted to examine various pragmatic functions of "aḡalakov'allah" (may God elevate you) expression in Jordanian spoken Arabic. The analysis of the observed situations provides us with major functions of "aḡalakov'allah"; that is, individuals use "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) in different situations: When they talk about animals, impure Places, reprehensible situations.

The prime goal of communication ("maximally efficient information exchange" - (Grice 1975)) might be in contrast with no less important 'social function' of communication –in order to support our relationships with other individuals. The latter is usually described through the notion of *face* (Goffman 1967) - an individual's publicly manifest self-esteem. Individuals attempt to support and maintain our 'negative face' (trying to refrain from imposition on the freedom of the Addressee) and our 'positive face' (saying 'nice' things to the Addressee to show that he is accepted) in accordance with how these concepts are understood in our culture. It has been demonstrated that Jordanians add "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) as an *indirect speech act* when the direct forms may appear impolite. *Indirect speech acts* have long been a major topic in pragmatics to escape *embarrassment*. The expression "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) is used to ensure that everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction. It also seems that the usage of "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) in JSA indicates that the speaker is attempting to save face.

5. Conclusion

The usage of "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) in JSA is associated with animals, impure Places, reprehensible situations. It is used to express indirect politeness since animals, impure Places, reprehensible situations are considered to be taboos in Jordanian culture. Accordingly, the use of "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) mitigates the effect of talking about these topics. Speech acts do not have universal cross-cultural application; there may be pragmatic problems in comprehending the utterance. In a similar way, speech events differ cross-culturally. The expression "aḡalakov'allah" (God elevate you) is peculiar to Muslims since it has a religious connotation since animals are associated with impurity and uncleanness in Islam. And *al-*

hammam from Islamic point of view is associated with impurity Jordanian .As for shoes Muslims remove them before entering a mosque The addressee is thus involved in using his knowledge of cross-cultural pragmatics to understand the message appropriately in order to avoid any offence. Because what is socially tabooed in Arabic,i.e *al-hammam*(bathroom)is not socially tabooed in English or in other culture .Thus, this may lead to pragmatic failure . To solve this dilemma, learners not only learn about English, but also learn how to use their knowledge in interactive situations. In real communications, oral or written, people normally try to understand not only what the words mean, but what the writer or speaker of those words intend to convey, which is the ‘intended speaker meaning’ in pragmatics.

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