# A syntactic and semantic study of the Arabic language news in Jordan

**Assistant Professor. Majed. Mohamed .Hasan. Drbseh**

Emirates Canadian University College –UAE

## I.  INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with structure of the modern standard Arabic of news broadcasts in Jordan. Jordanian Radio and television, which are state owned, were created after the independence day of 1946 respectively. They broadcast most of their programs and news in modern Arabic. The bilingual private radio station, Radio of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which was launched broadcasts news in modern standard Arabic and English.   Likewise, the services of the private channel, Television of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, which began operating at the early of 1960s, are characterized by modern Arabic and English bilingualism.

I have selected to deal with the language of the news on Jordanian radio and television for the following reasons. Firstly, very few descriptive studies have dealt with linguistic features of broadcast of news, and to my knowledge no published investigation have been undertaken on the Arabic broadcast news in Jordan. Secondly, radio and television are popular and powerful instruments of instruction and information; for example, referring to Brahimi (1989), said that most of the Jordanian people switch on their television set nonstop on matter whether they are watching or not. This is because radio and television are the major means of entertainment for the majority of the population, which totaled 7 million according to the Jordanian state report in 2013.

The aim of this paper is twofold 1. To provide a semantic sociolinguistics study of the news reports read in modern standard Arabic by the Jordanian radio stations and television channels, 2 to show with examples and figures the most commonly used morph syntactic patterns and linguistic preferences in the language of the news and the extent to which the latter is influenced by the structure, lexicon, and semantics of particularly English.  Concerning the methodology of this study, I tape recorded  16 hours of radio news report and collected 16 hours of video recording of television news of a period of 4 weeks (from first of June to 28th of June, 2013). Altogether, I counted 6090 sentences, excluding interviews in Jordanian (colloquial) Arabic. Then, I transcribed all the recordings prior to studying the corpus in details.

As my major concern is only with news provided in modern standard Arabic, not that in English or another language, I have ignored the news reports provided in other languages used in Jordanian media.

The paper is organized as follows. The second section provides a syntactic study of the news reports. I will look at the simple, compound, and complex sentences and investigate far their structure is influenced by English to certain degree. The frequent patterns and linguistic preferences will be indicated out. The third section is concerned with semantic aspects of the news language, namely lexical expansion, word borrowing, and code mixing.

## II.  THE SYNTACTIC LEVEL

The focus in this section will be on the morph- syntactic feature characterizing the style of the news, in other words, I will try to answer the following questions: (a) what are the salient distinctive structural features of the language broadcast news? (b) What pattern is more commonly used than others? (c) Is there a possible illustration for their distribution and for the preferences of certain structures and morph-syntactic devices in the news language?  I will attempt to discuss these questions in light of the collected corpus, by means of explanations' and statistics. At outset, I will deal with simple sentence and then with aspects of the complex sentence.

## III.  THE SIMPLE SENTENCE

The first observation that can be made in the respect is that in the broadcast news style, the optional subject –verb –object (S V O)  word order is preferred more frequently used than verb-subject-object (V S O) order.  A bout 94% of headlines are in S V O, and 75% of the overall sentences in the data are formed in this order as Table 1 showed.

1.  PiniZarun fii Syria juuddii   bihayaati sittat ashxaas.
Explosion in Syria takes away of six persons
'an explosion in Syria results in the killing of six people.

2.  Al waziru al SSouri al mu'ayyuan yuqaddimu laapiHaat Hukuumatihi liddawla.

The minister the prime   the appointed present   list of government his to the state.

 'The newly appointed Syrian prime minister presents the list of his government members to the state.'

In classical Arabic, which is the rigid high variety of Arabic associated with Qurran and classical literature, it is V.S.O, which is most common; the later order represents the canonical clause structure of the language viewed by (Enajji, 1988). The occurrence of the S.V.O, order in the Arabic of news can be ascribed to the influence of English. Thus, in the news broadcast sentence 4, for instance, S.V.O, is employed instead of the more usual V.S.O, order in 5:

4.ALaka 'souri yarfuduun faqat oan tuntah siyaaddyaatu bilaadihim (S.V.O).

The Syrian refuse only that be trespassed sovereignty country their

'The Syrian only refuse that their country's sovereignty be encroached upon.'

5. yarfud al'souryyuun faqat pan tuntahaka siyyaadatu bilaadihim (V.S.O).

We shall see in the semantic section that positioning the subject initially in a sentence is a way of focusing on the topic that is pragmatically important for the information provided about it. Concerning tense and aspect, it is noticeable that in headlines and topic sentences, or in sentences introducing a new type of information, the present tense and the imperative aspect are overridingly preferred; the purpose is to make the action or the event vivid or bring it home to the news consumer (as though it were still taking place), at the reader can check for himself or herself in the citied headlines above. By contrast, in the commentaries and detailed information, that is support sentences, the past tense or perfective aspect is more common.

6. 'Obama naala 52% muqabil 48% li Groomy
Barak Obama won 52% fact to 48% for Groomy
Barak Obama won 52% of votes compared to 48% for Groomy

7. wa qad kashafa Benyamin Netanyahu pannahu yatazimu at-tawajjuh illaa Washington

And surely declared Netanyahu that he intends the – departure to Washington

And Netanyahu declared that he intends to visit Washington
The language of thee news, in general makes use of the past because it is a narrative style, which is particularly the easiest to understand in the sense the news report are, in this respect , similar to storytelling. In addition, paragraphs are short, varying from one to three sentences, generally containing fewer than 30 words  viewed by Tuchman, (1978).

Another feature of the Arabic of news broadcasts is that the case endings are absent. For instance, in 75% of the sentences I taped the inflectional endings are dropped. This is a distinguishing feature of modern standard Arabic sentence in 8, below, where the italicized case endings occur, 9 is used, dropping all the inflectional morphemes.

8. raiis-u pal fariq-I al pumami-yyi haddada bistiqaalatih-i
President the team the united nations threatened with resignation
'The U N team leader threatened to resign (from his work).'

9. rais-u pal fariq-I al pumami-yy haddada bistiqaalatih-i
The majority of the endings that occur at all tend to be used in the headline sentences. One perhaps account for this fact by stating that since news editors goal for accuracy and simplicity, they eschew rigid and complex forms as much as possible.

The construct state, involving the possessive from noun+ noun called idaafa construction in the Arabic linguistic tradition is remarkably more frequent in the Arabic of news than the ordinary use of the language:
10. qitaa' al Riyyaar
Parts the spilt
'spare parts'
11. tarsiix ad – dimuqraaTiyya
Consolidation the democracy
'the consolidation of the democracy'

Observe that the construct state is more commonly used in the language of the media partly because it is formal. At any rate,

the li expressions used especially after an adjective modifying a noun, has emerged as a consequences of the contact of the modern standard Arabic with English. It is alternatively, used in complementary distribution with the more traditional construct state with Arabic.

Passive sentences are less common than active ones in the discourse of that the Arabic news. This type of sentence is ordinarily agent less, but in the data was collected, the use of agent phrases such as min qibali 'by' or min Tarafi prevails over the agent less passives.

As a pointed in Table 1, most of the passives sentences included the agent phrases and only 3.67% were agent less. This agent expression as a result of the influence of English (the) on the language of media in is Jordan viewed by (Enajji, 1988, 1991). Never the less, active sentences are unquestionable more dominant than their passive counterpart 85. 83% against 14.16% in the corpus I have already investigated.

**Table 1, frequency of use of simple sentence patterns**

| Patterns Number of occurrences | % |
|---|---|
| Subject-verb- object 5940 | 75 |
| Verb- subject-object 1980 | 25 |
| Case endings 871 | 10.99 |
| Active voice 6798 | 85.83 |
| Agentful passives 831 | 10.49 |
| Agent less passives 291 | 3.67 |
| Construct state 5230 | 66.03 |
| Li expressin 2690 | 33.96 |

……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………..

This is due to the fact in news language , focus is generally on the doer or the instigator of the action, which for emphatic purposes, rarely occurs in the initial position in a sentence as it mentioned above.

Moreover, the propositional phrase is commonly used sentences introduced by a propositional phrase like

12. fil l-panashatati il niyyabiya
'in parliament activities'
Bi Souria tahta inwaan
'Under the title'
'alaa mustawah  paaxar
'On another level'
Min ajili

'For the purpose of'
Kilaala arbaa wa ishreen sa'a al-maqadiya
'During the last twenty four hours'

Notice that a few headlines are constructed with prepositional phrase occurring initially. The aim is semantically and pragmatically to lay emphasis on the locus of the event or on the significance of the news item.

## IV.    THE COMPLEX SENTENCE

At the level of complex sentence, I have seen relatively frequent use of compound, relative and adverbial and complement clause, as reveal in Table 2. With respect to coordination, one can safely state that it is one of the most preferred and commonly employed syntactic structures in the discourse of the Arabic news. Thus, 43.13% of the sentences are coordinated. Among the Arabic conjunctives, wa' and 'and kama 'also' are the most prevalent, I have counted 1882 uses of wa and

**Table 2 frequency of use complex sentence patterns**

| Patterns<br>number of occurrences | % |
| --- | --- |
| Coordination<br>4317 | 43.13 |
| Relative<br>2640 | 33.33 |
| Adverbial<br>1584 | 20 |
| Complement clause<br>815 | 10.29 |
| ……………………………………………………………………<br>……………………………………………………………………<br>…….. | |

779 occurrences of kama in the total number of 7920 sentences I collected.

Other connectives like fa 'so' pajdan 'also' are relatively less used disjunctive connectives like pam/paw are seldom mainly because, in news casts, additionally and sequence of events are usually part of the news stories. Recall that story telling conjunction is also highly such as reports, the relative pronouns iladi 'who' masculine and ilati 'who' feminine' are obligatory utilized in the relative clause I went through.

13. assayed Mohamed, iladi yourafiquhu kilal hadihi il zzearah
Mr. Mohamed who is accompanied during this visit.

Il mudiru aliklimi li I UNICEF, sa –yaltaki bi adadin min il masuleen il il uoroniuun.

'The director local of the UNICEF will meet with a number the officials the Jordanaians'.

'Mr. Mohamed, who is accompanied, during this visit, by the local director of the UNICEF, will meet many Jordanian officials'.

In terms of frequency, gelatinization is less common that, for instance, coordination: 33.33% of the overall number of

sentences is relatives in the corpus against 43.13% of coordinated sentences. Complement clauses occupy 10.29% of the data. Declarative complement clause which are introduced by pianna/ pinamaa ' that' and pan 'for' are used to large extent by the news reports to express factuality and prepositions, presuppositions, topic and comment.

14. afaadat al-taqareer alwaarideh sabaah ilyawm min Dimashiq pan ail quwaat assourieh qamat ilyouam.
Mentioned the reports coming today from Damascus
Syrian that the forces took action todat
l- maadiya bi qasif 'aasimat il sourieh
the last by bombing capital of Syria

'The reports from Syria said today that the Syrian Army bombed the repels on the Capital of Syria'.

The panna clause in 14 is an assertion of the bombing of the Syrian Capital.

Compared to compound sentences, complement clauses are relatively less common.

Adverbial clauses on the other side are used in 20% of the overall number of collected sentences. One observation to be made is that the most frequent adverbial encountered in the data are kilal 'during', min pazli ' in order to' baynama 'while', fii hiin 'whereas', and fii waqat ' at the time when'. Additionally, new introductory adverbial expressions, which are built on the pattern adjective + yan, are coined as a result of the contact of modern standard Arabic with English. Compared French/English: worldwide, nationwide, economically, au money orient 'in the Middle East' , en Afrique du Sud 'in South Africa'. More discussion of the lexical innovations will be provided in next section.

## V.    THE SEMANTIC LEVEL

The lexicon
The lexical of the news language is characterized by two main themes: word borrowing and coining. The modern standard Arabic used daily in the media creates and borrowing dozens of lexical items and expressions basically  from English language. The borrowed vocabulary is either patterned according to Arabic paradigms or simply borrowed as is from the source language and adopted to morphological of the recipient language. In previous case Arabic morph syntactic there is a partially adoption of the English loans to the modern standard Arabic morph syntactic system as shown below it.
15. a. al-foliklor English 'folklore
Al-UNICEF from English 'UNICEF'
MILISHY-AAT from English 'militant' and so on.

In 15.a the borrowed lexical items bear the Arabic definitive article al-and in 15.b the loan words are marked by Arabic feminine gender suffix-a. in 15.c the English loan words carry the plural marker –aat. Overall, borrowed English items have been slightly altered in order to confirm to the morph syntactic patterns of the receiving language. They are assigned the determiner as well as the gender and number forms of modern standard Arabic stated by (Lahlou 1991).

Another example, the classical Arabic pattern pini'aal is reactivated in the coning of words such

**Pinfitaath –aat**
'openings'
Pinfialaat
'reaction' and so on.

**Coding mixing**

An elevated from Jordanian Arabic (educated spoken Arabic) is used by the interviews during radio or television was bilinguals. This type of interview involves code mixing which means in the case the process of mixing Jordanian Arabic and modern standard Arabic ( and seldom English)linguistic items. Consider the following case of code mixing:
16. u had nnataapiz hadu kantlqqawha
'an Tariiq at tilix fa'alaa sa'iid
Al masaalih al markaziya had
Al-mu Tayaat katshhal lina amaliyat
Al-pihsaap iii kini nadra 'laaliyat at-tasziil
'and we receive these results by telex at the level of the central services these data facilitate for us the operation of processing that gives me an idea about the process of registration.

The italicized words expressions belong to Jordanian Arabic.

Words borrowed from Jordanian Arabic function as lexical gap fillers when the speaker is unable to find the right modern standard Arabic word. This type of code mixing generally shows the speaker's lack of competence in Jordanian standard Arabic. In many interviews, code mixing in motivated by the speaker's in ability to find words to convey what he/she wants to say in modern standard Arabic and subsequent resorts to the dialect. In this context, code mixing is used in a nonconventional way, as it violates the expectation of using only modern standard Arabic in news according to Heller, (1992). The norm is that code mixing is made use of only in informal situations; but this norm is disobeyed, for sociolinguistic reasons, when an interviewee who has not mastered modern standard Arabic indulges in code mixing in a news bulletin. Code mixing in this respect has four main conversation functions. First, it is used to encourage open and free debate in order to get closer to the audience. For instance, consider the following extract from an interview:
17. min Haqana ann nusharik fi ilintkabaat u kantmnna pana kul Ishabaab u tkun andu ruH wa Taniya ……

'It is our right to participate in the elections and I hope that all young people will come to resistor their names and have a national list mind….

Here the italicized words are from modern standard Arabic whereas, the remaining are molded in the morph syntactic patterns of Jordanian Arabic. The goal of such code mixed quotation is to enrich the debate and at the same time influence viewers or listener's attitude.

Secondly, interviews including such code mixing are chosen by the Journalists to make a point or to address the person in the street or for the purpose representing an authentic picture of reality. Thirdly, code mixing is employed as some sort of reported speech that serves to diversity the sources of news or to clarify a point in the news. Fourthly, it is a type of personalization of news in the sense that the code mixing used by the interviews reveals the degree of speaker's involvement in a situation, his personal opinion, and his knowledge of the debated topic confirmed by Gumperz (1982). This personalization aspect is like an appeal to increase the audience's involvement.

Code mixing is also a characteristic of the weather forecasts in television and radio services. A mixture of modern standard Arabic and Jordanian Arabic is used in order to make the information about the weather accessible not only to the educated but also to the uneducated, especially illiterate peasants whose agricultural activity depends on weather developments.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This linguistic description provided in this paper has revealed that the style of news is characterized by the subject-verb-object order, frequency of active sentences, agentful passives, lack of case endings, and used coordination and relative. At the level of lexicon, there is a wealth of coinages based on modern standard Arabic morphology. The few foreign borrowed words that are borrowed as is are mainly technical terms for which there are no equivalents in modern standard Arabic. Interviews are distinguished by mixing Jordanian Arabic and modern standard Arabic for lack of competence on the part of the interviewee and for the purpose of clarification and audience involvement.

### REFERENCES

[1] Bell, A. (1984). Good copy-bad news : the syntactic and semantics of news editing in Applied linguistics, P. Trudgil (ed), 73-116. London: academic Press.

[2] Beabdi, L.C (1986). Lexical expansion in the Maghreb. International Journal of the sociology of language 61, 65-78.

[3] Blom, J.P and Gumprez, J.J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structure code switching in Norway. In direction in sociolinguistics, J.J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds) 407-434. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

[4] Brahimi, M. (1989). Audio visual et video au Morocco: cas praqtique de Rebat. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Universite de Paris ll.

[5] Davis, H.H.; and Walton, P.A. (1983). Sources of variations in news vocabulary a comparative analysis. International Journal of the sociology of language 40, 59-75.

[6] Ennaji, M. (1988). Language planning in Jordanian and changes in Arabic. International Journal of sociology of language. 87, 7-25.

[7] Fishman, J.A. (ED) (1978). Advance in the study of social multilingualism. The Hague: Mouton.

[8] Gumperz, J.J. (1982). Discourse strategies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[9] Heller, M. (ED) (1988). Code-switching Anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, (1992). The polities of code-switching and language choice. Journal of multilingual and multicultural Development 13, 123-142.

[10] Lahlou, M. (1991). A morph syntactic study of code-switching between Jordanian Arabic and French. Unpublished PhD. Dissertation University of Texas at Huston.

[11] Morsly, D. (1990). En Arab classique le Journal televise. In la linguistique au Maghreb, 163-174. Rabat: Okad.

[12] Poplack, S. and Sankoff, D. (1984). Borrowing the synchrony of integration. Linguistics 22, 99-135.

[13] Tuchman, G. (1978). Making news New York: Free Press.

[14] Youssi, A. (1990). Lexical processes in the Berber of the media in Morocco. In la linguistique au Maghreb, 264-281. Rabat: Okad.

AUTHORS

**First Author** – Assistant Professor. Majed. Mohamed .Hasan.
Drbseh, Emirates Canadian University College –UAE, Email:
aldarabseh.majed@yahoo.com, Email:drmajed.m@ecuc.ac.ae