

The Complex Pattern in Levantine Arabic Sentences Using the Lām Letter and Its Relationship to MSA and Aramaic

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Abstract

Arabic is one of the most difficult languages in the world. Its difficulty is not only because of grammar, but also because it consists of many dialects spoken in public, at homes, at cafes, in offices and many other places. The dialects are not derived only from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), but they are also a development of some other ancient languages spoken in the specific area of study, the Levant region. This study serves as an initial investigation in the use of the letter “Lām” in the Levantine dialect where it is not used in Modern Standard Arabic which makes the process of learning the Levantine Dialect (LD) more difficult for non-native speakers. This is an analytical study, which used Arabic research and studies as well as Aramaic teachers and speakers who live in Syria to help translate the examples and get to a conclusion that tells us why the “Lām” letter is used in places where it should not be used. Findings indicate that the use of the letter “Lām” in Levantine sentences is derived from Aramaic, which is an ancient language spoken in the Levant area as well as Yemen, Turkey, etc. This study shows that there is a logical reason why the letter “Lām” is used in daily life in verbal and nominal sentences spoken by people in the Levant region. I used the Arabic Romanization Table for the Transliteration. You can find it here: Arabic romanization table (loc.gov).

Keywords

Levantine, Arabic, Sentence, Structure, Complex, Pattern, Letter “Lām”

1. Introduction

Arabic language is a group of spoken dialects and a written standard language. Although Standard Arabic is the common written language in all countries of

the Arab World, and is used in news, books and schools, as well as official debates and conferences, spoken dialects are the dialects used to communicate between people, at work, in schools, and behind cameras. Most Arabs cannot speak Standard Arabic during their day because they are not accustomed to it, but only know it from school books, except for people with a high cultural background.

“The researchers say that the concept of (dialect) among modernists: is a set of linguistic characteristics spoken by a number of individuals in a specific geographical environment, and these characteristics are at various levels: phonetic, morphological, grammatical and semantic. These are the things that distinguish it from the rest of the other dialects in the same language. However, these characteristics must remain few so that it does not make the dialect alien to its sisters or difficult to understand for the people of the language. Because when these special qualities multiply over time, this dialect soon becomes independent. It becomes a language of its own, as witnessed in the Latin language, which has disappeared and branched out into languages that have their own entity and characteristics, including: Italian, French and Spanish. And as happened to the mother Semitic language from which languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic and others became independent. From this, we conclude that there is certainly a strong relationship between Standard Arabic language and the Levantine Dialect, which is also attached to Aramaic, whether it is understanding, grammar or the musicality of the language.”

“The study of Arabic dialects began in the modern era by orientalist who came to the Arab world to research its conditions and culture. Since the nineteenth century, most of them were modest works based on collecting material and studying it in a traditional way. It soon developed and strengthened, thanks to the progress of contemporary linguistic studies in the West. They benefited from modern inventions, such as the use of various devices and laboratories in the field of linguistic research.” Therefore, I’m here to add a new study to the previous studies and research.

“History offers us many examples of linguistic conflict. The Arabs conquered many multilingual regions, and the Arabic language was finally able to defeat those languages in its original place and replace them. It overcame Aramaic in Iraq and the Levant area, Coptic in Egypt, Berber in the Maghreb (Morocco), and Persian in some parts of the ancient kingdom of Persia. This is why Aramaic left traces in the Arab Levant area, and had an effect on Arabic as well, or to be more accurate, both languages affected each other”. (Ibrahim, 1992)

“Levantine Arabic has no official spelling rules and no standardized orthography”. Linguistics has little research studying spoken Levantine Arabic sentence and its structure. Most researchers studied MSA, and no one reached accurate results to set rules for the dialect, especially how the dialect changes with time. It changes with every occupation or political or social change. During my research, I found that there are some rules that have never been destroyed in dialect, and those rules are the basic foundation towards setting specific grammar for the Levantine Dialect so we can fill the gaps and answer the questions that

other researchers left unanswered.

From my experience as an Arabic language teacher to non-native speakers for more than ten years, I have met more than 400 learners of the Levantine Dialect who wanted to learn the LD without learning MSA, given that we use the colloquial dialect in our daily lives and even in official meetings. Therefore, I decided to carry out this research to start setting rules that make the learner succeed in understanding some terms and grammar more easily and to help teachers in the future teach this dialect using specific rules. This way, we can avoid the misleading, non-academic information.

This research is considered a keystone for teaching the Levantine Dialect by setting rules for it. We study the history of the language, the history of the dialect and the history of the region to reach an understanding of why we say a certain sentence or a certain term. So I started searching for the use of the letter “Lām” in verbal and nominal sentences because the uses of this letter are limited to a few that were found in some books and research for Modern Standard Arabic only, but they are not sufficient.

Therefore, in this study, we are studying the syntax in Modern Standard Arabic, and the syntax in the Levantine Dialect, their similarities and differences. I will show you the bridge they have with Aramaic using the “Lām letter” which I call later in the paper (**the Complex Pattern, where the verb is attached to its object by the letter “Lām”**).

In this study, I used samples from daily life, television series, and living in Syria for thirty years.

Abbreviations:

The letter (S) or (sub.) refers to (Subject).

The letter (O) or (obj.) refers to (Object).

The letter (V) or (v.) refers to (Verb).

The word مُسْنَدٌ “musnad” refers to the predicate.

The word مُسْنَدٌ إِلَيْهِ “musnad ilayh” refers to the subject.

MSA-FUSHA and Modern Standard Arabic refer to Modern Standard Arabic.

LD refers to (Levantine Dialect).

Lām refers to the letter ل in Arabic.

2. Literature Review

Many researchers, writers and educators studied how sentences are built in Aramaic and MSA but only few of them studied how to structure the sentence in Levantine Dialect. None of those articles, books or research studied the Complex Pattern and only one of them mentioned that it actually exists.

Al-Mousa (2003) studied the Linguistic pattern between MSA and Levantine in his research He concludes that there are some differences between them both but he didn't study the details of those patterns nor the reasons for using the “Lām” letter in the Complex Pattern.

Hussein (2011) studied the similarities and differences between the following languages: Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew and Akkadian. He says that it's not easy to

decide why a language took a specific pattern and that the pattern is coming from a long evolution of the language.

Albirini (2011) showed that although Arabic heritage speakers display significant competence in their heritage colloquial varieties, there are gaps in that knowledge. There also seems to be a significant transfer from English, their dominant language.

Akl (2015) wrote an article about the differences between MSA, Levantine and Aramaic. Dr. Mohammad paved the way for us to start a new study where we answer a lot of unanswered questions about the sentences he mentioned in his study.

Matthew & Yumun (2016) mentioned that Levantine Dialect has no official spelling rules and no standardized orthography, but they didn't mention the reasons behind that.

My research is a new study that no one has dealt with before. It's a study of the use of the letter "Lām" in the construction of complex sentences in the Levantine Dialect where the verb is attached to its object by the preposition "Lām". Dr. Muhammad Akl mentioned this idea, and although it is present in our daily lives, no one has studied it before. Therefore, I present this research to pave a way of filling the gaps that others couldn't fill.

3. Sample Selection

I studied literature, history and geographic books that studied the sentence in three aspects (Modern Standard Arabic, Levantine Dialect and Aramaic), studied the history of the region selected, as well as the geography of the region selected (Levant Region).

I selected 30 random people, living in the town of Maaloula, Syria and the city of Qamishli, Syria. All of them speak MSA, Levantine and Aramaic. Their ages are between 30 and 80. I used this sample to make a survey for translating examples in this research.

4. Verbal & Nominal Sentences in Fusha and Levantine

Based on (Hamasa, 2003) research in his book (The Building of the Verbal Sentence), we start by studying the nominal and verbal sentence in MSA, using some examples from his book:

4.1. Nominal Sentences in Fusha

"The subject is the supporter *مسند إليه* 'musnad ilayh' and the predicator is the 'musnad *مسند*' in the nominal phrase, for instance:

عبد الله أخاك 'abdu Allahi akhāka'

Translation: Abdullah is your brother"

4.2. Verbal Sentences in Fusha

"While in the verbal sentence, verb is the 'musnad *مسند*' and the subject is the supporter *مسند إليه* 'musnad ilayh', for instance:

ذَهَبَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ *dhahaba ‘abdu Allahi*

Translation: Abdullah went

Grammarians see the subject and the predicate as the base of the phrase, because they are the basic parts that a phrase should have, and a phrase can't be a phrase without them.

A subject can't be in one word, or using two verbs, neither a verb and a letter, nor a noun and a letter, or between two letters. But two nouns can construct a speech, if one is a subject and the other is a predicate. Also, the verb with the noun because the verb is the predicate and the noun is the subject. Therefore, types of sentences in Arabic were categorized into two main types: nominal and verbal phrases.

“If the predicate is placed following the subject, the sentence must be nominal, whatever the predicate's type was. But if the predicate is a verb that is supported by the ‘subject فاعل *fā'il*’ that exists in the same phrase, then the sentence is verbal. That means the subject and the predicate in a nominal phrase are free to have the ‘rank’ they want—means that you can place them the way you like, and forward one to another—unless there was an exception. The subject and the predicate need to have a specific pattern that we can't play with.”

The next examples show the freedom of the nominal sentence, where forwarding or being late doesn't give forbidden phrases in the language:

Examples taken from (Hamasa, 2003) book:

1) محمد قائم *Muhammad qā'im*

قائم محمد *qā'im Muhammad*

Translation: Mohammad is standing

2) المحمّدان قائمان *Al-Muhammadāni qā'imāni*

قائمان المحمّدان *qā'imāni Al-Muhammadāni*

Translation: The two men are standing

3) المحمّدون قائمون *Al-Muhammadūna qā'imūna*

قائمون المحمّدون *qā'imūna Al-Muhammadūna*

Translation: The men are standing

4) الفاطمات قائمات *Al-Faṭimātu qā'imāt*

قائمات الفاطمات *qā'imāt Al-Faṭimātu*

Translation: The women are standing

In the above examples, we see that there is no change in the meaning when forwarding one to another.

While forwarding the subject in the verbal sentence may lead to some linguistically forbidden cases, showed in the following examples:

5) قام محمد *qāma Muhammad*

محمد قام (غير ممنوع) *Muhammad qāma (it's not forbidden)*

Translation: Mohammad stood up

➤ Both structures are correct, so forwarding the singular masculine subject to the verb is okay.

6) قام المحمّدان *qāma Al-Muhammadāni*

المحمّدان قام (ممنوع) *Al-Muhammadāni qāma (forbidden)*

Translation: The two men stood up

- The second sentence is wrong, so forwarding the dual masculine subject to the verb is not okay.

7) قام المحمدون *qāma Al-Muḥammadūna*

(المحمدون قام ممنوعة) *Al-Muḥammadūna qāma (forbidden)*

Translation: The men stood up

- The second sentence is wrong, so forwarding the plural masculine subject to the verb is not okay.

8) قامت فاطمة *qāmat Fāṭimah*

(فاطمة قامت غير ممنوعة) *Fāṭimah qāmat (not forbidden)*

Translation: Fatima stood up

- The second sentence is correct, so forwarding the singular feminine subject to the verb is okay.

9) قامت الفاطمتان *qāmat Al-Fāṭimatāni*

(الفاطمتان قامت ممنوعة) *Al-Fāṭimatāni qāmat (forbidden)*

Translation: The two women stood up

- The second sentence is wrong, so forwarding the dual feminine subject to the verb is not okay.

10) قامت الفاطمات *qāmat Al-Fāṭimātu*

(الفاطمات قامت ممنوعة) *Al-Fāṭimātu qāmat (forbidden)*

Translation: The women stood up

- The second sentence is wrong, so forwarding the plural feminine subject to the verb is not okay.

I agree with (Hamasa, 2003) in what he said about the construction of the Arabic sentence in the classical Arabic language (MSA). Therefore, we'll compare the MSA sentence with the Levantine Dialect sentence by studying Levantine Arabic examples in the following paragraphs.

4.3. Nominal and Verbal Sentences in Levantine

In Levantine, we tend to reduce what is “wrong” in the language by allowing some sentences to be correct if it sounds good to the listener. For instance:

Examples taken from (Hamasa, 2003)'s book:

(قام محمد *Qām Muḥammad* or محمد قام *Muḥammad Qām*) *Translation: Mohammed stood up.*

both are used in Levantine, while قام الأولاد *Qāma al-awlādu* (*Translation: Children stood up*) which can be used in Standard, is NOT used in Levantine and we should always conjugate the verb according to its subject. It's not like Fusha, as in Fusha we should say (قام الأولاد *Qāma al-awlādu* or الأولاد قاموا *al-awlādu Qāmw*) but in Levantine, we should always conjugate the verb, whether we started with it or with the subject.

When asking the sample selection we used in this research to convert the Modern Standard Arabic phrase that we used earlier (قام الأولاد *Qāma al-awlādu*) into Levantine, **40%** of them converted it into: قاموا الولاد *Qāmw Iwlād* AND **60%** converted it into: الولاد قاموا *Lwlād qāmw*.

Al-Mousa (2003) said that “MSA is a syntactic linguistic system, while the colloquial language has the syntax almost completely fallen out of it”. This is what we see clearly in the structure of the nominal and verbal sentences in the Levantine Dialect in the previous examples.

4.4. Nominal and Verbal Sentences in Aramaic

When asking the sample we used in the research to translate a sentence into Aramaic which is (*The boy stood up* قام الولد *Qāma lwaladu*). We found that in Aramaic, we have the same rules used in Levantine. We should always conjugate the verb, whether we started with it or with the subject. **(50% of the sample translated the sentence into *i* and 50% of the sample translated the sentence into *ii*)** as the following:

i) *Qam tayla* (قام الولد)

Literal Translation: The boy stood up

ii) *Tayla qam* (الولد قام)

Literal Translation: Stood up the boy

(I used the book *The Teacher of Syriac Language* by Bishop. George Saliba. (2007) to make sure the Aramaic letters are correct).

5. Simple Patterns of Structuring a Levantine Sentence

In Standard Arabic, the correct structure of a sentence is when we start the sentence with a verb, a subject and then an object which is the most understandable structure, (verb + subject + object). And this, as grammarians say, is the original pattern, and from here the object takes its basic rank, and every change is related to this basic structure.

We have another structure though, when we start with the subject, verb and then the object but we use the first one more. There is no other sentence structure in Standard Arabic. But as Mohammad (2000) mentioned that Levantine has three sentence structures, which is true, but after an accurate and more detailed study that I made, I discovered more Levantine structures, that are stronger and more used, and that one of the three structures is NOT preferable as it might lead to a wrong meaning.

According to Mohammad (2000), a Levantine dialect, allows 3 possible words orders: **VSO, VOS and SVO**.

We asked the sample to convert a simple phrase, (shariba al-waladu al-*ḥalība* شرب الولد الحليب) (Education, 2019) used in the 2nd grade’s Syrian curriculum, into Levantine. We found the following:

Only 10% of the sample converted the phrase into A:

A) VSO:

شرب الولد الحليب (*shireb el-walad al-ḥalīb*) (*verbal sentence*)

We used the verb first, the subject second, and then the object (VSO). This pattern is the same used in Standard Arabic. But the pronunciation is not the same, as we delete short vowels in Levantine that are used more in Standard Arabic.

90% of the sample converted the phrase into B:**B) SVO:**

الوَلَدُ شَرِبَ الخَلِيبَ (*al-walad shirib el-halib*) (*nominal sentence*)

We started with the subject first, the verb second and then the object (SVO). This pattern is also used in Standard Arabic and it's called a nominal phrase.

In their final report on the *JHU Summer Workshop on "Parsing Arabic Dialects," Rambow et al. (2005)* show that MSA and Levantine allow both word orders. They clearly indicate that the choice of an SVO order in Levantine sentences is "not a strict requirement, but a strong preference."

No one from the sample converted the sentence into C:**C) VOS:**

شَرِبَ الخَلِيبَ الوَلَدُ (*shireb el-halib el-walad*) (*verbal sentence*)

This pattern is not used in Standard Arabic, and is only used in Levantine Dialect. But it's the least used in Levantine and avoided, as we might misunderstand the meaning of the sentence and we might think that the subject is the object or vice versa.

We can have another more accurate example about misunderstanding such a pattern:

I asked the sample why didn't they use the Type C (VOS) in their speech and I asked them to tell me what they think when hearing the following example:

أَخَذْتُ رَنَا رَجَاءَ مِنَ المَدْرَسَةِ *akhdet Rana Rajā' min el-madraseh* (This is the simple pattern that is the most used)

In this example, we started with the verb, the subject and then the object.

أَخَذْتُ *akhdet*: is the verb

رَنَا *Ranā*: is the subject

رَجَاءَ *Rajā'*: is the object

مِنَ المَدْرَسَةِ *min el-madraseh*: the rest of the sentence

If we wanted to forward the subject, we would say:

رَنَا أَخَذْتُ رَجَاءَ مِنَ المَدْرَسَةِ *Ranā akhdet Rajā' min el-madraseh*

The example above is also used, and the listener will not misunderstand the meaning of the sentence.

But if we said:

أَخَذْتُ رَجَاءَ رَنَا مِنَ المَدْرَسَةِ *akhdet Rajā' Ranā min el-madraseh*

According to our sample, 100% of them said that this will be a wrong sentence, as the meaning of the sentence is (Rana came and took Raja from school), so using this pattern which is (V. + Obj. + S.) will be misunderstood and should never be used because the listener will be confused. This is why we should avoid this pattern if we are not sure when to use it.

Another example using an indefinite object noun:

Again, I asked the sample to convert the following example (أَخْرَجْتُ رَنَا مِفْتَاحاً مِنَ الدَّرَجِ *akhrajt Ranā miftāḥan mina l-durj*) into Levantine. Their answers were as the following:

شَالَيْتُ رَنَا مِفْتَاحَ مِنَ الدَّرَجِ *shālet Ranā miftāḥ min el-dirj* (**this sentence is clear, as**

100% of the sample converted the sentence this way).

While 0% converted the sentence as the following:

شألت مفتاح رنا من الدرج *shālet miftāh Ranā min el-dirj*: We might think that someone (a female) took Rana's key from the drawer, which is definitely changing the whole meaning, so here we conclude that Mohammad didn't study all of the options of the VOS pattern and that we should avoid this pattern in our speech as it's a wrong one to use.

We also conclude that it doesn't matter if the object is definite or indefinite, we should avoid this pattern as it's confusing the listener.

Considering what *Moayad Husein* studied about the (*Building of the Aramaic Sentence*), we agree that Aramaic also has the same three types of the simple pattern and only the first two are commonly used as mentioned in the previous Aramaic examples.

6. The Letter “Lām” Meanings According to Some Scientists

Sibawayh (2014) said: The letter: is what comes to mean neither a noun nor a verb.

Lām letter according to *Al-Sharif (2014)*:

- 1) Possession: إن الأرض لله inna al-ar ḍa lill āh
- 2) Semi Possession: وهبنا لهم من رحمتنا wahabnā lahum min raḥmatinā
- 3) Istihqāq (entitlement): ويل للمطففين الحمد لله، ويل للمطففين al-ḥamdu lillahi, waylun lil muṭaffifina
- 4) 'illah or Reason: وإنه لحب الخير لشديدٌ wa innahu liḥubbi al-khayri la shadīdun
- 5) Tablīgh or notifying: وإذ قال ربك للملائكة: وا إذ قال ربك للملائكة wa idh qāla rabbuka lil malā'ikati

According to *Al-Theeb (2006)*, the letter Lam is used for “possession” and as a “preposition”.

The “L: Lām letter” is used for specializing and relating the verb to the other person/thing we are speaking about, like saying “Thanks to God”, everything that is followed by the Lām is related to the action, so we specialized our “Thanks” to “God” not to someone else. Exactly like when Umro' Al-Qays said: “the day I slaughtered my camel FOR my lover” so he slaughtered his camel especially FOR his lover. Also, the Lām is used for possessions like saying (I gave TO Zaid a lot of books) so the books are now belonging to Zaid as a gift.

While *Abbas (1998)* says in his book (*Arabic letters and their meanings*), that Lām letter: which is an average stressed letter that its shape in Syriac is like the “Bridle”. He linked that to Alayli's study, when he added a table to show the Arabic Alphabet letters and their meanings. He mentioned that the letter Lām means the “attachment and touching”.

When we study what *Al-Sharif (2014)*, *Abbas (1998)* and Alayli said about the letter Lām, we conclude that the letter Lām is translated as a letter that attaches words and meanings together, to give Istihqāq/entitlement. And this is why it was added to the **Complex Pattern** we are going to speak about later, mentioning that it was affected by Aramaic.

Before explaining the other Pattern, let's take a look at the suffixes used with verbs. For this purpose, we present to you **Table 1** that shows the “possessive

pronouns in Levantine Dialect” then we apply those suffixes on the verb “catch مَسَكْ masak” as shown in **Table 2**.

We know that we have exceptions adding the suffixes of the possessive pronouns in Levantine Dialect when the word/verb ends with one of the long vowels “ā/w/ī, ا/و/ي”, therefore **Table 3** shows you what suffixes we should use in such case. As an example of the exceptional suffixes, we used the verb “give عَطَى 3atā” as an example, as shown in **Table 4**.

Examples:

Let’s take the verb “catch” with the suffixes mentioned above...

Exceptions:

The verbs that end with “ي, و, ا”, ā, o, ī should have the following suffixes.

7. Complex Patterns of Structuring a Levantine Sentence

After looking at a lot of previous studies and reading many articles that did not give any logical reasons for the presence of the letter “Lām” in the Levantine Dialect, I found an article written about the Aramaic language by (Akl, 2015). He says, “In the Aramaic language, the verb transcends its object by adding the letter “Lām” to the passive object”, as Syrians and Lebanese say: (Examples written by Dr. Mohammad Akl in his article):

ضَرَبْتَو لَ أَخِيكَ ḍarabtw la khayyak

Literal Translation: I hit him TO your brother.

Context Translation: I hit your brother.

Table 1. Possessive pronouns in levantine dialect (Lingualism, 2017).

| Me | Him | her | Them | Us | You (m) | You (f) | You (p) |
|-------|-----|-----|--------|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| ني/nī | و/w | آ/ā | ونُ/un | نا/nā | أَك/ak | إِك/ik | كُن/kun |

Table 2. An example of the possessive pronouns in levantine using the verb (to hold) (Lingualism, 2017).

| Me | Him | her | Them | Us | You (m) | You (f) | You (p) |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| مَسَكْنِي /masaknī | مَسَكُو /masakw | مَسَكَا /masakā | مَسَكُنْ /masakun | مَسَكْنَا /masaknā | مَسَكَاك /masakak | مَسَكَاكِ /masakik | مَسَكَاكُنْ /masakkun |

Table 3. Possessive pronouns in levantine dialect with nouns ending with “ā, o, ī”.

| Me | Him | her | Them | Us | You (m) | You (f) | You (p) |
|-------|-----|-------|----------|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| ني/nī | ه/h | ها/hā | هُنْ/hun | نا/nā | ك/k | كِ/ki | كُن/kun |

Table 4. An example of the possessive pronouns in levantine dialect using an exceptional verb like “to give” عَطَا ‘atā (Lingualism, 2017).

| Me | Him | her | Them | Us | You (m) | You (f) | You (p) |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| عَطَانِي /‘atānī | عَطَاه /‘atāh | عَطَاهَا /‘atāhā | عَطَاهُنْ /‘atāhun | عَطَانَا /‘atānā | عَطَاكَ /‘atāk | عَطَاكِ /‘atākī | عَطَاكُنْ /‘atākun |

سمعتو ل الولد smi'tw lal walad

Literal Translation: I heard him TO the child.

Context Translation: I heard the child.

شفتو ل الصبي shifto lal şaby

Literal Translation: I saw him TO the boy.

Context Translation: I saw the boy.

These examples are not permitted by the rules of MSA. Therefore, I decided to find the link between MSA, Aramaic and Levantine by studying sentences where the letter “Lām” is used to attach the verb to its object. I named this rule the “Complex Pattern Sentence” where the previous case is applied.

We should know that the Complex Pattern is used when the object is a definite noun, because when using the Lām we should indicate a definite noun.

7.1. The Complex Pattern Has 3 Types

When asking the sample of the study to say the following Levantine sentence (شرب الولد الحليب *shirib el-walad el-ḥalīb*) in another way, we had the following results:

40% said the sentence with the structure A:

A) V (attached to a suffix that addresses the object)* + S. + ل la + Obj.

شربو الولد الحليب *shirbw el-walad la el-ḥalīb*

The Lām here is attached to the object. When we asked the sample (Levantine speakers) what they think about the previous phrase. They answered that they think about it by asking and answering the following questions:

- *What did he do? Answer: He drank it.*
- *Who drank it? Answer: The child.*
- *To what you are referring to? Answer: To the milk.*

If we combined the answers of the questions above, we'll end up structuring the Complex Pattern: He drank it, the child, to the milk.

60% said the sentence with the structure B:

B) S. + V. (with a suffix addressing the object) + la ل + Obj.

الولد شربو الحليب *el-walad shirbw la el-ḥalīb*

As we mentioned in the Simple Pattern, we can always switch the places of the verb and subject and nothing will change in the context. We usually use the phrase that starts with a subject more than the one uses the verb first.

We can see that the Lām is a letter to link the Verb with the Object.

While no one mentioned the structure C:

C) Obj. + V. (with a suffix addressing the object) + S.

الحليب شربو الولد *el-ḥalīb shirbw el-walad*

This type (C) has no “Lām” because the job of the Lām is just to link the Verb with the Object when the Object is NOT YET mentioned. But in this type, we used the object first, this is why we don't need a Lām afterwards.

This type may also make a confusion to the listener in some situations and some contexts, exactly like the 3rd type of the Simple Pattern. This is why we would also avoid using it unless we were 100% sure that the sentence is correct

and nothing may be understood wrong.

7.2. Complex Pattern in Aramaic

Aramaic, on the other hand, has the three simple and complex patterns, the thing that makes us find out where the letter “Lām” which is used in Levantine came from. As Aramaic also uses the same exact complex pattern. We asked the same sample to translate the sentence (*أنا أكلت التفاحة*) (*ana akalt el-tiffāḥa*) into the Complex Pattern in Aramaic, they answered with the following phrases:

Ana Eklet l-hazzura (ܐܢܐ ܐܟܠܬ ܠܗܘܪܐ) (50% of the sample)

Translation: I ate to this apple (which makes no sense in English or MSA but it does make a lot of sentence in Levantine)

Tayla ekal l-hazzura (ܬܝܠܐ ܐܟܠ ܠܗܘܪܐ) (50% of the sample)

Translation: The boy ate to the apply

We used the “L” in both examples exactly like we used the “L” in the complex pattern in Levantine Arabic.

We find in the previous examples that the Aramaic and the Levantine dialect agree about attaching the verb to its object by using the preposition “Lām”. MSA doesn’t like this rule, so we agree with what Dr. Muhammad Akl said in his article. However, Dr. Muhammad Akl did not give any reason for the use of the letter “Lām”. After studying the uses of the letter “Lām” in Arabic and Aramaic, we were able to answer this question that no one had answered before. We were able to say that its use in the dialect comes from its form and meaning; its form in Aramaic is a shape of a bridle that connects things together, and its meaning in Arabic is *Istiḥqāq* (entitlement). Here we see that the colloquial Levantine and Aramaic are similar in this context, and this is what no other researcher could prove before us.

8. The Usage of the Three Types

In English, we stress the word that we need to emphasize, but in Arabic we start with it. So if we are emphasizing the verb, we start with it. While emphasizing the subject or the object, then we should start with each one accordingly.

Aramaic also has the same case. People who speak Aramaic emphasize the word by starting with it, exactly like Levantine.

8.1. The Arabic Culture and Emphasizing Words

Arabic culture is a very interesting culture. People usually speak louder than others in other countries. In the market, for instance, people tend to shout and scream when speaking to each other. This is why the tone of voice of most Levantine speakers is a bit higher than others, the thing makes the stress on one word harder than we can imagine. So the easier way is just to start with the word that we want to emphasize instead.

8.2. The Most Common Type in MSA

The simple pattern (A) is the common one in Fusha. Although the complex pat-

tern is also used (which is called a nominal sentence). But the language tends to start with a verb then get to know the subject. But in some cases like focusing on the subject more than the verb, the type (B) of the simple type is more common, and these are special cases.

8.3. The Most Common Type in Levantine

The common type in Levantine is the complex pattern type (A), because Levantine tends to delete a lot of short vowels. By deleting the short vowels of words, sentences become unrelated, which is the thing that causes us to stop a little before saying the next word. This is why Levantine speakers tend to use the complex pattern type (A) more, because a linked pronoun is attached to refer to the object. And the adding of the letter “Lām” gives a nice sound and harmony to the word.

9. When the Subject Is Hidden

As I mentioned at the beginning of this study, grammarians see the subject and the predicate as the base of the phrase, because these are the basic parts that a phrase should have, and a phrase can't be a phrase without them.

Take into consideration that a sentence can't be a sentence and a phrase can't be a phrase without the predicate and the subject together. So when a subject is not obvious in a sentence, that doesn't mean it's deleted, because we can't delete one of the basic things in a sentence, but we should call the subject then “a hidden subject”.

When having a hidden subject, this means there is already something referring back to it, or at least the subject has been mentioned in our speech beforehand.

If the subject is an attached pronoun (linked pronoun) with the verb itself, this means the subject is hidden in Levantine, therefore we should delete it from the rule, so the rules would be as the following.

How the Simple and Complex Patterns Change When Having a Hidden Subject

If it's hidden, we should also hide it in the patterns we have. Let's take a look how sentences will change accordingly:

A) Simple Pattern:

I) Verb + Subject + Object شرب الخليب شرب الولد *shireb el-walad el-halib*

II) Subject + Verb + Object شرب الخليب الولد *el-walad shireb el-halib*

III) Verb + Object + Subject شرب الخليب الولد *shireb el-halib el-walad*

After hiding the subject in all of the Simple Pattern's types, we notice that the three types become one: Verb + Object شرب الخليب *shireb el-halib*.

In the above examples, we know that the verb شرب in Arabic already refers to the 3rd person in masculine singular, so we already know that we're speaking about an absent male that we might have mentioned in our speech earlier to that

sentence.

In Aramaic, we have the same case. We can also delete the pronoun or the subject because the verb used is already conjugated. Therefore, we don't have to use the pronoun or the subject.

Example:

i) **Ana eklet l-hazzura** (ܐܢܐ ܝܚܘܪܐ ܠܗܙܘܪܐ)

Translation: I ate to the apple

OR

ii) **Eklet l-hazzura** (ܝܚܘܪܐ ܠܗܙܘܪܐ)

Translation: I ate to the apple

We deleted the pronoun (which is the subject) in the second sentence because the verb is already conjugated saying (I ate) so there is no need for the pronoun in this sentence anymore.

B) Complex Pattern:

I) Verb (suffix) + Subject + ܠ + Object ܠ ܬܦܥܗܐ ܐܟܠܐ ܠܘܠܕ *akalā el-walad la el-teffāhah*

II) Subject + Verb (suffix) + ܠ + Object ܠܘܠܕ ܠ ܬܦܥܗܐ ܐܟܠܐ *el-walad akalā la el-teffāhah*

III) Object + Verb (suffix) + Subject ܠܘܠܕ ܬܦܥܗܐ ܐܟܠܐ *el-teffāhah akalā el-walad*

After hiding the subject in all of the Complex Pattern's types, we notice that the types that use the Lām becomes one type which is: Verb (suffix) + ܠ la + Object.

While the last type (III) – which is the least used in Levantine – becomes the following: Object + Verb (suffix), the thing that makes us sure that using this type is confusing to all listeners, natives and foreigners so we should avoid it as mentioned before in this study. **(None of the sample said the structure III)**

10. The Sentence Patterns with Verbs That Should Be Attached to the Letter “Lām” Already

We have some verbs that should be attached to the letter “Lām” like the verb “To Say” in Fusha and Levantine. For example: قال لِرنا *qāla li Ranā in Fusha* OR قال ل رنا *qāl la Ranā in Levantine*. The subject here is hidden inside the conjugation of the verb. It means that we either mentioned the subject before in the text/story, or we know who/what we are speaking about. When we have such verbs in a sentence, we have the following pattern which is:

The structure of the sentence in this case should be, either:

A) The Simple Version:

VERB + Lām (related to the verb/which is obligatory) + Thing/Person the verb is done to + OBJECT

قال ل سامي المشكلة *qāl la Sāmī el-mishkleh*

عطا ل رنا الشنطة *aṭā la Ranā el-shanṭah*

- Forwarding the object:

We can place the object between the verb and the Lām, for example:

قال المشكلة ل سامي *qāl el-mishkleh la Sāmī*

عطا الشنطة ل رنا *aṭā el-shanṭah la Ranā*

B) The Emphasizing Version:

VERB + Lām (related to the verb/it is obligatory) + A suffix refers back to the person/thing related to the verb + Lām (Emphasizing) + The person/thing + OBJECT

قاللوا لسانى المشكلىة *qāllw la Sāmī el-mishkleh*

عطاهال رنا الشنطة *aṭāha la Ranā el-shanṭah*

(This Version emphasizes the person/thing we made the action to)

OR

C) Forwarding the object:

We can place the object between the two phrases (the simple one and the emphasizing one)

VERB + Lām + a suffix that refers back to the person/thing related to the verb + OBJECT + Lām + The person/thing + Object

قاللوا المشكلىة لسانى *qāllw el-mishkleh la Sāmī*

عطاهال الشنطة ل رنا *aṭāha el-shanṭah la Ranā*

When asking the sample which one of the previous patterns would say the most (A, B or C), they said that they will use C more often (70% of the times) and will use B (20% of the times) while A is only used 10% of the times, especially when speaking to children between 2 and 6 years old.

11. Simple & Complex Pattern with Verbs Attached to the Letter “Lām” Already

11.1. Simple Pattern with Verbs Attached to the Lām Already

I) قال هوى الكلمة ل رنا *qāl huwe el-kilmeh la Ranā*

Verb + subject + object + TO (Lām) + thing/person

II) هوى قال الكلمة ل رنا *huwe qāl el-kilmeh la Ranā*

Subject + verb + object + TO (Lām) + thing/person

11.2. Complex Pattern with Verbs Attached to the Lām Already*

I) قالال هوى ل الكلمة ل رنا *qālā huwe la el-kilmeh la Ranā*

Verb (with a suffix) + subject + lām + object + TO (Lām) + thing/person

II) هوى قالال الكلمة ل رنا *huwe qālā la el-kilmeh la Ranā*

Subject + verb (with a suffix) + lām + object + TO (Lām) + thing/person

III) الكلمة هوى قالال ل رنا *el-kilmeh huwe qālā la Ranā*

Object + subject + verb (with a suffix) + TO (Lām) + thing/person

(This last type is not commonly used as mentioned before)

11.3. The Emphasizing Pattern with Verbs Attached to the Lām Already

I) قالال هوى ل رنا الكلمة *qāllā huwe la Ranā el-kilmeh*

عطالا محمدا ل رنا الشنطة *aṭāla Mḥammah la Ranā el-shanṭah*

Verb + to (lām) (suffix related to the person/thing) + to (lām) + object

*I added the pronoun “He” to the sentence to refer to the subject, but it can be hidden and referred back to by the conjugation of the verb)

(We emphasized the meaning here by using two “to/lām”’s in the sentence)

II) قاللا هوي الكلمة ل رنا *qāllā huwe el-kilmeh la Ranā*

عطالا محمّد الشنطة ل رنا *‘aṭāla Mḥammah el-shanṭah la Ranā*

Verb + to (lām) (suffix related to the person/thing) + object + to (lām) + thing/person

(We emphasized the meaning here by using two “to/lām”’s in the sentence)

III) هوي قاللا الكلمة ل رنا *huwe qāllā el-kilmeh la Ranā*

محمّد عطالا الشنطة ل رنا *Mḥammah ‘aṭāla el-shanṭah la Ranā*

Subject + verb + to (lām) (suffix related to the person/thing) + object + to (lām) + thing/person

(We emphasized the meaning here by using two “to/Lām”’s in the sentence).

We conclude that the letter “Lām” can be used twice, once with verbs that use the letter “Lām” in MSA, LD and Aramaic, and the second is when we use the letter “Lām” for Istihqāq (entitlement) and linking, that is not permitted in Fusha.

12. Conclusion

Arabic language is a modern and beautiful language which is newer than other Semitic languages like Aramaic and Hebrew. It’s a different language that has different grammar and rules. While Arabic dialects, especially Levantine, are dialects that were affected by the living reality. The region was affected by other cultures that lived in our region and Aramaic was one of them.

Aramaic affected Levantine and couldn’t affect Modern Standard Arabic because Modern Standard Arabic has specific rules and grammar that we apply to speak well. While Aramaic may have some rules and questions that weren’t answered. This is why Modern Standard Arabic used in books, news and formal conferences was not affected by other cultures that lived in the region. However, Levantine dialect is a street dialect, therefore, it has to be affected by people carrying cultural heritage from other languages or cultures.

We conclude that the Complex Pattern and the use of the letter Lām is taken from Aramaic, and that the use of the “Lām” letter in the Complex Pattern (where we attach the verb to its object) comes from its Standard Arabic meaning for “istihqāq” (entitlement) and its Aramaic shape “Bridle” that connects things together. Levantine speakers felt that there was a relationship between Fusha and Aramaic, therefore they started using this pattern more commonly because the letter Lām is used for Istihqāq (entitlement), emphasizing and informing, therefore it was entered into the dialect and people started using it in their daily lives.

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