

## **Elham Alzoubi: Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions in Levantine Arabic. Jordanian Dialect**

(London: Routledge. 2020. 208 p.)

Many books and studies have tackled the Arabic language and its widely spoken various dialects, which are used daily in the Arab world as a first language. Some of the reviews focus on the similarities, and other studies are on the differences. In the past decade, a number of studies have been trying to provide detailed insight into each of the dialects of a particular language by studying the diglossia phenomenon that forms the varieties of the dialect. Diglossia can be defined as a situation in which two languages (or two varieties of the same language) are used under different conditions within a community, often by the same speakers.

The concept of diglossia explained by Ferguson (1959), is commonly applied to languages such as standard German/Swiss German, standard French/Creole in Haiti, Katharevousa/Dimotiki in Greece. In this study, the Semitic standard Arabic/Arabic vernaculars referred to as 'high' and 'low' distinct varieties will be addressed solely. In discussing the two language varieties, the book attempts to re-popularize the two terms 'high and low variety of a certain dialect' used by Ferguson (1959), which are "high variety labeled = (H) "and "low variety labeled = (L)" language culture. By presenting examples that can describe the individual's intended message of each dialect and how the diglossic features are possibly related and employed to idioms. Classical Arabic is perceived as a representation of high variety culture because it is a language used in religious literature and official writings. Simultaneously, colloquial Arabic is referred to as a representation of low spoken variety because it functions only as a medium of regular communication.

A similar context of idiomatic expressions are presented in a considerable amount of literature, which resulted in the emergence of its importance, and which have led to the realization that there has been relatively little literature conducted on Jordanian Arabic and its idiomatic expressions in particular. This book comes in handy by offering research that examines first language acquisition through idioms in the Arabic language's Jordanian dialect. The book builds on the cultural and social forms of using the language in different parts of speech and conversational aspects. It then contributes to formatting a general instruction on what to focus on when addressing replacing idioms and the speech expressions for a quicker and sufficient conversation. In other words, any language that comprises a diglossic situation can use this book as a reference to build up their database or corpus of idiomatic expressions. The same case is applied to the other countries of the Arab world due to the mutual intelligibility by speaking Arabic but using it differently from one community to another.

The book also explores the tension of the two varieties through contemporary social and political events in Jordan. Such studies have contributed to the rise of testing how closely each dialect is related to another; how mutually intelligible these dialects are in another expression. For a morphologically rich language (MRL) such as Arabic, the language complexity and challenges exist. One of these encounters is the detection of idioms or aphorisms expressions, that can cause a misunderstanding between the speakers of those dialects and even the possibility of having this confusion in one community when it allows two different varieties spoken in the same dialect of the Arabic language by two separate groups due to the restriction and exclusivity of use of idioms in one place and not another. For example, in Jordan, the population's geographical distribution can play a significant role in the country's spoken variety. For instance, the urban areas representing 82.6% compared to the rural regions representing 17.4% have a different spoken variety; thus, a different set of idiomatic expressions differ in length, density, and meaning.

The author presents a comprehensive and detailed study of idiomatic expressions and lexicon of Jordanian variety of Arabic language mainly for foreign speakers and Arabic language students as well, going into the details of the different aspects of idiomatic mastery, concerning the role of visualization techniques in learners' understanding and retention of L2 idioms, deficiency, misconceptions, and the awareness of inventive idiom variants. Mastering idiomatic expressions to understand a particular language or a variety requires an understanding of what it means and how they work, starting with the definition of the *idiom* as provided by the author:

"Idioms are a form of figurative language that includes metaphor, personification, simile, and proverbs, that are peculiar to themselves. Grammatically, it cannot be understood from the on its own of its elements and can allow different meanings when treats as separate words" (Alzoubi, 2020: 8).

Barkema (1996) also adds, "Idioms are formed through compiling more than one word which has a meaning that cannot be easily deductible from the meaning of the individual words, but they do not mean what each word means by itself." The author investigates every possible idiomatic expression of over 2,000 in the Jordanian variety and their sociocultural roots to reach the level of learners' comprehension to use the proper idiom in their first and second language, which requires a good command of both languages to achieve.

The author defines idioms as a string of words that imply something different from what it means to be, not deductible from those of the individual words, which typically presents a figurative, non-literal meaning attached to the phrase. As

mentioned earlier, idioms are culture-bound, and it is usually hard to guess and interpret their meaning if the receiver of the message cannot relate to the meaning conveyed from the context. The design of the book's content is to provide an example, types of expressions, and figurative speech that hold and can be replaced with such idioms to maintain the rhythm and cohesion of speech between speakers. Moreover, the idioms provided in standard Arabic allow the reader to track and summarize the historical changes that altered the expression.

The book also provides sufficient data pointing at the awareness of translating idioms and idiomatic expressions, which can be the closest equivalent in the English language and not just a literal or general explanation to engage the researcher and meet the existing knowledge of idioms in their mind. Al-Rushaidi (2016) highlighted the primordial role of translating idiomatic expressions and defines it as "a process of rendering aspects and features of a target text semantically, culturally and pragmatically into another language, as they are culture-bound and involve many cultural elements."

Supporting Catford (1965) states that "translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language" (20). Nida (1964) also adds that "the role of a translator is to simplify the transfer of the meaning, message, and cultural elements from one language into another and generate an equivalent response to the receivers" (3). These definitions demonstrate the status importance of translating cultural elements in translation in general. Proverbs, idioms, and idiomatic expressions can come in various forms: for example, slang, similes, dead metaphors, social formulas, and collocations, the author also included multiple types of idioms that mentioning the situation as complete and pure idioms, semi-idioms, proverbs, popular expressions and semi-proverbial expressions, metaphorical slogans, and popular terms.

To put it concisely, the comprehension, retention, and production of idioms is a challenging field for language learners of a specific language. The author in this well-elaborated book offers an exciting approach for facilitating to become proficient at the idiomatic expressions knowledge and provides an excellent outline of the main aspects of understanding idioms by listing them alphabetically, providing equivalent translations of each phrase and expression in the English language, and precise comparison between the Jordanian variety and Modern Standard Arabic besides the general information needed to understand the subvarieties of the chosen dialect. However, it lacked the sense of graduality of information providing due to content gathering rather than specific separate chapters that could concern idiomatic expressions such as idioms in work, street, family, formal and informal environment. This way of providing the idioms will leave the reader helpless and feeble by drawing the direct connection between the situation

that requires a saying and the needed expression. As in the previous paragraph, there are different kinds and types of idioms in a mixed format, lacking the categories created in favor of alphabetically describing them. Apart from not adding the diacritics to denote vowels, that can change the meaning of the word in some cases. Aside from not including the literal translation 'word-for-word,' that will help the reader where the critical change happened to change it from an average meaningless sentence to an idiom and help readers understand and learn new vocabulary. Also, the translations of the idioms are provided but not for the context sentence, and this will exclude the beginner readers from grasping the fully intended meaning of the saying. It will also be better to use modern standard Arabic in the helping example to make it easier for those who are seeking a direct translation of each word. The present book is an excellent choice for the foreign learners of the language and linguists and local users of this variety as L1 researching language teaching and acquisition.

All in all, *Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions in Levantine Arabic. Jordanian Dialect* is a book concerning acquiring the first language for native and non-native speakers of the Arabic language and the Jordanian dialect in particular. The author presents a comprehensive and detailed collection of idiomatic expressions and lexicon to fit the needs of first and second language learners of Arabic. The present research investigates language acquisition through idiomatic expressions. The author goes into the details of the different aspects of idiomatic mastery, concerning the role of visualization techniques in learners' comprehension and retention of L2 idioms, errors, misinterpretations, and the perception of creative idiom variants. The comprehension, retention, and production of idioms is a very challenging field for language learners. The author offers an exciting method for facilitating mastering the idiomatic knowledge and provides an excellent outline of the main aspects of idiomatic mastery. This book is a splendid choice not just for researchers and linguists but both for teachers and language learners.

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