A Sociolinguistic Study of Graffiti in Jordan

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study is to investigate graffiti in Jordan from a sociolinguistic perspective. It is mainly concerned with examining the sociolinguistic functions expressed in graffiti. A total of 1187 pieces of spray-written graffiti were personally collected by the researcher from the Jordanian cities of Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, Mafraq, Ajloun, Ma’an, Aqaba, and Irbid’s and Baq’a’s refugee camps. The data analysis has shown that graffiti in Jordan are functional. They fulfill the sociolinguistic functions of feelings and internal sensations, propaganda and advertisement, fame and self-accentuation, loyalty and belonging, mass medium, admiration, political content, recording wisdom, leaving a memoir, advice, guidance and reminding, entertainment and futility, defamation and degradation, marking territory, challenge, nagging and resentment, instigation, giving instructions and directions, religious expression, warning and drawing attention, commemoration and social etiquette. Further, the data analysis has shown that the function of feelings and emotions is the most frequent function representing 11.96% of the total percentage whereas the function of social etiquette is the least frequent one constituting 1.69% of the total amount of expressions collected for the purpose of the study. This study concludes that in spite of the fact that graffiti is a widespread phenomenon with a multiplicity of functions, it is a practice that has many disadvantages and therefore should be monitored and brought to a minimum. Finally, the study recommends that special locations be allotted to those interested in graffiti, and that a strict law be put into effect for those insisting on writing on the walls of public and private properties.

Key Words: Graffiti, Sociolinguistic, Study, Jordan