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A Lexico-Semantic and Pragmatic Examination of Algerian Hirak Activists' Slogans from 02/22/2019 to 12/12/2019

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دراسة معجمية ودلالية وعملية لشعارات نشطاء الحراك الجزائري من 2019/02/22
إلى 2019/12/12

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ABSTRACT:

Algeria bore witness to an exceptional political phenomenon, dubbed "Hirak" by its citizenry. This compelling subject matter invites multifaceted exploration, firmly situated within the ambit of pragmatic discourse analysis. Embarking on a lexico-semantic inquiry into the placards brandished by protesters, our endeavor centers on discerning the formation and attributes of novel lexical constructs that came to fruition during the Hirak, encompassing their semantic underpinnings, utilization patterns, and prevalence. Given our predilection for a pragmatic investigative framework, our linguistic discourse assumes a performative dimension. The crux of our analysis lies in elucidating and delineating the Hirak's impact on its audience through the medium of slogans. This study delves into the burgeoning linguistic phenomena within Algerian society, manifesting as neologism and pragmatic discourse. Notably, it underscores the variegated linguistic tapestry of the nation and underscores the distinctiveness of the languages in play, most notably the French language.

Keywords: : Hirak, pragmatics, neologism, lexico-semantics, placards

مَجَلَّةُ لُغَاةِ
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شهدت الجزائر ظاهرة سياسية استثنائية أطلق عليها مواطنوها اسم "الحراك". يدعو هذا الموضوع المقنع إلى استكشاف متعدد الأوجه، ويقع بقوة في نطاق التحليل العملي للخطاب. من خلال الشروع في تحقيق معجمي دلالي في اللافتات التي رفعها المتظاهرون، يركز مسعانا على تمييز تكوين وسمات البنى المعجمية الجديدة التي أتت بثمارها خلال الحراك، والتي تشمل أسسها الدلالية، وأنماط استخدامها، وانتشارها. ونظرا لميلنا إلى الإطار التحقيقي العملي، فإن خطابنا اللغوي يتخذ بعدا أدائيا. يكمن جوهر تحليلنا في توضيح وتحديد تأثير الحراك على جمهوره من خلال الشعارات. تتعمق هذه الدراسة في الظواهر اللغوية الناشئة داخل المجتمع الجزائري، والتي تتجلى في الألفاظ الجديدة والخطاب العملي. ومن الجدير بالذكر أنه يسلط الضوء على النسيج اللغوي المتنوع للأمة ويؤكد على تميز اللغات المستخدمة في اللعب، وأبرزها اللغة الفرنسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحراك، التداولية، المستحدثات، الدلالات المعجمية، اللافتات

Introduction:

This research is woven into the expansive tapestry of linguistics and language sciences, embarking on a nuanced exploration of a theme that reverberated deeply within Algerian society during the Hirak¹. The genesis of this transformative period can be traced back to February 22, 2019², when the streets bore witness to an unprecedented upsurge in civic participation, characterized by the convergence of impassioned masses. Algeria was immersed in a resonant chorus of public protests and peaceful demonstrations, orchestrated by a heterogeneous ensemble of individuals spanning the gamut of social strata—politicians, civil servants, students, and citizens from every demographic cohort—unified in their collective repudiation of Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth presidential term. These watershed events ushered in a sustained series of weekly demonstrations, accompanied by a profusion of articulated demands (a tally of approximately 42 distinct demands unfolded over a span of 9 months).

At the onset, it became conspicuously evident that each participant in these demonstrations sought to leave an indelible mark on the sociopolitical canvas, employing novel terminology to convey their perspectives and vent their frustrations vis-à-vis the prevailing milieu. This melange of presence was adorned with rituals and slogans that bore the hallmark of linguistic creativity and cultural diversity. This rich mosaic of linguistic diversity emerged as the epicenter of our investigation, beckoning our dedicated attention.

This research, venturing deep into the realm of Hirak discourse, aspires to unearth the multifaceted role of pragmatics within this unique domain of discourse, with a specific focus on its manifestation within the landscape of political discourse. Additionally, this paper is driven by the imperative to illuminate the profound impact of slogans on a broader and discerning audience. This research is guided by a constellation of probing inquiries: What array of speech acts manifests within the discourse of Hirak activists? To what extent do lexical innovations permeate this discourse? In the pursuit of answers, the speeches and slogans employed by Hirak activists during their demonstrations were subjected to analysis, concurrently scrutinizing their discourse on various social media platforms. Furthermore, the manner in which Hirak activists harness language to express their grievances and political commitments was analyzed.

Drawing from the profound insights gleaned from observations, a series of hypotheses have been proffered. It is posited that, in the fervent throes of their political engagement, Hirak activists predominantly invoke performative speech acts to articulate their demands and underscore their political commitment. Additionally, it is contended that these activists, wielding the arsenal of linguistic innovation, craft novel terminologies and expressions, serving as linguistic keystones encapsulating the ethos of their movement and its overarching objectives. In parallel, these linguistic innovations serve as potent tools for delivering trenchant critiques of the entrenched political order. These lexical innovations, it is maintained, not only underscore the distinctive character of the Hirak movement but also epitomize its capacity to articulate a penetrating and original critique of the complex political landscape defining contemporary Algeria.

Theoretical Framework

A methodology of descriptive and analytical data collection has been chosen for the analysis of a specific set of slogans vocalized during the Hirak period. In the initial part of this research, immersion in a realm of theoretical constructs is undertaken to equip it with the necessary underpinnings for its successful realization.

¹ According to the Arabic dictionary "Mou'edjam El-Maani Eldja mie," the word "Hirak" is of Arabic origin and denotes "Each action has a general appearance of activity against sleep." website: www.almaany.com.

² A significant date that marks the commencement of the Algerian revolution, marked by peaceful political protests, a widespread strike, and acts of civil disobedience.

The opening chapter, titled "Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory," directs its focus toward pragmatics and, more specifically, the theory of speech acts. Commencing with the definition of the foundational concepts of this study, namely pragmatics³ and speech acts, the theoretical exploration extends to a comprehensive examination of J. Austin's theory of speech acts⁴. Particular attention is devoted to elucidating the conditions essential for the successful execution of a speech act.

Transitioning to the subsequent chapter, designated as "The Definition of Neology and Neologism," we engage with fundamental notions to ensure conceptual clarity. Within this chapter, the fundamental terminologies of neology, neologism, and lexical creativity are meticulously defined to enable a precise demarcation of these terms. Moreover, the chapter assumes the responsibility of facilitating a nuanced understanding of the processes integral to the formation of neologisms, encompassing derivation, composition, borrowing, and other linguistic mechanisms. This comprehension is fundamental to our subsequent empirical analysis of the neologisms accumulated during the course of our study.

Practical Framework

The second part of this research is characterized by its analytical nature and is divided into two distinct sections. The first section is dedicated to the morpho-semantic analysis of the corpus, while the subsequent section focuses on the pragmatic analysis and examination of speech acts.

Presentation of the Corpus:

The corpus utilized for this study comprises neologisms extracted from placards displayed by demonstrators over an eleven-month period during the Hirak movement, spanning from February 22, 2019, to December 12, 2019. The corpus encompasses a collection of 26 placards obtained from the social media platform "Facebook," resulting in the identification of 49 neologisms.

The corpus encompasses multiple languages, including French, Arabic (both standard and dialectal), Tamazight, Italian, Spanish, English, and instances of code-switching between French and Arabic. The placards predominantly address themes related to the fifth presidential term and the presidential elections held on December 12.

Corpus Exploitation:

Within the first section, the initial task involved the systematic identification of lexical matrices and the examination of the processes involved in the creation of these neologisms. This examination enabled the identification of novel lexical forms across various matrices. Notably, the external matrix emerged as the most frequently used within the corpus, with borrowing being the predominant method of lexical creation. This can be attributed to the influence of the demonstrators' native language on their communication, as they primarily drew from local languages to ensure comprehension among monolingual speakers. For example, the phrase "yetnhaw ga3" which means "they shall be removed al" exemplifies this practice.

Additionally, morpho-semantic matrices played a crucial role in the lexicon of Algerian demonstrators. In the analysis of the corpus, the process of deformation emerged as a significant lexical creation mechanism. This mode of lexical innovation involves altering or truncating words for humorous or comedic purposes. Despite the challenging national circumstances, Hirak activists consistently conveyed their serious messages with humor and irony. For instance, the phrase "Ti vote, Ti mout" meaning "you vote, you die" illustrates this approach.

³ The use of language in discourse and the specific markers in the language that attest to its discursive nature." Anne Marie Diller and François Récanati / *Langue française*, No. 42. May 1979.


⁴ (Speech act) According to Austin, by uttering any sentence, three simultaneous acts are performed: - A locutionary act - An illocutionary act - And a perlocutionary act.

The investigation also revealed instances of portmanteau words, such as "Dégagécilline,"⁵ compounds like "Bouddha-flika," and the use of acronyms, as exemplified by "4B."⁶ However, these manifestations were relatively limited within the corpus under scrutiny.

Placard Analysis:

An analysis was undertaken of a selection of placards, with a focus on lexical, semantic, and neologistic dimensions deemed intriguing and profoundly meaningful.

Table 01: Lexical and Semantic Aspects of Neologisms

Slogan	Lexical Aspect	Semantic Aspect
	<p>Adjective Formed by Composition, Proper Noun (Last Name) Bouteflika + lesika, a term from the Algerian dialect.</p>	<p>This term is a fusion of two words: "Bouteflika," the former president of Algeria, and "lesika," an Arabic word meaning "glue." Therefore, this term could be interpreted as "Bouteflika's glue" in English, suggesting that the former president of Algeria clung to the presidential chair and refused to relinquish it for 20 years.</p>

⁵ This term was formed through the process of creating a portmanteau word, which results from the fusion of the initial part of the verb "dégagé" and the final part of "pénicilline." It could be interpreted as "pénicilline de dégagement," signifying a combination of "pénicilline" and "dégagement." where "dégagement" implies the notion of leaving or vacating.

⁶ Acronym to designate political figures whose names begin with the letter B: Bedoui, Bensalah, Belai, and Bouchareb.

	<p>Noun Formed by the Portmanteau Word Creation Process, Verb "dégager" + Feminine Noun "pénicilline."</p>	<p>"This term was formed through the portmanteau word creation process, resulting from the fusion of the initial part of the verb 'dégager' and the final part of 'pénicilline.' It could be interpreted as 'pénicilline de dégagement,' signifying a combination "leaving penicillin"</p>
	<p>Proper Noun, Reduction of Four Proper Names Beginning with the Letter B.</p>	<p>An acronym used to designate political figures whose names begin with the letter B (Bedoui, Bensalah, Belaiz, and Bouchareb).</p>
	<p>Verb Formed by Suffixation, Numeral Adjective "douze" + Verbal Suffix "-er."</p>	<p>Algerians coined this verb after the announcement that the elections would coincide with December 12. Therefore, this term signifies the refusal to vote on December 12.</p>

Commentary:

Another noteworthy observation pertains to grammatical categories. It becomes evident that the preponderance of lexemes falls within the grammatical category of nouns. This predilection can be rationalized by the imperative to christen novel and quintessentially Algerian realities. Equally salient is the conspicuous presence of adjectives, attributable to the exigency of delineating the events unfolding in Algeria.

From a linguistic vantage point, a plethora of linguistic codes (French, Arabic, English, and Berber) have been discerned. Algeria, as a nation, is intrinsically multilingual, a characteristic that emanates

from its historical tapestry interwoven with diverse civilizations and cultures. The juxtaposition of these languages engenders a panoply of linguistic phenomena, foremost among them being code-switching⁷. Evidently exemplified by instances such as: "nouveau boutelsika سنة 20 تشد لي اللسقة", wherein two languages, Algerian Arabic and French, conjoin in discourse during the manifestations.

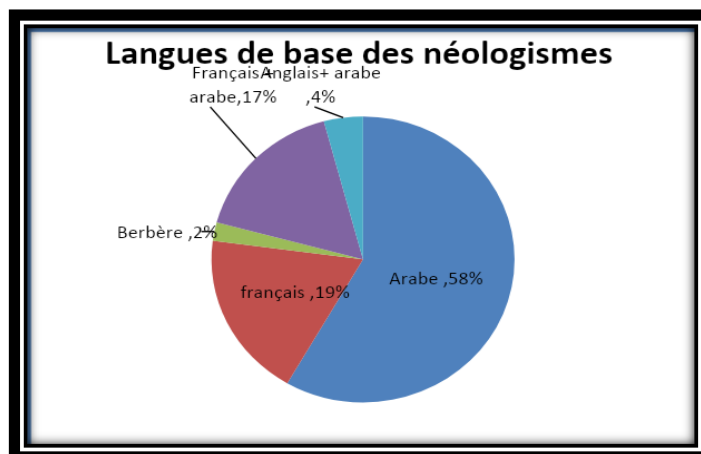


Figure 1: Distribution by Base Language.

Subsequently, a transition was made to the realm of pragmatic analysis, grounded in the linguistic theory of John AUSTIN, which posits that language fundamentally constitutes both an accomplishment and an act. According to this perspective, language inherently carries a performative dimension, meaning that when individuals engage in speech, they are simultaneously taking action.

Austin's linguistic framework involves the classification of speech acts into three distinctive categories: the locutionary (pertaining to conveying information), the illocutionary (encompassing conveying information through actions), and the perlocutionary (involving eliciting responses and reactions from others).

Within the context of this research, the primary focus centered on the perlocutionary speech acts. The overarching objective was to identify the spectrum of speech acts that manifest within the discourse of the Hirakists (populists) and to explore how these acts may influence and elicit responses from others.

Presented herein are a selection of illustrative examples drawn from the corpus. The fundamental aim is the examination of the linguistic elements tactically employed by the Hirakists to wield an impact upon their audience. These examples are intended to provide insights into the strategies employed by the Hirakists to communicate their messages persuasively.

- Example 1: Bearing the date of July 20, 2019, "El Djich (the army) protects our borders, El Gaid safeguards his interests, Ya Gaid, restore our army and seek an exit for yourself."
- Example 2: Dated May 24, 2019, "Long live the Republic, GAID or Caid, Salah or FASSID, their mission is one of resignation." Salah is a both a proper name and an adjective meaning good, Fassid is its anonym which means corrupt

⁷ Code-switching within the same verbal exchange or discourse, belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems, can take the form of two consecutive sentences or appear within a single sentence. John J. Gumperz (American linguist) offers an interpretative approach to this phenomenon (1989, p. 57). [Source: Online Thesis - Code-switching among secondary school students: case of third-year secondary school students (scientific stream) at Rares Taher Bir Elater High School/2016/2017]

These instances serve as illustrative samples of the linguistic tactics used by the Hirakists to convey their messages and potentially influence their audience.

Table 02: Analyzing Deixis

No	Statements	People	Places	Time	Possessive Determiners
1	Our Borders His interests Give us our army	First person plural	Borders	Absent	Our – his – our
2	Your Mission is resignation	The Hirak activists address El Gaid	Absent	Absent	Your

Commentary:

The present analysis, which primarily revolves around the scrutiny of the substance encapsulated within slogans, has yielded insights into the exertion of influence by protesters through perlocutionary acts. Evidently, the discourse espoused by Hirak activists is replete with an assortment of persuasive and rhetorical devices, meticulously deployed to mobilize, cajole, persuade, and stir the emotions of the audience, which, in this instance, comprises the Algerian populace.

In culmination, and with the aim of responding to the research inquiries posed, a qualitative inquiry was undertaken, involving four Hirak activists. Given the contemporaneity of the Hirak movement, statistical data on the subject is conspicuously sparse. Accordingly, the qualitative examination employed semi-structured interviews as a methodological recourse, designed to elicit an impartial vantage point on the Hirak's unfolding, its developmental trajectory, and its linguistic idiosyncrasies. This method strikes a harmonious equilibrium, situated betwixt the realm of directive and non-directive interviews. It avails itself of the duality of orienting the interviewee towards predetermined thematic trajectories, whilst simultaneously accommodating the need for investigative adaptability, cognizant of individual intricacies.

It came to light that, during Algerian protests, Hirak activists, as corroborated by select sources (notably, *L'évènement de la semaine* and *Pour avoir les idées claires*), habitually engage in the formulation of their slogans on the eve of the scheduled march, typically unfolding on Thursday evenings. This practice is underpinned by the strategic objective of demarcating their slogans from the corpus and asserting a distinctive presence within the movement's narrative. Although the fundamental demands voiced throughout the Hirak movement remain resolute, a certain element of repetitiveness is discernible. Nevertheless, with each passing week, activists make concerted endeavors to engender fresh ideational constructs that will effectively convey their core message.

Through the prism of the interview analysis, it becomes incontrovertibly evident that each Hirak activist assumes the mantle of spokesperson for the contemporaneous state of the movement. Each participant is motivated by an ardent desire to articulate their discontentment and unambiguous repudiation of the prevailing political milieu. Whilst it is true that slogans may, on the surface, exhibit thematic congruence, as they are all inextricably tethered to the shared aspirations of the Hirak

activists, namely freedom and justice, et cetera, the primary impetus is not differentiation per se. Rather, it is the inherent diversity of thought processes that affords variances in language selection, deployment of humor, utilization of lexicon, and other pertinent elements.

In the broader scope, the strategy elected for the crafting of a given slogan is an autonomous prerogative reserved solely for the Hirak activist. This strategy is orchestrated with a discerning sensitivity to the prevailing sociolinguistic and sociocultural landscape characterizing contemporary Algerian society. Consequently, the Hirak activist presents themselves as a facilitator, elucidating the intricacies of sociolinguistic realities.

Discussion of the Findings:

The present article undertakes a rhetorical analysis of the linguistic practices observed among the participants of Algeria's Hirak movement. Our primary focus revolves around an in-depth investigation into the slogans employed by these demonstrators, coupled with the examination of data derived from semi-structured interviews conducted with selected participants.

The scrutiny directed toward the lexical choices wielded by Algerian Hirak activists has led to the revelation of a linguistic tapestry of remarkable intricacy. It is characterized by a profusion of languages and codes, emblematic of the nation's historical trajectory marked by diverse cultural and civilizational influences. Algeria, in essence, stands as a genuine crucible of linguistic diversity, wherein a medley of languages—including dialectal Arabic, French, English, and Berber—coexist and interact.

This harmonious coexistence, however, frequently results in the emergence of intriguing linguistic phenomena. Among these phenomena, code-switching, the alternation between two languages within a single utterance, emerges as a prominent feature within the discourse of Hirak activists. As previously exemplified, this practice attests to the remarkable adeptness of these speakers in navigating the intricate terrain of multilingualism and leveraging linguistic resources with ingenuity and efficacy to articulate their sentiments.

The rich tapestry of linguistic diversity uncovered herein beckons to scholars intrigued by the intricate dynamics of language contact and the nuances of linguistic variation. Furthermore, it serves as a mirror reflecting the cultural and societal undercurrents coursing through Algerian society, particularly in the context of identity and cultural diversity. Thus, the exploration of the Hirak lexicon offers an invaluable conduit for a deeper comprehension of Algeria's linguistic and cultural milieu, as well as the imperative of preserving and celebrating the cohabitation of multiple languages and cultures.

We trust that this research endeavor will kindle heightened interest in the exploration of Algeria's sociolinguistic landscape, with its far-reaching cultural and social implications. Moreover, we hope it will galvanize concerted efforts aimed at safeguarding and venerating the manifold facets of this linguistic and cultural diversity.

CONCLUSION

The studied corpus, by its very nature, falls short of representativeness, and as such, the findings derived from it cannot be extrapolated broadly. Nevertheless, our endeavor has been to furnish a nuanced glimpse into a specific facet, namely the neologisms found within the slogans of Algerian protestors—a facet that warrants more extensive scholarly attention. We posit that it would be advantageous for researchers and specialists to embark upon an expanded inquiry into the subject matter at hand—namely, the Algerian protests. Such an endeavor would encompass a broader spectrum of Hirak activists, facilitating a comparative analysis of outcomes vis-à-vis those gleaned from our study participants.

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Annexes

Annex No. 1: List of Tables Table 01: Lexical and Semantic Aspects of Neologisms Table 02: For Deixis Analysis

Annex No. 2: List of Figures Figure 1: Distribution According to the Base Language

Annex No. 3: Interview Questions

1. How do you perceive the creation of slogans from a linguistic perspective (language)?
2. Have you noticed any lexical creativity in these slogans?
3. What is the intended objective?
4. Is there a discernible meaning conveyed through these slogans?