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## **DIALECT USE IN ARABIC ALGERIAN LITERATURE, THE CASE OF RIH EL DJANOUB BY ABD EL HAMID BENHADOUGA**

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### **Abstract**

*The present research paper is an attempt to analyse the role of dialect use in literature, as dialect use in literature has long been rejected by various authors and speakers all over the world; considering it as a symbol of under development. Fortunately literary dialect has struggled to maintain its place since it captured the interest of dialectology, sociolinguistics and literature. Thus, it is meant to transfer information about inner and outside world. Rih El Djanoub is not chosen randomly but on purpose because the novel is considered as a speech community and it is also affected by social variables (age, gender, social context and cultural background). Based on a set of literary (the novel of Rih El Djanoub as a field of work), linguistic (phonological and morphological levels) and sociolinguistic (social variables) approaches - so, these approaches are used to analyse the discourse analysis in the novel. The available cultural and linguistic data in the novel have been analysed and interpreted in order to come up with the following findings: what characterizes Benhadouga's novel and supplies it with distinguished glamour is the presence of language diversity so, despite the standard form is the dominant variety in the novel but, when the author is exposed to cultural elements such as: proverbs, popular songs, games and folk beliefs, he used dialect in order to be faithful to the context by retaining the original*

*words of characters in dialogue. This work aims to raise dialect awareness among readers and to capture the post independent Algerian era. Moreover, to pave the roads for other research works about literary dialect.*

### **Keywords**

Literary Dialect, Folklore, Cultural Background, Artful Technique

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## **1. Introduction**

Dialect was considered as a local non-prestigious variety of language that is dismissed from a concrete research. Dialect study has long been limited to dialectology. Yet, it has attracted the interest of different disciplines as: anthropology, folklore, linguistics, phonology, sociology, psychology, history, sociolinguistics, education and literature.

The present research paper studies the role of dialect in literature and, this latter does not mean folk literature (totally written in dialect) but, the insertion of dialect with the standard language. Therefore, the author here is put in a big ambiguity of whether being faithful to the rhetoric language by making an uneducated character speaks a high variety or he keeps the original words of characters. In this light, the problem issue of this research paper could be structured in the form of the following questions:

- What does prompt the authors to use dialect while writing in the standard form of language?
- Is the value of the literature that includes dialect use less prestigious or more realistic than exclusive use of standard Arabic?

To find reliable replies to the above questions, these hypotheses spring as follows:

- Dialect use in novels may serve the author to differentiate between characters by focusing on their social and cultural background.
- May be there are some artistic and technical reasons that drive the author to imply dialect in writing.

*Rih El Djanoub* is chosen as sample of study since still, the analysis of Algerian dialect in the novel has benefits to reflect our socio-cultural background and demonstrate the usefulness of dialect in the standard Arabic text in duplicating the model of a specific society that has lifted a period of time which Algerian history has recorded.

The data needed in this work to answer our questions and to verify our hypotheses will be collected by means of the following approaches: literary approach, sociolinguistic approach and linguistic approach.

## **1.1 Dialect in Literature**

For the first while, it seems a bloody adventure to link dialect, as local non-prestigious variety of language, to an artistic discipline (literature) but, if you think again about this dichotomy you will find that literature is famous to hold different varieties and styles, since it is a reproduction of real life with all its bad, good high and low aspects. In this spirit Riley (1982) states:

**Since literature must embrace naturally existing materials-Physical, mental, and spiritual-we have no occasion to urge its acceptance of so called dialect, for dialect IS in literature and HAS been there since the beginning of all written thought and utterance.**

In this vein, the literary writer must adapt what is said in fiction with should be said in reality especially, if it happens to the writer to portray some places like the streets, inns and some public places. In this case, the best means to depict and transmit the real picture of such low and complicated life is dialect. Azevedo Milton (2002) declares: **“For centuries authors have sought to evoke morality through a variety of techniques, generally known as literary dialect, aiming at capturing salient features of speech”** (p.05).

In Riley’s point of view (ibid), in order to be realistic a good writer needs to modify imagination in a way that suits reality by presenting his fictional characters in a vivid image via giving cues about their age, gender and background.

**The real master not only knows each varying light and shade of dialect expression, but he must as minutely know the inner character of people whose native tongue it is, else his product is simply a pretense, a willful forgery, a rank abomination.**

### **1.2 Literary Dialect and Social Variables**

Tackling the domain of literature we find that the above mentioned factors have an impact on determining the characters’ choice of particular variety. When a writer decides to use literary dialect he takes of course the social variables into account in order to show differentiation between characters (old vs. young/Rich vs. poor).

#### **1.2.1 Age**

Variation in speech behavior is also reflected in age. If we notice that everywhere the speech of an older man is distinct from that of the younger one. Trudgill (2002:06) asserts that age grading is:

**A phenomenon in which speakers in a community gradually alter their speech habits as they get older, and where this change is repeated in every generation [...] Age grading is something that has to be checked for in apparent time studies of linguistic change to ensure that conclusions are not being drawn from differences between generations.**

### 1.2.2 Gender

Wardaugh (2006) points out that gender is a key component identity hence, do men and women speak differently? In most societies the speech of a man differs in certain respects from a woman's speech. Linda Thomas (2004) agrees that **“women's talk is plentiful rather pointless”**. (p. 86).

### 1.2.3 Social Context

The social environment of the speaker is very important in determining his social class (lower versus higher class). Corder (1973:25) maintains that:

**We communicate with people only because they share with us a set of agreed ways of behaving. Language in this sense is the possession of social group, an indispensable set of rules which permits its members to relate to each other, to interact with each other, to cooperate with each other, it is a social institution.**

### 1.2.4 Cultural Background

The cultural background gives cues about the speakers' level of education interests, attitudes and so on for instance an educated speaker uses more formal style than the illiterate speaker. Wellek and Warren (1978) point out: **“Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language... literature occurs only in a social context, as part of a culture, in milieu”**. (p. 105).

## 1.3 Criticism about Dialect Use in Literature

Though many authors and speakers welcome the use of dialect in literature, others regret and refuse this use for many reasons, as Luigi Bonaffini (1997:297):

**Any critical discussion of words written in dialect is destined to run up against the heavy legacy or prejudices and misunderstanding that has historically weighed upon literature in dialect, often considered as ‘minor’, subaltern, marginal language even coarse and plebeian.**

### 1.3.1 Unintelligibility

Many novelists avoid the use of dialect in their work because of its complex orthography, the use of different pronunciations and several meanings which is hard for non-native or non-regional readers to understand in this case, they misunderstand the writer. As the use of the cockney dialect in Dickens' Oliver Twist which cannot be understood unless by cockneys.

### 1.4.2 Accuracy

Many critics and novelists suspect about the exactness of dialect use in literature and the way it should be written.

### 1.4.3 Modernization

The use of dialect in literature is seen as a nuance rather than enjoyment as Trudgill (2000) asserts that dialect use in literature is “**impeding communication, delaying modernization, damaging education and slowing down nation \_building**” It means that the scientific study of dialect is hard though many scholars are still searching tools to develop it and make it a clear cut matter. (p.29)

## 1.5 Rih EL Djanoub Summaries

Rih El Djanoub was a post- independence novel. It is widely acknowledged as the first major Arabic novel; it is characterized by its irregular story, which is takes place in one of the Algerian villages, the use of symbolism which gives the story its particular flavour.

Benhadouga in Rih El Djanoub (1970) stresses on two main things: the portrait of woman and feudalism; the novel is of social concern since; it reflects the true conditions of the Algerians’ life in the transition period from colonial to post colonial.

The novel is translated to ten languages but, unfortunately not to English. Benhadouga resumes the villagers’ life by showing their customs, traditions and beliefs which permit the reader to have a perfect image of their simple life. The reader then, may ask himself why Benhadouga entitled his novel Rih El Djanoub, (or Elqabli as it is named by villagers) this latter plays an important role in the whole story; it is an antagonist character for villagers it is the major reason of poverty ( evil omen).

## 1.6 Popular Culture in the Novel

The reader of Rih El Djanoub observes that it is very rich of cultural elements which are parts of the Algerian culture as:

**Table 1:** *The elements of popular culture in the Novel of Rih El Djanoub*

<b>The Elements of Popular Culture in the Novel</b>	<b>Examples in Arabic</b>	<b>The Meaning in English</b>
<b>Proverbs</b>	إذا شبع الكرش تقول للراس غني لي	When the person is satiety he is expected to do anything and he is ready made to enjoy himself
<b>Popular Songs</b>	ماذا تدي يا تراب من الزينين	It means that despite death takes our beloveds it

	يا دراق وجوه الأحباب خسارة	is obligatory and no one can change this fact.
<b>Popular Games</b>	تبدلت لغة اللعب ...؟!...كانت لغتنا غير هذه .كنا نسمي "القراط" و "القراط" و "السوطة" "السوطة" أما الآن .جدت لغة أخرى .	The language game has been changed "dice language"
<b>The Belief in sorcery</b>	أما الحجاب فتضعه في جلد أحمر وتعلقه	Concerning the amulet she ought to put it in red cloth and hung it
<b>The belief in destiny</b>	ربي قدر هذا ثم حظي العاثر	due to their disability people tend sometimes to relate every detail of their life to El Maktub/destiny
<b>Folk medicine</b>	إن الخباز يزيل الانتفاخ و يظهر الجرح بدون أن يحدث أي التهاب	Mallow is a good substance; it lightens the inflation and cleans the wound without causing any inflammation.
<b>Legend and Myth</b>	ظاهرة تحب الظهارة	Coffee is pure and it needs purity

## 1.7 The Analysis of Dialectal Features

Benhadouga tries to modify and simplify some standard words to be close to the dialect in an artistic way since dialect is an altering writing system of the standard.

### 1.7.1 The phonological level

The drop of the glottal stop appears in the novel as shown in these examples:

**Table 2: The Drop of the Glottal stop**

Structure in Arabic	Dialect Expressions with the glottal stop dropped	Standard Arabic Epressions	The Meaning in English
لاباس ناكلوا في القوت	/la:ba:s n:klu: fB Blqu:t /	/La:baʕs naʕkulu fi: Blqu:t/	Eat
فيرانا	/fi:ra:nan/	/fiʕra:n /	Mice

As it is shown the glottal stop is dropped for the sake of rapidity and facilitating the speech which is a feature of dialect.

### 1.7.2 Negation

It is observed that /la: / لا which is a negative tool used in Standard Arabic; in the dialect it is substituted by /ma:/ ما as in the word ما يدري<sup>1</sup> in the following proverb:

ma: jadri bB Blmazwad      i:r Blli Bn↓rab bih<sup>2</sup>

### 1.7.3 Other Characteristics

Many non-standard forms appear in the characters' speech; some words have been annexed to some syllables while others have been either totally or partially changed as it is shown in the following examples:

**Table 3:** Phonological Features of Non-Standard Utterances

The form of the feature	Standard Utterances	Non-Standard Utterances	Arabic
Replaced /J/	/BllaJi:/	/Blli/	الذي/التي
Annexation of / n/	/amu:tu/	/nmu:t/	أموت/نموت
Phonemic change	/Bnnisa: /	Bnsa:/	النساء/النسا
Phonemic change	/taddi:/	/ta uJu/	تأخذ/تدي

### 1.8 Syntactical Level

The author uses several utterances which are grammatically not followed the standard Arabic sentence structure.

#### 1.8.1 Verbal

Benhadouga uses various expressions that are near to the dialectal form and they range between verbal and nominal sentences. So, the verbal ones follow the standard Arabic structure 'verb Subject Object' as shown in the following example.

باع رأسه -----/ba: a ra sahu/-----he sold his head

The above sentences though they are simple sentences but, they respect the structure of the standard form SVO.

<sup>1</sup> Do not know

<sup>2</sup> No one can feel the agony /pain of the person except himself

### 1.8.2-Nominal Sentences in the Novel

Nominal sentences are also present in the novel which are unlike the standard Arabic novel i.e. ‘subject verb object’ instead of ‘verb subject object’ so, in the dialect whether the verb precedes the subject or vice versa the meaning does not affected then, the ‘SOV’ form is more common in the spoken form. As in the following example:

**Table 1.4:** Verbal and Nominal sentences in the Novel

Subject Verb Object Word Order as it is in the Novel	Verb Subject Object Order after Translation	The meaning in English
ri↓a:jatahakkam/ <sup>3</sup>	/jatahakamuri↓a: <sup>4</sup> /	Rida jokes

### 1.8.3 Interrogative Sentences in the Novel

In the novel some sentences are used without the interrogative tool (an auxiliary or wh question) as it is the case of dialectal forms.

تبدل العمل؟---/tabddal Bl⊗amal ?/---/atubadilu Bl⊗amal ?/---Are you going to change the work ?

As it is observed, whether the sentences contain an interrogative tool or not the meaning does not change since, the speaker does not care of using any interrogative tool; he just uses the right tone aiming at sending the message correctly.

### 1.8.4 Arabized Terms

The novel contains many words which are arabized and integrated in the dialect as it appears in the examples:

البون ----/Blbu:n/---bon-----the receipt

## 1.9 Data Interpretation

Dialect data collected in the novel interpret that the use of dialect in Rih El Djanoub intensively put in the different cultural aspects constitute the Algerian folklore the novelist Benhadouga endeavors to shape its broadest meanings to the reader.

The dialect is mirror that referred to the educational background of an illiterate character as /rabe⇔/,/ra⇔ma/ and /qwider/.

After the linguistic analysis of the data, it appears that the different dialectal variables included in the novel reflect distinctively the identities of characters using the dialect.

<sup>3</sup> رضا يتهمكم

<sup>4</sup> يتهمكم رضا

### 1.9.1 Dialect vs. Standard

The difference between standard and the dialect in Rih El Djanoub lies in:

- The non-use of vowelling in the dialect.
- The exchange of /hamzat Blmu↓ara⊗a/<sup>5</sup> with /nu:n/<sup>6</sup> in the Algerian Arabic dialect, for example in the dialect /naqra/ instead of /naqra<sup>7</sup>/.
- The role and the identity of the subject appear within the verb itself, we infer that it is the feminine form with the /t/ added to the verb as /tam<sup>8</sup>i: /<sup>8</sup>/t/ refers to her هي---she goes.

### 1.9.2 Dialect and speech Community

Holmes and Mayerkoff (1999:178-9) refer to it as “membership in a speech unity depends on behavioral people that one possesses it”

#### 1.9.2.1 The Novel’s speech community

The novel is of unknown place and since the writer is an Eastern, the novel is supposed to take place in the East of Algeria.

#### 1.9.2.2 The Café Player Speech Community

The café players share a common language sometimes understood only by them as the words /su:ta, qira:t, arba⊗a, majsa, ulu<sup>9</sup>/ (speech numbers)

#### 1.9.2.3 Slang

In the novel, slang forms are used for the sake of insulting between characters like/ Blkalba/ الكلبة/bitch /Bl<sup>9</sup>abijja/ stupid./ الغبية/

## 2. Conclusion

Language embodies our thoughts and represents our social behaviour this is why it is a very fundamental pillar in any literary work since it is meant to transfer information about the characters’ inner and outside feelings. What characterizes Benhadouga’s novel Rih El Djanoub and supplies it with glamour and beauty is its diversity so, despite the standard form is the dominant variety in the novel but, when the author is exposed to folkloric elements he used dialect in order to be faithful to the context as well as to set up speech boundaries between characters.

The present research paper has attempted to offer a detailed analysis and description of dialect use in literature; some findings are drawn from the research namely:

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<sup>5</sup> نون المضارعة

<sup>6</sup> نون

<sup>7</sup> تقرأ/تقرأ

<sup>8</sup> تمشي

<sup>9</sup> سوطه, قراط, أربعة, ميسة, ثلاث (Greek numbers)

- The beauty and distinctiveness of literature lie in language diversity which the literary dialect offers it since, the ordinary speech of characters has a strong effect on the readers' emotions as, and it captures the real language that the standard form lacks to convey.
- The use of dialect in literature does not lessen its value but, rather enforces its realistic picture with an aim to give vivid images about characters.

All in all, few studies are conducted on this topic, still the field of dialect use in literature a fruitful sphere that should be investigated. In this vein, one may wonder about the future of the Algerian literature that includes dialect use. This work hopes to open gates towards exploring Arabic dialect insertion in literary works. In this research, we faced many issues as insufficient references or previous works concerning dialect use in Arabic literature.

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