



THE SYNTAX OF SENTENTIAL NEGATION IN STANDARD ARABIC AND JAZANI DIALECT

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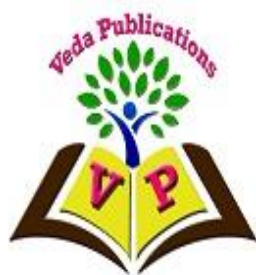
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ABSTRACT

Negation in Standard Arabic (SA) and colloquial Arabic dialects is expressed in diverse ways that have led to its being studied extensively by many linguists (e.g., Al-Shurafa & Al-momani 2011; Al-tamari 2001; Benmamoun 2000; Eid 1991; Harrama 1983). This paper highlights the varied syntactic structures of sentential negation in SA and Jazani dialect. The negative marker *maa* is from SA, while *f* developed from the word *fay?*, which means 'thing' (Ouhalla 2002). Benmamoun (2000) stated that *f* seems to have evolved relatively recently to reinforce the negative *maa*. This two-negation elements pattern *maa* and *-f* do not exist in SA.



Keywords: *Arabic, Negation, Negative markers*



1 INTRODUCTION

An essential property of any language is to be able to give the opposite meaning of a statement. Every language, including Arabic, has its own negation system with its own negative markers and strategies. Furthermore, "Negative markers can be sensitive to mood, aspectual, or temporal distinctions, as well as to the type of clause in which they occur (e.g. declarative versus imperative)" (Zanuttini, 1997, p. 512). Payne listed four such strategies to express sentential negation cross-linguistically (as cited in Zanuttini, 1997). According to him, some languages use only one strategy, while others employ more than one. One method "of negating a clause is to add a negative marker that has the characteristics of a verb taking a sentential complement" (p. 513). The following example is from the Polynesian language Tongan.¹

- (1) Na'e 'ikai ke 'alu 'a Siale
 ASP NEG ASP go ABL Charlie
 'Charlie didn't go.'

Another strategy Payne listed is to use a negative marker that has the properties of a finite auxiliary (carrying person, number, tense, aspect, or mood affixes) followed by the lexical verb in a non-finite participle form (as cited in Zanuttini, 1997). This method is exemplified in (2) with the Siberian language Evenki, of the Tungus family.

- (2) Bi ə-ə-w dukuwun-ma duku-ra
 I NEG-PST-1SG letter-OBJ write-PART
 'I didn't write a letter.'

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, examples are from the author's intuitions as a native Arabic speaker.

A common strategy is to add a negative marker that appears in the form of a particle (e.g., Russian *ne*) or that can exhibit sensitivity to mood (e.g., Hungarian *ne/nem*), tense, or aspect (e.g., Arabic *lam/la*). An example from Welsh is given in (3).

- (3) Nid yw'r bachgen ddim yn hoffi coffi
 NEG is.the boy NEG in like coffee
 'The boy does not like coffee.'

The last strategy Payne mentions is that negative markers can be part of the derivational morphology of the verb, as a prefix, suffix, or infix. For example, Turkish *-me-* precedes the affixes expressing tense, mood, person, and number and follows those indicating reciprocals, reflexives, causatives, and passives, as shown in (4) from Ouhalla and Shlonsky (2002).

- (4) ma mʃ-af Omar
 NEG1 go.3SG.M-NEG2 Omar
 'Omar did not go.'

Negation in Standard Arabic and modern colloquial dialects of Arabic is expressed in diverse ways that have led to its being studied extensively by many linguists, including Benmamoun (2000), Altamari (2001), Eid (1991), Alsalem (2012), Harrama (1983), and Al-Horais (2017). In addition, Al-Shurafa (2006) examined Kuwaiti Arabic, Al-Momani (2011) Jordanian Arabic, and Qafisheh (1996) Yemeni Arabic. Benmamoun (2000) and Ouhalla and Shlonsky (2002) identified five negative elements in Standard Arabic: *maa*, *la*, *lan*, *lam*, and *laysa*. Each element has specific features: *lam* carries past tense, *lan* carries future tense, and *laysa* inflects for agreement, whereas *laa* and *maa* carry neither tense nor agreement.



The aim of this paper is to describe the syntax of negation particles in Standard Arabic and Jazani dialect. Furthermore, it explores the extent to which a unified analysis of negation in Arabic is possible and details those phenomena that resist a unified account by presenting examples from corpora and previous studies of negative expressions in Standard Arabic and other Arabic dialects. The following section illustrates the syntactic structure of Arabic sentences, such as word order, nominal and verbal clauses, and verb tense. The next section discusses sentential negation in Standard Arabic in general. The last section discusses the syntactic structure of the negative marker *ma* in Jazani dialect.

2 SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN STANDARD

ARABIC

This section examines word order, nominal and verbal clauses, and verb tense in Arabic syntax.

2.1 Word order in Standard Arabic Word order has been the focus of many Arabic syntactic scholars. To start analyzing sentential negation, we first need to know whether a given sentence is nominal or verbal. Word order plays a significant role in Arabic sentence structure. Some Arabic linguists have stated that a nominal sentence is a clause that does not contain a verb, while others have defined a nominal sentence as any clause that starts with a noun whether it contains a verb or not (Alamah, 1993). If a verbal sentence consists of a transitive verb, there are six possible word orders: SVO, VSO, OVS, OSV, VOS, and SOV (Alsalem, 2012), as illustrated in (5).

- (5) a. SVO
- Aħmed-u ʔkala t-tuffaha-ta
- Aħmed-NOM eat.3SG.M.PST the-apple-ACC
- 'Ahmed ate the apple.'
- b. VSO
- ʔkala Aħmed-u t-tuffaha-ta
- eat.3SG.M.PST Aħmed-NOM the-apple-ACC
- 'Aħmed ate the apple.'
- c. OVS
- t-tuffaha-ta ʔkala Aħmed-u
- the-apple-ACC eat.3SG.M.PS Aħmed-NOM
- 'Ahmed ate the apple.'
- d. OSV
- t-tuffaha-ta Aħmed-u ʔkal.a
- the-apple-ACC Aħmed-NOM eat.3SG.M.PST
- 'Ahmed ate the apple.'
- e. VOS
- ʔkala t-tuffaha-ta Aħmed-u
- eat.3SG.M.PST the-apple-ACC Aħmed-NOM
- 'Ahmed ate the apple.'

f. SOV

Ahmed-u t-tuffaha-ta ?kala
 Ahmed-NOM the-apple-ACC eat.3SG.M.PST
 'Ahmed ate the apple.'

The tree diagram of word order VSO from (5b) is given in Figure 1.

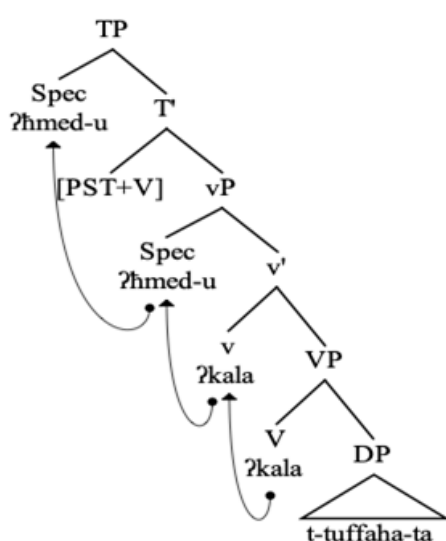


Figure 1. Tree diagram of (5b).

The instances above do not have the same pragmatic context; each word order indicates a specific context. For instance, VSO focuses on the verb *?kal-a*, while in SVO, the focus is on the subject, and in OVS, the focus is the object *t-tuffaha-ta*.

2.2.1 Nominal clause Arabic is a zero-copula language since it does not need a verb in a nominal sentence; the clause is initiated with a construction called the *mubtadaʔ*, which is *?hmed-u* in (6a), and the second part of the clause is called the *xabar*, as in *mudir-un* in (6a). Since there is no copula in the nominal sentence, tense is an important aspect in forming nominal tense, especially present tense,

where the copula is not present (Fassi, 1993; Neʕmat, 1973). For instance, in (6a), the nominal sentence *Ahmed-u mudeer-un* is in the present, where *Ahmed-u* is the subject of the sentence, which could be a pronoun *huwa* as in (6b). The verbal copula is absent in these cases. In perfective and future forms, the nominal sentence is unacceptable in Standard Arabic, as there must be a verb in the sentence (Bakir, 1980; Benmamoun, 2000; Fassi, 1993). In (5a), the sentence is called a nominal clause because it starts with a noun phrase *Ahmed-u*, while in (5b), the clause is called a verbal clause because it starts with a verb. Example (6) illustrates a nominal clause without a verb. It contains two parts: a subject *Ahmed*—which could be a proper noun as in (6a) or a pronoun as in (6b)—and a second noun or noun phrase.

(6) a. ?hmed-u mudeer-un
 Ahmed-NOM director-NOM

'Ahmed is a director.'

b. huwa sawfa yakunu mudeer-an
 he.NOM FUT.be.3SM be director-ACC
 'He will be a director.'

2.2.2 Verbal clause According to Benmamoun (2000), there are two forms of Arabic verbs, which differ in their agreement and mood morphology. The perfective is the past tense and appears as a suffix. The imperfective is the present tense and appears as a prefix that shows gender and first-person plural and as a suffix showing singular or plural. Tables 1 and 2 summarize imperfective and perfective forms in Standard Arabic and modern Saudi Arabic dialects, taken from Benmamoun (2000).



A significant feature of the perfective is that it requires a verbal predicate, while in the imperfective, a verbal predicate is not necessary in all sentences. For example, in a nominal sentence, there is no verbal predicate in the clause.

Person	Number	Gender	Affix	Verb + Affix
1	Singular	M/F	-tu	daras-tu
	Plural	M/F	-naa	daras-naa
2	Singular	M	-ta	daras-ta
		F	-ti	daras-ti
	Dual	M/F	-tumaa	daras-tumaa
	Plural	M	-tum	daras-tum
		F	-tunna	daras-tunna
	3	Singular	M	-a
F			-at	daras-at
Dual		M	-aa	daras-aa
		F	-ataa	daras-ataa
Plural		M	-uu	daras-uu
		F	-na	daras-na

Table 1. Perfective forms.



Person	Number	Gender	Affix	Verb + Affix
1	Singular	M/F	ʔa-	ʔa-drusu
	Plural	M/F	na-	na-drusu
2	Singular	M	ta-	ta-drusu
		F	ta-iin	ta-drus-iina
	Dual	M	ta-aani	ta-drus-aani
		F	ta-aani	ta-drus-aani
	Plural	M	ta-uuna	ta-drus-uuna
		F	ta-na	ta-drus-na
3	Singular	M	ya-	ya-drusu
		F	ta-	ta-drusu
	Dual	M	ya-aani	ya-drus-aani
		F	ta-aani	ta-drus-aani
	Plural	M	-uu	daras-uu
		F	-na	daras-na

Table 2. Imperfective forms.

Future tense in Standard Arabic is formed by adding the *sa* or *sawfa* particle before an imperfect verb. In (7a), *a-ktub-u* is in the first-person singular present tense. The future particles *sa* and *sawfa* in (7b)-(7c) precede the verb *a-ktub-u*, while (7d) is ungrammatical because a future particle in Standard Arabic must precede the verb; if the particle comes after the verb, the sentence becomes unacceptable.

In (7e), the sentence is ungrammatical because the future particle precedes the past-tense verb *kataba*.

(7) a. a-ktub-u

write.1SG.PRS-IND

'I write.'

b. sa-aktub-u

FUT-I-write1SG.PRS-IND

'I will write.'

c. sawfa-aktub-u

FUT-I-write1SG.PRS-IND

'I will write.'

d. *aktub-u-sawfa/s

FUT-I-write1SG.PRS-IND

'I will write.'

e. *sawfa/s-ktub-tu

FUT-I-write1SG.PST-IND

'I will write.'

2.3 Sentential negation in Standard Arabic This section gives a brief description of negative markers in Standard Arabic. As stated previously, the main negative elements in Standard Arabic are *laa*, *lam*, *lan*, *maa*, and *laysa* (Benmamoun, 2000; Ouhalla & Shlonsky, 2002), which can be divided into three groups: negation with *lan*, *lam*, and *laa*; negation with *laysa*; and negation with *maa*. Each group is discussed below. Benmamoun adapted the NegP Hypothesis, which states that negative particles head their own functional projections (as cited in Al-Momani, 2011), as shown in Figure 2.

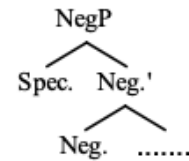


Figure 2. NegP Hypothesis (Benmamoun, 2000).

2.3.1 First group of negative markers in Standard Arabic The first group of negative markers includes *laa*, *lam*, and *lan*. The marker *laa* is always in the present tense, *lam* carries past tense, and *lan* carries future tense, as shown in (8a)-(8c). All these elements appear with only the imperfective form. If any members of this group occur with past tense, the result will be ungrammatical, as in (9a)-(9c).

(8) a. **laa** y-katab-u l-dars-a
 NEG 3SG.M-write-PRS the-lesson-ACC
 'He doesn't write his lesson.'

b. ?al-fatat-u **lam** tu-safer
 the-lady-NOM NEG.PST 3SG.F-travel.PRS
 'The lady did not travel.'

c. Khalid-u **lan** y-safer
 Khalid-NOM NEG.FUT 3SG.M-travel
 'Khalid will not travel.'

(9) a. ***laa** katab-a l-dars-a
 NEG write.3SG.M-PST the-lesson
 'He did not write the lesson.'

b. al-θoub-u **laysa** jaded-un

the-dress-NOM NEG.2SG.M new

'The book is not new.'

e. **maa** xaalid-un fii l-bayt-i

NEG Khalid-NOM.3SG.M in the-house-ACC

'Khalid is not in the house.'

2.3.3 Third group of negative markers in Standard Arabic

The third group of negative particles comprises *maa*. Regarding *maa* in Standard Arabic, Moutaouakil (1993) illustrated a variety of contexts presented in (12) (as cited in Aoun et al., 2010). In (12a), *maa* precedes the perfective form *saafarat*. In (12b), it negates a habitual present-tense sentence. In (12c), it negates a non-verbal sentence with a nominal predicate. In (12d) and (12e), *maa* negates adjectival and PP predicates, respectively.

(12) a. **maa** saafar-at Hind-un

NEG travel.PST.3SG.F Hind-NOM

'Hind did not go on a trip.'

b. **maa** yu-saafir-u ʕamr-un ʔilla fii s-sayfi

NEG 3SG.M-travel.PRE Amr-NOM except in

the-summer

'Amr travels only during the summer.'

c. **maa** muħammadun kaatib-un

NEG Mohammad writer.3SG.M-NOM

'Mohammad is not a writer.'

d. **maa** hindun haziinatun

NEG Hind sad.ADJ

'Hind is not sad.'

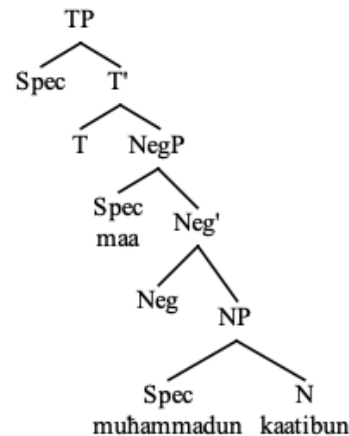


Figure 5. Tree diagram of (12c).

3 Sentential negation in Jazani Dialect

Different instances of sentential negation in Standard Arabic showed that *maa* is different from all other negative markers because it does not carry tense. In addition, *maa* occupies positions in both nominal and verbal constructions. This section explores a variation of *maa* in Jazani dialect. Jazan is a city in the southwest corner of Saudi Arabia, bordering Yemen to the south.

In Jazani dialect, sentential negation is expressed by three elements in verbal sentences: the proclitic *ma*, the single negator *mif*, and the bipartite negative marker *ma...f*. The particle *ma* negates verbal sentences, while the bipartite negative marker *ma...f* only appears in verbal sentences and nominal clauses that start with pronouns, as explained in the following examples. The particle *mif* only negates



nominal clauses. The two negation patterns of the bipartite negative marker *ma...f* and single negator *mif* do not exist in Standard Arabic.

3.1 Bipartite negative marker *ma...f* The particle *ma...f* negates verbs in present and past, but not future tense. In (13a), the clause is in VSO word order; the pre-verbal *ma* appears before *ʔkal*, and the verb is in the past tense with the enclitic *-f* attached to it. In (13b), the sentence has VSO word order. This word order is grammatical as the verb agrees with the subject in gender and number, but the enclitic *-f* is attached to the verb without the negative marker *ma*. The absence of *ma* results in an ungrammatical sentence in Jazani dialect as both *ma* and *-f* must be present in the same sentence. In (13c), the word order is SVO, and the sentence is grammatical. The bipartite negative particle *ma...f* is attached to the verb in the past tense. In (13d), *ma...f* is attached to the verb in the present tense *yʔkal*. In (13e), the verb is in future tense; negating a future-tense clause via *ma...f* results in an ungrammatical sentence in Jazani dialect.

(13) a. **ma-ʔkal-f** I-walad

NEG1-2SG.M-eat.PST-NEG2 the-boy

'The boy didn't eat.'

b. *ʔkal-f I-walad

eat.PST.3SG.M-NEG2 the-boy

'The boy didn't eat.'

c. I-walad **ma-ʔkal-f**

the-boy NEG1-3SG.M.eat.PST-NEG2

'The boy didn't eat.'

d. **ma-yʔkal-f** I-walad

NEG-eat.PST.3SG.M-NEG the-boy

'The boy didn't eat.'

e. ***ma** sa-ʔkal-f I-walad

NEG FUT-eat.3SG.M-NEG the-boy

'The boy will not eat.'

As shown in these examples, *ma...f* works to negate past- and present-tense verbs in different word orders; *ma...f* must co-occur in the same sentence for sentential negation to be grammatical, as the absence of either *ma* or *-f* in negation would be ungrammatical. Table 3 presents this marker with various pronouns.



Gloss	Jazani Pronoun	Bipartite negative marker <i>ma...f</i>
NEG + I.M/FS + NEG	Ana	maa-ni-f
NEG + you.MS + NEG	Anta	maa-nta-f
NEG + you.FS + NEG	Anti	maa-ntin-f
NEG + he + NEG	huwa	maa-hu-f
NEG + she + NEG	Heya	mahi-f
NEG + we.P.M/F + NEG	nahnu	ma-hnaa-f
NEG + you.P.M + NEG	antum	ma-ntum-f
NEG + you.P.F + NEG	antun	ma-ntun-f
NEG + they.P.M + NEG	Hum	ma-hum-f
NEG + they.P.F + NEG	Hun	ma-hun-f

Table 3. Examples of pronouns with *ma...f*.

The examples in (14) investigate previous examples of *ma...f* with pronouns in Table 3. In (14a), the negative particle *ma* precedes the pronoun *huwa*, while the enclitic *-f* is attached to the pronoun. The same system occurs in (14b). Regardless of the person and number, pronouns in Jazani dialect construct the negative using this same method.

- (14) a. **ma-huwa-f** jameel
 NEG1-he-NEG2 beautiful
 'He is not beautiful.'

- b. **ma-hum-f** tullab
 NEG1-they-NEG2 students
 'They are not students.'

3.2 Single negative marker *mif* The negator *mif* is used to negate nominal sentences that start with a proper noun or pronoun. Example (15a) is a nominal sentence that starts with the pronoun *huwa*. The independent negative marker *mif* precedes the adjective predicate *Jameel*. The same situation can be seen in (15b)-(15d). In (15e), the sentence is ungrammatical because it negates the past tense verb *katab*, and *mif* is only allowed to negate nominal clauses in Jazani dialect. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate (15c)-(15d).

(15) a. Huwa **mif** jemeel

he NEG beautiful

'He is not beautiful.'

b. Hiya **mif** Jameel-ah

she NEG beautiful-f

'She is not beautiful.'

c. Hum **mif** tullab

they NEG students

'They are not students.'

d. Ahmed **mif** jameel

Ahmed NEG handsome.M

'Ahmed is not handsome.'

e. Al-bayt-u **mif** kabir

the-house-NOM NEG big

'The house is not big.'

f. *Al-walad-u **mif** katab dars-uh

the-boy-NOM NEG write.3SG.M.PST
lesson-his

'The boy did not write his lesson.'

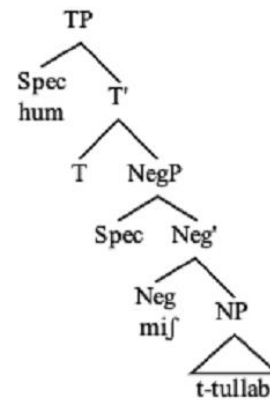


Figure 7. Tree diagram of (15c).

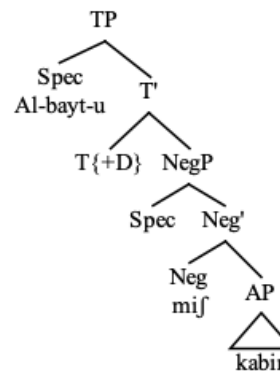


Figure 8. Tree diagram of (15d).

3.3 Negative marker *ma* In Jazani dialect, the particle *ma* is used to negate perfective and imperfective, as illustrated below. In (16a), the negative marker *ma* appears before the present verb *aktub* and past tense *katabu*. In (16c), the negation failed because the negative marker *ma* must appear before the verb.



(16) a. ana **ma** ?ktub

I NEG write1SG.PRS

'I do not write.'

b. Ahmed wa Khalid **ma** katab-u

Ahmed and Khalid NEG write3SG.PST

'Ahmed and Khalid did not write.'

c. *Maha katab-at **ma** darsa-ha

Maha write3SG.PST NEG lesson-her

'Maha did not write her lesson.'

3.4 Sentential negation in future tense in Jazani

Dialect In Jazani dialect, *raḥ* must precede the verb in the present tense to form sentential negation in the future, as shown in (17a)-(17b) with and without negation.

(17) a. ana **raḥ** aktub

I FUT 1SG.M.write.PRS

'I will write.'

b. ana **ma** raḥ aktub

I NEG FUT write1SG.PRS

'I will not write.'

c. Aḥmed **ma** raḥ ja-ḥrab

Ahmed NEG FUT 3SG.M-drink.PRS

'He is not going to drink.'

4 CONCLUSION

This paper highlighted the varied syntax of sentential negation in Standard Arabic and Jazani dialect. After discussing Arabic word order, clause, and tense patterns, it discussed sentential negation in Standard Arabic, which contains five negative markers: *la*, *lam*, *lan*, *ma*, and *laysa*. The marker *lan* negates future tense, *lam* negates past tense, and *laysa* inflects for agreement. The markers *laa* and *maa* do not carry tense or agreement. Next, *ma* and associated negative markers in Jazani dialect were discussed. The discontinuous negative marker *ma...f* appears with verbal sentences, the independent negative marker *mif* appears with nominal sentences, and the negator *ma* appears with sentences in the future tense. Based on his evidence, it appears the negator *ma* is from Standard Arabic, while *f* developed from the word *ḥay?* 'thing' (Ouhalla & Schlonsky, 2002). Benmamoun (2000) stated that *f* seems to have evolved relatively recently to reinforce *ma*. Finally, from the data provided in the Jazani dialect section, the negative particles *ma* and *-f* are not found in Standard Arabic. In addition, the use of the negative particle *ma* in Jazani dialect is similar to *ma* in Standard Arabic.

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