The Pragmatic Functions of Using the Expression *Mayyit ‘Dead’* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic

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Abstract—This study investigates the discourse analysis and the pragmatic functions of the expression *mayyit* (lit.: dead) and how students interpret it in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (JSA). It focuses on the intended meaning of using the expression *mayyit* in daily conversations among Jordanians. Data were collected from 72 undergraduate Jordanian students. The results of the study show that the connotative meaning dominates all the expressions explained in this study. None of the participants interpreted a single expression according to its lexical meaning alone. The results also reveal that the expression *mayyit* is used to serve 16 different pragmatic functions. However, the analysis shows that the expression *mayyit* is often used negatively in JSA; three functions are used positively, while the other functions of the expression are used negatively. This kind of knowledge can significantly benefit learners of JSA as a foreign language, without which learners may encounter some communication difficulties.

Index Terms—discourse analysis, pragmatics, Jordanian Spoken Arabic, dead, Arabic learners

I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is “the study of linguistic phenomena from the point of their usage properties and processes” (Verschueren, 1999, p. 1). In this regard, Cruse (2000) says, pragmatics can be taken to be concerned with aspects of information (in the widest sense) conveyed through language which (a) are not encoded by generally accepted convention in the linguistic forms used, but which (b) none the less arise naturally out of and depend on the meanings conventionally encoded in the linguistic forms used, taken in conjunction with the context in which the forms are used. (Cruse, 2000, p. 16)

According to Yule (2020), pragmatics is concerned with the examination of meaning conveyed by the producer and interpreted by the recipient. Brown and Yule (1983) assert that both discourse analysis and pragmatics are concerned with analysing language usage by focusing on the intentions and functions of linguistic forms. Yule (2020) describes the word ‘discourse’ as “language beyond the sentence” (p. 168), encompassing both spoken and written communication. Although they have distinct foci, pragmatics and discourse analysis converge in their emphasis on a text’s function in relation to its context (Cutting, 2002). Also, both fields investigate how interlocutors convey meaning beyond the words they employ, examining how language usage contributes to the significance and coherence of discourse and text. Moreover, they share an interest in function, investigating how language serves communicative purposes and becomes integrated into users’ communicative repertoires.

Spoken Arabic is replete with a diverse range of social and linguistic terms that remain underexplored, rendering it a rich area for investigation (Kanakri & Al-Harasheh, 2013). One of such terms is the expression *mayyit* which literally means ‘dead’. This study seeks to investigate the discourse analysis and pragmatic functions of *mayyit* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (henceforth JSA). Specifically, it aims to uncover the intended meaning behind the use of *mayyit* in daily conversations among Jordanians, focusing on the message conveyed by the speakers rather than the expression’s inherent meaning. According to Fraser (1990), the meaning of a sentence or phrase can be divided into two categories: (i) content meaning, which refers to the literal message conveyed, and (ii) pragmatic meaning, which relates to the speaker’s intention or ‘illocutionary meaning’. The current study aims to shed light on the usage of *mayyit* in JSA due to its prevalence and the observation that its meaning varies based on context.

A. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its examination of a linguistic expression in JSA that has yet to be explored by researchers. By doing so, the study aims to bridge a gap in the literature and contribute to linguistic research by building
on previous work in this area. Additionally, the study provides both Arab and non-Arab learners of JSA with a deeper understanding of Jordanian culture and the contextual use of expressions like mayyit. Non-Arab learners of JSA may face challenges in comprehending this expression due to its culture-specific nature. Thus, this study offers valuable insight into how such expressions are employed in the Jordanian discourse.

B. Questions of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the pragmatic functions of the expression mayyit in JSA. To accomplish this, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the various functions of the expression mayyit in JSA?

RQ2: How do Jordanians interpret the meaning of the expression mayyit in different contexts?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The pragmatic function of a linguistic expression is shaped by the context in which it is employed revealing how the expression conveys various meanings in diverse situations. Arabic is a particularly rich language in this respect. Previous research has investigated the pragmatic functions of such expressions within the cultural and linguistic contexts of the speech communities in which they are used (e.g., Al Rousan et al., 2020; Al-Shishtawi, 2020; Hamdan & Abu Rumman, 2020; Hammouri, 2017; Al-Ghoweri, 2016; Marmorstein, 2016; Alazzawie, 2015; Al Rousan, 2015; Mehawesh & Jaradat, 2015; Alazzawie, 2014; Rabab’ah & Al-Saidat, 2014; Al-Harahsheh & Kanakri, 2013; Kanakri & Al Harahsheh, 2013).

In the Jordanian context, Al-Shishtawi (2020) conducted a study on the pragmatic functions of the term mashi (lit.: walking) in modern Arabic language. To collect data, the author gathered over 400 instances of mashi from the website ‘Arabicorpus’ and identified 28 different functions of the term. A questionnaire was then distributed to 65 PhD students at the University of Jordan to validate these functions. The identified functions included threatening, approval, walking, end the speech, continuation and benefit, inter alia. The study found that the term mashi was generally understood to the majority of the participants (87.9%) with the function of ‘continuation’ being the most widely recognized and ‘benefit’ being the least recognized function.

In their research, Al Rousan et al. (2020) examined the pragmatic roles of the term bas (lit.: but) in JSA. For data collection, the authors analysed 24 natural dyadic conversations among native JSA speakers, in which they identified a total of 1113 instances of the term bas. The findings of their investigation showed that bas serves sixteen distinct pragmatic functions in JSA, including initiating a topic, signalling a topic change, ending a conversation, hesitancy, making correction, showing contrast or agreement, expressing regret, and filling in gaps in an interaction. The authors assert that these functions are unique to JSA, and only speakers of this dialect possess the ability to produce and comprehend them.

The pragmatic functions of the discourse marker Yahummalali in JSA were investigated by Hamdan and Abu Rumman (2020). The authors compiled a list of scenarios where the term Yahummalali is used and identified its pragmatic function in each scenario. To validate their findings, they enlisted 55 Jordanian students at the University of Jordan. The study found that Yahummalali is used in Jordanian Arabic to convey nineteen distinct pragmatic functions, with expressions of dismay and disapproval, showing anger, signalling condemnation, and expressing disappointment being the most common.

In a study conducted by Hammouri (2017), the pragmatic functions of the expression yallah meaning ‘let’ were investigated. The findings of the study indicated that yallah is used to serve 27 pragmatic functions including displaying approval, drawing attention, requesting patience, signalling the beginning of an action, issuing warnings and expressing anger.

Additionally, Al-Ghoweri (2016) conducted a study on the usage and pragmatic functions of adyalakom allah (lit.: May God elevate you) in Jordanian Arabic. The sample included 13 Jordanian participants from various age groups and genders. The study aimed to examine when and why Jordanians use adyalakom allah in their daily interactions. The results of the study revealed that adyalakom allah is used by Jordanians to convey specific functions related to taboo topics such as animals, impure places, and reprehensible situations. The expression is also used to signal indirect politeness, with or without mentioning the name of the intended object.

Mehawesh and Jaradat (2015) investigated the multifaceted use of the expression inshallah (lit.: God willing) in Jordanian Arabic, which is commonly used among Muslims in daily conversations. The authors found that, apart from its literal meaning of expressing hope and reliance on God, inshallah is used in various non-literal ways that flout Grice’s maxim of quality. These non-literal meanings include irony, threat, surprise, agreement, prohibition and expression of wishes. The authors further discovered that omitting inshallah from an utterance could significantly change its meaning.

How the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ are used and what connotative meanings are communicated by Jordanian native speakers using these terms was investigated by Rabab’ah and Al-Saidat (2014). The study aimed to explore how culture influences the message conveyed by these expressions. The results of the study indicated that the participants interpreted these expressions based on their connotative rather than lexical meanings, which reflects the dominant influence of social and cultural beliefs. Additionally, the study found that black was associated with negative meanings.
while white was associated with positive meanings in most cases. The study concludes that language and culture are inseparable and that understanding the culture of native speakers is essential when learning their language.

Using the Relevance Theory as a theoretical framework, Al-Harshsheh and Kanakri (2013) examined the pragmatic functions and translatability of the expression tāyyyib ‘Okay’ (lit.: good) in Jordanian Colloquial Arabic (JCA). Their analysis showed that tāyyyib serves ten distinct pragmatic functions depending on the context in which it is used. These functions include serving as a marker of backchannel support, a marker of challenge, a filler to bridge gaps in conversation, a request for patience, permission-giving and an indication of acceptance or agreement.

In another study on JSA, Kanakri and Al Harahsheh (2013) investigated the pragmatic functions of the expression ša’di (lit.: normal or usual) in the speech of Jordanians. They compiled data from twenty dyadic video-taped conversations at Yarmouk University. The study found that the expression ša’di serves various contextual functions including reducing the impact of bad news, indicating refusal or acceptance, saving face and conveying indirect criticism.

In other Arab countries, the frequent use of expressions by native speakers in their daily interactions has also drawn the attention of researchers, as demonstrated by studies conducted by Marmostein (2016), Alazzawie (2015, 2014) and Al Rousan (2015).

Similar to the focus of the study of Kanakri and Al Harahsheh (2013) discussed above, Alazzawie (2015) investigated the usage of the expression ša’di in Iraqi Arabic. He examined the expression’s distribution, context-dependent meanings and functions. The findings revealed that ša’di is used to perform a range of functions, including providing material support and sympathy, expressing politeness and courtesy, and requesting and granting permission.

Within the context of a corpus of interviews with Cairene females in Egypt, Marmostein (2016) explored the varied uses of the expression yašnī (lit.: it means). The study utilized a framework that aimed to understand the cognitive processes and communicative goals that are facilitated and conveyed by the use of yašnī. The findings revealed that the primary function of this expression is to signify the speaker’s cognitive efforts in conveying their intended message that aligns with the topic of discourse whether local or global.

In Saudi Arabia, Al Rousan (2015) conducted a study to investigate the pragmatic functions of the term Ma3 Nafsak (lit.: with yourself) as used in the local dialect, Saudi Arabic, based on the online conversations of young Saudis. Using user-diaries of 17 Saudi students, the author gathered 262 natural online conversations which involved 132 instances of Ma3 Nafsak. The results of the study showed that Ma3 Nafsak serves as a multifunctional expression, denoting 12 different pragmatic functions in Saudi Arabic. The functions are context-dependent and include showing objection, lack of interest, annoyance, reprimanding and distancing oneself from others.

In a study on Iraqi Arabic, Alazzawie (2014) analysed the multifunctional discourse unit yamawward, whose meaning and function are context-dependent. The author collected data from dyadic conversations and transcribed the contexts where yamawward was used. The study identified seventeen functions for yamawward, such as opening a conversation, indicating politeness and courtesy, requesting someone to do something, expressing displeasure, annoyance and irritation, and conveying furiousness and indignation.

After a thorough review of the related literature, no previous research has been found addressing the use of the expression mayyrī in spoken or written Jordanian Arabic. As a result, this study aims to bridge this gap in the existing literature.

### III. Method

This study aims to explore the pragmatic functions of the expression mayyrī in JSA and how it is interpreted by interlocutors. The study utilizes a theoretical framework that combines pragmatic analysis on the basis of context, and translation theory. In the process of translation of spoken discourse, it is crucial to take into account three-stratum level analysis, which includes semantic analysis, textual analysis, and pragmatic analysis. The translation of mayyrī’s meanings relies on the pragmatic strategy employed. The researchers are native speakers of JSA; they composed an initial list of 40 situations that involved the use of the expression mayyrī in JSA. They based their selection on their own familiarity with this expression and their understanding of its usage in JSA.

**Sample of the Study**

The population of the study is the students at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Jordan. The study sample comprises 72 BA students in the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University who are native speakers of JSA. The sample included 32 males and 40 females, ranging in age from 20 to 22 years. They were voluntarily recruited to participate in this study. The researchers provided the participants with a sheet containing 40 suggested situations that included the expression mayyrī and asked them to identify the functions and interpretations of mayyrī in each situation. Participants were not subjected to any time constraints while completing the task; they were encouraged to add more examples and functions for the expression mayyrī. The collected data were analysed by the researchers using supported illustrative examples.
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study is to explore the pragmatic functions employed in the use of the expression mayyit in Jordanian Arabic spoken discourse, with a particular focus on the intended meaning of using this expression in daily conversations among Jordanians. This section outlines the major findings of the study, which demonstrate that the expression mayyit is multifunctional and serves a range of purposes beyond its literal meaning of ‘dead’. Specifically, the analysis revealed sixteen distinct functions served by the expression mayyit in the examined dataset. Below is a presentation of each pragmatic function of mayyit within its given context, followed by a descriptive example. To enhance readability and use, each example is presented in Arabic, accompanied by its transcription and meaning translated literally into English.

A. Expressing an Extreme Feeling of Something

Context (a): Salma meets Layla, one of her friends, while they are both at a pharmacy. As Salma prepares to depart, the following dialogue unfolds between them:

Salma: ‘I want to go to the restaurant to have lunch. Will you come with me?’
Layla: ‘Of course. I’m already starving.’

Salma: ‘Let’s go.’

Salma: ‘I want to go to the restaurant to have lunch. Will you come with me?’
Layla: ‘Of course. I’m already starving.’

Context (b): Samira, employed as a secretary in a corporate establishment, finds herself needing assistance and reaches out to her friend Fatima. During their interaction, Samira articulates the following request:

Samira: ‘Fatima, I don’t know how to download files from the email.’

Fatima: ‘It’s definitely due to the dead internet speed. I’ll take a look.’

The expression mayyit is also used to describe the speed of a person, animal or thing. In example (B), Samira encounters a technical problem in downloading some files from the email for which she seeks the help of her friend, Fatima, who immediately attributes the matter to the slow speed of the Internet using the term mayyit (f) to describe the slow speed. When the term mayyit is used in this context, it typically carries a negative connotation, implying that the speed is very slow and not up to the expected standard. This negative connotation is meant to convey a sense of...
disappointment or dissatisfaction with the speed being described. It is worth mentioning that the use of the term *muyyit* is not limited to physical movement but can also be used to describe the speed of a process or task, as in the above example. This connotation of sluggishness is important for learners of JSA to be aware of in order to convey their intended meaning in communication accurately.

C. Denoting Miserliness

Context C: Warda and her brother Wahid are engaged in a conversation regarding a wealthy relative who declined to contribute to a charity dedicated to orphan support. Warda expresses her viewpoint by stating:

Warda: ‘This man never spends a penny.’

Wahid: ‘Sister, this person is dead set against paying money in this world.’

Moreover, the usage of the expression *muyyit* in JSA can be associated with negative connotations in relation to a person’s spending habits. It is employed negatively to describe miserly people, as shown in example (C) where Wahid uses *muyyit* to describe their relative and give a reason for his refusal of donation. This meaning can be used to describe a person who is reluctant to spend money, even when it is necessary, or to describe someone who is unwilling to share their resources with others. So, the connotation is that the person is viewed as selfish or ungenerous, as they are perceived to be more concerned with their own interests than those of others and are not always well-regarded.

In the Jordanian culture, this negative connotation serves as a warning for the hearer to be cautious when dealing with such individuals, especially when investing some money. The use of *muyyit* in this context reflects the importance of money in Jordanian culture and the emphasis placed on trust and reliability in business transactions.

D. Expressing Discouragement

Context D: Bilal pays a visit to his friend Jihad, who has recently returned from England. The following conversation takes place:

Bilal: ‘How is the economic situation these days in Britain?’

Jihad: ‘Believe me, the economic situation is dead and is getting worse.’

The term *muyyit* is used to reflect the overall unfavourable conditions of the situation or place being under discussion. The speaker discourages the hearer from going forward to do or start something, whether it be business or moving to live in a particular place. In example (D), Jihad’s use of *muyyit* implies unsatisfactory living conditions, lack of opportunities, and unfavourable economic conditions of England, inter-alia. What Bilal understands is that he is not advised to even think about any business in England since it is not good and even getting worse. The connotative meaning of *muyyit* in this context is negative and serves to dissuade the listener from pursuing the course of action under consideration as it indicates that the situation or the place is uninvisiting or unappealing.

E. Indicating Extreme Love for Something / Somebody

Context E: Marwan and Saif are very close friends and also happen to be colleagues working together in the same company. During the break time, Marwan takes the opportunity to inquire:

Marwan: ‘I heard that you are planning to propose to Rahaf.’

Saif: ‘Oh, I’m crazy about her and have been wanting to propose to her for a long time.’

The expression *muyyit* seems not to be always used negatively in JSA. In addition to the positive meaning implied in example (b) above, it can be used to express a deep positive meaning, especially when used to show a person’s intense affection towards someone, usually from the opposite sex. In example (E), when Saif is asked about his intention to propose to Rahaf, he confirms what Marwan heard and uses the expression ‘lit.: I am dead on her’ to express his deep feeling of love for her. Similarly, it can be employed to signify a person’s strong desire to own something, whether a car, house, book, device or the like, such as when one says ‘I am crazy about this car’ meaning that he or she strongly wishes to have this car. In both cases, the connotative meaning of *muyyit* is positive, as it is employed to communicate a strong and intense emotion or desire emphasizing the importance of the person or thing being discussed for the speaker.

F. Signalling Insufficiency
Context F: Faris and Hasan are both involved in the field of business. They are partaking in a coffee break at a local café in their residential area. The subsequent discourse occurs between them:

Faris: ‘Small businesses started to collapse after COVID-19.’

Hasan: ‘The government financial support for such projects is dead.’

The expression mayyit is also used to signify insufficiency. In the conversation between the two businessmen illustrated in example (F), Hasan’s comment on the small businesses’ status includes the expression mayyit to indicate his disappointment or dissatisfaction with the outcomes of such businesses compared to expected standards. Furthermore, the comment could be interpreted as a kind of warning to the listener, Faris, against engaging in any kind of the business they are referring to. The connotative meaning of mayyit in this context is negative as it implies the idea that the reward, be it support, supply, profit, or salary, is inadequate when compared to established standards.

G. Indicating Weak Business

Context G: A few days after Eid Al-Fitr celebrations, Ayham meets his associate Abdul Rahman, the proprietor of a modest boutique situated within their town. Ayham initiates the conversation by posing the following inquiry:

Ayham: ‘How is the sale during the Eid holiday?’

Abdul Rahman: ‘The market is dead today, and there is no selling activity.’

In JSA, the expression mayyit is used to describe the state of the market in terms of selling and buying transactions as demonstrated in example (G). In this example, the conversation took place immediately after Eid’s vacation in which business activities are expected to be more active than usual leading to more earnings on the part of business owners. Ayham asks Abdul Rahman about the sale during the vacation and Abdul Rahman’s response includes the expression mayyit: ‘the market is dead today, and there is no selling activity’. The use of mayyit in Abdul Rahman’s statement implies his discontent with the current commercial activities as it is explained by the use of ‘there is no selling activity’. The connotative meaning of mayyit is negative, indicating that the market is not performing as well as it should be, probably because there are few customers.

H. Denoting Difficulty

Context H: Omar and Ammar share a fervent interest in football. While seated at a café, Omar initiates the conversation by expressing his thoughts:

Omar: ‘Did you see how Messi scored the goal?’

Ammar: ‘By God, he is a talented player. He scored a goal from a dead angle.’

In JSA, the expression mayyit is used to describe a challenging situation. In example (H), Ammar appreciates the player’s performance and uses the expression mayyit in the description of the point or angle from which the goal was scored. Thus, he positively denotes that the player has achieved something deemed difficult or impossible to accomplish. In Jordanian culture, the connotative meaning of mayyit in this context is positive, and people use it to appreciate the performance of the person involved. This is clear in Ammar’s description of the player at the beginning of his statement: ‘By God, he is a talented player’.

I. Expressing Disapproval

Context I: Jalal desires to augment his financial resources by setting up a small business. He pays a visit to his uncle Radhi and during their teatime, he expresses the following:

Jalal: ‘What do you think about the idea of opening a Shawarma shop in this area?’

Radhi: ‘This idea is dead. Look for another idea.’

The expression mayyit is used to describe a proposed idea or plan that it is ineffective and does not yield any desired results. Example (I) illustrates this meaning of mayyit. Jalal seeks advice from his uncle about establishing a new business. His uncle comments on the idea using mayyit to signify that it is ineffective and provides his advice of looking for another idea.
for another idea. The advice to look for another idea can explain the meaning of mayyyt in this context. The connotative meaning of mayyyt in this example is negative, and it serves to encourage the listener to search for a better solution or a more efficient substitution. It is worth mentioning that in the Jordanian culture, it is common to employ negative expressions to encourage listeners to look for better alternatives. Therefore, the use of mayyyt serves as a warning to the hearer not to rely on the described idea or object. Other examples include "the battery is dead", "the car is dead", and "this plan is dead", implying their uselessness.

J. Indicating Poor Quality

Context J: Ali and his friend Ahmed are watching television together. They both share a passion for the Barcelona team. The following dialogue occurs between them:

Ali: "What is happening with Barcelona in the Champions League?"
Ahmed: "To be honest, the team’s performance has been really dead these days."
Ali: "They need to change some players."

Jordanians frequently use the expression mayyyt to describe situations or activities deemed weak or ineffective, as demonstrated in example (J). Ahmed comments on the level of the Barcelona team and describes it as poor or weak; he uses mayyyt to show his dissatisfaction with the perceived weakness, as the team is not performing well and is likely to lose the game. Ali agrees with Ahmed and provides a piece of advice in order to improve the level of the team. Other examples of this meaning in Jordanian culture include "a dead knife" referring to a blunt knife that is not capable of cutting properly, "a dead heart" implying ‘he is dead’ and serves as a warning to the listener that they can rely on this person, and ‘this plan is dead’, implying their uselessness.

K. Indicating Unfitness for Planting

Context K: During a conversation at the farm, Abu Hamid seeks advice from his neighbour Khalil concerning his business affairs. In response to Abu Hamid’s inquiry, Khalil provides his suggestion by stating:

Khalil: "Why don’t you cultivate the land you bought on the airport road?"

According to the available data, the expression mayyyt is used to convey a negative connotation when describing land as having less value in terms of cultivation, implying that it cannot be planted, as demonstrated in example (K) in which Abu Hamid uses mayyyt to describe the land, he says ‘the land is dead’ and adds ‘not suitable for cultivation’. His addition verifies the negative connotation of mayyyt. As such, this implies that the speaker believes the land is unproductive and has a low yield, which is undesirable. In principle, the use of mayyyt in this context signals dissatisfaction with the ability of the land at hand to support agriculture.

L. Indicating Bravery

Context L: In the residential area where Issa and Qasim reside, a snake was discovered in the garden of one of the houses. A neighbour, Abu Ata, promptly took action to eliminate the snake. During a conversation with Qasim regarding this incident, Issa provides his commentary by stating:

Issa: "Did you see how he grabbed the snake without any fear?"
Qasim: "This man seems to have a dead heart."

In this context, the expression mayyyt is used positively. In example (L), Abu Ata is viewed as a person with a strong heart who fears nothing, as implied by the use of mayyyt in Qasim’s statement. The connotative meaning of mayyyt, in this case, is positive. It is meant to highlight the person’s courage and bravery, implying they can face any situation or task without fear. It also implies to the listener that they can rely on this person to handle any situation that requires courage.
M. Signalling Lack of Mercy

Context M: Lubna and her husband are conversing about a neighbour who recently committed a criminal act. She expresses her thoughts by stating:

لبنى: شفت كيف قلل صديقة بدون رحمه بسبب خلاف مادي؟

Lubna: “Did you see how he mercilessly killed his friend over a financial dispute?”

Mofleh: “His heart is dead to commit such an act.”

The conversation in example (M) provides a different meaning of the same structure used in the previous example (L). It shows the role of the context in interpreting the intended meaning of the linguistic structure. In this example, Mofleh responds to the comment of his wife Lubna using the expression mayyt to describe their neighbour as a person who lacks compassion when dealing with situations that require mercy. Despite using the same Arabic structure in examples (L) and (M), the intended meaning in each example is different, as well as the connotation. While in example (L) the connotative meaning is positive, it is negative in example (M). It is necessary to note that the structure in example (M) does not imply that the person being talked about possesses a strong heart as in the case with the meaning in example (L).

This finding highlights the necessity of considering the context in which the expression mayyt is used, as the same linguistic structure can have varying connotations. Furthermore, this emphasizes the multifunctionality of mayyt in Jordanian Arabic, as it can be used to describe people in various ways. As such, it has implications for learners and teachers of JSA. They should pay careful attention to the different meanings and functions of mayyt in different contexts in order to effectively be able to produce and understand messages involving such deeply rooted terms in Jordanian culture, without which it may become an obstacle to their language acquisition.

N. Conveying Extreme Quietness

Context N: Abdullah, an English language teacher who recently relocated to a village school, encounters his comrade Salman one week after his transfer. The following dialogue unfolds between them:

سلمان: كيف سكنتك الجديد في القرية؟

Salman: “How do you find your new residence in the village?”

عبد الله: يا اخي الحياة في هاي القرية ميتة!

Abdullah: “Brother, life in this village is dead.”

The concept of quietness, especially the extreme one, is not always positive, as viewed by JSA speakers. In example (N), Abdullah uses the expression mayth to describe the kind of life he is experiencing in the village where he moved to as lifeless. The use of mayyt in this context implies that the life is tranquil to the point of causing boredom. The connotative meaning is negative as it is used to discourage the addressee from living or even visiting the place in question due to the perception of it being uninteresting or lacking excitement. This meaning is somehow similar to the meaning discussed in example (D) above in that the speaker uses the expression mayyt to discourage the addressee from proceeding to do or start something and the negative connotation is mainly due to the unfavourable economic conditions whether it be business or moving to live in a particular place. However, in this meaning (example N), the negative connotation is solely due to the extreme quietness.

O. Expressing Depression

Context O: Yousef participated in a wedding celebration where he had an encounter with his friend Firas and discerned a subtle sense of despondency in his demeanour. Several days subsequent, upon encountering another friend, Ibrahim, he addresses the situation by stating:

يousef: ما ل فراس صائم هيك؟

Yousef: ‘What is wrong with Firas?’

إيراهم: مراحه ميت بعد الحادث.

Ibrahim: ‘His mood is dead after the accident.’

The expression mayyt is also employed to describe a person who feels disappointed or depressed resulting from a temporary situation. For instance, in the conversation between the two friends shown in example (O), Yousef asks Ibrahim about their friend Firas and Ibrahim replies using mayyt to describe his mood. Ibrahim also mentions the cause of this state of being ‘after the accident’, so Yousef will tolerate or excuse Firas for his strange behaviour. When disappointed or depressed to a higher degree, some Jordanians use mayyt to describe their state of being, such as when one says ‘قلبي ميت بعد الحادث’ ‘My heart is dead. I don’t like life anymore’. In both cases, the connotative meaning is negative. However, in the former example, the state of depression is caused by a temporary factor such as ‘the accident’. In contrast, in the second, it results from a series of negative experiences that the speaker has encountered in their life.
These examples show the versatile nature of the expression *mayyit*, which can be employed to express a wide range of emotions and situations in JSA. Moreover, these negative connotations suggest that the use of *mayyit* in these contexts may be intended to induce sympathy or support from the listener.

**P. Indicating a Desire to not Be Involved**

Context P: Hatim and Walid witnessed a confrontation among a group of university students. As soon as the altercation finished, they found a place to sit on the university campus and engaged in the subsequent dialogue:

 Hatim: ‘Did you hear what he said to him?’

 Walid: ‘Consider me dead and didn’t hear anything.’

 The expression *mayyit* is employed in JSA to mean being ignored, avoiding involvement or denying responsibility. In other words, it is used to convey a sense of reluctance or disinterest in participating in certain situations. In example (P), Walid signals his unwillingness to participate even in opinion about the students’ confrontation when asked by his friend Hatim and indicates his desire to be entirely ignored or not hold any responsibility. In this context, the connotation of *mayyit* is negative, implying a lack of accountability or willingness to engage.

The above analysis demonstrates the multifaceted nature of the expression *mayyit* in JSA. It serves a total of 16 (A-P) different pragmatic functions that span a wide range of meanings, including expressing extremity, characterizing sluggishness, denoting miserliness, describing discouragement, expressing strong love, denoting insufficiency, signalling a lack of customers, denoting difficulty, expressing disapproval, indicating poor quality, Indicating unfitness for planting, indicating bravery, signalling lack of mercy, conveying extreme quietness, Expressing depression, and indicating a desire to not be involved.

### V. Conclusion

The present study has aimed to investigate the discourse analysis and pragmatic functions of the expression *mayyit* in JSA based on contextual analysis. The results have revealed that the expression *mayyit* has 16 different functions interpreted according to the context in which it is used. The findings of the study suggest that the participants did not interpret *mayyit* solely according to its lexical meaning. Instead, the connotative meaning of *mayyit* was more dominant. This goes in line with the findings of Rabab’ah and Al-Saidat’s (2014) study, in which the participants interpreted the expressions in question according to their connotative meaning rather than lexical meaning. This underscores the importance of considering the cultural and contextual factors that influence the interpretation of linguistic expressions.

The study has explored the multifaceted nature of *mayyit* in JSA, revealing that it serves a wide range of pragmatic functions. While it is employed for 16 different functions, the majority of these functions have negative connotations. Remarkably, three positive functions have been identified, connoting deep longing, intense love and bravery as presented in functions (A), (E) and (L), respectively. Interestingly, the expression ‘his heart is dead’ may have three different functions according to the context, including connotations of strength, lack of mercy, or a feeling of depression or disappointment, as in functions (L), (M) and (O), respectively. As such, the interpretation of *mayyit* depends heavily on the context in which it is employed; this agrees with Fraser’s (1990) study discussed above. The positive usage of *mayyit* contrasts with the negative connotations investigated above, which imply dissatisfaction, frustration or desperation. When expressing love or desire, *mayyit* has a connotation of intensification and passion, in which it expresses the depth of the speaker’s emotion or longing, emphasizing the significance of the person or object being talked about. In other words, while the expression *mayyit* is frequently associated with negative meanings in JSA, it also conveys positive emotions and desires, adding depth and nuance to everyday interactions. It is important to note that this positive usage of *mayyit* is more common in colloquial speech, such as JSA, than in formal writing or communication. In everyday interactions, Jordanians may use *mayyit* to express their enthusiasm or passion for something or someone, whereas in more formal contexts, other expressions may be more suitable.

Simply put, the context plays a significant role in the interpretation of *mayyit*. Its meaning is context-dependent; it depends heavily on the context in which it is used. Therefore, it is essential for teachers of JSA to be aware of the cultural and contextual nuances of the language they are teaching in order to effectively convey the meaning and usage of expressions like *mayyit* to their students. Learners also have to pay attention to the use of this and other similar expressions in order to be able to produce and understand messages involving such deeply rooted terms in the Jordanian culture, without which it may become an obstacle to the acquisition of JSA by non-native speakers (Komissarov, 1991).

The present study offers valuable insights into the multifunctionality and connotative meanings of the expression *mayyit*. It sheds light on the importance of understanding the context in which it is used and how this context plays a significant role in its interpretation. As such, the study represents a significant contribution to the fields of pragmatics and language acquisition. The study highlights the need for future research on similar linguistic phenomena in Arabic and its dialects. Arabic language is known for its rich linguistic environment and cultural diversity, so there is much to be explained in terms of the usage, meaning, and function of different words and expressions in different contexts.
Future research can build on this study by examining other expressions in JSA or other Arabic dialects to deepen our understanding of the linguistic and cultural aspects of Arabic language use. This could include investigating the use of idiomatic expressions and other colloquialisms in Arabic and how they are perceived by native and non-native speakers of the language. Such studies would not only deepen our understanding of Arabic but also provide valuable insights for language teachers and learners.

REFERENCES


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