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An Analytical Study of Word-Order Patterns in Standard Arabic Simple Sentence

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The main focus of the study is to analyze the simple sentence structure and its word-order patterns of Standard Arabic syntactically. Main methods concern description and comparison of word-order patterns observed. Primarily the current study deals with some differentiations of the terms on sentence types and word-order patterns described by both medieval grammarians and modern linguists. Moreover, the so called Sībawayhian theory of 'amil' also provides some explanations of sentence structures and word-order patterns in Standard Arabic. Simple sentences are highlighted to examine the occasions for using different patterns and where they are commonly found, along with examples to facilitate the explanation and use of these patterns. It is essential to point out that Standard Arabic is considered to be a language with a flexible word-order, which is why there exist word-order patterns of both VOS and SVO languages, though the latter is more frequently used.

Key words: Standard Arabic (SA), sentence types, simple sentence, nominal sentence (جملة اسمية jumla ismiyya), verbal sentence (جملة فعلية jumla fi'liyya), word-order patterns, flexible word-order, Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) and Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structures

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Аналитический подход к характеристике моделей порядка слов в стандартном арабском языке

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В статье главный фокус исследования обусловлен синтаксическим анализом структуры простого предложения и его моделей порядка слов в Standard Arabic. Основные методы — описание и сопоставление порядка слов в представленных моделях. Прежде всего анализ касается дифференциации терминов для обозначения типов предложения и моделей порядка слов в средневековых и современных грамматиках. Более того, так называемая теория *Sibawayhian* или *'amil'* предоставляет дополнительные разъяснения относительно этих лингвистических объектов в современном Standard Arabic. В качестве объекта исследования различных словопорядковых моделей выбраны простые предложения, поскольку в них уже представлены все модели, которые обладают объяснительной силой в процессе употребления. Существенно отметить, что Standard Arabic — это язык, которому свойственен несвязанный, подвижный порядок слов, поэтому он реализует словопорядковые структурные свойства языков обоих типов — VOS и SVO, но последний реализуется гораздо регулярнее.

Ключевые слова: Standard Arabic (SA), типы предложения, простое предложение, именное предложение (جملة اسمية *jumla ismiyya*), глагольное предложение (جملة فعلية *jumla fi'liyya*), модели порядка слов, несвязанный порядок слов, структуры VSO и SVO

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Introduction

As is well known, each language has its own regulations and methods that facilitate our understanding of the way words are formed and joined together to create phrases, sentences and clauses. In the study of languages, these regulations and methods are known as the grammar of the language they represent. Due to the fact that there are various languages around the world, each belonging to the same or different family of languages, hence, languages which structurally differ from one another normally have got different regulations. For native speakers, these rules and regulations are acquired at an early age, when they are in their childhood through a natural and innate process. Furthermore, a native speaker possesses the ability to figure out if a sentence is likely to appear or not, though she/he might not have the ability to explain the rules governing the occurrence of such sentences and whether these sentenc-

es are grammatically correct or not. For a foreign language learner, the acquisition of such grammatical descriptions and rules happens consciously, with the learner being aware of such a process.

The Arabic language is, of course, one of the many various languages of the world; it is spoken by a large number of people as a native or second or foreign one. It is considered the language of Islam and the main language of the Holy Quran. Belonging to the Semitic family of languages, it is characterized by its rich morphology and complex grammar, therefore many linguists, native and foreign (known as Arabists) grew more interested in analyzing the Arabic language to explain the appearance of its various structures and rules of its application and acquisition. Due to the fact that Arabic is spoken in different places by different people, many varieties of the language were developed, for instance, the dialect used in countries of Northern Africa known as Arab Maghreb, such as in Algeria where the dialect called Maghrebi Arabic dialect is a mixture of mainly Berber, Arabic and loanwords from French, Ottoman Turkish and Spanish. Therefore, Standard Arabic is usually the model language chosen for investigation.

During the ancient period of Arabo-Islamic studies, Arabic grammar was among the disciplines to be formed. Syntactically, grammarians came up with a new significant theory called the theory of 'عامل' 'amil' (lit.: 'user'). The main purpose of this theory is to specify the rules of cases through different operators known as 'عوامل'/'awāmil' (lit.: 'operators'). The theory of 'amal' is considered as the backbone of traditional Arab grammatical philosophy, and as a method used in modern analysis of Arabic grammar. In the late Middle Ages, studies on the Arabic language in general, and on its grammar, in particular, were negatively influenced by the decline of Islamic civilization during that period of time. However, the prosperity of Semitic philology in the 19th century Europe, paved the way for scholars to develop a notable interest in studying the Arabic language, and analyzing its grammatical structures. Additionally, during this period, these scholars were dependent on traditional Arabic grammatical discoveries, but it was only in the 20th century that the pieces of writing of the traditional Arab grammarians were really valued. Following the development of modern linguistics through Saussure's structuralism, then later Chomsky's generative-transformational grammar, and also some other developed approaches in Europe and the United States, similar to other languages, the research of the Arabic language and its grammar was also highly influenced. Particularly, these modern theories led to the appearance of new ways for linguists acquainted with the Arabic language, whose main task was to study and analyze various grammatical phenomena from the point of view of modern linguistics. Thus, the study of Standard Arabic and its grammar has been developed since the 8th century AD through Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, it has been the focus of study for traditional Arab grammarians, Semitic philologists, Arabists and modern linguists [1. P. XI].

Hence, the current study focuses on explaining some Arabic grammatical features highlighted by medieval grammarians and modern linguists alike. The theory developed to differentiate between sentence types and word-order patterns is also emphasized. Furthermore, the Sībawayhian theory of 'amil' is also explained and analyzed in terms of sentence structures and word-order patterns. Later on, the simple

sentence in Standard Arabic with its main components and basic syntactic characterizations are defined analytically. Furthermore, different word-order patterns of simple sentences are presented and analyzed along with examples illustrating and providing evidence of the different patterns that exist.

1. Sentence Types and Word-Order Patterns in Standard Arabic

1.1. Sentence types VS. Word-order patterns

Both medieval grammarians and modern Arabists have always been considering the subject of sentence types in Standard Arabic. Surprisingly, the concept of verbal sentence or in Arabic (جملة فعلية *jumla fi'liyya*) and nominal sentence (جملة اسمية *jumla ismiyya*) was first introduced in the ancient Arabic grammatical literature, though during the earliest stages of medieval Arabic grammatical writings, the difference between these main sentence types is implied. Moreover, a nominal sentence is a sentence that starts with a noun (a noun phrase), whereas, a verbal one starts with a verb (a verb phrase) [2. P. 488]. Additionally, in his *Kitāb, Sībawayhi* presents an accurate explanation of various syntactic formations in Arabic; nevertheless the primary difference is highlighted by him. The following model sentences show the distinction between the two main structures:

(1) يذهب زيد *yadhabu Zaydun* (translated as: ‘Zayd goes’)

(2) عبد الله أخوك *'Abdu-llāhi 'axūka* (which means ‘Abdullāh is your brother’)

The first model sentence (1) begins with a verb (يذهب *yadhabu* ‘goes’). However, the second one is a nominal sentence because it begins with a noun which is *Abdu-llāhi*. Subsequently, grammarians started using these models (1 and 2) as *jumla fi'liyya* (جملة فعلية = verbal sentence) and *jumla ismiyya* (جملة اسمية = nominal sentence), nowadays, these two terms are used in the grammar of Standard Arabic [1. P. 6].

According to Peled, a sentence type can be described using entirely pure syntactic terms, alongside the models utilized by the medieval grammarians. Peled also points out that for any specific language, one can assume one or more model sentences that can be made up of a set of small distinctive units characterizing all sentences that are likely to occur. Furthermore, Peled adds that word-order, case marking and grammatical agreement are the guidelines to those model sentences mentioned before, she explains that: “If, for a given language L, it can be shown that any given sentence, however complex, is reducible to one of a given number of such nuclear model sentences, these model sentences are defined as sentence types in L.” [Ibid, P. 4].

Present-day linguistic studies of Arabic syntax have been extensively based on Chomsky’s generative grammar theory, and with regard to word-order studies, numerous researchers have decided to use Joseph Greenberg’s method that emphasizes universals and typology as a guideline in their language studies. Greenberg believed that each language has its basic word-order patterns; more specifically the ordering of the subject (S) and object (O) in the sentence corresponding to the verb (V). In addition to that, word-order patterns such as SVO, VSO, and SOV (which are the most

common) are assumed to have a correlation with some particular grammatical characteristics [3. P. 61].

Later on, in their works, Winfred P. Lehmann (1973) and Theo Vennemann (1974) changed the main idea of word-order patterns covered in Greenberg's methodology. On the one hand, Lehmann suggested that a differentiation between VO and OV languages (i.e. object following or object preceding) was necessary instead of introducing word-order patterns with regard to the place of the subject and object depending on the verb. On the other hand, in his typology, Vennemann distinguished between two types of languages: XV and VX languages, then he proposed a definition for an XV language: "a language in which the normal position of the finite verb is the clause-final position in main declarative clauses." A language that shows a different word-ordering was called a VX language [1. P. 2].

Modern cross-linguistic studies have questioned the model proposed by Greenberg in terms of its basic word-order patterns, as well as suggesting different typologies. In their examinations, researchers fundamentally took into consideration syntactic, pragmatic and cognitive properties to explain various word-order patterns. Subsequently, one remarkable idea is of Mithun, in which she differentiates between language that are syntactically based and those which are pragmatically based ones. Peled mentioned that:

'She [Mithun] argues that syntactically-based languages have a syntactically defined basic word order that may be altered, for pragmatic purposes, by right- and left-dislocation processes. In pragmatically based languages, in contrast, all ordering reflects pragmatic considerations. Unusual situations are marked by other means reordering is usually assumed to result in a theme-rheme... with new or newsworthy elements following the 'old' or 'given' information, in pragmatically based languages, the order is nearly the reverse...' [Ibid, P. 2].

Recently, Kristen E. Brustadhas proposed a typology of Arabic that surprisingly deviates from Greenberg's model, and looks closer to the medieval Arab grammarians' approach. Although in the analysis of word-order, the paradigm of Greenberg has continued to be the most significant model of study, not least amidst Arabists and linguists concerned with the study of the Arabic language. Nevertheless, it is worth to mention that a general linguist whose main focus is on investigating an Indo-European language such as English, French or German, where the verb is the basis of each sentence; therefore, the placement of every other component of a sentence is to be determined according to the verb. In the Arabic language, sentences that exist without a verb; can be found both in classical as well as modern texts of Arabic, and most of the times this kind of sentences share fundamental characteristics with sentences that have a verb [Ibid, P. 2].

Rather than the medieval Arab grammarians, modern researchers have drawn a separating line between the two model sentences *ضرب عبد الله زيدا daraba 'Abdu-llāhi Zaydan* (lit.: hit Abdullah Zayd) and *عبد الله ضرب زيدا 'Abdu-llāhi daraba Zaydan* (lit.: Abdullah hit Zayd), characterizing two word-order patterns, first one is VSO while the other one is SVO. Obviously, it corresponds with the Greenberg's paradigm, where the order of other elements in a sentence is relative to the verb. Actually, it has been the trend in studying the sentence structure of Modern Standard Arabic

(MSA) as well as modern Arabic dialects. Furthermore, these two word-order patterns VSO and SVO became the two basic sentence types in the Arabic language. However, in the recent study, the terms VSO and SVO are used to refer to word-order patterns, and not to sentence types. Thus, the notion of sentence type is difficult to understand, and is not restricted to these two word-order patterns [Ibid, P. 3]. Subsequently, in his dictionary of grammatical terms, Robert L. Trask introduces the definition of sentence type:

‘Sentence type: One of the four traditional classes of sentence, in a classification which attends only to surface form and not to discourse function, the four types being **statements, commands, questions** and **exclamations**, conventionally associated with the four [4. P. 251].

According to Trask’s definition, the type of sentence is dependent on the nature of its predicate and the position of the predicative components (i.e. subject and predicate) with respect to the relation between them. In addition, all types can be utilized to form a statement or ask a question, an imperative form is characterized by a sentence headed by a verb.

1.2. The Sibawayhian theory of ‘عامل’ ‘amil’ (‘operator’)

Similar to other basic ideologies, the concept of sentence types began to be explained and analyzed during the late period in the development of Arabic grammar. Through time, grammarians had been focusing on distinguishing between a number of primary structures in the Arabic language, e.g., those shown in sentences like: *زيد منطلق* *Zaydun muntaliqun* (lit.: Zayd is going off), without emphasizing the sentence type. According to Sibawayhi, whose book *Kitāb* is considered to be the first book explicitly explaining the grammatical constructions of the Arabic language, the concept of the sentence is found on the principle of what is called in Arabic as *إسناد* ‘*isnād*’ (despite the fact that the term itself is not commonly used in the book, the term’s literal meaning is ‘leaning,’ which refers to the two predicative constituent of the sentence; that is the subject and the predicate, indicating that one somehow is held up by the other. Sibawayhi applies the two model sentences *عبد الله أخوك* ‘*Abdu-llāhi ‘axūka*’ (translated as Abdullah is your brother) and *زيد يذهب* *yadhabu Zaydun* (goes Zayd) as expressions of ‘*isnād*. To explain more, Sibawayhi refers to the first predicative constituents as *musnad*, while to the second as *musnad ‘ilayhi*. Yet, Sibawayhi appears to have been fascinated not only by sentence constituents, but also by sentence formation; i.e. the way a sentence structure is formed [1. P. 6].

Various grammarians use the term ‘*amil*’ to refer to a one-way process where a component in a sentence works ahead of another by assigning its case. The ‘*amil*’ (‘operator’) works ahead the *ma ‘mūl* *معمول* (translated as: the affected), resulting in changes in its case ending (‘*rāb*’ *عراب*). The ‘*amil*’ is generally a verb or a particle, for example, a preposition. The *ma ‘mūl* is a nominal or a verb of the *yaf‘ alu* *يفعل* form (which is the imperfect form). Moreover, a fundamental notion in the ‘*amil*’ theory is *ta ‘diya* *تأدية* which indicates the transitivity of the verb, referring to sentences with the VSO word-order pattern. In taking into consideration the notion of *ta ‘diya*, it is supposed that in sentences such as *عبد الله ضرب* *daraba ‘Abdu-llāhi Zaydan* (hit Abdul-

lah Zayd), it is the verb ضرب *'daraba'* (hit in this case) which establishes the formation of the sentence. More specifically, the verb *'daraba'* influences the first nominal (the *fā'il* فاعل who is *'Abdu-llāhi'*), giving it the *raf* الرفع case. This influence of the verb goes further (in Arabic يتعدى *yata'addā*) through the *fā'il*, into the second nominal (the *maf'ul* مفعول who is *Zaydan*), giving it the *nasb* النصب case [Ibid, pp. 5—6].

Although, Sībawayhi did not precisely propose a well-defined separation of sentence type, he certainly cleared the path for later grammarians to develop a hypothesis providing that any sentence in the Arabic language can be represented by one of these two types: on the one hand, a verb-based sentence (in other words a verbal sentence), while on the other hand, a noun-based sentence (a nominal sentence). In a matter of fact, his division between two types of *'amal* was subsequently translated into a precise theory of two corresponding sentence type.

2. The Simple Sentence in Standard Arabic

The Arabic language of the Semitic family of languages is morphologically rich and has a flexible word ordering. According to Cantarino, a sentence '...is usually defined as a self-contained unit of speech consisting of a meaningful word or word arrangement.' As it was mentioned above, in Standard Arabic grammar, there is a distinction between two basic types of sentences in the simple sentence structure, one is the nominal sentence (*jumla ismiyya*) and the other is the verbal sentence (*jumla fi'liyya*). Hence, nominal sentences contain two main parts: a subject (in Arabic مبتدأ *mubtada'*) and a predicate (خبر *xabar*) [5. P. 2].

2.1. The constituents of simple sentences and their syntactic characterization

In the Arabic grammar, the division of words into verbs, nouns, and particles is one of the most important criteria. Grammarians specialized in analyzing the Arabic language explained each of these elements in correspondence with principles from phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic/pragmatic levels of linguistic analysis, significantly, morphological and syntactic levels. In his *Alfiyya* ألفية (rhymed book dealing with Arabic grammar), Ibn Malik provided some important definitions of nouns, verbs, and particles.

2.1.1. Nouns

In Standard Arabic, a noun can be defined as: 'a word that names a person, place, or thing, as in *Yusuf* يوسف *bank* بنك and *pen* قلم. A noun can either be definite (in Arabic or indefinite (i.e., النكرة *alnakera*). On the one hand, a definite noun is a noun which names a particular person, place or thing, for instance, *Muhammad* مُحَمَّد (The Prophet peace be upon him), *Madinah* المدينة (the Holy City), and *Black-Stone* الحجر الأسود (the Holy stone). On the other hand, an indefinite noun is a noun that refers to unparticular person, place or thing, for example *a girl* طفلة, *a school* مدرسة, *a chair* كرسي. Additionally, a noun can be classified into two gender classifications, masculine (المذكر) and feminine (المؤنث), in most cases the ending of a noun determines whether it is a

masculine noun or a feminine one, the “ة” (known as ‘*taa almarbota*) in مدرسة (=school) indicates that the noun is feminine. Different from English, the noun in Arabic is divided into three categories regarding the number; they are Singular المفرد (e.g. a man ‘رجل’), Dual المثنى (e.g. two men ‘رجلان’) and Plural الجمع (e.g. men ‘رجال’).

Furthermore, Zaggagi explains a noun as being a subject (فاعل *fa’il*) or an object (مفعول به *maflul bihi*). Ibn Hisam acknowledges the appearance of a noun with nunation (التنوين *tanween*) and the definite article, as well as having the feature of being talked about (*muhaddat ‘anhu*). This feature is to some extent similar to what Zaggagi mentioned about a noun being a subject, even if it is semantically and pragmatically directed. It is impossible not to mention the work of Sarrag which was the first total list of noun characteristics. In his list, the syntactic characteristics Sarrag adds are appearance with a genitive particle, modification by an adjective (*na’t*, in Arabic نعت), appearance as topic (in nominal sentence), non-appearance with the verbal modifiers سوف ‘*sawfa*’ (indicating the future; equivalent to ‘it will’), قد ‘*qad*’ (it may) (indication of perfective). Another list appeared later in the work of Anbari in which a few modifications were made; appearance with the vocative particle is introduced, also it is mentioned that nouns are those which appear as topics, subjects, objects and possessors [6. P. 213].

2.1.2. Verbs

In the description of verbs, syntax does not play an important role as it is with nouns. Sarrag emphasizes the semantic contribution, and negative explanation, for instance, the things that do not specify a noun. As for Anbari, ‘verbs are words which cannot be talked about’ (*mukhbar ‘anhu*, occur as subject) and with which you talk about something (as predicate, *mukhbar bihi*). In addition, the two classifications (*mukhbar ‘anhu/bihi* / مخبر عنه/ به) are important in differentiating between nouns and verbs: nouns appear as both due to the fact that they can act as subjects or as predicates in the nominal sentence, while verbs appear only as predicates. Anbari adopts the same classification but refers to it with the term إسناد *isnad*. Thus, a verb can act as predicate, مسند *musnad* but cannot be an argument to a predicate [Ibid, P. 214].

Additionally, Mubarrad does not give a definition of verbs following a syntactic criterion, and Zaggagi provides only a semantic explanation, verbs are words that take past, present and future tenses that express an action. Yet, Zaggagi considers that verbs should be explained through syntactic criterion, or partially through analyzing the relations between sentence components when he compares them with nouns. Nouns are considered, in a logical way, to be ‘the first’ (meaning more basic) since there are sentences containing only of nouns, and if a verb appears as an agent, a noun must go with it. This implies that a verb a relation between an agent noun and itself [Ibid, P. 215].

2.1.3. Particles

The particles are considered to be the most heterogeneous among word classes and are divided into numerous sub-classed: Anbari and 'Asrar provides six, Sarrag gives eight and Zaggagi provides a semantic description, ‘(words which) have a

meaning by virtue of their referring to another word.’ Nonetheless, Zaggagi makes no attempt to provide a complete grammatical definition, neither syntactic nor morphological. But, once the morphological, syntactic and semantic descriptions of nouns and verbs have been identified, any words which do not meet such descriptions are believed to be particles. Moreover, Ibn Ginni gives a summary to what particles are, he explains them as follows: ‘(particles) are whatever have neither the characteristics (*alamat* علامات) of nouns nor verbs’ [Ibid, P. 215].

3. Word-order Patterns of Simple Sentences

3.1. Verbal Sentence and Nominal Sentence

Word-order in Arabic sentences has different patterns. As it was mentioned above, the Arabic sentence takes two main forms that are usually used to contrast each other. The first is called *جملة فعلية jumla fi ‘liyya*, ‘verbal sentence’ where a VP (verbal phrase) precedes the NP (noun//nominal phrase). The second structure is called *جملة اسمية jumla ismiyya*, [7. P. 33]. Examples:

(1) Verbal sentence:

جاء الولد *dzaa-a al-waladu* ‘the boy came’

(2) Nominal sentence:

الولد جالس *al-waladu dzaliss-un* ‘the boy is seated’

In (1), the VP جاء *dzaa-a* (came) precedes the NP الولد *al-waladu* (the boy), and in (2), the sentence begins with an NP, الولد *al-waladu*.

The nominal sentence comprises two elements known as مبتدأ *mubtada’*, that can be translated as the initial NP, and خبر *xabar*, or the predicate. In (2) the initial NP is الولد *al-waladu*, and جالس *dzaliss-un* is the predicate. The two components are always nominative, and agree in terms of number, gender, as well as definiteness [8. P. 77].

Two main constituents make up a nominal sentence in Standard Arabic, *mubtada’* and *xabar*. The initial NP or *mubtada’* has three features; firstly it must be definite, secondly, it must carry the nominative case, and thirdly it has to be a single phrase. The predicate or *xabar*, however, can be a single word, phrase, or a complete sentence, e.g.:

الأم في المطبخ *al-ummu fi al-matbax-i* ‘the mother is in the kitchen’

Traditional grammarians define the predicate *xabar* of the nominal sentence as the second main constituent whose role is to report, add, and complete the meaning of the sentence or clause, it agrees with the subject or *mubtada’*, it can be a single word or a complete phrase.

The simple form of *xabar* can be an adjective or a noun, as in the following examples:

الجو ممطر *al-jaw-u mumtr-un* (adj) ‘the weather is rainy’

احمد صحفي *Ahmad-u sahafy-un* (noun) ‘Ahmed (is) a journalist’

In both examples the report is a single NP, the report is ممطر *mumtir-un* (rainy) in the first example and صحفي *sahafy-un* (a journalist) in the second. One can notice that in both examples the *mubtada’* (initial NP), and its *xabar* (report), agree in gender and number. In both examples, however, the predicate is indefinite while the *xa-*

bar is definite; it is said here that the predicate receives definiteness from the initial NP [9. P. 246].

In a nominal sentence, the complex report can be in the form of a verb phrase or nominal phrase as illustrated in the examples below:

المدير في اجتماع *al-mudir-u fi idztima-in* ‘The director (is) in a meeting’

In the example above the report is the prepositional phrase (*jumla fi ‘liyya*) في اجتماع *fi idztima-in* (in a meeting), which also follows the initial noun المدير *al-mudir-u* (the director), it is an example of a nominal clause with a locative clause report in which *fi idztima-in* reports the location of the ‘director’ assuming that the meeting place is known [10. P. 16].

Another type of complex *xabar* is a verb phrase as in the following example:

البنيت تحب السفر *al-bintutu-hib-u al-safar-a* ‘The girl loves travelling’

ليلى تحب السفر *Leyla tu-hib-u- al-safar-a* ‘Leyla loves travelling’

In this example the initial NP البنيت *al-bintu* (the girl) is a *mubtada*’ carrying the nominative case. The initial NP *al-bintu* can be replaced by the name *Leyla*, it also becomes the subject to the VP *tu-hib-u al-safar-a*; the initial NP is a definite specific noun, and the verb agrees with the *xabar* in gender, person, and number.

In summary, the nominal sentence is composed of two constituents: the *mubtada*’, or (initial NP) and the *xabar* (predicate). The initial NP, *mubtada*’, can be simply defined as any definite, generic, or specified, NP heading a sentence, and the *xabar* of nominal sentences can either be a nominal or verbal constituent [11. P. 49].

3.2. VSO versus SVO

The Arabic language is a flexible one in terms of word order. Examples in traditional and modern Arabic comprise up to eight patterns as illustrated in the Table 1 below, providing evidence of the flexibility in word-order patterns:

Table 1 / Таблица 1

Examples of possible word-order patterns in Standard Arabic /
Примеры возможных шаблонов порядка слов в стандартном арабском языке

Word-order patterns	Example Translation in English	
SVO	اللوحة جميلة /al-lawhat-o jamilat-un/	The painting (is) beautiful
	اللوحة جميلة (هي) /jamilat-un (hiya) al-lawha/	Beautiful (is) the painting
	الفنان رسم لوحة /al-fanan-o rassam-a lawhat-an/	The artist drew a painting
VSO	رسم الفنان لوحة /rassam-a al-fanano-o lawhat-an/	Drew the artist a painting
VOS	رسم لوحة الفنان /rassam-a lawhat-an al-fanan/	Drew a painting the artist
OSV	لوحة الفنان رسم /lawhat-a al-fanan-irassam-a/	A painting the artist drew
SOV	الفنان لوحة رسم /al-fanan-o lawhat-an rassam-a/	The artist a painting drew
OVS	لوحة رسم الفنان /lawhat-an rassam-a al-fanan/	A painting drew the artist

Only two patterns will be dealt with: VSO and SVO due to the fact that these are the most commonly used in modern prosaic Arabic, the other patterns are more fre-

quently used in poetry and eloquent artistic style, not to be found in daily writings [11. P. 50].

According to Arab grammarians, VSO is the basic syntactic word order, and SVO is derivate of the VSO, as a result of subject movement. VSO order is altered to highlight shift in focus, emphasis and information distribution. Stylistically speaking, VSO order is more frequent than SVO as seen in the writings of many Modern Arab writings. The VSO pattern is used in many cases such as:

a. Passive sentences (they are commonly found in writings, they usually verbal sentences)

الباب فُتِحَ fouthiha al-babu ‘lit.: opened (was) the door’ ‘The door was open’

b. When independent subject pronouns are deleted

قرأت المقال (أنا) (ana) qara’-tu al-maqal-a ‘(I) read the article’ ‘I read the article’

The SVO pattern is used in certain positions such as:

a. Sentences consisting of a subject and a NP predicate:

حاضرا احمد احمد حاضرنا Ahmad-u hadir-an ‘lit.: Ahmed present’ ‘Ahmed is present’

b. Sentences beginning with emphatic ‘inna’ and similar emphatic words.

حاضر في احمد حاضرنا inna Ahmed-a hadir-un ‘Ahmed is present (not absent as you thought)’

c. Sentences beginning with auxiliary ‘kaana’ and similar auxiliary (incomplete) verbs:

حاضرا كان احمد حاضرنا kaana Ahmad-u hadir-an ‘lit.: was Ahmed present’ ‘Ahmed was present (but is no longer)’

The sentence *حاضرا كان احمد حاضرنا Ahmad-u kaana hadir-an* is also correct, but with the slight difference that contrary to the previous one *kaana Ahmad-u hadir-an*, the latter sentence emphasizes Ahmed’s presence more than the time of presence. Analyzing Arabic texts is challenging because this language has diverse morphology due to its inflectional nature and flexibility in terms of word order and the use of clitics attached to words [12. P. 5]. In this work two different word orders in Arabic (SVO, VOS) will be considered so as to show how they are derived. Below are some of the rather challenging characteristics of the Arabic language [13. P. 2].

A. Arabic has a relatively free word-order and it is therefore not unusual to find each of VSO and SVO within an Arabic text as in:

a. *قرأ المدير التقرير qara’-a al-mudir-u al-taqrir-a* ‘lit.: read the director the report’ ‘the director read the report’

b. *المدير قرأ التقرير al-mudir-u qara’-a al-taqrir-a* ‘The director read the report’

Both examples (a) and (b) are grammatically correct and imply the same meaning (the director read the report) with difference in emphasis, for in the first sentence, the act of reading is emphasized, whereas in the second example, the focus is on the doer of the action of reading (the director himself and not someone else, or to mean that it is no less than director who read it, depending on intonation).

B. Another challenge is that Arabic is a clitic language, i.e. one in which morphemes are morphologically linked to other words; these can be coordinating conjunctions, a definite article, prepositions; a particle, or pronouns attached to the beginning or end of a word. For example:

c. *ذهبن dhahab-na* ‘they (female pronoun) left’

Example (c) above comprises the verb ذهبن *dhahaba* and a clitic ن ‘na’ that acts as the subject for the verb *dhahaba*, (the male counterpart would have been ذهبوا *dhahb-ou*).

C. The omission of diacritics in most written texts, which makes almost only natives of advanced learners able to *guess* the type of word being used; so that ذهب *dha-haba* ‘(he) left’ or ذهب *dhahab* (gold) can only be distinguished from the context if such signs are omitted.

D. Arabic is a pro-drop language. The subject can be omitted leaving it the reader to decide if there is an omitted pronoun in the subject position or not. Let us consider the exchange below as an example:

d. أين ليلي؟ *ayna Leyla?* ‘Where is Leyla?’

e. ذهبت إلى المدرسة. (هي) *(hya) dhaba-t ila al-madrassat-i* ‘She left to school’

Here, the subject pronoun (*hya*) ‘she’ is often omitted.

Another challenge with Arabic added to the omission of diacritic signs is the abundant use of homographs that differ not only in meaning but in the part of speech as well (see example (f) above or the example below):

f. البيت جميل *al-bayt-u jameel-un* ‘the house (or a poem verse) is beautiful’

Here the meaning of the word البيت *al-bayt* preceded by the definite article *al-* and the diacritic sign –u implying the word is an initial (*mubtada*) or subject in this case is quite hard to know unless the context is clear. The sentence can mean that the speaker likes a *house* they are looking at or a *verse* in a poem because both are written and referred to as البيت *al-bayt*.

Conclusion

Belonging to the Semitic family of languages the Arabic language is characterized by rich morphology and flexible word order. Many medieval grammarians attempted to analyze the grammatical aspects of Standard Arabic, following a lot of various approaches and referring to different sources for the study. They also tried to identify the types of sentences that exist in the Arabic language, as a consequence, the concept of verbal sentence (or in Arabic *jumla fi ‘liyya*) and nominal sentence (*jumla ismiyya*) was introduced during the early stages of investigating the Arabic language. Later on, grammarians and modern linguists started analyzing the simple sentence structures and characterizing its basic components in order to identify the word-order patterns of each structure. In the end, it was concluded that Standard Arabic is a language characterized by its free word-order, meaning it can be both VSO and SVO, though more commonly VSO, as compared with other languages, as to say for instance, the English language, which has a fixed SVO word-order.

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