

Key Features and Parameters in Arabic Grammar

Abdelkader Fassi Fehri

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Key Features and Parameters in Arabic Grammar

Abdelkader Fassi Fehri

KAICAL, Ryad & Mohammed V University, Rabat



John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fassi Fehri, Abdelkader.

Key features and parameters in Arabic grammar / Abdelkader Fassi Fehri.

p. cm. (Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today, ISSN 0166-0829 ; v. 182)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Arabic language--Grammar. I. Title.

PJ6106.F348 2012

492.7'5--dc23

2011048226

ISBN 978 90 272 5565 5 (Hb ; alk. paper)

ISBN 978 90 272 7496 0 (Eb)

© 2012 – John Benjamins B.V.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission from the publisher.

John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today (LA)

Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today (LA) provides a platform for original monograph studies into synchronic and diachronic linguistics. Studies in LA confront empirical and theoretical problems as these are currently discussed in syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, and systematic pragmatics with the aim to establish robust empirical generalizations within a universalistic perspective.

For an overview of all books published in this series, please see
<http://benjamins.com/catalog/la>

General Editors

Werner Abraham
University of Vienna /
University of Munich

Elly van Gelderen
Arizona State University

Advisory Editorial Board

Josef Bayer
University of Konstanz

Cedric Boeckx
ICREA/Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Guglielmo Cinque
University of Venice

Liliane Haegeman
University of Ghent

Hubert Haider
University of Salzburg

Terje Lohndal
University of Maryland

Christer Platzack
University of Lund

Ian Roberts
Cambridge University

Lisa deMena Travis
McGill University

Sten Vikner
University of Aarhus

C. Jan-Wouter Zwart
University of Groningen

Volume 182

Key Features and Parameters in Arabic Grammar
by Abdelkader Fassi Fehri

For Heroes of Arab Revolutions

Foreword

This book is based on a collection of recently published contributions by the author in the last decade (suitably revised and annotated with additional new references), complemented with new unpublished work (Chapters 5 & 9), or to appear (Chapter 11). The whole material has been appropriately restructured in three parts. Part I deals with essential issues in temporality, aspectuality, and actionality. Part II examines various aspects of nominal architecture, including (but not limited to) distinctions in count/mass expressions, bareness, (in)definiteness, or other determination parameters involving N-to-D Move or Agree. Part III is dedicated to investigating time/space anchoring in clauses (or CPs), anaphors, pronominals, and the interpretability of inflectional features.

Although there is now a rather flourishing and valuable modern linguistic literature on the various themes and issues of Arabic grammar, the key features of the analyses proposed, as well as the nature of the parameters involved are, to my knowledge, both new and appealing. First, the profound study of plurality (and pluractionality) of verbs in Arabic (Chapters 2 & 11), including the interpretability of Number on the verbal category, is rather unprecedented in the literature. Second, the discovery that Arabic bare nouns behave like true indefinites in English or Romance (Chapter 7), coupled with the discovery that Arabic post-nominal adjectives are in a strict mirror image order of their Germanic counterparts (in analytic contexts) provide even more important new keys of the Arabic (or Semitic) nominal architecture than the traditionally studied construct state (reanalyzed here in terms of macro-parametric synthesis; Chapter 6). Third, the traditional count/mass dichotomy is re-examined in light of the role played by general, collective, or singulative DPs, and replaced by a more adequate binary feature system ([\pm atomic] and [\pm singulative]; Chapter 5). Fourth, the synthetic nature of temporal and voice categories (Chapter 3) and determiner categories (Chapter 6) is given a formal characterization. Finally, a Past/Perfect/Perfective ambiguity is established and solved in the contexts of (potentially ambiguous) collocating temporal adverbs, or the role played by CP in temporal anchoring, DAR (double access reading), or SOT (sequence of tense), Arabic being argued to be a DAR language.

These key features and issues in the grammar of Arabic are treated in light of the most recent developments of generative theory, building on comparative and parametric approaches to language variation, minimalist design of gram-

mar, and computational efficiency (cf. in particular Chomsky (1995, 2008), and Kayne (2000, 2005)). The semantic/formal nature of parameters is amply investigated, chiefly in connection with the Longobardi (1994, 2001)/Chierchia (1998) debate, as well as the more general debate on whether there are macro-parameters (Baker (2008) or parameter schemata (Longobardi (2005), Guardiano & Longobardi (2003)) that cannot be fully reduced to micro-parametric variation (as in Kayne (2005)). The cartographic methodology is also explored (cf. Rizzi (1997) and Cinque (1999) in particular), and typological results discussed and integrated (e.g. Greenberg (1972, 1991), Aikhenvald (2001), WALS (Haspelmath et al. 2005), etc.).

One peculiarity and persistent state of the art in approaching the structure of Arabic is that three rather separate methodological and conceptual trends coexist, although they hardly converge, or communicate the results of their investigations: (a) a remote Arabist tradition, which is rich and valuable with regard to traditional grammatical thought (see e.g. Sibawayhi (8th century), Astarabaadii (12th century)), but cannot replace (or be transposed as such) in modern analysis or theory; (b) a western Orientalist (and/or semiticist) tradition, which makes use of distinct notions and terms, although it builds (critically) on the Arabist lines of thought and data (see e.g. Brockelman (1913), Wright (1974), Blachère & Gaudefroy-Demombynes (1939), Blau (1972), or more recently Retsö (1997), Owens (2000), Versteegh (2001), Badawi, Carter & Gully (2004), or Ryding (2005)), and (c) modern linguistic theory applied to Arabic (for very recent applications, see e.g. Bahloul (2008), Bardeas (2009), Aoun, Benmamoun & Choueri (2010), etc.). The texts of the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Languages and Linguistics* edited by Kees Versteegh and others is an illustration of this state of affairs, since they gather together these three non-communicating traditions. The present book attempts to bridge gaps between these traditions, taking into account important results reached in the various frameworks.

The language described is basically Standard Arabic, although dialect (or colloquial) varieties are also brought in, in addition to Hebrew, for the sake of describing and identifying micro-variation. For more general comparison (or macro-variation) various other languages are used (typically Germanic and Romance). Standard Arabic is the language of more than 350 million speakers around the globe (including 22 Arab states in which it is the main or unique official language), more than 60 million internet users, and more than 30 million social network users. It is also the media language of the most influential TV channels in the Arab World, the most read language of the newspapers or magazines, etc. Huge electronic corpora in Standard Arabic are then now available to check grammatical judgements, a tool which developed so rapidly and quantitatively only in the last decade, and now provides more modern and reliable data.

By putting these new contributions together (with new considerations of theory and data), the book is expected to have a wide and substantial audience among students, researchers, and teachers of Arabic, Semitic, comparative, typological, or theoretical linguistics. Following the path of its predecessor, *Issues in the structure of Arabic Clauses and Words*, published by Kluwer Academic Publishers in 1993, it is hoped that it will become one of the popular references in the field.

Provenance of chapters

Chapter 1, Tense/aspect interaction and variation, appeared in *The Syntax of Time*, Jacqueline Guéron & Jacqueline Lecame (eds), 235–257, 2004. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.

Chapter 2, Transitivity, causativity, and verbal plurality, appeared in *Research in Afroasiatic Grammar 5*, Jacqueline Lecarme, Jean Lowenstamm & Ur Schlonsky (eds), 131–185, 2003. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chapter 3, Synthetic/analytic asymmetries in Voice and Temporal Patterns, appeared in *Asymmetry in Grammar 2*, Anna Maria Di Sciullo (ed.), 95–128. 2003. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chapter 4, Arabic Perfect and temporal adverbs, appeared in *Perfect Explorations*, Artemis Alexiadou, Monika Rathert & Arnim von Stechow (eds). 2003. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Chapter 6, Synthesis in Arabic DPs, appeared in *Relative Clauses and Genitive Constructions in Semitic. Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 25*, Jan Retsö & Janet Watson (eds), 153–180, 2009. Oxford: OUP.

Chapter 7, Bare, generic, mass, and referential Arabic DPs, appeared in *Phrasal and Clausal Architecture. In Honor of Joseph Emonds*, Simin Karimi, Vida Samian & Wendy Wilkins (eds), 40–65, 2007. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chapter 8, Determination parameters in the Arabic and Semitic diglossia, appeared in *Proceedings of NACAL 35*, Charles Haberl (ed.), 149–182, 2007. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

Chapter 10, Arabic silent pronouns, person, and voice, appeared in *Brill's Annual of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics 1*: 1–38, 2009.

Chapter 11, Plural verbs and Agree, is to appear in *Nominal and Verbal plurality*, Patricia Cabredo-Hofherr & Brenda Laca (eds). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Thanks to the publishers for having granted me permission to reproduce this material.

Chapter 5, The grammar of count and mass, appears here for the first time, and is based on two invited talks: Kinds of Number (and Gender). International Workshop on *Nominal systems across languages*. Barcelona: UAB, 2009; & Ways of counting and numbering. *Workshop on nominal and verbal Plurality*, 2009. Paris: CNRS & Univ. of Paris VIII.

Chapter 9, Time/space anchors, logophors, finiteness, and (un)interpretability of inflection, appears here for the first time, and is based on two talks. Finite time inflection and double access construal. Invited talk. *Postgraduate Conference at the Univ. of Newcastle*, 2007. & Talk delivered at *NACAL 36*, 2008. Chicago.

Table of contents

Foreword	XV
Provenance of chapters	XIX
PART I. Temporality, aspect, voice, and event structure	1
CHAPTER 1	
Tense/Aspect interaction and variation	3
1. Past, Perfect, Perfective 5	
1.1 The Past/Perfect ambiguity 5	
1.2 Temporal and modal <i>qad</i> 7	
1.3 One or two projections of T 9	
1.4 Perfective 9	
2. Present, Imperfect, Imperfective 10	
3. Imperfect and SOT 13	
4. Perfectivity 16	
4.1 ST as Perfective 16	
4.2 PT as Imperfective? 20	
4.3 From Tense to Aspect 22	
4.4 The Tense/Aspect language typology revisited 24	
5. Conclusion 25	
CHAPTER 2	
Transitivity, causativity, and verbal plurality	27
1. Issues 28	
1.1 Problem 1: Semitic morpho-syntax 28	
1.2 Problem 2: Transitivity theory 29	
2. Number Theory 31	
2.1 Ingredients of Num theory 31	
2.2 Verbal plurality and distributed Num 32	
2.3 Distributed plurality 33	
2.4 Causative complexity, verbalization, and distributivity 33	
2.5 Two sources of transitivity 35	
2.6 Parallel plural morphology 36	
2.7 Summary 40	
3. Cross-linguistic evidence 41	

3.1	Causatives, transitives, and event quantification	41
3.1.1	Causativization and transitivization	42
3.1.2	Multiple behaviour	43
3.1.3	Event quantification	44
3.2	Moravcsik's resistant cases	45
4.	Conceptual motivations and competing analyses	46
4.1	Little v: Verbalizer or transitivizer?	46
4.2	Aspect	47
4.3	Voice	50
4.3.1	Anti-transitive reflexives	51
4.3.2	Reflexive causatives	52
4.3.3	Agentive and "expositive" causatives	53
4.3.4	"Requestive" causatives	53
4.3.5	Ergative Num and intensive forms	54
4.4	Further empirical motivations	55
4.4.1	Ergative and unergative Num in event plurality and transitivity	55
4.4.2	Adicity, (in)transitive alternations, and multiple uses	55
5.	Num theory and Num heights	57
5.1	Sg and Pl Merge	57
5.2	Language variation	57
6.	Summary and conclusion	58

CHAPTER 3

Synthetic/analytic asymmetries in voice and temporal patterns 61

1.	Analysis, voice, and temporality	65
1.1	The problem	65
1.2	Nominal auxiliaries	66
1.3	S/O Agr split and auxiliary selection	67
1.4	Temp auxiliaries	69
1.5	Voice	71
1.5.1	Arabic and anaphoric Agr	71
1.5.2	Latin and split Agr	72
1.5.3	Modern Greek	74
1.5.4	Albanian	75
1.5.5	Moroccan Arabic	76
2.	Formal complexity and categorization	79
2.1	Further analytic and synthetic questions	80
2.1.1	Pass and additional complexity	80

2.1.2	Two finite Agrs	80
2.1.3	Ancient Greek as fully synthetic	81
2.2	Reanalysis as the source of analytic pass or perfect	82
2.3	A splitting analysis (of Temp and Agr categories)	83
3.	Peculiarities and structural heights	85
3.1	Imperfective passive	85
3.2	Verbal and adjectival voices	86
3.3	Multiple functions across heights	89
4.	Summary and conclusion	91
CHAPTER 4		
Arabic Perfect and temporal adverbs		93
1.	Salient properties of the Arabic TR system	94
1.1	Polyfunctionality of T/Asp forms	94
1.2	The PresPerf split: Synthesis and analysis	95
1.3	The Past split: Simple Past Pfv and complex Past Impfv	96
2.	The Perfect/Past ambiguity	99
2.1	Aspects and Tenses	100
2.2	Positional “deictic” adverbs	103
2.3	Perf and modal <i>qad</i>	104
2.4	Adverbs and simple vs. complex tenses	106
2.5	Durational adverbs	107
3.	Temporal adverbs and kinds of Perfect	110
3.1	Positional <i>mundu</i>	110
3.1.1	Imperfective tenses	110
3.1.2	Perfective tenses	111
3.1.3	PresPerf tense	112
3.2	Durational <i>mundu</i>	113
3.3	Perf of Res and Post-state	113
4.	Summary and conclusion	115
4.1	T/Asp morphology	115
4.2	T/Asp adverbs or particles	116
4.3	Conclusion	116

PART II. DP, np, bareness, and count/mass structures

CHAPTER 5

The grammar of count and mass 121

1. Toward a wider count grammar 122
 - 1.1 Ways of ‘numeralizing’ 124

- 1.1.1 Partitive numeral 124
 - 1.1.2 Predicative numeral 125
 - 1.1.3 Numeral verbs 125
 - 1.1.4 Numeral adverbs 125
 - 1.2 Ways of count quantifying 125
 - 1.2.1 Count quantifier *biḍṣ* in a construct state 125
 - 1.2.2 Predicative count quantifier 126
 - 1.2.3 The count/measure ambiguity of *kam* 126
 - 1.2.4 More partitives 127
 - 1.3 Events selecting count nouns 127
- 2. General nouns 128
 - 2.1 General atomicity 129
 - 2.2 Singulative atomicity 130
 - 2.3 General nouns and general Number 130
 - 2.4 Counting and numeralizing 132
 - 2.5 The general noun is not plural 132
 - 2.6 The general noun is not mass 134
 - 2.7 The general noun is not a group 134
- 3. Collective varieties 134
 - 3.1 What 'counts' in the grammar of collectives 134
 - 3.2 Syntactic groups 136
- 4. Masses 138
 - 4.1 Mass as atomless 138
 - 4.2 Mass is cumulative, and non-divisive 140
 - 4.3 Mass as distinct from plural 141
 - 4.4 Plural of mass is productive 142
- 5. Count/mass architecture, features, and functional categories 144
 - 5.1 Count and mass syntax 146
 - 5.2 Interpreting plural and singular inflections 147
- 6. Summary and conclusion 151

CHAPTER 6

Synthesis in Arabic DPs

153

- 1. Setting the stage for synthesis 154
 - 1.1 Synthetic ingredients 154
 - 1.2 Synthetic 'articles' 156
 - 1.3 Quantifiers 158
 - 1.4 Numerals 158
 - 1.5 Demonstratives 159
 - 1.6 Indefinites in Arabic dialects 160

2. DP architecture 162
 - 2.1 Adjective modification 163
 - 2.1.1 The NA Order 163
 - 2.1.2 MIO 164
 - 2.1.3 Adjectival classes and non-intersectives 165
 - 2.1.4 DA extensions 167
 - 2.2 Mirror image alternations 168
 - 2.3 Synthetic indefinites 169
3. Core properties and types of synthetic possession 171
 - 3.1 How real is Definiteness spreading? 172
 - 3.2 Possessor placement 174
 - 3.3 Two classes of synthetic possessives 175
4. Characterizing the variation 176

CHAPTER 7

Bare, generic, mass, and referential DPs

179

1. Overt D contrasts and genericity 181
 - 1.1 Definite, generic, and mass 181
 - 1.2 Predicates and anaphors 183
 - 1.2.1 Kind Level Predicates 183
 - 1.2.2 Stage Level Predicates 183
 - 1.2.3 Individual Level Predicates 184
 - 1.2.4 Kind anaphora 185
 - 1.3 Plural as 'plural of the singular' 186
 - 1.3.1 Scope 186
 - 1.3.2 Opacity 186
 - 1.3.3 Telicity 187
2. Arabic BNs are indefinites 187
 - 2.1 Arabic BNs as indefinites? 188
 - 2.2 GenP and N-to-Gen 190
 - 2.3 Arabic/Romance distinctions and the Numeral Parameter 191
 - 2.3.1 Varieties of bareness 193
 - 2.3.2 The Numeral Parameter 196
3. Further discussion 197
 - 3.1 Gen contexts 197
 - 3.2 Modification and D-binding 198
 - 3.3 Modalized contexts 198
 - 3.4 Definite and indefinite generics 200
4. BNs and PNs 200

5. Mass specification 202
6. Conclusion 204

CHAPTER 8

Determination parameters in the Arabic and Semitic diglossia 205

1. Indefinites 207
 - 1.1 N moves over indefinite quantifier 208
 - 1.2 N movement to indefinite D 210
 - 1.3 Adjective movement and movement over adjectives 211
 - 1.4 Semitic overt indetermination 212
2. Definites 213
3. Double (in)determination in Semitic 216
 - 3.1 Definites and indefinites are not complementary 218
 - 3.2 Searching for minimal (in)definite pairs 220
 - 3.3 PNs are not indefinite 221
4. Bare determination 223
 - 4.1 Individuating and non-individuating vocatives 223
 - 4.2 'Unique' superlatives 226
5. Account and summary 228
 - 5.1 The computational history of determination 228
 - 5.2 Two features in computation 230

PART III. Clausal structure, silent pronouns, and Agree

CHAPTER 9

Time/space anchors, logophors, finiteness, and (un)interpretability of inflection 235

1. CP anchoring, double access tenses, and logophors 236
 - 1.1 Person double access 237
 - 1.2 Time double access 238
 - 1.3 Arabic as a DAR language 238
 - 1.4 Double access and Mood 240
 - 1.5 Root and logophoric Cs 242
2. Finiteness 243
 - 2.1 Subject properties 244
 - 2.1.1 Cases of subjects 245
 - 2.1.2 Positions of subjects 246
 - 2.1.3 Subject agreement 246
 - 2.1.4 Expletive subjects 246
 - 2.2 Truncated structures 247
 - 2.2.1 Raising 247

2.2.2	Auxiliary (complex tense) structures	248
2.2.3	ECM	249
2.2.4	Control	249
3.	The structure of Tense	250
3.1	Tense on T and Person	250
3.2	Synthetic and analytic temporality	251
3.3	V movement	253
4.	Summary and conclusion	256
CHAPTER 10		
Arabic silent pronouns, person, and voice		257
1.	The referential/non-referential correlation	258
2.	Impersonals/indefinites	261
2.1	Arabic	261
2.2	Comparison with French, Finnish, Irish, and Italian	264
2.3	The human feature	266
3.	Referential pro	268
3.1	A topic approach	268
3.2	A Probe-Goal implementation	271
4.	'Passive', 'impersonal', 'indefinite'	273
5.	Expletives and EPP	276
5.1	Arabic expletives	277
5.2	Pronouns and EPP	281
5.3	Finnish	283
6.	Some consequences	284
6.1	Variation around Person	284
6.2	Topicality and Person	286
6.3	A new approach to Voice	288
CHAPTER 11		
Plural verbs and Agree		291
1.	Introduction	291
2.	Nominal Number	292
2.1	Where is number?	295
2.2	Non-human plurality	299
2.3	Lexical collectives	299
2.4	Syntactic collectives	301
2.5	Plurals of plurals and similar matters	305
3.	Verb plurality	309
3.1	Pluractional morphology	311
3.2	Collective and distributive plural	313