

The Unique Structure of the Pronoun "you" in Arabic Variety Associated with This Pronoun in Term of Gender and Number

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Abstract

This paper examines the second person pronoun in Arabic with much focus on how this pronoun can affect the antecedent; the word that the pronoun stands for. Obviously, the Arabic pronoun "you" can have various types to encode the gender and the number of the addressee. The detailed matter of this pronoun can be noticed when the person to whom we direct the talk is masculine or feminine and if this person singular, dual or plural. All these concepts have a certain rule that must be added to the noun, the verb or the preposition that follows. As a result, the listener or the reader can easily decide on the identity of the addressee in the cases of using the pronoun "you". This is because diacritical mark is used to indicate singular form of the pronoun "you" which is used in the written discourse to reflect which gender is being addressed. Furthermore, we can find diversity of suffixes at the end of such noun or verb without any change in the meaning but they change the grammar of that word according to gender and dual or plural forms. Therefore, this paper will stand on clarifying and analyzing some important points related to the unique structure of the pronoun "you".

Keywords: pronoun, you, noun, verb, preposition, gender, number, analysis

1. Introduction

Arabic is widely spoken and nowadays various nations from all over the world have new directions in learning Arabic. Hence, Arabic is the official language for more than 22 countries as it is the native language for more than 300 million (Yacoub, 2011).

In the Arabic language, there is a huge variety in term of vocabulary and the rules of the grammar that can form a unique structure that hardly to be found in other languages. This is because Arabic has certain rules that are strict to number and gender as well (Alhawary,2011). One clear example is the idea of the pronoun "you" which can be derived into five types to cover the concepts of gender and number. In addition, it extends to involve other types that varied according to the sentence structure since the pronoun "you" might be followed by a noun, verb and sometimes a preposition.

To define the word pronoun we can say that sometimes, we use different words that can take the place of the nouns. These words are pronouns (Nguyen, 2018). To be concise to some extent, you can use the pronoun instead of repeating the noun in your sentences. In English, there are different types of pronoun, such as, subject and object pronouns which can be used in the same sentence (Massey, 2008). For instance, she assisted me when I was busy, in this example, the subject pronoun is she and the object pronoun is me. "She" is used to refer to a female and "me" is used to refer to the speaker himself or herself. The most noticeable idea about English pronoun is that they are separated from the noun in its various types while in Arabic; there are some cases in which the pronoun can be attached to the noun and the verb.

1.1 Pronoun "you" in Arabic and English

Furthermore, English sentences with the pronoun "you" can refer to both male and female or a group of people, for example, you are creative, regardless the gender of the speaker as well as the addressee. In the contrary, Amer (2011) illustrates that Arabic has specific pronouns to differentiate between male and female, dual and plural nouns (Erwin, 2004). In the case of the pronoun you in Arabic, the noun and the pronoun are concerned since diacritical marks is being used with the pronoun "you" and the speaker might change the conjugation of the noun to specify gender.

1.2 Pronouns in Spanish

Also, subject pronouns in Spanish more often replace a subject noun of a person or a thing, and they can be classified according to several principles into four categories. The first one for person, the second for number, the third for gender and lastly, for formality (Nuessel,2006). One significant matter about the Spanish subject pronouns is that many native speakers can use them rarely in their talk since the Spanish verb endings tell the listener who the subject is (Carvalho, 2015). From this remarkable point, we can recognize an important similarity between Arabic and Spanish. In Arabic, mostly the verb ending itself can reflect the identity of the subject without presenting an independent subject pronoun.

The second person singular in Spanish "tú" (you) and the second person plural "vosotros" (you guys-masculine), vosotras (you girls-feminine), and "Ustedes" is used for second person

plural (Hill & Bradford, 2000). Basically, a Spanish speaker would use "tú" with a friend, family member or young person. In contrast, "usted and ustedes" are formal ways to express the meaning of "you". Also, they would be more appropriate for use with someone older or with a person the speaker does not know well. These pronouns "usted/ustedes" are better to show respect or maintain a certain distance with any person.

We can conclude that in Spanish there are three words to address more than two people unlike English which has only one pronoun to address singular or plural noun. This is because the use of these various words is related to the several Spanish-speaking regions since there is no universal rule to be followed in using these pronouns.

1.3 Various French Pronouns

Heminway (2011) emphasizes that French has different subject pronouns. This because a third subject pronoun must agree with the gender and the number of such noun it is referring to (Hebert&Sallee, 2014). For example, French has two forms of "you" tu, vous, and an indefinite personal pronoun "on". Tu refers to singular noun in informal talk and vous can refers to plural noun or reflects formal case. Similarly, in Arabic, the pronoun follows certain rules that are connected to the identity of the noun, so the choice of the pronoun must reflect the gender and the number of the noun in Arabic.

Further, another example of pronouns variety in French is about the use of "il" and "elle" (Chauderlot, 2004). They involve the use of animate and inanimate nouns. The difference between these pronouns is that "il" replaces masculine nouns while "elle" replaces feminine nouns. However, in English, the pronoun "it" only can replace only inanimate nouns, such as an idea or an object either masculine or feminine. Also, Richmond (2011) clarifies that within the seven subject pronouns in English, there is no specific rules to follow to match the idea of gender and number. For example, the same pronoun like "you/they" can refer to singular and plural nouns, masculine or feminine without significant indication to the identity of those nouns.

2. The Paper Approach

In this paper, I have chosen to adopt a qualitative research methodology as well as a quantitative one. This is because the qualitative research shed light upon real experiences in different social settings. It reveals the social life through observation as well as the relationship between the researcher and the people they study through various qualitative methods. Many of these research methods help the researcher to be engaged in different social settings they analyse and describe. (Miller & Dingwall 1997). Furthermore, the qualitative approach investigates the natural behavior of such social setting since it is a naturalistic and interpretative approach. Hence, this type deals with the meaning of what people do in different social experiences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003 Bryman1988). In addition, researchers state that the qualitative research has a variety of materials that involved within the case study that the researcher intends to employ. These materials include interviews, personal experiences, observation as well as note taking which provide more data regarding

each social experience. Maxwell (2005) explains that data in qualitative study is related to any components the researcher sees, hears and communicates with in order to conduct their study.

The quantitative research approach is typically used to reflect upon various social surveys that adopt experiential investigation. Based on the quantitative approach, the study of language demonstrate that linguistic factors in the spoken language are highly structured (Trask 1999). Bryman (1988) investigates that the quantitative factors is best to clarify the structural regularities in social life. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative denote assumption about the nature and the goals of the research in a social view.

I used two methods to collect the data which based on the spoken discourse. These methods are some audio recordings and number of interviews.

For the conversations, I recorded various conversations in Arabic and gave information about the context. After listening to the conversations, transcribed them, and translated them into English. Also, the interviews were conducted in Arabic and also transcribed and translated.

2.1 Audio-recording and Transcript

An important method to obtain data is audio-recording which provides a chance to the researcher to be more engaged with their data. This is because audio recording allows keeping vital ideas and information such as pauses, high pitch and overlaps (Sacks 1984, cited in Silverman 2001: 161). Also, they can be played several times and the researcher can go back and check some points that are not sure about it (Swann, 1994:31).

2.2 Interviews

One of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research is undoubtedly making interviews. Interview is considered as a construction site of achieving specific knowledge as Kvale (1996) states that it is literally inter change of ideas and views between two speakers. With such interview, there will be a mutual interest around a topic that is chosen by the interlocutors.

3. The Extensive Quality within the Arabic Pronoun "you"

Evidently, in Arabic, there are number of rules for using "you" especially in small talk to discuss either cultural, social or personal topics. Choosing gender in Arabic is essential in making a sentence or a question and this can be obviously seen within the noun and the verbs. For more clarification, diacritical mark is used in the written discourse to reflect which gender is being addressed. In addition, suffixes can be added to the end of such noun or verb without any change in the meaning but they change the grammar of that word according to gender or number.

This means that the pronoun "you" has different meanings in Arabic since it comes to cover two categories in the spoken or the written discourse with sub-sections within each category. The first category will consist of two sections that fall under the term-detached pronoun. In

this case, the pronoun "you" that falls with the first section, can be shown as a second person pronoun (to the one being addressed), and mostly followed by an adjective. The second section as in most cases is the hidden pronoun which come with the imperative form. It is the same as how the imperative form in English can be built, but it differs according to gender.

On the other hand, the second category illustrates the dependent pronoun and it will extend to cover three sections under the pronoun "you". These sections are varied according to what type of word or sentence is being used to combine that with the pronoun "you". Hence, in the first type, "you" can come as a suffix to follow such noun to play the role of possessive pronoun. The second section can be presented as an object pronoun that follows verbs in its various types, the past, the present as well as the future tense. Finally, there is a kind of suffix that is combined to the prepositions to convey a complete obvious message. Commonly, suffixes here are varied according to the person being addressed, so it might refer to masculine, feminine, dual as well as plural. Also, the use of the pronoun "you" in Arabic is different as it can be followed by a noun and sometimes by a verb (Bouchentouf, 2006).

3.1 The First Category

3.1.1 You as a detached pronoun

3.1.1.1 "You" as a second person pronoun followed by an adjective.

Table 1. "You" followed by adjectives

| The English sentence | The Arabic transcript | The usage |
|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| You are smart | أنت ذكي / Anta thaki | Singular masculine |
| | أنت ذكية / Anti thakiatun | Singular feminine |
| | أنتما ذكيان / Antuma thakyan أنتما ذكياتان / Antuma thakyatan | Dual masculine Dual feminine |
| | أنتن ذكيات / Antuna thakyat | Plural feminine |
| | أنتم أذكيا / Antum athkya'a | Plural masculine |

In the above table, we use the same example but with different group of people. The pronoun "you" is referred to a singular male or female, dual male or female, plural female or plural male with different final endings in the Arabic transcript "Anta". These various endings are necessary to be applied according to the number and gender as well. Also, the adjective itself (smart/thaki) has different final endings to match the pronoun it follows.

3.1.1.2 "you" and the imperative form

The Arabic structure of the imperative form is the same to that in English. Commonly, the

subject pronoun "you" is hidden in the case of the imperative format, for instance, be careful. If we translate this example into Arabic, we can conclude that the form of the verb in Arabic can present the identity of the person whom we address. This is because the verb will have some final endings that refer to the hidden subject pronoun "you". For more details, look at the following table:

Table 2. The hidden "you" in the imperative form

| The Example in English | The Arabic transcript | The Arabic transcript indication |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Be careful | احذِرْ/ Ehthar | Singular male |
| | احذِري/ Ehthari | Singular female |
| | احذِرا/ Ehthra | Dual male & female |
| | احذِرن/ Ehtharna | Plural female |
| | احذِروا/ Ehthroo | Plural male |

3.2 The Second Category

3.2.1 You as a dependent pronoun

3.2.1.1 When the pronoun "you" follows a preposition, it becomes a possessive pronoun.

Look at the following table for more clarification.

Table 3. "you" as a possessive Pronoun

| The English word | The Arabic word | The suffix | The usage |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------------|
| For you Your book | كتابك/ ketabuka | ka | Singular male |
| | لك/ laka | | |
| | كتابك/ ketabuki | ki | Singular femal |
| | لك/ laki | | |
| | كتابكما/ ketabukuma | kuma | Dual male and female |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|------|----------------|
| | لكما/lakuma | | |
| | كتابكن/ketabukuna | kuna | Plural females |
| | لكن/lakuna | | |
| | كتابكم/ketabukum | kum | Plural males |
| | لكم/lakum | | |

3.2.1.2 You as an object pronoun

The object pronoun "you" in Arabic follows the verb, and the verb can have different format based on gender and number. The conversations below will explain in details the how the identity of the person can affect the verb.

Conversation 1:

1. Speaker 1: what time is it now?
2. Speaker 2: 11:15
3. Speaker 1: which time do you (استيقظتي/istaigath \mathbf{ti}) wake up?
4. Speaker 2: umm nearly uh at 7:15 or might be 7:30
5. Speaker 1: oh too early
6. Speaker 2: yeah, you know (تعلم/ta'alam) I am a morning person
7. Speaker 1: oh don't explain that for me.

The context:

This is a conversation between a mother (speaker 2) and her son (speaker 1). The son initiated the talk as he waked up late after attending a party the night before. They talked about the time as they slept late, but the mother waked up early, as she likes to enjoy her time in the morning.

Linguistic analysis

In the above conversation, the pronoun "you" is used twice. At the beginning, the son uses the pronoun "you" when he directs his talk to his mother. In the Arabic form which includes the pronoun "you", the identity of the addressee is obvious since the verb (wake up) is followed by the suffix "i". This kind of ending indicates that the person to whom we are talking to is a singular feminine.

Also, line 6 includes the pronoun "you" when the mother explains how she likes to leave her bed early in the morning. We can notice that the verb "know" in the present tense starts with "ta" and ends with nothing in the Arabic transcript. Since it has no final endings, we can

conclude that the addressee is a male.

Conversation 2:

1. Speaker 1: you know (تعلمن/ta'alamna) I love you (أحبكن/Uhebokuna) um I think about about your benefit
2. Speaker 2: but you said you won't allow us to use it
3. Speaker 1: um I may let you (أدعكن/Adacuna) play with it for an hour a day
4. Speaker 3: Uh an hour, er please mom think again

Context:

This conversation is a part of a long talk between a father and his daughters about using their tablets to play games. The father reduces the time of using these devices for the benefit of his children, but they try to convince him to change his mind.

Linguistic analysis:

These lines contain the pronoun you with two different indications in Arabic. Lines 1 and 3 which includes the speech of speaker 1 (the father) has the pronoun "you" reflecting the same grammatical function as the father directs his talk to his daughters. The pronoun "you" is followed by the suffix "na" in the Arabic transcript in the following words (you know/love you/ let you) as either a subject or an object pronoun. Therefore, when the talk is directed to a group of girls, the verb in Arabic ends with "na" that reflects the use of the pronoun "you"

In addition, there is one use of the pronoun "you" in line 2 to reveals another function to this pronoun in Arabic. In line 2, one girl talks to her father and starts her talk by the verb you said (قلت/qulta). In this example, we find that when we talk to a singular masculine using the pronoun "you+verb in the past tense", the verb will end with "a".

Conversation 3

1. Speaker 1: Come on, it is my graduation party!
2. Speaker 2: where is it in your house?
3. Speaker 1: No, I arrange that in a coffee
4. Speaker 3: Wow, it is amazing
5. Speaker 1: sure, um when you come (تحضران/tahduraan) call me don't forget (تنسوا/tansayaa)

Context

The above conversation is about a student who graduated from the high school inviting his friend to his graduation party. Because they are so interested in this party, they start asking several questions about it.

Linguistic analysis:

1. Speaker 1 uses the pronoun "you" in line 5 when he addresses two of his friends. The structure of the verb being used here is different as "aan" follows the end of the verb in the Arabic word (تحضران/tahduraan) means you come. This means that when the talk is pointed to two listeners either males or females, "aan" will be used in the affirmative sentence while "aa" only without "n" will be used in the negative format like (تنسيا/tansayaa) means do not forget.

Conversation 4:

1. Speaker 1: uh no why do you come (جئتم/je'etum) late? It's 8:30
2. Speaker 2: um we had an accident, but we called someone to pick up us
3. Speaker 1: oh sorry, is there any injury?
4. Speaker 3: No, thanks God
5. Speaker 4: um no teacher but we are worried about the exam
6. All the speakers laughed

Context:

This conversation happened between a university teacher and his students who came late to the class on the exam day because of an accident.

Linguistic analysis:

In this conversation, there is only one use for the pronoun "you" in line 1 from the teacher to a group of male students. In the past form of the verb, we can notice that the verb ends with "um" in the Arabic transcript to reflect that we can use "um" as a suffix for plural males. However, in the present tense, "oona" will follow the end of the verb instead of the "um"

4. Conclusion

In the provided conversation, there is much use of the pronoun "you" when the speakers direct the talk to different gender. There is a big difference in using "you" between English and Arabic. In English, it is not necessary to show the reference of "you" either if it is referred to one person, two people, or even to a group of people. The reason is that, the use of the pronoun depends on the presented audience to whom the talk is directed. On contrast, the Arabic language has a rule in using the pronoun "you" either if it is followed by a noun or a verb or if it is referred to one person, two people or a group of people, with a consideration if "you" is referred to a male or female. This

If the pronoun "you" is followed by a noun, there will be suffixes added to the noun. Suffixes are varied when "you" is referred to a singular noun either male or female, in the case of duality as well as the case of plural nouns. Further, it is different in the male and the female plural. An example of using "you" when the gender is singular male male is that "your book" and the word book in Arabic means "keetab", but if we want to say "your book" it would be "keetabuka", this is for masculine. In a singular feminine case the word "keetab" in "your

book" would be "keetabuki" and in the case of duality the male and the female expression is the same as the word "your book" in Arabic would be "keetabukuma" for both gender. The last case is the plural form for "you" in Arabic where the male plural is different from the female. Male plural of "you" would be "keetabukum" while the female plural would be "keetabukuna".

The second situation of using "you" is when it is followed by a verb. In this case, the verb will have suffixes or prefixes which refer to the subject of that verb. Also, this suffix is varied when the subject is masculine, feminine, dual or plural (Wightwick & Gaafar, 2005, p. 14-16). Examples which clarify these differences in using "you" followed by a verb in the present tense are as follow. The word "say" in Arabic means "yaqool" without any prefixes or suffixes, but if we say "you say" for singular masculine it would be "taqool". If the verb is referred to a singular feminine the word "yaqool" would be "taqooleena". In the duality form, the masculine and the feminine are the same, as the word "yaqool" would be "taqolan" for both gender. The male plural in using the word "yaqool" would be "taqoloon", while the female plural would be "taqolna".

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