A Sociopragmatic Study of Conversation in Jordanian Arabic: Turn-taking and Interruption

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Abstract

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This study investigates conversation in Jordanian Arabic focusing on two related phenomena: turn-taking and interruption. The researcher asserts that conversation is a highly organized social event, as the turn constitutes an integral part of it. In addition, the turn is affected by social factors like religion, age, and setting, which influence turn initiation, its length, and even its constituents.

The researcher tackles the problems involved in defining the turn and investigates its importance in strengthening social ties. In ritualistic conversations, power is stressed as a source deriving from age that affects turn control and organization. In light of this, the researcher holds that Sacks et al.’s model can be expanded to include social factors since the current speaker is often one advanced in years and speaking rights for the young are less than those for the elderly.

The last section of chapter three deals with men’s and women’s supportive turns illustrating diversity in their use. Pragmatic issues pertaining to taking, holding, or abdicating the turn are also investigated within the Jordanian culture.

With reference to interruption, the researcher looks into the definitions presented and sheds new light on the phenomenon when taking context into consideration. In addition, the researcher argues that the mere taking of the turn might be a case of interruption at its macro level. At its micro level, cutting into other’s turns, interruption can be divided into cooperative and intrusive with the
latter encompassing floor-taking, topic-changing, and disagreement interruptions.

The results show that Jordanians are inclined to use floor-taking interruptions to a greater extent despite some differences pertaining to speaker’s sex. The researcher warns against misinterpreting interruption as positive or negative, for the issue is dependent on the participants and the social norm.

The last section of this study deals with manifested interruptions and the pragmatic means through which Jordanians interrupt each other’s talk, or complain of being interrupted.