

Introduction

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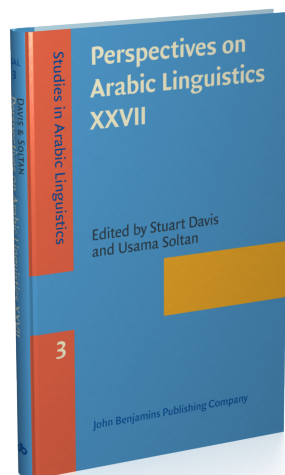
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Introduction

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The study of Arabic dialects within modern linguistic analysis has constituted an important and rich area of research during the past thirty-five years or so. Linguistic data from various Arabic dialects have played a significant role in contributing to the development of linguistic theory in the areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, and sociolinguistics, among a few others. While much of the early research tended to focus on Standard Arabic, research on modern Arabic dialects and cross-dialectal variation has increasingly played a more central role in recent studies. From a typological perspective, Arabic dialects display a wide range of linguistic phenomena where variation is not only witnessed across different geographical dialects but often within the same dialectal region. All the contributions to this volume share this focus on the study of Arabic dialects and cross-dialectal variation, with the papers representing multiple subfields within linguistics.

The volume consists of three parts: The first part contains five papers on syntax and its interfaces; the second part comprises four papers all dealing with Arabic linguistic variation; and the third part has one paper on child phonological acquisition. Data in these papers come from the various dialects spoken in North Africa, Egypt, the Arabian peninsula, the Levant, and to a lesser extent Standard Arabic.

Part I of this volume features five papers on syntax and its interfaces with morphology, phonology, or discourse. The first two papers in this part discuss the syntactic properties of two grammatical structures in two Arabic dialects, whereas the three other papers address issues at the syntax-morphology, syntax-phonology, and syntax-discourse interfaces. In the following paragraphs, we present a more detailed summary of each paper.

The first paper in the syntax section of this volume is by Lina Choueiri and is entitled “Locative Prepositional Phrases and Inalienable PLACE in Lebanese Arabic.” In this paper, Choueiri investigates the syntax of locative PPs in Lebanese Arabic (LA), and particularly the fact that in certain locative PPs (so-called indirect complementation or INDCOMP PPs), a locative element can be followed by the semantically vacuous preposition *min* before introducing the ground DP complement. Choueiri points out that functional prepositions like *bi/fi* ‘in’ and

ʕa(laa) ‘on’ are excluded from occurrence in this frame. To account for these facts, Choueiri argues for the postulation of a fine-grained internal structure for locative PPs in LA, whereby an often silent PLACE noun mediates the relation between the ground DP and the locative element. Choueiri further proposes that locative elements in LA are not created equal; rather, functional locative elements are generated as P heads, while lexical locative elements are generated as modifiers of the PLACE head. When the functional head P is occupied by the light preposition *min*, Choueiri argues that lexical locative elements, but not functional locative elements, are allowed to occur inside the PP. This analysis explains the complementary distribution between *min* and functional locative elements, thereby accounting for the primary observation of the paper. The proposed analysis draws on recent work in the relevant literature on cross-linguistic variation in the syntax of PPs in other languages (e.g., Hebrew and Greek), while pointing out how LA behaves differently in this regard from these other languages.

Usama Soltan’s contribution to the volume is entitled “On the Syntax of Exceptive Constructions in Egyptian Arabic.” Soltan investigates the syntactic properties of exceptive phrases headed by the particle *ʔillaa* in Egyptian Arabic (EA). The paper first provides a descriptive account of the distribution of such exceptive phrases, pointing out two asymmetries with regard to their positioning in the sentence as well as the range of elements that license their occurrence. To account for these two asymmetries, Soltan argues for a distinction between two types of exceptives in EA: *connected exceptives* (CEs) and *free exceptives* (FEs), following Hoeksema’s (1987) seminal work. Under the proposed analysis, the exceptive marker *ʔillaa* is treated as a coordinating conjunction that may conjoin two DPs, giving rise to CEs, or two CPs, giving rise to FEs. CEs occur adjacently to their licensing DP and represent a restriction on the domain of quantification of that DP, and are, therefore, licensed by a restricted set of quantifiers (typically universal quantifiers). FEs, by contrast, express exceptions to generality claims, and are, therefore, licensed in a wider set of contexts. In addition, given their clausal syntax, *ʔillaa*-FEs always appear at the right periphery of the sentence. Empirical support for a clausal coordination elliptical analysis of FEs in EA comes from cases of non-elliptical clausal exceptives, similarities with ellipsis phenomena with regard to P-stranding and the occurrence of multiple XP remnants, occurrence of contrasting speaker-oriented adverbials, and effects of the parallelism constraint in such constructions.

Elabbas Benmamoun’s contribution to this volume is entitled “Verbal and Nominal Plurals and the Syntax-Morphology Interface.” In his paper, Benmamoun focuses on the issue of formal feature spell-out at the syntax-morphology interface. More specifically, Benmamoun investigates how the plural feature is spelled-out on nominal and verbal heads in Arabic dialects, providing evidence that spell-out of

number is dependent on whether the feature is interpretable or non-interpretable in the minimalist program's sense. When number is interpretable, it can be spelled-out inside the noun and verb stem. But when it is non-interpretable, it is spelled-out by regular concatenation to a word or stem level category. Benmamoun argues that this can follow from the assumption that interpretable features are derived prior to narrow syntax (possibly lexically), while non-interpretable features are derived post-syntactically. The proposed analysis suggests that while the distinction between lexical and post-lexical modes of derivation may need to be maintained, the critical factor may not be the derivation vs. inflection split, but possibly the interpretable vs. non-interpretable or the relational vs. inherent nature of the relevant feature in relation to its host.

Sam Hellmuth's contribution to the volume is entitled "Exploring the Syntax-Phonology Interface in Arabic." Hellmuth starts out her contribution by noting the dearth of studies that genuinely examine the syntax-phonology interface in Arabic, especially the issue of the mapping of prosodic constituency (as reflected by intonation) and syntactic structure. One reason for this is that there does not seem to be any simple syntax-prosody mapping that holds across Arabic dialects. Hellmuth reviews some of her previous work on Egyptian Arabic where whole sentences often constitute a single prosodic phrase. In SVO sentences with a complex subject, a prosodic boundary could be observed at the end of the subject noun phrase only if the subject is of sufficient prosodic weight. Hellmuth further observes that within Egyptian Arabic there are two different ways of marking prosodic phrasing. One group of speakers consistently has a phrase-final high tone (followed by a lower pitch at the beginning of the next phrase). A second group of speakers display a lower pitch at the end of the phrase followed by a high pitch at the start of the next. Hellmuth then reports on a pilot study comparing prosodic phrasing in Jordanian Arabic with that in Egyptian Arabic. A clear difference that she observes is that Jordanian Arabic speakers consistently show an intonation phrasing that marks the initial subject constituent in the SVO sentence regardless of the length of the subject constituent. The phrase is typically marked by an intonational fall at the end of the subject noun phrase followed by a subsequent rise (pitch reset) on the next word. Throughout the paper, Hellmuth relates her findings to general theoretical work on the syntax-prosody interface. The importance of the paper lies in the fact that it constitutes a model for original research in this understudied area in Arabic linguistics and what the expectations might be in examining the syntax-prosody interface for any dialect of Arabic.

The fifth contribution in Part I of the volume is Amel Khalfaoui's "A Salience-based Analysis of the Tunisian Arabic Demonstrative *hāk* as Used in Oral Narratives." In her paper, Khalfaoui reports on a study of the demonstrative element *hāk* in oral narratives, proposing that its occurrence reflects a strategy used by

the narrator to increase the relative salience of the referent of *hāk*. The degree of relative salience to which these entities are promoted, Khalfaoui argues, is not always the same, and has to do with the centrality of the referent of *hāk* in the story. Human referents typically play a central role in the story, and as such are established as the most salient entities relative to other entities in the discourse, whereas non-human referents, such as objects or locations, are promoted to a higher degree of relative salience without being established as the discourse topics. Because of the nature of the genre of folk tales, the examples discussed in Khalfaoui's study indicate that the narrator uses the demonstrative *hāk* not to draw the hearers' attention to the referents of *hāk* themselves, but to indicate to the hearer how these referents will influence the events, with the goal of keeping the audience interested in the story.

Part II of this volume consists of four papers all in some way reflecting approaches to linguistic variation: sociolinguistic variation, phonological variation with regard to Arabic *jiim*, and a computational approach to measuring variation among Arabic dialects. In the following paragraphs, we provide a summary of each article.

The first paper of Part II is by Atiqa Hachimi and is entitled "Moroccan Artists 'Blacklisted': Dialect Loyalty and Gendered National Identity in the Age of Digital Discourse." In this paper, Hachimi explores consequences of the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology, that is, the unequal relationship between North African and Middle Eastern vernacular Arabic varieties assumed by many Arabic speakers, through the examination of a Facebook page dedicated exclusively to the 'Blacklisting' of Moroccan artists who converge to Middle Eastern (Mashreqi) Arabic varieties in mediatized pan-Arab encounters. Hachimi's study examines these artists' communicative practices as presented in embedded videos and commented on by the Facebook community, arguing that the Blacklist Facebook page is a discursive site that works to demand national dialect loyalty, especially from female cultural figures, and that the anxieties and language ideological debates on the Facebook page are not only about language, but also about the complex relationships between communicative practice, morality, and today's conceptualizations of Moroccan national identity.

The second sociolinguistics paper of Part II is by Enam Al-Wer and Khairia Al-Qahtani and is entitled "Lateral Fricative *ḍād* in Tihāmat Qaḥtān: A Quantitative Sociolinguistic Investigation." In this paper Al-Wer and Al-Qahtani document the variable occurrence of an emphatic lateral fricative reflex of the Arabic *ḍād* in two villages located in Tihāmat Qaḥtān in the Asir province of southwest Saudi Arabia. The authors note that the emphatic lateral occurs sometimes in words that historically contained the emphatic interdental /ḍ/, which still occurs in the dialect, thus indicating that in Tihāmat Qaḥtān Arabic the emphatic lateral

fricative and the emphatic interdental are no longer distinct phonemes but may reflect allophones of the same phoneme. After reviewing the historical evidence for a lateral pronunciation of *ḡād* in Arabic and establishing its occurrence in Tihāmat Qaḡtān Arabic, the authors report on their quantitative sociolinguistic study based on data obtained through interviews with native speakers. Two important independent variables included age (older speakers vs. younger speakers) and gender (female vs. male); additionally two variants of *ḡād* were coded for: a lateral variant and an interdental variant. Also, linguistic environments were considered such as whether the variant preceded or followed a consonant, vowel or pause. Probably the most interesting finding of the quantitative study is the role of age and gender on the use of the lateral vs. interdental pronunciation of *ḡād*. Al-Wer and Al-Qahtani found that older speakers favored the lateral variant more so than younger speakers and that among the older group, females favored it more than males. On the other hand, they found that among younger speakers, females were least likely to use the traditional lateral pronunciation of the *ḡād*. The authors argue that the younger females' divergence from the traditional lateral pronunciation is symbolic of rejecting a local lifestyle in which they are in a disadvantageous social condition with unpromising future prospects. This, along with education and exposure to other dialects, acts as a factor motivating divergence from the local norm of speech.

The third article in Part II offers a historical approach to variation in Arabic dialects. In "Arabic *jiim* and the Class of Sun Letters: A Historical and Dialectological Perspective," Aaron Freeman isolates three different Arabic varieties with respect to definite article assimilation (i.e., the full assimilation of the /l/ of the prefixal definite article to a following coronal consonant) to the following *jiim* (i.e., traditionally considered to be a postalveolar affricate) in Arabic dialects, based on a study of 20 different dialects. First, in Modern Standard Arabic and in dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, the coronal *jiim* is the only coronal that fails to trigger assimilation of the /l/ of the definite article. Second, in other dialects where the *jiim* has a coronal pronunciation it triggers the assimilation of the /l/ of the definite article like all the other coronal consonants. Finally, in a third dialect group reflected in Cairene Arabic and in other parts of lower Egypt the *jiim* is pronounced as the voiced velar stop /g/, where it and the voiceless velar stop /k/ both optionally trigger the assimilation of /l/ of the definite article. In order to account for the varying behavior of *jiim* across the dialects, Freeman argues that *jiim* was originally a palatal stop (thus a dorsal consonant) in pre-Arabic and this is still reflected phonologically in dialects of the Arabian Peninsula where *jiim* still does not trigger the assimilation of /l/ of the definite article; the patterning found in other dialects reflects subsequent historical developments.

The final contribution in Part II of the volume is by Mahmoud Abunasser and Elabbas Benmamoun and is entitled “Quantifying Lexical and Pronunciation Variation between three Arabic Varieties.” In their paper, Abunasser and Benmamoun report on a study of linguistic variation within the growing field of dialectometry. More specifically, they discuss computational measures of linguistic variation that quantify the lexical and pronunciation variation between three varieties of Arabic: Moroccan Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, and Gulf Arabic. In this regard, they provide three measures of linguistic variation, all of which are computed based on elicitation of the Swadesh list: The first measure is of lexical variation based on the percentage of non-cognate words. The second measure is another lexical measure that takes into account a pronunciation aspect by considering the IPA transcription of the same word list. The third measure is a pronunciation measure that computes the variation of the IPA transcriptions of the cognate words in the Swadesh list. The results of the three measures, combined with two tests of reliability using a convergence test and statistical tools, show that geographically proximate languages are also linguistically closer to each other.

Finally, Part III of this volume includes one paper on child phonological acquisition by Eman Abdoh entitled “Compensatory Lengthening: Evidence from Child Arabic.” The paper examines the phonological process of compensatory lengthening as witnessed in the acquisition of Hijazi Arabic as a first language. The paper first discusses cases of compensatory lengthening in fully developed languages distinguishing between cases where the deleted phoneme results in lengthening of a vowel and those where it results in the gemination of the consonant. The former is more common typologically. The author also introduces the moraic conservation approach to compensatory lengthening in which it is the deletion of a moraic phoneme that results in the occurrence of compensatory lengthening. Abdoh then introduces her study, which is based on the spontaneous speech of 20 children between 15 months and 24 months of age acquiring Hijazi Arabic as their first language in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The author finds that child compensatory lengthening is quite common among the children in her study and that the typical case of compensatory lengthening involves the deletion of a coda consonant triggering the gemination of the neighboring consonant, as in the child pronunciation of [daddub] for target [dabdub] ‘teddy bear’. Abdoh shows that it is the deletion of a moraic element that triggers compensatory lengthening and so supports a moraic representation for Arabic phonology. Given that Arabic phonological acquisition is vastly understudied, Abdoh’s paper constitutes an important contribution in documenting the occurrence of the compensatory lengthening process in the developmental phonology of Arabic.

In conclusion, all the articles in this volume reflect current research in Arabic linguistics in different subfields and point to new directions for further research.

Some of the papers included here are especially important because they address understudied areas in Arabic linguistics and as such we hope they set trends for future research. All the contributions show how Arabic dialects provide a rich source of linguistic data that bear on current issues in modern linguistic analysis. It is our hope that the papers in this volume will spur further interest in and research on all aspects of Arabic linguistics.