The Use of Language in an Administrative Setting

Ahmad Khalaf Sakarna [(*)]

Abstract

One of the most interesting phenomena of using language in an administrative setting in Jordan is commonly referred to as ṭaxṭaxa 'shooting'. That is, to use a specific version of Arabic to fight, argue against, or weaken the status of a person who is leading an administrative position or who has an administrative status. Linguistic investigation and complete understanding of this phenomenon, as far as I know, has not been studied yet [(1)] .

The present research attempts to explore the linguistic components associated with the use of language in an administrative setting. It shows that the use of language in such a setting triggers the application of specific linguistic structures that contain particular statements, expressions, terms, and idioms. It also views the use of language in an administrative setting as an art of fighting with words, as the user tends to apply ṭaxṭaxa aggressively to achieve certain objects. The paper discusses and provides evidence for the different elements of 'shooting' which include its definition, labels, levels, types, users, reasons, objects, times, reaction to, and effects, respectively .

Keywords: Arabic Linguistics, Arabic Pragmatics, Administrative Linguistics, Applied Linguistics.

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ملخص

1.Introduction

Current linguistic trends have presented two opposing views about the nature of using language as a tool of communication in a broad sense. One view suggests a peaceful use that aims at facilitating interaction between members of a linguistic community (Suleiman 1995, Coulmas1998, Searle 2000, Romaine 2000, Owens 2001, Boxer 2002, Downes 2005, Owens 2006, Coulmas 2006, and Bassiouney 2009),whereas the other claims that language is a tool that utilizes a non-peaceful communication that initiates or copes with "conflicts." (Eadie and Nelson 2000, Rouchdy, 2003, Thomas et al 2003, and Suleiman. 2004). The complex and sophisticated nature of language etal . use, however, justifies the realistic and reasonable vision of these conflicting views. Narrowing the scope of the second vision to include specific setting would help understand how language use functions in "conflicts", which "are dependent on how the speakers interpret the facts of their situation" (Suleiman 2004: 55), and provide further evidence to such view. As far as I know, using language the non-peaceful way in an administrative milieu is not investigated yet, an issue that raises a high need to fill in this gap in the current linguistic trends[2].

2. What is *ṭaxṭaxa*?

The literal translation for the term *ṭaxṭaxa* is 'shooting'. It is derived from the root *ṭaxx,* which means 'shoot'. The process of 'shooting' can be defined as talking about or against someone to someone else. As shown in figure (1), below, person number 1 is talking to person 2 about 3.

Figure (1)
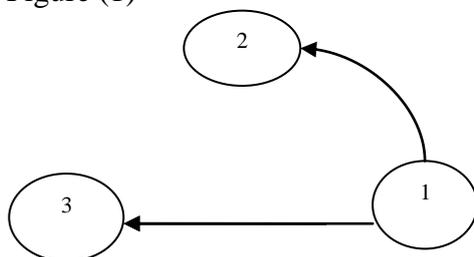
The process of ṭaxṭaxa is negatively looked at by people, because of its negative and non- peaceful effect on the targeted person(3)It is derived from a root that denotes a sense of 'fighting', 'participating in a battle', or 'joining a war' to express its impact. It is a starting point or a trigger of what is known as "a war of words" (Suleiman, 2004), a case where the insight of Owens (2001, 2006) is neither followed nor adopted, where sociolinguistics interaction does not proceed in a peaceful way and takes a form of a fight, a battle, or a war in which specific expressions are used and causalities, loss, or destructions are expected   .

The process of 'shooting' itself is also described by some expressions:

(1) *hazz đanab* 'tail shaking'   *fīša* 'shooting'   ' *isfīn* 'shooting'
   masifi ğūx 'clothes washing'   *tašlīx* 'shooting'
   gaṣṣ   'telling untrue stories' *'ariṭ* 'lying'

3. Labels

The person who practices *ṭaxṭaxa* is usually referred to by the following local terms:

(2) *bitnaṭaṭ* 'jumper'   *laggāg* 'big mouth'   *xriṭy* 'liar'
   hazzāz đanab 'tail shaker' *massīfi ğūx* 'clothes cleaner' *'arīṭ* 'liar'
   gaṣṣīṣ   '(untrue) story teller'

A skillful *ṭaxxīx* 'shooter', who practices *ṭaxṭaxa* regularly and successfully, is usually addressed by certain labels or nicknames that donate a negative or positive social image. In both cases, such labels represent an underlying negative connotation.

3.1. Negative Labels

(3) *mutasalliq* 'climber'   *wuṣūly* 'climber'   *ṭuhlub* ' snoop ,
   xibiϴ 'mean'   *maṣlafiğy* 'selfish'   *đanab* 'a tail'
   mā bin'aṭa 'ein 'never respected'   *fiayya* 'snake' *nasnās* 'gossiper'

3.2. Positive Labels

(4) *mad'ūm* 'supported'   ' *axṭabūṭ* 'octopus'   *wāṣil* 'powerful'

   muṣaddaq   'truthful'   ' *illuh nās* 'has people around him'

kilimtuh mā bitsīr Ɵnīn 'his word never gets two'

Although these terms sound positive, yet they are implicitly negative.

4. Levels of *ṭaxṭaxa*

There are two levels of shooting depending on who practices it and who the target is.

4.1. Low

This type goes in two dimensions. First, it could be practiced between employees, who, for certain reasons, don't get along with their boss. As shown in figure (2), employees A, B, and C are talking against their boss.

Figure (2)
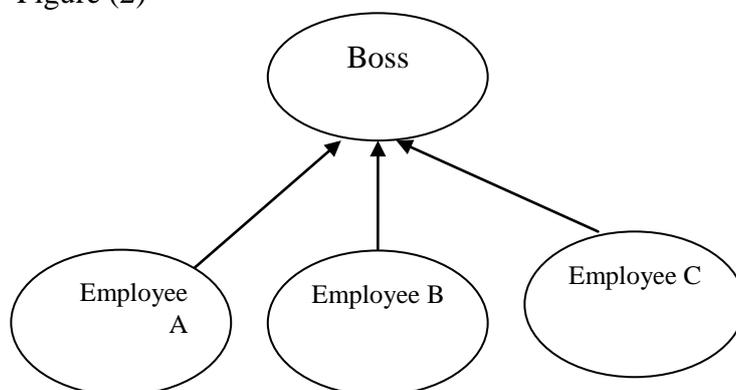
Shooters usually express their disapproval of their boss by using certain strategies:

    1. Imitating his way of speaking.
    2. Repeating the same word or sentence said by him.
    3. Commenting on him ironically.
    4. Making jokes about him.
    5. Looking down to what he says.

Second, it might be used by employees themselves against one of their peers. An employee may express his disapproval of a peer by talking against this peer to the boss using the same strategies mentioned earlier, as shown in figure (3) where employee A is talking against employee B to the boss.

Figure (3)
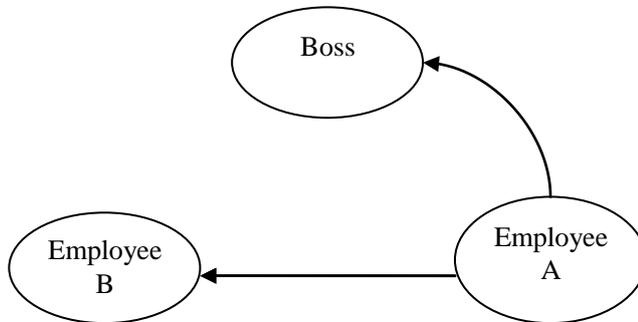
4.2. High

This type takes place when an employee meets a higher boss to complain about his immediate boss. It also happens when a boss meets a higher boss to complain either about a competing person or an employee. A shooter in these situations follows the strategy of pointing out the weakness of the target. The three cases are illustrated in figure (4), where (4.A) an employee is talking against his immediate boss to a higher boss, in (4.B) a boss is arguing against a competing person to a higher boss, and in (4.C) a boss is complaining about an employee to a higher boss. (The curved line represents the destination to which *ṭaxṭaxa* should arrive, the straight line represents the targeted person):

Figure (4)
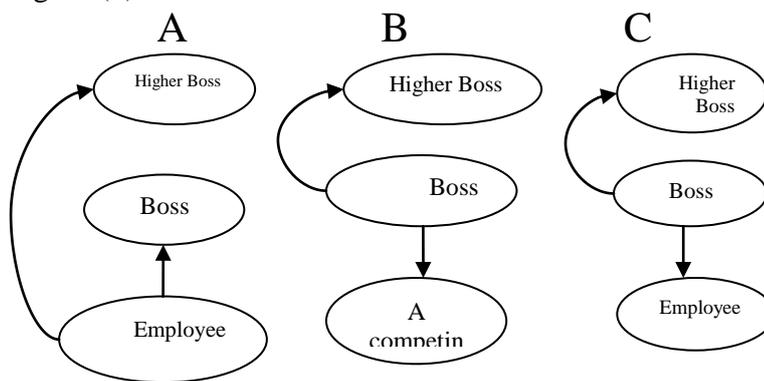
5. Types of *ṭaxṭaxa*

There are two types of *ṭaxṭaxa*; overt and covert. The former entails attacking the targeted person publicly on face to point out his problems and mistakes, while the latter is made indoors behind the target and normally addresses the boss of the target.

5.1. Overt

Examples of overt *ṭaxṭaxa* include the following statements used by a shooter in which the complement is always a negative statement:

(5) *ṣafiīfi gult ...*   'is it true that you said….'
   bigūlu 'annak ...   'they say about you….'
   leiš 'imilit ...   'why did you do…..'
   fassirly leiš ...   'explain to me why….'
   šū alġāya min ...   'what is the object of ….'
   šū rāyak bikalam flān ... 'what do you think of the opinion of people about…..'

The audience who witnesses this type of 'shooting' usually labels it with negative terms like *waġhana* 'keeping face', *šakwana* 'complaining', and *mzāwada* 'claiming loyalty'.

5.2. Covert

This type is considered more effective and destructive since the targeted person is not given the chance to defend his view. It is referred to as *fasfasa* 'gossiping', *dasdasa* 'insertion', *zarwaga* 'zigzaging', *naṭnaṭa* 'jumping', or *ṭaḥīna* 'grounding'.

The shooter usually uses the following expressions:

(6) *simi'it ....*   'I heard that…'
   bigūlu ...   'people say that….'
   lā tġīb sīra ....   'don't mention that….'
   beiny wa beinak ...   'between you and me…..'
   lulā ma'aztik 'indy, mā gultlak ... 'because you dear, I've told you...'
   mišānak lāzim ti'raf innuh...   'for your sake, you should know….'
   lafiada ġeirak mā fiakeit...   'I would not mention that to someone else…'
   bafiki 'ašān almaṣlafia al'āma.... 'I am talking because of the public interest'

6. Users of *ṭaxṭaxa*

A normal employee may turn into a shooter who finds it a need to verbally attack his boss in the following situations. First, when the boss does not respond to the shooter's personal needs:

(7) *faššalny* 'he disappointed me'   *nafaxit bgirba maxzūga*   'I blew air in a torn bag'

   'ana bwād wa hū bwād   'I am in a valley and he is in a different valley'

   mas'ūl ġaby   'a stupid boss'

Second, when the boss applies regulations strictly so that the shooter 'sobjects are not met:

(8) *ǧilif* 'stubborn'   *mā buxiđ walā ba'ṭy*   'he never gives or takes'

   'abū atta'līmāt 'father of regulations'

   'ala doary ṣār niẓāmy 'he applies the rules on me'

Third, when the boss is not fair:

(9) *'ibin fiarām* 'sun of a gun'   *ẓālim* 'unjust'

   mal'ūn wāldein 'parents' disobedient'

Fourth, when the boss is not flexible:

(10) *loafi* 'a board'   *xašaba* 'a wood'   *fieiṭ* 'a wall'

Fifth, when the boss practices bad or corrupted administration:

(11) *fāšil* 'a failure' *ṣāgiṭ* 'unsuccessful'   *fāriġ* 'empty'

   Meanwhile, a shooter may practice *ṭaxṭaxa* against a peer when reasons, as will be discussed below, are available.

7. Reasons for *ṭaxṭaxa*

   The process of 'shooting' is triggered by one of the following factors, depending on the targeted person who might be a boss or a peer.

7.1. Shooting against a boss

7.1.1. To take revenge from the boss

The prefix *ba-* in the following examples represents future threat.

(12) *bašiffuh* 'I will hit him'   *bafẓafiu* 'I will scandalize him'

   ba'alǧuh 'I will cure him'   *baballiġ 'annuh* 'I will inform about him'

   badāwīh 'I will treat him'   *bawarǧih* 'I will show him'

   ba'arfuh fiaġmuh 'I will let him know his worth'

7.1.2. To announce boss mistakes

(13) *lakšif wrāguh* 'I will reveal his papers'   *kulluh 'xṭā'* 'his is full of mistakes'

   kalamuh miš ṣafīīṭfi 'his speech is wrong'   *ġalṭān* 'he is wrong'

   šuġluh miš ṣafi 'his work is wrong'   *'abu alġalṭāt* 'father of mistakes'

7.1.3. To reveal boss violations

(14) *xālaf atta'līmāt* 'he violated the regulations'

   miš mazbūṭ 'his is not on the right track'

   bitāfiyal 'alqānūn 'he is fooling the law'

   'idāry fāšil 'administratively corrupt'

   walla mā 'afawitha iluh 'I swear not to forgive him'

   'ārif maxābīh 'I know his secrets'

7.1.4. To impose boss response

(15) *mīn huwwa* 'who is he!'   *šū makanuh* 'what is his position!'

   mīn warāh 'who is supporting him!'   *šū hadafuh* ' what is his goal!'

   ' al'ayām beinna 'days between us'

7.1.5. Jealousy from the boss

(16) *'ala eiš* 'for what!'   *šū mu'ahaluh* 'what is his qualification!'

   mīn huwwa 'who is he!'   *miš m'abiyy 'einnī* 'he is not filling my eyes'

   šū biswa 'what is his worth'   *hāđā illī ṭili' minnuh* 'is this all that he got!'

7.1.6. To preserve peers support

   This is made to gain a group support against the targeted person:

(17) *biddu ydammirna* 'he wants to destroy us'

   biddu yifibiṭna 'he wants to make us upset'

   biddu yxarrib byūtna 'he wants to destroy our houses'

   biddu yifirigna 'he wants to burn us'

   mā bixaf Allah 'he does not fear God'

   mā bifiib fiada 'he does not like anybody'

   miš šāyifna bi'yūnuh 'he does not see us with his eyes'

   miš fiāsib fisābna 'he does not count us'

7.1.7. To spread rumors about the boss

(18) *fialafūly innuh…* 'they swore to me that…'

   gālūly innuh… 'they told me that….'

simiʿit innuh… 'I heard that…..'
ğāny xabar innuh… 'I got the news that…..'
mitʾakkid innuh… 'I am sure that……'
rāfi tšūfu innuh… 'you will see that…..'

7.2. Shooting against a peer
7.2.1. Personal fights or clashes
(19) *bawarğīh* 'I will show him'
barabbīh 'I will raise him'
badamruh 'I will destroy him'
ʾna warāh wazzaman ṭawīl 'I am behind him all the way'

7.2.2. Personal hatred or jealousy
This surfaces when the 'shooter' asks others not to interact with the targeted person:

(20) *dīr bālak minnuh* 'be careful from him' *lā tiϴiq fīh* 'don't trust him'
xarrāb byūt 'he's houses' destroyer' *miš sahil* 'he is not easy'
xabīϴ 'he is mean' *bitxalah ʿannak* 'he will leave you'
mā ʿinduh walā' 'he is not loyal' *bifiki bgafāk* 'he talks behind your back'

7.2.3. To defend a mistake
A shooter may appeal to *ṭaxṭaxa* to defend a mistake that he made to avoid peers' criticism:

(21) *flān mā bifham* 'that person does not understand'
bitdaxxal 'he interferes in my business' *bixfī alfiagāy'ig* 'he hides the truth'
kaḍḍāb 'he is a liar' *maškalğy* 'he is a trouble shooter'

7.2.4. To hide the truth
Criticizing others is another policy to hide a truth that the shooter knows:

(22) *flān kaḍḍāb* 'that guy is a liar' *bikub šarruh* 'he is pouring his bad deeds on us'
birmi maṣāybuh 'he is throwing his problems on us'
bifayyiš fīna 'he is shooting us'

7.2.5. To practice power

Shooting on others can also be used to practice power over peers:

(23) *ṭī'ūni* 'obey me'   ' *isma'u mini* 'listen to me'

    ruddu 'alayya 'respond to me'   *sawwu illī bafikīh* 'do what I say'

8. Objects of *ṭaxṭaxa*

A shooter struggles to achieve the following objectives:

8.1. To gain the trust of a higher boss

This entails talking to a higher boss against an immediate one.

(24) *mā bifham* 'he never understands'   *qarāruh ġalaṭ* 'his decision is wrong'

    lāzim yitġayyar 'he should be changed'   *mā bi'rif* 'he never knows'

8.2. To achieve boss satisfaction

This requires spying on other peers and reporting their deeds to the boss

(25) *biddu ysawwi kaḏa* 'he will do …..'   *fiakāli kaḏa* 'he told me ….'

8.3. To get social status

A shooter may compete his target as a way to get public reputation by talking against his target openly to take his position. The objects of the shooter in targeting a position can be understood from the following:

(26) *wallah mawqi' fiassās* 'I swear it is a sensitive position'
    waġāha '(this position) has a high value'
    kulluh ma'ārif '(this position) is full of relations'
    mā fīh miϴluh 'no place like (this position)'
    kulluh da'im '(this position) is full of support'

8.4. To gain financial status

(27) *wallah mawqi' fīh 'alāwah*
    'I swear this position has an allowance'
    wallah mawqi' fīh xadam
    'I swear this position has servants'
    wallah mawqi' fīh 'sayyārah
    'I swear this position has a (free) car'
    wallah mawqi' fīh telefon

'I swear this position has a (free) phone'
wallah mawqi' fīh maṣāry
'I swear this position has (good) money'

8.5. To be powerful

(28) *halmanṣib biftafi kul al'bwāb*   'this position opens all the door'
mā fiada bigullak wein rāyiţfi   'nobody asks you where are you going'
mā fiada balšān fīk   'nobody questions you'
' *inta sayyid nafsak*   'you are the lord of yourself'

8.6. To avoid being a follower

(29) *lā sā'il wala mas'ūl*   'no body supervises you'
'amry bīdy   'my decision is in my hand'
dawamy 'ala keify   'I work when I want'
basawy illi bidi yāh   'I do what I want'
mā fiada mfiāsibny   'nobody investigates my work'

8.7. To hunt a chair

(30) *miš 'afiag minni*   'I have more right in this position than him'
'akal fiaggy   'he took my right'
mā 'induh mu'ahalāti   'he does not have my qualifications'

8.8. To weaken the status of the chairman

(31) *mā bifham* 'he does not understand'   *šuġluh ġalaṭ*   'his work is wrong'
mā bidāwim 'he does not show up at work'   *mā bitābi'* 'he does not follow up'
kθīr fiaky 'he speaks a lot'   *miš daqīq* 'he is not accurate'

8.9. To prove presence

This happens when arguing against a peer.

(32) *badaggig warāh* 'I always check his work'
nabbahtu 'akθar min marrah 'I warned him several times'
naṣafituh 'I advised him'
law lāy kān…. 'without me it would not be so'
štaġalt 'annuh 'I did his work'

8.10. To get personal needs

This occurs when talking with a new boss against an old one.

(33) *'adurak ṣilfiat al'umūr* 'you fixed the problems'
'illi gablak xarrabha 'the old boss made problems'

gablak rāfi fiagna 'we lost our rights before you'
'adur flān nẓalamna 'we were treated unfairly by the old boss'
hassa' niẓman fiagna 'now we guarantee our rights'

8.11. To destroy the hoss social image

(34) *mutakabbir* 'arrogant'   *muta'ağrif* 'proud'   *šāyif fiālluh* 'overconfident'

baṭnuh 'ğrab 'his tummy is dirty'   *hamağy* 'barbarian'

šuġul 'azāyim 'he seeks invitations'   *bṭeiny* 'he likes his tummy'

ği'ān 'he is hungry'   *raxīṣ* 'he is cheap'   *sarrāg* 'he is a thief'

mā 'induh karāmah 'he has no dignity'   *ganāṣ furaṣ* 'chances hunter'

8.12. To achieve success

This happens when looking down to the achievements of the targeted person to make people just remember the achievements of the shooter:

(35) *miš hal'inğāz*   'this achievement is nothing'
    'ay wāfiad bi'malha   'anyone can do that'
    mā sāwa išy kƟīr   'he does not do a big thing'
    hāđa wāğbuh   'this is his job'
    miš hal'amal almumayyaz   'his work is not distinguished'

    'išī 'ādy ğiddan   'this is very normal'

    lula aldaz mā bisawīha   'he cannot do it without others ' support'

8.13. To gain credit for others works

A shooter may struggle to maintain a positive administrative image in front of his boss by repeating certain expressions to point out his important role in achieving a particular task, even if someone else has done it:

(36) *'ana 'illi 'milit heik miš huwwa* 'I did this not him'
    law lāy mā ṣārat 'it would not happen without me'
    'ana šağğāl 'aleiha 'I am working on it'
    duxut lamma sawweitha 'I worked hard to do it'
    'axđat min wagtei kƟīr 'it took a lot of my time'
    ta'abatnī kƟīr 'it exhausted me a lot'

galabt 'aleiha addinya 'I bothered the world to make it'
jannanthum fiatta raddu 'alayya 'I bothered them a lot to reply to me'

8.14. To mislead the boss

Misleading the boss, from a shooter perspective, will provide the chance to achieve the desired goals. This involves a continuous complaint about the target:

(37) *mas'ūlītu huwwa* 'it his responsibility'
    fiāsbu huwwa 'you should question him'
    lā trud 'alleih 'don't respond to him'
    xarrab aššuġul 'he destroyed the work'

8.15. To trick a peer

A shooter may talk against a peer to the boss, but when meeting this peer he claims the opposite.

(38) *dāfa'it 'annak*   'I defended you'
    laṭṭaftilak alǧaw   'I cheered it up for you'
    gultuluh ysā'dak   'I told him to help you'
    đakartak bilxeir   'I mentioned all the good things about you'
    minni kul adda'im   'I gave you all my support'

9. Times of *ṭaxṭaxa*

The times in which *ṭaxṭaxa* occurs rely on the following situations.

9.1. Meeting the immediate boss

In this case, the target is a peer:

(39) *mā biǧǧāwab*   'he never responds'
    xalliṣna minnuh   'for our sake get rid of him'
    xarrab šuġulna   'he destroyed our work'

9.2. Meeting the higher boss

The target in this case is the immediate boss.

(40) *huwwa mudīr willa muwaẓẓaf* 'is he a manager or an employee?'
    mā 'indu xibra 'he lacks experience'

  ' *axṭā'uh rafi tbayyin* 'his mistakes will show'

9.3. Meeting peers

In this case the target is the immediate boss or another peer.

(41) *lā trud 'alleih* 'don't respond to him'   *ifiligluh* 'ignore him'

mā binxadim 'he does not deserve our effort'   *izbiluh* 'treat him like trash'

mā bigaddir 'he does not appreciate others'   *ṭanšuh* 'quit dealing with him'

10. Reaction to *ṭaxṭaxa*

Skillful bosses believe in the local expression "*mā fī nār bidūn duxxān*", that is, 'there is no fire without smoke'. They are familiar with *ṭaxṭaxa,* its reasons, and its objectives. They do not, in most cases, react or make a decision against the targeted person, unless the shooter provides critical evidence against his target. Inexperienced bosses, on the other hand, may not carefully examine the reasons and objectives of shooting, and thus, may take an action against the targeted person. However, when shooting takes place indoors with a skillful boss, there are four scenarios that represent the reaction of this boss. First, as shown in figure (5.A), an employee A is talking against his peer (B) to the boss. But the boss, as in figure (5.B), will be on touch with employee (B) to check all complaints against him as well as direct him. Eventually, as shown in (5.C), the boss does not make a decision against the targeted person[4]except stopping communication with him, but maintains contact with the shooter to explore his reasons and objectives and, in certain cases, to use him as a source of information that provides a feedback about the work of other employees.

Figure (5)
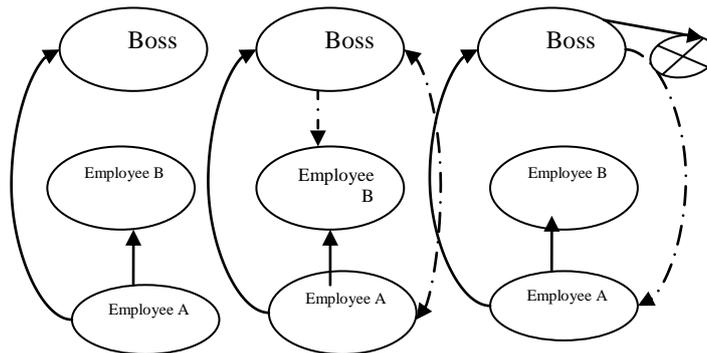
Second, an employee is talking against his immediate boss to

the higher boss as shown in figure (6.A). The higher boss, as in figure (6.B), will contact the concerned boss to question all complaints against him, while maintaining contact with the shooter to gather more details. The higher boss may not act against the target, as shown in (6.C), but will maintain listening to the shooter to get more feedback about the efficiency of the concerned boss for future evaluation or direction.

Figure (6)
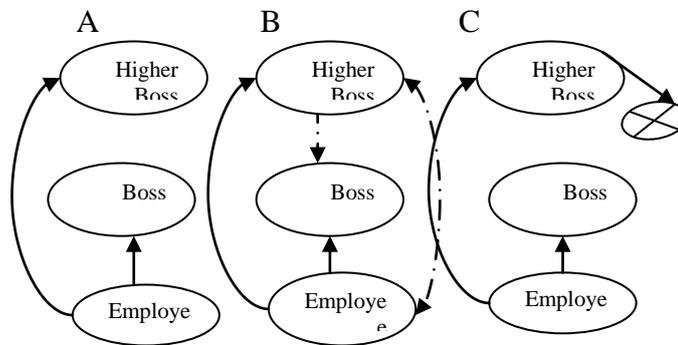
Third, a boss may complain or argue against a competing person to a higher boss, as in (7.A). The higher boss, in turn, may maintain communication with both parties, as in (7.B). As a result, no action against the target may be taken. The higher boss may decide to discontinue communication with the shooter himself who fails to provide logical reasons against his target, as in (7.C). The shooter is a loser in this case, because the higher boss will maintain communication with his opponent. In other words, failure to practice strong shooting may change into a critical shooting against the shooter himself.

Figure (7)
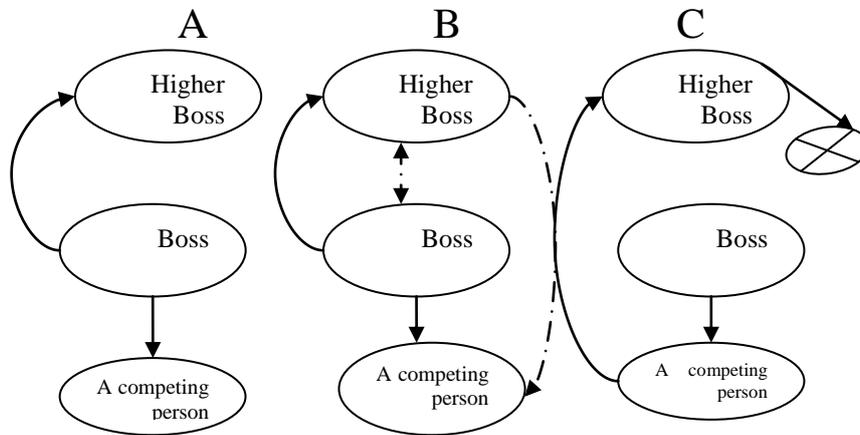
Fourth, a boss may argue against an employee to a higher boss, as in (8.A). The higher boss, in turn, may maintain communication with this boss whose arguments might be convincing, as in (8.B). As a result, the higher boss may continue communication with the shooter to receive further information which will affect the status of the target and lead to making a decision against him.

Figure (8)
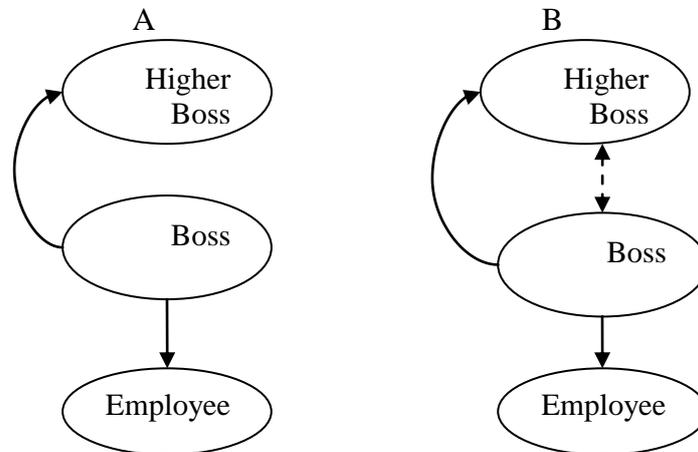
Fifth, the same scenario mentioned above might be repeated but with a different shooter and a different target. Employee A may argue against employee B to their boss, as in (9.A). The boss may listen to the shooter whose arguments might be convincing, as in (9.B).

Eventually, the boss may maintain contact with the shooter to receive further details which will affect the status of the target and lead to making a decision against him.

Figure (9)
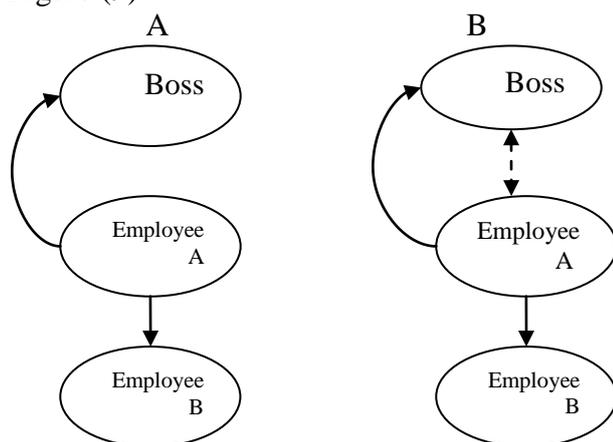
11. Effects of *ṭaxṭaxa*

The question is: does shooting affect the target? The answer is yes. This is evident from the following examples, where in (42) the shooter expresses his ability in achieving his aim through defeating his target:

(42) *'axaḏha bil'aẓal* 'I gave it (the shot) to him in the muscle'

fi aṣṣamīm '(he received the shot) in the heart'
ṭil'at min rāṣuh 'it (the shot) went out of his head'

To avoid consequences , and as a protection measure, it becomes common among employees to warn each other by using labels that address a boss or certain peers who are skillful in practicing *ṭaxṭaxa* routinely.

(43) *fīšu wilgabbir*   'his shot sends to the grave'
     lsānuh munšār   'his tongue is a saw
     kalamuh yugtul   'his speech kills'

     'abu alma'arik   'father of battles'

     fiarbağy   'a warrior'

12. Conclusion

The broad scenario of "a war of words" which represents "a conflict between languages or language and varieties" (Suleiman 2004: 15) is

clearly evident when it is narrowed to an administrative setting, as it sheds light on a specific instance of such war. In this particular setting, which has its own linguistic aspects and components, an aggressive version of Arabic is used. This version triggers a battle of words which concerns a linguistic fight or struggle "between the speakers of a language who compete over resources and values in their milieus".

In an administrative setting, a battle of words can occur. In this battle, a skillful ṭaxxīx 'shooter'or fiarbaǧy 'warrior'does his best to use the available weapons, which are words and expressions, to fight and defeat an opponent in "a conflict" triggered by a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values, and interests.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. [1] The following symbols with their Arabic equivalents are used throughout this paper; ' ء, *d* ذ, *ḍ* ض, *k* ك, *b* ب, *ḏ* ذ, *ṭ* ط, *l* ل, *t* ت, *r* ر, *ẓ* ظ, *m* م, *θ* ث, *z* ز, *ʿ* ع, *n* ن, *q* ق, *ṣ* ص, *x* خ, *y* ي, *w* و, *f* ف, *š,č* ش, *fi* هـ, *h* ح, *ġ* غ, *s* س, *ğ* ج

2. [2] This research was conducted during my sabbatical at Prince Mohamad Bin Fahad University at Al-Khobar, KSA in the academic year 2007/2008. This study is based on my personal experience taking over two different administrative positions at Mu'tah University, Jordan, for more than seven continuous years. This experience gave me the chance to interact with administrative staff at different administrative levels in different times and situations. A questionnaire was also distributed during August, 2007 to more than 50 persons who were in different administrative positions at Mu'tah University. It includes the following questions:
   1. What do you think of ṭaxṭaxa?
   2. Who are involved in it?
   3. What are the types of it?
   4. Do you practice ṭaxṭaxa?
   5. When do people practice it?
   6. Why do other people practice it?
   7. What are the advantages of it?
   8. What are the disadvantages of it?
   9. How do you react to it?
   10. How do other people react to it?
   11. What common expressions used to express it?
   12. How do you defend yourself from it?
   13. How do you defend others from it?
   14. What are the reasons behind it?
   15. What blocks it?

3. [3] The following notions will be used for figure 1 – 9. Head of the curved non-dotted line means talking with or complaining to, head of the straight line means talking against, head of the curved dotted line means talking against, two heads means making a continuous contact, and a circle with a cross means no action is taken.

4. [4] This is represented by a crossed circle