Anti-language: A Case Study of Jordanian Inmates

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This study investigates Jordanian inmates' anti-language based on data collected from interviews with 15 Jordanian male inmates who recently had their freedom in 2016. The data shows that the inmates employ several relexicalization processes to distinguish themselves from the wider Jordanian community and establish their own subculture (anti-society).These processes include neologisms, compounding, metaphors, idiomatic expressions, semantic narrowing and extension, rhyming expressions, and euphemisms. They all join forces to account for maintaining secrecy and experimenting with verbal art at the same time in order to represent prison life both linguistically and socially.

Keywords*: anti-language, Jordanian Spoken Arabic, male inmates, relexicalization processes, subculture.*

1. Introduction

Language is a communicative and semiotic system that shapes the ideas, thoughts and even the culture of the interlocutors in a speech community. However, when a group of interlocutors are socially isolated for a certain reason, they tend to create their own code or jargon that has a completely different pragmatic import which reflects their counter-society (anti-society), technically known as *anti-language*. In his 1976 seminal article *Anti-languages,* Halliday states that anti-language is generated by anti-society, which is a society that is built within another society "as a conscious alternative to it." He views it as "a mode of resistance, resistance which may take the form either of passive symbiosis or active hostility and even destruction…an anti-language stands for an anti-society in much the same relation as does a language to a society" (Halliday 1976:570). The members of an anti-society are constantly striving to maintain a counter-reality which is under pressure from the established world.

Giblett (1991: 1) indicates that "anti-language and anti-society go together; one is not possible without the other." Therefore, anti-language is a special linguistic variety or code created and used by a certain group of interlocutors and embodied by an anti-society, thus occurring as a resistance to that society. The users of anti-language seek to create their own society (subculture) and maintain their secret spoken language. In this way, anti-language is only communicated and understood within one particular group, and it categorically excludes outsiders from such communication. Another explanation can be psychological, as those interlocutors may suffer from racism, discrimination, suppression, or unfairness in their societies. For these reasons, they may isolate themselves from their normal society and create an anti-society that, subsequently, gives rise to an anti-language. Prison language "is a symbol of group identity and solidarity and a way to express aggression without resorting to violent behaviour" (Wittenberg 1996: 50).

Prison language or anti-language is used by prison gangs or prisoners in general to deceive the wardens or other rival gangs in prison (Hurst 2019; Wittenberg 1996). Inmates

use a variety of language with limited vocabulary and structures to communicate with each other. This variety is associated with the prison language at the one end and the youth language at the other end (Mesthrie 2008). Prison language or argot brought cohesiveness in prisoner's life because of the distinctiveness of its vocabulary and patterns. It helps them to protect their privacy "even in the presence of intense surveillance" and to define their 'relative status' and rights like workers of corporations, who have their argot to the same ends by using words or expressions that are only known by the group to reinforce 'its shared identity' (Wittenberg 1996: 45).

Wenger (1998) uses the term 'community of practice' to refer to a group of people who have shared the same interests, crafts or concerns and interact regularly. This concept may be similar to anti-society as the members of this group can share the same stories, concepts, ideas and so on. Similarly, Milroy and Gordon (2003) refer to the concept of 'individual's social network' as unlimited web of ties or networks between individuals in a social and geographical space. These networks can also be within individuals who share the same interests and concerns.

Wittenberg (1996: 50) illustrates that prison language depends on six contextual factors: 1) Setting the time and place of conversation, such as dining hall or prison chapel; 2) Participants, i.e., inmates to inmates or inmates to staff members or vice versa; 3) Activity in which inmates are engaged in; 4) Channel of communication; 5) Code of prison language; 6) Message form, i.e., 'conversational, aggressive, direct, loud, or soft.' Inmates usually curse, swear or use profanity to express feelings, ideas and attitudes.

Anti-language is mainly employed for secrecy purposes and a verbal art display, as the speakers wish to protect themselves from the outside world on the one hand, and to distinguish themselves by having a different spoken jargon on the other. To isolate themselves from the outside society and have safe communication, German prisoners "have created their own language – a criminal jargon. In the process of prisoners' communication symbols, gestures, signs, nicknames, and tattoos that function in an organized subcultural hierarchy as a distinctive sign, are of certain meaning language" (Osovska &Tomniuk 2019:3). Mallik (1972) reports that out of 385 responses from criminals and anti-social elements, 158 attribute anti-language to the need for secrecy, while 132 mention communicative force or verbal art. Anti-language has the same grammar and vocabulary of the ordinary language, but it has different semantic and phonological systems. Halliday (1976:582) argues that anti-language is "recognizable by its phonological or lexico-grammatical shape as a metaphoric alternant to the everyday language." The users of an anti-language try to protect themselves by generating words, expressions, or giving some existing words new meanings that can be understood only by the members of their group.

By way of illustration, Jordanian inmates use the expression *dʒibt il-ʕadʒal* (Have you brought the wheel?) to refer to bringing drugs. The word ʕadʒal denotes a 'wheel of a vehicle and is devoid of any connotative meaning in Jordanian Spoken Arabic (Henceforth JSA), but the inmates employ it here to refer to drugs in a metaphorical way. To explain, the wheel's circular shape is invested as an area of cognitive correspondence that can represent what drugs do to a person, i.e. feeling dizzy when taking drugs. This conceptual mapping (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) is not accessible to ordinary language users and may sound incomprehensible to prison guards and police without further investigation. This study aims to investigate Jordanian inmates' anti-language. It specifically looks into the relexicalization processes employed in their anti-language and the motivations behind them.

2. Literature Review

According to Halliday (1976), anti-language is a process of relexicalization and resocialization through which old vocabulary acquires new meanings or new connotations, and new vocabulary may be generated. Jordanian inmates, for example, use the word *xalle:tˤ* as an active participle form to mean 'boss'. Actually, the active participle form from the verb *xalatˤ* 'to mix' in JSA is *xalla:tˤ* 'a mixer', thus the word has acquired a new meaning by relexicalization. Not only does the word acquire a new meaning, but it also undergoes a phonological change by replacing the second vowel /a:/ with /e:/. Sometimes, the process involves only adding a connotation to the word, e.g. the generic word *sˤandu:g* 'a box' is employed by the inmates to specifically mean 'a packet of cigarettes'. Moreover, anti-language becomes extremely opaque when a new word is generated, e.g. the word *laʔu:n* (a fagot) does not exist in either Standard Arabic (Henceforth SA) or JSA. For its part, resocialization is the process of generating a new social environment for the users (i.e. a subculture), which makes the anti-language socially acceptable within their group, i.e. the anti-society incubates anti-language.

Hurst (2019: 123) studies the phenomenon of relexicaliztion and metaphor in South African Tsotsitaal, the vernacular spoken by young African Urban Youth. This language practice aroused in 1940s during the apartheid period in South Africa due to "the conditions of inequality in colonial, and later, postcolonial societies, in imposed nation-states where the dominance of European languages and capitalist consumerism further disadvantages those outside the western episteme." This practice appeared as "decolonial practice, a challenge to coloniality." In other words, Tsotsitaal is a linguistic variety used by South African youth as a revolution against "the monolingual, anglonormative linguistic hegemony of western modernity." The speakers mix the linguistic codes and do not follow the linguistic rules of the standard language.

Montgomery (1986-1995: 101-102) states that anti-language "can be used to illuminate certain kinds of social dialect" and argues that a speech community "emerges as an arena of competing affiliations and antagonistic differences". One should note that such competing affiliations which represent different social dialects may arise within the same family. In Jordan, for example, there is a wide-spread phenomenon by which females glottalize standard /q/ to become /ʔ/, while males veralize it (/q/ becomes /g/) within same families as a strong marker of gender identity, despite the fact that they belong to the same social class. Montgomery gives examples from Citizens' Band (CB) radio slang which involves metaphorical anti-language such as *bear cage* for *police station*, *kojack with a kodak* for *police using radar* and *bubble-gum machine* for *police car*. Such jargon is directed to listeners who affiliate with this anti-language and is usually incomprehensible to large sectors of the population.

Allan & Burridge (2006: 58) consider anti-language as a jargon and they define jargon as "the language peculiar to a trade, profession or other group; it is the language used in a body of spoken or written texts, dealing with a circumscribed domain in which speakers share a common specialized vocabulary, habits of word usage, and forms of expression." Jargon, they state, is used "to promote in-group solidarity and to exclude as out-groupers those people who do not use the jargon," adding that it is a "kind of Masonic glue between different members of the same profession" (Allan & Burridge 2006: 61). One should note that the term 'anti-language', in contrast to the term 'jargon', has a negative shade of meaning that relates

to anti-society and secrecy which Mallik (1972) and Halliday (1976) stress. Thus, jargons affiliating with various professions like 'the medical jargon', 'the sport jargon', and 'the linguistic jargon' do not involve anti-social or secret motifs the way 'inmates', 'Red Necks', 'Lavender', or 'drug mafias' anti-language does. Such jargons, however, may transpire professionalism and solidarity among users.

Baihui & Fengjie (2017: 50) review the scant volume of literature on anti-language, asserting that as a social symbol code, anti-language "can reflect the social attitude and create social identities, and as a special form of language, it verifies closely the relationship between language and society." They give several English examples from the anti-language of homosexuals like *bent* for *homosexual* and *straight* for *heterosexual* and from Netspeak like *BTW* for *by the way* and *tttt* for *to tell you the truth.* The two processes of semantic extension and abbreviation here are respectively employed to create a subjective and secret reality accessible only to those who invented it, at least in the early stages of the anti-language. As time goes on, however, several anti-language vocabularies sneak into the language of the community at large, but at the same time, more anti-language-specific terms may come into existence as a counter process.

Allan & Burridge (1991) discuss euphemism, which aims to replace offensive words/expressions with words/expressions that have positive connotations, e.g. *economical*, *elderly* and *sleep with* for *miserly*, *old* and *sexual intercourse*, respectively (also see Farghal 1995b for interpreting euphemism from a Gricean perspective). It also deals with dysphemism as a lexical process in the opposite direction to euphemism, that is, it replaces positive or neutral words with words carrying negative connotations, e.g. to *babble*, *scribble* and *screw* for *speak*, *write* and *make love,* respectively. Farghal (1995a) views dysphemism as a lexical resource in natural language whereby lexemes are created for combining denotation and negative attitude via a complex process of lexical compression in response to existing psychological and social pressures. Given such pressures, the speaker of JSA may produce the negative *ga:ʕid bitsamam* 'He's poisoning himself' instead of *ga:ʕid bu:kil* 'He's eating' and the negative *ʔingalaʕ* 'He was extracted' instead of the neutral *ra:ħ* 'He left'.

Wolfer (2011: 2) investigates Damascene secret languages and explains that anti-language or secret language in the Arab world is embodied in three varieties: "argots, luldings and mixed languages" (i.e. Christian Goldsmith of Damascus). Secret language is used among closed groups of people such as occupational groups such traders and craftsmen, religious people, soldiers, etc. "Luldings are formed by systematic changes of the colloquial language… usually those changes are morphological." Luldings is used among non-closed social groups. It uses the existing roots of Arabic words and derives new "luldings words according to existing or invented forms of stem formation in a way that is typical for the Arabic language" (Wolfer 2011: 44). Wolfer's (2011) study describes the luldings used in Damascus, which is called *lsa:n il-ʕasʕfu:ra* (the language of small birds).It is mainly used by women and sometimes it is used by men in family chatting, especially in the presence of guests to deliver a certain message to his wife. It is also used by men especially when they play cards. Wolfer (2011: 3) explains that Arabic luldings belong to "seven linguistic categories, using affixes, methathesis, substitution, creation of new stems, spelling, intertwining with Koranic verses and numbers."

Arabic argots on the other hand are used among closed social groups such as occupational group, religious minorities or 'peer groups'. These argots have limited vocabulary with strict 'hierarchical and closed' structures. They are used by craftsmen in the *Suqs* (Market). Wolfer classifies five mixed Arabic secret languages: The use of Arabic in

the *kalamu tesitesi* (Madagascar), the use of Hebrew by Jewish as a secret language in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, the Christian goldsmiths in the old city of Damascus adopted the Jewish secret language(lo:so:n), the Yemeni Jewish argots which used words related to Hebrew.

Nieuwkerk (1998) studies the secret language or 'code' used by Egyptian entertainers such as musicians, dancers and singers. She explains that the profession of entertainers is disregarded in Egyptian society, as people think that these performances are prohibited. Yet, people still enjoy watching these performances. As a result, entertainers developed their own distinctive argot. She examines three contexts for secret language used by entertainers at wedding and saint's day celebration 'popular circuit," the circuit of nightclubs and the performing arts circuit. Entertainer's occupation is infamous in Egyptian society, so entertainers are spatially, socially, cultural and economically marginalized (Nieuwkerk 1998).As a result of that, the entertainers "create a world for themselves and foster a positive self-image. It is not only a reaction against exclusion by society, but a way of group inclusion for the members of the marginal group" (Nieuwkerk 1998: 32).

According to Rowson (1983)[1], there are two types of secret language in Egyptian Arabic "the *sīm* of gold- and silversmiths (*sīm il*-sdgha) and the *sīm* of entertainers (*sīm ilfannantn or sīm il-ʕawalim*)" (Nieuwkerk 1998: 33). Nieuwkerk(1998: 40) classifies the secrete words in words related to money, food, people and warnings. She concludes that entertainers are not strongly marginalized by the society; they use this argot among themselves as well as with outsiders. Therefore, they think that there is no need to create their own distinctive social world. In addition, "the secret codes does [sic] not function as a way of affirming their solidarity."

One should note that anti-language, being reflective of anti-society, tends to neutralize or euphemize rather than dysphemize vocabulary from the wider community's perspective. In this way, while the term homosexual is generally viewed as a neutral/objective term in the base community, the Lavender terms *fagot*, *queer* and *bent* are viewed differently by in-groupers and out-groupers. While homosexuals employ them neutrally by way of objective denotation, outsiders use them dysphemistically by way of pejoration. There is a strong tendency, therefore, to come up with words carrying positive connotations to replace ones with negative connotations, e.g. *gasʕir* 'palace' and *beet xa:ltuh* 'his aunt's house' are used by Jordanian inmates to refer to 'prison'. According to Piechota (2018), anti-language often corrupts the language norms, values and perceptions.

Shunnaq (1994: 227) studies anti-language expressions used by male college students at Yarmouk University, Jordan. He considers these expressions as anti-language, because they are only employed among young male students. He concludes that these expressions are used for secrecy reasons, to show solidarity and intimacy among the interlocutors, and "to avoid embarrassing other people, to create an atmosphere of humor, fun, and amusement, and to express unpleasant ideas, acts, facts and events by using more acceptable and pleasant expressions."

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[1] Cited in Nieuwkerk(1998)

3. Method and informants

The data was collected in 2016 with the help of two volunteers who had intimate relationships with some inmates who had recently obtained their freedom then. The volunteers played a pivotal role in managing the meetings with the inmates and collecting the written data as used and pronounced by them. The two male volunteers were MA students of linguistics who studied Sociolinguistic course. They were given detailed instructions on how to conduct the meeting and obtain the data. The participants were informed about the aim of the study, and they were reassured that their identities and privacy would be kept highly confidential. The data was the output of casual and friendly meetings with 15 male inmates in different places in Irbid city. The inmates refused to record these meetings for embarrassing reasons. Therefore, the volunteers wrote down the elicited data that was obtained in individual and collective meetings with inmates. The inmates' ages ranged from 25-50 years; they spent periods in prison lasting from six months to ten years. They confirmed that all the expressions and terms collected are used by all Jordanian inmates regardless of their age or the period they spent in prison. The corpus consisted of 96 common words and expressions used by the inmates. These words and expressions are completely different from JSA as the majority of them are used in JSA with different meaning.

4. Analysis and discussion

The data analysis shows that inmates follow several relexicalization processes in constructing their anti-language. Halliday (1976: 571) defines relexicalization as the creation of "new words for old" in areas "that are central to the activities of the subculture and that set it off most sharply from the established society". The lexical procedures in creating the subculture mainly include: neologisms, compounding, metaphors, idiomatic expressions, semantic narrowing and semantic extension, rhyming expressions, and overlexicalization. Each of them will be discussed with illustrative examples below.

4.1 *Neologisms*

Inmates create neologisms that do not exist in JSA or SA by way of relexicalizing existing words or by filling in lexical gaps to produce the most opaque lexemes in their anti-language insofar as communicating in the presence of outsiders is concerned. That is to say, it is usually impossible for an outsider to guess what a neologism denotes based on the verbal sign alone. The following examples are illustrative:

(1) a. *laʕu:n*   'a fagot'
      b. *mukin*   'red-handed'
      c. *dazdu:z*   'a prisoner who acts treacherously'
      d. *ʕatʕu:n*   'a policeman who brings drug pills for the inmates'

In the above data, (1a) and (1b) relexicalize the existing JSA words *mitlabbis* 'red-handed' and *manyak* 'a fagot' by creating words that have no trace in JSA or SA. The examples in (1a) and (1b) can be considered euphemisms by way of mystifying the familiar, inherently negative JSA words for 'a homosexual' and 'red-handed', so that only insiders would

understand them. As for (1c) and (1d), they fill in gaps by creating words that represent aspects of the prison world. To explain, the coinage of a word that stands for 'a prisoner who acts suspiciously and treacherously' in (1c) and a word that denotes 'a policeman who secretly cooperates with inmates by bringing them drug pills' in (1d) becomes a lexical necessity for the inmates during imprisonment. JSA and SA do not need such lexemes because the circumstances requiring them are non-existent.

4.2 *Compounding*

Compounding is a word-formation process that involves joining two existing lexemes to create a compound. Compounds fall into two categories: endocentric and exocentric (idiomatic). The former presents the compound as a kind of the second lexeme (item) in it, e.g. a *textbook* is a kind *book* and a *bedroom* is a kind of *room*. The latter, by contrast, presents the compound as a kind of something else, e.g. a *bigmouth* is not a kind of *mouth* but a kind of *person* (a talkative person) and a *tallboy* is not a kind of *boy* but a piece of *furniture*. Note that compounds reorganize reality in terms of new concepts. Being locked away in prison (which is an abnormal reality), Jordanian inmates relexicalize the elements of the existing environment in terms of their own experience and needs. They relexicalize metonymies which happen to be compounds. The following examples are illustrative:

(2)   a.   il-ɣurfa is-su:da
                the- room   black
                'the black room (a lightless room assigned for inmates who make trouble
                 regularly)'
         b.   ɣurfit il-xirwiʕ
                room the-castor oil
                'the room for castor oil (a room for those who are suspected of swallowing
                 drugs,   so they are given castor oil for excrement)'
         c.   ɣurfit il-ħilwi:n
                room the-handsome boys
                'the room for the handsome boys (the room for young, handsome and sexually
                 attractive boys)'
         d.   ɣurfit ʕamra:ð̣ nafsiyyih
                room illness mental
                'mental illness room (a room for serious guys who do not have a good sense
                 of humor)'

As can be observed, the compounds in (2) are all endocentric compounds that can be interpreted properly only by the inmates because they dissect a reality which is not accessible to outsiders. That is, these compounds denote objects that do not exist in the environment of the Jordanian community at large. Therefore, for instance, if an outsider were to guess what (2c) and (2d) based on the way they are lexicalized given general language competence, they would say they refer to 'the room for well-behaved prisoners' and 'the room for prisoners with mental problems' respectively, which both prove to be wrong. In this way, common sense in interpreting anti-language may not help.

However, the inmates' anti-language may include compounds that are transparent or relatively transparent to outsiders, as can be exemplified in (3) below:

(3)   a.   ʁurfit it-tafti:ʃ
              room the-inspection
              'inspection room (a room for searching new inmates thoroughly for illegal
              things before being checked in)'
        b.   ʁurfit il-ʕazil
              room the-quarantine
              'the quarantine room (the room assigned for inmates who are highly dangerous)'

The compound in (3a) denotes a room that is familiar in several other contexts such as airports and police stations, which makes it easy to comprehend by outsiders. For its turn, (3b) is less transparent than (3a), despite the fact that the compound 'quarantine room' is a familiar concept because it applies differently to the prison context here, i.e. 'quarantine' is not implemented in terms of a person's contagious disease but in terms of a person's dangerousness.

4.3 *Metaphors (Metaphorical extension)*

Relexicalization by the construction of creative metaphors to stand for familiar entities is one of the main procedures in Jordanian inmates' anti-language. In most cases, the conceptual mapping in the metaphors is accessible only to the community of inmates. The following examples in (4) are illustrative:

(4)   a.   *sˤa:ru:x*   'a rocket' for 'a hashish cigarette'
        b.   *farru:dʒih*   'a grilled chicken' for 'a method of punishment where the
                                   feet of the prisoner are tied together'
        c.   *ʕadʒal*   'a wheel' for 'a drug pill'
        d.   *maħru:g*   'burned' for 'very angry'

As can be observed in (4), it would be impossible for an outsider to guess what is denoted by these creative metaphors based on familiar conceptual mapping. Let us examine (4a) and (4b) by way of illustration. The familiar *sˤa:ru:x*'s (rocket's) attribute 'being fast' in (4a) may be metaphorically mapped onto a person's act in the domain of speed. One should note that outsiders might detect such an area of cognitive correspondence that gives rise to this conceptual mapping. However, going as far as establishing conceptual mapping between *sˤa:ru:x* and *hashish cigarette* would be opaque to Jordanians other than inmates because when creating such metaphorical expressions in their anti-language, the inmates construct a cognitive world of their own. In this world, the hashish cigarette lifts the smoker up in terms of pleasure the way a rocket finds its way easily into the skies. A similar argument can be made about (4b) where it is impossible for an outsider to figure out that the inmates' *farru:dʒih* 'a grilled chicken' denotes 'a certain method of punishment', which is a creative metaphor that invests the position of a chicken's legs while being grilled metaphorically, thus finding its legitimacy only within the confines of prison life.

Some metaphorical expressions in the inmates' anti-language are borrowed from Jordanian slang and, subsequently, they are applied to prison life. The examples in (5) are illustrative:

(5)   a.   *mgalliʕ*   'a toothless person' for 'a very experienced person'
       b.   *ʕakal ra:si*   '(he) ate my head' for '(he) convinced me to do something'
       c.   *be:t xa:ltuh*   'his aunt's house' for 'prison'
       d.   *xa:ru:f*   'a lamb' for 'a gullible person'

The metaphorical expressions in (5) belong to Jordanian slang, some of which are only used by the older generation, while some belong to the new generation. Apparently, Jordanian inmates are aware of both old and modern slang in JSA. For example, the loss of a person's teeth due to progressing in age is metaphorically connected to having wide experience in (5a), hence the conceptual mapping, which is mostly accessible to the older generation of Jordanians and may not be heard in the young generation's speech. However, it has been borrowed into the inmates' anti-language to denote a prisoner's wide experience in the world of crime. By contrast, the inmates have borrowed the creative metaphor *xa:ru:f* in (5d), which exclusively belongs to the young generation's vernacular to denote a 'gullible prisoner' in the world of crime. Therefore, Jordanian slang constitutes one of the lexical resources the inmates resort to in constructing their anti-language within the borders of prison life.

4.4 *Idiomatic expressions*

The data includes a number of idiomatic expressions that are specific to the inmates' anti-language. Such idiomatic expressions further consolidate the inmates' subculture. The examples in (6) are illustrative:

(6)   a.   btilʕab bʕadda:d ʕumrak
            are playing(you) odometer life your
            'You're playing with your life's odometer' for
            'I'm warning you not to dare me'
       b.   mħammad in-nusˤ bisallim ʕale:k
            Mohammad the-half say hello to you
            'Mohammed the half says hello to you'
            for 'give me half of your cigarette'
       c.   tiħit   taxtak   ħaʃi:ʃ
            Under bed -your   hashish
            'There's hashish under your bed'
             for 'I'll make trouble for you'
       d.   ʕixtasˤir   w gassim ʕala ʕaʃra
            be (you) brief and   divide on ten
            'Be brief and divide by ten'
            for 'Be careful not to argue with me'
       e.   ʕigra   su:rit fa:rig
            read (you) Surah departure
            '*Read the Surah of departure*' for '*Get out of here*'

If we exclude (6e), the idiomatic expressions in (6) are not heard in JSA, i.e. they exclusively belong to the inmates' anti-language. Just like idiomatic expressions in language in general, the import of these expressions cannot be worked out on the basis of the individual words

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comprising them, i.e. they have a unitary meaning. Apparently, inmates usually coin their own idiomatic expressions that color their anti-language with interestingness, forcefulness, and emotiveness. In this way, not only do the idiomatic expressions in (6a) – (6d) distinguish the inmates from the wider Jordanian community, but they also surpass their literal counterparts in the aforementioned attributes. As for the idiomatic expression in (6e), it is borrowed from JSA slang and it sounds very forceful and, simultaneously, humorous by idiomatically intertextualizing with the Holy Quran by employing the Quranic term *Surah* (chapter).

4.5 *Non-metaphorical semantic narrowing and extension*

The data shows that narrowing down the generic senses of common nouns to specific senses is an important relexicalization process in the inmates' anti-language. This process seems to be less taxing than creating neologisms and, at the same time, it achieves the same communicative purpose, i.e. both processes produce vocabulary whose sense may only be understood by inmates. The following examples are only a selected few, out of the multitudes which have been observed in the corpus:

(7) a. *sˤandu:q* 'a box' for 'a packet of cigarettes'
   b. *gisˤsˤa* 'a story' for 'a problem, especially when some inmates
          conspire against someone'
   c. *dʒamʕa* 'a gathering' for 'a problem'
   d. *il-xuz* 'a weak, effeminate young male' for 'the one who washes
          the inmates' underwear'
   e. *bas* 'boss' for 'gambling controller'

In all the examples in (7), the generic sense of the word is changed to a specific one. To explain, the generic senses of the familiar JSA common nouns in (7a) – (7c) have been narrowed down to specific senses. In (6a), for example, the generic common noun *sˤandu:q* is used by the inmates to specifically denote 'a packet of cigarettes'. Hence, it is impossible for an outsider to assign this specific denotation to it. While the noun *sˤandu:q* familiarly collocates with a variety of contents such as sˤ*andu:q bandu:ra* 'a box of tomatoes', *sˤandu:q bibsi* 'a box of Pepsi' and sˤ*andu:q mudʒawhara:t* 'a box of jewelry', it fails to collocate with cigarettes – the collocation in JSA is *ba:ki:t duxxa:n* 'a packet of smoking'. Thus, the collocational behavior of sˤ*andu:q* in JSA further mystifies the specific sense of this word in the inmates' anti-language. The same process can be observed in (7b) and (7d) in which a generic sense is narrowed down to a specific sense that may not be detected by outsiders. In (7d), for instance, the young generation's familiar noun *xuz* is generically used to label 'a sissy, weak young male' but is specifically used to mean 'the one who washes the inmates' underwear'. Last, (7e) is of special interest because it is an English borrowing that has undergone the same process, i.e. the generic noun *bas* 'boss' is used to specifically mean 'gambling controller'.

 For its turn, non-metaphorical semantic extension involves changing a specific sense of a word into a generic sense, i.e. a hyponym becomes a superordinate. While semantic narrowing (a superordinate becomes a hyponym) is a very common process in the inmates' anti-language, semantic extension is rarely found. This strong tendency may be motivated by the inmates' desire to distinguish their subculture from rather than dilute it into the base

(wider) culture. The data includes only one example of non-metaphorical semantic extension, as can be witnessed in (8) below:

(8)   *iz-zahir*   'dice' for 'gambling'

The 'dice' *iz-zahir* game in (8), which is a hyponym of 'gambling' *ligma:r* like 'poker' and 'roulette', is semantically extended to become a superordinate, a semantic phenomenon which is attested in both English and Arabic, e.g. *cat*, *lion* and *tiger* are all hyponyms of *cat*.

4.6 *Rhyming expressions*

Rhyming expressions also contribute to establishing the inmates' subculture. They color the anti-language with musicality and amusement while communicating the message forcefully. Following are some illustrative examples (the repeated syllables/sounds are highlighted in boldface):

(9)   a.   allah yikab**ruh**   ħatta   ndab**ruh**
              Allah grow him up so (we) deal with him
              'May you live long, so I'll punish you', i.e. 'I'm warning you'.
       b.   ʔimba:riħ ilʕasˤir   ʔije:t   ʕal lgasˤir
              Yesterday afternoon came (you) to the palace
              Yesterday afternoon, you came to the palace', i.e. 'to the prison'.
       c.   ɣa:li w   miʃ ʃayif   ɣe:rak   gba:li
              dear (you) and not see   other than you   in front of me
              'Dear and I see only you in front of me', i.e. 'You are nothing'.
       d.   mur ya ʕabdissala:m u ʕaddi ma:lik   ʔiʃi   ʕindi
              pass oh Abedelsalam and go   don't you have anything with me
              'Oh Abdelsalam go past you have nothing with me', i.e. 'I'm warning you
              not to dare me'.
       e.   Gu:l na:dir   u gu:m   ɣa:dir
              Say(you) nadir   and stand up(you) (to) leave
              'Say Nadir (a proper name) and leave', i.e. 'Get out of here'.

The rhyming expressions in (9) furnish the inmates' anti-language with an artistic dimension through creative repetition of syllables and sounds in parallel parts within the same utterance. In terms of communicative import, they vary in transparency. For example, while it is impossible for an outsider to understand the message intended in (9c), which goes as far as using an endearing term 'dear' in addressing the interlocutor, an outsider can readily assign a mild request to (9d) rather than a strong order as intended in the anti-language. In addition to relative secrecy, therefore, communicative force and verbal art emerge as key motivations for rhyming expressions. While these rhyming expressions may sound humorous and unserious at face value, they usually communicate forceful messages.

By way of illustration, (9e) is almost entirely built on repeating syllables and sounds in a parallel way and, at first glance, may seem a funny, unserious attempt at verbal art to make a mild request but, in reality, it forcefully performs the illocution of *ordering*. More subtly, it is unlikely in (9a) for an outsider to detect the illocution of *threatening* based on its familiar linguistic signs which may transpire a pleasant invocation rather than a threat.

4.7 *Euphemisms*

Jordanian inmates tend to replace familiar taboo words with pleasant sounding ones in their anti-language mainly for the purpose of secrecy, i.e. it would be impossible for outsiders to guess what the replacements stand for. The following examples are illustrative:

(10) a. *ʕaya:n*   'a sick person' for 'an asshole'
      b. *rafa:hiyyih*   'luxury' for 'a fagot'
      c. *ʃilt-il-uns*   'the friendly gang' for 'judges of the court'
      d. *madrasit yu:sif* 'Joseph's school' for 'prison'
      e. *mraffiʕ*   'lifted up' for 'intoxicated'

All the examples in (10) employ euphemism to replace words/expressions with negative or neutral connotations with ones having neutral or positive connotations. In (10a), for example, the JSA negative expressions *gawwa:d* or *ʕarsˤ* 'an asshole' are euphemized in the inmates' anti-language by the neutral *ʕayaan* 'a sick person'. Similarly, the neutral *quḍa:t al-maħkamah* 'judges of the court' is relexicalized as the humorously positive *ʃilt-il-uns* 'the friendly gang'. By contrast, the dysphemistic JSA *manyak* 'a fagot' and *msˤatˤtˤil* 'intoxicated' are replaced with the pleasant sounding *rafa:hiyyih* 'luxury' and *mraffiʕ* 'lifted up' in (10b) and (10e).

4.8 *Overlexicalization*

The data shows some examples of overlexicalization where several words/expressions are employed to denote the same thing. Such cases usually involve key concepts in prison life such as *homosexuality* and the *warning* illocution. The examples in (11) and (12) represent these two concepts, respectively:

(11) a. *rafa:hiyyih*   'luxury'
      b. *laʔu:n*   ' ? '
      c. *bala:tˤah*   'a tile'
      d. *zaʕtar*   'thyme'

(12) a. miʃ ʃa:y**fak** ʔirfaʕ ʃafa:y**fak** miʃ ʕa:j**bak** ʔirfaʕ ħawa:j**bak**
          not see-you raise lips-your not like-you raise eyebrows-your
          'Lit. I don't see you, so raise your lips, if you don't like it, raise your eyebrows'.
      b. allah yikab-**ruh**   ħatta   ndab-**ruh**
          Allah grow- him- up so   deal with him (we)
          'Lit. May you live long, so I can punish you'
      c. btilʕab   bʕadda:d   ʕumr**ak**
          play (you) with odometer age-your
          'Lit. You're playing with the odometer of your life'.
      d. ʔixtasˤir   w   gassim ʕala ʕaʃra
          be (you) brief and   divide on ten
          'Lit. Be brief and divide by ten'.

The words in (11) overlexicalize the JSA dysphemistic word *manyak* 'a fagot' in the inmates' anti-language, which is indicative of the need to have several lexical options to refer to the concept of homosexuality in prison life. While (11a) euphemizes the concept, (11b) neologizes it. As for (11c) and (11d), they metaphoricize the concept of homosexuality. The conceptual mapping in (11c) is hardly decipherable, viz. a fagot's skin is as smooth as the surface of a tile. In (11d), the mapping is achieved in terms of food, viz. *zaʕtar* is a popular Jordanian dish consisting of ground, dry thyme mixed with sesame and eaten with bread and olive oil, to imply a delicious taste. Overlexicalization of this concept, therefore, enables inmates to readily call up one of these terms when need arises.

Similarly, prison life generates a lot of friction between prisoners which requires issuing the *warning* illocution. Consequently, the JSA warning illocution *baħaðrak* 'I warn you' is overlexicalized in the inmates' anti-language by experimenting with verbal art using both rhyming and idiomatic expressions. In (12a) and (12b), the inmates issue forceful warnings by employing rhyming expressions, while in (12c) and (12d) they achieve the same objective by utilizing idiomatic expressions. In both cases, the inmates' even distinguish themselves more sharply from the wider Jordanian community by not only relexicalizing but also overlexicalizing familiar JSA concepts in their subculture.

5. Conclusion

By examining Jordanian inmates' anti-language, this study emphasizes the notion that anti-language reflects anti-society and is linguistically informed by the physical, psychological, and social environment surrounding prison life. The inmates employ anti-language as a restricted, context-dependent spoken code to protect themselves from the outside society. It is mainly used for secrecy purposes and for contest and verbal display to maintain "a counter-reality that is under pressure from the established world" (Halliday 1976: 582). The study has also shown that Jordanian inmates' anti-language was associated with power, control and dominance. The expressions they use in their communication can only be understood by inmates inside the prison. In this way, the inmates' anti-language is established as a resistance tool against the wider community, which is created and used in prison and is naturally given up when the inmates get their freedom and return to their normal life in society. This may lead to the assumption that the use of anti-language is temporary and occurs under certain circumstances, and any group of people who are suppressed, isolated, or neglected by their societies may contrive it. The study recommends other researchers to investigate prison language from a sociolinguistic perspective because it will further our understanding of the relationship between language and society. Future research can also focus on the female inmate subculture since their communication, feelings, needs, and concerns are different than those of the males'.

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