

Day 2- April 4, 2006

An Emotive Dictionary of Conflict Terms - Ilai Alon, Visiting Professor, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Alon discussed his ongoing JTAC funded research and highlighted the benefits his research had for the government. The objective of this effort is to create an accessible dictionary of the emotional content of Arab Palestinian terms related to conflict. Unlike other dictionaries, this database does not seek to translate the Arabic terms into English but highlight the terms' meanings in such a way that they are not restricted to the cognitive sphere, but also include emotional context. The Arabic language (Palestinian dialect) is largely indicative of the Palestinian's national and religious identity and culture. To better understand them, one needs to understand their culture.

To develop this database, Alon is assessing what constitutes emotion and terms of conflicts for Arab Palestinians. He developed a 2 phased questionnaire to be used in a survey. The document lists a variety of emotive terms (love, tenderness, faithfulness, hope, fraternity, etc) and conflict terms (racism, hatred, co-existence, peace, etc) and asks the participants to develop meaning. They will then "grade" the conflict terms with the emotion terms. The survey results will be used as the basis for the database.

Alon would like to see this work help the military finesse their use of terms (capture subtleties) so that they adequately express what is needed to allow the receiver to fully understand the message.