

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

Emad M. Al-Saidat*

Department of English Language and Literature, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan

Lana J. Kreishan

Department of English Language and Literature, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan

Renad M. Abbadi

Department of English Language and Literature, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan

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 to a rich area for investigation (Kanakri & Al-Harabsheh, 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

* Corresponding Author. Email: emad.m.saidat@ahu.edu.jo

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-Harabsheh & Kanakri, 2013; Kanakri & Al Harabsheh, 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 *Yahummali* in JSA were investigated by Hamdan and Abu Rumman (2020). The authors compiled a list of scenarios where the term *Yahummali* 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 *Yahummali* 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 *adzalakom 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 *adzalakom allah* in their daily interactions. The results of the study revealed that *adzalakom 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-Harashsheh and Kanakri (2013) examined the pragmatic functions and translatability of the expression *tayyib* 'Okay' (lit.: good) in Jordanian Colloquial Arabic (JCA). Their analysis showed that *tayyib* 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 Harashsheh (2013) investigated the pragmatic functions of the expression *ʕa: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 *ʕa: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 Harashsheh (2013) discussed above, Alazzawie (2015) investigated the usage of the expression *ʕa:di* in Iraqi Arabic. He examined the expression's distribution, context-dependent meanings and functions. The findings revealed that *ʕa: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, Marmorstein (2016) explored the varied uses of the expression *yaʕni* (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 *yaʕni*. 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 *yamawwad*, whose meaning and function are context-dependent. The author collected data from dyadic conversations and transcribed the contexts where *yamawwad* was used. The study identified seventeen functions for *yamawwad*, 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 *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* 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 *mayyit*'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 *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* and asked them to identify the functions and interpretations of *mayyit* 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 *mayyit*. 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 literary 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:

- سلمى: بدي اروح ع المطعم اتغدى. تروحي معي؟
 baddi ʔaru:h ʕal maʕʕam ʔatrada tru:h maʕi
 Salma: 'I want to go to the restaurant to have lunch. Will you come with me?'
 ليلي: طبعا. انا أصلا ميتة جوع.
 tabʕan ʔana ʔaʕlan maytiḥ dʒu:ʕ
 Layla: 'Of course. I'm already starving.'
 سلمى: يله.
 yalla
 Salma: 'Let's go.'

Context (b): Suhaib and Rami are currently pursuing their study abroad, find themselves in the final week of their study abroad programme. They happen to cross path on university campus and the following conversation takes place:

- صهيب: شو شعورك واحنا مروحين كمان اسبوع؟
 ʃu: ʃuʕu:rak wiḥna mrawḥi:n kama:n ʔisbu:ʕ
 Suhaib: 'How do you feel as we are leaving in a week?'
 رامي: طبعا شعور لا يوصف ميت شوق للأهل خصوصا الحجة.
 tabʕan ʃuʕu:r la: yu:ʕaf mayyit ʃo:g lil ʔahl xuʕu:ʕan ʔil ḥadʒdʒa
 Rami: 'It cannot be described, of course. I am dying of longing for my family, especially for my mother.'

After examining the dataset, it has been found that the expression *mayyit* is frequently used by Jordanians to express extreme or intense feelings. For instance, in example (a) when Salma asked her friend Layla whether she wanted to join her to have food, Layla immediately agreed and expressed her state of hunger by the expression *maytiḥ* to mean that she is starving. The expression *maytiḥ* is the feminine form of *mayyit*. The connotation of the expression is primarily negative since it is used to convey feelings of starvation, as in the above example. Other negative connotations of *mayyit* are also found in expressions involving thirst, exhaustion, sadness, pain, fear, oppression and regret. In other words, the speaker uses *mayyit* to express their deep desire to eat, drink water, rest, or sleep, or to seek support from the hearer. For instance, when a person says أنا ميت عطش 'I am dead thirsty', they mean that they are extremely thirsty and urgently need water. Similarly, when a person says انا ميت تعب 'I am dead tired', they imply that they are exhausted and desperately in need of rest.

However, it is worth mentioning that the connotative meaning of *mayyit* can be positive in some uses such as the one illustrated in example (b). Rami replies: ميت شوق 'I am dying of longing' in which the connotation of his meaning is positive as Jordanian addressees, as part of their culture, would appreciate such a feeling towards the people the speaker is referring to.

B. Indicating Very Slow Speed

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:

- سميرة: فاطمة مش عارفه أنزل الملفات من الإيميل؟
 fa:ʕmih miʕ ʕa:rʕih ʔanazzil ʔil malafa:t min ʔil ʔi:meil
 Samira: 'Fatima, I don't know how to download files from the email.'
 فاطمة: أكيد من سرعة النت الميتة. هسا بلقي نظرة.
 ʔaki:d min surʕat ʔinnit ʔil maytiḥ hasa balqi naʒra
 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 *maytiḥ* (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 *mayyit* 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:

وردده: يا رجال هالزلمه ما بيطلع منه قرش!
 ya: rıdʒdʒa:l hazzalama ma: bıtlaʃ mınnu ɡırʃ
 Warda: 'This man never spends a penny.'
 وحيد: يا أختي هاضا ميت على الدنيا ما بحب يدفع فلوس..
 yaxtı ha:za mayyıt ʃala ʔıddunya ma: bıhıɪb yıdʃaʃ flu:s

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

Moreover, the usage of the expression *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* 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:

بلال: كيف الوضع الاقتصادي هالايام في بريطانيا؟
 keɪf ʔıl wazʃ ʔıl ʔıqtıʃa:dı hal ʔayya:m fı: brı:ta:nıya
 Bilal: 'How is the economic situation these days in Britain?'
 جهاد: صدقني الوضع الاقتصادي ميت وكل ماله للأسوأ.
 ʃaddıɡnı ʔıl wazʃ ʔıl ʔıqtıʃa:dı mayyıt ʔu kul ma:lu lalʔaswa?
 Jihad: 'Believe me, the economic situation is dead and is getting worse.'

The term *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* 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 uninviting 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:

مروان: سمعت إنك بدك تخطب ر هف؟
 ʔısmıʃıt ʔınnak baddak tuxʔub rahaf
 Marwan: 'I heard that you are planning to propose to Rahaf.'
 سيف: والله أنا ميت فيها وبدي اخطبها من زمان..
 walla ʔana mayyıt fı:ha ʔu baddı ʔaxʔubha mın zama:n
 Saif: 'Oh, I'm crazy about her and have been wanting to propose to her for a long time.'

The expression *mayyit* 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 *أنا ميت فيها* '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 *أنا ميت على هاي السيارة* 'I am crazy about this car' meaning that he or she strongly wishes to have this car. In both cases, the connotative meaning of *mayyit* 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:

فارس: المشاريع الزغيرة بلشت تنكسر بعد كورونا!
 ʔil maʃa:ri:ʃ ʔizzaxi:ra ballaʃat tɪnkasɪr baʃd kuro:na
 Faris: 'Small businesses started to collapse after COVID-19.'

حسن: الدعم المادي لهيك مشاريع من الحكومة ميت.
 ʔiddaʃm ʔil ma:ddiy laheɪk maʃa:ri:ʃ mɪnɪl huku:ma mayyɪt
 Hasan: 'The government financial support for such projects is dead.'

The expression *mayyɪt* 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 *mayyɪt* 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 *mayyɪt* 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:

ايهم: كيف البيع على العيد؟
 keɪf ʔil beɪʃ ʃala ʔil ʕi:d
 Ayham: 'How is the sale during the Eid holiday?'

عبد الرحمن: والله السوق اليوم ميت وما فيه حركة بيع.
 walla ʔissu:g ʔil yɔ:m mayyɪt ʔu ma: fi: ʔarakat beɪʃ
 Abdul Rahman: 'The market is dead today, and there is no selling activity.'

In JSA, the expression *mayyɪt* 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 'السوق اليوم ميت وما فيه حركة بيع' 'the market is dead today, and there is no selling activity'. The use of *mayyɪt* 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 *mayyɪt* 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:

عمر: شفت كيف ميسي سجل الهدف؟
 ʃuft keɪf mɪ:si sɑdʒdʒal ʔilhadaf
 Omar: 'Did you see how Messi scored the goal?'

عمار: والله إنه لعيب سجل هدف من زاوية ميتة!
 walla ʔinnu laʃʕi:b sɑdʒdʒal haddaf mɪn za:wiyɪh maytɪh
 Ammar: 'By God, he is a talented player. He scored a goal from a dead angle.'

JSA speakers use the expression *mayyɪt* to describe a challenging situation. In example (*H*), Ammar appreciates the player's performance and uses the expression *maytɪh* 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 *mayyɪt* 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 'والله إنه لعيب' '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:

جلال: شو رايبك بفكرة فتح محل شاورما في هاي المنطقة؟
 ʃu: ra:yak bɪfɪkrat fath maʃal ʃawɪrma fi ha:y ʔil mantɪqa
 Jalal: 'What do you think about the idea of opening a Shawarma shop in this area?'

راضي: هاي الفكرة ميتة، شوفك فكره ثانية.
 ha:y fikra maytɪh ʃu:flak fikra ʔa:nɪyɪh
 Radhi: 'This idea is dead. Look for another idea.'

The expression *mayyɪt* 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 *mayyɪt*. Jalal seeks advice from his uncle about establishing a new business. His uncle comments on the idea using *maytɪh* to signify that it is ineffective and provides his advice of looking

for another idea. The advice to look for another idea can explain the meaning of *maytħ* in this context. The connotative meaning of *maytħ* 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 *mayyit* serves as a warning to the hearer not to rely on the described idea or object. Other examples include البطارية ميتة 'the battery is dead', السيارة ميتة 'the vehicle is dead' and هذه الخطة ميتة '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:

- علي: شو اللي صاير مع برشلونة في دوري الابطال؟
 fu: ʔılılɪ ʃa:yır maʃ barʃalɔ:na fɪ dawɪl ʔabta:l
 Ali: 'What is happening with Barcelona in the Champions League?'
 احمد: بذك الصحيح مستوى الفريق ميت هاي الأيام.
 baddak ʔıʃʃaħı:ħ mustawal farrı:q mayyıt ha:yıl ʔayya:m
 Ahmed: 'To be honest, the team's performance has been really dead these days.'
 علي: لازم يغيروا بعض الدماء.
 la:zım yırayru baʃz ʔıddıma:ʔ
 Ali: 'They need to change some players.'

Jordanians frequently use the expression *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* 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 سكين ميتة 'a dead knife' referring to a blunt knife that is not capable of cutting properly, ضربه ميتة 'his kick is dead' and مضخة المياه ميتة 'the water pump is dead'. In these instances, the connotative meaning of *mayyit* is negative because it signals the speaker's disappointment or frustration with the person or thing being referred to.

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:

- خليل: ليش ما تزرع الارض اللي اشتريتها على طريق المطار؟
 leıʃ ma: tızraʃ ʔılʔarz ʔılılɪ ʔıʃtareıtha ʃala ʔarrı:g ʔıl ma:ar
 Khalil: 'Why don't you cultivate the land you bought on the airport road?'
 أبو حامد: والله الأرض ميتة مش شغل زراعة، شغل استثمار او الواحد يبني عليها بيت.
 walla ʔılʔarz maytħ mıʃ ʃuʔul zıra:ʃa ʃuʔul ʔıstıθma:r ʔaw ʔıl wa:ħad yıbnı
 ʃaleıtha bert
 Abu Hamid: 'The land is dead, not suitable for cultivation. It is suitable for investment or to build a house on it.'

According to the available data, the expression *mayyit* 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 *maytħ* to describe the land, he says الأرض ميتة 'the land is dead' and adds مش شغل زراعة 'not suitable for cultivation'. His addition verifies the negative connotation of *maytħ*. 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 *maytħ* 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:

- عيسى: شفت كيف مسك الأفعى وما خاف من مره؟
 ʃuft keıf masak ʔıl ʔaʃʃa ʔu ma: xa:f mm marra
 Issa: 'Did you see how he grabbed the snake without any fear?'
 قاسم: شكله قلبه ميت هالزلمه.
 ʃıklı galbu mayyıt hazzalama
 Qasim: 'This man seems to have a dead heart.'

In this context, the expression *mayyit* 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 *mayyit* in Qasim's statement 'this man has a dead heart'. The connotative meaning of *mayyit*, 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 قتل صديقة بدون رحمه بسبب خلاف مادي؟
 fuft kerf gatal şadı:qu bıdu:n raħma bısabab xıla:f ma:ddı
 Lubna: ‘Did you see how he mercilessly killed his friend over a financial dispute?’
 مفلح: قلبه ميت لحتى فعل هالفعله.
 galbu mayyıt laħatta faşal halfışlıh
 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 *mayyıt* 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 *mayyıt* is used, as the same linguistic structure can have varying connotations. Furthermore, this emphasizes the multifunctionality of *mayyıt* 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 *mayyıt* 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 سكتك الجديد في القرية؟
 keif sakıntak ʔıl dʒadı:da fı qarya
 Salman: ‘How do you find your new residence in the village?’
 عبد الله: يا اخي الحياة في هاي القرية ميتة!
 ya: ʔaxı ʔılħaya: fı ha:y ʔıl qarya maytħ
 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 *maytħ* to describe the kind of life he is experiencing in the village where he moved to as lifeless. The use of *mayyıt* 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 *mayyıt* 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:

- يوسف: مال فراس صاير هيك؟
 ma:l fıra:s şa:yır heik
 Yousef: ‘What is wrong with Firas?’
 إبراهيم: مزاجه ميت بعد الحادث.
 maza:dʒu mayyıt baʕd ʔıl ħa:dıθ
 Ibrahim: ‘His mood is dead after the accident.’

The expression *mayyıt* 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 *mayyıt* 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 *mayyıt* to describe their state of being, such as when one says ‘قلبي ميت بطلت أحب الحياة’ ‘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:

- حاتم: اسمعت ايش حكاية؟
 ?ismisʔit eɪʃ ʔaka:lu
 Hatim: 'Did you hear what he said to him?'
 وليد: اعتبرني ميت وما سمعت شيء.
 ?ɪstabirni mayyit ?u ma: smisʔit ʃiy
 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

- [1] Al Rousan, R. (2015). The use of discourse marker maʿ nafsak in Saudi Arabic: A pragmatic perspective. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 7(3), 33-48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v7i3.7669>
- [2] Al Rousan, R., Al Harahsheh, A., & Huwari, F. (2020). The pragmatic functions of the discourse marker Bas in Jordanian Spoken Arabic: Evidence from a corpus. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 10(1). 130-142. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2020-0012>
- [3] Al-Ghoweri, H. (2016). Pragmatic functions of adzalakom'allah (May God elevate you) in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2(6), 271-274.
- [4] Al-Harahsheh, A., & Kanakri, M. (2013). The Pragmatic functions and the translatability of 'Tayib' in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. *US-China Foreign Language*, 11(3), 196-202. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17265/1539-8080/2013.03.004>.
- [5] Al-Shishtawi, H. (2020). The pragmatic functions of mashi in Modern Arabic language. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 7(1), 32-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30845/ijll.v7n1p5>
- [6] Alazzawie, A. (2014). Yamawwad: A discourse and pragmatic marker in Iraqi Arabic. *World Journal of English Language*, 4(2), 30-39. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v4n2p30>
- [7] Alazzawie, A. (2015). ʿadi as a discourse marker in Spoken Iraqi Arabic. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(7), 1352-1360. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0507.06>
- [8] Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805226>
- [9] Cruse, A. (2000). *Meaning in language: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [10] Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and discourse analysis*. London: Routledge.
- [11] Fraser, B. (1990). An approach to discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, 383-395. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(90\)90096-V](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90096-V)
- [12] Hamdan, J., & Abu Rumman, R. (2020). The pragmatic functions of Yahummalali in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, 12(3), 327-345.
- [13] Hammouri, D. (2017). *The pragmatic function of Yalla in Jordanian Spoken Arabic* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Jordan.
- [14] Kanakri, M., & Al-Harahsheh, A. (2013). The discourse analysis and pragmatics of ʔa:di in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(6), 59-63. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v3n6p59>
- [15] Komissarov, V. (1991). Language and culture in translation: Competitors or collaborators?. *TTR: Traduction, terminologie, redaction*, 4(1), 33-47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/037080ar>
- [16] Marmorstein, M. (2016). Getting to the point: The discourse marker yaʿni (lit. 'it means') in unplanned discourse in Cairene Arabic. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 96, 60-79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2016.03.004>
- [17] Mehawesh, M., & Jaradat, A. (2015). Inshallah: Extensive flouting of Grice's maxim of quality. *Asian Social Science*, 11(4), 319-327. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n4p319>
- [18] Rabab'ah, K., & Al-Saidat, E. (2014). Conceptual and connotative meanings of black and white colours: Examples from Jordanian Arabic. *Asian Culture and History*, (6)2, 255-260. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ach.v6n2p255>
- [19] Verschueren, J. (1999). *Understanding pragmatics*. London: Edward Arnold.
- [20] Yule, G. (2020). *The study of language* (7th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Emad M. Al-Saidat is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan. He was born in Jordan in 1969. He obtained his PhD in Sociolinguistics from University of Mysore, India, in 2000. Dr Al-Saidat has published many articles in international journals. His specialist interests focus on SLA, sociolinguistics, phonology and pragmatics.

Lana J. Kreishan is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Jordan. She obtained her PhD degree in Linguistics, Surrey University, United Kingdom. Dr. Kreishan has published many research papers on varied topics in Linguistics in international journals. Her research interests focus on SLA, Contrastive Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, and Sociolinguistics.

Renad M. Abbadi is an Associate Professor of Linguistics and Translation at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University (AHU), Jordan. She obtained her PhD in linguistics and translation from Macquarie University, Australia. Dr. Abbadi has published articles on translation, discourse analysis, and pragmatics. Her main research interests are in comparative rhetoric, translation, and cross-cultural linguistics.