VOICE PHENOMENA IN JORDANIAN ARABIC

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by
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CHAPTER ONE: SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE LANGUAGE

1.1 Introduction

The data analyzed in this thesis is drawn from the author's idiolect of Jordanian Arabic spoken in the rural north of the country. This rural dialect shares so many phonological, grammatical, and vocabulary features with other dialects spoken in Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria that some (e.g., Stowasser and Ani, 1964) refer to them as a unit (usually called Syrian or Levantine Arabic). Like other dialects of Arabic, Jordanian co-exists with a form of Classical Arabic in what has been termed a 'diglossic' situation (Ferguson, 1959a). In diglossia, two (genetically-related) varieties of a language co-exist in a single speech community, each variety being used for socially-defined functions for which the other is not used. (One is essentially formal, the other spoken as in Ferguson's original definition.) In this case, Classical Arabic is the variety associated with formal-written purposes, while colloquial Jordanian is the vehicle of oral-informal communication. This dichotomy, however, is not always clear-cut. Both varieties may be present in two successive utterances and even in the same utterance and, at certain points, it is difficult to keep things discrete. (Cf. El-Hassan, 1977).

Classical is an older form of Arabic. It might not be the direct ancestor of the colloquial dialects of today, but a pseudo-historical relation can be accepted as a working hypothesis until further evidence is produced (Ferguson, 1959b). In other words, one can often
usefully speak of a Classical form 'changing' into a colloquial one. As an example, the verb form (ʔ)nCaCa in Classical is the reflexive of CaCaCa; it has changed into colloquial nCaCaC and has acquired a new function in addition to the reflexive, namely, the passive. The Classical passive, which is expressed by an internal vowel change, has disappeared from the colloquial dialects (see 2.2 below). Such a statement is not necessarily to be understood literally. Rather, it is intended to mean that the forms existant in Classical have these equivalent forms in colloquial and that there is a more or less regular relation between them. The justification for the historical-like statement is the fact that Classical, even if it is not the direct ancestor of colloquial, is at least the older of the two. Classical is a written language and this probably gives it a slower rate of change. Its rules have also been codified for centuries and have been accepted as the norm since their codification by ancient grammarians. (Cf. Ferguson 1959b: 616).

Throughout this study the terms Jordanian Arabic, Colloquial Jordanian or, simply, colloquial will be used to refer to the colloquial dialect defined above. Classical will be the term used to refer to both Classical Arabic and Modern Literary Arabic both of which have much the same phonological and morphological features. (Cf. Ferguson, 1959b:617)

1.2 Root and Patterns

One of the most important structural features of Arabic (as well as other Semitic languages) is what has been termed in English the "root-and-pattern" principle of morphological derivation. Basically, this
term refers to the phenomenon of a common root, characteristically consonantal, shared by several vocabulary items—a phenomenon so pervasive in the language that only prepositions and a few particles do not participate in it. So, a group of words sharing the same root could be referred to as a "family" (as does Cowell, 1964, for example). The differences among members of the same family are the patterns according to which the actual words are built. Patterns and roots combine in an interlocking fashion to give surface words. Neither roots nor patterns exist independently from each other on the surface. Roots are usually an unpronounceable group of consonants; patterns are typically a group of vowels (though they can include consonants as well) which cannot make complete surface syllables without consonantal elements.

It is customary to cite patterns using the root $\text{f-\text{-c}-l}$ 'to do'. So $\text{fa\text{-al}}$ stands for the pattern "-a-a-" and $(?i)\text{na\text{-al}}$ for the pattern "?in-a-a-" and so on. When citing the roots, traditional grammars of Arabic give the perfect form of the verb agreeing with a third person masculine singular subject. In this study patterns will be cited with C's (for consonants) intercalated among the vowels (and consonants) of the pattern. So, instead of $\text{fa\text{-al}}$ and $(?i)\text{na\text{-al}}$, CaCaC and $(?i)nCaCaC$ will be used. Roots will be cited as consonants separated by hyphens (e.g., $\text{k-s-r}$ 'to break'). The citation form of a verb will be the traditional third person masculine singular perfect form of the verb (e.g., $\text{kasar}$ 'he broke') but from now on the English gloss of this form will be the infinitive (e.g., $\text{kasar}$ 'to break') in accordance with most Arabists' practice.

Roots carry the lexical meaning while patterns commonly carry
grammatical information (usually the derivational class to which the word belongs plus any additional subclass specification). It should be noted here that the combination of a root-and-a pattern may add specialized meaning to the sum of the meaning of the root and that of the pattern. For example, the root ʕ-b-x conveys the idea of cooking as in ʕabax '(he) cooked,' ʕabix 'cooked food,' ʕabbaʃ 'to cook,' ʕabux '(the act of) cooking' and miʕbax 'kitchen.' The pattern miʕCaC in miʔbax shows the word is a noun and, furthermore, that it is a noun of place. The combination of the root ʕ-b-x and the pattern that gives noun of place gives the specialized meaning of kitchen not simply a cooking place. In this sense the meaning of miʔbax is more than the sum of the root and the pattern. Other examples of nouns of place are miraʃ 'place where animals are tied up' (from r-b-ʕ 'to tie') miʕʕaʃ 'place to sit in' (from gʕ-a-ʕ 'to sit') and mitʕaʃ 'restaurant' (from tʕ-a-ʕ 'to feed').

It is clear from the examples above that the derivational class shown by the pattern does not have to be only a major lexical category such as verb or noun. It can be a subcategory as well. So, within the category verb one can speak of several derivational classes each represented by a pattern. For example, kasar 'to break,' kassar 'to make (someone) break,' kasar 'to arm-wrestle with,' tkassar 'to be made to break,' tkasar 'to be arm-wrestled with' and nkasar 'to be broken' are all perfect verbs in the third person masculine singular (i.e., the differences between them are not inflectional). The patterns of these verbs are CaCaC, CaCaC, CaCaC, tCaCaC, tCaCaC and nCaCaC and they roughly signify the basic, the causative, mutual action, the passive of the causative, the passive of the mutual and the passive of the basic, respectively across word families. The pattern nCaCaC,
for example, is usually the passive of CaCaC.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>salax</td>
<td>'to fleece'</td>
<td>nsalax</td>
<td>'to be fleeced'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katab</td>
<td>'to write'</td>
<td>nkatab</td>
<td>'to be written'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saхаt</td>
<td>'to drag'</td>
<td>nsахаt</td>
<td>'to be dragged'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarag</td>
<td>'to steal'</td>
<td>nsarag</td>
<td>'to be stolen'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the examples mentioned up to this point suggest that a pattern X has the meaning Y across all word-families. But such a statement is only an idealization that may not hold in practice (cf. Bateson, 1967:3; and Cowell, 1964:48). Some words, like mitrag 'a stick; a steel bar,' do not mean what their patterns predict. The pattern miCCaC, as we have seen, gives the noun of place. In the case of mitrag, however, it gives the instrument (stick is the instrument of t-r-g 'to hit') or even a specialized meaning (like 'steel bar').

In many cases, we do not find an expected combination of a root with a particular pattern. This kind of gap is completely arbitrary and is only a matter of lexical peculiarity. There is no *mihlab (from h-l-b 'to milk') which should mean something like 'where animals are milked;' nor is there *midran (from d-r-s 'to thresh') to mean 'threshing floor,' etc.

1.3 Valence

One way of looking at the basic structure of a clause in Arabic (and other natural languages as well) is to see it as a verb with which a number of other constituents stand in a certain relationship. If a verb represents an action or a state, then the participants in the