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SOME REMARKS ON WRITING A GRAMMAR OF MODERN STANDARD ARABIC

0. Thinking about methodological questions of a grammar is necessary when preparing for a grammar or a syntax of Modern Standard Arabic /MSA/ in order to continue and to complete the series of manuals 'Lehrbuch des Modernen Arabisch' part I - III issued in Leipzig bei Krahel/Reuschel 1974, Blohm/Reuschel/Samarraie 1981 and Krahel/Reuschel/Jumaili /forthcoming/ or the 'Lehrgang für die Arabische Schriftsprache der Gegenwart' part I - II written by Fischer and Jastrow 1976/1986.

Thinking about writing such a grammar and especially in the case of MSA must go to several directions:

We must think first of all about the place of MSA from both diachronic and synchronic points of view.

After that we have to ask whether there are sufficient - at least descriptive - publications on MSA.

And last not least we have to discuss 'parameters' for a grammar or a syntax also in comparison with other possibilities of presentation.

1. There is a far-reaching agreement between the non-Arab Arabists on the existence of Modern Standard Arabic as a stage of the development of Arabic - in comparison with Classical Arabic and the levels beneath MSA. Nevertheless I like to stress several points of view that could prove the justification of this assumption also in the field of the grammar, even though these peculiarities appear in the lexicon most obviously.

It is possible to point out some characteristic features of the grammar of MSA compared with Classical Arabic:

- The plurales paucitatic of the noun are restricted to some idiosyncratic lexicalized forms which do not represent a grammatical category.
- There is an obvious development of the perfect and the imperfect of the verb from a mixed aspect / tense system towards a tense system.
- The modus energicus of the verb has almost completely disappeared.
- The usage of some verbs of *aḥawāt kāna* /for instance, *mā zāla*, *ḡalla*, *baqiya*, *aṣbaḥa*/ is preferred in comparison with some other verbs of the same group.
- There is a stronger congruency between the adjective or verb and the noun referred to.
- There is a stronger structuration of the subordinate clauses by means of conjunctions and conjunctive groups like *ʿindamā* 'when' or *fī l-waqt alladī* 'whereas'.
- In MSA conditional sentences often begin with *idā* instead of classical *in*, and the 'modern' *ʿindamā* can express a conditional nuance on the basis of its generalized meaning.

There is no doubt that the available morphological possibilities have not changed substantially in comparison with Classical Arabic and that educated Arabs can 'reactivate' grammatical rules of Classical Arabic, because this stage of language development and its literature heritage has a prominent place in the education of the Arab world. There are also modern and traditional Islamic texts which are orientated more towards the *fushā at-turāt* /Badawī 1973, p. 119ff./.

2. If we claim to write a new grammar of MSA we will concentrate on the language of the second half of the twentieth century that is on the latest stage of Arabic and continue by this synchronic analysis the work of Cantarino 1974/75 which is concerned with writers of the late XIX-th century and the first decades of this century.

A grammar of MSA should be based on all sorts of texts - first of all on texts from Modern Arabic prose, that is texts from newspapers and journals, belletristic texts, popular scientific texts,

and religious texts, too in order to point out common features of all of them and aspects of specific standards.

2.1. Helbig/Busch 1986, p. 18 claim for foreign language teaching the norm of the standard language /the written language/. They do not call for dealing with the language of a specific sort of texts or with the shortened language of certain communicative situations. Against that Sitta 1989, p. 38 says that we are obliged to accept also in language teaching different norms in parts of language usage<sup>1</sup>.

In MSA we have to be aware of deviations from the usual modern standard. There are - on the one hand - classical, mostly religiously motivated stereotypes like

/1/ /allahu/ <sup>C</sup>azza wa-<sup>V</sup>ḡall

rasūlu llāhi sallā l-lāhu

<sup>C</sup>alaihi wa-sallam

which are taken from *fushā at-turāt* /Badawī 1973/ and dialectal interferences which are found in newspaper language and sometimes in literary language, too.

On the other hand, we must pay attention to different stylistic levels and sorts of texts with their possible peculiarities, for instance religious /Islamic, possibly also Christian/ texts that do not belong in all cases to the traditional level<sup>2</sup>, belletristic texts which do not represent a monolithic 'block', newspaper and scientific texts.

We must also distinguish between grammatical and stylistic questions and between common stylistic questions and problems of personal style, conf., for instance, the prose of Naḡīb Mahfūz, Suhail Idrīs or Lailā Ba<sup>C</sup>albakkī.

3. Let us now enter the methodological part. Which points we must take into consideration when writing a grammar. We will try to demonstrate some general lines and principles with relation to MSA.

3.1. First of all, users of a grammar like to have a manual which is not ambiguous and is limited to the essentials. Brockelmann's grammar /<sup>14</sup>1960/ may serve as a good example: as short as possible, as detailed as necessary; limited formulations of the rules, examples as typical as possible.

Users of a grammar wish also that the knowledge concentrated in the concerned manuals 'comes round' to them as an understandable message, according to Paul 1909, which wrote in 'Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte: "... dass die Wissenschaft nicht vorwärts gebracht wird durch komplizierte Hypothesen, ..., sondern durch einfache Grundgedanken, die an sich evident sind, die aber erst fruchtbar werden, wenn sie zu klarem Bewusstsein gebracht und mit strenger Konsequenz durchgeführt werden." Fischer 1972 delivers a good example for the claim that simplicity and understandability of a grammar need not contradict to strictness of description.

When writing a 'practical' manual it is useful to avoid "as well ... as"-rules. Teachers and pupils are looking for reliability, plausability and unambiguous rules.

3.2. What type of grammar do we want to write? According to Helbig 1981, p. 49 grammar means "reguläre und vermittelte Zuordnungsbeziehungen zwischen Leuten und Bedeutungen, Formen und Inhalten."

It can be a rule system that is inherent in a language.

Grammar can also mean a linguistic description of this rule system.

Grammar can also be the internal rule system that develops within the learner and that he will master step by step.

The second type of grammar mentioned above can describe both the first and the third type of it. This description can lead to a linguistic or a didactic grammar. Whereas a linguistic grammar is guided by internal systematic aspects, a didactic grammar is to be considered as the didactic-methodological transformation of a linguistic grammar.

3.3. According to the special teaching purposes we may distinguish further on between systematic presentations and /teaching/ manuals.

In Blohm/Reuschel/Samarraie 1981/1989 we have tried to make a compromise between a grammar and a teaching manual with regard to the lacking of a systematic and complete presentation of a syntax of MSA. Therefore the manual mentioned is used as a reference, but against that the presentation of the Arabic syntax is too voluminous for teaching purposes, and therefore one can use only select-

ed parts of the grammatical instructions given for developing language competence and language skills<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore we intend to make a splitting between a teaching manual of MSA for advanced students with a shortened presentation of grammar accompanied by grammatical exercises on the one hand and lexical, conversational and translating exercises on the other hand and a grammar of MSA in which the language regularities are presented systematically, that is, language knowledge is transmitted by developing awareness and systematization of the set of rules and/or presenting of the internal system relations.

3.4. The grammar discussed here must be - like other arabic grammars - in general a result grammar which will be written after utilizing the relevant sources of Arabic linguistic research and investigating our own collections of instances on subjects of common interest.

There is no need to give reasons for our decisions in favour of certain rules. But we must be able to prove them in any case wanted. These decisions should take into consideration also "approved reliable" new data, that means, statements in linguistic publications which do not contradict language practice.

A result grammar does not argue with other authors, but it is useful to add to the different chapters /or parts/ general and special bibliography.

This summarizing result grammar must be based on special presentations which aim to increasing comprehension and which are referred to, for instance, in the bibliographies of Pearson, Bakalla, Fischer 1972 and so on. We can also refer to more than 200 diploma papers and dissertations in the field of Arabic linguistics written at the chair of Arabic studies at Leipzig university about different aspects of Arabic grammar and lexicography, and we should deal with magister theses prepared at the chaire of Arabic linguistics or translational studies at the Arab universities themselves.

Nevertheless, we are faced with white spots in the field of grammatical topics of Modern Standard Arabic. We can point out, for instance, the following complexes as 'desiderata':

- aspects of determination and indetermination /relative, numerals, infinitive/,

- constraints on pronominalization,
- use of perfect and imperfect,
- use and distribution of the verb group *aḥawāt kāna*,
- interchangeability between adverbial accusative and prepositional groups,
- detail analyses on the use of propositions /min, bi-, ḥattā, ka-/,
- thema/rhema disposition as a whole,
- sentences introduced by *habbaḍā lau, laita, la<sup>C</sup>alla, <sup>C</sup>asā*,
- ḥāl-clauses in MSA,
- *af<sup>C</sup>al al-qulūb* - possibilities of construction.

3.5. NAF 1984, p. 23-25 differentiates between expression grammars /view from the language forms/ and content grammars /view from the language contents / functions/. Following this differentiation we may find under the verbal category 'Imperfect Indicative' in Wright 1896, p. 18ff.:

- "a/ An act ... which takes place at all times ...,
- b/ An act which, though commenced at the time of speaking, is not yet completed - which continues during the present time /the definite present/ ...,
- c/ An act which is to take place hereafter /the simple future/...,
- d/ An act which was future in relation to the past time of which we speak. When this is the case, the imperfect is simple appended to the preceding perfect without the intervention of any particle, ...
- e/ An act which continues during the past time. In this case too the imperfect is appended to the perfect without the interposition of any connective particle, ..."

As against that we have to register, for example, the following points in order to mark the future time in MSA:

- /2/ a/ imperfect indicative:  
       *usāfiru gadan ilā Dimašq.*        I will/shall travel to Damascus tomorrow.
- b/ imperfect indicative introduced by *sa-/ saufa*:  
       *sa-'usāfiru ...*
- c/ imperfect subjunctive introduced by *lan 'not'*:  
       *lan usāfira ...*                    I shall not travel ...
- d/ imperfect subjunctive after an 'that':  
       *āmulu an usāfira ...*            I hope to travel ...

e/ active participle:

*anā musāfirun gadan ilā*            I will/shall /certainly/  
*Dimašq.*                                travel to Damascus tomorrow.

f/ perfect in conditional sentences:

*idā sāfarta ...*                        If you travel ...

...

The teacher is in need of both directions of view. The grammars written till now are mostly expression grammars, but nevertheless it is legitimate to wish to get also informations about means of expressions.

3.6. In this place we can hear also the call for taking into consideration texts besides sentences. There is no doubt that the problem of the explicit text coherence in some sorts of texts and especially in the press style and in scientific texts appears above all when translating texts from German into Arabic by adding sentence connectors or sentence-introducing expressions like

|                                           |                           |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| /3/ wa-                                   | /and/                     |
| fa-                                       | /for, so that/            |
| amma ... fa-                              | /as to .../               |
| wa- <sup>C</sup> alaihi fa-               | /and therefore/           |
| /wa-/min al- <sup>V</sup> gadīr bi-d-dikr | /it is worthy to mention/ |
| /wa-/min al-ma <sup>C</sup> lūm anna      | /it is known that/        |

4. A grammar should not be a field of experiments, from the methodological and terminological point of view /Fischer 1972, p. VI/ in order not to embarrass the user of the manual in an unnecessary way. As far as understandability of grammars discussed above is concerned, we should reflect on the relation between modern grammatical theories and the theoretical 'burden' for the user of the publication. Therefore we recommend to maintain the traditional terminology. There is still one essential question: What kind of traditional terminology - our traditional or the Arabic one. Our grammars turn generally to users that are accustomed to the European/American grammatical tradition and know more or less also the Arabic equivalents of the traditional terms.

Our pro-european orientation does not mean at all that we do not appreciate the views of the Arab grammarians. Before writing chapters in a grammar one should refer to the tractats of Sībawaih oder Az-Zamah<sup>V</sup>ārī or Ibn Qutaiba and so on. By various occasions, for instance in dealing with the category mutāwī<sup>C</sup>, the Arabic article, the grammatical synonymy /i. vs. iv. verbal stem/ it becomes obvious that the "old masters" many centuries ago have come to the same results as modern linguists.

It stands for reason that who is working in the field of comparison between old Arab grammarians and modern linguistics is in need of thorough knowledge of both the "old masters" and the modern linguistic theorists.

5. There is a last point which we have to take into consideration: Our addressees learn Arabic as a foreign language. They have a /limited/ competence in their native language, and as against that they do not have any competence in Arabic at the beginning of their study. A grammar of /Modern Standard/ Arabic for foreigners must be more explicit than a grammar for a native speaker of Arabic. It must include in detail topics like the correct choice of the article or the idāfa with its peculiarities, the genus verbi, the proper use of the prepositions especially after verbs and adjectives, the accusative as adverbial case, the circumstantial sentences, determinated and non-determinated relative clauses and so on. To sum up the problem dealt with we can say that a grammar for native speakers is based on their competence. A grammar for foreign language learners helps them to build up their foreign language competence.

6. We want now to sum up some characteristic features of the grammar or the syntax, respectively, that we are going to write:

We insist to concentrate on Modern Standard Arabic. Our book should be a systematic presentation, and further on a result grammar which includes ideas and knowledge improved in the practice in a moderate way. As a grammar of the written language it will point out common and special features of Arabic sorts of texts. The manual turns to theorists and practitioners and offers - in <sup>V</sup>ā'a llaḥ - understandable rules as a transformational grammar with a traditional face. It will be an expression grammar and

contain elements of a content grammar, and it will deal with texts of the second half of our century.

#### R e m a r k s

<sup>1</sup> F i s c h e r 1972, p. VI, declares that he will in his grammar of Classical Arabic pay attention also to deviations from the norms in pre- and postclassical texts. In general, the appropriate solution of this question depends on the addressees turned to - beginners, average users or only orientalist or scholars in the field of Arabic studies.

<sup>2</sup> It will be necessary to discuss Badawī's division into fuṣṣa al-<sup>C</sup>asr and fuṣṣa at-turāṭ because of modern islamic and grammatical texts which - at least partly do not belong to the traditional heritage.

<sup>3</sup> The selection of the grammatical matter for teaching purposes depends considerably on the teacher's practical language knowledge, and there is a danger that such a voluminous presentation leads to different utilizations and destroying of practice related reliability and unambiguity.

<sup>4</sup> See F i s c h e r 1972; for Hebrew: K u t s c h e r 1982, G l i n e r t 1989.

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### Les variantes de flexion dans les verbes gémisés en arabe

Quelles que soient les hypothèses de reconstruction du verbe gémisé en proto-sémitique (1), on observe aisément au niveau du sémitique que le traitement des consonnes identiques dans les verbes se répartit en trois modes dont deux coexistent la plupart du temps au sein des flexions des différents aspects :

- Absence de contraction des syllabes à consonnes identiques (AC) : en sud-arabique, aux formes réfléchies et causales; d'une façon généralisée en tigrina; en hébreu, dans des verbes de formation récente forgés sur le modèle du verbe sain; en arabe classique; dans des formes récentes reconstruites sur le modèle du verbe sain (p.ex. *labuba* "être sage", *šarura* "être mauvais"). En dehors de ces formes exceptionnelles, l'absence de contraction est régulière en arabe classique à toutes les personnes quand C<sup>3</sup> est non vocalisé (*madadtu*, *madadnā*, *yamdudna*, *tamdud*, *'umdudna*), qu'il s'agisse de l'accompli, de l'impératif ou de l'inaccompli indicatif, subjonctif ou apocopé (2).

- Contraction des syllabes à consonnes gémisées (CN) : les verbes à deuxième radicale redoublée obéissent aux lois générales qui régissent les rencontres de sons identiques en sémitique : quand une syllabe ouverte avec une voyelle brève rencontre une autre syllabe ouverte avec une voyelle brève qui commence par la même consonne, alors la première de ces deux syllabes, dans la mesure où elle n'est pas protégée par l'accent, perd sa voyelle et il