

Indroduction

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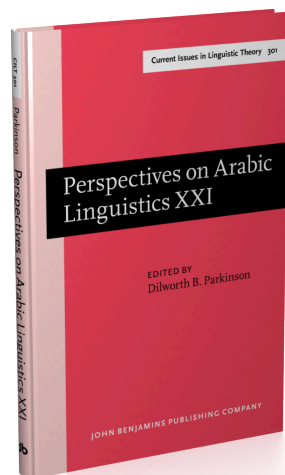
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INTRODUCTION

Dilworth B. Parkinson

The papers in this volume deal with a variety of topics in Arabic Linguistics, with a notable number of them emphasizing pragmatic aspects of their topic. All of the papers emphasize the collection and analysis of authentic language data and explore different approaches to the analysis of these data.

The first paper, by Zina Saadi, explores the implications of the computationally annoying fact that writers of Arabic do not always choose the same Unicode character to represent a particular Arabic letter. This is an important issue in the processing of natural language texts, and the paper both explores and catalogues the scope of the problem, and calls for the incorporation of normalization schemes for electronic Arabic corpora.

In his contribution, Kamel Elsaadany reviews the data on agreement mismatches in Arabic noun phrases that contain numbers, and then compares two possible accounts of these data within an LFG framework, demonstrating that the account which proposes a separate notation for INDEX and for CONCORD proves to be the most felicitous.

Reda Mahmoud has examined the point/counterpoint type of Arabic television program on Al-Jazeera and other Arabic language satellite stations, in which a moderator discusses an issue with two participants who represent different points of view, and focuses on how the moderator of these debates generates controversy by asking a particular kind of question whose purpose is not to find an answer but rather to stimulate controversy. Syntactic, lexical and pragmatic features of these questions are examined to help explain how they manage to generate disagreement and debate.

In his paper on emphatic negation (putting the negative markers around the pronoun instead of the verb, or instead of using 'not'), Mustafa Mughazy shows that this alternative form of negation, which is often characterized simply as being more 'emphatic', is not actually emphatic, but rather a pragmatically distinct method of negation used for denial instead of plain negation. When viewed in a system with regular sentential negation, metalinguistic negation, and denial, we find an interesting distribution of pragmatic functions over the available structures.

Jonathan Owens and Trent Rockwood have done a careful examination of the use of the form *yaʕni* in a corpus of Arabic speech, in order to determine what it actually means in usage. After reviewing a number of previous approaches to this discourse marker, they take a more minimalist approach, concluding that

although its lexical meaning is minimal, its actual meaning ‘resides in its discourse organizing function’, and that the relationship it sets up between concepts invites the kind of inferences that give rise to the meanings ascribed to the form.

In his piece comparing the legal language of religious vs. secular judges in Morocco, Ahmed Fakhri examines how writers encode references to outside texts in their judgements, demonstrating a clear contrast between the religious and secular modes in terms of their emphasis on authors vs. texts, whether the material is incorporated as a quote or a summary, the lexical items used to introduce the quote, and other related structures. This paper is a contribution to our understanding of how cultural rhetorical and thought patterns are embedded into Arabic texts.

Abderrahmane Zouhir, in a comparative paper, examines the language policies of Lebanon, Turkey, Israel and Morocco, demonstrating that the discussion of language policy divorced from the social, economic, political, historical and cultural forces that have shaped it is not a fruitful enterprise. He shows how identical policies work out differently depending on those factors.

Selim Ben Said gathered data on the perception of Arab-accented speech (compared to Latino, East European and Asian accented English) by native speakers of American English as well as by other groups. Subjects heard a passage read by speakers of English with various accents, and then rated both the performance and the speaker on a number of scales. The Arabic accents scored poorly (along with the Asian ones), and the male speakers of both were particularly disliked. Analysis of the data leads to a number of hypotheses about the source of these reactions.

In her contribution, Hanada Al-Masri looks carefully at ‘what is lost in translation’. By examining a number of short story translations, she categorizes and illustrates the kinds of losses that occur, and what this means for our understanding of translated literature.