

## Anti-Coercion Function of Metaphors in Jordanian Media Discourse

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### Abstract

*This article investigates the discursive practice of many contemporary Jordanian columnists of using metaphors to implicitly refer to the Jordanian Monarch. This linguistic phenomenon is becoming prevailing in Jordanian media discourse which undertakes contemporary debates about political reform in Jordan. Through the contextual analysis of a large body of Jordanian media texts, and on the basis of the theory of critical metaphor analysis, I argue that the metaphoric expression marje<sup>c</sup>yah <sup>c</sup>ulyaa ‘high-profile references’ is discursively used in Jordanian media discourse as an anti-coercion representation that stems from the need to smooth over the threat-to-face that harbors behind the illocutionary force of the discourse which approaches any of the state’s symbols – namely the Monarch. However, the lack of any explicit definition of the actual reference of this metaphor might trigger ambiguous interpretations by the discourse recipient; a tendency which the author has frequently perceived while following the readers’ commentaries on the columns where this metaphor appears.*

**Key Words:** media, metaphor, coercion, discourse analysis, Jordan

### 1. Introduction

One of the peculiarities of media discourse is its flexibility to change in accordance to the society it represents, and it can be perceived as one of the most prevalent reflection of human natural experience; thus making it ‘... one of the best known commodities in today’s world’ (Shrivastava, 1991: 10). Media discourse constantly attracts the linguists’ attention especially those concerned with public opinion, persuasion, and manipulation because its discourse involves the kind of language that ‘contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief’ (Fairclough, 1992: 64). As people, in any given society, are subject to a huge amount of knowledge accumulated through time and experience, the main aspect of this knowledge is manifested through languages and rules of communication which together formulate the socially shared beliefs and representations.

These beliefs construct what can be called the social memory of society (van Dijk, 2001), and it is presented, sensed, and preserved through media and press. As it has always seemed the case in most totalitarian regimes, governments are persistently keen to seize opportunity to control what circulates in media discourse. Several journalists and editorial writers find themselves compelled to apply a sort of ‘fair and responsible’ self-censorship to their editorial language that puts them in grey-area between what is lawful and unlawful. As Altschull once argued, ‘history demonstrates that the press...has always been used, and that individuals and groups in power have always sought to manipulate the press into serving their particular causes’ (Altschull, 1984: 233), editorial language has played a significant role in implementing strategies which can maintain the balance between the columnists’ abidance to censorship law and loyalty to the state and its institutions on the one hand and their public image and journalistic principles on the other.

To elaborate the case, Jordanian authorities, for instance, constantly declare that the rules of law are the arbitrator in the matter of censorship and freedom of expression; nevertheless, this does not free the government from bending the law to impose censorship and control the style of this censorship carried out on newspapers and their resources (Assaf and Henderson, 2007: 15). Jordanian government constantly justifies such actions by saying that the security of the realm requires them, because the media ‘could cause trouble or internal riots’ (ibid.). However, censorship could not stand the rapid and unprecedented development in internet and communication technology (Bitso *et al.*, 2012).

In Jordan, journalists and columnists now use internet outlets to commercialize and publish their views, and they discuss publicly what was deemed to be forbidden just few years ago. Still, Jordanian columnists are known public figures. So, they are asked to alienate themselves from commitment that follows what they write if it is proved (or alleged) inaccurate. For this reason, columnists are encouraged to rely on figurative language to feature news information and debate to evoke their evaluative judgments. Al-Jarrah sees that Arabic media discourse in general and Jordanian media discourse in particular relies on the explicit use of evaluative statements which support the writer's viewpoint (Al-Jarrah, 2011). These evaluative statements, as Ryan and Tankard accentuate, construct 'a statement (either direct or implied) of approval or disapproval of a person or institution, issue or event in the news' (Ryan and Tankard, 1977:165). The significance of metaphors as a discursive and evaluative device is that they allow the presentation of the discourse *subjunctively* where the part often stands for a whole. Wolfsfeld claims '... [o]ne of the first lessons in journalism is to construct news stories as a pyramid by leading off with the most important part before spreading out to give background and details' (Wolfsfeld, 1997: 51).

The linguistic study of media discourse involves uncovering the relationship between the linguistic, social, and psychological dimensions which control it. These dimensions conform to the journalistic norms of professionalism, objectivity, and thoroughness. In a study case, Teun van Dijk has analyzed opinion articles in the New York Times and the Washington Post in light of critical discourse analysis theory, and he demonstrated how ideologies organize the attitudes and the social representations shared by members of groups (van Dijk, 1995). Van Dijk accentuates also that ideologies indirectly control language and discourse which are shaped by the mental context models of society. Thus by studying the semantic structures of a give ideological discourse (such as topic, propositional structures, coherence and levels of description) we can formulate how language and discourse are monitored by the ideologies existing in the given social context. And these ideologies are mostly conveyed through the lexical choice of the discourse maker.

Lexical choice in media discourse is triggered by socio-cultural domains and available linguistic resources. For instance, metaphorical nominal phrases make a rather acceptable mode of expression. Fowler points out that '[n]ominalization and the use of nouns for actions are endemic, especially in official, bureaucratic and formal mode of discourse, once one has learned to spot the processes' (Fowler, 1991:79). Metaphorical language plays a remarkable role in arising the reader's awareness behind the literal illocutionary force of the message. Raymond Gibbs sees that the Gricean notion of 'conversational implicature' is primarily based on metonymic representation (Gibbs, 1994). He indicates that metonymy, for example, can be used in discourse in order to understand different discursive strategies such as tautology and indirect speech acts. In addition, metonymy helps the discourse recipient to understand and recognize the reference determined within the context. What is more, metonymy is perceived as a means of building up imagery that focuses on concrete objects in a generalized meaning as the 'the explicit image-bearing components of the phraseological units have a metonymic function in discourse' (Naciscione, 2001: 100). Thus, political and public figures can be extensively recognized in terms of a particular metaphor to the extent they are assigned synonymic relationships between a metaphoric representation and its referent(s). Thus, we have heard of the images of the 'father of the nation' which appears in many cultures across the world (See Paczkowski, 2003; Grizzard, 2002). This synonymic relationship is based on a conception that it represents a direct product of an inherent relationship between the discourse, its producer, its language (style), and other different social and semantic relationships. And metaphorical language plays an indispensable role in the formulation of such conceptual representations.

Metaphors construct a frequent figurative discursive strategies that is copiously used in media discourse as they form primary means of semantic innovation by which a novel sense for some established word or word combination is created' (Warren, 1992: 133). This novelty allows metaphors to stand for the strategy of avoiding the explicit mentioning of what might be deemed untouchable within a given social context. In contexts of strict media censorship, metaphor-based synonyms might form a discursive necessity. Herein, synonymy is not recognized as redundancy or repetition, but it is a sort of *wordiness* or the use of more words than necessary, and its proliferation results reaching the level of *over-lexicalization* (Halliday, 1978: 165). Over-lexicalization involves 'the existence of an excess of *quasi-synonymous* terms for entities and ideas that are a particular preoccupation or problem in the culture's discourse' (Fowler, 1991: 85). Over-lexicalization can patently distinguish media discourse of the society it expresses. For example, in a patriotic society which suffers military occupation, the abundant use of quasi-synonymous terms such as 'to fight-back', 'to strive', 'to resist', and 'to liberate' can be seen as instances of disguised form of created synonymous repetition, or over-lexicalization.

And as Linfoot-Ham elaborates, this creation is rule-governed, and new meanings are acceptable when the relationship between the novel term and its referent is strong and of 'lasting value' (Linfoot-Ham, 2005: 230).

Synonymous metaphors are also used in media discourse to moderate the columnist's utterances or statements for the sake of reducing the level of threat in the message conveyed. Still, a major difficulty in studying the use of synonymous metaphorical representations in media discourse is associating them to salient, and agreed upon, evocative meanings. At this point, a problem of classification might result as the relationship between the evocative meanings of a metaphorical and metonymic representations and its referent can be random and confusing (Bello *et al.*, 2006: 183). It is implausible to argue here on behalf of the existence of clear-cut lists of what columnist aim to evoke when using a particular metaphorical representation because this inherently depends on the communicative context, the co-text, and the intention of the discourse. Accordingly, metaphorical language can be used to construct some ambiguity in the message for the sake of concealing some truth or to avoid committing oneself to the illocutionary force of a message. Herein, metaphors can carry an *equivocating* message that is meant to be non-straightforward communication based on speech acts such as 'self-contradictions, inconsistencies, subject switches, tangentializations, incomplete sentences, misunderstandings, obscure style or mannerisms of speech,... etc.' (Watzlawick *et al.*, 1967: 76).

On the other hand, the analysis and notation of metaphorical language is recently introduced on the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Lakoff and Johnson adopt an analytical structural framework by which a metaphor is recognized as a conceptual phenomenon that connects one notion with an idea. Accordingly, the notion and its idea, which represent two spheres of human cognitive system, are *conceptually* connected together through a process of 'cross-domain' mapping (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and by which a given notion (e.g. argument) is understood in terms of human attributes and experiences (e.g. war) to result a metaphorical expression such as 'his idea is indefensible'. Herein, the conceptual domain that includes an idea that conveys a certain meaning on the basis of human experiential knowledge such as physical entities and animate beings is labeled 'Source' domain. On the other hand, the conceptual domain that most frequently involves the meaning that the metaphor is intended to convey and which generally includes abstract concepts and notions is labeled 'Target' domain. In a conceptual metaphor, systematic conceptual correspondences are drawn between the relevant elements in the two conceptual source and target domains. For example, in a metaphoric expression such as 'his idea is indefensible', a mapping process between the elements of the conceptual source domain WAR and the elements in the conceptual target domain ARGUMENT takes place, and this generates the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR<sup>1</sup>. And whereas the source domain generally includes human experiential knowledge such as physical entities and animate beings, the target domain typically involves more abstract notions such as emotional states.

The study of metaphors in discourse should be also anchored on critical frameworks in metaphor analysis in order to acknowledge the impact of the most frequent and significant metaphoric representations in a given discourse. In this article, I referred to Jonathan Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004). This approach methodically investigates the use of metaphors in particular genera of discourse usually by means of corpus-assisted techniques and on the ground of three processes: the identification, the interpretation, and the explanation of a metaphor in the corpus in order to identify its ideological implications and which are transmitted to an audience by means of discursive strategies. Critical Metaphor Analysis emphasizes that metaphors should be analyzed from *real-world* authentic data because 'metaphor can only be explained by considering the interdependency of its semantic, pragmatic and cognitive dimensions' (Charteris-Black, 2004: 2). By integrating in his approach the areas of cognitive semantics, pragmatics, and critical discourse analysis, Charteris-Black was able to critically analyze the ideological implication of using metaphor as a persuasive device in different types of discourse, such as politics, press reporting (including financial and sport reporting), and religion (Charteris-Black, 2004; 2005). In addition, this approach accentuates that 'metaphor selection in particular types of discourse is governed by the rhetorical aim of persuasion' (Charteris-Black, 2004: 247), and the act of persuasion involves exerting some sort of (verbal) power to influence an audience's beliefs and attitudes.

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<sup>1</sup> It is conventionally in the field to represent conceptual metaphors using small upper-case letters.

As a result, Critical Metaphor Analysis raises the researcher's awareness of how the critical analysis of metaphorical language in any given discourse provides a better understanding of the intuitive cognitive system of society in relation to its linguistic repertoire.

## **2. Context of the Research**

The data of this Article is based on Jordanian newspapers columnists' writings which have tackled the process of political reform in Jordan for the period between January 2011 and June 2012 and which are extracted from daily newspapers. This period was patently characterized by the escalation of both public and political discontent and dissatisfaction because of the slow in implementing political and economic reform and under the influence of what is known as the 'Arab Spring'. Harris and Johnson advocate that the primary objective of a daily newspaper is to promote 'social, economic and political philosophies...[i]t is powerful and influential, and colors and infuses the character, ideals and institutions of the individual, the family and the community' (Harris and Johnson, 1977:174). This makes newspaper discourse construct a rich source of linguistic data about the relationship between the columnist and the society in question. Such data, as Galperin emphasizes, represents a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means, and which in turn, can be characterized with a separate linguistic unity (Galperin, 1977: 297). Instances of metaphorical representations constitute part of these means which each columnist aims to significantly benefit from to influence public opinion. Accordingly, and following Critical Metaphor Analysis, my goal is to analyze the discursive strategy of using metaphorical representations when referring to the Monarchy in Jordan.

My proposition here is that Jordanian columnists reframe media discourse for the sake of providing anti-coercion messages by which they deliberately avoid the explicit mentioning of any of the 'state's symbols'; especially the Monarch. The data consists of a corpus of texts taken from Jordanian daily newspapers. The choice is based on the disposition that columns make a particular discourse in their own that reflects the columnist's strategy in smoothing over the threat-to-face that harbors behind the illocutionary force of the discourse which approaches the Monarch in Jordan. The discursive strategy involves the use of the metaphoric phrase *marje<sup>c</sup>ya<sup>c</sup>ulyaa* 'a High-Profile Reference' and which is purportedly believed to refer to the Monarch in Jordanian media discourse.

The data in hand consists of a collection of 72 journal columns written in Standard Arabic in Jordanian daily newspapers by four prominent Jordanian columnists. The columns were published online simultaneously by most Jordanian news sites in the period between 4 January 2011 and 30 April 2012. The size of each column varies between 340 and 380 words. Thus, my entire data consists of about 20,000 words web-based corpus of the writings of ten Jordanian columnists in Arabic. All the texts are extracted in digital form from *ammonnews.net* and *sarayanews.com*; the two most popular Jordanian news websites according to *alexa*<sup>2</sup> website.

The Analysis involves the identification of all instances and contexts of the metaphorical representation *marje<sup>c</sup>ya<sup>c</sup>ulyaa* 'a High-Profile Reference'. Then, contextual qualitative analysis is carried out with the aim is to accentuate a set of generalizations deduced from the use of metaphors and metonyms when referring to the Monarchy and the King in Jordanian media discourse. These generalizations are built on the basis of the Halliday's *transitivity* perspective which looks into the ideational function of the text and which is concerned with the transmission of ideas. Thus, the function of transitivity is that of 'representing 'processes' or 'experiences': actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations' (Halliday, 1985: 53). In this respect, transitivity mostly pays attention to the process (actions) system and the *agent-patient* relations in the discourse in hand. Herein, a *process* is used as a notion 'to cover all phenomena...and anything that can be expressed by a verb: event, whether physical or not, state, or relation' (Halliday, 1967: 159). Accordingly, the processes (actions) in the chosen texts should be analyzed in terms of cultural significance to study the implication of the relationship between the metaphorical representations and the process associated with them. Such analysis should show how the habitual co-occurrence of idiosyncratic collocations with these representations reveals networks of social associations and connotations. These connotations, in turn, can stand for the different underlying ideological assumptions and structures about that Jordanian social context.

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<sup>2</sup> *Alexa* is a website that is widely considered the leading provider of free, global web metrics. It is widely used to discover the most successful sites on the web by keyword, category, or country. Researchers can rely on its analytics for competitive analysis, benchmarking, market research, or business development.

### 3. Findings

The phrase *marje<sup>c</sup>yaat <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* ‘high-profile references’ constructs one of the most frequent metaphoric representations used in contemporary Jordanian media discourse. In the corpus we compiled from a collection of 72 journal columns from Jordanian daily newspapers, the phrase *marje<sup>c</sup>yaat <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* ‘high-profile references’ and its different derivations have appeared 84 times; at least once in each of these columns. In a few columns the phrase has appeared more than twice. The analysis shows no significant discrepancy between column writers in terms of the frequency of using the phrase. Each columnist has used the phrase between 14 to 18 times in all his/her writings.

The shade of meaning of *marje<sup>c</sup>yaat <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* in Arabic stems from both the attributive nominal *marje<sup>c</sup>* and the verb *raja<sup>c</sup>*; which all mean ‘to come back’ (Ibn Manzur, 1997: ‘*marje<sup>c</sup>*’). The word *marje<sup>c</sup>* ‘reference’ refers to a person, or a figure, that is considered a point for reference for a testimonial to the degree he, or it, represents a factual concept that forms the basis of an evaluation and assessment or ‘the use of a source of information in order to ascertain something’ (*Oxford Dictionaries Online*: ‘reference’). Thus, a *marje<sup>c</sup>yah*, in politics jargon, denotes the authority that possesses the highest level of knowledge and information that enables it to have power over decision making. What is more, this *marje<sup>c</sup>yah* ‘reference’ steadily collocates with *<sup>c</sup>ulyaa* ‘high-profile’ in Jordanian media discourse; entailing the reference’s exalted position (in the hierarchy of the political system) and capacity to oversee what ordinary people underneath cannot see, or know.

The conceptual base of the metaphoric phrase *marje<sup>c</sup>yah <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* ‘high-profile reference’ originates from the metaphoric schemes UP IS GOOD and BEING A CONTROLLER IS BEING IN THE TOP based on the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphors (See Lovejoy, 1936). In the light of modern metaphor theory, Kövecses sees that at the heart of the great chain metaphors is a certain folk theory of how ‘things’ are related to each other in the world (Kövecses, 2002: 126). The GREAT CHAIN OF BEING can be considered a metaphor system, or a tool of great power and scope, that maps the attributes and/or behavior between the different categories of the chain (such as mapping between attributes of political and administrative figures and the actions of human body organs). These mapping processes give the great chain metaphors an evaluative function that is based on the cultural beliefs of the society where they emerge (See Lakoff and Turner, 1989: 160ff).

A preliminary web-based inquiry indicates that the first appearance of the nominal phrase *marje<sup>c</sup>yaat <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* in a Jordanian newspaper is dated to the summer of the year 2006 (and in the spring of 2007 in non-media websites<sup>3</sup>). The first connotations of the phrase has referred to the need to establish some ‘higher authorities’ which work as referential administrative bodies that work on maintaining old cultural notions. Since then, Jordanian columnists have borrowed the phrase and started using it when referring to high-rank officers working at influential administrative institutions especially the General Intelligence Department and the Royal Court.

When it comes to the semantic function of the phrase *marje<sup>c</sup>yaat <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* ‘high-profile reference’ in the compiled corpus, it is found that it randomly collocates with processes that dubiously structure the referent in terms of *agents* and a *patients* without defining them explicitly, and this, in turn, draws a high degree of uncertainty in the reader. To illustrate, the *marje<sup>c</sup>yaat <sup>c</sup>ulyaa* (‘high-profile references’) are attributed with *agentive* qualities in 56 instances of the total 84 instances where the phrase appears in the corpus. In these instances, the ‘high-profile references’ are depicted as enjoying tremendous power like controlling the flow of information in administration, and thus, the process of decision making. This is plainly illustrated in the following three examples:

1. All information, which ‘*Saraya*’ have acknowledged, confirms that the high-profile references actually *began revising all the names* available to form the next government to succeed AlBakhit’s. (*Sarayanews*, 12 June 2011)
2. ...most likely, Prime Minister AlBakheet keeps a draft copy of his Cabinet’s reshuffle on hold until *receiving the green light* from high-profile references that *permits*.... (*Ammonnews*, 03 June 2011)
3. The impression among the attendance was that AlMasry [Head of the Chamber of the Senates] will be the most suitable figure, who would be very close, when high-profile references *decide to terminate* the trial-period of President Marouf AlBakhit after accomplishing its designated tasks... (*Sarayanews*, 15 August 2011)

<sup>3</sup> [www.alghad.com/index.php/article/61579.html](http://www.alghad.com/index.php/article/61579.html) (in Arabic), and [www.aalalbayt.org/en/pastandpresent.html](http://www.aalalbayt.org/en/pastandpresent.html) (in English).

In addition, the ‘references’ are depicted as a hidden hand that control events from behind that stage; exercising unquestionable – and somehow interfering and intervening – influence upon other departments and administrations in the state. This can be understood from the following example:

4. ..., while few deputies revealed that high-profile references in the state are *annoyed* by the allegations of corruption which arraign several major figures in the state or those close to it. (*Ammonnews*, 28 September 2011)
5. ..., where these information said that the deal was revoked after the *intervention* of high-profile references in anticipation that the deal might lead to some changes in the professional plan of ‘*AlArab Alyawm*’ newspaper. (*Sarayanews*, 13 June 2011)

In few instances, this influence is perceived as a negative one because it looks, according to the columnist’s or a third party’s viewpoint, damaging to the democratic image of the state and a predicament for distorted rulership. This can be seen in the following example:

6. Mr. AlKabariti [a former Prime Minister], in turn, presented a bold intervention in which he hinted to the *responsibility* of some high-profile references in *weakening the general mandate* of the state’s governments. (*Ammonnews*, 13 January 2012)

As illustrated above, Jordanian columnists use the phrase ‘high-profile references’ by attributing to them agentive qualities without defining their identity explicitly. The social function of the ‘high-profile reference’ metaphor can be structured through other collocating processes with relevance to transitivity or the *agent-patient* relations (Fairclough, 1995a; 1997). In the discourse level, the frequent emergence of ‘high-profile reference’ as a semantic agent more than patient reflects a perspective in favor of THE REFERENCE AS AN AGENT scheme. As an *agent* ‘high-profile reference’ predominantly collocates with material processes which indicate ‘initiative and action’ as we saw in the extracts above. However, the contextual analysis of the corpus shows that all we know about these ‘high-profile references’ that they are high-rank officers in the state. In addition, the processes attributed to them indicate that these ‘references’ are influential to the extent that they *seriously consider* (*tufaker jedyyan*), *decide to reappoint* (*tuqarer i’aadat altakleef*), *prefer* (*tufaDel*), *start revising all the names* (*bada’at tanqeeh al’asmaa*’), *consider reviving* (*tufaker be e’adat istehdaath*), and *cease its support* (*tarfa’ alda’m*), and so on. Still, the identity of these ‘high-profile references’ remains undisclosed for the reader; only the columnist can discern it.

However, intertextual analysis from Jordanian context can reveal the identity of these ‘reference’; casting some doubt over the figure of the king. In the Constitution of Jordan, *Article 28* and *40* plainly state that the Monarch exercises almost absolute power in administering the state’s affaires as he signs, executes, and vetoes laws; making him the most influential figure in the state. On the bases of the processes presented above, it is understandable that the King exercises his jurisdictional powers, and these powers are invested in the constitution through *al’iradah assameyah* (the royal decree) and after being signed and forwarded by the prime minister and the minister(s) concerned (*Article 40*).

On the other hand, the ‘high-profile references’ are sometimes discursively structured in Jordanian media discourse in terms of the semantic function of a *patient*. The *marje’yaat ‘ulyaa* (‘high-profile references’) are attributed with the *patient* qualities in 28 instances of the total 84 instances where the phrase appears in the corpus. Unlike the *agent* scheme, THE REFERENCE AS A PATIENT scheme indicates the individuality of these references and its ‘human’ like nature in all its aspects of vulnerability and openness which has made it subject to manipulation and deceit. However, this reflects the positive influence the flexibility of the ‘references’ and the influence they can exercise for the benefit of the state. For example:

7. After all this, do not we have the right to prosecute the former Prime Minister Samir AIRifai on *charges of causing* a crisis in the country and *exasperate* the people *against* high-profile references? (*Sarayanews*, 14 February 2011)
8. In an attempt to *feel the pulse of* high-profile references, the list was endorsed with the royal signature. (*Sarayanews*, 10 March 2012)
9. ..., a sentiment makes me feel that the *calls demanding* some high-profile references to *tolerate cases of slandering* (the Monarchy) are initiated from sense of right and they reflect virtue and integrity. (*Ammonnews*, 10 April 2012)

10. His [Prime Minister Awn AlKhasawneh's] tactical resignation that *has not been endured by high-profile references* at the time, so they *dealt with it seriously...* (Ammonnews, 27 April 2012)

The Processes associated with the phrase 'high-profile reference' in the two examples above reflect the depiction of these references in terms of a patient who is under the influence of others' *charges of causing*, and that those last ones are *exasperating* the people *against* this high-profile reference. And this can be perceived from the act of *feeling the pulse* of the high-profile reference as well. The significance of the representation THE REFERENCE AS A PATIENT is that it plainly shed more light on the identity of the 'references' making it centralized around the figure of the King personally, not to the institution or the high-rank officers around him. This can be patently perceived through the contexts where the 'reference' is presented to the reader as a 'mediator' between the different levels in the state. This supports the conception of the conceptual metaphor THE KING IS A MEDIATOR which originates from the explicit understanding of the constitutional role of the King in decision making and how it transcends its mere role in controlling and governing to guidance and counseling. The question remains here, why Jordanian columnists have a preference to refer to the Monarch as a 'high-profile reference' over referring to him explicitly?

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Jordanian media discourse is the product of societal and institutional practices and – to a great extent – a shaper of its public discourse. The topic this article tackles involves the Jordanian columnists' discursive product of using metaphorical representations to implicitly refer to the state's symbols – namely the Monarch. The point to be highlighted now is how the metaphoric representation *marjē'ya 'ulyaa* 'a high-profile reference' is discursively used in Jordanian media discourse as an anti-coercion discursive practice. This can be recognized by looking to the status of media discourse and the freedom of expression within the Jordanian context.

Jordan national media emphasizes the democratic and pluralist natures of the state by highlighting that the King exercises his executive authority through the prime minister and his ministerial cabinet; which in return are responsible before Parliament. In fact, Jordan has gone a long distance in pluralism; year 1989 was considered the year of transformation towards democracy; a process that symbolizes pluralism manifested materially through the adoption of the *Printing and Press Law*, n° 1993/10, in addition to the multiplicity of parties through the adoption of the *Political Parties' Law* n° 1993/32. (Assaf and Henderson, 2007: 13). Neither of these laws plainly states that the explicit referring to the Monarchy in Jordan is forbidden. However, Jordanian columnists remarkably avoid the explicit mentioning of the name of his majesty the King in their writing especially within the context of criticizing governments' decision or corruption in the state. This has led Jordanian journalist to increase their thirst to involve in more critical and explicit coverage of the state's affaires in public media; especially the speed of reform and anti-corruption measures and their lawsuits (Hamdy, 2009). This coverage has obtained a conjectural influence from the Jordanian Constitution which explicitly affirms that:

'... [t]he State shall guarantee freedom of opinion. Every Jordanian shall be free to express his opinion by speech, in writing, or by means of photographic representation and other forms of expression, provided that such does not violate the law.... Freedom of the press and publications shall be ensured within the limits of the law'. (*The Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Article 15*)

However, successive governments have constantly relied on its own interpretation to the above-mentioned Article, where freedom of expression and opinion remains restricted in accordance with the law, to impose censorship by rules of law. These rules of law have been implemented by the judicial authority to become the arbitrator in controlling the language used in the existing - and new - newspapers and their resources (Assaf and Henderson, 2007: 15).

What is more, under the impact of the 'Arab Spring', the reader of Jordanian columnists can notice the emerging trend in dealing local situation liberally; especially, following the initiation of reform process. When discussing reform process and local affairs, Jordanian columnists are keen to approach the Monarchy in their writings attributing entire political reform around the King; especially as he constantly presents himself as the vanguard of this reform as he declared:

... I am confident that 2012 will be a year of key political reform in Jordan. Among the most important steps is building the robust political party life that parliamentary government requires. We know that it is not one election, but the next and the next and all those that follow, which show that a system is working. (King Abdullah II, *Remarks Before the European Parliament Strasbourg*, France, 18 April 2012)

As mentioned earlier, metaphors are discursively used to conceal some facts about the topic in hand and highlight other ones. In other words, metaphors can be used for the pragmatic function of equivocation. This mostly occurs when the illocutionary force of an argument relies on the interlocutors' understanding of a salient word which can be understood in more than one sense. In the case of *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* 'a high-profile reference', we would have the case of the Jordanian columnist creating the nominal phrase *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* to repeal in democratic states the institution of the Monarchy but not necessarily the Monarchy itself. This is a case of equivocation in which the contexts where the metaphor appears to involve large degree of ambiguity in identifying to whom the metonym or the metaphor exactly refer.

In examples above, Jordanian columnists aim to express their general feeling of disappointment of the outcome of the reform process which is halted down by some hidden forces. The columnist was aware of the seriousness of his criticism if it is understood to be referring to the King. Instead, his use of the metaphor 'high-profile reference' respects the Jordanian societal conception that unpopular policies and decisions are initiated by individual people and departments within the institutions of the state and high-rank officers rather than from the King himself. The reason behind such allegations are understood from the opposition, especially the party of Islamic Action Front (IAF), who have constantly attacked the government and circles of decision making for hindering the delay in achieving the promised reform, allegedly pointing to some 'hidden forces' in the state who are deemed responsible for the obstruction of constructive paces that might lead to significant political reform (Mahafzah, 2012). Even people within the closed circle of the state have expressed their disappointment from the delay in reform process. For instance, Marwan Muasher, a former cabinet minister, regretfully accentuated that '[a]fter a decade of political reform efforts in Jordan, it does not appear that the process has made any significant advances (Muasher, 2011: 21).

Although the metaphor referring to the Jordanian Monarch as *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* 'a high-profile reference' is meant to be an anti-coercion discursive practice that repeals Jordan as a democratic state (where some referential 'institution' which rule and govern and make mistakes), in many contexts, this *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* denotes the conception that the main role of this *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* in the state is to hinder, and even revoke, unpopular or argumentative policies and decisions initiated by the government (first three examples above); a role that suits the King most. And this can be enforced though example 1 and 2 above where the columnist accentuates that 'high-profile references' actually began revising all the names of the candidates to appoint a new prime minister, it is explicitly indicated in the constitution that it is the King's right to appoint the prime minister (*Article 35*). Here, the columnist's evocating message hints to two interpretations: first, the columnist wishes to convey to the reader that the King appoints a new prime minister after the candidates been *verified* by 'other' departments in the state; namely the General Intelligent Department; or secondly, the columnist has borrowed the official terminology of the Constitution hinting to the King himself as the first and last reference in appointing the new prime minister. This first interpretation stems from the belief that the General Intelligence Department continues to influence decisions in most aspects of Jordanian public life, including academic freedom [and] government appointments (Human Rights Watch, 2011: 1). Thus, the careful reading of the examples shows how the different interpretations of the contexts of the metaphoric representation *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* 'a high-profile reference' allows for either of these two kinds of interpretations.

One of the challenges of using the metaphoric phrase *marje<sup>e</sup>ya<sup>e</sup> ulyaa* 'high-profile references' in Jordanian media discourse is the actuality that we cannot be certain whether the ordinary Jordanian reader can recognize the columnist's intention when encountering the above mentioned unresolved conflict between two implied interpretations. Since the excessive conveying of information using inexplicit metaphoric representation such as 'a high-profile reference' can reflect a higher degree of ambiguity to the ordinary reader, many writers have acknowledged the danger behind such practice and warned that it is necessary to disconnect the different high-profile institutions (such as the 'Royal Palace') from the King and Monarchy; especially when it comes to ostracized decisions. For example, a Jordanian columnist sincerely wonders:



- Why the name of the King or ‘the palace’, his indicative term, is *interjected* in biased processes and virtual confrontations which are not politically constructive to Jordan,... (Ammonnews, 01 March 2012)

It is found that the superfluous proliferation of the metaphor *marje<sup>ʿ</sup>yaat ʿulyaa* makes the ordinary reader anticipate what is mentioned in media discourse and understand whatever attributed to the ‘high-profile’ bodies of administration in the state in reference to the generic metonymic principle THE PART FOR THE WHOLE, or its more specific representation THE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE LEADER. Jordanian columnists seem to take it for granted that - when using this representation - their readers will connect it immediately to the King if the illocutionary force of the message is positive. This superfluous proliferation of the metaphor *marje<sup>ʿ</sup>ya ʿulyaa* to refer to the King accords with the metaphor UP IS GOOD. On the other hand, when the illocutionary force of the message is negative, the metaphoric representation *marje<sup>ʿ</sup>ya ʿulyaa* ‘a high-profile reference’ is used here to imply high-rank officers in the state to release the Monarch– the King – from any commitment resulted from unpopular and argumentative decision.

Jordanian columnists have been using metaphoric representations to evoke equivocating information for the sake of avoiding the explicit reference to the Jordanian Monarchy, and the King. In Jordan, ‘the people in power’ contact journalists to update them on different matters and events, and the journalists usually understand that these particular pieces of information are to be made public or subdued (Assaf and Henderson, 2007: 23). Since there are media restrictions in Jordan on defamation and opposition to armed forces and security agencies (ibid.), and since criticism of the King<sup>4</sup> is heavily punished under the penal code (Human Rights Watch 2011: 2), anti-coercion metaphorical language becomes defensive strategy aims to signal the columnist’s lack of full commitment to the proposed illocutionary force of his/her discourse resulted from inaccuracy of those people in power’s information.

In an early stage before writing this article, I had the chance to have an informal communication with three prominent Jordanian columnists who regularly write for local newspapers asking about their perception of using the metaphorical representation *marje<sup>ʿ</sup>yaat ʿulyaa* in editorial language. The three columnists have emphasized that they primarily use this phrase a ‘protective measure’ to avoid the explicit motioning of the King’s name. Remarkably, all have agreed that it is discursively used in Jordanian media jargon to refer to the King in the first place, and in few cases to refer to high-profile civil officers in the state, officers in the cabinet, officers in the Royal Court, or the chiefs of security services, and in these institutions rests real power as they are not accountable to the parliament or regulated by the constitution (Choucair 2006: 4). Interestingly, the three columnists have accepted that such a discursive strategy characterizes journalistic style rather than public discourse in Jordan. One of them elaborated that using this metaphorical representations is considered a stylistic requirement to attract the readers’ attention by preparing them to precipitate the ‘element of surprise’ before the information is proved or denied officially. The three columnists have also accepted the assumption that the copious use of *marje<sup>ʿ</sup>yaat ʿulyaa* metaphorical representations in the Jordanian context can be illusive to ordinary readers. However, they have emphasized that the careful reader can easily recognize the referent to which the columnist refers. Finally, the three columnists have firmly denied the proposition that mentioning the King’s name explicitly might result serious implications by censorship authorities in Jordan. Still, a columnist accentuated that serious implications might be aroused if the illocutionary force behind the discourse was damaging to the image of the Monarchy.

Still, emphasizing that the explicit mentioning of the King’s name has never been a taboo in Jordan, ‘equivocating’ metaphorical representations might lead to the misinterpretation of the different processes involved in the circle of decision making with the exact referent responsible of the decision taken. Fairclough implicitly emphasizes such particularity that might be find in journalistic – and political – discourse as he notes that language can ‘misrepresent as well as represent realities, it can weave visions and imaginaries which can be implemented to change realities...’ (Fairclough, 2006: 1). It sounds as it is the columnists’ decision to make their discourses more complicated for the ordinary reader. The unsystematic reliance on confusing metaphoric representations in media discourse might lead the reader to infer something that was not explicitly asserted by the column writer.

<sup>4</sup> The constitution even states that the King – as head of state – is immune from any liability and responsibility (Article 30).

The columnists implicitly suggest that the Jordanian media can openly criticize policies and behavior of the 'government', thus there is no risking reprisal from the King as the King is outside the political arena (Mednicoff, 2002: 101); an assumption that is heavily relied upon by media discourse to divert criticism and blame to unpopular decisions on the government. From a pragmatic linguistic perspective, this can be contrasted to presuppositions because these labels function on the level of discourse not the phrase or sentence; so they are much more dependent on the shared knowledge and social structures of society where the journalist and the reader live (See Jones and Peccei, 2004: 44).

To tackle issues related to the linguistic strategies used to maintain the harmonious relationship between the different levels of the Jordanian state still needs more research especially within the realm of the Arab Spring. Media discourse constitutes a rich source for such analysis. My article here, unfortunately, lacks the quantitative analysis that might have shown more patterns of using metaphorical language as an anti-coercion discursive strategy in media discourse; quantitative analysis with a larger body of texts can actually reveal more implications about the use of metaphorical language in media discourse.

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