Epitaph in Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract

The study explores the sociolinguistic aspects of epitaphs in Arabic. It examines the use of language and its impact on the meaning and interpretation of epitaphs, as well as the cultural and social contexts in which they are used. This genre has received little attention in studies. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of language in shaping how the dead are remembered and honored. The study aims to analyze the syntactic and morphological aspects of epitaphs in Arabic beside examining the semantic content and use of euphemistic expressions in Arabic epitaphs. The study Identifies social factors like gender, age, and status that influence the writing of epitaphs and how the deceased's role in life is portrayed. Finally, the study aims to explore the cultural values and beliefs about death and the afterlife reflected in Arabic epitaphs. The study analyzes thirteen Arabic epitaphs using a sociolinguistic approach, considering linguistic factors like sentence structure and semantics, as well as social variables. The key findings indicate differences in morpho-syntactic structure, with Arabic marking gender explicitly. Arabic epitaphs convey the denotative meanings of their cultural contexts, using more euphemisms. Social factors like gender, age, and status are more frequently reflected in Arabic epitaph. There are differences in the linguistic cues used for male versus female epitaphs. The study provides insights into how language reflects cultural and societal norms in funeral rituals.

Keywords: *Epitaph, Euphemistic Expressions, Morpho-Syntactic Structure.*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humans have grappled with the inevitability of mortality, seeking ways to immortalize the memories of their departed loved ones. One such timeless tradition that transcends cultures and civilizations is the writing of epitaphs (Bernhardt-Kabisch, 1967:113). These inscriptions, carved on gravestones or memorials, serve as a lasting tribute to the deceased, preserving their legacies and offering solace to those left behind. From a sociolinguistic perspective, epitaphs offer glimpses into the language and communication practices of specific societies or time periods. Epitaph analysis can provide insights into the social hierarchy of a community by examining the symbols and language used which can indicate the status of the deceased or their family (Pearson, 2003: 69). According to Davies (2002: l0l) The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites,' studying epitaphs can be a multidisciplinary pursuit. Davies argues that epitaphs can provide insights into various fields, including linguistics, history, sociology, anthropology, genealogy, and literature. As researchers continue to explore these concise yet profound inscriptions, they not only honor the departed but also unlock a treasure trove of knowledge about the past.

The adopted model in this study is an eclectic one. It consists of two main parts, linguistic and sociolinguistic ones. Linguistically, Quirk, et al (1985) and Aziz's (1989) model where sentence types, tense, active and passive constructions, finite andon-finite verb forms, and apposition have

been conducted. Moreover, Leech's (1981) theory of sense relations, associative type of meaning, and euphemism are used too. In sociolinguistics, Holmes' (2013) social variables and culture analysis are conducted as well. This study aims to Analyze the syntactic and morphological aspects of epitaphs Arabic, examine the impact of semantic content of the interpretation of epitaphs, and how it affects their meaning. Investigate the use of euphemistic expressions epitaphs and how it varies depending on the social context in which they are used. Identify the social factors concerning gender, age, status that influence in writing an epitaph and how the deceased's role in his life is reflected. Explore the cultural values and beliefs about death and the afterlife reflected in the cultural context of epitaphs.

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LITERATURE REVIEW
EPITAPH AND RELATED TERMS

An epitaph is a brief inscription carved on a gravestone or monument that serves as a written tribute or final message for someone who has passed away. Epitaphs play a significant role in remembering and honoring the deceased through memorials and plaques as they help preserve the memory of loved ones and bring solace to mourners, as noted by Smith (2015). Their purpose is to summarize an individual's life in a few memorable words for future generations, according to Cohen (1999: 78). Traditionally, epitaphs were beautifully worded inscriptions on monuments that paid respect to the deceased by commemorating them and expressing their character and the grief of their death through lyrical rhyme to evoke remembrance and mourning, as Williams (2008:23) discusses. In antiquity, epitaph inscriptions preserved the memory of important community and national figures, referred to as "historical hailers", ensuring their names and achievements would be remembered for generations, as explained by Thorne (2014). A superscription in verse or prose on a tomb, grave or burial briefly declared the deceased's name, age, qualities, status, virtues, fortunes in life, and manner and time of death, according to Camden (1639) as cited in Brunton (2020: 27).

Epitaph, elegy, and epigram are three forms used throughout history to commemorate the dead, express grief, and honour loved ones. While each state has unique characteristics, they all share a common theme of remembrance and reflection. Elegy is a pensive melancholy poem or a poem expresses sorrow for one who has died (Johanson, 2010: 153). Epigram, on the other hand, is initially a brief poem produced for reminder. Sepulchral notes have been short due to the time and expense of engraving and the space restrictions on stones (Scodel, 1991: 50). An epigraph is a line, a verse, a quotation, or a motto at the beginning of a book, chapter or a poem that indicates its theme(Sharmas, 1998: 51).

THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN ARAB SOCIETIES

Dying is an inevitable transition from life to death. Therefore, the opposite of life is death. Since the dead do not come back, there is no way to reconcile. Inscriptions on tombstones and epitaphs in general could be seen as representing the core of the human condition, which is death. Death continues to be one of the biggest taboos in modern societies. As a result, language users find it difficult to discuss death in straightforward. In order to convey death, they turn to metaphorical language. Thus, death metaphors are found in epitaphs (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 135). Death and the afterlife as Shakespeare called ' the undiscovered country ' from which no one returns (Segal, 2010: 2). However, each culture, religion, and legal system have a unique meaning of death and a different definition of when life ends. Since the dawn of civilization, the fundamental fears and uncertainties about the nature and stage of death have impacted cultural production. The same goes for people's ambiguous and anxious attitudes regarding death. (Vidal & Blanco, 2014: 1).

According to Islamic belief, God Almighty is the only one Who gives life, and take the souls back which leads to death. No one else can do that except with a special permission from Him, the Almighty: " Allah take the souls back at the moment of their death …" (Azumar: 42). As for death (الوفاة), it is the process that takes place when a person is at the moment of death and at the moment of sleep. Hence it is said: *He is died* توفي is always in the passive voice, unlike the matter regarding مات *(he died)* which is expressed in the active voice, and also in the passive voice (omeet أميت), when the cause of his death is external, such as being killed by a person or a accident , etc. (Al-Asfar, 2020: 20). Lakoff and Turner (1989) examined common euphemisms for death. In terms of root metaphors, "LIFE IS BEING HERE" and "DEATH IS DEPARTURE" come to mind, as well as "passed away" and "was taken from us." However, many religious traditions hold that a person has a soul separate from their physical body and thus literally views death as both a departure and a release. Additionally, the usage may be metaphorical for someone conversant with such a religious system, but it is still founded on the primary metaphor. "DEATH IS THE DEPARTURE OF AN IMMATERIAL SOUL." It is necessary to consider the cultural, religious, and occasionally even political circumstances to comprehend the use of one of these terms (Braman, 2004: 41).

TYPES AND FEATURES OF EPITAPH

Epitaphs go beyond as being a mere announcement of demise; rather, they serve as evidence of how humankind views mortality. Tombstone inscriptions are unquestionably very diverse, and this diversity is precisely where much of their value lies. Epitaphs are a hybrid genre, much like obituaries, in which publicity and information coexist with objectivity and passion. There are two types of epitaphs: informative and opinion. Informative

epitaphs are objective inscriptions that provide basic information (such as the name of the decedent, the dates of birth and death or the age at death). Opinion epitaphs are private and intimate funeral texts in which feelings and emotions, as well as social and political concerns, play a significant role. The table below lists the qualities of both types of epitaphs (García et al., 2013: 205). When it describes the traits and deeds of the honourable man, an epitaph honouring the deceased is rightly regarded as the noblest and pure form of praise. Private virtues are unquestionably just as deserving of this honour as public ones, and the titles of a good citizen, friend, or father amply justify being inscribed on brass or marble. A decent man's tomb can partially fill the void left by his absence and, by encouraging respect for his memory, serves as a stand-in for the opportunity to learn from and emulate him. Epitaphs can be viewed as a way for the living to communicate with the deceased or a means of giving serious instructions (Pettigrew,1857: 18-19). Unquestionably, an epitaph ought to be brief as Scodel (1991: 2) has mentioned because of space limitations and expense, and the time involved in inscribing a monument, and portray feelings with beauty and tenderness. An epitaph should contain everything that expresses love, sadness, faith, hope, resignation, and purity. It should be relevant to the buried person and should not take too long to be remembered. Its purpose is to preserve important memories and arouse empathy in the viewer. Honest and sincere sorrow is never talkative. It should refer to the common fate of all in communicating solace and warning and instruct people to look up from the cemetery to a higher plane of existence (Pettigrew, 1857: 25-26).

RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

The research method in this study is qualitative method, namely analyzing of four Arabic epitaphs. Data collection techniques are carried out by actual visits to the cemetery and taking pictures of the various tombstones. The researcher analyzes epitaphs using two level of Analysis Grammatical Level and Social Level. The first level implies a Morpho-syntactic and semantic analysis, while the second level carries the analysis of social factors with euphemisms and cultural analysis. Epitaphs are analyzed depending on the adopted model and as it is shown in the following figures below:
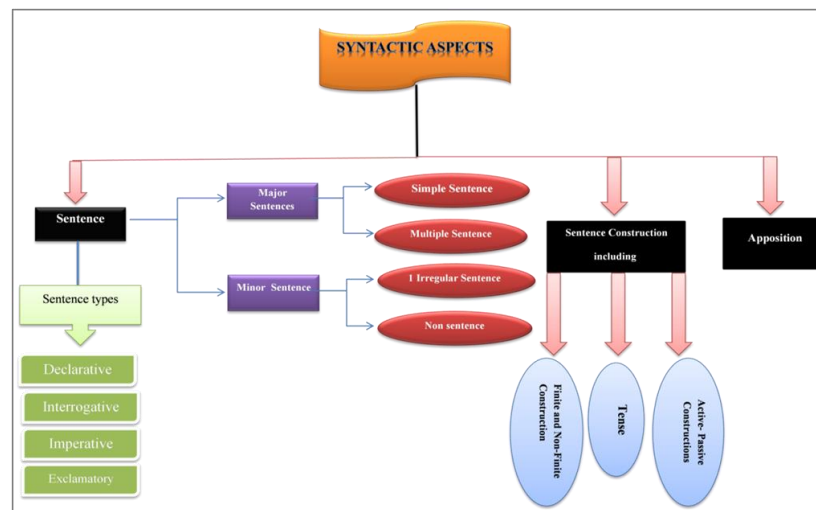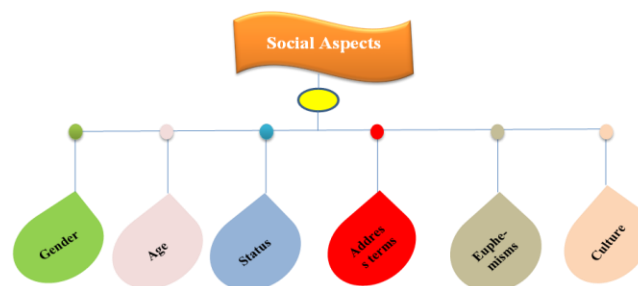

Figure 3.1 The Syntactic Aspects
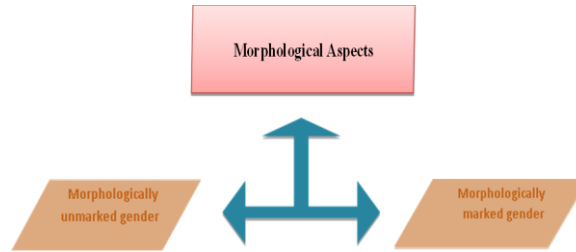

Figure 3.3 The Social Aspects

Figure 3.2 The Morphological Aspects

The Procedure of Analysis

Firstly, a brief description of each epitaph is set in advance under its picture with their textual components written down. Next, the linguistic analysis which focuses on the morpho-syntactic. Syntactically, it tackles sentence structures, namely, major and minor sentences, and their types. Moreover, Syntactic analysis also handles passivation, tense, finite and non-finite verb form and apposition. Then morphologically, it is restricted to gender morphemes in terms of free and bound ones. Semantically, the analysis tackles the associative meaning of epitaph beside sense relations found among lexicons. This sublevel of analysis appears when the epitaph under analysis contains gender morphemes, otherwise it is skipped.

The outcome of this linguistic level of analysis is going to be the bread and butter of a comparative study of both languages' grammatical structure, word choice, and sentence structure

Finally, the sociolinguistic analysis which explores the social factors (gender, age, status), whereas, in gender, personal names are ignored because they are common facts, yet only the morpho-syntactic genders are analyzed as a social factor. In addition, address terms, euphemistic expression, and cultural analysis that influence how epitaphs are written in English also examined. The analysis will also explore the role of language in shaping social identity and relationships.

SAMPLES OF ANALYSIS
Sample 1

This gravestone's epitaph is taken from Álusha cemetery in Salah Ad-Din province – Iraq. This grave marker (headstone) is an individual one that stands for a mother as it is stated from its textual component:

<div align="center">

My mother is the first homeland and the last exile

the pilgrim Wadha Nouri Hazza

Passed away 2021\12\22

</div>

Grammatical Level
Morphological Analysis

The following epitaph will be analyzed morphologically to determine the markers that determine gender(Morphologically marked) :

-The suffix "ة" in "الحاجة" indicates that the deceased is a female.   It is a feminine marker in Arabic.

-The suffix "ت" in "توفيت" indicates that the deceased is a female. It is a feminine marker in Arabic.

Syntactic Analysis

The sentence *"My mother is the first homeland and the last exile "* is a nominal sentence. It's a declarative major sentence. This simple sentence structure makes a statement consists of a subject and a predicate. The predicate comprises two clauses, The first clause is 'the first homeland', while the second clause is 'and the last exile '. Using the word 'and' creates a sense of continuity between the two clauses.

"Al-Hajja (the pilgrim) Wadha Nouri Hazza" is a major nominal declarative sentence, it is an apposition that functions as the predicate of the omitted subject of the sentence (this is the grave) which is omitted due to the small size of the tombstone (for curtailment) and the subject is already known. Passive voice indicates by the minor non-sentence which is the verb phrase توفيت *"passed away"* that is a finite verb in passive past tense indicating that the action has already occurred .

Semantic Analysis

The epitaph 'My mother is the first homeland and the last expatriate' implies a few sense relations:

Metaphor

The epitaph employs a metaphorical device. The speaker compares their mother to a homeland, suggesting that their mother is a place of comfort and familiarity, where they belong. 'homeland' also used as a metaphor for one's roots or identity. Using the word 'last' in the second clause creates a sense of finality and loss, emphasizing the idea of a departure from one's homeland.

Antonym

The phrase 'first homeland and last exile ' contrasts two opposing ideas. The speaker's mother is both their home and their departure point, suggesting that the mother is both a source of comfort and a reminder of the pain of leaving. 'first' and ' last' represent reverse antonymous relation while 'homeland' and 'expatriate' denote non-gradable antonymy.

Social Level

According to Holmes, language is a critical factor in establishing and maintaining social relationships and can be used to express one's identity. In this case, using the word "homeland" to describe the speaker's mother presents a strong emotional connection to their family.

-Gender: From a sociolinguistic perspective, using the term 'mother' highlights the significance of family and motherly duties typically linked to femininity, it implies that women are traditionally associated with motherhood and caregiving role.

-Age: The use of the term 'Hajja' before the deceased's name suggests that she was an elderly women. Additionally, the term 'mother' implies that the deceased was a mother and the speaker is one of her children which reinforces the assumption of her age.

-Status

The phrase 'My mother is the first homeland and the last expatriate' is a poetic expression highlighting the importance of the deceased's role as a mother and her relation with her children. This suggests that the deceased was highly valued within her family. The phrase also stresses the deep bond between a mother and her child and the loss and displacement felt by those left behind. 'homeland' is often associated with a physical place or country.

Using the word "mother" strongly emphasizes maternal status as a married women who has children.

The use of the term 'pilgrim' which precedes the deceased's name indicates a level of religious devotion and status within her community.

-Address Forms

The term "Hajja" is a honorific title given to Muslim women who have successfully completed the pilgrimage to Mecca and is a term of respect for older women in general.

The second address form used in this epitaph is the kinship term "mother"

First, middle and last name are mentioned in this epitaph.

-Euphemism: Arabic epitaphs often use euphemistic expressions to comfort family and friends during a difficult time. 'passed away' توفيت is used as a way to soften the blow of death and comfort to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one."

-Cultural Analysis: Arabic epitaphs have evolved, reflecting changes in culture and society. In the past, epitaphs were often simple, focusing on religious themes and the afterlife. However, modern epitaphs are more personal and often include expressions of love and gratitude for the deceased. Arabs often use themes of home and homeland to provide a sense of comfort and belonging for their loved ones. These themes are deeply rooted in Arab culture, where the concept of home is highly valued and cherished.

Whereas, motherhood is highly valued and respected, mothers are often referred to as a homeland, this epitaph 'My mother is the first homeland and the last expatriate' indicates that one's mother is one's true home, and even after death, one remains an expatriate, meaning that the love and connection to one's mother transcends physical boundaries. The whole epitaph is written in black color which is used as symbol of loose and mourning on a marble grave marker.

Sample 2
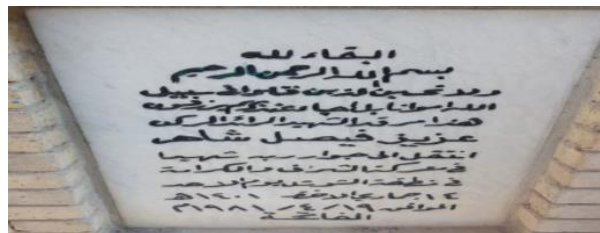
This gravestone's epitaph is taken from Al-khayzran cemetery in Baghdad-Iraq. The headstone which is a documentary one with some additional information, is an individual one which stands for a martyr as it is stated in its textual component:

"To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.
With the name of Allah the most Gracious the most Merciful
Think not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision.

This is the grave of the martyr, Staff Major Aziz Faisal Shaher, who moved next to his Lord as a martyr on Sunday, 14 Jumada al-Akhir 1401 AH (corresponding to April 19, 1981), in the battle of honor and dignity in the Shush region. Al Fatiha"

Grammatical Level
Morphological Analysis
Arabic is one of the languages that distinguish between male and female through some additions (affixes) at the beginning or end of the word as a prefix or suffix. The adjective (the martyr) is written in masculine form since the feminine form of this adjective is by adding (ة) at the end of it.

Syntactic Analysis
In this epitaph, the sentence (this is the shrine of the martyr staff major Aziz Faisal Shaher) is a declarative major nominal sentence . The statement entails facts related to the deceased ″Aziz Faisal Shaher ″.

The nominal sentence consists of The adverb' this هذا ' is the subject of the sentence and ″The grave of the martyr staff major Aziz Faisal Shaher قبر الشهيد الرائد الركن عزيز فيصل شاهر' is the predicate. The predicate consists of a noun phrase, with 'grave قبر' as the head and 'the martyr, staff martyr Aziz Faisal Shaher ', as the modifiers. The descriptive phrase includes a series of adjectives and nouns that indicate the rank and name of the dead.

The epitaph contains several aspect markers that convey information about the timing and nature of the related events. The verb انتقل "moved" is, in the past tense, which shows that the martyr's death has already occurred. The preposition الى"to" is followed by the phrase جوار ربه "next to his Lord" indicating where the martyr's soul is after death. The adjective شهيدا", as a martyr" describes how the martyr died. The verbal clause indicating through the sentence (moved next to his God) which is a declarative major sentence . (*moved*) is a finite verb , indicating tense (past tense), gender , person and number (third person singular) written in active form.

The prepositional phrase 'في معركة الشرف والكرامة في منطقة الشوشل' (in the battle of honour and dignity in the Shoushal region) modifies the verb 'انتقل', indicating the location and circumstances of the martyr's death. The adverbial phrase (Sunday, 14 Jumada al-Akhirah 1401 AH) refers to the specific day of the martyr's death. The noun phrase 'الموافق' (corresponding to) is followed by the date '19/4/1981', meaning the corresponding Gregorian date.

Semantic Analysis
The epitaphs language evokes emotions, Conveying a sense of martyrdom and heroism. The phrase "Do not think of those who have been killed in the way of Allah, as dead. They are alive with their Lord receiving sustenance" is a quote, from the Quran (2;154) that highlights the concept of martyrdom and life after death. The inclusion of the word "martyr" further strengthens this notion.

The epitaph of Aziz Faisal Shaher beautifully commemorates his courage and selflessness, as a martyr in the fight for honor and dignity. Overall, this inscription serves as a tribute, to Shaher's bravery and unwavering dedication to his cause. The use of the term "martyr" emphasizes his sacrifice and deep devotion to his beliefs while the phrase "beside his Lord" alludes to his faith and profound spiritual commitment. By mentioning the location and date of his passing, the epitaph provides historical context that further amplifies its significance..

Sense relations typically involve the semantic relationship between words or concepts within a sentence or text.
Antonymy
The verse of Quran contains an example of Antonymy which is a "relationship of opposition" between words, such as with "dead" and "alive" in the Qur'an verse as a type of Non-gradable Antoymy.

Synonyms
The verse also contains an example of near synonyms which are expressions that are more or less similar. In Islamic culture, martyrdom is considered a great honour and a way to attain paradise. The word *martyr* repeated twice to convey the sense of death, so the two concepts martyrdom and death could be seen as near synonyms.

This epitaph is meant to remind believers that death is not the end but rather a transition to a new life in the afterlife.
Metaphor
The terms "dead" and "alive" are employed metaphorically to convey the concept of an existence beyond death. The word "receiving" suggests a flow of nourishment and support. The reference to the battle of honour and dignity suggests that

the battle was fought for a noble reason and that Aziz Faisal Shaher was a hero who died defending his country and his people's honor and dignity.

In (He moved next to his Lord) the sense relation of Metaphor can be recognized. Metaphor is a form of figurative language which involves describing something in term of another thing. Instead of using the verb died, the verb phrase *moved next to* acting as moving from one life to another . life likened to a journey and death is the end of that journey where the deceased move from it to another life , even the Qur'an quotation carries out this fact, the martyrs are treated as alive not a dead . So the word chosen to describe his death was moved - as moving from one life to another or from one station to another- .

Social Level

The social level of this epitaph shows a great deal of knowledge about language functioning, social interactions in a community, and how people express and construct aspects of their social identity through their language .

-Gender: In Arabic language, gender is typically indicated by using masculine and feminine word forms. In this epitaph, the usage of adjective masculine forms like" major" and "martyr" further reinforces the notion that the individual in question was indeed male.

-Age: Taking the language indicators found in this epitaph into account, we can deduce that the individual who passed away was probably a middle-aged or older military officer with a high rank at the time of his death.

-Status: The epitaph of Aziz Shaher pays tribute to a *martyr* who lost his life in a battle fighting for honor and dignity. The epitaph suggests that the deceased was motivated by his faith to fight in the battle.

The staff major, which is a rank in military, shows the deceased status and contribution to his country that has been represented through his sacrifice in defense of his country in the battle of honor and dignity, and even the name of the battle, added to the high status of the deceased, as he died in the defense of the honor and dignity of his country.

The verse, from the holy Quran, holds symbolism within culture. It serves as a messages of condolence and comfort for the family of the deceased, emphasizing the value of sacrifice and martyrdom within traditions.

- **Address form**: Address forms and titles used in the epitaph provide insights into the age, social status, military rank, and religious beliefs at the time of death.

The dead, Just like the living, have an identifying identity, which is their own grave. Therefore, the tombstones contain the names of the deceased in commemoration of them by mentioning their names and any information that pertains to them. First, middle and last name are mentioned as identification of the deceased so family members, acquaintances, friends and loved ones can easily distinguish the grave from the rest.

In this epitaph, the deceased is referred to as a martyr (religious term) and the mention of his death in a battle also suggests a certain level of heroism and sacrifice," الرائد الركن" (the staff major), indicates that he held a rank in the military which typically requires several years of experience (attaining this rank as a result of the promotions he has received and the scientific courses he has obtained). This shows how social considerations affect language choice.

-Euphemism: The epitaph uses religious language which serves as a way to soften the impact of death, *the martyr* is used euphemistically instead of using *the dead*. The Qur'an verse comforts the deceased's family and community and reinforces the belief that the deceased sacrifice was noble and worthwhile.

"Moved to be with his Lord, as a martyr" could be seen as an euphemism indicating someone has died. It is a common way of referring to death in many cultures and can be seen as a way of softening the blow of the loss.

-Cultural Analysis: Making reference to a verse from the Quran symbolizing the culture and its religious convictions. The verse, that discusses the notion of individuals who pass away while serving God not being seen as dead, on the contrary as alive and cared for by God. This verse is frequently recited during funeral prayers serving as a reminder of the faith in life, after death and the dedication of those who perish while serving God.

The epitaph employs religious language (such as *البقاء لله* which emphasizes the idea of mortality and the inevitability of death), and symbolism to communicate the martyrdom and honor of the deceased, in battle. The phrase "moved to be, with his Lord" is a known expression used to describe someone who has passed away and is believed to have ascended to heaven. This phrase implies that the departed was a devoted Muslim and their demise was seen as an honorable sacrifice. The phrase *"The battle of honour and dignity" "معركة الشرف والكرامة".* implies that the battle held some significance and possibly had value. Even the battle location is mentioned, " الشوش " which could indicate a region that played a role, in the conflict Additionally, the reference to the date of the battle (14 جمادي الاخر 1401 هـ) and the date of the epitaph (19\4\1981) suggests that the deceased's sacrifice was still remembered and honoured years after the event. This reflects the cultural value placed on martyrdom and sacrifice in Islamic society.

In epitaphs, the use of white and black colors can create a sense of balance and contrast, drawing attention to the most important elements of the text.

White Color

In epitaphs, white color is often used to symbolize purity, innocence, and peace. It is also associated with mourning and grief, as it represents the absence of life and the emptiness left behind. In this gravestone it's used as the background of the epitaph.

Black Color

Black color is commonly used in epitaphs to represent death, mourning, and remembrance. It is associated with the darkness and finality of death, as well as the weight of grief and loss.

Sample 3

> With the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
> "Verily, the promise of Allah is true."
> The deceased young man
> Mohamed Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim
> passed away on 2019\11\20
> buried above his father
> the deceased al Hajj   Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim
> passed away on 1980\1\20
> Al-Fatiha.

This gravestone's epitaph is taken from Al-khayzran cemetery in Baghdad province - Iraq. The headstone which is a documentary one with some additional information, is a dual one which stands for a deceased and his father as it is stated in its textual component:

Grammatical Level
Morphological Analysis

The first epitaph describes the deceased as a young man named Mohammed Alaa Eldin Abdel Halim, who passed away on November 20, 2019, and was buried above his father, the use of the adjectives ' the young deceased' (الشاب المرحوم) in a masculine gender form and the absence of any feminine marker indicates that the deceased was male.

The second epitaph describes the deceased as Mohammed Alaa Eldin Abdel Halim, who passed away on January 20, 1980. The use of the honorific title 'Al-Hajj' (الحاج) and the adjective the deceased (المرحوم) in a masculine gender form indicates that the deceased was male.

Syntactic Analysis

The given epitaph consists of two sentences describing the death of a person. The first sentence describes the death of a young man named Mohammed Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim, who passed away on November 20, 2019 and was buried above his father. The second sentence describes the death of Mohammed's father named Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim, who passed away on January 20, 1980, and is referred to as 'the deceased pilgrim'.

sentence 1

المرحوم الشاب محمد علاء الدين عبد الحليم توفي 20\11\2019.

The deceased young man Mohamed Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim passed away on 2019\11\20.

The first sentence is a major nominal declarative sentence in which the appositive *'The deceased young man Mohamed Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim'* is the predicate of an omitted subject (this is the grave). توفي *(passed away)* is a finite verb (indicating tense , gender , person and number; third person singular) in past tense that taking passive form. The verbal clauses functioning as a second predicate to the omitted subject (this is the grave).

sentence 2

دفن فوق أبيه المرحوم الحاج علاء الدين عبد الحليم توفي 20\1\1980.

the deceased al Hajj Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim passed away on 1980\1\20.

The second sentence is a   major verbal sentence in which *buried* is a finite verb written in past tense with passive construction. *above his father* is adverbial clause and the appositive '*the deceased al Hajj Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim*' is the Pro-agent. The verb phrase (*passed away*) is a minor non-sentence in which the past verb also written in passive form.

Epitaphs are an essential part of Arab culture, serving to honour and remember the deceased. In this epitaph, two sentences are presented in the past tense passive voice, a standard syntactical structure used in Arabic epitaphs. This construction emphasizes the action done to the deceased rather than the deceased themselves and can significantly impact the epitaph's overall tone and meaning.

Semantic Analysis

The epitaph begins with the phrase *'With the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful'*. This common phrase is used in Islamic writings and indicates the deceased's faith in God .The last part of the epitaph mentions that the deceased was buried above his father. This placement may indicate a close relationship between the father and son and a desire to be buried in a close approximant.

The Quran quote on the epitaph reads, *"Verily, the promise of Allah is true."* from Surat Al Room:60 when Allah was addressing His prophet Mohammed (May the blessing of Allah be upon him). This quote is significant in Islamic belief as it emphasizes the importance of trusting in Allah's promises and it is an explanation for the matter of patience (as the Ayah begins with *So be patient (Muhammad* صل الله عليه وسلم)., it is as a homage to the Prophet to fulfill God's promise of taking revenge on the deceits and support the Messenger, may blessings and peace be upon him.

In Muslim belief, the use of passive voice in epitaphs is significant as it reflects cultural values and beliefs about death and the afterlife. God Almighty alone is the one who gives life and causes death. Evil actions shouldn't be attached to God hence it is said: (He passed away) in the passive voice always.

Social Level

-**Gender**: In the given epitaph, the use of the masculine form of the adjective "deceased" المرحوم and the pronoun (his) further supports the inference that the deceased were males.

 Inference of the deceased gender can be made through gendered language (gendered marker), the use of 'father' in an epitaph reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations. The noun Father and The use of the honorific "Al-Hajj" before Alaa El-Din name suggests that the deceased was male.

-**Age**: *"The young man"* indicates that the deceased was relatively young at the time of his death. This adds an emotional tone to the epitaph, emphasizing the tragedy of a life cut short. The use of "al-Hajj" before *Alaa El-Din*'s name and mentioning previously that he is a father determining that the age of the deceased as an older man.

-**Status**: The title, in the epitaph for Mohamed Alaa El Din Abdel Halim indicates that he was likely a young man possibly in his twenties or thirties and held a relatively lower social status. Conversely the presence of the title "al Hajj" in the epitaph for al Hajj AlaaEl Din Abdel Halim suggests that he was an individual possibly, in his fifties or sixties and held a higher social standing.

-**Address Forms**: Based on the use of the address form, in the given epitaph, *"The deceased young man*" is the two address forms that are used for *Mohamed Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim*. The use of the address form "al-Hajj" before the deceased father's name indicates that he had completed the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, which signifies a high status within the Muslim community. Honorifics are used to show respect and deference to those of higher social status in traditional societies.

- **Euphemism**: Euphemistic expressions replace words or phrases considered taboo, offensive, or unpleasant with more socially acceptable alternatives. **The Euphemistic Expressions used in this epitaph are:**

> " The deceased young man" (المرحوم الشاب)
> " the deceased al Hajj " (المرحوم الحاج)

In Arabic the term 'المرحوم' is a way to mention an individual who has passed away. The word 'المرحوم' originates, from the root word 'رحم' which signifies mercy and is used to express condolences and sympathy for the soul.

- **Cultural Analysis**: From a sociolinguistic perspective, religious language in this epitaph reflects the cultural and religious background of the deceased and their family. sThis verse "*Verily, Allah's promise is true*" is written on most Muslim gravestones as a reminder of God's promise. The verse has a special interpretation, as mentioned previously in the semantic analysis, but   the true promise , culturally means death, and that humans are mortal, as God promised people of immortality and survival belong to God alone, and that everything is mortal and has an end.

The fact that Mohamed was buried above his father, al-Hajj Alaa El-Din Abdel Halim, suggests a strong family connection, it also shows a strong cultural emphasis on family and lineage, as well as it can represent a love between family members and a desire to be close to one another even in death. In Muslim culture, it is common for family members to be buried near each other and to be visited regularly for prayer and remembrance. This epitaph ends with Al-Fatiha's recitation (the opining chapter in Quran), which consider a common practice in Islamic funerals. It is believed to bring blessings and comfort to the deceased.

Colors are frequently used to mark significant events because they can convey emotions. In Arab culture, black which is associated with death, disgrace, and tragedy, it could also denotes power, senior status, authority, formality. While the color green is consider as a symbol of fertility, blessing, grace and Paradise. The color red symbolizes several meaning, among them is that it could symbolize murder or blood, and this analogy carries a negative meaning in general, as it refers to killing, and the flow of blood in combat.

Sample 4

This gravestone's epitaph which is mixed between documentary and opinion one is taken from Al-Khaizaran cemetery in Baghdad province – Iraq. This Ledger grave marker is an individual one which stands for a deceased as it is stated in its textual component:

<p align="center">With the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful</p>

" And on the earth are signs for those who have Faith with certainty. 21. And also in your own selves. Will you not then see? 22. And in the heaven is your provision, and that which you are promised. 23. Then by the Lord of the heaven and the earth, it is the truth (i.e. what has been promised to you), just as it is the truth that you can speak."

<p align="center">If my chest were a cage for the soul bird
and the soul were the traveling blood
the soul would be nothing but a proud bird
if I release it, it will long for the prison,
and when I keep it, it longs for the branch
and always migrates.
The forgiven deceased's grave
Riyad Abdul Latif Hussein Dhaher Al Nuaimi
born in 1948</p>

He spent 17 years in Iranian prison detention camps and returned to the homeland on 7/7/1998. He passed away on 12 Dhul-Hijjah 1421 AH.

<p align="center">7/ March 2001 AD
Alfatiha for his soul</p>

Grammatical Level
Morphological Analysis

This epitaph contains of several affixes that determine gender. In Arabic, which is a language that has gender bias. The affixes play A significant role in determining the individual's gender. Gender marker (affixes) that are used in the epitaph such as the masculine pronoun (ـه) in "المغفور له" and "لروحه" indicate that the deceased was male.

However, gender indicators in this epitaph are the following :

المرحوم(the deceased) - masculine singular form of "the deceased"

المغفور له - masculine singular form of "the forgiven one". 'قضى' (spent), 'عاد' (returned),

'ولد' (was born) and 'توفي' (passed away)- all were written in masculine singular form.

Syntactic Analysis

From a linguistic perspective, The epitaph consists of nominal and verbal declarative sentences with an apposition. They are typically written in a formal and poetic style, using reverential and emotionally evocative language :

The sentence 'The forgiven deceased's grave;'قبر المرحوم المغفور له is a major nominal sentence in which the noun phrases 'The forgiven deceased's grave' is a predicate of the omitted subject_ due to the lack of space of the tombstone_(this).
" المرحوم المغفور له رياض عبد اللطيف حسين ظاهر النعيمي" serves as the appositive of the sentence.

This epitaph is a clear example of an appositional sentence, which places two or more nouns or noun phrases side by side, with one serving to define or explain the other. In this case, the appositional phrase "the forgiven deceased" describes the deceased, emphasizes his virtues and highlights his status . The sentence implies a declarative sentence type, stating that the deceased, Riad Abdel Latif Hussein Zaher Al Nuaimi, is buried there.

Analysis of the rest of the epitaph read

<div dir="rtl">

ولد سنة   1948

قضى في معتقلات الاسر الايرانية 17 سنة

عاد الى ارض الوطن 7\7\1980.

توفي في 12 ذو الحجة 1421   هـ7 \اذار\2001

لروحه الفاتحة'.

</div>

Sentence type :declarative sentences.

Tense : past tense.

Active voice: 'قضى' (spent), 'عاد' (returned)

Passive voice: 'ولد' (born), 'توفي' (died).

Finite verb form: 'قضى' (spent), 'عاد' (returned), 'ولد' (born), 'توفي' (died).

The four sentences are verbal major ones, two of them are written in active voice while the others are written in passive voice. The use of past tense throughout the epitaph establishes a sense of finality and closure, as all of the events described have already occurred. Using passive voice conveys that a higher power predetermined the individual's life and death "'ولد' (was born), 'توفي' (was died).

In Muslim belief, it is believed that only Allah causes life and death. Therefore, epitaphs in Muslim culture often use passive voice to emphasize the role of Allah in the person's birth and death. So verbs like, "'ولد' (was born), 'توفي' (was died)." usually written in passive voice form to emphasize that the person did not choose to born or die but rather it was Allah 's will.

Semantic Analyses

This epitaph is a poignant example of the importance of funerary inscriptions. The inscription includes details about the deceased's life and the date of his return to his homeland along with a prayer for his soul. This epitaph serves as a testament to his life and struggles. The epitaph serve as a reminder of the individual's life, significant achievements, virtues, prayers for their soul, expressions of grief and provide a way for future generations to connect with their ancestors and cultural heritage.

Aya in this epitaph contains a variety of sense relations to convey its message. For example:

> **Meronymy:** "Signs on earth" are a part of the larger concept of signs in Islamic theology.
>
> **Synonymy: "**truth" is seen as absolute synonymy with "death". "Sustenance" with "our daily needs" or "the afterlife reward" could be seen as partial synonymy.
>
> **Antonymy: "**earth" and "heaven" are reverse antonymous while born and passed away are non-gradable antonymy.

While the poem uses another figurative language that is metaphor;

> **Metaphor**

The poem explores the relationship between the soul and the body, using the metaphor of a bird trapped in a cage. The speaker imagines their chest as a cage for the soul bird, suggesting that the soul is like travelling blood. The soul is described as a proud bird, indicating that it has a sense of independence and freedom that is being restricted by the body.

The speaker also acknowledges that if they were to release the soul, it would long for the prison of the body, suggesting a sense of attachment or comfort with its current state. Similarly, if the soul were kept within the body, it would long for the branch and always migrate, suggesting a desire for exploration and movement. Overall, the poem explores the complex relationship between the physical and spiritual aspects of the self and the tension between freedom and attachment. This metaphor reflects a belief in fate and the inevitability of death, as the soul cannot escape its predetermined destiny.

> **Social Level**

-**Gender**: In this epitaph, the phrase "المرحوم المغفور له" (The forgiven deceased) is used to describe the deceased, which is in the masculine form as in the pronoun "his" in "his soul" which indicates a male gender.

-**Age**: The epitaph mentions the birth year of the deceased, as well as their imprisonment and eventual return to their homeland then their passing away date.

Spending 17 eventful years away from his homeland, his family, and his friends, meaning that the deceased spent the prime of his youth in captivity.

-**Status**: The fact that the deceased spent 17 years in Iranian prisons suggests that he was a solider in Iraqi army. Additionally, his return to his homeland on July 7, 1998, may indicate that he was released or exchanged as part of a prisoner swap during the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. Finally, the date of his death, March 7, 2001, can infer that Al-Naimi lived during a tumultuous period in Middle East history. Beside mentioning such details on the tombstone shows and explains the tragic life that Al-Naimi experienced.

-**Address Forms:** Using honorifics and address forms in Arabic epitaphs can provide clues about the social status of the deceased. Al-Naimi was described as "the deceased who is forgiven." Which means "May God forgive him," commonly used to express condolences for the dead.

Furthermore,Fist, Middle, .. till furth name was mentioned with "Al-Naeemi" which suggests that the deceased belonged to the Naeemi tribe.

-**Euphemism**: "Al-Maghfoor Lahu" is an Arabic phrase that translates as "may he who has passed away be forgiven." It is often used as a euphemism for death in Islamic culture.

- **Cultural Analysis**: Using poetic language in the epitaph reflects the importance of language and literature in Middle East culture. On the other hand, using the Islamic calendar to indicate the date of the deceased death also reflects the cultural

and religious significance of the Islamic tradition in Arabic cultures. The epitaph featured is rich in metaphorical language, drawing upon imagery from both the natural world and Islamic tradition.

The opening lines, "There are countless signs on earth, and there are within yourselves, can't you see? And in heaven is your sustenance and whatever you are promised," suggests a deep connection between the physical and spiritual realms. Using the word "signs" implies that the natural world is full of meaning and significance. At the same time, the reference to sustenance and promises in heaven underscores the importance of faith and trust in a higher power.

The epitaph emphasizes the significance of faith as it mentions the Lord of the heaven and the earth. Additionally it draws attention to the indications of God's presence, in both our surroundings and within us. By mentioning sustenance and heavenly promises, it implies a belief in life after death and the accompanying blessings. The epitaph reflects the religious convictions held by Arabic speaking communities. The phrase "by the Lord of the heaven and earth," which suggests that truth(death) is divinely ordained and therefore cannot be ignored or denied.

Colors are frequently used to mark significant events because they can convey emotions. In Arab culture, black which is associated with death, disgrace, and tragedy, it could also denotes power, senior status, authority, formality. While the color green is consider as a symbol of fertility, blessing, grace and Paradise, the color red symbolizes several meaning, among them is that it could symbolize murder or blood, and this analogy carries a negative meaning in general, as it refers to killing, and the flow of blood in combat.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Here is a summary of the key findings from the analysis of Iraqi Arabic epitaphs:

1.Arabic sentences vary between nominal and verbal declarative major sentences that reveal death (minor sentences are sometimes used). Most sentences are written in past tense, and most verbs, which are finite one, are written in passive voice form. The passive voice is found to be an essential feature in Arabic epitaphs. For Arabic epitaph, the passive voice conveys the belief that only God controls life and death. The use of passive voice emphasizes that the individual's death was not caused by any human agency, but rather by a higher power. Apposition is also used profusely in Arabic epitaph, including phrases related to the deceased such as , the martyr, the deceased, al-hajj… etc.

2. Sentences in Arabic contain gender markers as a bound morpheme (affixes or suffixes) attached to verbs, nouns and adjectives to determine the person in question whether male or female.

3.Associative meaning is reflected in epitaph's text with the social meaning it carries. Some verbs takes their synonyms forms since their social meaning is more accepted than the others, for instance synonymous of the verb *die* يموت are used in Arabic epitaph such as *passed away*.

4. In Arabic epitaphs, gender can play a significant role in the meaning and effect of the text. For example, women may be described as virtuous and pious, while men may be praised for their strength and bravery. Additionally, the language used in epitaphs may reflect traditional gender roles, such as using masculine pronouns to refer to the male deceased.

6. Address Forms in Arabic epitaph are of great importance. First, second, third, with last name (family name) is mostly mentioned.

7. Euphemisms are widely found in Arabic epitaph. The word "the deceased" المرحوم for example, which carries with it a prayer of mercy for the deceased, is used in almost all tombstones.

8. Epitaphs reflect Arab culture greatly, both in terms of beliefs and traditions. Most epitaphs reflect the identity of the deceased Muslim by mentioning a quotation (Qur'an verse), the Hijri calendar, beginning the epitaph with Al-basmalah, or ending with the Opining chapter in the Quran (Al-Fatiha). The most commonly used colors in the Arabic epitaph are black, white and green, they are colors with an Islamic symbol among the Arabs.

CONCLUSIONS

Here is a summary of the key conclusions from the analysis of Arabic epitaphs:

1. All Arabic Epitaph varied between verbal and nominal major sentences. Only a few sentences were minor ones. Declarative sentences are the most common form in Arabic epitaphs with Finite verbs and Passive voice as a standard feature.

2. Arabic language is a gender bias language, so that all the epitaphs are morphologically marked indicating the deceased's gender. All Arabic epitaphs marked by gender morphemes(ة) if the deceased is female one, while if the deceased is a male one, It does not contain any gender marker except the particle (ي) which prefixed the verb in present tense.

3.Arabic epitaphs convey denotative and social/community meanings through textual and discursive strategies. Metaphor is a common sense relation found in Arabic epitaph.

4 Arabic epitaphs widely use euphemistic expressions related to death and the afterlife. Some expressions such as *the deceased* and *passed away* _ which is found almost in all Arabic epitaphs_ and prayers show mercy like *the forgiven*. Many religious phrases used as an euphemistic expressions.

5. Epitaphs are inscriptions on tombstones or memorials that provide information about the deceased, including their social status, age, and gender. Male epitaphs use more formal titles and names related to occupation or status, while female

epitaphs use more familial titles and names. There are also differences in the descriptive words used to describe the deceased, such as words related to piety or virtue. Age and gender are more frequently indicated in Arabic epitaphs through address terms. Linguistic cues differ for male vs. female epitaphs in Arabic language. Arabic epitaphs always reflect the deceased's social status through honorific titles.

6. Arabic Epitaphs reflect their societies cultural norms, values, and beliefs . Muslim identity is reflected by using some verses (Aya) from the holy Quran with some other issues such as Muslim Calendar, prayers, phrases such as *"Moved next* to" or *"His term has come"* . Color symbolism is a powerful tool used to create a mood or atmosphere that enhances the reader's experience and adds depth. In epitaphs, for instance, the use of white and black colors can create a sense of balance and contrast, they may symbolize the contrast between life and death and drawing attention to the most important elements of the text.

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