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**Identity in Narratives of Arab and African Refugees
(2012-2016): A Sociolinguistic Perspective**

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To
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Dedication

To

my parents

For their endless love and unconditional support

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Abstract

The present study examines narratives of Arab and African refugees from 2012 to 2016, to highlight how the refugees' identity is constructed in their narratives. Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed international borders, searching for safety in another country. Employing Lieblich et al.'s holistic-content perspective (1998), the Appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2005), Labov's structural model (1999; 2006), the model of Speech and Thought Presentation (S&TP) developed by Short (1996), and Bucholtz and Hall's identity framework (2005), the study shows that, in terms of the narratives' thematic concerns, the refugees' intense suffering and their tortuous journeys are developed as the narratives' principal foci. From an Appraisal-framework perspective, tokens of negative affect are excessively depicted, marking Arab and African refugees' deep sense of insecurity, whereas tokens of positive judgement are noted, representing the refugees as determined and hopeful. In addition, tokens of negative appreciation are identified, exploring the complex situation in Arab and African countries leading to the refugees' unbearable experience of suffering. Incorporating Labov's structural model within the model of S&TP, it is noted that orientation, complication and evaluation are the most dominant elements used to explore refugees' identity features through the categories of DS & NRA (Speech Presentation) as well as NRTA and NRT (Thought Presentation). As for Bucholtz and Hall's identity framework, analyzing the features of the indexicality principle explores the various identity roles occupied by refugees, illuminating their representation as powerless agents who are forced to leave their homeland and search for a safer place (Arab refugees) and as hapless victims who display a strong sense of belonging to cultural and African traditions (African refugees). Thus, the study's major linguistic models intertwine discursively to highlight the constructed refugees' identity, making their voices heard and appealing for the public's attention.

Keywords: Identity, Narratives, Arab and African Refugees, the Appraisal Framework, Evaluation and Speech & Thought Presentation.

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List of Abbreviations

DS	Direct Speech
DT	Direct Thought
FIS	Free Indirect Speech
FIT	Free Indirect Thought
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IS	Interactional Sociolinguistics
IS	Indirect Speech
IT	Indirect Thought
NRA	Narrator's Representation of Action
NRS	Narrator's Representation of Speech
NRSA	Narrator's Representation of Speech Acts
NRT	Narrator's Representation of Thought
NRTA	Narrator's Representation of Thought Acts
S&TP	Speech and Thought Presentation
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

0.1. Context of the Study:

The present study tackles the crisis of Arab and African refugees and asylum seekers owing to its great prominence in different discourse genres in the last ten years. Refugees are people fleeing conflicts or persecution, whilst asylum seekers are those “whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed” (UNHCR website, 2015, “Asylum Seekers”). A refugee usually experiences growing fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political views or membership in a particular social group. This study examines different narratives of Arab and African refugees and asylum seekers from 2012 to 2016, providing an insight about how refugees’ identity is constructed in their personal narratives. Shetty (2010) argues that identity emerges during interactional exchanges through the telling of narratives (p. 97).

The present study adopts the framework of Sociolinguistics to investigate the process of identity construction in refugees and asylum seekers’ narratives. Within the field of sociolinguistics, narrative research occupies a leading role. It is noted that when narrators tell a story, they “give narrative form to experience” as they position characters in space and time and they make sense of what has happened and the events they have gone through (Bamberg, 2012, p. 77). Hence, the present study analyzes personal narratives

of Arab and African refugees and asylum seekers, highlighting how identity is shaped in refugees' narrative discourse.

0.2. Objectives of the Study:

The present study has five major objectives. It aims at: first, highlighting the representation of Arab and African refugees in the data under investigation through examining the sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors represented in the selected narratives; second, revealing how Arab and African refugees construct their own identity in their personal narratives; third, revealing points of similarities and differences between Arab and African refugees with regard to expressing emotions and finally, drawing the lines of interface between personal narratives and identity from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

0.3. Research Questions:

To achieve the above aims, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) How are Arab and African refugees represented in the data under investigation?
- 2) How do the lexical and thematic choices employed in the selected narratives in the light of the Appraisal framework and Lieblich, Mashiach and Zilber's holistic-content perspective (1998) help construct the identity of Arab and African refugees?

- 3) How do the linguistic choices in the light of the Labovian model and the model of Speech and Thought Presentation (S&TP) complement each other in shaping the identity of refugees?
- 4) How do all the previously mentioned elements intertwine discursively to underline the difference in the process of identity formation between Arab and African refugees, based on their cultural and racial backgrounds?
- 5) How do the sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors represented in the selected narratives help establish the link between personal narratives and the notion of identity?

0.4. Scope of the Study:

The present study focuses on narrative discourse. It performs an analysis of personal narratives of Arab and African refugees from the perspective of sociolinguistics covering the time span from 2012 to 2016 and using five distinct linguistic models, namely; Liebllich et al.'s holistic-content perspective (1998), the Appraisal framework proposed by Martin and White (2005), Labov's narrative model (1999; 2006), the categories of Speech and Thought Presentation (S&TP) developed by Short (1996) and Bucholtz and Hall's framework for analyzing identity (2005), to underline the process of identity formation in refugees and asylum seekers' narratives.