

The Pragmatic Functions of the Discourse Marker ‘Saha’ in Algerian Spoken Arabic

Amira Ahmed Kebabi*
Prof. Rajai Rashead Al-Khanji**

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Abstract:

The present study investigates the various pragmatic functions of the discourse marker ‘saha’ which is used as an interjection in Algerian spoken Arabic. The literal meaning of this discourse marker is ‘health’ but it has other different pragmatic functions depending on the context in which it is used. Moreover, it is a sound effect noun that has a socio-communicative role.

The data gathered for this discourse marker is based on the daily observations of conversations where ‘saha’ is used in different contexts by Algerian students in the campus of the University of Jordan. Eventually, in this study, fourteen different pragmatic functions are reported, showing various functions identified from naturally occurring conversations between Algerian students.

Keywords: Algerian spoken Arabic, discourse marker ‘saha’, pragmatic functions, socio-communicative role.

Algeria\ amira.kebabi25@gmail.com *
The University of Jordan\ Jordan\ dr.rajaikhanji@gmail.com **

الوظائف البراغماتية لعلامة الخطاب "صحا" في اللغة الجزائرية العربية

أميرة أحمد كبابي*

أ.د. رجائي رشيد الخانجي**

ملخص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في مختلف الوظائف البراغماتية لعلامة الخطاب "صحا" التي تستخدم كتدخل في اللغة الجزائرية العربية. المعنى الحرفي لعلامة الخطاب هذه هو "الصحة" ولكن لها وظائف براغماتية مختلفة أخرى اعتماداً على السياق الذي تستخدم فيه. فضلاً عن ذلك، فهي اسم مؤثر صوتي له دور اجتماعي تواصل.

تستند البيانات التي تم جمعها لعلامة الخطاب هذه إلى الملاحظات اليومية للمحادثات العفوية بين الطلاب الجزائريين في حرم الجامعة الأردنية حيث يتم استخدام "صحا" في سياقات مختلفة. بناءً على ذلك، تم تحديد أربع عشرة وظيفة براغماتية مختلفة تم استخلاصها من المحادثات العفوية بين الطلاب الجزائريين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الجزائرية العربية، علامة الخطاب "صحا"، الوظائف البراغماتية، الدور الاجتماعي التواصل.

* الجزائر / amira.kebab25@gmail.com

** الجامعة الأردنية/ الأردن / dr.rajaikhanji@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis is concerned with analysing language in use by describing its purposes and functions (Brown & Yule, 1983, p.1). Thus, discourse analysis is understood at the pragmatic level as the main purpose of a language is to communicate meanings among the interlocutors.

In this concern, pragmatics is the study of “speaker meaning” by means of the utterances produced by the speaker and how they are interpreted by the listener in a particular context (Yule, 1996, p. 3). Yule (1996) further argued that, in order to get the intended meaning, participants should be able to organize what they want to communicate in concordance with the other participants, when, where and under what circumstances. The participants should also be able to make inferences of what is unsaid as part of what is communicated. Hence, the role of pragmatics is not only to describe the linguistic expressions and give their semantic meanings but also to show their purposes and functions within the spoken language (ibid p. 3).

Spoken varieties of Arabic represent a source for research in pragmatics because they include a large number of linguistic expressions that have multi-functions. These multi-function expressions are called ‘discourse markers’ or ‘discourse conditionals’ (Farghal 1993 cited in Farghal 1995, p. 254). He defined ‘discourse conditionals’ as expressions that are conjoined to Arabic discourse for the purpose of realizing a specific speech act. Similarly, Fraser (2017, p. 297) defined ‘discourse markers’ as expressions or discourse segments that express different illocutionary acts.

In this regard, this paper aims to shed light on one of the discourse markers used in Algerian spoken dialect which is ‘saha’, meaning health is English. It is frequently used in Algerian spoken dialect to serve several functions and meanings such as thanking, greeting, blaming, etc.

1.1 Literature review

There is a number of studies that have been conducted on the pragmatic functions of different discourse markers in different Arabic dialects. For example, Farghal (1995) investigated the pragmatics of ‘inshallah’ in Jordanian spoken Arabic and identified three functions. It can be used to express directive speech acts such as requesting or ordering, commissive speech acts such as promising and threatening, or expressive speech acts such as thanking and apologizing.

Similarly, Kanakri and Al-Harashseh (2013a) conducted a research on the discourse analysis and pragmatics of /ʔa:di/ in Jordanian spoken Arabic. The study revealed that the discourse marker /ʔa:di/ has nine different

functions used in different contexts and situations: (a) to express the meaning of consolation or mitigating the effect of a sad piece of news; (b) to ask for a permission to do something; (c) to express the meaning of disapproval or rebuke; (d) to express disappointment regarding a certain action or piece of news; (e) to express the meaning of contempt, disdain or scorn; (f) to express courtesy; (g) to express acceptance of what happened without bearing any responsibility of the other partner; (h) to save one's face in speech in front of other people in a certain situation; (i) to express indirect criticism or questioning about a certain behaviour or deed.

Al-Harashseh and Kanakri (2013b) further conducted another study on the pragmatic functions and translatability of /tayyib/ in Jordanian spoken Arabic. The researchers notified that the discourse marker /tayyib/ has ten different functions: (a) to express objection to what has been said; (b) to indicate an introduction of a new topic; (c) to express challenge; (d) to mean 'stop' let us understand the matter; (e) a mitigating term for the disagreement force; (f) a backchannel marker with what precedes; (g) to indicate the end of a conversation; (h) to send a message to the interlocutor to be patient; (i) to give permission; (j) to serve as a gap filler. One further study on 'discourse markers' is the one conducted by Al-Rousan (2015) about the use of the discourse marker /maʕnafsak/ in Saudi Arabic. The study revealed that the discourse marker /maʕnafsak/ serves twelve different functions depending on the context in which it is used. These are, (a) to express lack of interest; carelessness and/or indifference; (b) to express annoyance; (c) to express reprimanding; (d) to express an objection; (e) to express refusal; (f) to express doubt; (g) to indicate unwillingness; (h) to express scolding; (i) to express disappointment; (j) to express challenge; (k) to make a choice; (l) to preserve personal privacy.

Abdeljawad and Abu Radwan (2016) investigated the discourse marker 'Inzeen' used in Gulf spoken Arabic, which means 'okay' in English. They revealed that this discourse marker can be used as an agreement marker, a challenge and / or a threat marker, a topic management marker, an interactive marker, a tag marker, a structural marker and a cohesive marker.

Al-Ghoweri (2016) examined the pragmatic functions of 'azalakom Allah', meaning in English (may God elevate you), used in Jordanian spoken Arabic. The researcher revealed that Jordanians use 'azalakom Allah' when they talk about animals, impure places and reprehensible situations.

Al-Khalidy (2017) explored the pragmatic functions of the discourse

marker /ta:lʕ/ used in Jordanian spoken Arabic comedy series. The researcher revealed that /ta:lʕ/ in Jordanian Arabic has eight pragmatic meanings: going, going out, hearable, appear, looks like, share, ascending and from now on.

Algerian spoken dialect represents a rich source for research in pragmatics because it has a large number of discourse markers that are used by interlocutors in their conversations to serve different speech acts. Accordingly, this study explores the different pragmatic functions of the discourse marker 'saha' which is used in Algerian spoken dialect. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different pragmatic functions of the discourse marker 'saha' used in Algerian spoken dialect?
2. What are the influencing factors that lead to the multi- functionality of the discourse marker 'saha' used in Algerian spoken dialect?

1.2. Aim of the study

The present study focuses merely on identifying the possible pragmatic functions of the discourse marker 'saha' used in Algerian spoken dialect. It also sheds light on the factors that lead to having different meanings of 'saha'. The motive behind conducting this study comes from observation of Algerian students on the campus of the University of Jordan using the discourse marker 'saha' in their undertakings. Another motive behind conducting this study is that there has been no research found about the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker 'saha' used in Algerian spoken dialect. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by exploring its pragmatic functions and meanings.

The present study is based on discourse analysis and conversation analysis for representing the findings. It also draws on previous research's model of analysis of Farghal (1995), Kanakri and Al-Harahahah (2013a), Al-Harahahah and Kanakri (2013b) and Al-Rousan (2015), who investigated the pragmatic functions of insh'allh in Jordanian spoken Arabic, the pragmatics of /ʔa:di/ in Jordanian spoken Arabic, the pragmatics of /tayyib/ in Jordanian spoken Arabic, and the discourse marker /maʕnafsak/ in Saudi Arabic respectively, using discourse analysis, conversation analysis, translation theory and pragmatic analysis.

2. Methodology

This research is qualitative-interpretative in nature; it is based on the researcher's observation of Algerian students on the campus of the University of Jordan, as well as on the experience of the researcher as a

native speaker of Algerian Arabic. Accordingly, the discourse marker ‘saha’ is employed within rich linguistic context in Algerian spoken dialect. The identified meanings and functions are discussed and interpreted based on the contexts in which they occur.

3. Findings

Fourteen pragmatic functions of the discourse marker ‘saha’ are identified and discussed in the following section.

3.1. Expressing thanking

A: أعطيني لكتاب لي فدامك
aʕṭīnī ləktāb lī gdāmək
(ناولني الكتاب الذي أمامك)

B: هاك

hāk

(خذ)

A: صا

ṣhā

(شكرا)

In this example, two participants are engaged in an informal exchange noting that the relationship between the speaker and the hearer is intimate. This is shown through the way in which speaker A addressed speaker B, that is speaker A used a direct request ‘pass me the book in front of you’, in return speaker B replied with ‘take it’, then speaker A said ‘thank you’.

From the above brief exchange, it seems that speaker A and B violated the principle of politeness by spontaneously initiating the talk with a direct form of requesting ‘pass me the book’ rather than ‘would you please pass me the book’ and ‘take it’ instead of ‘here you are’.

However, in such type of conversation, participants tie a relation of intimacy and friendship, hence the use of a direct request like in the expressions above ‘pass me the book’ and ‘take it’ sound natural. Thus, in this context the use of ‘saha’ among participants with intimate relationship would serve the function of thanking just like يعطيك العافية /jæʕṭīk al-ʕāfjæ/ meaning ‘may God give you health’ used in Jordanian spoken Arabic in certain contexts to express thanking.

3.2. Expressing remembering

A: درت التمرين لي عطا هولنا لبروف؟
 dər̥t al-tv̥mr̥n lī ʕṭāhūlnā lprūf ?
 (هل قمت بتحضير الواجب الذي طلبه الدكتور؟)
 B: وينا تمرين؟
 wīnā tv̥mr̥n?
 (أي واجب؟)
 A: تاع رياضيات
 tāʕ rījādījāt
 (واجب مادة الرياضيات)
 B: آ صحا درتو.
 Ā ṣḥā dər̥tū
 (لقد قمت بتحضيره)

This is an exchange between two participants in which speaker A asked speaker B if he did the assignment that the teacher assigned to the class. Speaker B replied with an intonation indicating astonishment and surprise ‘which assignment’?! giving the intention to the hearer that he did not know about the assignment, eventually he did not do it. However, once speaker A made his statement clearer to the hearer by specifying which assignment he is talking about, speaker B used the discourse marker ‘ah, saha’ with a raising intonation on ‘ah’ and falling intonation on ‘saha’ to show that he recognized which assignment speaker A is actually talking about and remembered that he did the task.

The statement of question uttered by speaker A in the beginning of the conversation ‘have you done the assignment’ seems to violate the maxim of quantity since it does not provide enough information to the addressee. The maxim of quantity is about the amount of information provided in a conversation in order to make the participant’s contribution informative (Grice 1989). Hence, this violation could be seen the reason behind using the discourse marker ‘saha’ by speaker B in order to indicate that he recognized which assignment speaker A is talking about. Thus, speaker B who is the utterer of the discourse marker ‘saha’ gives the intention that the communicated meaning in speaker’s A mind is not the one that he captured. Eventually, elaboration of the meaning by making the statement uttered by speaker A clearer to the addressee was essential for getting the intended

meaning by speaker B.

3.3. Expressing blame

A: رحتي للعرس لبارح ؟
 rəḥtī ləlʕərs lbārəḥ?
 (هل ذهبتى البارحة للعرس؟)
 B: هيه رحت
 (نعم لقد ذهبت)
 hīh rəḥt

A: صحا رحتي وما فلتيليش. (لقد ذهبتى ولم تخبرينى، شكرا):
 ṣḥā rəḥtī wmā gultīlīš

In this conversation, speaker A initiated the talk with asking speaker B if she went to the wedding ceremony yesterday, speaker B replied that she did so. Regarding the last statement in the conversation uttered by speaker A, the form of this statement seems to express thanking. However, it expresses blame because speaker A attacked speaker's B face blaming her for not taking her to the wedding ceremony. The use of the discourse marker 'saha' with a raising intonation in this context serves the function of expressing blame.

3.4. Expressing threat and warning

A: واش بيك تجري كاش ما صرا ؟
 wāš bīk təʒrī kāš mā ṣrā?
 (لماذا تجري بهذه الطريقة أحدث شيء ما؟)
 B: سراق كسر كارو تاع طوموبيل وسرق راديو، صحا يا لوكان نحكمو
 sərāq kəsəsr kārū tāʕ tūmūbīl w srəq rādīū, ṣḥā jā lūkān nəḥkmū
 (لقد كسر السارق زجاج السيارة وسرق الراديو، اتمنى لو أمسكت به)

In this example, Speaker A inquired about the reason why speaker B is running in a hysterical manner. Speaker B replied with in an angry manner (raising his tone) saying that the thief has broken the windows of the car and has stolen the radio, adding that if he caught the thief, he would have beaten him. Hence, speaker B issued a direct warning towards the thief through the insertion of the discourse marker 'saha' in his sentence, accompanied with a raising intonation and a strong tone of emphasis on 'saha' expressing a serious warning towards the thief. Therefore, the importance of intonation

and tone of the participant issuing a speech act are of equal importance to the context in order to determine the pragmatic function and speech act in question.

3.5. Expressing suggestion

A: هيا نروحو للمعرض
hæjā nrūhū ləlmæʕrəð
(هيا بنا نذهب الى المعرض).

B: صحا و لوكان نروحو لسينما خير؟
ʃhā w lūkān nrūhū ləsīnīmā hīr?
(حسنا، ماذا لو ذهبنا الى السينما أليس ذلك أفضل؟)

In this example, two friends are engaged in a conversation. Speaker A said to speaker B let's go to the exhibition, in return, speaker B replied with a suggestion that it would be better if they go to cinema. The statement uttered by speaker B seems to have the function of requesting since it is in the form of question. However, this statement of a question expresses a suggestion for speaker A that, it would be better if they go to cinema instead of going to the exhibition. The use of the discourse marker 'saha' in this context serves the function of suggestion; this could be understood by having awareness and pragmatic competence in Algerian spoken dialect.

3.6. Introducing a new topic

A: صحا دوکا نهذرو على موضوع واحد أواخر
ʃhā dūkā nəhdrū ʕlæ məwḏūʕ wāḥd ūḥər
(الآن سوف نتطرق الى موضوع آخر)

This utterance illustrates the example of a teacher in a classroom where he shifts from one topic into another. The teacher used the discourse marker 'saha' in order to prepare his students that he is shifting to talking about a new topic. Therefore, the use of the discourse marker 'saha' in this context enables the hearers to infer that it indicates an introduction of a new topic in a conversation. In order to further clarify the pragmatic function of 'saha' as introducing a new topic in Algerian spoken dialect, reference to similar discourse markers in other Arabic dialects will be helpful for a better understanding. For example, in Jordanian spoken Arabic, speakers tend to use the discourse marker /tayyib/ or /tab/ to indicate introduction of a new topic in conversation.

3.7. Giving permission

A: صحا تقدر تروح دوكا
 ṣhā taqdər trūḥ dūkā
 (حسنًا يمكنك الذهاب الآن)

This sentence uttered by speaker A could be translated into English as ‘well, you may go now’. By inserting the discourse marker ‘saha’ to the declarative sentence uttered by speaker A, this implicates the meaning of permitting the addressee to leave. To put in differently, the intended meaning in speaker’s A mind was not directly expressed, instead it was implicitly implied. Therefore, the use of the discourse marker ‘saha’ in this context serves the function of giving permission.

3.8. Face damage

A: قداش في عمرك؟ تباني فربعينات, مم....صح ولا لالا؟
 gədaš fi ʕomrək? tbānī fəræbʕīnāt, mm ṣəḥ wəla lālā?
 (ما هو سنك؟...بيدو عليك انك بالعقد الرابع, أليس كذلك؟)
 B: (No answer)

A: مم... باينة فربعينات
 Mm... bājnæ fəræbʕīnāt
 (بيدو انك بالعقد الرابع)
 B: هيه صحا صحا
 hīh ṣhā ṣhā
 (نعم نعم)

In this conversation, speaker A initiated his talk by asking personal questions enquiring about speaker’s B age and at the same time made some guesses about her age. By doing so, this reflects a kind of imposition on speaker B. In return, speaker B kept silence and may be turned her face to the opposite direction, as a non-verbal strategy for ignoring speaker A, pretending that she did not hear his question as his personal questions embarrassed and frustrated her. Speaker A said that speaker B seems to be in her forties’, hence speaker B used ‘saha saha’ repeatedly accompanied by /heeh/ (meaning in English okay) with an intonation as a verbal strategy to ignore him one more time.

The use of the discourse marker ‘saha’ in this particular context with the focus on repeating it twice ‘saha, saha’ revealed that speaker B resorted deliberately to the strategy of attacking speaker A face as an

impoliteness strategy for the purpose of saving her face, hence freedom from imposition. Moreover, using ‘saha, saha’ in this context could be seen as a counter attack strategy used by speaker B in order to cause face damage to speaker A and embarrass him instead of speaker’s B face damage. Therefore, the discourse maker ‘saha’ in Algerian spoken dialect can be used as a result of the need for freedom of action and freedom from imposition in situations of invasion of one’s space by others, such as being asked personal and intimate questions. One may use the discourse marker ‘saha, saha’ which expresses the meaning of ‘stop it’ or ‘shut up’ as a strategy to flee from embarrassment and cause face damage for the speaker.

The use of the discourse maker ‘saha’ with intonation in this context serves the purpose of ignoring the speaker which is a negative impoliteness strategy used in order to flee from imposition, and eventually save one’s face.

3.9. Expressing agreement

A: نروحو للمكتبة دركا ؟
nrøḥū ləlməktbæ durkā?
(هلا ذهبنا الى المكتبة الآن ؟)

B: صحا
ṣḥā
(نعم)

In this conversation, speaker A made a suggestion for speaker B to go to the library. Speaker B had no objection for accepting speaker A’s suggestion, hence agreed to go to the library. Readers of this conversation may notice that the utterance produced by speaker A ‘shall we go to the library’ has the form of a question but, in this context, it functions as proposing a suggestion for speaker B to go to the library. In return speaker B replied with a brief, precise and concise answer saying ‘saha’ meaning ‘yes’ to show his agreement with speaker A’s proposition.

The use of the discourse maker ‘saha’ in this context is for the purpose of expressing the interlocutor’s agreement to the statement that has been said earlier by the speaker.

Speaker A used a statement of a question ‘shall we go to the library’ rather than a declarative one ‘Let’s go to the library’ in order to make a suggestion and speaker B captured the same intended meaning as speaker A, which is making a suggestion rather than asking a question. Participants in

this conversation are cooperative in the sense that they are maximally efficient in interaction with each other. This is seen in speaker A statement of the question through which he intended to make a suggestion, and in speaker B understanding and interpretation of the intended meaning of speaker A.

3.10. Expressing refusal or objection

A: سلفلي طوموبيل تاعك ليوم ونجيبها لك لعشية
 svləflī tūmūbīl tāʕək lǧūm w nǧībhālək ləʕšījæ
 (أعزني سيارتك و سأقوم بأرجاعها اليك هذا المساء)
 B: صحا وادا ما قدرتش ترجعها في لوقت؟
 ʃhā w idā mā qdvrtəʃ trəjæʕhā fəl wvqt?
 (وماذا لو لم تستطع ارجاعها في الوقت المحدد؟)

In this conversation, speaker A asked speaker B to lend him his car promising that he will return it to him on time. In return, speaker B replied by saying ‘well, how about if you do not return it in the afternoon?’. The use of the discourse marker ‘saha’ in this context serves as a response for speaker A indicating a refusal. Readers of this conversation may notice that the response uttered by speaker B has the form of a question, it seems that speaker B replied to a question by another question. However, the statement uttered by speaker B indicates an objection to the previous statement uttered by speaker A. Eventually, the use of the discourse marker ‘saha’ with a raising intonation in this context serves the function of expressing an objection to what has been said earlier in a conversation.

3.11. Open marker for greeting (hi/hello)

صحا, واش راک؟ A
 ʃhā, wāʃ rāk?
 (مرحبا, كيف الحال؟)

This is an utterance used in order to illustrate the function of ‘saha’ as an open marker for greeting. The discourse marker ‘saha’ in Algerian spoken dialect can be used to serve the function of greeting others in contexts where a speaker salutes his/ her friend by just saying ‘saha’ meaning hi/ hello in a quick and short interaction. Or accompanied with a sentence like ‘how are you’ and initiating a conversation in long interactions. In order to elaborate more the function of ‘saha’ in Algerian spoken dialect, reference to similar discourse markers in other Arabic

dialects is essential for better understanding. For example, in Jordanian spoken Arabic, the discourse marker يعطيك العافية /jæʕtɪk al-ʕāfjæ/ (literally means ‘may God gives you health’) is used in a number of different contexts and serves many functions, one of them is as an open greeting marker such as in ‘يعطيك العافية أحمد, كيفك ليوم؟’ /jæʕtɪk al-ʕāfjæ aḥmd, kɪfk l-jūm? /

3.12. Close marker for greeting (goodbye)

Similar to the previous elaboration on the discourse marker ‘saha’ as an open marker for greeting, ‘saha’ may also serve as a close marker for greeting. It may occur in two types of conversation in Algerian spoken dialect:

A/ face to face

A: أيا صحا, نتلاقاو مبعدا
ajā šhā, nətlāqāw mbæʕdā
(إلى اللقاء, نلتقي فيما بعد)

This is an utterance which illustrates the function of the discourse marker ‘saha’ as a close marker for greeting in Algerian spoken Arabic. In this type of conversation, a friend may mark his/her end of a conversation by saying ‘saha’ meaning ‘so bye for now’. The use of the discourse marker ‘saha’ accompanied by ‘Ayya’ in this context is for the purpose of saying ‘goodbye’ after having finished the talk. Reference to other discourse markers in other languages like Standard Arabic and French languages may help to better understand the pragmatic function of the discourse marker ‘saha’ as a close marker for greeting in Algerian spoken dialect. For example, in standard Arabic, greeting formulas like السلام عليكم /al-slām ʕælæjkum/ or سلام /salām/ can be used in both contexts of greetings; a salute formula used as an open marker for greeting (hi/hello) and/or as a salute formula employed as close marker for greeting (goodbye). Similarly, the form of greeting salut /salũ/ in the French language can be used to mean hi/ hello as it can be used to mean goodbye depending on the context.

B/On the telephone

A: صحا صحا
šhā, šhā
(مع السلامة)

This short utterance illustrates the example of using the discourse marker ‘saha’ in Algerian spoken dialect as a marker to indicate end of a

phone call.

The use of the discourse marker 'saha' in the context of calling somebody via the telephone is commonly used among Algerians. They use it in telephone interactions to indicate the end of the conversation and call. Therefore, the use of the discourse maker 'saha' among interlocutors in the context of an exchange throughout the phone is seen as a polite and a softening mitigator used to express politeness since it would be rude and impolite to directly finish the call without any hint.

3.13. Congratulation formula

A: صحا ليك طوموبيل جديدة .
 ṣhā līk ṭūmūbīl zdīdāe
 (هنينا لك السيارة الجديدة)

This utterance illustrates the function of the discourse marker 'saha' as a formula which expresses congratulation. The use of the discourse marker 'saha' in this context is seen as polite formula used to congratulate the interlocutor for buying a new car. The speaker used 'saha' appropriately; as a form of congratulation in a relevant situation and being neither over congratulating nor impolite (not congratulating) as the event necessitates congratulating the interlocutor.

3.14. Sarcasm

A: متأكد بلي نجي لول في برومو
 mətʔkəd blī nʒī lūwəl fəl prūmū
 (أنا متأكد بأنني سأكون المتفوق في القسم)
 B: هه صحا صحا
 həh ṣhā ṣhā
 (أكيد أكيد)

In this exchange, speaker A claimed that 'he will be the first in his class', in return speaker B replied with 'hah, okay, okay'. The use of the discourse maker 'saha' in this context indicates a sarcastic response meaning that 'you will not be the first in your class'. Speaker B intentionally repeated 'saha' twice (saha, saha) accompanied with the other discourse marker 'hah' with a sarcastic intonation in order to express sarcasm and cause face damage of the interlocutor. Sarcasm is about the speaker being indirect. In some cases, interlocutors may get the intended meaning of the speaker, as in some other cases they may not. In other

words, in some situations, the intention of the speaker is sarcastic but the hearer does not understand it as sarcasm.

In this context, the use of the discourse marker 'saha' as a sarcastic response is regarded as a negative impoliteness strategy because it causes face damage of the addressee.

4. Discussion and concluding remarks

This study discusses the pragmatic functions of the discourse marker 'saha' used in Algerian spoken dialect. This discourse maker has drifted extensively from its semantic import (health) by acquiring a wide spectrum of illocutions, hence becoming a multi-purpose expression in every day undertakings in Algerian spoken dialect. The discourse marker 'saha' is frequently pledged to segments of Algerian Arabic discourse in order to mortgage the speech act in question such as expressing refusal, congratulation, sarcasm and others. Thus, the results of this study are in harmony with the results of Farghal (1995), Kanakri and Al-Harahahah (2013a), Al-Harahahah and Knakri (2013b) and Al-Rousan (2015), who identified different meanings and functions of the discourse markers 'insh'allah' '/ʔa:di/', /tayyib/ and /maʕnafsak/, respectively.

The present study is also in line with the previously mentioned studies in that context as well as intonation are important factors for identifying the different usages of discourse markers. Thus, the utilization of the discourse marker 'saha' should be sought within the speech event rather than the isolated speech formula. As for intonation, it plays a major role in identifying the different usages and meanings expressed by this marker depending on different tones of intonation.

However, this study is different from the previously mentioned studies in that, it further shows that pragmatic competence is crucial for undersatnding the different functions of discourse markers. Therefore, in order to understand the different usages and meanings of 'saha', interlocutors should have awareness and pragmatic competence in Algerian spoken dialect.

One of the problems that the researcher faced in this research was about the translatability of the discourse marker 'saha' within its different meanings into Standard Arabic. This was not an easy task to accomplish because one should have an adequate and equal pragmatic competence in both languages; Algerian spoken dialect and Standard Arabic. Moreover, translation of socio-communicative and cultural formulae like 'saha' would lead to losing the aesthetic side and beauty value. This is because of the

difficulty of developing pragmatic competence in the target language. Therefore, in order to overcome this gap, one should develop an adequate pragmatic competence in the target language by raising awareness and exposure to the pragmatics and culture of that language.

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