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**LINGUISTIC MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NEW LIBYAN COUPLES**

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( وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ) [سبأ: 6]

## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the reason new Libyan couples misunderstand each other when they interact. To answer this question, the researcher used interview phone calls. This research analyzed most situations of misunderstanding between new Libyan couples. The research results were collected from 5 couples from Libya. A survey consisting of six questions for each member of couples uses a combination of different questions around various situations to establishing measurable values from couples about how and why misunderstanding occurs. The research demonstrate the most factors that cause misunderstanding e.g. directness/indirectness, gender differences and cultural back ground differences.

*Keywords:* Misunderstanding, Couples, Pragmatics, conversation.

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is an original report. It has been written by me and has not been submitted for any previous degree. The experimental work is almost entirely my own work; the collaborative contributions have been indicated clearly and acknowledged. Due references have been provided on all supporting literatures and resources.

## **DEDICATION**

This research project is dedicated to my parents, for their endless love, support and encouragement.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### **Pragmatics and other fields:-**

Misunderstanding is usually discussed in relation to the field of linguistics. . One of the most important fields of linguistics is pragmatics which mainly concentrates on meaning. In the field of pragmatics, there are more misunderstandings than in the other fields of linguistics. This kind of misunderstanding mainly refers to contextual issues.

However, misunderstanding may be due to contextual issues. However, all the different fields of linguistics study different issues such as literal, social, or pragmatic meanings, etc. Pragmatics deals with the relationship between normal language and users of that language. Moreover, pragmatics investigates beyond the literal meaning of utterances that people intended as it concentrates on how different social contexts determine the use of linguistic expressions.

### **Definitions of pragmatics and meaning:-**

This study concentrates on investigating misunderstanding between couples when they interact in social conversations. It concentrates on meanings in relation to their contexts. Yule (1996: 3) states that pragmatics is the study of meaning in context. It comprises the interpretation of the intended meaning in a particular context, and how context affects what people say, to whom they say it, and also where, when, and under what circumstances. Describing pragmatics, Leech (1983: 3) differently defines pragmatics as language use in communication. In other words, to avoid misunderstanding between the speaker and hearer, pragmatics is very important to understand precisely the meaning of people's utterances as well as the context situation of these utterances. Sometimes language, as an instrument of interaction, is not what people mean when they interact but it has a hidden meaning, which should be understood. Thus, pragmatics, concentrating on this hidden meaning, helps people to communicate and understand each other.

### **Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics:-**

In order to make our discussion clear and focused, we need to explain the difference between sociolinguistics and pragmatics as context is crucial to both of them. This difference in relation to contextual meaning is that in pragmatics the context is flexible, whereas in sociolinguistics the context is fixed. Sociolinguistics describes the linguistic resources available in speech communities and provides a systematic account of how social variables influence linguistic choices from among those resources. Pragmatics explains how individuals use linguistic resources to produce and interpret



meaning in interaction, and sometimes to change relationships. Certain aspects of each discipline are generally recognized as distinct, but there are also areas of overlap.

However, most scholars agree that pragmatics is concerned with the study of the use of language in context and how we produce and comprehend the meaning in context. According to Holmes(), the field of pragmatics has at least two approaches (Leech 2014) the first one is the cognitive approach (Thomas 1995, Sperber and Wilson 2005, Carston 1998, 2002) which studies the restrictions on the interpretation of related meaning by the hearer of the message that is less concerned with social context but more with encoding decoding processes. The second approach is the social approach which focuses on the social restrictions on the speaker's intention. This social approach to pragmatics is where problems of boundaries and overlaps with sociolinguistics arise. So it's safe to say that this research is under the umbrella of sociopragmatics where the sociolinguistics part is concerned with the new couples while the pragmatics part is concerned with the issue of misunderstanding.

### **Research Problem:-**

Interacting appropriately has always been an issue to investigate for linguists. They argue that newly married couples usually misunderstand each other, because of different linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguists claim that linguistic misunderstanding is more likely to happen between people who are strange to each other. A context of interaction that includes new couples is one where more cases of misunderstanding are likely to occur. Such misunderstanding may lead to a breakdown in communication, interactants insulting each other, or even it may lead to divorce.

### **The research Question:-**

The main research question that this study investigates is "Do new couples experience situations of linguistic misunderstanding that may lead to breakdown, conflict, or even divorce? In order to answer my question accurately, I also need to answer some sub-questions such as

- 1- What misunderstanding problems are commonly associated with new couples during conversations?
- 2- Why do new couples struggle with misinterpretation through communication?
- 3- How does misunderstanding between new couples affect their conversation?
- 4- What are the factors that lead to misunderstanding between new couples?

### **The research Assumption:-**

New couples experience some situations of misunderstanding which may cause some problems and conflict.

### **Importance of research:-**

This study might help new married couples to understand the situations of misunderstandings that occur between them and give them a helpful way to avoid such situations and reduce cases of divorce or serious conflict.

## **Scope of research:-**

The scope of this research is in the field of pragmatics. It concentrates on analyzing situations of interactions between new Libyan couples obtained from interviewing them. It analyzes these perceptions and beliefs included within the assumptions around social roles, positions, rights, and obligations that are part of the background knowledge of the new married couples that is routinely brought to bear on the interpretations of utterances. These situations of misunderstanding include accusing each other of being impolite, inappropriate, ignorant, etc.

## **Outline:-**

This research contains five chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction, research problem, research question, research assumption, and importance of research .in the second chapter, it discusses the relevant literature review and refers to the relevant theories of misunderstanding and language and gender. The third chapter argues the methodology of the research that has been used, the fourth chapter contains the analysis and the discussion of the research. The fifth chapter is the conclusion of the research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

#### **Pragmatics and misunderstanding:-**

In relation to misunderstanding and proficient communication Schaap (1982) concludes that proficient communication is related to the sending of clear, unambiguous messages; with dynamic listening and proof that the message is heard; with the expression of regard and caring; and, with a precise interpretation of what the life partner has implied. Noller (1980) finds that each member of 48 married couples sent a standard set of vague messages to his or her life partner and decoded a comparable set gotten from the life partner. The vague messages were outlined so that the verbal content may have a positive, unbiased, or negative meaning depending on the nonverbal communication that went with it.

All messages were evaluated by groups of judges who categorized each mistake as related to encoding or decoding. Women were way better encoders than men, especially with respect to positive messages. With high marital adjustment, they were able to communicate more effectively, particularly within the case of the spouses who sent more clear messages and made fewer mistakes than those within the low marital adjustment gather. Moreover, women had a higher rate of mistakes on their messages accounted for by their spouses' decoding than did men.

#### **Cultural misunderstanding Linguistic misunderstanding:-**

Gender and language were interpreted as a sociolinguistic variable like ethnicity, social class, age, race and religion, etc... in 1970s when Lakoff's book *Language and Woman's Place* was released, language and gender started to attract the main concern of linguists and sociolinguists. A considerable amount of research has been carried out about language and the influence of social characteristics in shaping language use and language change, and how language reflects the way its speakers behave and think. Research about language and gender conversational-differences during the 1990's was divided into two main classifications.

The Dominance theory adopted by Fishman, West, and Zimmerman in support of Lakoff's claims assigns these differences to their "unequal roles". The Difference theory which appeared after Maltz and Broker (1982) and Tannen (1990) infers those differences as evolving from two separate sex cultures. According to Bonvillain (2008), men and ladies are assigned diverse social roles, values, and communicative behavior, which makes sex vary among eras, societies, and indeed settings. "...women

and men are socialized to express themselves in different ways in accordance with cultural norms that teach and reinforce differentiated gender roles".

The styles of gender difference in speech interaction may lead to difficulties in conversation, as proved in such behaviors as interruption, overlap, and "back channeling" or in hedging and apologizing. There are also sex differences in lexical usage as well as in their behaviors which may lead to miscommunication. For instance, the different meanings in the terms used by women and men to express or the different understandings they may have of masculine or feminine form used generically. Generally speaking, the majority of linguist researchers in language and gender assign differences in language use between males and females to three main models: the Deficit model, the Dominance model, and the Difference model.

### **The Deficit Model:-**

In *Language and Woman's Place*, one of the earliest studies in language and gender, Lakoff (1975) argues that in comparison with the established men's linguistic conversational norms, women's language has characteristics showing its deficiency. She mostly argues that woman's language differs from men's in the lack of authority and assertiveness. Lakoff (1975) identifies several linguistic features which are more characteristic of feminine speech and such as shyness and hesitation.

These features are taken and characterized by several linguists from many angles. Holmes (2001) distributes them into two classes, "hedging devices" and "boosting devices" were they linguistic or stylistic features. Hedging devices are features that may be used for hedging or weakening the "force of an utterance", like tag questions, lexical hedges and fillers, and rising intonation on declaratives. Whereas, boosting devices consist of features that may boost or intensify a statement like intensifiers and emphatic stress.

Lakoff (1975) states that, in times where hedges reveal the woman's unassertiveness to her statement, intensifiers add force to it. She considers that women's use of hedges and intensifiers in mixed-gender conversation reflects her lack of power in comparison with men. O' Barr and Atkins (1980) in their research on women's language in courtroom discourse point out that women use these speech styles more than men because they are associated with their lower-status positions.

Henley and Kramarae (1991), in their studies of explanatory theories of cross-sex miscommunication which are based on descriptions of sex differences in language usage, declare that the most effective theories have been female deficit theory and two cultures theory. A lot of theories and researchers have written about the ways that dominant groups of a social hierarchy (males) largely determine the dominant communication system of the society and about the ways subordinate groups (females) are silenced and made inarticulate in the language. Therefore, it is understandable why many linguists refer to the Deficit and the Dominance models inseparably and in many cases as one approach.

### **The Dominance Model:-**

The dominance model is also related to misunderstanding whereas studies of this theory focused on mixed-sex conversations to describe men's tendency to dominate and how women are subordinated. Zimmerman and West (1975) in their research about speech styles in mixed-sex conversations find that

95% of interruptions were made by males and that males interrupted females more than females did to males. In her book *Interaction: The Work Women Do*, the social psychologist Pamela Fishman (1978) notes that women do more conversational work than men; females tend to use more speech that encourages a response from their colleague converser; they are “more actively engaged in insuring interaction than the men”. Women use more inclusive language, such as “you” and “we” to draw their listeners into the conversation and insert subtle verbal cues such as “mmhm” to show that they are listening. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to cut women off during conversation or challenge them. Freeman and McElhinny (1996) attribute the linguistic conversational insufficiencies of women to the social dissimilarities between both genders, and similarly, men’s conversational dominance reflects males’ social and political dominance over females. Lakoff (1975) adds that women’s different conversational performance reflects their subordinate social status, and the gender-differentiated language is a result of the men-oriented society where men have more power and impact and where women tend to be cautious, more considerate and polite when they speak.

### **The Difference Model (two cultures theory):-**

Another reason for misunderstanding the difference model could possibly have grown as a reaction to Lakoff’s Dominance model. In the bestselling book, *you just don’t understand: men and women in conversation*, Tannen the most creative linguist of the Difference model (1991) states that besides the social status created on weakness and subordination for women and men there are sexual orientation contrasts in ways of talking as cultural differences because men and women grow up in two different cultures, brought in a different way and they both fill different roles, (Wardhagh, 2002).

Conversation between men and ladies can be like cross-cultural communication. For example, men see themselves as individuals in a hierarchically organized world who arrange control, status, and upper hand. Women see themselves as individuals in a world of association who arrange closeness, affirmation, support, and consensus. Tannen (1990) argues that men control conversation over women does not really mean they intentionally intend to, but this is because of the fact that both of them behave in accordance with their sex class personalities. “Men and women are social beings who have learned to act in certain ways. Language behavior is largely learned behavior. Men learn to be men and women learn to be women, linguistically speaking”, (Wardhough 2002).

Furthermore, Henley and Kramarae (1991) confirm that these group differences in their speech situations show that women’s speech is interactional, it encourages the other and openly builds on the other’s contributions while men’s speech is categorized by storytelling, arguing, and verbal aggressiveness that is to say the world of women declares their cooperation and equality of power. The world of men, on the other hand, is said to be hierarchical dominance is crucial and their words used to reach and keep an audience and to emphasize identity. Ladies use conversation to interact; telling equals showing involvement, listening equals showing interest, and caring. Ladies have a lifetime of verbalizing feelings. Men talk to exchange data; do not express "feelings and passing thoughts" since usually not seen as important. For ladies, conversation holds relationships together nonetheless for men relationships are held together by exercises, or conversation around exercises, so men are most inclined to talk when they have to impress or when their status is in question,(Tannen 1991). Since men and young ladies grow up completely different universes of words.

Ladies and men can walk absent from the same discussion with totally distinctive thoughts of what was said, (Maltz and Borker 1982). They learn to interpret conversational features differently. Men and women have learned to do different things with words in conversation so that when they try to carry on discussions with one another, even if both groups are attempting to treat one another as equals, social miscommunication results. Basically, these “genderlects” have diverse rules for communication, which is why so lots of misunderstandings happen. Obviously, there are differences in language style between women and men which certainly are caught up in misunderstandings situations but the cultural difference alone is not enough to explain the full pattern of language difference and miscommunication.

In a systematic study of couples “certain types of communication were particularly given to misinterpretation- requests, excuses, explanation; in short, verbalizations associated with getting one’s way”, (Henley and Kramarae 1991). Tannen (1991) makes a distinction between men’s “report” talk agenda and women’s “rapport-building” talk agenda. She explores how conversational styles can make or break interpersonal relationships at home, at work, or at play. For example ladies “often include reports of conversations” (p. 147) in which they describe the experience in awesome detail counting “tone of voice, pitch, and wording” (p. 147). Men, however, “give a brief summary rather than reproducing what was said and how” (p. 147) causing ladies to feel that they are missing **pith** in their retelling. She proceeds by saying that when men don't give such details expected by ladies, these ladies suspect that they are “only pretending not to remember”, whereas men expect that ladies are “making up the details”, (Tannen 1987). Her interpretations can be summarized in six contrastive points: Status vs. support, independence vs. intimacy, advice vs. understanding, information vs. feelings, orders vs. proposals, and conflict vs. compromise, (tannen1991). To explain her interpretations, she suggests the following differences between women’s and men’s conversational behavior:

Women:

- Talk too much
- Speak in private contexts
- Build relations
- Overlap
- Speak symmetrically

Men:

- Get more air time
- Speak in public
- Negotiate status
- Speak one at a time
- Speak asymmetrically

Above all Henley and Kramarae (1991) discuss another adequate theory in their study of cross-sex miscommunication. It calls a multi-determined social context approach to that other explanations like social class, psychological influences, race, age, and sexual preference all are shaped by the context of male authority and female subordination. Therefore it affects language use which will lead to miscommunication. These differences and misunderstandings formed by the mentioned factors are not equally involved in all contexts due to variation meanings of factors in different contexts, for instance, the different speech cultures come mainly into play with marital/partner communication like when

wives say they want husbands to engage in more emotionally sharing communication. So the place of power must be recognized in miscommunication problems between females and males.

Consequently, Cameron (1998) agrees that to be a man or a lady cannot be interpreted in isolation of the distinctive social variables surrounding them, but they are decided in connection with their ethnic, religious groups and social classes, as well as the diverse circumstances, situations, and positions of interactions they are put in. According to Gray (1993), men are often quite literal, women tend to use more words as mere expressions of a general feeling. It's seen how an exacting interpretation of a woman's words seem effectively deludes a man who is used to using discourse as a means of conveying as it were truths and data. A man should focus on the feelings of women rather than their words alone. And a woman should stop trying so hard to find the hidden meaning behind men's words because they'll often say what they mean anyway thus they would argue less and be able to respond more positively and avoid misunderstanding each other during conversation.

### **Politeness/impoliteness and misunderstanding:-**

Holmes (1995) examines the distribution and functions of a range of particular verbal politeness methodologies in women's and men's discourse and talks about the possible reasons for sexual orientation differences in this area by employing an extent of evidence and a corpus of information collected largely from New Zealand. The information given is on interactional strategies, 'hedges and boosters', compliments and apologies, she clarifies ways in which women's politeness patterns vary from men's, with the implications of these distinctive patterns investigated, for women in specific, within the areas of education and proficient careers. Holmes (1995) illustrates women's speech as more polite than men's. Such a characterization stems from her own and others' work (e.g. Zimmerman and West 1975; Fishman 1978, 1980; Tannen 1984, 1990) on language and gender over the past three decades, according to which females are more likely than males to express positive politeness and to use mitigating strategies to avoid or minimize threatening their interlocutors' face. For example, women tend to interrupt less in conversation and "to be more focused listeners, concerned to make sure others get a chance to contribute" than men (p.67). They also interpret and use certain speech acts differently to men. For example, not only do females use more apologies than males but their apologies serve more often than men's "as remedies for space and talk offences – areas of interaction where women are particularly vulnerable and where they may have developed a greater sensitivity" (p.185).

Mulac and Bradac (2001) indicate Results across the three studies supported the hypothesized language feature-by-stylistic dimension relationship for 15 of the 16 variable. The 6 male language features were evaluated as more direct, succinct, personal, and instrumental, whereas 9 of the 10 female features were perceived as more indirect, elaborate, and affective.

Gborsong (2016) gives an attempt to find out in case male and female students make requests differently. The study considered the sentence sorts used by guys and ladies, the levels of formality in request making, the variety of English used, and the politeness of the requests made. Using the Speech Act Theory of Austin and Searle, and the Convergence theory in Sex as a theoretical base, an argument is made that ladies and guys make requests differently. He finds that the interrogative was the most commonly used sentence sort in making requests particularly by ladies; the guys used imperatives more frequently than the ladies. In instances where declaratives were used, it was observed that guys used straightforward declarative sentences while the ladies used complex declarative sentences.

Ramos (1999) argues all the possible sorts of misunderstanding that can emerge in face to-face interaction are the result of the combination of three pragmatic continua: (a) the intentional vs. unintentional continuum; (b) the verbal vs. nonverbal continuum; and (c) the explicit vs. implicit continuum. Lorenzo and Bou-Franch (2003) argues that in spite of the fact that politeness devices were in some cases qualitatively and quantitatively distinctive in our data, men and ladies were politeness-oriented. Moreover, our consider loans support to Okamoto's (2002:102) see that "gender cannot be separated as an free variable for deciding language use, and ... other factors have to be be considered as at the same time relevant".

Barbora (2013) finds in her study that ladies talk is politer than men talk. It also found out that gender's style of discourse is more or less the same in certain conditions and sexual orientation parts are still far from break even with in everyday life. She claims that if sex roles were on an equal level, females would not tend to use politer expressions. Unlike from this think about, Barbora concentrates on language use and sexual category and how males and females differentiate in use of politeness.

### **Different speech acts and misunderstanding:-**

Speech act consists of three separate acts: an act of saying something, an act of doing something, and an act of influencing something. Reflecting this, Leech (1983) used Austin's (1975) sorts of speech acts: Locutionary act, Illocutionary act, and Perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is the act of basically expressing a sentence from a language; it is a description of what the speaker says. Illocutionary act is the act in which the speaker intends to do something by producing an expression. Illocutionary acts would include stating, promising, thanking, congratulating, apologizing, threatening, predicting, requesting, and ordering. Perlocutionary act is the act done by the listener influenced by what the speaker has said. Perlocutionary acts would include impacts such as: get the hearer to think about, bring the listener to learn that, get the listener to do, persuading, humiliating, intimidating, boring, bothering, or inspiring the listener (p.199).



## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

Linguistic misunderstanding between new couples is a quite issue to occur thus, to understand more information about of how and why this issue occurs therefore, the researcher chooses qualitative approach which is used in order to give clear indication of understanding the issue of misunderstanding the utterance used in the interact between couples. Ten couples were used, for each sex. Each group contains five people, six questions were given to each of them. To show how this misunderstanding happens in certain situation. An interview is conducting for the two of the groups. Thus, avoiding such cases of misunderstanding that may lead the couples to a conversation breakdown, conflict or maybe divorce.

## Chapter Four

### The analysis, results and discussion

This chapter discusses number of situations happened between Libyan new couples and led to misunderstanding. The discussions is organized in relation to certain selected conversations where different types of misunderstanding happened between the Libyan couples. W refers to wife and H refers to husband.

#### Extract 1

#### Cross-cultural background interaction and discourse system:-

The following conversation is analyzed when the question was wether you have been shouted, what happened between the interactants is developed conversation.

W : I'm going out with my family.

H : what a shame ,no .

الزوجة : أنا ذاهبة مع عائلتي.

الزوج : ياللعيب ، لا .

Different discourse systems, in an interaction, might lead interactants to misunderstand each other, or even accuse each other of being inappropriate. Scollon and Scollon discuss systems of communication from a cross-cultural view. They try to offer solutions for those who may need to communicate within cultures which are not their own. For them, 'the main concern is to see how the ideological positions of cultures or of discourse systems become a factor in the interpersonal communication of members of one group with members of the other group' (1995:126).

people may not be able to avoid misunderstanding because of their different discourse systems. Such differences, which do not necessarily need to be clear in forms of speech acts determine not only the linguistic structures and strategies, but also the interpretation and understanding of these structures. For example, the wife is raised in family where women can speak up about what they want ,so in this example she wasn't really ordering him without his permission but instead telling him that she wants to

go with her family. Now the husband thinks that he is offended therefore refusing her order. A wife from different culture background could've used a request instead of a statement but these differences in their cultures. libyan in different parts of the libyan world agree and disagree with each other in what is considered to be appropriate/inappropriate in certain interactional social contexts.

The husband culture background supports the dominance theory that women who are known of low position in society hence, their style of speech and are more polite. According to Scollon and Scollon "each one of us is simultaneously a member of many different discourse systems. We are members of a particular corporate group, a particular professional or occupational group, a generation, a gender, a region, and an ethnicity" (1995:3). Just as communication between members from the same culture can be impeded by the use of alien discourse systems.

## Extract 2

### Misunderstanding and indirectness:-

H: why are u so late for the visiting ?

W: I'm exhausted , I feel I may need a pill .

H : you can take a rest for twenty minutes and then we go.

الزوج : لماذا تأخرتني عن الزيارة؟  
الزوجة : أنا متعبة، أشعر بأنني سأأخذ حبة دواء.  
الزوج : تستطيعين أخذ راحة لمدة عشرين دقيقة ثم نذهب.

Indirectness is contextual, which means that it might only take longer for one of the interactants to process or produce. What indirectness means is not always the same to the interactants , because of this, misunderstanding happens. The following example is about a situation where the wife is supposed to go with her husband to a family gathering every Friday but this Friday after house working she felt tired and that she doesn't want to go , both of them are Libyan and social relations are usually given priorities in interaction over individual interests, because a person might be classified as impolite if he/she ignores them. So avoiding conflicts with the husbands the wife is being indirect , she was trying to hint or suggest to him of what she really wants through implication. This form of communication can lead to feeling misunderstood and unappreciated in any relationship.

There are two reasons why indirectness may lead to misunderstanding: first, the husband not understanding what the speaker means by her utterance; whereas the intended meaning in this utterance I'm exhausted was I don't want to go. The second, the hearer not understanding what the speaker means by being indirect , women are mostly indirect in their speech and men takes the utterances literally. The two reasons may lead the hearer to consider the speaker impolite because of misunderstanding the reason behind the indirectness.

In their interpretation of indirectness Brown and Levinson argue that the closer you are to your interactant the more direct you can be. The new married couples still getting used to each other, for

example, there are topics, such as marriage, which a son or daughter cannot discuss with their father directly. Some topics, even between close friends, need to be discussed indirectly, and the illocutionary forces of the utterance, whether apology, request, blame etc., must also be performed indirectly. In such situations indirectness is subject to the context, culture and the topic.

Van Dijk (1997) holds that cultures determine people's linguistic strategies. For example, they differ in determining when and how one should be 'indirect' to others. We may be unsure about how an utterance will be understood by our addressee, and whether the intended meaning will be perceived when we deliberately use an indirect strategy for the purpose of request. Because an utterance is shaped by understanding of the context, sometimes interactants convey meanings indirectly, assuming that their interlocutors will grasp their meaning by inference rather than by explicit statements.

### **Extract 3**

#### **Misunderstanding because of linguistic use:-**

H : dress very well

W : puts on thick clothes

الزوج: ألبسي كويس

الزوجة: تضع ملابس ثقيلة

An example of a failure to understand the intended implicature of an utterance can be seen in an interaction between wife and husband. What the husband here means exactly by dress very well is wear coverable clothes not just more clothes, the wife did not understand this intended meaning. Rather, she understood the literal sense (explicature).

According to Sperber and Wilson, hearers may stop at the first interpretation that satisfies their expectation of relevance. This means that 'a speaker who wants her/his utterance to be as easy as possible to understand should formulate it so that the first interpretation to satisfy the hearer's expectations of relevance is the one she intended to convey' (Sperber and Wilson, 1995). But what happens in this instance is that the speaker fails to formulate his utterance to convey what he intended as the first interpretation or the strongest implicature to his hearer.

What has happened in this interaction is that the hearer's understanding of the context is different from the speaker's, when the wife heard that utterance from her husband it was winter so she closely thought that he means thicker clothes. Being in winter season is within the context of this conversation. The hearer's goal is to construct a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning that satisfies his understanding of the context, which is at the same time an appropriate hypothesis about the explicit content of the utterance; this is the explicature of the utterance. However, interactants vary in the ways they interpret utterances, and different factors play a role depending on the illocutionary forces of the utterance.

A speaker may use a different language pattern to another interactant, or the addressee may infer a different implicature from the speaker's utterance. How what is said leads listeners to define one implicature as weak and the other as strong is controversial, and might lead to misunderstanding or even conflict in cross-gender interaction.

## Extract 4

### Misunderstanding between wife and husband in conversation:

W: talks about a problem.

H: it's your fault, you needed to do this and that .....

W: you don't understand me !

الزوجة : تتحدث عن مشكلة .

.....الزوج : إنها غلطتك، كان يجب عليك أن تفعل ذلك و ذلك

!الزوجة : أنت فقط لا تفهمني

In the above situations the husband is trying to blame his wife and finding solutions for her problem while on the other hand, the wife doesn't want to be judged she just want to be heard . Now this difference gender shows different kind of their speech and how they communicate with each other in their groups.

The literature that deals with the gender effects on language reveals two contrary views. The first point of view claims that men and women speak different languages due to the fact that they are members of different cultures (Maltz and Borker 1982; Tannen 1990; Gray 1992). Nevertheless, the other theory claims that men and women behave in different ways because this approach puts men as the ones who control and dominate a conversation. Women then become the ones who are dominated (subordinate).

Furthermore, Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990) present the "difference" approach which is based on the theory of cultural differences claim that men and women come from two different subcultures. The differences of these two subcultures lead to the differences of communicative competence of men and women thus differences in internal norms of men and women at the time of interaction.

Men and women have different cultural assumptions about talk and friendly conversation. According to Maltz and Borker girls talk to establish and maintain relationships of closeness; whereas boys perceive talk as a tool for conveying information and getting things accomplished. Because of these differences for both of them, the wife didn't feel satisfied with the process of communication she expected to get the accepting and be heard by her husband as she does with her female friend in her utterance *you didn't understand me* the thing that causes misunderstanding.

### Findings:-

From what has been discussed, we can see that there are different situations of misunderstanding between new couples because of different reasons. One of the reasons could be gender differences the different speech styles of males/females when they interact with each group, the second one cultural background differences of the husband and wife, other one is directness and indirectness whereas women are more indirect than men.

## **Conclusion:-**

This study proves our assumption that there are always situations of misunderstanding between new couples because of different cultural and contextual reasons between the couples. It proves that such misunderstanding may lead to conflict between interactions, and may also lead to breakdown, or even divorce. The intended meaning might be avoided to be said directly because of certain reasons. Thus, the implicature is not understood by listener. Rather the listener goes to a different interpretation of what the speaker intends. This may happen intentionally by one of the interactants because s/he felt indirect insult or that his/her interactant is inappropriate or impolite. Misunderstanding between new couples has always been an issue of research interests. It is always an issue even between people who are from the same environment, culture and backgrounds. New couples are usually from different backgrounds with different personality building up of understanding. Thus, the way the interactants understand what is appropriate and polite is sometimes different. The situation of interaction that an interactant decides to be indirect might also be different from the situations that the other interactant evaluates. This may lead us to conclude that different cultural and linguistic theories of analysis may be needed to analyze misunderstanding situations of new couples. This may also lead to advice new couples, Libyan and non-Libyans, that they try to understand their way of conveying meanings, and their intentionality and the influence of culture in our linguistic production and linguistic interpretation.

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## **Appendices:-**

### **The interview questions:-**

- 1- Have you been shouted by your wife/husband?
- 2- What was the situation where you felt that you have been misunderstood the most?
- 3- How do you apologize when you've done something wrong to your wife/husband?
- 4- How do you ask for something expensive from your husband?
- 5- How do you ask indirectly for something? For example going out.
- 6- What will be your reaction of u experience a situation where your husband is absence from your life or whenever he is needed he isn't there.
- 7- Does your husband/wife thank his husband/wife with words or by actions?
- 8- What do you understand if your wife ask you to not go to the bank to get her money if she works)?
- 9- What do you understand as a husband if your wife asks her husband why you always on your phone?
- 10- If your wife asks you would you like to have a cup of coffee in a road trip? Yes or no and why.
- 11- The wife asks you when can we go to a night restaurant? What do you understand and why.
- 12- The wife says I want to redecorate my house. What will be your reaction and why.
- 13- The husband asks you have you seen my wallet. What will be your reaction and why.
- 14- The wife asks when his husband come back late at night to home where have you been and with whom? What will be your reaction and why.
- 15- The husband asks you what does the house miss from groceries. What will be your reaction and why.
- 16- The wife asks if you can go out and the husbands says that he will tell his family then the wife reply why it's just the both of us ! What will be your reaction and why.