



The Impact of Semantic Relations from the Perspective of Sociolinguistic Structures: A Case Study of the Ouadi Souf Dialect

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Abstract:

Semantics in language or dialect is a reflective mirror of the sociolinguistic dimension, considering language as a series of organized social activities, not just a means for expressing individual thoughts. It is an expressive tool of the social environment, conveying multiple meanings and gestures of different human behaviors. For example, when someone says "good morning," the automatic response is to greet them with the same greeting. The linguistic meaning of these expressions does not simply convey the idea of a greeting to the individual; it signifies more than that. Semantic language carries the significance of social norms, which must be performed among individuals. This confirms that language or dialect is nothing more than a social phenomenon subject to the individual and the social environment in which they live. It interacts and changes according to the various requirements and developments of life, manifested through different semantic phenomena, including the axis of semantic relations.

Keywords: Semantics, Sociolinguistics, Axis of Semantic Relations, Influence and Impact.

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Introduction:

The individual who communicates and interacts with members of their community uses language or dialect to communicate and express their different thoughts and opinions. These ideas are conveyed through meaningful words, phrases, and sentences that express the individual's self and the social environment in which they live. Any social interaction within a community, such as the Algerian society, specifically the Ouadi Souf community, always involves a semantic dimension. This interaction is reflected through the individual's language. Therefore, we question the extent to which sociolinguistic structures can influence the axis of semantic relations in the Ouadi Souf dialect.

Firstly - Semantics:

The semantic level is the final level of linguistic analysis, but it is considered one of the most important levels as it is one of its fundamental pillars. This is because the previous linguistic levels, such as the phonetic, morphological, or syntactic levels, do not reveal their meaning except through the semantic level. So, what is semantics?

1- Definition of Semantics:

The term "semantics" from a linguistic perspective is based on two terms: the science of semantics derived from the trilateral root "dall" (to indicate) and it was defined in the Lisan al-Arab dictionary by Ibn Manzur as: "Dall means to indicate, to show someone something and guide them towards it. And Dallalah means to direct someone towards something. And Al-Dalil is what is



used as evidence to indicate something. And Al-Dalil is the indicator, and it guided him on the path, indicating it." (1) So, semantics carries in its meaning the concepts of guidance and direction towards the guided path.

From a terminological standpoint, the relationship between the "dall" (signifier) and the "madlul" (signified) is the semantic relationship that connects them. It has been established in modern linguistic definitions that semantics is the relationship between the "dall" (expression) and the "madlul" (meaning). It is considered the event in which the signifier is associated with the signified. Therefore, it is permissible to say, with some tolerance, that hitting is the connection between the hitter and the hit, and it is also permissible to say, based on this analogy, that semantics is the connection between the signifier and the signified or the relationship between them (2).

It is the Meaning that the linguistic sequence or sentence contains a set of words, terms, or phrases that encompass a range of meanings distributed within the sentence itself. Searching, for example, for the evidence for that linguistic sign in the sentence, represented, of course, by the signifier and the signified, means searching for the meaning, whether it is imagined or existing in the mind, regardless of whether this evidence has a connection or existence in an external reference. Because the reference sometimes can be symbolic and non-existent, such as the word "bravery" or the word "love," where there is no physical reference for them, they exist only in the mind. As for the meaning or mental representation of a word or term like "milk," "bread," "car," or "apple," all these things have mental representations drawn in the mind because they have meaning in the external world, they are tangible things that we see in the external world.

The science of semantics (La Semantique) is concerned with the scientific study of meaning (3). It is the discipline that studies meaning or that branch of linguistics that deals with the theory of meaning. It also examines the necessary conditions for a symbol to be capable of carrying meaning (4).

The science of semantics includes all signs and symbols, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, falling within the broader scope of what is known as Semiology. However, Arab scholars and philosophers specifically focused on linguistic semantics, i.e., the realization of pronunciation and ensuring its audibility, which is known as linguistic semantics (Sèmantique). Some of them even went further to propose that words are positioned in relation to mental images, a viewpoint that is very close, if not identical, to what Saussure has concluded. In other words, the study of semantics cannot be conducted without connecting it to the external world and establishing a mental representation for it. Since our research is related to the external environment, we will attempt to explore the relationship between semantics and the field that deals with the language of society.

2- Definition of Sociolinguistics:

The field of "sociolinguistics" or "social linguistics," also known as "the science of social language," has gained the interest of many researchers. It is the science that "studies the relationship between language and society, as well as the diverse language uses and the structures of the society; that is, the social structures in which users of this language live." It is evident from this definition that there is an inherent connection between language and society, and they cannot be separated. The society can influence language over different periods, which is evident through social classes and their levels, such as cultural level, for example.

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on studying language as a social phenomenon. It examines its relationship with society and reveals and interprets the interplay between linguistic and dialectal variations and various social structures, such as social classes, gender, age, profession, and more. It organizes all levels of language structure and the methods of its usage, which are linked to its social and cultural functions. Thus, it is a science that focuses on studying linguistic phenomena in light of their connection to social interaction among individuals.

3- The Relationship between Semantics and Sociolinguistics:

The field of semantics is not only of interest to specialists in linguistics but also to many researchers from various disciplines, such as psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others. The connection between semantics as a branch of language and other sciences lies not only in the common point between them, which is language, but also in their shared focus on the study of meaning, each with its own specialization and interest. Thus, it is not possible to separate semantics from other branches of linguistics. Just as other linguistic sciences rely on semantics for their analyses, semantics requires the assistance of these sciences to fulfill its function. This is evident in the field of sociolinguistics, which focuses on studying language in relation to society. Scholars in this field are interested in studying " (7) practical cases, social relationships, and situations in which communication takes place, as all these factors play a fundamental role in meaning production." (8) This, of course, happens through the interconnected relationship between semantics and sociolinguistics.

Looking at semantics from a sociolinguistic perspective, we find that they converge when considering the relationship between language and society. Language, which expresses meaning, is primarily determined by society. Both semantics and sociology analyze the degree of social interaction as manifested in linguistic discourse. Meanings (significations) are not inherent in the linguistic tools used but rather exist in the mind of the speaker who employs these tools

in various ways. Therefore, their shared topics of study include analyzing different social situations, customs, traditions, methods of communication among people, and modes of expression (9).

The relationship between semantics and sociolinguistics is interconnected and interdependent. They both aim to understand the meaning of linguistic signs when used in society, as signs gain currency and become established among members of the linguistic community through customary and implicit agreement (10). Any deviation from this implicit agreement may lead to ridicule or indifference. A good example of this is found in Arab folklore in the story of Abu 'Alqamah when he visited the eye doctor. The doctor prescribed various absurd remedies, and Abu 'Alqamah did not understand him, leading to a comedic misunderstanding (11).

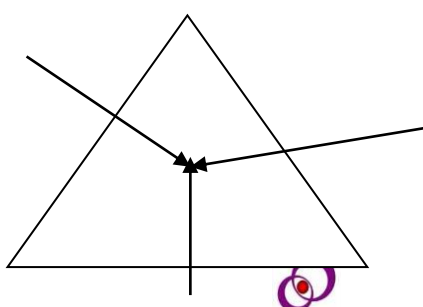
This example illustrates that semantics plays a role in elucidating meaning. Accessing semantic meaning is only possible by connecting it to the agreed-upon social context. This is accomplished through the use of language, which, "from one aspect, falls within the realm of natural sciences (as linguistic messages have natural purposes), and from another aspect, falls within logical-mathematical principles (as the processes underlying expression can be formalized), and from yet another aspect, falls within psychological and sociological domains (as language is spoken by individuals within groups)." (12). The following diagram clarifies the relationship between semantics and various fields:

Tangue (lisan)

.The logical-mathematical aspect

The psychosocial aspect

The aspect of natural sciences



.Figure (01) illustrates the three aspects of studying language

Therefore, semantic meaning emerges through the interaction among members of society through implicit agreement among them. For example, the word "needle" linguistically signifies that it is thin, sharp, and made of solid iron. These components may be part of the conceptual meaning of the word "needle." (13) However, all these connotations do not determine its semantic meaning as either a medical needle or a sewing needle. The individual determines its meaning based on the context.

To study any language, its semantic meaning is not evident without the presence of the semantic dimension that reveals the linguistic meaning and the presence of the social dimension that reveals the process of meaning being influenced by its surroundings. The relationship between these two disciplines is interdependent and complementary.

Secondly, the axis of semantic relations:

Both ancient and modern linguistic studies aim to understand the semantic meaning intended by the speaker through the words, phrases, and different sentences produced during their dialogue with others. This begins with the pronunciation of sounds, extends to the morphosyntactic aspect, and culminates in the lexical dictionary, all while linking these stages to the surrounding reality of social and cultural systems in society.

Thus, the semantic study, which is a branch of language, (14) "starts from a pure descriptive standpoint, free from any normative influence, and aligns these relationships in a unified framework, seeking to make its results applicable to all languages" and dialects. This is accomplished through one of the semantic axes, such as the axis of semantic relations, a term coined by modern scholars to explain various phenomena that describe the relationship between words in a given

language. This relationship may involve the two words being synonymous, having multiple meanings for a single word, or other forms of linguistic association.

This term has emerged recently from the study of semantic fields, where researchers have examined the relationships between words within these fields. Although ancient linguists, particularly Arabic linguists, were aware of these phenomena, they categorized them differently (15). The meaning of a word, according to these scholars, is the result of its relationships with other words within the same semantic field or domain (16).

1- The Sociolinguistic Semantic Relations in the Ouadi Souf Dialect:

Specialists believe in the possibility of classifying and quantifying words based on the relationships within the lexical field. This is affirmed by Stephen Ullmann, who stated that "a word occupies its place in a system of relationships that connect it to other words in the linguistic material. These relationships have been quantified through the axis of semantic relations," (17) such as the relationship of synonymy, as in the words "mother" and "parent," or the relationship of antonymy, as in "night" and "day," among other different semantic relations.

A) Synonymy:

The Ouadi Souf dialect contains words that exhibit a type of synonymy, meaning semantic convergence. However, each word differs from the others in at least one significant aspect, and this type can be represented by individual words in each semantic field, especially when narrowing down the field and limiting it to a few words (18). In this case, there is a convergence between the meanings, but the words differ in at least one distinctive aspect (19).

For example, the word "kin" (sit down) is synonymous with "arkhah," "habs," and

"ogaad." All these words carry synonyms for the same meaning in this dialect, which is "stopping movement." For example, when addressing a misbehaving child, they might say, "kin fiblastak," which means "sit in your place." However, if we examine the linguistic meaning of the verb "kin," we find that its semantic connotation differs slightly from what is intended. It conveys the sense of " (20) covering and protecting something, keeping it hidden within itself." This social aspect may have influenced the meaning, giving it a semantic convergence in the dialect.

However, when we examine the meanings of each word, we find that they carry slight differences in terms of semantic connotation, without the users in the dialect paying much attention to them. For example, the word "arkhah" means "an imperative verb that signifies stopping what you are doing and returning to your natural state." If there is someone engaged in an activity and another person wants them to stop and return to a state of inactivity, they would say "arkhah," (21) meaning "stop." Similarly, the word "habs" carries a semantic connotation of "holding, restraining, and imprisoning," indicating a restriction of movement (22). Another word, "ogaad," signifies sitting and is used in certain situations and speech contexts to indicate stopping movement.

From these aforementioned synonyms, it can be inferred that they are all relatively close in terms of the semantic connotation of the imperative verb "kin" in this dialect. Accordingly, the speakers follow a dialectical approach in their pronunciation, which does not pay attention to the subtle differences in semantic connotation and precision of expression between similar words. This is confirmed by Dr. Ahmed Zaghb (23) in his book "The Ouadi Souf Dialect." Additionally, their inclination towards this type of synonymy may be attributed to the absence of complete synonyms in the dialect, along with the influence of the social and cultural environment on it.

Therefore, determining the vocabulary and semantic connotations of a dialect is

challenging because it is an oral and non-written form of language. Additionally, dialects are variable and not fixed. The observer of a dialect must be familiar with its social and cultural aspects. Anthropologists and sociolinguists emphasize that language and dialects are more than what we find in dictionaries and require a deep understanding of the linguistic connections between language patterns and social and cultural patterns (24).

For example, we find that social life and its various levels can leave traces on certain synonymous expressions in the Ouadi Souf dialect. For instance, the imperative verb "kin" expanded its connotation from "covering" to "calmness and reduced movement." This expansion occurred through the naming of something by comparing it to another. When a person enters a "kin," meaning a place, their movement decreases. Thus, the term "kin" was used to refer to reduced movement because it is usually associated with it. In this dialect, the semantic connotation of "kin" aligns somewhat with the linguistic connotation of "covering and concealing" (25) due to the influence of the social environment represented by the phenomenon of a place characterized by calmness and lack of movement.

B) Relationship of Contrast:

Regarding the semantic aspect of the relationship axis, the phenomenon of contrast, it has been said that it is "one of the customs of the Arabs in naming opposites with a single name, such as 'jawun' for black and 'jawun' for white." (26) The phenomenon of contrast is considered "a manifestation of semantic research among Arab scholars, where new meanings enter the original meanings of words." (27)

In the Ouadi Souf dialect, there are few instances of the phenomenon of contrast compared to the phenomenon of synonymy. For example, there is the expression "la'bitha fayqah" which is used with a tone of mockery, ridicule, and belittlement towards a girl who claims to be intelligent and sharp but is

actually foolish and ignorant. Despite some people being aware of its linguistic meaning in Arabic dictionaries, which means "awakening intelligence," (28) they still use it in their dialect with the opposite meaning.

If we examine this previous phrase and other spoken words in this dialect from a sociolinguistic perspective, we will find that some words are influenced by the social relationships between individuals through the phenomenon of interaction. For example, when they say, "marhaba bīk ya fulān," this phrase carries two semantic meanings among Arabs in general. The first meaning is to welcome someone, indicating that they love and appreciate that person and hold a special place for them in their hearts. The second meaning, however, is the opposite, implying that they are not welcoming someone, meaning they are not desired or welcomed (29). In other words, the word for welcoming is used sarcastically and mockingly, conveying negative emotions. The listener understands the meaning based on the context and tone of voice used by the speaker.

Similarly, the word "basīr" is traditionally associated with the sense of sight and means "one who sees." However, in the Ouadi Souf dialect, it is used with a different meaning. It is applied to blind people, referring to those who cannot see (30). Thus, the general semantic meaning of the word "basīr" in the dialect has shifted to a specific semantic meaning related to blindness. This indicates that this community, as an Arab Muslim society, holds within its structure many human qualities that consider the feelings of others, especially individuals with special needs. This is reflected in their vocabulary, showing respect and politeness towards this group. For instance, they use the word "basīr" to refer to a blind person, which is known to be used for a person with sight (31).

It is natural for a dialect to be influenced and influenced by various social and cultural factors, such as social and psychological factors. For example, the word "magadrah" traditionally means "power, strength, ability,

wealth, and richness." (32) However, in this community, it is used to refer to a person being afflicted with an illness.

And perhaps the social aspect represented in the phenomenon of optimism about the patient's recovery is reflected. Instead of saying "disease," they say "magadrah." Magadrah may mean the lack of ability. If we refer to our Arab heritage, we find that Arabs have used some contradictory words that indicate optimism. For example, they say, "Al-salīm 'alā al-salīm," which means "the healthy person to the healthy person" to wish someone good health. They also use phrases like "for those who returned, closed, and prepared for the journey, optimism about their return." (33)

It becomes clear that the Ouadi Souf community, with its various customs, has influenced the linguistic repertoire of individuals through the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission. This has led to the pronunciation of certain words carrying a sense of contradiction, as demonstrated by some previous examples.

C- The phenomenon of homonymy:

Homonymy refers to the difference in meaning despite the similarity in pronunciation. As stated: "The difference in pronunciation leads to different meanings (...), and the agreement in pronunciation does not necessarily mean agreement in meaning. For example, you can say: 'I found it on the muwajjadah' (meaning a found item), and 'I found it if I wanted to find the lost one' (meaning a lost item) (34), and similar examples." Similarly, in the verse of the Quran: "So throw him into the sea, and let the sea throw him onto the shore." (35) The phrase "let the sea throw him" is considered an instance of homonymy, as it combines elements of both a command and a statement. It can be understood as "So throw him into the sea, and the sea will throw him (onto the shore)." It is also possible that "the sea" is a command to throw him. (36)

Thus, the phenomenon of homonymy contains words that carry two or more

meanings. One word can encompass two or three or more implications. Many spoken words in this dialect conform to the semantic pattern of this phenomenon. For example, they say: "ainoha sahiha" (her eye is healthy), where "ainoha" can mean bold or impudent, "ainoha harra" (her eye is burning) can mean jealous, and "ainoha titlawas" (her eye is sneaky) can mean deceitful.

The word ain "eye" here can refer to something tangible, like the physical eye we see with, or it can have a figurative meaning, such as a bold eye, a jealous eye, a deceitful eye, and other various semantic meanings.

Therefore, context plays an important role in determining the semantic meaning and its domains. This is observed by the French linguist Leroy B., who associates the phenomenon of homonymy, particularly in the French language but also in human language in general, with context. He argues that when we say a word has multiple meanings simultaneously, we are often victims of deception to a significant extent, as only the meaning implied by the context of the text emerges in our consciousness (37). This observation aligns with what we have noticed regarding the words encompassing the phenomenon of homonymy in this dialect.

Sociolinguists argue that the social system plays an active role in influencing words, giving them multiple and diverse meanings "due to the differences among people in their social classes and categories, as well as the deviation of word meanings from their original definitions. This is influenced by the differences between speech communities in psychological characteristics, political affairs, social and cultural aspects, education, thinking and emotions, living standards, family life, traditions, and customs." In other words, society affects dialects in one way or another. This has indeed happened with the word "eye" in the sense that it no longer refers to the physical eye but rather carries the meanings of envy and deceitful intentions. Thus, like other Arab societies, the community

of Ouadi Souf has been influenced by the presence of cultural and religious systems that believe in the existence of jinn, magic, and the belief in evil spirits, as well as the presence of the evil eye and envy in human life. (39)

Another word that carries shared meanings is "logmah," which in the dialect refers to "anything put in the mouth as food. Anything held by the hand to be put in the mouth is called 'logmah.' Then, the meaning expanded to include any edible item. Some even use the word 'logmah' to refer to food or dinner. For example, they would say, 'Bring the logmah, let's eat it.' Furthermore, the meaning expanded even further, and the word 'logmah' is used by builders. When mixing gypsum with water to form a paste, the worker takes some of it in their hand to fill gaps in the wall. This is also called 'logmah,' (40) comparing it to the morsel of food."

Therefore, the Soufi community has been influenced by its surroundings, including the food held in the hand. This is why the word "logmah" is used to refer to the shape or object carried by hand, whether it means the morsel of food that is fed by hand or the lump of gypsum used in construction and other similar meanings.

Furthermore, in the dialect, the word "sabtah" has different shared meanings depending on the context in which it is used. For example, they say "arbitah" when referring to fastening the belt of trousers or tying the straps of sandals and other similar meanings. In the language, "sabtah" means "sabt, every tanned skin, including the sabtiyah sandals." (41) Additionally, this word appeared in another context, where they say "tah sabtah" to mean that the person is seriously ill. In the language, "sabt" refers to a person struck with a disease or in a state of unconsciousness. It can also refer to a sick person who is bedridden, like someone sleeping with their eyes closed most of the time. This person is considered "masbut," a term used for a deceased person or someone who has fainted (42).

Thus, this semantic meaning of the word "sabtah" aligns with the dialectical meaning of this community, influenced by the social system through the phenomenon of interaction among individuals.

D- Variation relationship:

Arabs have long recognized the phenomenon of contrast, and this phenomenon distinguished itself from others by the fact that the signifier in contrast situations "has only one signified, as the relationship between them is fixed." (43) In other words, "a single word signifies a single meaning," (44) as in the case of the terms "khali" and "khalati," both carrying the same semantic meaning of "maternal uncle" or "maternal aunt." Similarly, the terms "amti" and "ami" both signify "paternal aunt" or "paternal uncle," respectively. In all of these examples, a single word conveys a single semantic meaning.

Thus, it becomes evident that the speakers of this dialect have adhered to the semantic law of the contrast phenomenon, which states that there is no inclusion from both sides. Kinship terms, such as "father," "brother," "sister," "uncle," "maternal uncle," and so on, illustrate this relationship. Each of these terms "does not include any other word, and therefore, the relationship between these terms is a relationship of variation," (45) relying on the contrast of kinship relations between the words.

If we look at the axis of semantic relationships in the phenomenon of contrast in the previous examples, we can observe a sociolinguistic perspective on kinship relations. Nations differ in their social systems, including kinship relationships. For instance, in Western societies, there is a single term for each kinship relation. They use the word "uncle" for both paternal and maternal uncles and "aunt" for both paternal and maternal aunts. On the other hand, Arab societies have a different social system for kinship relations. They specify the type of relationship in the corresponding words. They say "uncle (khali: the mother' borther), uncle (ami: the father' brother), aunt (amati:

father's sister), ami' son , ammati' son and so on (46).

Therefore, it is evident that different societies have distinct social systems and linguistic practices when it comes to expressing kinship relationships, reflecting the sociocultural variations in the way kinship is conceptualized and labeled.

Therefore, it becomes clear that kinship words and expressions are not merely linguistic labels, but they are witnessing words that reveal to us the conceptualizations of social phenomena. They help us understand collective actions and individual behaviors within the Arab linguistic community. Kinship is not solely a biological organic phenomenon based on blood relations, but rather a social phenomenon that relies on the customs and beliefs of the society. This has influenced their pronunciation of words that carry the meaning of kinship, imbued with cultural connotations (47).

Conclusion:

The essence of the argument becomes clear that studying any language or dialect from a sociolinguistic perspective cannot be solely confined to linguists. Even if they lack the ability or desire to delve deeper, they must at least lend an ear to the scholars of logic who, in their discoveries, find assumptions underlying every statement—some of which are local, tied to cultural and social spaces, and others are general, characteristic of all individuals as speaking creatures.

In other words, the researcher must be well-versed in the intricacies of the society under study, including its social and cultural aspects. This facilitates the process of uncovering the relationship between the dialect and the community. This is evident through language or dialect, which primarily proves to be a social phenomenon that reflects the reality of any given society.

This is indeed what we have observed through our exploration of the semantic relations in the dialect of the Wadi Souf community. It becomes evident that there is a mutual influence between the dialect and the

community, albeit to varying degrees. This influence is manifested in their spoken words, clearly demonstrated through the axis of semantic relations.

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