

Negation in Modern Standard Arabic
Ahmad Alsharif and Louisa Sadler (University of Essex)

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) uses five different particles to express sentential negation: the invariant particle *maa*, *laa* and its tensed counterparts *lam*(PAST) and *lan* (FUT), and *laysa* which is marked only for SUBJ agreement. We propose an LFG analysis of the *l-* form particles: *maa* raises a number of additional issues and we leave it to one side for reasons of space. Existing accounts treat all these particles in the same manner, as Neg heads undergoing head movement (Shlonsky, 1997; Benmamoun, 2000). We argue that it is incorrect to assimilate all the *l-* forms to the same analysis, proposing a different analysis for *laa*, *lam*, *lan* on the one hand and for forms of *laysa* on the other.

laa, *lam*, *lan* show distinctions of TENSE, occur only with imperfective forms of the verb (excluding the perfective), must immediately precede the imperfective and are limited to occurrence in verbal sentences. (1) illustrates the basic requirements:

- (1) a. *lam* *a-ktub/* **katab-tu* *al-resalat-a*
 NEG-PAST 1SG-write.IMPERF.JUS 1SG-write.PERF the-letter-ACC
 I did not write the letter
- b. **lam* *al-resalat-a* *a-ktub*
 NEG-PAST the-letter-ACC 1SG-write.IMPERF.JUS
 I did not write the letter

Previous approaches to the adjacency issue have invoked various types of head movement in the syntax, for example moving V to T and T-V to Neg (Shlonsky, 1997). Such approaches do not agree on either the number or the hierarchical ordering of the various functional projections invoked, many do not capture the fact that these particles select (particular MOODs of) the imperfective. Contrary to these approaches relying on head movement, we will argue that the adjacency requirement (for *laa*, *lam*, *lan*) follows from the fact that these negative particles are non-projecting words adjoined to the (imperfective) V. We show that the Arabic negative particles *laa*, *lam*, *lan* share the properties of the Swedish verbal particles analysed by Toivonen (2003) as non-projecting words (cannot take complements or modifiers, are adjoined to the verb, can bear stress), and cannot be separated from the verb: the SUBJ may precede (as in (2)) or follow.

- (2) *Zayd-un* *laa* *y-aktub-u* *al-yawm-a* *al-risalat-a*
 Zayd-NOM NEG 3SGM-write-SG.IMPERF.IND the-day-ACC the-letter-ACC
 Zayd is not writing the letter today

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(3) <i>lam</i> $\hat{P}t$ (\uparrow TENSE) = PAST
 (\uparrow ASP) =_c IMPERF
 (\uparrow MOOD) = JUSS
 (\uparrow POL) = NEG</p> | <p>(4) <i>lan</i> $\hat{P}t$ (\uparrow TENSE) = FUT
 (\uparrow ASP) =_c IMPERF
 (\uparrow MOOD) = SUBJ
 (\uparrow POL) = NEG</p> |
|---|--|

The imperfective does not itself express tense, defaults to a present time interpretation but is consistent with other temporal interpretations. The *laa*, *lam*, *lan* particles select (\uparrow IMPERF) =_c + hence requiring an imperfective verb. In the affirmative, past time reference is generally encoded by the PERF forms): it follows from the requirements of the *l-* particles that an imperfective is selected in the negative.

Note that future is expressed by the imperfective combined with the particle *sawfa* (or *sa*, a cognate prefix) (5), but in the future, negation must be expressed by *lan* + imperfective rather than *laa* + future marker + imperfective. This may be captured by specifying *laa* as incompatible with TENSE = FUT. Note that like the *l*- particles, *sawfa* may not be separated from the verb.

- (5) *sawfa y-uḥibb-u* *Zayd-un al-qirāt-a*
 will 3SGM-like-SG.IMPERF.IND Zayd-NOM the-reading-ACC
 Zayd will like reading

The behaviour of *laysa* (and its variant forms) is as follows. It also selects an imperfective form of an accompanying verb, but is marked for agreement with the SUBJ and not for TENSE. It can be separated from the verb and can occur in so-called nominal sentences, (7) (*jumal ismiyya*) like the PAST tense copula *kāna*, and unlike *laa*, *lam*, *lan*. We argue that *laysa* is in fact a negative verb in I, occurring only in the PRES tense. Like other finite verbs in Arabic it shows full agreement with a preceding SUBJ and partial agreement (in GEND but not NUM) with a following SUBJ. The SG on the finite verb in (6b) is a default and does not express agreement with the SUBJ. The examples also show multiple exponence of some agreement features: as Niño (1997) demonstrates for Finnish, such facts are simply accommodated in LFG without recourse to the proliferation of functional heads by the straightforward requirements of feature unification.

- (6) a. *al-awlad-u lays-uu ya-ktub-uun*
 the-boys-NOM NEG-3MPL 3M-write-IMPERF.IND.PL
 The boys do not write
- b. *laysa al-awlad-u ya-ktub-uun*
 NEG-3SG the-boys-NOM 3M-write-IMPERF.IND.PL
 The boys do not write
- (7) a. *hādā lays-a rajul-an sharīf-an*
 this NEG-3.SG man-ACC.INDEF noble-ACC.INDEF
 This is not a noble man.
- b. *sum^cat-u-ka lays-at jayyidat-an.*
 reputation.F-NOM-2.MSG NEG-3.FSG good.F-ACC.INDEF
 Your reputation is not good.
- (8) *laysuu* I (↑ TENSE) = PRES (↑ ASP) =_c IMPERF
 (↑ MOOD) = INDIC (↑ POL) = NEG
 (↑ SUBJ PERS) = 3 (↑ SUBJ GEND) = M
 (↑ SUBJ NUM) = PL

References

- Benmamoun, Elabbas. 2000. *The feature structure of functional categories: A comparative study of Arabic dialects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Niño, María-Eugenia. 1997. The multiple expression of inflectional information. In F. Corblin, D. Godard, and J.-M. Marandin, eds., *Empirical Issues in Formal Syntax and Semantics*, pages 127–150. Berne: Peter Lang.
- Shlonsky, Ur. 1997. *Clause Structure and Word Order in Hebrew and Arabic: An Essay in Comparative Semitic Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Toivonen, Ida. 2003. *Non-Projecting Words: A Case Study of Swedish Particles*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.