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Thought colloquial but found formal in Jordanian Arabic vernaculars: a sociolinguistic perspective

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Abstract

Lexical borrowing can be looked at as a vital sign that a certain language or variety of a language is lively and progressive, rather than spiritless and regressive. Masquerading under the guise of colloquialism and subscribing to the view that both *interlingual* and *intralingual lexical borrowing* can be seen as a *linguistic zone of contact*, this paper examines the premise that Jordanian Arabic local dialects proliferate in words that have been traditionally conceived by many 'semi-languaged' people as being colloquial, while they are actually formal and/or standard. Analysis shows that while some examples have displayed a perfect congruence between the colloquialized forms and their 'parent' ones at the semantic, syntactic, phonological, and morphological levels, some other ones have undergone certain changes at one or more of these levels, in response to the sociolinguistic exigencies of human communication. Analysis also provides proselytizing support to the overarching claim that classical Arabic enjoys a sonorous signifying richness, a primacy, and an inspiring, horizontalizing, and ennobling influence and effect on the different vernaculars spoken across Jordan; rather, classical Arabic never ceases to serve a cathartic function and to play a formative role in *animating* such local colloquial codes.

Keywords: Jordanian vernaculars; colloquial Arabic; classical Arabic; lexical borrowing; sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

The issue of human communication is one of the most, if not the most, important subjects, that occupies the minds of linguists, psychologists, philosophers and anthropologists. This is so because languages are crucial avenues for communication specific to human beings alone. Within the global community, language and culture are the most important and distinctive factors which distinguish one community from the other. Thus, culture and language are bound to witness parallel changes over the course of time and the kind of language currently used in a given society must, therefore, be a result of the years of evolution in the corresponding culture influencing that language. The present paper lends itself to showing how classicism from the Qur'an affects or determines, though might not be within the consciousness of language users, Jordanian colloquial forms.

Arabic is known for its three varieties: classical Arabic (CA), modern standard Arabic (MSA), and the local dialects. Classical Arabic is the form of Arabic prevalent in the Umayyad and Abbasid literary texts from the seventh to the ninth century AD (Shah, 2008). MSA is the official variety used in almost all formal setups like education, media and politics. However, in the everyday activities, the colloquial varieties or the various dialects are used as means of communication in addition to the informal writing heavily exercised in today's social media. As is the case in almost all other languages, these different dialects of Arabic are spoken in different regions and countries throughout the Arab world. It is not further unfamiliar to have different varieties of Arabic within the same region or country. The two versions of modern standard Arabic and classical Arabic constitute the foundations which all regional varieties, dialects, vernaculars or slangs build upon. With this in mind, these two foundational versions of Arabic could not be viewed to have the actual status and use as other native languages, since they are only present in the written literature. Using classical Arabic or the modern standard variety in everyday life like ordering food at a restaurant, or discussing a weekend picnic in a family gathering, etc., would sound lofty and too formal exactly like the echo a Shakespearean English may leave on the recipients if used in similar everyday situations.

This diglossic situation, which is, as Ferguson (1959: 325) puts it, “a case where two distinct varieties of a language are spoken within the same speech community”, is a shared phenomenon in all Arabic-speaking countries. In such a linguistic situation, the standard language is assigned the role of the high variety (H), whereas the local dialect assumes that of the low variety (L) (Jabbari, 2012: 23). Language use in Jordan, as is the case in all other Arab countries, is characterized by diglossia wherein MSA is the official language used in the media and almost all written documents, whereas the local colloquial varieties, urban (modern Jordanian), rural and Bedouin are the means of communication in everyday conversations. Besides, the common Jordanian dialect is mutually understood by most of the country's population; yet, this daily spoken variety throughout the whole country varies significantly from region to region, which is clearly manifested at the levels of pronunciation, grammar and lexical choice.

The present work limits itself to an identified set of lexical items available in Jordanian Arabic which is mistakenly thought of as the creation of colloquialization. As is argued below, all the words under discussion are definitely traced back to classical Arabic, and more specifically the language of the holy Qur'an. This, of course, brings into mind the linguistic phenomenon of borrowing, not only among different languages of different speech communities, but also within the diglossic situation of languages. Arabic, of course, is an outstanding case of Diglossia where there are many distinct varieties of the same language, viz. classical Arabic as the high variety with many low varieties, including the Jordanian colloquial one. Like standard varieties, colloquial ones expand their vocabulary stock through the processes of lexicalization or lexification first, and then through institutionalization, as Lipka and others (2004: 5-7) put it, i.e. putting the new lexicalized item into actual use.

In Jordanian colloquial Arabic, in particular, a variety of items, things, names, nouns, etc., are borrowed either from the classical and standard variety of Arabic or from a foreign language. Taken as stems, as Al-Azzam and others (2008: 1-2) and Al-Quran (2006: 101-103) argue, they are lexicalized to enter the vernacular system as adjectives and, then, as verbs through the application of the morphological processing rules of the hosting code. Of course, the borrowed and the lexicalized product in the colloquial variety is accommodated in the daily use of the language. They further add that after undergoing lexicalization or lexification, the new items are institutionalized, and thus acquire their existence through a social acceptance of and frequent use by the speech community given that the new context is similar to the historical or cultural background associated with them.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Classicism and colloquialism

Like modern standard Arabic, a sizeable body of the vocabulary used in the colloquial varieties, as the selected examples under discussion below show, is rooted in classical Arabic, or literary Arabic, which is also referred to as Quranic Arabic as it is the written language of the Quran, the main spiritual text of Islam. As stated elsewhere above, classical Arabic is no longer the dominating spoken language, as it is primarily used in specialized language and literary courses of Arabic at schools and higher education institutions, in addition to its use for religious purposes. Colloquialism includes the three types of words, phrases and aphorisms. These can be viewed as examples of colloquialism if they display the regional variety of speakers, and thus are understood within geographical boundaries.

Colloquial varieties in Arabic, though distinct from classicism, have their roots in classicism which forms the basis for their development within their own independent geographic, social and cultural setups. Yet, one of the major differences between classical Arabic and its varied colloquial varieties is that the latter have borrowed many words and

hence are incorporated in their vocabulary stock. As stated above, the Qur'anic classicism manifests itself, though without being aware of, especially by the lay-people, in colloquial Arabic conversation. Even some of the grammatical rules governing this colloquial discourse are derived from classicism. Freeman (1994), within this vein, argues that most of the modern varieties of Arabic follow the grammatical rules stipulated by the founders of classicism. In fact, one basic feature of Qur'anic Arabic is that the linguistic similarities are evident on even the very phonetic level; this entails that it is supposed to have a big impact on and serves as the basis for almost all its colloquial varieties (for more details, see Ditters and Motzki, 2007).

In spite of major differences among local varieties spoken in different regions of the Arab world, there is one common characteristic, evident among all of them, which is retaining many word forms derived from the classical variety or with little modification. Still they remain easy to understand by people from other regions as both the pronunciation and the intended meaning of these forms are affected by classical ones. In Arabic, wherein the case might be different from many other linguistic systems, and as the argument below shows, the classical form dominates over all local dialects and hence constitutes the basis for all colloquial varieties, though speakers whether educated or uneducated might not necessarily be aware of. The examples chosen for analysis in this piece of work, which were thought to be colloquial, turn out to be of a classical origin and specifically of a Qur'anic origin. This serves as evidence that, despite the abundance of Arabic colloquial variations, they are all influenced by the single stem language, classical Arabic in this case.

2.2. Colloquialism: how does it portray culture?

Since language is the most important communicative vehicle among people, the relation between language, culture, and their mutual interconnectedness plays a very significant role in the everyday lives of human beings. The inextricable connection depicts various manifestations of conventionalized language taken either from the standard variety or colloquial ones. These include slang expressions and different forms of figurative language as pervasive language uses that reflect culture in real life. Colloquialism, a composite structure and thought to include slang, jargon and idioms, is generally viewed through culture's eyes. To understand expressions related to these areas, one has to know the culture behind them or at least their origin. Take idioms, for example, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, an idiom is an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its individual or separate words as it has an independent meaning of its own that cannot be interpreted, expressed or negotiated in isolation from the cultural milieu it springs from and through whose lexification it must have gone.

Expressions under these categories reflect the environment, life, history and culture of the native speakers and clearly portray their innermost spirit and feelings. They have close as-

sociation with the historical background, geographical environment, customs and economy of the concerned nation and, thus, they typically represent the cultural characteristics of a language more than its mere words. Deeply rooted in culture, if one fully understands the context of use well, then he/she will be closer to speaking the language fluently because they are not only useful, but also can be very necessary in everyday life and in various situations wherein the message or meaning is both composed and interpreted figuratively. Furthermore, colloquial expressions, which include slang, jargon and figurative forms, are viewed to be natural decoders of cultural beliefs, customs, norms and social conventions since they constitute the major components of the daily communication. Acquaintance of this special type of verbal behaviour eventually enables language learners to understand how the speakers of the target language view the world, their thoughts and emotions and, thus, become socially interactive, as this everyday dominant variety must assist them to acquire effective communication strategies.

2.3. Borrowing between colloquial and standard varieties: interlingual or intralingual?

Borrowability in general is a concept that refers to the likelihood that certain linguistic elements from one language are integrated into another. That is, speakers are likely to import features from other languages into their native languages (Wardhaugh, 2006; Holmes, 2008; Labov, 1994, 2001; Thomason and Kaufman, 1988). For them, almost all languages must have borrowed words from one another since their related cultures must not have developed entirely from scratch. In other words, linguistic borrowing refers to taking some features from another language into one's inherent language. Within this context, Hoffer (2002: 1) states that “borrowing is the process of importing linguistic items from one linguistic system into another, a process that occurs any time two cultures are in contact over a period of time”.

Furthermore, in terms of borrowability, most research has focused on determining which word classes are more likely to be borrowed and whether there are any universals that apply to inter-lingual borrowability. Matras (2009) points out that prior studies in the field have applied varied methods and approaches, while current research is somewhat inconclusive about the categorization of borrowed items. However, findings of several studies across a number of language contact situations refer to the greater likelihood of content-class items to be borrowed compared with closed-class ones. As for categorizing borrowings from the theoretical ground of contact linguistics, Winford (2003: 43) mentions two main groups: (a) lexical borrowings and (b) native creations. This distinction is made on the basis of whether lexical items which are thought to be loanwords are modelled on the donor variety or not. Lexical borrowings, as Winford (2003: 43) states, “involve imitation of some aspect of the donor language”, whereas creations “are entirely native and have no counterpart in the donor language”. Winford (2003: 43) further subdivides lexical borrowings into two groups: loanwords “in which all or part of the morphemic composition of the loan derives from the ex-

ternal source language", and loanshifts (i.e. loan meanings), where the morphemic composition is entirely native, but the meaning is at least partially derived from the donor language.

As shown above, interlingual borrowing is a very important source of developing the vocabularies and terminologies of a language. But what about a dialect adopting or loaning words, terms or expressions from its standard variety? Is this interlingual or intralingual? Are dialects independent or separate language systems at all levels? Existing literature on borrowing restrict the term to a situation whereby a particular language incorporates in its lexicon words from another language or dialect of that language. Yet, in this piece of work wherein the diglossic situation of Arabic is addressed, a large body of words and expressions are mistakenly thought of as dialectal; that is forms of language that local people, Jordanian Arabs, create in this particular part of the Arab world, but have no relation with nor derived from the classical variety. Ferguson (1959) contends that the two divergent forms of the same language where the former is L-variety and the latter is H-variety are above the level of a standard-with-dialects distinction, but which stay below the level of two separate languages. This argument opens the door for a question that might not be easy to answer or even go unanswered, i.e. whether diglossic borrowability is inter- or intralingual. Sociolinguistically, whether inter- or intralingual activity it is viewed, the present case under discussion does reflect unawareness on the part of users of the origin of some of the terms they use in their daily lives. Likewise, speakers of different languages are not necessarily conscious of loanwords in their languages, nor of their external sources.

3. Methodology

In order to verify the validity and reliability of the main premise of this study, authentic data has been obtained from the Jordanian local dialects, especially the ones spoken in the rural and desert areas. Compared to the delicate urbanized one(s), such dialects abound in lexical items that have been conventionally thought to be colloquial, but which have turned out, as it will be shown later in this study, to be borrowed from a higher code, i.e. the classical variety of Arabic, rather from the highest code, i.e. the Qur'an. A representative sample of examples has been selected haphazardly and analyzed empirically in terms of two main aspects: the etymological and the socio-linguistic. More specifically, whether or not it is congruent with its 'parent one', every selected example borrowed by the Jordanian local vernacular(s) will be traced to its origins, and analyzed semantically, syntactically, phonologically, morphologically, and most importantly, discursively, i.e. how it is used in real-life communicative situations. The discussion will be supported with a thrifty exemplification.

It should also be pointed out that in case of an occasional 'semantic mismatching' between the colloquial form in question and its 'parent', reference will be made to some Qur'anic exegeses to offer admissible evidence in support of the argument being put forth. For this purpose, six renowned Qur'anic exegeses available on https://www.altafsir.com have been

selected. These include al-Tabari's (1994) jaami' al-bayaan fi tafsiir al-qur'aan, al-Razi's (1995) mafatiiḥ al-ɣayb: al-tafsiir al-kabiir, al-Sabouni's (1996) ṣafwit al-tafasiir, Ibn Kathir's (1997) tafsiir al-qur'aan al-ʿaðiim, al-Qurṭubi's (1998) al-jaami' li-'aḥkaam al-qur'aan, and al-Zamaxšari's (2001) al-kaššaaf. Finally, for all the Qur'anic verses drawn upon in this study, Ali's (1984) famous translation *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* has been adopted.

4. Findings and discussion

To remind, the underlying premise here is that the Jordanian Arabic vernaculars are replete with words thought of as being colloquial, while, in fact, they are formal and/or standard; rather, they have their roots in the ultra-formal (i.e. classical) variety of Arabic.

Example (1): *buur*

Reckoned by many lay people as a colloquial lexical item, an opposite claim can be made, as the word *buur* (‘lost’, Ali, 1984), example (1), does seem to be traceable to classical Arabic, i.e. to the Qur'anic verse no. 12, Surah Al-Fatḥ (no. 48). In the Jordanian local discourse, the word *buur* literally means ‘counterproductive’, ‘corrupted’, ‘uncultivated’, or ‘destroyed’, and enjoys a broad collocational range. Perhaps, the most salient use for this word is with land. Therefore, in the Jordanian colloquial language, the widespread expression *arḍ buur* can be used to mean ‘a barren land’, or ‘a land that is originally suitable for agriculture, but which is abandoned and not being ploughed’. The former expression may sometimes bear a subtle message that it is the careless owners of the land who should take the blame for this, i.e. the expression is not only indicative that this land is barren, but it can also be conducive of a stinging criticism to its owners, as this barrenness has resulted from their negligence.

Within the context of ploughing lands, farmers have derived other words out of *buur*, such as the verb *baaratt* ‘has become barren’, the noun *tabweer* ‘intentionally leaving the land without cultivation’, and the adjective *bawaar*, which can be used interchangeably with *buur* to mean ‘barren’. Furthermore, the word *buur* can also be used metaphorically in many informal social communicative situations, with slightly different meanings that revolve around the idea that ‘something is destroyed or no longer fit’. For instance, it is quite typical to refer to any older woman who ‘missed the train of marriage’, i.e. who exceeded the usual age of marriage, as *bint baayrih* ‘a spinster’, but which sometimes implies that the woman might be sterile too, *bluuzeh baayrih* ‘a torn-out sweater’, *baayer luwnuh* ‘with a bleached colour’, *tijaarah baayrih* ‘a business that is at a standstill’.

Indeed, the word *buur* has been directly borrowed from this verse, without any morphological or phonological adaptation, except for the afore-mentioned derivatives for grammatical necessities. Obviously, the lexical element *buur* at some point in the history of the Jordanian dialect must have entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing, transfer, or copying. Seen

as a consequence of intra-lingual transfer in the broader context of intra-cultural communication, the lexical borrowing *buur* can be said to represent a case of a linguistically-motivated borrowing. Most Qur'anic exegeses consensusly point out that buur in the given Qur'anic context above has to do with 'destruction' or being 'destroyed' (see al-Tabari, 1994; al-Razi, 1995, and al-Sabouni, 1996). Clearly, the polysemous meanings of *buur* in its immediate colloquial Jordanian context stem from such a scriptural meaning, which constitutes its point of departure. It should be pointed out here that the word *buur* has been thought as colloquial due to the fact that, in the past, there was no schooling or education in the countryside and desert, and most of whatever was used by the people living in such areas has gone down from one generation to another. This is the main reason that can account for why such a word is still considered colloquial by educated generations nowadays. Indeed, this argument applies to all examples adduced in this study, as it will be shown.

Example (2): *lajjeh*

With a lack of an equal footing, the colloquial register inescapably leans towards classical Arabic, as can be demonstrated by the presumably colloquial designation *lajjeh* in example (2). This word appears to have originated from classical Arabic, specifically, from the Qur'anic word *lajjau* ('obstinately persist', Ali, 1984), which figures in verse no. 21, Surah Al-Mulk (no. 67). In informal contexts, the word *lajjeh* can be used to signify 'a great deal of gossiping about someone for doing something unusual or extraordinary, for doing something that goes beyond the higher end of people's expectations, or for doing something that can be considered a quantum leap in one's life'.

Informally speaking, *lajjeh* is heavily used in real-life situations with an invariant mono-semantic indication, e.g. *lamma 'ammar al-qaṣir ṣaar 'aliih lajjeh* 'when he built the mansion, there was a lot of gossiping about him' and *ṣaar lajjeh kabiirih ba'd 'xtifaa' al-walad min al-qariyyh* 'there has been a lot of gossiping after the disappearance of the boy from the village'. In fact, in the Jordanian informal context, *lajjeh* is a kind of pretty unpleasant gossip that can be sometimes abrasive, provocative, and even hurtful. A fairly common expression that is used in such situations is *xoof min lajjit al-naas* 'to be fearful of people's gossip'. Thus, a typical lay person, especially in rural areas, may think twice before doing something that may arouse people's *lajjeh*.

On equal footing, the word *lajjeh* can also be used in many social interactions when someone does something that is terribly bad or negative, or when someone behaves in an awfully awkward manner that can give rise to the arousal of *lajjeh*, e.g. *lajjat al-naas 'ala al-ṭabiib li'annahu lam yunqiz al-mareeḍ fil-waqt al-munaasib* 'people had a lot of gossip about him, as he did not save the patient in the right time'. In this particular instance, the verb *lajjat* (lajja + /t/ is added at the end for verb-noun agreement) is used rather than the noun *lajjeh*.

Here, the verb *lajjau* (lajja + /u/ is added at the end for the plural in Arabic) is originally used with the meaning of 'doing something persistently'. While the Quranic exegetes, such as al-qurṭubi and al-raazi emphasize that *lajju* in this Qur'anic context means 'they persist', al-ṭabari, al-'alusi, al-zamaxšari, al-samarqandi, abu-ḥayyan and al-fayrouz-'abadi provide a meaning that is not much different from the former one, i.e. 'they go far', which supports the argument point put forth above that *lajjeh* in the Jordanian colloquialized contexts can imply gossiping that is upsetting, rough, or provoking, of course, as a result of people *going far* in their unconstrained tittle-tattles.

Example (3): zaraṭ

Drawing on the huge designationist power, or 'iconic' richness of classical Arabic, *zaraṭ* 'swallowed' is another striking example that contributes to a proliferation of signifiers and signifying chains within the context of Jordanian informal register. Indeed, *zaraṭ* in example (3) above is only one case in a huge phalanx of words that have descended from classical Arabic. Surprisingly enough, this specific word, i.e. *zaraṭ*, represents a blatant case of adaptation of the Qur'anic word *al-ṣiraat* ('the straight way', Ali, 1984), which emerges in verse no. 6, Surah Al-Faatiḥ (no. 1). Paradoxically speaking, *zaraṭ* and *al-ṣiraat* do not seem to show any affinity, especially at the semantic level, a sharp semantic divergence, which gives the inkling that there is no connection of any kind between them. Nevertheless, beneath the superficial level, there are a number of indications that *zaraṭ* has been derived from *al-ṣiraat*.

To elaborate more, most Qur'anic interpreters point out to the fact that the origin of the word *al-ṣiraat* in Arabic is basically *al-siraat*, i.e. it is originally written with the phoneme /s/ in the middle, rather than the phoneme /ṣ/. This word, i.e. *al-siraat*, is derived from *al-istiraaṭ*, which literally means 'swallowing' (see al-Sabouni, 1996, and al-Zamaxšari, 2001). This can explain why *zaraṭ* means 'to swallow', and it no longer means 'way' in informal contexts. Morphologically, *zaraṭ* is derived from the trilateral root s-r-t or ṣ-r-t and, phonologically, this word testifies to the fact that the phoneme /ṣ/ in *al-ṣiraat* or the phoneme /s/ in the original word *al-siraat* has been replaced by the phoneme /z/, which, in terms of place and manner of articulation, shows a remarkable degree of proximity to either the phoneme /ṣ/, or the phoneme /s/. However, there is a strong link between the Qur'anic meaning, i.e. 'way', and the colloquialized meaning of *zaraṭ*, i.e. 'to swallow', in the sense that there is a strong Muslim belief that on the Day of Judgement everyone will have to advance to Paradise through the Straight Way. It follows that if the person followed God's guidance and light in this mundane life, he/she would take this Way safely to Paradise, but if he/she had little spiritual insight, he/she would walk in the darkness of God's wrath on this Way and, consequently, he/she would fall off and be swallowed and devoured by Hellfire, which lies just beneath such a Way. Thus, the 'straight way' in this religious context may well appeal 'to swallow' or 'being swallowed'.

Through the grid of the Jordanian colloquial tradition, zaraṭ can be used with its very literal meaning, i.e. 'swallow', e.g. *haaða al-ṭifl fi 'awwali mašiyhi zaraṭ* šilin 'this child swallowed a coin when he was a toddler'. Yet, in most cases, *zaraṭ* has pejorative connotations, as it indicates that the person is either avaricious, or he/she shows a stunning lack of mealtime etiquette and table manners. For instance, *zaraṭ wajbtu wa-qaam* 'he swallowed his meal, and then he left' means that the speaker is ridiculing, criticizing and, perhaps, making fun of this person, as being uncivilized when it comes to food sharing and consumption. Figuratively speaking, Jordanian speakers use the word *zaraṭ* metaphorically to mean 'to steal someone', or 'to rip someone off', e.g. *zaraṭ šariikuh fil-šuγl* 'he swallowed his business partner', metaphorically: he betrayed his business partner and stole all the money; *zaraṭ al-zaboon* 'he swallowed the customer', metaphorically: he ripped the customer off; *zaraṭ maal al-yatiim* 'he swallowed the orphan's money', metaphorically: he deceived the orphan and stole his/her money'; *miθl lil-ḥayyih 'il-zaraṭah* 'he/she is like a snake that has just swallowed an animal', this is used metaphorically when someone has overeaten and he/she walks or moves around slowly, heavily, and sluggishly', and *miθl zarraaṭ 'il-mous* 'like a razor's swallower', this is metaphorically used when someone is given a choice and each option is worse than the other.

Example (4): xaayis

Complying with informal socio-linguistic pressures, the word *xaayis* 'low/miserable' in example (4) has also gained ground as a word that correlates with indigenous Jordanian register. Clearly, it can be argued here that the word xaayis has stemmed from the Qur'anic word *'ixsa'u* ('driven into it [with ignominy]', Ali, 1984), featuring in verse no. 108, Surah Al-Mu'minoon (no. 23). A scrutinizing look at the word *'ixsa'u* in its Qur'anic context can reveal that the colloquial adjectival form *xaayis*, which is a variation of the formal adjectival form *xaasi'*, alongside *'ixsa'u* itself, are all derivatives of the Arabic trilateral root x-s-'a. At this juncture, it is useful to know that the formal adjectival form in question, i.e. *xaasi'* has undergone a phonological change, that is, it has undergone a vowelization process represented in the physical insertion of the vowel /y/ medially, and the deletion of the glottal stop in the final position, thereby evolving into the colloquial form *xaayis*.

Morphologically speaking, nothing has changed, as *xaayis* is still following the same morphological pattern of *xaasi'*; yet, if *'ixsa'u* is compared to *xaayis*, there is a noticeable syntactic change represented in the shift in the syntactic class from a verb for plural (i.e. *'ixsa'u*) into an adjective (i.e. *xaayis*) for masculine, or even the most heavily used feminine form *xaaysih*. Lastly, a highly interesting semantic congruency is quite observable between the original (i.e. *'ixsa'u*), and the newly-sculptured one (i.e. *xaayis / xaaysih*), 'as to be driven into Hellfire with ignominy' signals to shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and disgrace, which are all captured by *xaayis* or *xaaysih*.

The masculine form *xaayis* or its variant feminine one *xaaysih* are used quite heavily in the local linguistic landscape in Jordan to express dissatisfaction, disturbance, and resentment, as can be shown, respectively, in the following examples: *haað al-mudeer al-xaayis ʻendu afkaar ɣariibih jiddan* 'this *miserable* manager/boss has very strange ideas', *haaða al-jaar al-xaayis ma xallaani 'arif 'anaam* 'I could not sleep from this *miserable* neighbour', and *haaði al-ʻajuuz al-šamṭaa' al-xaaysih afsadat ʻalyya al-riḥlah* 'this *miserable* old hag has spoiled my trip'. In addition to this, *xaayis* or *xaaysih* can also be used as a term of endearment, with the word *bloody*, of course, in its non-basic sense, as a possible equivalent for it in English, e.g. *faayn kont ṭuul haaða al-waqit ya-xaayis* 'where have you been all this time, you *bloody* man', and *ishtaqt illik ya-xaaysih* 'I missed you, *bloody* girl'.

Finally, a typical Jordanian speaker, especially from the older generations, would use *xaayis* or *xaaysih* in case he/she forget the name of any object: *xaayis* for masculine nouns and *xaaysih* for feminine nouns; the word *bloody* can be seen as the best equivalent here, but with its basic pejorative overtone as to express complaint, e.g., *jiib li al-xaayis illi ʻala al-ṭaawlih* 'get me the *bloody* thing on the table' (here the thing must refer to any object with a masculine noun, owing to the employment of *xaayis*), and *ištariili ma'ak xaaysih went emrawwiḥ fi ṭariiqaq* 'buy me that *bloody* thing in your way' (here this thing must refer to any object with a feminine noun, due to the employment of *xaaysih*). Normally, the recipient can never understand what is meant by *the thing* unless there are enough contextual clues, or unless the recipient gives enough clues that he/she did not understand what is meant by this so that the speaker is urged to put the effort into specifying the thing in another lucid utterance, i.e. in an explicature.

Example (5): saaybih

Wrapped in a complex of implications, dispositions, and redispositions, *saaybih* 'on the loose' avails itself as a colloquial word that is synonymous with a correlated element in another one (i.e. the classical). According to the Qur'anic verse no. 103, Surah Al-Maa'idah (no. 5), and based on a careful bilateral consideration—vacillating across codes—it can be safely assumed that *saaybih* has its roots in the Qur'anic word *saa'ibah* ('a she-camel let loose', Ali, 1984). Given the argument thus far, it is perhaps appropriate and instructive here to digress to the question of phonological change that occurred to this word.

Similar to *xaayis* in the previous example (4), *saa'ibah* has undergone a vowelization process by the physical insertion of the vowel /y/ medially, and the deletion of the glottal stop, i.e. the glottal stop in the very middle of the word has been substituted by the vowel /y/, which has led to the present form, i.e. *saaybih*. Moreover, the final vowel /a/ in *saa'ibah* has been replaced by the vowel /i/. Apart from this slight change, *saaybih* displays almost a full morphological, syntactic, and semantic compatibility with *saa'ibah*, the source. Yet, there

remains only one thing to harp on: the word *saaybih* has undergone a semantic extension, as it does not only apply to female animals, as is the case with the original *saa'ibah* during the pre-islamic era, but also to human females and, metaphorically speaking, to any feminine noun that indicate operation(s), action(s), activity(ies), etc.

Enjoying a high syntactic distribution in the colloquial Jordanian variety, *saaybih* is used in many social communicative events to express the idea that a certain human female is no longer under the control of anyone around her, especially her family, and that she enjoys a total liberty to do whatever she pleases, e.g. *ṭil'at bi-malaabis faaḍ li-'annha bint saaybih* 'she came out with revealing clothes, as this girl is on the loose'. However, in some very specific contexts, *bint saaybih* 'a girl on the loose' can sometimes be an egregious utterance, hinting that such a girl has loose morals, has voluptuous and promiscuous disposition or, in the worst case scenario, has lost her maidenhood. In case the female is animal, *saaybih* means 'it has escaped from confinement and is free to move around a place and perhaps harm people', e.g. *qabl 'esboo' 'enṭalqat 'el-daabih wa-hassa' hii saaybih* 'a week ago, the she-donkey set itself free and now it is on the loose'. Basically, *saaybih* is used in the countryside and desert areas to refer to animals, mostly donkeys, when they become old and useless, a condition that necessitated setting them free by their owners. Thus, most donkeys detected roaming in the countryside or desert would mostly turn out to be cases of *saaybih* animals, rather than astray ones. Then, with the passage of time, the meaning has been extended to people, or one's belonging like one's house or one's land.

There are also innumerable examples where *saaybih* is used metaphorically to express the idea that there is a great deal of chaos, e.g. *'el-'umuur saaybih fi al-madaaris haaði l-'ayyaam* 'things are chaotic at schools these days'; the word *'al-'umuur* 'things' is a feminine noun in Arabic. A very famous saying that is normally summoned upon when someone does not take care of his/her own business or finances is *'el-maal 'el-saayib bi'allim 'el-sirqqah* 'unprotected money/business prompts theft'. Yet, if the speaker applies this adjective to children, like saying *'awlaad saaybih* 'these children are on the loose', it would imply that these children have not been brought up properly, and that it is their parents who keep kicking them out to the streets. The masculine adjective *saayib* can also be used with human males only, e.g., *haaða rub 'usrah saayib* 'this family head is on the loose', which implies that this individual is either not home-oriented, jobless, or has his own problems, the reason why he spends most of his time outside the house. Finally, it should be mentioned that the noun *tasayyub* has been derived from *saaybih* to be used informally instead of its formal counterpart *tasarrub* 'leaking', which is metaphorically used to refer to any state of anarchy or lack of control. Yet, if *tasayyub* is linked with *madaaris* 'schools', as in saying *tasayyub madrasi*, it would mean 'school truancy', which, in turn, can be seen as a manifestation of anarchy or lack of control.

Example (6): sirwaal

Integral to the exigencies of *lexical borrowing* that never recede is the word *sirwaal* (lit. 'trousers'), which has been always conceived as a colloquial designation in the first place. In fact, this does not hold true, as this lexical item is the singular form of *saraabiil* ('garments/coats', Ali, 1984), which appears twice in the Qur'anic verse no. 81, Surah Al-Naḥl (no. 16). A comparative examination of these two words shows that *sirwaal* has been directly borrowed from the classical form *sarabiil* 'trousers and/or shirts', but with a partial phonological integration, as the medial consonant /b/ has been substituted with the consonant /w/, thereby evolving into the current colloquial form *sarawiil*, the plural of *sirwaal*. From the vantage point of semantics, the plural form *sarabiil* in this specific scriptural context has a broad meaning that covers not only all kinds of clothes, i.e. trousers and shirts that may protect human beings from heat [and cold], but, also according to most of the commentators (see al-Qurṭubi, 1998; al-Zamaxšari, 2001; al-Razi, 1995), the second mention of the word has to be understood in a much wider sense, perhaps metaphorically signalling to all types of 'coverings' or 'armour devices' that are meant to protect the body from Man's own violence. Against this backdrop, the word *sirwaal* (pl. *sarawiil*) has undergone a semantic restriction in the sense that it is used formally and informally only to mean 'trousers'.

Attention, however, should be drawn to the fact that *sirwaal* is used informally in very limited contexts to denote a special kind of a very traditional trousers, solely for men, used mostly by the older generations. The mere mention of the word *sirwaal* nowadays triggers in the younger generations nostalgia to olden days, and more importantly, to the local Jordanian cultural heritage. Apart from this special sense, if the need arises to talk about trousers in other communicative social undertakings, Jordanian speakers would use the word *bantaloon* 'pants', rather than *sirwaal*. In fact, if *sirwaal* was translated into trousers, there would be a considerable loss of the cultural significance this has, and so, in such a case, *foreignizing* rather than *domesticating* the word is quite advisable, e.g., *'štara sirwaal min souq al-turaaθ* 'he bought a sirwaal from the Heritage Souk/Market', and *'štara bantaloon min al-souq* 'he bought pants/trousers from the Souk/market'.

Example (7): naffal

With an admirable veracity, the lexical occulations relevant to the Jordanian colloquial setting unfold as audacious cases of borrowing from classical Arabic, and like all previous examples, *naffal* in example (7) can further demonstrate this reality. The word *naffal* can be said to have evolved from *'al-'anfaal* ('spoils', Ali, 1984), according the Qur'anic context, verse no. 1, Surah Al-Anfaal (no. 8).

Looking more homogenous, rather than heterogeneous to the original (i.e. *'al-'anfaal*), *naffal* is actually a geminated verb that has been derived from *'al-'anfaal*, which itself is a derivative noun of the trilateral root *n-f-l*. In a kaleidoscopic manner, the duplication of

the medial consonant /f/ in the root *n-f-l* has resulted in a phonological change, i.e. *naffal* as a geminated form that indicates *intensification of meaning*. In Arabic germination, as is the case in this specific example, *shadda* (i.e. a diacritic resembling a lowercase Greek omega, or a rounded Latin w) is written above the consonant that is to be doubled or geminated. Apart from this slight phonological change, *naffal* clings tightly to its original soil, i.e. *'al-'anfaal*. As far as the semantics of *naffal* is concerned, *nafal*, the singular of *'anfaal*, in Arabic in general, and in this Qur'anic context in particular, refer not only to 'spoils', but also to 'any extra or additional thing(s) that is given to someone besides what he/she is entitled to', or 'any extra or additional quantity of the same thing given to someone, besides his/her own share'.

Mainly, in the countryside *naffala*, is used to refer to 'an extra piece of land given to someone as a recompense when the land originally given to him/her is not as good or cultivatable or commercial as those of others'. In addition to carrying such a basic meaning, *naffal* has acquired another sense in the Jordanian colloquial code, as it also means to 'sort out'. It is assumed here that figuring out the intended meaning hinges on the context, as can be illustrated in the following examples: *lamma wazza'at al-ḥukuumah al-mo'an 'ala al-mowaaṭiniin, naffalat al-fuqaraa'* 'when the government distributed the supplies to the citizens, the poor were given extra/additional supplies', and *qaalt-luh 'ummuh naffil 'l'aabak illi laazim tirmiihum* 'his mother told him to sort out the toys that must be thrown away'.

Example (8): bakat

Veiling under the guise of colloquialism, *bakat* 'to pierce' cannot abolish the welcome fact that classical Arabic plays a central role in animating the Jordanian dialects. A cursory look at the Qur'anic text verse no. 119, Surah Al-Nisaa' (no. 4), particularly at the word *fal-yubtikanna* ('to slit the ears', Ali, 1984) should be further evidence of the *paternity* of classical Arabic in the process of lexical borrowing carried out by the vernacular variety in the Jordanian context.

Drawing a comparison between these two words can show that the colloquial verb *bakat* is quite isomorphic in its semantic, syntactic, phonological and morphological features to the *parent* verbal form *fal-yubtikanna*, and both are derivatives of the trilateral root *b-k-t*. Hence, the reader may be baffled by the alleged (paradoxical) difference between these two words, but a simple and straightforward morphological analysis can irrefutably proves that *bakat* and *falyubtikanna* are two faces of the same coin: *bakat* in this specific Qur'anic context appears somehow different, due to some obligatory prefixes and case endings associated with the use of the simple present tense with plural subjects. According to the case marking system of Arabic, the word can be syllabified as *f-al-y-u-battik-a-n-na*. In Arabic, case endings are called *ḥarakaat* (i.e. 'small markings that stand for short vowels that are attached to the ends of words as to indicate their grammatical function'). Essentially, there

are three main *ḥarakaat* in Arabic, namely, *ḍamma* for the short vowel /o/, *fatḥa* for the short vowel /a/, and *kasra* for the short vowel /i/ that mark the subjective (nominative), objective (accusative), and possessive (genitive) cases, respectively.

Semantically speaking, it must be pointed out that, in the Jordanian colloquial variety, *bakat* has undergone a semantic change, as instead of being associated with 'slitting/cutting', the word is only associated with 'piercing/perforating/puncturing'. Finally, in some informal communicative situations, and for the purposes of intensifying the meaning, the geminated verbal form *bakkat* can also be used instead of *bakat*. Following are some examples that can show the pragmatic use of both forms: *bakat al-waraqah bi-siqaartuh* 'he pierced the paper with his cigarette', *bakat al-walad ṭablit 'eðnuh bi qalam al-rasaas wa-huu bil'ab* 'the boy perforated the drum of his ear with a pencil while he was playing', *'el-ḥaraami bakkat 'ajal al-siyyaarah ba'ed 'amaliyyat al-saraqha* 'the thief has punctured the tyre many times after the robbery'.

Example (9): ɣabra

Visualized in the Jordanian local context as a purely colloquial word, *ɣabra* 'dusty' can be attributable to the classical stem *al-ɣaabiriin* ('legged behind', Ali, 1984) figuring in the Qur'anic verse no. 83, Surah Al-'A'raaf (no. 7). While there is no doubt about the fact that *ɣabra* is a derivative of *al-ɣaabiriin*, there is almost a full consensus among Qur'an commentators on the meaning of *al-ɣaabiriin* in this specific context, which talks about Lut's undutiful wife and her foolish unrighteous conduct. The world around her was filthy and sinful, and she indulged in it, rather than following her righteous husband. She betrayed her husband, not in sex, but in the crucial spiritual matters of truth and conduct. As a consequence, she was doomed to suffer the same fate of her wicked world, and so when the Lord's punishment came down, i.e. when the Lord rained down on Lut's people "a shower of brimstone" (Ali, 1984), his wife was left behind (in Sodom) to be tortured, (i.e. to be destroyed) with them (see al-Qurṭubi, 1998; al-Zamaxšari, 2001; Ibn Kathir, 1997; al-Sabouni, 1996).

Informally speaking, the derived word *ɣabra* is used pragmatically just to tag someone as being 'damned' or 'ill-fated', a meaning which does not depart much from the already indicated one, i.e. 'dusty', which in its turn is a sign of bad luck. This semantic change that the word has undergone can be associated with the formal Arabic word *ɣubaar*, which literally means 'dust', and so *ɣabra* could also be interpreted as 'being engulfed with dust', which enhances its well-known pragmatic meaning, i.e. 'to be damned' or 'ill-fated'. It is also useful to point out that in the Jordanian colloquial context *ɣabra* is predominantly used by women, rather than men. This could substantiate the claim that *ɣabra* has essentially developed out of *al-ɣaabiriin*. In the ordinary use of the word, *ɣabra* is usually preceded by the vocative particle /ya/ to express surprise, astonishment, and shock as can be shown, respectively, in the following illustrative examples: *ya ɣabra faayn ḳont* 'oh you, damned,

where have you been?', *ya ɣabra keef biddak taaxuð qarḍ wa-'anta ʿaaṭil ʿan el-ʿamal* 'oh you, damned, how can you apply for a bank loan while you are still jobless', and *ya ɣabra meen qallak 'nnuh hoo illi saraq bait ʿammuh* 'oh you, damned, who told you that he broke into his uncle's house'.

Example (10): jada

Rooted in classical Arabic, the word *jada* 'on his knees' is another case of *intra-lingual borrowing* that goes predominantly from the upper variety of language to the lower one. It can be posited here that the word *jada* has been developed out of the word *jiθiyya* ('on their knees', Ali, 1984) that can be found in the Qur'anic verse no. 68, Surah Maryam (no. 19). Obviously, the slang word *jada* has been derived from *j-θ-a* (pronounced as *jaθa*), the trilateral root of the word *jiθiyya*; yet, the latter has undergone a slight phonological change, represented in the substitution of the medial phoneme /θ/ by the phoneme /d/. Morphologically speaking, both *jaθa* and *jada* follow the same morphological pattern, i.e. *fa'al*, and syntactically both of them have the same grammatical category, i.e. both of them are verbs. In other words, *jada* has not changed the syntactic class of the parent word *jaθa*. As far as the semantics of this adapted word is concerned, *jada* has reserved the same referential meaning of *jaθa*, i.e. 'to be on the knees'. A classical example encountered in the colloquial Jordanian context is *jada ʿal-'arḍ* 'he kneeled on the ground'; pragmatically: 'he was on his knees'. It is also quite essential to know that *jada* can also be used metaphorically to indicate humiliation and surrender. The very same example *jada ʿal-'arḍ* can be employed to mean that 'someone has surrendered in a very humiliated fashion'.

However, there are other cases where *jada* is only interpreted with its figurative meaning. By way of illustration, the following two examples can illustrate the point, as they ought to be understood metaphorically, rather than literally, regardless of the context of the situation: the first well-known example is *jada ʿalaxnaaqu*, which literally means 'he kneeled on his throat', but which metaphorically and pragmatically means 'he gave him a good beating-up' (this must include tackling him on the ground, like in baseball). The other famous one is *jadaaluh ʿala ruqbah wa-nus*, which literally means 'he kneeled to him by one knee and a half', but which metaphorically and pragmatically means that 'he fiercely stood up to him and faced him with all the truth, or he harshly dotted the I's and crossed the T's'. Indeed, there is also a semantic link between the word *jada* and the young male goat *jidi*, which makes such a posture, i.e. 'kneeling down' when feeding from its mother's udder.

Example (11): farraṭ

Consumed and exchanged in a search for absolute distinctness within the boundaries of the Jordanian spoken dialects of Arabic, the word *farraṭ* 'neglect/underperform' testifies to the fact that such dialects have never been alienated or despoiled by interference from classical Arabic. The primacy and magnificence that should be accorded to classical Arabic

as a perfect vehicle for brining to light a time when the language and those who spoke it owed nothing to anybody requires no further emphasis here. To turn to example (13), a quick survey reveals that *farrat* does seem to draw on the classical word *farraṭ-na* ('omitted', Ali, 1984), detectable in verse no. 38, Surah Al-An'aam (no. 6).

Despite the fact that Ali translated *farraṭ-na* (verb for plural) as 'omitted', many other Qur'anic translators rendered it as 'neglected' (see Asad, 1984; Pickthall, 1992; Arberry, 1996), which comes in a perfect harmony with most of what Qur'an commentators put forth in this regard (see also al-Zamaxšari, 2001; al-Razi, 1995). Interestingly enough and without any phonological, morphological, syntactic, or semantic changes to report on, the word *farraṭ*, derived originally from the trilateral root *f-r-ṭ*, and capable of fulfilling a referential function, can be used both formally and informally in Arabic. To exemplify on the formal use, consider the following: *farraṭa al-muwaððaf bi-jamii' waajibaatuh* 'the employee neglected all his duties', and *farraṭaṭ al-ḥukuumah bi-mas'uuliyaatiha tijaaha al-fuqaraa'* 'the government neglected its responsibilities towards the poor'. By way of illustration on the informal use, consider the following: *rasab li-'annuh farraṭ bi-jamii' droosuh* 'he failed because he neglected all his lessons', and *ma fi 'enduh 'entaaj haða l-mawsim li-'annuh farraṭ bi-mazra'tuh* 'he does not have any produce this season because he neglected his farm'. Before closing, *farraṭ* can be used sometimes to pragmatically mean 'to waste something', e.g. *farraṭ bi-kull lif-luus illi wiriθha fi sanah waḥdih* 'he wasted all the money he inherited in a span of one year'.

Example (12): lazbeh

Being stealthily active in Jordanian rural fluency, the massive influence of classical Arabic can be noticed in the colloquial word *lazbeh*, which has its very roots in classical Arabic, specifically in the Qur'anic word *laazib* ('a sticky clay', Ali, 1984), spottable in verse no. 11, Surah Al-Saaffaat (no. 37). In the informal Jordanian context, *lazbeh* literally means 'to have torrential rain for a long period of time'. For a clay to be sticky, it requires water, which is a very important element in this process. This may account for why and how the word *lazbeh* has been derived from *laazib*, but not without a noticeable semantic change that it has undergone: from *stickiness* to *continuous torrential rain for a long period of time*.

More specifically, nowadays if there is a non-stop torrential rain for a few hours, this would be referred to as *lazbeh*. Yet, for the older generations who outlived their peers, a *lazbeh* is 'to have torrential rain for days that may extend in some cases to up to two weeks'. Younger generations may not be familiar with the word *lazbeh*, as it is a very classical designation in the Jordanian colloquial heritage and/or reservoir. Used mostly by older generations, *lazbeh* is normally employed in the context of rain and, therefore, this word shows a very restrictive collocational range, e.g. *'ams jaabat lazbeh ba'd al-'aṣr* 'yesterday, in the afternoon, we had a torrential rain'. Whilst *lazbeh* is associated with incessant torrential rain for an extended period of time, Jordanian speakers use the word *za'ooq* to refer to 'continuous torrential

rain for a short period of time', i.e. for a period approximately between 5-30 minutes. As a natural corollary, the element of time is crucially important for the Jordanian communicator to determine which word to opt for in case there is a heavy rainfall: *lazbeh* or *za'ooq?!*

5. Conclusion

This paper makes a few excursions into the Jordanian colloquial landscape in order to verify the underlying premise that Jordanian Arabic vernaculars abound in words that have been traditionally thought of as being colloquial, while in fact they are formal, as they have their own roots in the classical variety of Arabic, specifically that of the Holy Qur'an. More specifically, through handling a representative spectrum of different colloquial lexical items, the paper shows that these instances represent cases of blatant *lexical borrowing*, as they are traceable in the donor variety (i.e. the classical). The investigation also shows that, while some cases have exhibited a perfect matching between the colloquialized form of the word and its 'parent' one at the semantic, syntactic, phonological, and morphological levels, some other ones have undergone certain changes at one or more of these levels, as to tune with the human social communicative force in the Jordanian informal context.

With no emasculation and no padding, the discussion provides further evidence to the big claim that classical Arabic not only enjoys an iconic richness, a superiority, and a far-reaching and dignifying influence on the different vernaculars spoken across Jordan, but it is also conceived as a code of differentiation that serves a cathartic function and plays a generative role in enlivening, invigorating, and enthralling such colloquial codes. This may well explain the existence of a phalanx of lexical occulations, where the examined lexical items have been found to be veiling behind the cloak of colloquialism, and more importantly, to have been envisaged by many 'semi-languaged' and/or 'lay people' as being born in such a 'slang soil'. Having put forth such a neatly reversible argument that may bludgeon the reader, the paper shows that the kind of copious *intralingual lexical borrowing* that has taken place between the formal and informal varieties in the Jordanian context can be looked at as a *linguistic zone of contact*, with a respiratory of potential 'lexical leverage and/or lexical revitalization'. Indeed, this paper only scratches the surface, as much or even most of the terrain is still uncharted. In other words, this paper aims to serve as a starting point to deepen the topic in future research, laying the basis thereby for more exhaustive research, broader analysis, and further documentation.

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Appendix 1

List of Arabic phonetic symbols

/b/ voiced bilabial stop

/m/ bilabial nasal

/f/ voiceless labio-dental fricative

/ð/ voiced interdental fricative

/ð̲/ voiced interdental emphatic fricative

/θ/ voiceless interdental fricative

/d/ voiced alveolar stop

/t/ voiceless alveolar stop

/ḍ/ voiced alveolar emphatic stop

/ṭ/ voiceless alveolar emphatic stop

/z/ voiced alveolar fricative

/s/ voiceless alveolar fricative

/ṣ/ voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative

/n/ alveolar nasal stop

/r/ alveolar rhotic liquid

/l/ alveolar lateral liquid

/š/ voiceless alveo-palatal fricative

/j/ voiced palatal affricate

/y/ palatal glide

/w/ labio-velar glide

/g/ voiced velar stop

/k/ voiceless velar stop

/ɣ/ voiced uvular/post-velar fricative

/x/ voiceless uvular/post-velar fricative

/q/ voiceless uvular stop

/ʿ/ voiced pharyngeal fricative

/ḥ/ voiceless pharyngeal fricative

/ʾ/ glottal stop

/h/ voiceless laryngeal fricative

/i/ high front short vowel

/u/ high back short vowel

/a/ low half-open front-to-centralized short vowel

/ii/ high front long vowel

/uu/ high back long vowel

/aa/ low open front-to-centralized long vowel

/ee/ mid front long vowel

/oo/ mid back long vowel