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Preface

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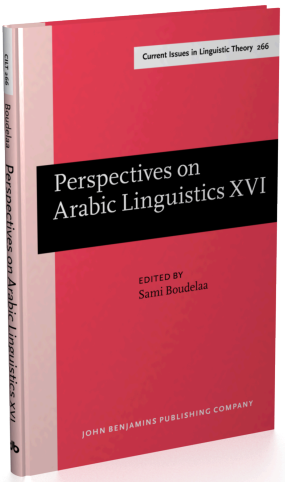

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PREFACE

The papers in this volume span a number of interesting issues in Arabic, with one focusing on Maltese.

The paper by Georges Bohas, the guest speaker to the symposium, deals with the issue of lexical organization in Arabic. He calls into question the concept of the triconsonantal root by invoking theoretical and experimental evidence. Bohas shows, for example, that most native speakers of Arabic are unable to extract the triconsonantal root from highly-familiar surface forms such as [makaan] "place". This leads him to conclude that the triconsonantal root cannot be the basic unit of analysis either in a formal theoretical sense or in a psychological cognitive sense. Instead, he suggests the etymon and the phonetic matrix as alternative units around which the Arabic and perhaps the Semitic lexicons are organised.

The paper by Ferrando focuses on the plural of paucity in Arabic by assessing two claims made about this notion. The first is that a small set of the broken plural patterns represents small quantities. The second is that the variation between "natural" agreement (plural attribute with plural subject) and "deflected" agreement (feminine singular attribute with plural subject) is based on a distinction between paucity and abundance. Ferrando concludes that the plural of paucity may be seen as an optional feature at the disposal of Arabic writers, but not as a psychologically productive process involved in everyday language production and understanding.

Freeman tackles the question of whether or not a koiné is in progress in Sanʕaaʔ, Yemen. His data consists of natural language as produced by Yemini speakers aged 15 to 40 in TV serials, radio broadcasts, interviews in informal settings, and a questionnaire. The analysis of these data led Freeman to conclude that there is no koiné in Sanʕaaʔ. Instead, he points out that there are at least two identifiable dialect systems in use in Sanʕaaʔ and that each dialect system is evolving towards becoming more distinct from the other. Freeman further speculates that the current linguistic situation may lead in due course to the formation of two koinés in Sanʕaaʔ; one spoken by the Sanʕaanis and migrants from the northern highlands and the other by the migrants from the southern regions of Yemen.

Ingleby and Baothman contributed two papers. The first deals with the durational and co-articulatory effects of phonological *sukuun* (i.e., the orthographic marker showing that a consonant is not followed by a vowel), and concludes that the phonological activity associated with the orthographic incidence of *sukuun* involves devoicing, schwa-epenthesis and coalescence.

The second contribution sets out to compare the directionality of nasal assimilation and the spread of pharyngealization. The authors suggest that nasal assimilation in Arabic follows the same regressive and local pattern as in English, while the spreading of pharyngealization from emphatic segments is bi-directional and non-local.

The paper by Kamel focuses on the characteristics of information structure in Arabic by way of contrasting them with those of English, probing into their effect on meaning. The author concludes that there are similarities and differences between the ways in which information structure is coded in the two languages, and that the differences relate mainly to linguistic features such as free-word order or tonicity that may be available in one linguistic system but not the other.

The paper by Khattab, Al-Tamimi, and Heselwood investigates gender differences in implementations of the phonemic opposition in Jordanian Arabic between the plain coronal plosive /t/ and its emphatic counterpart /ṭ/. On the basis of acoustic and auditory analyses, Khattab et al. conclude that females and males produce comparable evidence of emphasis and suggest that the extent to which this feature is present in the speech stream may vary considerably depending on whether one looks at spontaneous speech or laboratory recording of elicited speech.

The final paper, by Walter, describes the behaviour of the historical emphatics in Maltese Arabic. Although this dialect no longer displays this set of consonants on the surface, their effects still manifest themselves as backing and lowering of neighbouring vowels. Specifically, an RTR-spreading process extends leftward to the word boundary with no blocking segments, and rightward to the word boundary unless blocked by a geminate high front glide. Walter further suggests that Maltese exhibits a guttural dissimilation process similar to the one previously documented by others in South Palestinian Arabic.

The author observes that her data have interesting implications for the feature geometry proposals.

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