

COORDINATION IN LITERARY ARABIC

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Coordination is a linkage between two or more speech segments which stand in an identical and parallel syntactic relationship to a more extensive stretch of utterance. It may subsist either between words, phrases or clauses in their relationship to the sentence; or between sentences in their relationship to the paragraph or even larger unit. The former is exemplified in "John and Mary came to tea", the latter by "Adam delved and Eve Span". There is also a type of partial-sentence coordination in which the second sentence is only fully intelligible by assuming that a part of the first sentence (that sentence being complete in itself) is to be understood as repeated in the second, as in "Amin reigned in Baghdad and Na'mun in Khurasan".

Simple coordination, marked in English by "and", in Arabic by *wa*, can be expanded by incorporating into the coordinative particle other sememes indicating special relationships on the logical plane: e.g. disjunctive "or" and adversative "but". I do not want here to labour the well-known facts, that the Arabic coordinating particles *wa*, *fa*, *thumma*, *'aw*, *'am*, *bal*(1), are not wholly congruous in use with English particles; and that the first two of those are in many contexts not coordinators at all, in the sense defined above. But it may be worth remarking that *la'kin* (na) does not belong to the above series; it incorporates only the sememe of logical adversativeness and not in itself a syntactic coordinator. Where this is not so, it would have been impossible (but it is in fact possible) to place the simple coordinator *wa* in front of it: for no two coordinating particles can be used in immediate juxtaposition.

(1) See appendix for transcription.

It is, however, by no means necessary that coordination should be marked by a particle, if it is so marked, it is syndetic'(S); but it can equally well subsist without being marked by a particle, and is then 'asyndetic' (A). "Adam delved; Eve span". In normal spoken English, the second sentence in the A form has a distinctive tonal pattern which sets it off from "Eve span" when uttered as an isolated sentence, and this tonal pattern (for which the semi-colon in the written form is the code signal) acts as a surrogate for the coordinating particle. In dealing with literature of the past, where the only record we have is a written one, it is impossible to do more than guess whether any distinctive toneme may have signalized the A form.

potentialities of A coordination are subject to constrictions of various kinds in various languages. It is characteristic of English word or phrase coordination that where there are three or more coordinates, and hence two or more linkages, by far the commonest form is (A+) A + S as in "(John), Tom, Mary and Jane", while S + S (Tom and Mary and Jane") and A + A ("Tom, Mary, Jane were horrified") are both extremely rare, and S + A is inadmissible. There is a sharp contrast here with Arabic, in which S + S is practically universal, and the most-favoured English form A + S does not occur.

There is one interesting exception to the general heavy preference in Arabic for S linkage in word or phrase coordination. In coordination of adjectives, both S and A forms occur, but with distinct values. If each adjective is applicable simultaneously to the totality of the qualified substantive, it is mandatory to use A- linkage; Kutub quadri:ma nafi:sa "old and precious books". The use of S- linkage has distributive value, implying that each adjective is applicable to only a part of the substantive, or to it for only part of the time, as kutub quadimah wa haditah "old and new books" (some of them being old and some new), and ihtima:mu-hu lna:hi wa-lwani: "his waxing and waning) interest," (his interest was sometimes waxing and sometimes waning) It is true that speakers do not always pay

strict attention to the logic of their discourse, and no doubt instances could be quoted where an utterance has been illogically framed in this respect; but the basic principle is there, at least so far as simple adjectives are concerned.

But if the first qualificative is a phrase of more than one word, then a second qualificative of the main substantive is S- linked to the first, since A-linkage might lead to the supposition that the second qualificative was coordinated with only the last word of the first, and not with the whole phrase. In the following (1): *ḡana:Siru attaka:lifi ḡayr almuba:shirati wa-lmukhaSSaSatī ḡala: mara:kizi attaklifa* 'indirect cost elements other than those which are direct and attributable to the individual plant', omission of the S particle might have led to the interpretation "cost elements other than those which are direct and attributable to the plant", that is, it would have coordinated "attributable" with "direct", instead of with "not direct". There is also a marked tendency to S coordination when the second qualificative is a clause introduced by the *masu:l* (alladi:); thus (2), *tasḡi:ru almala:bisi adda:kuihiyati al quṭhiyati wa-lṭati 'aSbaḡat 'aḡa:ru-ha tatadh'ab* "the pricing of cotton underwear, which is subject to price fluctuations". Here, however, A-linkage would have been also admissible.

In the case of coordinated predicates to a single theme, both Sand A linkage are found in Arabic, so that it is admissible to write *kaṇat kutubu-hu qadi:mutan wa nafi:sa*; though of course it could here be argued that this is not a case of word-coordination, but of partial-sentence coordination. When two phrases of differing grammatical structure are A-linked, the problem may arise as to whether the second is coordinated or subordinated: it is far from easy to determine whether *huwa min 'aḡyani l'anna:si yaftakhiru bi-manzilati-hi* is equivalent to the English form "he is one of the top people, and takes a pride in his position", or "he is one of the top people, taking a pride in his position".

(1) Quoted from the Cairo economics journal *al Ma'l wa-lṭijarah*, Decembre 1972, p.39.

(2) *Ibid.*, p.37.

In the field of sentence coordination, every reader of Arabic becomes at once aware that dominance of S-linkage is marked. In premodern prose style it is virtually impossible to begin a fresh sentence without a coordinating particle. There seems little doubt that a factor in bringing this about is that Asyndesis in Abbasid and post-Abbasid writing has acquired an explicitly subordinating function in two very commonly occurring situations: that of an adjectival clause qualifying an underlined substantive, e.g. *fa'ja'at-ni: Hadithatun lam 'antanzhir-ha:* is quite certainly "an event which I had not expected it" (1); and that of a circumstantial clause beginning with an imperfect verb, as in the example quoted in the preceding paragraph. The English A forms "I once had a neighbour a rich merchant; he left vast property to his son", and "my friend goes out every day; he fishes for tuna", would as such be obligatorily presented in Arabic with S-linkage, because Asyndesis would reduce the second sentence in each case to the status of a subordinate clause: *Kama fi: jiwa:ri ta:jirun ganiyun 'awratha bna-hu ma:lan Ta'ilan* "I had as neighbour a rich merchant, who left vast property to his son", *yakhruju sadiqi: kulla yawmin yasi:du 'attun* "my friend goes

(1) Early Arabic offers occasional instances where A-linkage is used for proposition which is logically subordinate, in the sense that it merely develops and amplifies the preceding proposition and does not introduce a new idea, even though the overall structure does not conform to the syntactic rules for subordination as they evolved in the Abbasid period. For instance, Qur. 12,33' *inna-hu rabbi:-* 'aHsana mathwa:-yaa and a remark attributed to 'Umar b. Hubayrah al-Pazari (in Ibn Khallikan's life of hasan al-Basri) *inna yazi:d khali:fa:ta-lla:hi stakhlafa-hu bala: 6iba:di-hi*. A more sophisticated age would probably have phrased these utterances with explicit subordination as "He is my lord, who has given me honourable lodging" and "yazi:d is God's viceregent whom He has appointed over His servants". It must be remarked that in the Qur'anic passage, the interpretation which avoids the coordination problem by making it all one sentence by taking *-hu* as the *damir al-sa'li* ("Verily my Lord has given me honourable lodging") seems to date only from Zamakhshari, since all the authorities cited by Tabari clearly take it as two sentences. It is on this basis that I have vocalized the remark of 'Umar b. Hubayrah in the above manner, in preference to *kalifata* as a *badal*. I think we have to acknowledge that early Arabic employed paratactic Asyndesis with subordinating value after defined as well as undefined substantives.

out every day to fish for tuna". For the European reader, an even more striking fact is that the insistence on making the beginning of each new sentence by S-linkage is so dominant that even paragraphs commonly begin so, a habit wholly alien to European style. The effect of this is that the speech unit within which the coordinative structure operates is the total literary work, which is thus organized in one continuous logical stream.

At the same time, there are occasional instances where the dominance of S-linkage for sentence-coordination is infringed. The case of *lakin* (na) has already been mentioned. Although the pre-modern writers preferred on the whole to use this in conjunction with the simple S particle, one can certainly find examples of the contrary. Moreover, theme-marking particles such as *ammā* and *laytā* are not uncommonly used without an S particle, since they are necessarily the beginning of new-sentence, so that it is impossible in these cases to misapprehend the A-linkage as having subordinating function(1). Indeed, the particle *ammā* is effectively the equivalent of the English tonal pattern, referred to above, which distinguishes "Even so" as coordinated with a preceding statement about some one else; from the same two words when envisaged as an isolated proposition unrelated to a preceding context.

In modern style, Stetkevitch has recently asserted(2) that no longer is it customary to resort to *wa* as a quasi-punctuation device in a narrative sentence sequence. It is certainly true that some styles of modern Arabic do use A-linkage in a way reminiscent of European usage and sharply contrasting with older Arabic usage; but the important thing to note is that this is most emphatically not true of narrative that is, passages dealing with the sequence of events. In the domain of narrative, S-linkage is as prevalent in modern writing as it has ever been in the past. It is not in narrative that A-linkage occurs, but in descriptive writing.

(1) *Lafalla* is univalent, sometimes introducing a subordinate proposition "in order that perhaps"/"less perhaps". Here, A-linkage tends to point to subordinating value, while a coordinate proposition tends to be S-linked.

(2) "The modern Arabic Literary Language", Chicago 1970, p.94.

In order to justify this judgement, I have taken and analyzed a couple of passages from contemporary short-story, namely two pages from each of two short stories published with french translation by Vincent Monteil(1): "L'angoisse" (qalaq) by Suhayl Idris, and "je vis" ('Ana: alIya) by Layla: Ba6Labakki.

The former of these passages is basically a narrative, though with a few interspersed pieces of comment; in the latter, the first page and a half contain no events at all, but is a description of feelings passing through the mind of the fictional speaker in the disconnected manner of the stream of consciousness, and it is only in the last half of the second page that we meet a narrative of external events. An analysis of the sentence coordination insertions are naturally excluded from the analysis.

In the first two pages of "L'angoisse" there are eleven(2) occurrences of A-linkage in coordinated main sentences; all of them are uniformly similes or sentences of a descriptive nature, and not a single one is part of the narrative of events. Contrasting with this, there are 27 S-linked sentences which constitute the narrative. It is particularly noteworthy that precisely two-thirds (18) of those appear in the French translation with A-linkage. One must inevitably conclude that the habit of presenting narrative in a series of staccato A-linked sentences, which has become prevalent in modern European writing, has as yet found little echo in Arabic.

(1) "Antologie bilingue de la littérature arabe contemporaine" Beyrouth, 1961, pp 33-5 and 3-5.

(2) These eleven instances begin: *li-ku-linna-hu... li-qad halam... inna hu dhar' yushku... ka-inna hana-ku... kalinah Sagi-ra... inna-hu yawduhu... inna-hu yashbu... hira ft... hana-ku... inna-ku 'allafna... inna-ku Dami'r* (which is only a re-phrasing of the preceding sentence)... *inna-hu lam yansah*. It is certainly pertinent to observe that the second of these is the only verbal sentence (*jumla fi'liya*) among them all, and that the great majority begin with one of the theme-marking particles *inna* and *ka-inna*; compare with this what I have said above, that the introduction of a new theme necessarily marks the beginning of a fresh sentence, and that explicit marking of a term as theme, by the use of one of the theme-marking particles, tends to diminish the need for S-linkage.

Exactly the inverse is the case in the passage from "je vis". An equal bulk of material provides us with only nine cases of S-linkage in all, compared with the 27 in "L'angoisse"; and these are distributed with four in the first page and a half which is non-narrative, and five in the last half-page where the narrative begins. The inference is equally clear: S-linkage still dominates narrative, and A-linkage is characteristic of non-narrative.

There has always been a strong and lively tradition of narrative writing in Arabic, and evidently this tradition has proved strong enough to resist alien influences. On the other hand, the "interior monologue" is a mode of writing absent from Arabic until the beginning of the *nahda*: the mode is a foreign importation from European literature, and the modern European style has been borrowed along with the matter. It is, of course, true that there is much pure descriptive writing in older Arabic literature, and that this is as much dominated by S-linkage as narrative. It might therefore be asked why that tradition has not resisted the encroachment of European stylistic, as narrative has. But there is a radical difference between older attitudes to descriptive writing and the use that contemporary authors make of this mode. The older Arabic prose writers (no matter how much they choose to employ technical embellishments such as simile and metaphor) used the S-linked style because this, with its tone of logical coherence and organization, suited their attitude to description which was intellectual, unemotional and prosaic. In poetic style on the other hand, each element in a description has its own emotional impact independently of other elements; each subsists as it were in a subjective vacuum. "The way was long, the wind was cold, the minstrel was infirm and old" is poetic style; "the way was long and the wind cold, while the minstrel was elderly and infirm" is prosaic. The former has a greater emotional impact on the reader/hearer than the cool dispassionate tone of the latter. The importation of a quasi-poetic emotional involvement into prose writing is a phenomenon characteristic of certain much-admired modern writers, which would have been abhorrent to be Abbasid "age of enlightenment", when the attitude of an uninvolved spectator was the proper for prose, and an emotional approach was the province of verse.

Further more, "L'angoisse" as a whole is divided into five sections Chapters in miniature. In modern European usage it is altogether inadmissible to begin such stretches of discourse with S-linkage; and the French translation of course does not have it. Yet Suhayl Idris begins every one of the last four sections with an S particle; this following the traditional Arabic practice, mentioned above, of treating the total work as connected discourse. There is no hint here of any imitation of European stylistic.

I conclude with two small matters of detail. In early Arabic, a vocative is often followed by *fa* (ya: hindu *fa* aqbili:) this is, I suspect, indeed a coordinative particle; the vocative is envisaged as an independent utterance (*kalām*) preparatory to a further communication, and not as a subordinate part of that communication.

Secondly, it is a very common feature of English that if an adverbial phrase is of some length and complexity, it is set off from the rest of the sentence by a pause in the spoken form, represented by a comma in the inscription of a demonstrative pronoun. The English equivalent of the following sentence (1), *wa-kamat 'alkhasa:ru fi: Farwa:hi Da'imatān bi-shaklin yadbur ila: 'alDalliki dha:lika bi-'anisbati li-ttisa:fi mana:Tiqi 'amattu:hati* small, in relation to the extent of the conquered territory". In traditional grammar, it would be necessary to classify the demonstrative here as the theme of a fresh sentence, and hence capable of S-linkage to the preceding structure. In actuality, S-linkage is not normal in these cases, and is felt to be, that of marking a structural break in the sentence, just like the *fa* which may mark off theme from predicate. If one were to restructure the above sentence by shifting the final adverbial phrase into initial, and therefore thematic, position, one would have the formulation *wa-bi: nisbati li-ttisa:fi linana:tiqi 'almatu:hati fa-kamat 'alkhasa:ru fi-Farwa:hi Da'latan* etc. In neither case is the break-marker essential, but it does help the reader by breaking up the sentence into more manageable bits than if it were presented all in one continuous stream with no pause.

(1) Quoted from *Tabshirah al-Qur'an: al-shu'bu al-'ilmiyya fi-Firfiresh 'usufyati*, Cairo 1963, p. 53.

APPENDIX

ARABIC TRANSCRIPTION

Consonants

د	=	D	ط	=	T
ب	=	b	ظ	=	zh
ث	=	th	ع	=	ʿ
ج	=	j	غ	=	g
ح	=	H	ق	=	f
خ	=	kh	ك	=	K
د	=	d	ل	=	l
ذ	=	dh	م	=	m
ر	=	r	ن	=	n
ز	=	z	ه	=	h
س	=	s	و	=	w
ش	=	sh	ي	=	y
ص	=	S			

Vowels

Short : a - u - i (أ - ب - ي)

Long : ā - ū - ī (آ - ū - ī)

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