

Language Pattern of Arabic Debaters of International Islamic University Malaysia in Debating

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the Arabic debating language pattern among International Islamic University Malaysia Arabic debaters. It will focus on debating terms and phrases that are widely circulated in Arabic debating in this university whereby these terms distinguish debate from any other language activities such as forums, discussions and public speaking. This study will show examples of styles and phrases that are used by the debaters when they perform their roles as members of two opposing teams, which are the government and the opposition. This collection of examples can be used as a reference for those who participate in Arabic debate as well as for debate trainers. It can be a useful helping tool when training the novice. Although it may not be the best reference as there are too many language styles and phases debaters use, at the very least it can help debaters to have a grasp of basic debating phrases and terms and therefore, will lead to betterment in choosing the right phrases and words when they debate. It is important for them to have a good grasp of these phrases and terms on the basis, that debating is not a regular dialogue or discussion, but it is also an art of systematic and constructive argumentation. Furthermore, the debate skill requires a high accuracy of words used, clarity of ideas and 'straight to the point' manner of speaking without any elongation of the time allocated for every speaker/debater is very limited.

Keywords: Arabic Debate, Arabic Language Pattern, Debate Phrases, Public Speaking

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1. An Overview

International Islamic University Malaysia is well known for its achievement in debating arena, in all three languages: Malay, Arabic and English, locally, regionally and on international level. Today, IIUM Arabic debating teams still manage to maintain its status quo of Arabic debate champion in Malaysia when in 2015, they won ASEAN Arabic Debate Championship organized by University of Islamic Science Malaysia, and Maal Hijrah Intervarsity Arabic Debate Championship organized by IIUM itself. As IIUM is a prominent university in debating arena, many took IIUM as a model in teaching the novice, whether its school debaters or university debaters. They refer to IIUM debaters' videos uploaded on Youtube and IIUM Arabic debate manual written by IIUM Arabic debate trainers [1] to teach debaters on how to debate properly. Nevertheless, throughout years of IIUM participating the Arabic debate arena, the style of debating has evolved. In order to identify whether this evolution has made Arabic debate become better in terms of style, this paper attempts to make comparison of debating styles in the eras of IIUM

Arabic Debate Club presidents' tenures throughout the years IIUM debating teams won championships. It also serves universities' and schools' debaters in showing them the ideal way of presenting a debate.

1.1. Problem Statement

We are mainly focusing on styles that were used by the IIUM Arabic debaters and discover whether there are any changes in their styles of phrases throughout certain period of time.

1.2. Objective

The objective of this study;

1. To identify styles of debating phrases of IIUM Arabic debaters.
2. To compare styles of debate phrases used by IIUM debaters according to their periods.
3. To suggest the ideal way of presenting debate.

1.3. Significance of Study

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This paper is to examine the styles of debaters and to compare the similarities and the difference among them. It is also can be used as a guideline for the current and newbie debaters as well as the trainers.

1.4. Description of Research Areas

This paper is focusing on styles of phrases used by the IIUM Arabic debaters in defining the debate motions during intervarsity debating competitions, which used the Malaysian Parliamentary system; for instance, ASEAN, the Royals, Maal Hijrah and University of Malaya's Arabic Festival.

We are seeking changes of these styles throughout the period of 2008 until 2015 due to the distinguished achievements of IIUM Arabic debating teams during this period.

2. Description

2.1. Debate

Qatar Debate Dictionary of Debating Terms defines the word of "debate" as "a verbal confrontation between two teams engaging in argumentation of a motion. Each team member is a debater. The team that supports the motion is called proposition and the team that challenges it is called opposition. A debate is administered by a chairperson and assessed by adjudicators. It is usually attended by an audience" [2].

2.2. Malaysian Parliamentary Debate

Malaysian Parliamentary debating style is following the Asian Parliamentary Debate's style. A debate will consist of two teams; one to propose the motion and one to oppose it. The team proposing may be known as 'The Proposition', 'The Affirmative' or 'The Government'. Teams will comprise the following members:

Debaters (or members) will speak in the following order:

- a. Prime Minister, or 1st Affirmative.
- b. Leader of Opposition, or 1st Negative.
- c. Deputy Prime Minister or 2nd Affirmative.
- d. Deputy Leader of Opposition, or 2nd Negative.
- e. Government Whip, or 3rd Affirmative.
- f. Opposition Whip, or 3rd Negative.
- g. Negative Reply (given by 1st or 2nd Negative).
- h. Affirmative Reply (given by 1st or 2nd Affirmative).

3. Discussion

3.1. Salman's Epoch

Mohamed Salman Mohamed Ali was the president of IIUM Arabic Debate and Public Speaking Club from 2007-2008. As from this period, we grabbed an example from the ASEAN Intersity Debate Championship 2008, which held at Islamic Science University Malaysia (USIM).

In this competition, we choose the match between IIUM versus USIM in preliminary round and the motion was "استخدام الطاقة النووية لمصلحة الدولة أفضل" (Nuclear Power should be Used for the Interest of the State).

In this competition, as first speaker Ummu Hani Abbas presented her definition of motion by starting with giving the literal definition for each word stated in the motion. "The word 'state' means country and 'interest' means advantage or benefit."

We could see that those words are the synonyms of the word stated in the motion. After defining each of every word in the motion by giving its synonyms, she proceeded with giving the contextual meaning of the motion in a general way. She put the contextual definition in one sentence i.e.:

"ونحن الحكومة نريد استخدام الطاقة النووية لتخفيف من الاعتماد على الطاقة العادية في شكل جزئي بالقيام بالإضاءة لتشغيل المصانع الكبرى واستعمالها في الأغراض الطبية وتيسير السفن في صالح الشعب والدولة أفضل للشعب والدولة"

"We, the government want to use nuclear energy to reduce dependence on conventional energy partially by using its lighting for the operation of large factories, medical purposes and to facilitate ships in the interest of the people and the state, and it is best for the people and the state."

3.2. Abu Hafiz's Epoch

Abu Hafiz was the president of IIUM Arabic Debate and Public Speaking Club from 2009- 2010. As from this period, we grabbed an example from the ASEAN Intersity Debate Championship 2010, which was held at Islamic Science University Malaysia (USIM). In this competition, we choose the match between IIUM team A versus IIUM team B in the grand finale and the motion was "مشاركة دول منظمة آسيان في حل النزاعات الدولية أفضل" (ASEAN Countries Should To Take Part in Resolving International Conflicts).

In the competition, Nurhuda Ramli as the first speaker tried to make new changes in the Arabic debating world in presenting the definition. She started defining the motion by giving literal definition for word phrase by giving the synonym of the word or general concept of the phrase, followed by conceptual definition of that word or that phrase. In addition, she justified the reason for choosing the conceptual meaning of the word or phrase. Moreover, she added up the definition with mechanism or methods used when necessary. For instance,

"أيها الجمهور الكريم، الدولية بمعنى العالمية أيها الجمهور الكريم، ولكن نحن نقصد هنا في ثلاثة أطراف، أولاً: هذه النزاعات سواء أكان بين دول منظمة آسيان نفسها أيها الجمهور الكريم، مثلاً بين ماليزيا وبنغلاديش لأن النزاعات بين دول آسيان أولى وأوجب حلها أيها الجمهور الكريم. وثانياً أيها الجمهور الكريم، هذه النزاعات سواء أكان بين دول منظمة آسيان ودول خارج منظمة آسيان أيها الجمهور الكريم. وثالثاً أيها الجمهور الكريم هذه النزاعات تكون بين دول خارج هذه المنظمة مثل بين عراق وكويت، وبين أمريكا وعراق أيها الجمهور الكريم."

"Ladies and gentlemen, 'international' means global ladies and gentlemen. But what we mean in here (it will be) on three level. First, conflicts between ASEAN countries ladies and gentlemen, for example: between Malaysia and Singapore because resolving conflicts between ASEAN countries is supposed to be a priority ladies and gentlemen. Second, ladies and gentlemen, conflicts between ASEAN countries and other countries outside ASEAN region, ladies and gentlemen. Third, ladies and gentlemen, conflicts between countries outside ASEAN region, for example between Iraq and Kuwait, and US and Iraq ladies and gentlemen."

During this presentation, the researchers noticed that used most of her time in defining the motion due to the longer detailing of the definition. Consequently, she tends to speak faster in the last minutes of allocated time to complete her speech.

3.3. Nadhirah's Epoch

Nadhirah Abdul Latif was the first female president of IIUM Arabic Debate and Public Speaking Club. Her tenure was for academic session 2012- 2013. As from this period, we grabbed an example from the first edition of Maal Hijrah Arabic Debating Competition in 2013, which held at IIUM. In this competition, we choose the match between IIUM team A versus IIUM team B in the final round and the motion was "رفع الدعم أسعار البترول ضرورة" (Petrol Subsidy Should Be Removed).

As the first speaker, Nur Faiezah started the presentation by mentioning the case of the government for the motion. In this case, the researchers notified that this is the new trend of proposing the motion by presenting the case first rather than presenting the definition for example;

"ونحن متمسكين بموقفنا اليوم ألا وهو رفع الدعم أسعار البترول ضرورة بنظر إلى الهدف من هذا المشروع هو استفادة من مخصصات مالية لدعم حكومي للبترول في مشاريع تنمية لتطوير الدولة وتحسينها". فهيا ننتقل إلى تعريفات لغوية حول هذا المشروع."

"and we stand affirm with our case today that petrol subsidy should be removed by looking into the purpose of this motion which is to use the government budget allocated for petrol subsidy for other development projects to develop and improve (current state) of the country. Let's move to the literal definition of the motion."

At this point, she clearly mentioned that the case comes first rather than the definition of the motion. As the definition is presented, she defined the words literally by giving the synonyms of the words. This could be the major turning point in the definition presentation in which, she mixed up the Ummu Hani's style and Nurhuda's style.

As soon as she finished defining all the words in the motion literally, she came out with conceptual definition of the motion and added it with the source of the statement to justify her concept; for instance,

"البترول هو النفط ، الضرورة هو شيء لا مفر منه. فالآن قبل أسواقكم إلى سد الحجاج والبراهين من قبل الحكومة. فدعوني بأن أعرف لكم التعريفات الاصطلاحية، الدعم الحكومي فما مقصود هنا؟ الامتدادات المالية تقدم الحكومة لتخفيض أسعار البترول إما لصالح الصناعة ولصالح المواطن. جمهور الكريم، نحن نريد أن نرفع عن هذا الدعم لأن قد قلل عدد سعر البترول عالميا من 100.60 إلى 100.16 دولار لميلا واحدا كما قد أثبت في موقع www.bbc.co.uk

She concluded the definition by giving the justification of supporting her motion, by saying:

"وكذلك لماذا نجعل هذا المشروع ضرورة؟
فلأن المساعدة المستمرة دليل على تدليل المجتمع يا أيها الجمهور الكريم وإيقاعهم على شيء من السرقة."

3.4. Abdullah Aimanrusydi's Epoch

Abdullah Aimanrusydi was the president of IIUM Arabic Debate and Public Speaking Club reigned from 2014- 2015. As from this period, we grabbed an example from the University of Malaya's Arabic Festival 2015, which held at Malaya University (UM). In this competition, we choose the match between IIUM versus Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) in grand final round and the motion was "قطع الأشجار بطرق غير شرعية في ماليزيا سبب" (Illegal Deforestation is The Main Cause of Floods in Malaysia).

In this tournament, Firman stood up as the first speaker. He started with projecting motion by revealing the literal meaning as quoting:

"أولا في كلمة (قطع) أي (إزالة). ثم كلمة في كلمة (الأشجار) جمع (شجرة) . (بطرق) أي (بوسائل). (غير شرعية) أي (غير قانونية)"

After giving the literal meaning of each of the word, he gave the conceptual meaning of the motion by saying:

"وننتقل مباشرة إلى التعريفات الاصطلاحية حول مشروعنا اليوم أيها الجمهور الكريم. في عبارة (قطع الأشجار) نحن من الحكومة نعتبر هذه العبارة وفقا بالقانون تحت مادة 172، 2 أن قطع الأشجار يدخل فيه قطع الأشجار أولا، ثم نقلة الأشجار، أخيرا تدمير الأشجار أيها الجمهور الكريم."

Eventually, the conceptual definition given in the motion is quoting from trusted resources such as the act in the law etc. At this point, the debaters started to use the exact words from the resource without altering it.

4. Conclusion

There are ways of defining debate motion manifested in the debaters' speech. Each individual's style in defining motion was picturing the trend that was pervasive in each era. It was obvious that the way debaters define the motion have changed throughout the period that the researchers study. These changes can be summarized as follows:

- In the beginning, the definition was simple and very short. It has basic structure of a required definition.

- The changes started when debaters put in more details in the contextual definition. The details can be mechanisms and justifications of the concepts.
- As time goes by, debaters become more accountable to the details of their concepts by quoting sources of information to support their concept.

Though there are changes in the styles of defining motion, there are some things remain:

- Literal definition is made by giving synonyms of the words, without any quote of its source.
- All debaters stated their case when defining their motion, whether in the beginning of the definition, in the middle as well after the motion was defined.
- Debaters prefer to use the phrase 'ladies and gentlemen' to address the audience

We observed that each debater has distinctive weaknesses when delivering their speech:

- Repetition: The phrase repeated so many times though it was unnecessary to do so.
- Improper wording: For instance; the word lighting used for nuclear power. The right word for nuclear power was radiation not lighting. The researchers believe that this improper use of word that distorts the basic concept of its related phrase was due to lack of knowledge.

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