

Pragmatics of Illness: A View from Jordanian Arabic

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Abstract : This research article investigates how illnesses (different types and severity) are expressed in Arabic discourse with a particular focus on input coming from Colloquial Jordanian Arabic (CJA). Drawing on a corpus of naturally occurring conversations, this article offers evidence that illnesses are predominantly expressed through two different sets of expressive strategies, namely direct expressive strategies (DES) and indirect expressive strategies (IES). The latter are exclusively used when cancer and mental health disorders are targeted. IES include the substitution of the name of the illness with some religious expressions (e.g., ʔallah ʔijdzi:na 'May Allah keeps us safe') or certain terms especially when cancer is meant (e.g., hað'a:k ʔil-marað' 'that disease'). On the other hand, DES are used in conjunction with other illnesses (e.g., heart, kidneys, diabetes, etc.), regardless of their severity. DES include specific formulas that remarkably mention the name of the inflicted organ (e.g., [with-SOMEONE the ORGAN] as in ʔinduh ʔil-qalb 'lit. with-him the heart' meaning 'He has a heart disease'). We discuss the effects of religious beliefs and local norms and values in determining the use of these strategies.

Keywords : Illnesses, pragmatics, expressive strategies, religion

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