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Life Demands *Musayara:* Communication and Culture Among Arabs in Israel

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This chapter analyzes the folk-linguistic term musayara as it is used in the discourse of Arabs in Israel. The interactional ethos encapsulated in the notion of musayara is examined with reference to its cultural-historical underpinnings. An understanding of the interactional ethos of musayara compared to the dugri *ethos of native Israeli Jews (Katriel, 1986) is argued to provide some insights into the potential for miscommunication in intercultural encounters between Arabs and Jews in Israel.*

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic folk-linguistic term *musayara* (which refers to "going with" or "accompanying" one's partner in conversation) is associated with an other-oriented, "humoring," "conciliatory" attitude, with individuals' effort to maintain harmony in social relations. The term and its derivatives (e.g., *musayir*, a person disposed to doing musayara) carry many potent overtones for cultural members.[1] Our Israeli Arab respondents' talk was sprinkled with a variety of semiformulaic expressions that underscored the centrality of this cultural orientation in their lives, for example: "Musayara is in the blood of every Arab person"; "You drink it with your mother's milk,"; "It's in the air, you breathe it in."

The traditional notion of musayara can be traced to its historical roots in both religious Islamic doctrine and the high degree of interdependence that characterized the social relations of early Arab communities. Indeed, the art of comporting oneself with social delicacy was praised by pre-Islamic poets, who were keenly aware of the role of such stylized conduct in the maintenance of harmonious social relations within the close-knit tribal group. This cultural orientation received explicit religious legitimation with the advent of Islam, as expressed in the elaborate literary tradition of *adab* (the

ways of politeness, etiquette) that flourished from the beginning of the eighth century and was influenced by the cultures of newly Islamicized nations.[2]

In everyday discourse, the notion of musayara is typically invoked in passing judgment on social actors or social conduct. A person may be praised for being musayir or criticized for consistently failing to conform to the social/interactional norms associated with the musayara code. Such a person may be referred to by the term *jilda*—the rough, impenetrable husk of a tree.

It appears, then, that the notion of musayara encapsulates much that is distinctive to Arabic speechways and interpersonal conduct, and that "doing musayara" is a major communicative vehicle for the maintenance of social relations and the cultivation of traditional patterns. We propose, therefore, that musayara be considered as an articulation of a cultural "ethos"—the moral and aesthetic patternings distinctive to a cultural group (Bateson, 1958; Geertz, 1973). A leaning toward "modernization" may be associated with a repudiation of the musayara ethos. So, while for many cultural members acting with musayara is an expression of interpersonal sophistication, of maturity and self-control, those who reject the injunction to do musayara (typically some of the members of the younger generation) consider it an expression of self-effacement and lack of assertiveness—attitudes that should not be promoted in modern times, and that are self-defeating in political struggles (see Sharabi, 1975).

A vivid and touching example of generational differences in attitudes toward doing musayara was given to us by one of our respondents, a highly educated professional. He vividly recalled an exchange he had had with his elderly father during which they discussed some marital difficulties the son was experiencing at that time. The father interceded, saying to the son, "Sayerna, she is your wife, after all" (act with musayara toward her—i.e., compromise, don't bring the conflict to a head, try to smooth things over, she is your wife). To this the son replied in a way that shocked his father to such an extent that he subsequently reminded him of the exchange again and again in later years. The son's reply was: "Precisely because she is my wife I won't act with musayara toward her."

Reflecting on the interchange, the son said that our probings into the cultural meanings and uses of musayara made him realize that he had applied to the situation a Western cultural logic according to which interpersonal difficulties, especially those experienced with

"significant others," need to be addressed explicitly and elaborated upon by the parties involved. It is through such mutual confrontation that interpersonal bonds can be revitalized and reaffirmed (see Katriel & Philipsen, 1981). The son said he had felt he would not be taking his wife seriously if he allowed issues to be "pushed under the rug." His father, he explained, expected him to come forth with a show of magnanimity, and interpreted his unwillingness to act with musayara on that occasion as a rejection not only of his wife, but also of the binding force of social relations and the family as a locus of order in communal life.

Underlying these very different valuations, however, there is a basic understanding of the intricate working of musayara as a culturally "named" interactional pattern. It is this overall pattern and the "cultural logic" underlying it that hold our attention in this chapter.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Our analysis draws in a cumulative fashion on data derived from a number of complementary sources, gathered between 1982 and 1986:

(1) an ethnography of speaking conducted by the first author in a Bedouin settlement in the Galilee, employing both participant observation and interviewing methods, which took folk-linguistic notions, musayara among them, as its focus (Griefat, 1986);

(2) sociolinguistic interviews with bilingual Arabs from both rural and urban backgrounds (which took place either one on one or in small groups) were conducted in Hebrew, and recorded respondents' efforts to explicate the notion of musayara to a cultural outsider;[3] and

(3) insights derived from both Arab and Jewish students' field exercises and discussions, which involved conceptions of and attitudes toward each other's communication styles (these exercises focused on, but were not limited to, the folk notions of doing musayara and speaking *dugri*, as the latter term is employed in both spoken Hebrew and spoken Arabic; Katriel, 1986).

The Musayara Interactional Code

Generally speaking, behavior designed to enhance commonalities rather than differences, cooperation rather than conflict, and mutuality rather than self-assertion would be interpreted as involving

musayara. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, doing musayara involves an array of politeness strategies designed to signal concern with one's interlocutor's "positive" face wants, that is, indications of support for the other's image of him- or herself. Expressions of musayara imply a wide range of prescriptions and proscriptions. Thus there is great emphasis on displays of involvement and participation, such as being accessible in the sense of being prepared to give of one's time and attention whenever this is required. Thus some of our younger respondents said they were accused by their elders of failing to act with musayara when they terminated an unplanned social visit to attend to a previous commitment. They said the pace of modern life and the many demands placed on them, especially when their work took them outside the community proper, make it impossible for them to abide by the rules of musayara and be as constantly available to conversation and visiting as people who were living a slow-paced traditional life could be.

Verbal acts of musayara can be marked by a sense of *conversational restraint* on the one hand or *conversational effusiveness* on the other:

(1) Conversational restraint is displayed through strict adherence to procedural rules of deference, the avoidance of interruptions and topic shifts, and the effort made to avoid topics of potential discord or any remarks that could be interpreted as confrontational. Restraint also is exercised in the use of one's voice and speaking rights—loudness and hurried pace are shunned, and interruptions are avoided.

(2) Conversational effusiveness involves a variety of interactional tactics that function to dramatize and to intensify interpersonal bonds. These interactional tactics include the effusive use of many "layers" of greetings, the use of multiple, accentuated deferential or affectionate forms of address, accented displays of attentiveness, and the open sharing of personal resources, in both time and effort.

The example of the use of special forms of address in doing musayara will illustrate the larger pattern of conversational effusiveness. For an address form to be "heard" as involving musayara it has to be contextually interpreted as going beyond the norm. Thus doing musayara involves more than just basic rules of social interaction that tell you, for example, that you have to address your uncle as "my uncle." This form would be a minimal one, indicating that one is appropriately respectful, but no more. But addressing one's uncle as

"my father" would signal the intention of showing special, particularized bonding, in the spirit of musayara.

Similarly, addressing someone who had not gone on the pilgrimage to Mecca as "Haj" rather than, say, "Abu X' (that is, going beyond the rules of propriety) signals particular respect. This pattern of "fictional address" (see Antoun, 1968) involves (as one of our respondents put it) a widely accepted "norm of going beyond the norm," which is typical of musayara of the effusive variety in all its manifestations. Another example of musayara in the domain of address terms involves a strategy of "fictional symmetry" in the exchange of kin or role terms, for example, as when a grandfather affectionately addresses his grandson as "my grandfather" (the term that would apply to himself) rather than "my grandson" (the appropriate kin designation).[4]

Whether the spirit of musayara is manifested in interactional restraint or interactional effusiveness, it is made possible based on the assumption that participants share an interactional "base" from which they depart in one direction or another in making their metacommunicative statement about the relationship at hand. As we discuss below, these expressive possibilities are socially distributed in particular ways (see Albert, 1972; Friedrich, 1972; Hymes, 1974; Keenan, 1974).

The Musayara Dimensions

The social dimensions of status and degree of familiarity have emerged as decisive for the understanding of the ways in which acts of musayara are socially distributed in intracommunal encounters. We can distinguish among four broad types of social contexts, and attendant functions, for doing musayara. The first has to do with social rules pertaining to structural inequality, to the hierarchy of social relations in the community, and is associated with what we call the *musayara of respect*. The second involves situational inequality and is a reversal of the first, since it is extended from the higher to the lower in status in moments of exigence. We have, accordingly, dubbed it the *musayara of magnanimity*. The third involves relations of either equality or inequality and is associated with the pursuit of self-interest. We refer to it—after the usage of one of our informants, who spoke of it as "the small politics of everyday life that we do all the time"—as *political musayara*. The fourth type of musayara is specifi-

cally associated with conflict situations, and will be referred to as the *musayara of conciliation*. Let us consider each one in some detail.

The *musayara of respect* is typically extended to persons higher in status—to the older from the younger, to men from women, to a Haj or to a sheikh from a simple villager. In all these cases the status inequality is due to the relative positions individuals occupy in the hierarchy of social relations. The musayara of respect is also typically employed between status equals who are unfamiliar with each other and is gradually "dropped" if their relationship becomes that of close friends.

The ability to do musayara requires the virtue of self-control, a virtue both children and women are said to lack, as well as an ability to use language indirectly and artfully. So, whereas women and children are expected to act with musayara toward grown men, who are considered their status superiors, they are not considered sophisticated enough to be able to utilize the resources of language and etiquette in an elaborate way. Their *musayara of respect* usually takes the form of tactics of evasion, of nonresponse, or of interactional restraint, and it tends to be slighted by the men.

The *musayara of magnanimity* is typically extended in contexts in which the *musayara of respect* would not ordinarily be appropriate. Thus, although a child or a woman would not ordinarily expect to be treated with musayara by grown men, an exigency, such as an illness, would justify treating them with musayara. Some spoke of it as "the musayara of the sick" and some generalized it to "the musayara of the weak" that can be displayed in times of exigency. For example, a teacher may refrain from punishing a student who has misbehaved, saying that he will do musayara one more time. Similarly, some respondents mentioned the "musayara of the stranger," the magnanimity to the one who is out of his or her cultural waters, so to speak, and needs help, especially in allowing his or her interactional gaffes to slip by.

Political musayara involves relations of inequality defined not in social but in situational terms. Being in need of someone may put one temporarily in a position of relative disadvantage in relation to a person who otherwise would be considered one's status equal, or even one's inferior. Thus people testified that they have gone out of their way to act with musayara toward those whose good will they wished to secure for specific reasons. For example, a man said that for several years he took care to do musayara to a woman he would

ordinarily try to evade because he was interested in her daughter as a possible match for his son. He said when he chatted with her from time to time he always greeted her profusely, using multiple forms of address as a sign of respect.

Finally, *musayara of conciliation* is invoked in the context of conflict between status equals, who are familiar with each other and would ordinarily not invoke the mode of musayara in their interactions. Partners in a confrontal exchange may be enjoined by friends to do musayara toward each other as gestures of appeasement and not to allow the conflict to escalate. As long as one's "point of honor" is not felt to be compromised (see Bourdieu, 1966), the injunction to do musayara may serve effectively to restore harmony in social relations. When a participant's "honor" (i.e., public self-image) is jeopardized (e.g., when a man's manliness is put to the test through direct offense or indirect insinuation against his wife, mother, or sister), then the plea to do musayara and smooth over a conflictual situation is likely to be ignored. In other words, a situation of highly escalated conflict, or a fight, is one in which the cultural injunction to do musayara is suspended.

Another type of context in which doing musayara is consensually suspended is one in which the accuracy of factual information is very important and no embellishment of facts can be tolerated. An example of such a context that appeared in our data involved a man's attempt to secure reliable information regarding the person and family of a possible bridegroom for his daughter. Intent on learning all he could in this crucial interchange, he asked his interlocutor to cut the musayara and speak the dugri, the truth. In contexts where crucial information is sought, the slipperiness and ambiguity attending the exercise of musayara cannot be tolerated.

The above classifications are no more than an attempt to systematize some of the contexts and functions associated with doing musayara. Given cases are, of course, ambiguous or multivocal in various ways and to various degrees. Take, for example, the very common case of a merchant being said to act with musayara toward a customer by offering a reduction on the price of the merchandise he or she is interested in. Here the musayara of magnanimity and political musayara become interlaced: In offering a reduction, the merchant is both taking account of the customer's situation and at the same time establishing business credit, so to speak, with the customer and, possibly, his or her larger group.

The Musayara Strategies

Employing a distinction proposed by Beeman (1986) in his study of Iranian communicative style, we might say that in the aforementioned types of interactional contexts the ethos of musayara provides a pattern for the resolution of two distinct problems faced by interactants: the problem of *appropriateness* and the problem of *effectiveness*. Beeman (1986) posits two basic categories of core interaction conventions in a society, each of which is relevant to the notion of doing musayara in one of the aforementioned categories of social context:

> *Prescriptive conventions* are operations in communicative behavior that reinforce a state of affairs that will be perceived by individuals in interaction as normal or expected. By conforming to these prescriptive interaction conventions, individuals meet criteria of *appropriateness* in their dealings with others. *Strategic departures* are operations in communicative behavior that violate expectations in systematic interpretable ways in order to accomplish specialized communicative tasks such as persuading, expressing emotion, joking, threatening, or insulting. By skillfully adjusting their speech between prescriptive conventions and strategic departures, participants in interaction are able to excel in *effectiveness* in communications. (p. 7)

Acts of musayara can thus be intended and interpreted either as tokens of respect that serve to uphold a hierarchical social order or as strategic moves that depend on participants' assessment of the social relations between them, and that dramatize a conciliatory, concessive orientation. At the same time, it is important to note that doing musayara does not imply a complete subordination of one's self-interests to those of one's interlocutor. Indeed, conduct that is perceived as overly self-ingratiating is not acceptable. For example, an elderly man was heard to scold his son for lending out work tools indiscriminately, for being unable to refuse a request: "If you had been a girl, you would have been kidnapped," he quipped, expressing his displeasure in metaphorical terms.

Respondents also pointed out that one could go overboard in trying to humor others. When this is overdone, the overly ingratiating conduct of the person is natively referred to as ***masax jux*** (literally, "wiping the dust off the elegant, silken clothes of the ruler" as a show of concern). The mention of this term never failed to amuse our

respondents. One person laughingly told an anecdote that to him exemplified behavior falling under the category of masax jux in the political domain, the context in which it is most frequently mentioned. He recounted that before the elections, one of the candidates for a local political office used to go back and forth by the bus station in his shiny car and offer rides to the people who were waiting for a bus. When the elections were over, his shiny car was no longer seen anywhere near the bus station. Acts falling under the category of masax jux violate the sense of subtlety and indirection associated with acts of musayara. Thus one can fail to fulfill the expectations associated with doing musayara on more than one ground: by not being considerate enough or, on the other hand, by being self-effacing. Doing musayara appropriately thus requires competency and cultivation and cannot be equated simply with nonassertive behavior.

The interactional subtlety characterized by exchanges described as involving musayara is exemplified by the following encounter observed by the first author, in which hints and metaphors were used to convey critical messages indirectly but clearly enough to be understood by those present. The exchange took place as part of the *diwan*, the semiformal gathering of grown males in the home of one of them. Conversation concerned the issue of girls' high school education, which required commuting to a nearby city. One of the participants said that it went against the tradition, and that it might jeopardize the family's honor. He spoke in general terms, invoking the notion of tradition as a widely accepted source of authority. Nevertheless, everybody knew that his words were directed to a particular participant whose daughter was going to high school. The addressee at whom the hint was directed responded with comparable artfulness: "What shall I tell you, friends, not all the lambs are taken to the slaughter." The Bedouin, the speaker implied, does not slaughter a lamb casually, but, rather, chooses a fat lamb or a thin lamb, all according to the status of the visitor he expects. Through the use of this metaphor, the speaker expressed the view that not all girls are alike, not all of them will do things that jeopardize the family's honor, even if they are given the chance to do so. Both speakers used strategies of indirection that require verbal agility, both managed to convey their messages in ways that were clear but did not openly commit them to a particular position or give cause to open confrontation. Thus the nature of the message remained ambiguous, debatable, and open to various interpretations. Other devices used to this end, and

with similar effect, are traditional sayings, proverbs, stories, and passages of poetry.

Our final example illustrates a Bedouin elder's use of musayara in addressing a Jewish dignitary who came on an official visit to a settlement and was aware of the inhabitants' widespread discontent with the kinds and level of employment they were given. Using metaphorical, ornate language, the Bedouin said: "The government is our father and our mother. We feel this when we come to complain about the situation and ask for assistance. Instead of a tent we now have a modern house that you have filled up for us with clocks that tick away the whole day long. We need sources of employment so that we can pay all the bills that go with all these clocks." In this indirect and deceptively naive, but highly respectful, way, the village elder pointed out to the government representative that providing modern conditions of living for the local population is a job half done; they also need means of supporting this modern way of life presented to them as "progress" by the dominant Jewish population.

None of the indirection and rhetorical flair heard in the elder's address could be found in the speech of a younger member of that same community who bluntly said in a televised discussion: "The situation is such that the Bedouin settlement has turned into a kind of work-camp since there is no industry or agriculture that could provide employment within the settlement." Some young people explicitly denounce the elders' reliance on musayara and the use of personal ties in their dealings with the Jewish authorities. As one young person said: "In the state one has to stand up for one's rights forcefully, and keep close watch over the way our interests are being handled in government offices." Indeed, whereas the value of acting in the spirit of musayara in internal communal relations is by no means uniformly upheld, a bitter point of disagreement relates to the role of musayara in contacts with cultural outsiders, especially in the realm of politics. In these contexts musayara most frequently takes the form of the interactional restraint associated with the position of the less powerful.

In conclusion, let us briefly summarize the interactional semantics of doing musayara as they figured in the foregoing discussion:

(1) *Acts of musayara are other-directed social gestures* designed to maintain harmony in communal relations by upholding the social order, by mobilizing individuals' good will in conflict situations, by enhancing the recognition of individual circumstances, and by promoting interpersonal affect.

(2) *Acts of musayara have a concessive flavor.* In doing musayara one is understood to "give up" something in the form of tangible or intangible "goods," such as money, time, effort, momentary social positioning (lowering oneself by elevating the other), or the expression of one's beliefs and opinions. A mere verbal gesture of flattery to a passing woman would not be called musayara, but rather *mudjamala*, since there is no sense that anything of the "self" has been "given up." Notably, however, the concession typically relates to minor issues that do not affect one's honor, and is, moreover, understood to serve one's larger interest in the maintenance of the social order or, specifically, to serve one's longer-range "political" goals.

(3) The cultural injunction to do musayara involves a generalized norm that says that *one should go beyond widely accepted interactional norms*. This may take the form of either interactional restraint or effusiveness, as we have described them, depending on who the participants are and what their relationship to each other is. When doing musayara is a matter of speech, there are also language-related criteria of form that have to apply for a speaker's words to qualify as an expression of musayara.

CROSS-CULTURAL STYLES

Communication Tension

In its broad outlines, the ethos of musayara echoes cultural communication patterns found in other traditional societies (e.g., see Albert, 1972; Beeman, 1986; Keenan, 1974; Rosaldo, 1973; Beeman, 1986). What seems particularly striking about the folk notion of musayara is that it embodies a keen consciousness of the tension between individual pragmatic and expressive concerns on the one hand and the demands of communal life on the other. This tension is fundamental to human societies and thus becomes expressively elaborated in what Philipsen (1987) has called the forms of cultural communication: ritual, narrative, and social drama. In the case of musayara this tension becomes a widely acknowledged and symbolically potent cultural focus, and is given form as well as name in a culturally shared communicative style that is at the same time socially regulated and given to individual inflection.

Rosen (1984) refers to a similar overall pattern of essential indeterminacy in the interpersonal bargaining that constitutes Moroccan social life, which he likens to the archetypal Moorish form, the *arabesque*, describing it as follows: "Simple in concept, yet elaborate in design, its draped arcades, hedged round by divine oration, describe a model of regularity and certitude, and, at the same time, a template for contingency and contrariety" (p. 192). It seems to us that the interactional "dance" subsumed under the folk notion of musayara is another, differently colored, manifestation of this pattern.

The high praises for doing musayara heard from tradition-oriented members of the community, be they elderly men or young fundamentalists, are not, however, sung by all. As noted earlier, many members of the younger generation emphasize its restrictiveness, which is acutely felt and resented by those who desire to have more of a say in critical life decisions, such as vocational aspirations or choice of marriage partner. When these young people openly contest the particular cultural arrangements embodied in and symbolized by the value of doing musayara, it is clearly a broader cultural and social configuration that they are rejecting. However, as some of our respondents pointed out, the grip of the musayara ethos on most community members is still such as to help smooth over discords everywhere: "The young does musayara to the old, and the old does musayara to the young," as one respondent put it. In short, the ethos of musayara is instrumental in helping the community mend social ruptures even as they relate to breaches associated with the code itself. In the following section, we will compare the interactional ethos of musayara with the dugri ethos of native Israeli Jews.

Intercultural Encounters

Our experience as participants in the intercommunal dialogue of Arabs and Jews in Israel, our many discussions with both Arabs and Jews relating to interracial tensions, and our reading of the journalistic coverage of the intercultural scene (ongoing coverage as well as focused accounts such as that found in Shipler, 1986) and of scholarly treatments of it (e.g., Caplan, 1980) suggest that, over and above conflicts of interests and general belligerency, intercultural encounters between Arabs and Jews are all too often deflected due to conflicting cultural communication styles. Juxtaposing our study of the ethos of musayara and a previous study of the Sabra (native-born, Jewish) ethos of "straight talk," natively known as dugri speech, may provide some insights into why Arabs and Jews "rub each other the wrong way" even, at times, in encounters in which good will seems to prevail. We would like to propose that communication between members of the two cultures is often impeded by unmatching assumptions and conflicting evaluations of various aspects of the communication process itself. Some of these can be traced to the dimension of "directness/indirectness" or, in Brown and Levinson's (1987) terminology, to "politeness strategies" as they have been given distinctive cultural patterning in speaking dugri and in doing musayara.

Just as the folk-linguistic notion of musayara encapsulates values and meanings that are central to the Arab speech communities in which it is used, so the folk-linguistic notion of dugri speech (or *dugrijut*, in its nominalized form) embodies a focal cultural orientation associated with the Sabra culture of modern Israel. Thus speaking dugri in Israeli Sabra culture involves the choice of a "direct" strategy in performing an act that poses a threat to one's interlocutor's "positive" face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In "saying it dugri," one first of all speaks one's mind (as opposed to keeping one's thoughts to oneself, or being silent on the issue); moreover, one does so in explicit, forceful, and unembellished terms (rather than "softening" one's remarks through the use of some form of indirection). It is a style that is highly confrontational in tone and intent.

Sabra dugri speech manifests the attitude of "antistyle," an attitude predicated on the cultural disjunction between the categories of words (*diburim*) and deeds (*ma'asim*), and is associated with a pragmatic orientation. Notably, this attitude itself becomes stylized and ritualized. Dugri speech is thus a symbolic expression sociohistorically anchored in a set of cultural meanings and values: the notion of sincerity as it has evolved in modern Western ideologies; the value of assertiveness and an activist orientation, which is conceptualized as counteracting the traditional passivity attributed to Diaspora Jews; an aesthetic of simplicity and a high value placed on solidarity.

If we are right in claiming that for members of mainstream Israeli culture, the general flavor of interactional life is colored by the meanings and values associated with the dugri ethos, and that for Israeli Arabs the meanings and values associated with the ethos of musayara demarcate the central parameters of social interaction, then it would seem that the incompatibility of cultural styles between Arabs and

Jews on the dimension of directness indeed contributes to misunderstandings of all sorts.

In what follows we will briefly delineate the major points of conflict in terms of cultural premises related to communication that seem to us to underlie some of the difficulties in intercultural encounters between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

First, the Sabra dugri speaker's assertiveness involves a focus on the speaker's own face, a concern with behaving interactionally in such a way as to project the image of a "proper" member of the Sabra culture, one who is enjoined (and not afraid) to speak his or her mind in a straightforward way. The assertive dugri mode thus implies concern for the speaker's face rather than for the addressee's face and is diametrically opposed in orientation to the other-oriented mode associated with doing musayara, which involves giving rather than claiming face. The coming together of these two orientations in an intercultural encounter can be problematic indeed.

Second, dugri speech is motivated by a high value placed on the idea of sincerity in its Western interpretation (see Trilling, 1971). This notion is predicated on the expectation of correspondence between avowal and feeling, between one's inner world and one's behavioral display. As Keddie (1963) has pointed out, the mode of sincerity is a Western modern notion that is not part of traditional Islamic cultures, so, for example, "Middle Eastern intellectuals are quite aware that there may be a difference between a man's public utterances and private beliefs." Keddie further suggests that "the frequency of a distinction between what is said and what is believed . . . seems also to arise from the influence of centuries-long traditions of esoterism, double meanings, and precautionary simulation" (p. 28). This accepted disjunction between one's inner self and one's public image allows participants to maintain a high degree of ambiguity in social communication, and to embellish the facts in pursuit of one's goals and in the service of rhetorical flourish. As a result, Arab communication is perceived by many Jews to involve a high degree of "fabulation" (to use Caplan's, 1980, term), and to inspire little trust.

Third, dugri speech involves a momentary suspension of the requirements of the immediate social situation and social relations and the invocation of more encompassing relations of solidarity grounded in cultural membership. Doing musayara, on the other hand, involves a set of cultural injunctions that are highly sensitive to various aspects of the social situation, such as participants' ages, genders, and degree

of familiarity (see Rosen, 1984, for a discussion of the Moroccan person as "homo contextus").

Fourth, speaking dugri is associated with an attitude of spontaneity, with the elevation of "naturalness." Doing musayara, on the other hand, is associated with the capacity for self-control, which is associated with a high positive value placed on cultivation—the "culture" rather than the "nature" end of the continuum. The sense of virtue accompanying the Sabra's employment of straight talk is obviously not easily communicated to an Arab interlocutor.

Fifth, the dugri ethos gives expression to an aesthetic of simplicity, to an attitude of antistyle, which is predicated on the cultural contrast between deeds and (mere) words. The ethos of musayara is associated with the high cultural value placed on the Arabic language (see Ferguson, 1968), with a delight in its stylistic possibilities, which Patai (1983) has called rhetoricity. For Arabs, the Sabra style smacks of unfathomable literal-mindedness.

Sixth, the directness associated with the dugri interactional code implies a preference for nonmediated, face-to-face communication. People say they prefer the dugri approach to one that involves "speaking behind the back." In saying it "straight to the face" one both displays trustfulness and inspires a sense of trust. Straight talk is thus seen as counteracting the use of gossip to circulate unfavorable information. Speaking dugri is also often contrasted with "diplomacy." For Arabs, on the other hand, passing on social information via an indirect channel is often a preferred strategy, as it reduces the risk to participants' "face." For them, straight or dugri talk in the style of the quintessential Sabra is not an expression of trust but rather is often experienced as offensive, even abusive. Mediation is, indeed, an important communicative vehicle in contexts of interpersonal conflict and negotiation. As one of our respondents described it, each party does musayara to the mediator who comes to the litigants' home and tries to bring about conciliation. These divergent cultural attitudes toward the communicative encounter may well color the ways in which exchanges between Arabs and Jews may become deflected even in the wholehearted pursuit of a cultural and political *modus vivendi.*

CONCLUSION

The Israeli Jew, for whom dugri speech and the mode of directness define an idiom of cultural self-definition, and the Israeli Arab, for

whom "life demands musayara," both have a great deal of cultural learning to do before they can speak "person to person," either in interpersonal encounters or in the context of political negotiations. To be a person, as Geertz (1976) reminds us, is to be a person-in-a-culture. What it means to be a person-in-a-culture can be gleaned, at least in part, through a study of the assumptions and displays of personhood that give shape to cultural communication styles. However broadly sketched and tentative such a study must ultimately remain, however partial the attempt to convey a sense of self to a cultural other, we believe such exploration is a necessary step toward better intercultural understanding and mutual acceptance.

NOTES

1. Our study relates specifically to Arabs in Israel (respondents included both Moslem and Christian Arabs, as well as Druze). Our reading of the literature, however, suggests that the social norms associated with doing musayara might be associated with a larger "speech field," in Hymes's (1974) terms, cutting across dialectal and regional differences within the Middle East (see Assadi, 1980; Beeman, 1986; Gilsenan, 1967; Keddie, 1963; Koch, 1983; Patai, 1983; Rosen, 1984; Sharabi, 1975).

2. Griefat (1986) provides a more detailed discussion of the historical/cultural underpinnings of musayara.

3. We are grateful to the many Arab and Jewish students who participated in ethnography of communication courses at the School of Education at the University of Haifa during the years 1982–1986 for many helpful examples, comments, and queries, as well as to the many other individuals who were willing to share their perceptions and stories with us. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Sami Mar'i, whose wise counsel and constant encouragement made it possible for us to pursue this project.

4. This strategy is mentioned by Khuri (1968) in relation to patterns of bargaining in the marketplace.

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7

Linguistic Strategies and Cultural Styles for Persuasive Discourse

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This chapter describes the ways in which culture, language, and rhetorical situation come together to shape persuasive strategies used in the European West and the Arab and Iranian East. It is an attempt to find a way of combining a view of rhetoric that sees persuasive style as a facet of culture, and hence to some extent predetermined, with a view that sees speakers as making choices, based in immediate rhetorical situations, among "available means of persuasion."

Let me begin with three examples of the kinds of communicative problems that this chapter attempts to explain. The first is an essay written by a young Egyptian student for an intermediate-level composition class that was part of an intensive English as a second language (ESL) program. The topic for this assignment was "What was the most frightening experience you ever had?" I have edited out orthographic and syntactic errors, which are not relevant to the present discussion, and have numbered the sentences for later reference:

> (1) The thing that makes me most frightened to think about is death. (2) I don't like it because it takes one of my best friends and when I begin to think if one of my family died, what would happen to me. (3) I love my father, my mother, and my brother and I can't imagine my situation in this case. (4) Really I don't know what I'd do. (5) And really I worry about my father and mother because they are becoming old. (6) And I can't do anything to save them. (7) I am just studying to keep them

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