

MEST 30010

Dissertation

TENSE AND ASPECT IN ARABIC

What are the different tense and aspect systems in the varieties of Arabic?

Student: 5890991

May 2009

This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA with Honours in Arabic Studies at the University of Manchester

Contents

Abbreviations used in this study	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 <i>Aims and Scope</i>	4
1.2. <i>Methodology and Data Analysis</i>	4
2. Definitions I: What is meant by the term “Arabic”?	7
3. Definitions II: What is meant by the terms “Tense” and “Aspect”?	13
4. Tense and Aspect Systems in Arabic	15
4.1 Simple Verb Forms	16
4.1.1 The Perfective Verb	16
4.1.2 The Imperfective Verb	18
4.1.2.1 The Unmarked Imperfective	19
4.1.2.2 The Marked Imperfective	20
(a) Future and Intensive Markers	21
(b) Indicative Markers	23
4.1.3. The Marked Imperfective versus the Unmarked Imperfective	25
4.1.4 The Indicative versus the Subjunctive in Modern Standard Arabic	25
4.2 Participles	26
4.3 Present Tense Copular Sentences	27
4.4 Compound Verbal Forms	29
5. Conclusion	33
Bibliography	34

Abbreviations used in this study:

1SG	first person singular
2SG	second person singular
3SG	third person singular
1PL	first person plural
2PL	second person plural
3PL	third person plural
ACC	accusative
DET	determiner
FEM	feminine
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
IMPERF	imperfective
IND	indicative
MASC	masculine
NEG	negative
OBJ	object
PERF	perfective
PHON	phonological element (such as phonemes with zero-semantic information, added for phonetic reasons)
PST	past
SBJN	subjunctive

Tense and Aspect in Arabic:

What are the different tense and aspect systems in the varieties of Arabic?

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and scope

This dissertation aims to provide a comparative analysis of the tense and aspect systems present in a range of Arabic dialects (including Maltese). More precisely, it will attempt to examine the way in which tense and aspect systems differ across the Arabic varieties, as well as any similarities they may exhibit.

There appears as of yet to be no single study in the literature which compares tense and aspect systems across the varieties of Arabic, nor very many studies devoted solely to tense and aspect in any single variety. Instead most of what has been said about these phenomena is found in larger works on the grammar of a single variety, or in comparative grammars of Arabic varieties.

In order to provide a more informative study of tense and aspect systems in Arabic, data will be included from as many Arabic varieties as is available. However not all varieties have equal weighting, due to space; instead a number of the “major” Arabic varieties have been selected to provide the majority of the data for analysis. However, data from several other varieties is used whenever they have something interesting to add to the study. The main varieties and languages to be used are: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, Kuwaiti, Iraqi, and Maltese.

1.2 Methodology and data analysis

First and foremost, an attempt will be made to explain what the term “Arabic” refers to, since there seems to be confusion and ambiguity when it comes to knowing what exactly is meant by the term, whether it be a single standard language, or a collection of related but in some

cases mutually unintelligible dialects. This will involve discussing the term diglossia, and what has already been established in previous works about this topic. This will also bring Maltese into the discussion and the reasons it is a language and not just a “dialect”, like Egyptian would be termed. Beeston (2006) provides a good introduction to this.

Secondly, the key terms for this study need to be defined. An attempt will be made to define tense and aspect using previous studies about this linguistic phenomenon. Formal definitions will be provided first, however to exemplify these definitions reference to a multitude of languages from different language families will be made in order to fully understand the ranges of meaning these two linguistic phenomena can exhibit. There are many good introductions to tense and aspect that very precisely define and colourfully illustrate these concepts. There is a wide range of very useful literature for this, notably the works of Comrie (1976), Dahl (1985) and Thieroff (1994).

As for the principle chapter of this study, a link will be made between tense and aspect on the one hand, and the Arabic language, or varieties of Arabic on the other. The data will be interpreted using a form-to-function description. That is to say, the formal morphosyntactic properties of the verb will be described first (form), followed by a description of its usage in terms of its tense and aspect (grammatical function). The form of a verb denotes how it looks, i.e. its shape and its structure, whereas the grammatical function of the verb denotes the grammatical semantics of the verb, in the case of this study, the verb’s reference to time, and its aspectual properties. Therefore by using a form-to-function approach, this study will analyse how changes in the morphosyntax of a verb change the verb’s temporal and aspectual properties.

Throughout the analysis, for any data that seems to exhibit quite a radical difference in its grammatical properties, an attempt will be made to find a reason for this and explain it as best

as is possible. It is most likely that the reason for this would be contact from surrounding languages.

The conclusion will summarise what I have attempted to set out by outlining any common features of tense and aspect that have been drawn from the data analysis, as well as the major differences, and where these occur.

2. DEFINITIONS I: WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM “ARABIC”?

Arabic belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language family, and more specifically to the Semitic branch, which also includes languages such as Hebrew, Amharic, and Aramaic.¹ In fact these are the living languages; there existed other Semitic languages in history, for example Akkadian, Phoenician and Canaanite (Ryding 2005).

The earliest stages of the Arabic language are recorded between the seventh century BC and the third century AD however very little is known about the language at this time. This was probably a Proto-Arabic language, also sometimes referred to as Old Arabic. This later developed into Early Arabic between the third and fifth centuries and became closer in form to that what is known as Classical Arabic (Ryding, 2005).

Classical Arabic is the form of Arabic that has religious significance for Muslims, and is considered by many as the most eloquent of the forms of Arabic. At the time of its use from the sixth century, it flourished and much poetry was composed, as well as being used for a “highly developed oral art” (Ryding, 2005), such as the قصيدة /qas^īida/, a form of poetry or “ode”.

Ryding states that around the thirteenth century, the spoken form of Classical Arabic developed into what is known as Middle Arabic. However Classical Arabic survived in its written form due to the dominance of religion and literature. The spoken form split into a variety of dialects, which varied by region. These were not recorded, and so not much is known about their individual developments; however they did continue to evolve and grow further apart from each other.

¹ Ryding, K (2005) *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Modern Arabic is the form of Arabic that exists from the eighteenth century up to the present day. During this period a form of Arabic known as Modern Standard Arabic developed, which is a formalised form of Arabic used in the media, literature and speeches. Its form is very conservative in terms of structure and resembles that of Classical Arabic very much. The differences between Modern Standard Arabic and Classical Arabic however lie in style and vocabulary (Ryding, 2005). Note that despite these two terms existing, they are used outside of the Arabic language; in Arabic, only one term exists to refer to the two, namely, اللغة الفصحى /alluḡa alfusḥā/.

According to Ethnologue, Modern Standard Arabic is not a first language, and is “used for education, official purposes, written materials, and formal speeches,” and “Classical Arabic is used for religion and ceremonial purposes, having archaic vocabulary.” Basically, “Modern Standard Arabic is a modernized variety of Classical Arabic.” It is also important to point out that Modern Standard Arabic is not spoken by all Arabs, and “in most Arab countries only the well educated have [an] adequate proficiency” (Ethnologue).

Ethnologue lists 35 Arabic languages, ranging from Algerian Saharan Arabic to Uzbeki Arabic, and uses the term “Arabic” to refer to a macro-language, consisting of a great number of mini-languages.² The debate is whether Arabic is in fact a collection of languages all derived from a single origin that subsequently have diverged to become individual languages, or whether Arabic is in fact one language with a number of quite different dialects. The former view considers Arabic like the Romance languages: Old Arabic is equal to Latin, and the modern spoken variants of Arabic, such as Egyptian and Iraqi, are equal to French and Portuguese for example. Therefore, varieties such as Egyptian are Arabic-derived languages, just as French is a Latin-derived language. The latter view however sees Arabic as a term to

² This number is debatable.

refer to a single language. If you speak Moroccan, you speak the same language as someone from Iraq. The latter view in my opinion is an inadequate analysis of Arabic, as I will attempt to explain.

Ryding (2005) states that “Arabic is the official language of all the members of the Arab League, from North Africa to the Arabic Gulf”. This analysis is basically taking the view that Arabic is a single language, as she goes on to say that despite the range of varieties of Arabic, they are all unified by a “shared history, cultural background and [...] religion.” In my opinion this definition of Arabic is a socio-cultural definition and not a linguistic one, since the varieties of Arabic are considered as part of a single language, because of social, cultural, historical and religious reasons, and yet neglects any linguistic contribution to the formation of a solid definition.

Lyovin (1997) makes an interesting point that Maltese is often considered a language in its own right and not a dialect, not because of political reasons, due to its standardisation and the fact it has been made the official language of Malta, but rather because the Maltese are Christians, whereas Arabs are generally Muslims. Again this is a definition based on socio-religious reasons and not linguistic ones.

I now turn to some linguistic arguments in the language-dialect debate. The term that is most commonly used in the literature to refer to the situation of Arabic is diglossia: “the divergence [...] between the [several] vernaculars [of Arabic] as a whole and the standard written form” (Ryding, 2005). I generally feel that diglossia is a man-made phenomenon, since the only reason for its existence is due to socio-cultural reasons, in particular because of religion and the notion Arab Nationalism. If it were not for the Qur’an, then Modern Standard Arabic would probably not have been created from Classical Arabic, since Classical Arabic

would have less an importance than it has for Arabs and Muslims. Consequently the modern natural vernaculars would have gained greater recognition and are mostly likely to be viewed as separate languages in their own right, rather than simply vernaculars of the same language.

As Ryding (2005) admits the Arabic dialects “vary substantially from one another in proportion to their geographical distance”, therefore Jordanian and Syrian would share more linguistic properties and therefore be more mutually intelligible than Moroccan would be to Kuwaiti.

Educated Arabs are able to communicate across dialects by knowing certain properties of the dialect of the person with whom they are speaking. In fact it has been said that there is a form of Arabic between formal Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial called “cultivated” or “formal spoken Arabic” (Elgibali, 1993).

What I find curious is that very little seems to be written that addresses the definition of the varieties of Arabic in terms of natural language and speech. Since the vernaculars are naturally learned and spoken by people, it would, in my opinion be the argument that these are more significant individually than Modern Standard Arabic, and should in fact be classified as individual languages, rather than dialects. Although Modern Standard Arabic derives from Classical Arabic, which was once a natural language, it is no longer the case. Judging from my own experience of learning Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic is highly conservative and prescriptive; in fact much vocabulary is invented by Academies and its

grammatical and stylistic use is controlled.³ Furthermore, it is not the natural first language of any person.⁴

The vernaculars or “dialects” on the other hand are modern, naturally occurring languages that are the product of internalised linguistic properties. Nobody has decided how the grammar should be; it just is as it is due to natural linguistic evolution (Ryding, 2005).

A further argument is that since the varieties are only spoken forms (for the most part they aren't written down), they are just dialects of each other. But I often wonder if the people who suggest this are aware of the languages of the world around them. The majority of the world's languages are not written down, but can still be considered languages in their own right. If we are to take a language isolate, more specifically a language isolate that has no written form, is this a language or a dialect? If it is a dialect, what is it a dialect of?

Language standardisation seems to have a lot to do with whether a form of speech is considered a language or a dialect. Maltese for example has been standardised and is now considered a language. Does this mean that if there are to be a collection of Arabic languages rather than dialects, each variety should be standardised? In my opinion this should not be the case, as I view language standardisation as making a language artificial and relying heavily on a prescribed written form. In linguistics, the written form of language is secondary to the spoken form and therefore less important in the formation of linguistic theory. Therefore, I believe that any language is thus the naturally occurring speech of the humans who use it, and the grammar that has evolved naturally.

³ Ryding, K (2005) *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Ethnologue

Turning back to Arabic, the dialects are often seen as less important socially and culturally, with Modern Standard Arabic and Classical Arabic, considered languages, taking precedence. These two along with their vernacular dialects are often seen as the definition of the Arabic language. I, on the other hand, prefer to define Arabic as a collection of naturally occurring languages, with a human-manipulated form used in certain socio-religious contexts.

3. DEFINITIONS II: WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERMS “TENSE” AND “ASPECT”?

Comrie (1976) defines aspect as consisting of “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation.” He outlines two extremes in the range of temporal dimension, namely *punctual*, i.e. a situation containing no internal dimension, versus *durative*, i.e. a situation in process.⁵

Eisele (1999) categorises aspect as being either “formal aspect”, that is, “the aspect associated with a morphological form”, and “lexical aspect”, which is “associated with the lexical entry of a root or stem.” Basically distinctions in formal aspect are rendered through the use of inflections, adverbials and adjuncts, and the use of serial verb constructions; lexical aspect however is contained within a lexeme. In fact it is quite common in languages for verbs to have aspectual pairs, such as in Russian and in fact in Arabic, where there is a both a *perfective* and *imperfective* version of a verb.

These two terms: *perfective* and *imperfective* are very important for the analysis of Arabic verbs. Generally, the perfective form of the verb can be defined as expressing punctuality, as Comrie suggests, and often designates completed situations. The imperfective form is however durative in nature. Brustad (2000) identifies that within the definition of durative aspect, there is *progressive* and *habitual* aspect. Progressive aspect refers to on-going situations, whereas habitual designates repeated situations.

A further term that can be applied to Arabic is that of *perfect* aspect. This should not be confused with perfective aspect however. Comrie (1976) defines the term perfect as designating “a past situation which has present relevance” in contrast to the perfective as

⁵ I use the word *situation*, to refer to a verbal utterance, whether it be an action, state or process, which was suggested by Huddleston and Pullman (2005)

“denot[ing] a situation viewed in its entirety, without regard to internal temporal constituency.”

The three aspects outlined above, namely perfective, imperfective, and perfect, as well as the sub-divisions within imperfective, will all be discussed in terms of how they relate to the varieties of Arabic under discussion.

Turning to “tense”, I refer to Huddleston’s definition that tense can either be “deep” or “surface”. Deep tense refers to time references that are marked by temporal adverbs and the surrounding syntax, whereas surface tense is what is carried within the morphology of the verb.

There is a distinction to be made between tense and time reference. It is common in the literature for tense to be referred to as a morphological category, which would render for example a past tense verb form. On the other hand, time reference refers to the positioning of a situation in time with regards to the whole proposition. This can be exemplified through the English sentence: *I am going to the library tomorrow*. The verb *am* here is in its present tense form, yet the whole proposition indicates a future situation. Therefore under the definition given above, the tense of this sentence is present, whereas its time reference is future. This will prove important since time reference will prove to be quite important in any analysis of Arabic verbs, whereas tense, will play a much more recessive, and in most cases nonexistent role, as will soon be seen.

4. TENSE AND ASPECT SYSTEMS IN ARABIC

Arabic verbs come in pairs consisting of an imperfective form and a perfective form. Furthermore, there are two participle forms which derive from the verb root.⁶ Brustad (2000) explains that these three morphological forms can be mapped neatly onto three aspectual forms: perfective, imperfective and perfect. The following table is based on definitions provided by Brustad (2000), which ultimately derive from Comrie (1976):

Aspectual Form	Aspectual Meaning
perfective	“a completed, indivisible whole”
imperfective	“a non-complete process, which may be iterative, habitual, or progressive”
perfect	“a state that bears relevance to the moment of speaking”

The Arabic verb forms appear to link more to aspect and temporal dimension, than they do to tense and time reference. Of course all degrees of time reference can be expressed using the forms of the Arabic verb. However there is a strong link between tense and aspect in Arabic verbs. As Brustad puts it “the Arabic perfective and imperfective represent morphological categories that interact with other grammatical features to produce time reference”, which basically means that the verb forms alone do not always refer to time, that is to say they don't necessarily conjugate for tense alone; instead other grammatical features are often needed to fully express time reference.

This chapter will individually examine the semantic uses of the three Arabic verbal forms outlined above, in terms of temporal dimension and durativity on the one hand, and time reference on the other.

⁶ Arabic participles include both active and passive forms: */ism fāʿil/* and */ism mafʿūl/* respectively.

4.1 Simple Verbal Forms

I begin by first examining the verbal forms as they stand alone, i.e., the possible meanings that can derive from them, without anything being added to alter the meaning in anyway, such as auxiliary verbs or temporal particles or affixes.

4.1.1 The Perfective Verb

The Arabic perfective form is formed from the tri- or quadriliteral verb roots plus suffixes that are used denote person and number. The internal vowels depend on the variety of Arabic in question. In order to illustrate a conjugation of a perfective form, the following table compares the verb /k/-/t/-/b/, bearing the meaning ‘to write’ across three varieties of Arabic:

		Modern Standard Arabic	Egyptian Arabic	Iraqi Arabic	Maltese
singular	1	<i>katab-tu</i> write.PERF-1SG	<i>katab-t</i> write.PERF-1SG	<i>kitāb-it</i> write.PERF-1SG	<i>ktib-t</i> write.PERF-1SG
	2 Masc.	<i>katab-ta</i> write.PERF-2SG.MASC	<i>katab-t</i> write.PERF-2SG.MASC	<i>kitāb-it</i> write.PERF-2SG.MASC	<i>ktib-t</i> write.PERF-2SG
	2 Fem.	<i>katab-ti</i> write.PERF-2SG.FEM	<i>katab-ti</i> write.PERF-2SG.FEM	<i>kitāb-ti</i> write.PERF-2SG.FEM	
	3 Masc.	<i>katab-a</i> write.PERF-3SG.MASC	<i>katab-ø</i> write.PERF-3SG.MASC	<i>kitāb-ø</i> write.PERF-3SG.MASC	<i>kiteb</i> write.PERF.3SG.MASC
	3 Fem.	<i>katab-at</i> write.PERF-3SG.FEM	<i>katab-it</i> write.PERF-3SG.FEM	<i>kitāb-at</i> write.PERF-3GD.FEM	<i>ktib-et</i> write.PERF-3SG.FEM
plural	1	<i>katab-nā</i> write.PERF-1PL	<i>katab-na</i> write.PERF-1PL	<i>kitāb-na</i> write.PERF-1PL	<i>ktib-na</i> write.PERF-1PL
	2	<i>katab-tum</i> write.PERF-2PL	<i>katab-tū</i> write.PERF-2PL	<i>kitāb-tu</i> write.PERF-2PL	<i>ktib-tu</i> write.PERF-2PL
	3	<i>katab-ū</i> write.PERF-3PL	<i>katab-ū</i> write.PERF-3PL	<i>kitāb-aw</i> write.PERF-3PL	<i>ktib-u</i> write.PERF.3PL

The Arabic perfective form when use in isolation primarily expresses a past situation with the idea of the verbal situation being completed. The placement of the situation in time is also a single point. Take the following examples, the first from Egyptian:

- (1) *min yumi:n suf-t-a-ha hina*
 from two.days see.PERF-1SG-PHON-OBJ.3SG.FEM here
 I saw her here two days ago.
 (Abdel-Massih et al., 2009. pp291)

This example complies with the definition given that the perfective form of the verb, when used alone, expresses a completed situation in the past, since the “seeing” in this example

happened “2 days ago” relative to the time the sentence was uttered, and the act of “seeing” is completed.

Abdel-Massih (2009) states that the perfective verb form in Egyptian is used to denote a situation “which was completed prior to the moment of speaking” (as in (1)) or a situation “which took place at some past time, but whose results linger on”⁷. In English, these two dimensions of time can be individually represented by two constructions: the simple past to express the former; the present perfect to express the latter. Egyptian Arabic has no such distinction in terms of morpho-syntax. As Eisele (1999) puts it, to know which meaning is intended is “dependent on pragmatics or context”.

In Iraqi Arabic, the perfective verb form is used to express the former of the two distinctions noted above, namely a completed action in the past and Erwin (1963) states that it “generally corresponds to the English simple past tense.” The example in (2) illustrates this with the verbs “see” and “talk”:

- (2) *ʃif-t-a* *bi-s-sūg* *il-bārḥa* *lākin ma-ḥtʃī-t* *wi-yyā*
 see.PERF-1SG-OBJ.3SG in-DET-market DET-yesterday but NEG-talk.PERF-1SG with-3SG
 I saw him at the market yesterday but I didn’t speak with him.

An interesting phenomenon that occurs in several varieties is the possibility of combining the perfective verb with what is referred to by Brustad (2000) as “an aspectual durative particle”. In essence the perfectiveness of the verb is being transformed to impart the dimension of duration. Take the following example from Jordanian:⁸

- (3) *qaraʔ-t* *fi il-kitāb* *ʕiddit sāʕāt*
 read.PERF-1SG in DET-book several hours
 I read the book for several hours.

⁷ Similar to the English present perfect.

⁸ Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp174

Basically, the addition of preposition *fi* meaning “in” makes the sentence carry a durative meaning. Without this aspectual particle, the sentence would be rendered ungrammatical, since the perfective verb alone cannot occur with an adverbial of duration, such as that in (3).

4.1.2 The Imperfective Verb

The second member in an Arabic verb-pair is the imperfective form. In many varieties of Arabic, this imperfective form generally occurs with some form of prefix, which adds to the aspectual or temporal meaning being carried. Before exploring some of these prefixes, it is important to first analyse how this form can be used in an unmarked form, i.e., without prefixation.

The following table illustrates the morphology of the imperfective verb in several varieties. Note that this time the verb stem (for most parts) is both prefixed and suffixed, unlike the perfective form which only undergoes suffixation.

		Modern Standard Arabic	Egyptian Arabic⁹	Iraqi Arabic¹⁰
Singular	1	<i>ʔa-ktub-u</i> 1SG-write.IMPERF-IND	<i>ʔa-ktib</i> 1SG-write.IMPERF	<i>ʔa-ktib</i> 1SG-write.IMPERF
	2 Masc.	<i>ta-ktub-u</i> 2SG-write.IMPERF-IND	<i>ti-ktib</i> 2SG-write.IMPERF	<i>ti-ktib</i> 2SG-write.IMPERF
	2 Fem.	<i>ta-ktub-īna</i> 2SG-write.IMPERF-FEM.IND	<i>ti-ktib-i</i> 2SG-write.IMPERF-FEM	<i>ti-ktib-īn</i> 2SG-write.IMPERF-FEM
	3 Masc.	<i>ya-ktub-u</i> 3SG.MASC-write.IMPERF-IND	<i>yi-ktib</i> 3SG.MASC-write.IMPERF	<i>yi-ktib</i> 3SG.MASC-write.IMPERF
	3 Fem.	<i>ta-ktub-u</i> 3SG.FEM-write.IMPERF-IND	<i>ti-ktib</i> 3SG.FEM-write.IMPERF	<i>ti-ktib</i> 3SG.FEM-write.IMPERF
Plural	1	<i>na-ktub-u</i> 1PL-write.IMPERF-IND	<i>ni-ktib</i> 1PL-write.IMPERF	<i>ni-ktib</i> 1PL-write.IMPERF
	2	<i>ta-ktub-ūna</i> 2-write.IMPERF-PL.IND	<i>ti-ktib-u</i> 2-write.IMPERF-PL	<i>ti-ktib-ūn</i> 2-write.IMPERF-PL
	3	<i>ya-ktub-ūn</i> 3-write.IMPERF.PL.IND	<i>yi-ktib-u</i> 3-write.IMPERF.PL	<i>yi-ktib-ūn</i> 3-write.IMPERF.PL

⁹ Abdel-Massih, Ernest T. et al., (2009) *A Reference Grammar of Egyptian Arabic*. Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp. 262

¹⁰ Erwin, Wallace M. (1963) *A Short Reference Grammar of Iraqi Arabic*. Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp. 84

4.1.2.1 The Unmarked Imperfective

Eisele (1999) identifies two uses for the unmarked imperfective in Egyptian Arabic, which he calls temporal and non-temporal. An example of a temporal usage is in a sentence that contains two finite verbs, for example in a pair of coordinated clauses. The second verb can occur unprefixed when it shares the same temporal reference as the first one. Take the following example¹¹:

- (4) *ḥ-a-xallaṣ il-madžistēr is-sana g-gayya wi-a-ftaxal ʕand ʔabū-ya*
 FUT-1SG-finish DET-masters DET-year DET-coming and-1SG-work at father-my
 I'll finish my masters next year and work with my father.

It can be seen that the second verb in the sentence (“work”) is unmarked, whereas the first verb (“finish”) is marked with the future prefix *ḥ(a)*. The temporal value of the second verb is determined by the verb in the first clause, and in the case of (4), this is future time reference: “I will finish and I will work”.

In terms of non-temporal uses, the unmarked imperfective plays a major role in Egyptian Arabic. For example, it is used to express the negative imperative¹²:

- (5) *ma-ti-ktib-f*
 NEG-2SG-write-NEG¹³
 Don't write!

Furthermore, the unmarked imperfective is used after modals such as *lāzim* (“must/necessary”) and *mumkin* (“can/possible”):

- (6) *lāzim ni-rūḥ*¹⁴
 necessary 1PL-go.IMPERF
 It is necessary that we go.

¹¹ Eisele, John C. (1999) *Arabic Verbs in Time: Tense and Aspect in Cairene Arabic*. Harrassowitz Verlag. Pp.81

¹² Ibid. Pp 83.

¹³ The reason for the two negative morphemes is that *ma-f* is a circumfix that attaches to a finite verb (including any object suffixes).

¹⁴ Eisele, John C. (1999) *Arabic Verbs in Time: Tense and Aspect in Cairene Arabic*. Harrassowitz Verlag. Pp.88

Moreover, the unmarked imperfective is used in subordinate positions, when following an auxiliary verb however more will be said about this in the section on compound verbal forms.

Mitchell and El-Hassan (1994) identify that both Egyptian and Moroccan Arabic use an unmarked imperfective with certain verbs carrying the meaning of “knowing, remembering, liking, and other “mental” verbs”. Brustad (2000) suggest that this is done to avoid “commit[ing] too much to the truth of opinions or presume to know the mind of another person.” In the following example from Moroccan, the verb *taṣqəl-i* meaning “remember” is used in the unmarked form to avoid committing too much to the fact that the sister does remember:¹⁵

- (7) *ʔuwwəl mərɾa ta-n-fri ʔllāba -- ta-ṣqəl-i ʔuxt-i, dīk əʔ-ʔllāba*
 first time IND-1SG-buy dress -- 2SG-remember-FEM sister-my that DET-dress
lli frī-tī l-i
 REL buy.PST-2SG.FEM for-1SG
 [It was] the first time I bought a jellaba, -- remember sister, that jellaba you bought me?

What’s more, on the idea of politeness, Egyptian and Syrian employ an unmarked imperfective for suggestivity as in example (8) from Syrian:¹⁶

- (8) *ʔa-ṣmel ʔahwe, wəlla fāy?*
 1SG.make coffee, or tea
 Shall I make coffee or tea?

According to Brustad (2000), Levantine speakers would reject this usage, instead opting for a prefixed imperfective for making suggestions.

4.1.2.2 The Marked Imperfective

There exist a number of markers (some in the form of prefix, others in the form as particles) that are attached to or positioned before the imperfective verb and that alter the aspect or

¹⁵ Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp237

¹⁶ Ibid. Pp. 238

temporal reference of the verb. These aspectual and temporal markers can be divided into two main categories: (a) future/intentive markers and (b) indicative markers.

(a) Future and Intentive Markers

The following table presents the future markers (and intentive markers) used in four Arabic varieties:¹⁷

Variety	Future	Intentive
Moroccan	<i>māf(i)</i> (northern) <i>ṛā(di)</i> (southern)	-
Egyptian	<i>ḥ(a)-</i>	-
Syrian	<i>raḥ</i>	<i>b-</i>
Kuwaiti	<i>bi-</i> <i>raḥ</i>	<i>bi-</i>
Iraqi	<i>raḥ-</i>	-
Modern Standard Arabic	<i>sa-</i> <i>sawfa</i>	-
Maltese	<i>se</i> <i>ḥa</i> <i>ghad</i>	<i>(bi ḥsiebu)</i>

The following examples (taken from Brustad (2000: 241-4) with the exception of the Egyptian example which is from Eisele (1999: 96)) illustrate the usage of these markers. The first is from Moroccan, in which the most common future time reference marker *ṛādi* is used:

- (9) *ṛādi n-mədd lə-k rəʒl-i mn f-ʃərʒəm*
 FUT 1SG-stretch.IMPERF to-2SG leg-my from DET-window
 I will put out my leg from the window for you.

Example (10) is from Egyptian, in which the future prefix *ḥ(a)* is used on the imperfective verb:

- (10) *ḥ-a-ʃūf-u bukra*
 FUT-1SG-see.IMPERF-OBJ.3SG tomorrow
 I will see him tomorrow.

¹⁷ Adapted from Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp234. Includes information from Erwin (1963) and Ryding (2005).

The Syrian examples below contrast in that the first expresses future time (with the particle *rah*), whereas the second expresses some kind of intention (with the prefix *b-*):

- (11) *fū rah t-samm-i l-mawwlūd ?*
 what FUT 2SG-call.IMPERF-FEM DET-newborn
 What are you going to name the baby?
- (12) *ha l-marra nʕalla mā b-i-nsa*
 this DET-time God_willing NEG FUT-1SG-forget.IMPERF
 This time, hopefully, I won't forget.

The difference between these two verbal meanings is that in (11) a specific question is being asked about the future (hence the future marker), whereas (12) expresses an “intended action on the part of the speaker”, and so the intensitive prefix *b-* is used.¹⁸

Kuwaiti also indicates a difference between future time reference and intentionality however the situation gets more complicated since there are gender-based differences. A Kuwaiti woman would use the prefix *b-* for both future and intentional statements; a male on the other hand would use the *b-* prefix only for expressing intention, and the particle *rah* for future time reference.¹⁹

Iraqi employs the future prefix *rah*, and is used in a similar way to the English *will* or *going to* (Erwin 1963: 138):

- (13) *ma-rah-yi-ji*
 NEG-FUT-3SG-come
 He's not going to come.

Modern Standard Arabic makes use of the future prefix *sa-* which Ryding (2005) says is possibly a contraction of the particle *sawfa*. The following example is from Ryding (2005: 442):

¹⁸ Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp 244

¹⁹ Ibid. Pp 242

- (14) *sa-ʔu-fakkir-u fi ɖālīka*
 FUT-1SG-think-IND in that
 I will think about that.

According to Borg (1997), there are a variety of future particles in Maltese. *Se* is the most frequent however. The following examples are taken from Borg (1997: 223, 239):

- (15) *se ti-ktib-l-u ittra twila*
 FUT 3SG.FEM-write.IMPERF-to-OBJ.3SG.MASC letter long
 She's going to write him a long letter.

Furthermore, future time reference can be expressed by means of adverbials:

- (16) *n-ghidl-ek ghada x' bi hsieb-ni na-ghmel*
 1SG-tell-OBJ.2SG tomorrow what with intention-1SG 1SG-do.IMPERF
 I will tell you tomorrow what I intend doing.

Incidentally, Maltese contains the prepositional phrase *bi hsiebu* which is used to express intention:

- (17) *bi hsieb-om jimxu l-lejl kollu*
 with intention-3PL walk.3PL DET-night all
 They intend walking all through the night.

(b) Indicative Markers

The following set of indicative markers from a selection of dialects fall into two groups: those expressing progressiveness and those expressing durativity:²⁰

Variety	Progressive	Durative
Moroccan	-	<i>ka- / ta-</i>
Egyptian	(<i>ʕammāl</i>)	<i>bi-</i>
Syrian	<i>ʕam</i>	<i>b-</i>
Kuwaiti	<i>gāʕid, gāʕda, gāʕdīn</i>	-
Iraqi	<i>da-</i>	<i>da-</i>

Note that the term durative is taken from Harrell (1962), which is used to include both habitual and stative meanings.

²⁰ Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp. 246 and Erwin, Wallace M. (1963) *A Short Reference Grammar of Iraqi Arabic*. Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp. 139

As the table suggests, Moroccan does not differentiate between durative and progressive meanings, and does in fact mark both interpretations with the same prefixes. In fact Egyptian is the same, whereby it can use the *bi-* for both durative (15a) and progressive moods (15b):²¹

- (18) a. *ma-ḥadd-i-f* *bi-y-ʔūl* *ḥāga* *f-dī*
 NEG-person-PHON-NEG IND-3SG-say.IMPERF something in-this
 Nobody says anything about this.
- b. *bi-t-ʔūl* *ʔē?*
 IND-3SG-say what
 What are you saying?

Despite this, it does however have the particle *ʕammāl*, which Badawi and Hinds (1986) refer to as “intensifying progressive”. Take the following example as illustration:

- (19) *ʕammāl yākul*
 CONT 3SG-eat
 He keeps on eating.

As for Syrian, it has a marked difference between progressive and durative moods, as can be seen in the table above. Interestingly however, as Brustad points out, the progressive particle can be used alongside the *b-* prefixed imperfective:

- (20) *ʕam b-a-ʔil-ik*
 PROG IND-1SG-tell-OBJ.2SG.FEM
 I am telling you!

Kuwaiti speakers have no durative marker;²² however do have a particle that can be used to express progressiveness. This particle declines for person and number as can be seen from the table.

- (21) *rifj-i lli yam[b]-i gāʕid yi-frab wiski*
 friend-my REL beside-me PROG 3SG-drink whiskey
 My friend who is next to me is drinking whiskey.

²¹ Eisele, John C. (1999) *Arabic Verbs in Time: Tense and Aspect in Cairene Arabic*. Harrassowitz Verlag. Pp.91-92

²² Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press. Pp.248

The Iraqi indicative prefix *da-* is used to express both durative and progressive moods (Erwin, 1963: 139):

- (22) a. *hāḏa da-y-ṣāwin-hum ihwāya b-ḥuṣuḥ-hum*
 he IND-3SG-help-OBJ.3PL a_lot in-work-their
 He helps them a lot in their work.
 b. *da-yi-ktib maktuub*
 IND-3SG-write letter
 He's writing a letter.

4.1.3 The Marked Imperfective versus the Unmarked Imperfective

Brustad (2000) refers to the difference between the unmarked imperfective and the marked or prefixed imperfective as that of grammatical mood, and says that the unmarked imperfective serves as the subjunctive mood. In terms of modality, the difference between choosing between an unmarked imperfective and a marked imperfective, i.e., indicative versus subjunctive respectively, lies in “the distinction between *actual* and *potential*”. That is to say “the subjunctive represents a potential event without reference to time...” Consider the minimal pairs from Egyptian in Brustad (2000)²³:

- (23) a. *ti-ḥrab-i ḥāy?*
 2SG-drink.IMPERF-FEM tea
 Would you like to drink (some) tea?
 b. *bi-ti-ḥrab-i ḥāy?*
 IND-2SG-drink.IMPERF-FEM
 Do you drink tea?

Example (23a) uses the unmarked imperfective verb so expresses a polite request in this instance since the verb carries the “potentiality” meaning suggested by Brustad; (23b) on the other hand is marked by the indicative prefix and so carries a meaning of “actuality”.

4.1.4 The Indicative versus the Subjunctive in Modern Standard Arabic

Modern Standard Arabic has no indicative marking particle or prefix; instead it employs the use of grammatical case, which is a feature of older forms of Arabic. In order to distinguish between indicative and subjunctive forms (other than within context), there is a slight change

²³ Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington: Georgetown University Press.

in the imperfective verb's pronunciation at the end. The following table compares the verbal mood markers for the indicative and subjunctive moods:²⁴

Verbal Form	Phonological Ending	
	<i>Indicative</i>	<i>Subjunctive</i>
1SG	[u]	[a]
1PL		
2SG.MASC		
3SG.MASC		
3SG.FEM		
2SG.FEM	[(i)na]	[(i)]
2PL	[(ū)na]	[(ū)]
3PL		

Note that the phonemes in rounded brackets represent number and gender information, and are not part of the mood marking. They are given however to show that in the subjunctive there is a zero-element mood marker for the second person singular feminine, and the second and third person plural forms. The following examples from Ryding (2005: 607-610) illustrate this concept:

- (24) *ta-ʕrif-u kull-a shayʔ-in*
 3SG-know-IND every-ACC thing-GEN.INDEF
 She knows everything.

- (25) *kay lā ʔa-qūl-a...*
 in_order_that NEG 1SG-say-SBJN
 in order that I not say...

4.2 Participles

Brustad (2000) states that “the active participle is commonly used in past, present and future time contexts” however the participle itself, as Eisele (1990) points out, the participle itself shows no time reference, and that the temporal information is derived from context.

²⁴ Based on material from Ryding (2005)

In terms of assigning a particular grammatical aspect to the participle it is very difficult to do. Brustad (2000) claims that attempts have been made to “assign perfect aspect to the participle” however many authors are quite reluctant to confirm this, even if they do hint upon it. Ingham (1994) is one author who recognises a link between the participle and the perfect aspect in relation to Najdi Arabic:²⁵ “it [is] possible to interpret the [a]ctive participle as meaning *having begun to...* or *having performed the initial action which results in the state of...*” Despite this, he does not fully affirm a perfect link, due to the fact participles can often be used for expressing verbs of motion (Brustad, 2000: 183). The following examples from Brustad (2000: 184) illustrate the active participle being used to express perfect aspect followed by the active participle being used to express a progressive aspect. The first is from Syrian; the second from Egyptian:

(26) *ḥaliyyan muxtār-t-u*
 currently having_chosen-FEM-OBJ.3SG
 As of now, I’ve chosen him.

(27) *huwa rāyih*
 he going.MASC
 He is going.

A number of participles can however carry both aspectual interpretations: the act indicate a progressive situation or the result of a prior situation (perfect). Brustad recognises this in Egyptian, Syrian and Kuwaiti Arabic. The participle *māfi* for example in Egyptian and Syrian can either mean *going* or *having left* (Brustad, 2000:185).

4.3 Present Tense Copular Sentences

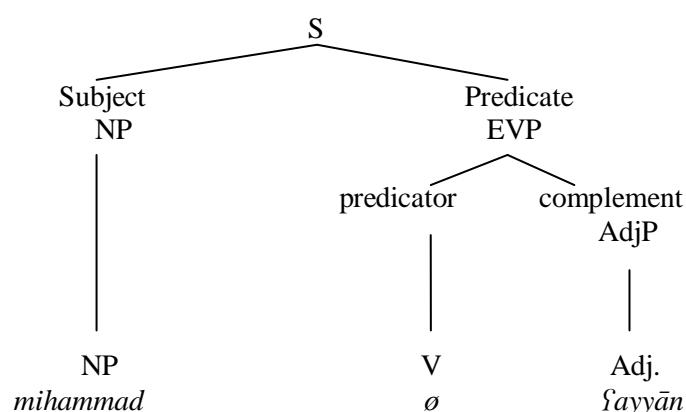
A feature of Arabic is its lack of present tense form of the verb *to be*. Basically a combination of subject-predicate is enough to express meaning, and therefore the copula is invisible. This

²⁵ A variety of Arabic spoken in the desert of central Saudi Arabia.

type of structure is often referred to as “an equational sentence” (Brustad, 2000; Eisele, 1999), and their basic characteristic is that they “lack a verbal predicator”, or as Eisele calls it, “a null predicator.” An example of this in Egyptian Arabic is as follows:²⁶

- (28) *miḥammad ṣayyān*
 Muhammad sick
 Muhammad is sick.

In order to illustrate this syntactic structure more deeply, Eisele provides the following syntactic tree,²⁷ where EVP stands for “extended verb phrase”:



Ryding (2005) outlines the possible combinations or the various types of subject and predicate in Modern Standard Arabic, which is most likely to apply to the majority, if not all of the varieties of Arabic. The basic structure involves the subject being definite and the predicate being indefinite, however other possibilities occur as will be soon seen. Here are just a few of the combinations of subject and predicate outlined by Ryding²⁸:

- a. *Noun-Adjective*
- b. *Noun Phrase-Adjective*
- c. *Pronoun-Adjective (Phrase)*
- d. *Pronoun-Noun*
- e. *Demonstrative Pronoun-Noun*
- f. *Demonstrative Pronoun-Adjective (Phrase)*
- g. *Noun (Phrase)-Noun (Phrase)*
- h. *Noun-Prepositional (Phrase)*

²⁶ Eisele, John C. (1999) *Arabic Verbs in Time: Tense and Aspect in Cairene Arabic*. Harrassowitz Verlag.

²⁷ Ibid Pp. 102

²⁸ Ryding, K (2005) *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp59-61

If however a speaker wants to express a definite predicate, then a common feature of Arabic is to use a pronoun as an overt copula, and Brustad (2000) points out that this “occur[s] in all dialects”. An example of this type of equational sentence from Syrian comes from Brustad, (2000: 157):

- (29) *ʔahamm fi bi-kall doktōrā hiyye l-ʔatrūḥa*
 most_important thing in-every doctorate it DET-dissertation
 The most important thing in every doctorate is the dissertation.

Example (29) contains the feminine personal pronoun *hiyye* which links the definite subject with the definite predicate. Brustad actually says that in some dialects this usage is called a “pseudo-verb copula”, since the pronoun is in fact acting as a verbal element.

4.4 Compound Verbal Forms

Huddleston (1984) defines a compound tense as “one in which there is a dependent or auxiliary verb followed by a main or head verb.” Arabic contains an assortment of compound verbal forms which provide for a deep array of temporal nuances. The most dominant way of forming a compound verbal structure involves the auxiliary verb *to be*. This auxiliary, when combined with an imperfective or a perfective verb, adds more precise information to the situating of the event in time. The following examples are from my own data of Egyptian Arabic (with the exception of examples (30) and (33), which come from Hinds and Badawy (1986)) that I collected whilst taking part in conversations with Egyptians. They illustrate some of the possible combinations of the auxiliary verb *kaan* with imperfective and perfective verbs, as well as the temporal-aspectual meaning they express as a whole verbal constituent:

- (30) *kunt rāyih al-sūʔ lamma ʃuf-t-u fi-f-ʃārīʕ*
 was.1SG going DET-market when saw-1SG-OBJ.3SG in-DET-street
 I was going to the market when I saw him in the street.

This example contains the verbal element *past auxiliary* plus *active participle*. Basically what this combination expresses is a progressive event in the past, i.e. the past progressive.

- (31) *kān-it b-t-rūḥ al-madrasa fi-shallalāt*
 was-3SG.FEM IND-3SG.FEM-go DET-school in-Shallalāt
 She used to go to school in Shallalat (an area of Alexandria, Egypt).

Example (31) contains the *past auxiliary* plus the *bi-imperfective*, i.e. the indicative imperfective. What this combination expresses is a habitual event in the past, which is expressed in English by *used to*.

- (32) *kaan ḥa-yi-ttiṣil bi-ṣāhib il-bēt, bes lāzim yi-ftiri kart-ə ṣaḥn*
 was.3SG FUT-3SG-call with-landlord but necessary 3SG-buy card-PHON charge
 He was going to call the landlord, but he needs to top-up his phone.

This example is constructed from the *past auxiliary* plus the *ḥa-imperfective*, i.e. the future imperfective. This combination refers to an intensitive event in the past, where English would use *was going to + infinitive*.

- (33) *bi-yi-kūn bi-ya-ʿmil il-wāgib lamma ba-rūh-l-u*
 IND-3SG-be IND-3SG-do DET-homework when 1SG-go-to-him
 He will usually be doing the homework, when I go to see him.

Example (33)²⁹ contains two *bi-imperfective* verbs in succession. It seems to suggest some type of future progressive-habitualness, since Hinds and Badawy translate the sentence as *will usually be doing*.

Up to now, the examples of compound verbal structures in Egyptian have all carried an imperfective meaning. The following examples however carry a perfective meaning:

- (34) *kān miṣi lamma waṣal-t*
 be.PERF.3SG leave.PERF.3SG when arrive.PERF.1SG
 He had left when I arrived.

²⁹ Hinds and Badawi (1986) *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic (Arabic to English)* International Book Centre

Example (34) contains two *perfective* verbs in succession, and is equivalent to the English past perfect or pluperfect. Example (35) however expresses a future perfect by the use of the *ḥa-imperfective auxiliary* followed by the *perfective verb*.

- (35) *ḥ-a-kūn* *xallaṣ-t* *bukra*
 FUT-1SG-be.IMPERF finish.PERF tomorrow
 I will have finished tomorrow.

Finally, example (36)³⁰ contains a verbal construction made up of the *bi-imperfective* of the auxiliary followed by the *perfective* of the main verb. This appears to be expressing a perfective future habitual, in contrast to (33), which expresses an imperfective future habitual, since the main verb is imperfective.

- (36) *bi-yi-kūn* *ʕamil* *il-wāgib* *lamma b-a-rūḥ-l-u*
 IND-3SG-be.IMPERF do.PERF.3SG DET-homework when IND-1SG-go.IMPERF-to-him
 He will usually have done his homework when I go to see him.

What all of these examples show is that Arabic allows for more than one finite verb in a verb phrase. Eisele (1999) confirms this by saying that Egyptian Arabic “uses the same morphological forms in both simple and compound tenses” and there can be “more than one finite verb in compound tenses” and attempts to explain this by saying that use of more than one finite form in a single verb phrase “could be tied to a lack of non-finite forms [...], which would lead to the general use of finite forms in embedded contexts.” English restricts the number of finite verb forms that can be used in a single verb phrase, however Egyptian Arabic does not have this restriction, and so the need to use non-finite forms, such as participles and verbal nouns, never occurred.

What can be concluded from this section on compound verb forms is that Arabic possesses a wide variety of possibilities in terms of expressing different temporal references and

³⁰ Hinds and Badawi (1986) *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic (Arabic to English)* International Book Centre

dimensions, through the combination of auxiliaries with the perfective and imperfective forms of the verb. Moreover, Arabic allows for the combination of finite verb forms within one verb phrase.

Despite the fact that only Egyptian Arabic has been analysed here, it would be most likely that the same holds for other varieties of Arabic too. Obviously their morphological forms are different, as is the way that they combine their auxiliary with the imperfective and perfective forms of the verb, but it is probable that they possess the same range of aspectual and temporal nuances. Of course to fully know this and confirm it, further analysis would be needed, more than this present study has space for.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to outline and exemplify the way in which the varieties of Arabic express temporal properties of their verbs. Due to space, not all varieties of Arabic have been analysed, nor has every aspect of the tense and aspect systems of each of the varieties that were covered been analysed. Despite this an informative picture of the tense and aspect systems in place in Arabic in general has been achieved.

Firstly it has been revealed that Arabic does not really rely on tense, where by tense refers to a morphological category; instead there is a heavy reliance on time reference, which is achieved through particles, affixes, adverbial and analytic constructions.

Secondly, and most importantly, this study has shown that formal aspect is very dominant in Arabic, and that there exist a variety of constructions allowing for the expression of complex dimensions of temporal nuance. Not only this, but lexical aspect plays a major role in both time reference and aspectual expression.

All these very broad characteristics apply to all the varieties analysed in this study, and these are possibly universal to all varieties of Arabic. Of course, the study has also revealed some characteristics of tense and aspect specific to certain varieties.

In order to extend this study, to gain an even deeper insight into the tense and aspect systems present in Arabic, it would be necessary to analyse more varieties, as well as look deeper into those that have already been analysed. Unfortunately for this present study, space does not permit this.

Bibliography

Books and Articles:

- Abdel-Massih, Ernest T. et al (2009) *A Reference Grammar of Egyptian Arabic*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Beeston, A.F.L. (2006) *The Arabic Language Today* Washington DC: Georgetown University Press
- Borg, Albert (1996) *Maltese* London: Routledge
- Brustad, Kristen E. (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press
- Comrie, Bernard. (1976) *Aspect* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- _____ (1986) *Tense* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Dahl, Östen (1985) *Tense and Aspect Systems* Blackwell
- Eisele, John C. (1990) "Time Reference, Tense, and Formal Aspect in Cairene Arabic" *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics I*, ed. Mushira Eid 173-212 Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 63. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- _____ (1999) *Arabic Verbs in Time: Tense and Aspect in Cairene Arabic*. Harrassowitz Verlag
- Elgibali, Alaa (1993) "Stability and Language Variation in Arabic: Cairene and Kuwaiti Dialects" In *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics*. Eid Mushira and Clive Holes (eds.) 75 ff.
- Erwin, Wallace M. (1963) *A Short Reference Grammar of Iraqi Arabic*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press
- Harrel, Richard (1962) *A Short Reference Grammar of Moroccan Arabic*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Hinds and Badawi (1986) *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic (Arabic to English)* International Book Centre
- Hoberman, Robert D. & Aronoff, Mark (2003) *The Verbal Morphology of Maltese: From Semitic to Romance* In *Root-Based Morphology*, ed. by Joseph Shimron. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Huddleston, R & Pullum, R. (2005) *A Student's Introduction to English Grammar* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ingham, Bruce (1994) *Najdi Arabic: Central Arabian*. London Oriental and African Language Library, I. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins

Ryding, K (2005) *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thieroff, R (1994) *Tense Systems in European Languages*. Niemeyer, Tübingen

Internet Websites:

Ethnologue: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=90001 (Accessed : 18/03/09)