THE SYNTAX AND LEXICAL COHESION IN THE MEDIA STATEMENTS OF
HEZBOLLAH’S MILITARY ARM

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ABSTRACT
Issuing media statements, particularly in sensitive situations, such as the military contexts, stipulates not only opting certain words, but also forming syntactic structures align with the aim of the producer. In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, militant organisations, such as Hezbollah’s military arm, "The Islamic Resistance", issue media statements to the public include details about their military activities. However, these statements are written carefully, because it is assumed that the readers are not limited to the followers and the supporters. To understand the syntax of the issued media statements by militant organisations in the Middle East, this paper sheds the light on the syntactic structures of statements issued by the media unit of Hezbollah's military arm. In utilising linguistics as an approach, this paper provides an insight about the grammatical structure of the statements in Arabic and their English translation. Thus, the paper shows an example of the corpus linguistics of a news lead extracted from a statement in Arabic and its English translation to sketch the shifts in the sentence. In showing the significance of the linguistic choices for the producer, the paper illuminates on the lexical cohesion in the statements, because they play a role in the representation of ‘the self’ and ‘the other.’ The result of the paper, which considers archival data in the analysis, shows how the syntactic structure plays a role in framing. In this regard, this paper sheds the focus light on the significance of studying syntax and lexical cohesion to understand the media discourse of militant organisations in the Middle East.

Field of Research: Modern Linguistics, Translation, Lexical Cohesion, Syntax

1. Introduction
Militant organisations in the Middle East have benefitted from the new communication technologies to establish their own media discourse. They utilised online outlets to transmit their messages, which include statements about their activities. The recent Israeli war on Gaza Strip has shown how militant organisations, such as Hamas, issued media statements about their activities as part of their military media discourse. However, the history of issuing media statements by a militant organisation in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict goes back to Hezbollah’s military arm, "The Islamic Resistance", in Lebanon which established what so-called "The Military Media Unit" in the mid-1980s. This paper sheds light on the syntax and lexical cohesion in a sample of issued statements by the media unit of Hezbollah’s military arm. In this regard, it shows how translation can affect the syntactic structure of the statements.
2. Literature Review

Hezbollah (transliterated also into Hizballah and Hizbullah) appeared in the Lebanese theatre in 1982 as a jihadi organisation has a military wing "The Islamic Resistance" to liberate the occupied territories in southern part of the country from the Israeli occupation (Hamzeh, 2004). Due to the significance of media in the war, "The Islamic Resistance" has established a media unit called "The Military Media Unit" (may be called also "War Information Unit") in 1984 to document the military operations against the Israeli army in the context of propaganda (Harb, 2011; Osipova, 2011). This unit issues media statements about the "The Islamic Resistance's" attacks against Israel and its army (ibid).

Many studies have focused on the military operations' films produced by this unit (El Houri, 2012; Harb, 2011). However, it seems there is a dearth in studies about the syntax and the lexical cohesion in the issued statements by this unit.

In this regard, this paper aims to bridge the gap in the existing studies through shedding light on these two linguistic features in the statements, because they play a role in representation of 'the self' and 'the other.'

3. Methodology

In studying media discourse under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis discipline, linguistics is considered a method in the analysis (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, the researcher can study a number of linguistic features in the analysed texts, such as syntax and lexical cohesion (Fairclough, 2014). In every language, the deep structure of the sentence holds semantic features appear on its surface (Chomsky, 1965). Hence, syntax reveals the structure and the coherence in the sentence (Matheson, 2005). However, the lexical choices in the text identify its linguistic and semantic features (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Thus, the lexical cohesion in any text is translated by the systematic choices of words to assert certain meanings. These choices are various, but not limited to synonymy, hyponymy and repetition (ibid).

Studying syntax and lexical cohesion can show how the linguistic choices and the semantic relations in texts paly a role of representation. However, the tool of representation is generally the frame (Watson, 2007). In this vein, understanding syntax and lexical cohesion in "The Islamic Resistance's" media statements can provide an insight on how some guerrillas pay further attention on the linguistic choices in the conflict, because the war is not only military, but it is also culturally.

4. Data Collection

The collected archival data in this study have a military context. However, this study has reviewed the issued statements by "The Military Media Unit" of “The Islamic Resistance” between October 2000 and August 2007 to choose seven criterion samples. The chosen samples reflect, as it will be shown, the majority of the linguistic features in the statements, particularly the syntactic structures. The data are obtained from Al-Ahed newspaper archives and the official website of "The Islamic Resistance" (www.moqawama.org).

5. General Structure of the Statements

The written statements issued by “The Islamic Resistance” hold nearly the same structure. Generally, every statement contains a general lead, which is a Quranic verse aligns with the content, then the body, which contains a paragraph or paragraphs holding the core news.

In addition, as it will be shown, every statement includes time, place and details about the military activity.
5.1 Syntax

"The Islamic Resistance’s" statements are written in Arabic. Every statement includes a news lead contains the core news values, or a coherent summary of the content. In observing further the syntax of the news leads, it can be concluded there are three types of Arabic verbal sentences:

Sentences start by a verb, such as:

أطلقت المقاومة الإسلامية عند الساعة 15:15 دفعتين من الصواريخ على مدينتي صفد وحيفا.

"The Islamic Resistance” launched at 15:15 two batches of missiles on the two cities Safed and Haifa"

Source: The Islamic Resistance, 24 July 2006

Sentences start by a prepositional clause, such as:

عند العاشرة قبل الظهر وجه أبطال المقاومة الإسلامية دفعة من الصواريخ باقتحام مستعمرات معلوّت وكفرفراديم والشويرة.

"At 10 am, “The Islamic Resistance’s” heroes launched a batch of missiles towards Ma’alot, Kfar Vradim and Ech Choumara colonies.”

Source: The Islamic Resistance, 27 July 2006

Sentences start by a verbal clause, such as:

ردًا على الاعتداءات المستمرة من قبل العدو الصهيوني هاجمت المقاومة الإسلامية عند الساعة 05:18 دقيقة من فجر هذا اليوم 13-7-2006 موقع قيادة العمليات الجوية في جبل ميرون بصواريخ عدة من الصواريخ...

"Replying to the continuous assaults by the Zionist enemy, at 5:18 early this morning, 13 July 2006, “The Islamic Resistance” attacked the aerial operations leadership barracks in Meron’s mountain with several barrages of missiles..."

Source: The Islamic Resistance, 13 July 2006

The following Arabic syntactic structure of a sentence extracted from a statement of “The Islamic Resistance” provides an example of all statements start by a verb.
The Arabic syntactic structure of the sentence, as shown in Figure 1, has pointed out that the verb “launched” is the axis of the subject and the complement. Hence, the action (verb: launched) is the dominant in the sentence. However, the translation from Arabic into English will reframe the focus of the sentence and consequently its syntactic structure (Darwish, 2009).

**Figure 1. The Arabic Syntactic Structure of A Leading Sentence From A Statement**

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The English syntactic structure of the sentence, as shown in Figure 2, has pointed out that the subject “The Islamic Resistance” is the axis of the verb and the complement. As result, the actor (Subject: “The Islamic Resistance”) is the dominant in the sentence. Likewise, the verb is the axis of the Arabic statements start by a prepositional clause. However, the actor is not “The Islamic Resistance” in the verbal clause. In this clause, “the Zionist enemy” is the actor. Such shift in actor, based on functional grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014), has an impact on the text receiver, because it emphasises on the theme that “The Islamic Resistance” replies to Israeli army assaults.

5.2 Lexical Cohesion

As shown previously, the written statements of “The Islamic Resistance” are generally short and hold news value. Nevertheless, the sample of chosen statements for this research provides examples of the choices of lexemes, because these texts have the same author and context. The following two excerpts show the chain of lexemes, which provides the media statements of “The Islamic Resistance” lexical cohesion.
First excerpt:

“To Confirm ‘The Islamic Resistance’s’ decision to liberate the still occupied Lebanese territories, to perpetuate facing the enemy for massacring our kin and people in occupied Palestine and who is continuing its daily assaults on Lebanon violating its lands, water and airspace, [thereupon] at 3:20 am the Al-Aqsa Intifada Martyrs’ Group in “The Islamic Resistance” shot a Zionist convoy in the occupied Shebaa Farms...”

Source: The Islamic Resistance, 16 November 2000

Second excerpt:

“Replying to the persistence of the Zionist enemy to assault Lebanese territories, “The Islamic Resistance” attacked at 2:45 pm Ein Zeitim base close to Safed colony with dozens of rockets...”

Source: The Islamic Resistance, 19 July 2006

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Figure 3. A Sample Of Lexical Choices By “The Islamic Resistance”
In these two statements, the lexical cohesion, as shown in Figure 3, provides an example of how “The Islamic Resistance” constructs a binary opposition of lexemes between itself and Israel (The Islamic Resistance vs. Israel). It names itself “The Islamic Resistance” and its groups belong to its body. However, it names Israel as an “enemy” or “Zionist Enemy” who occupies Shebaa Farms and Palestine and has colonies. In addition to these reframes, “The Islamic Resistance” signifies its actions and goals by these words: replying; facing; shot; attacked; and liberate. Also, it signifies the Israeli actions by these words: assaults; massacring; violating and occupied. These lexical choices reveal that “The Islamic Resistance” considers the conflict with Israel to be not only military, but also cultural and ideological. As the result of lexical choices, the following segments, or phrases can be extracted from Figure 3:


These extracted sixteen phrases show that “The Islamic Resistance” sets a chain of chosen lexemes in its statements to provide a constructed meaning and textual cohesion. The collocation in the phrases shows the relation between the used words and includes description of the actors, their actions and goals. In the same manner, some statements include further details can aid to interpret other terms or phrases in other statements. For example, the term Safed colony, which found in a previous statement without providing more details about its location, can be found in another statement with the required details “...Safed colony, north occupied Palestine” (Source: The Islamic Resistance, 17 July 2006).

In addition to collocation another lexical cohesion element, elaboration, can be observed in the long statements. The following statement provides an example on elaboration and enumeration.

“A Zionist force composed of two tanks re-advanced towards the hit vehicles that were attacked by “The Islamic Resistance’s” mujahedeen, at a location between Misgav Am and Adaisseh town, in an attempt to retrieve them from the battlefield [end of sentence one]. At 10:40 am, the mujahedeen attacked this force with the appropriate weapons and anti-shield weapons and they were able to hit two tanks, destroying one, which erupted in flames, killing and wounding its crew [end of sentence two].”

Source: The Islamic Resistance, 06 August 2006

The first sentence in the statement introduces the news story including enumeration about the event. Also, the second sentence includes enumeration as well about what happened later to the force in more details. In observing the statement further, there are cohesion elements. They are as followings:

Repetition: Force; mujahedeen, tanks; weapons
Reference: its
Substitution: them
Ellipsis: In the phrase “destroying one” the word ‘tank’ was omitted.
Meronymy: the tank is a meronymy of vehicle.
6. Results and Conclusion

The chosen lexemes and the syntactic structure of the issued media statements of "The Islamic Resistance" reflect that the conflict with Israel has a cultural feature. In this regard, Suleiman (2004) argues that, "one of the most important aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the manipulation of terminology to create a linguistic map that conditions people's perceptions of the facts on the ground" (p. 138). Thus, the process of naming in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict "functions as locating in history, as temporalizing, and ultimately as asserting power as colonial domination or as anti-colonial resistance" (Massad, 2006, p. 14).

In their stating this notion under the clashes between Islam and the West, Khoury and Da'na (2009) consider Hezbollah's military arm success in its war against Israel a "failure of cultural imperialism [which] signifies a serious challenge to Western hegemony, which depended on the hegemony of its world views, the inherent assumption of the superiority of Western cultural forms, and the uncritical acceptance of its images of the self and the other" (p. 146).

The utilisation of this label in the issued media statements of "The Islamic Resistance" to frame the actions of 'the self' implies that this military arm has a nuance understanding of the importance of choosing self-defensive words in addressing the public, particularly the audiences in the Western countries, to change their perception about the nature of the conflict and entice a sort of legitimacy. In his comments on the description of Israeli military actions in some Western press, Suleiman (2004) points out that the "military actions by the Israelis are always a 'response' to something, even when they strike first. If they haven't actually been attacked, it's a 'response' to a security threat. 'Response' is a very useful word. It provides a ready-made reason for the Israelis' actions and neatly brushes off demands for further explanation. It says: 'Don't ask why we did it, ask the other side'" (p. 138).

Similarly to Israel and its sympathisers or allies, the utilisation of this frame in actions seems to have significance in "The Islamic Resistance's" media war. In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, framing is characterised by the process of naming, particularly to the actions and the places, because it entails cultural and political dentation (ibid). In this vein, the Palestinian cause shaped the perception of Hezbollah and consequently its military arm, since their inceptions, towards the conflict with Israel (Matar & Dakhlallah, 2006). As observed in its media statements, "The Islamic Resistance" employs certain frames to describe Israel, its places, its army and its actions. It denies the right of Israel to exist and describe its army as an occupation army. Thus, the issued media statements of Hezbollah's military arm show a deliberate selecting of words that reflect 'the self' and reframe 'the other' in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, because the statements are directed to different audiences who do not have the same perception about the war.
References