THE SYNTAX OF SENTENTIAL NEGATION IN STANDARD ARABIC AND JAZANI DIALECT

Eman Mohammed A Hadadi

Jazan University
Email: emhadadi@jazanu.edu.sa
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9209

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 *ʃ* developed from the word *ʃayʔ*, which means ‘thing’ (Ouhalla 2002). Benmamoun (2000) stated that *ʃ* seems to have evolved relatively recently to reinforce the negative *maa*. This two-negation elements pattern *maa* and -*ʃ* do not exist in SA.

Keywords: Arabic, Negation, Negative Particles
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 ‘ikaike ‘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 a-a-w dukuwun-maduku-ra

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-aj Omar

NEG1 go.3SG.M-NEG2 Omar

‘Omar did not go.’

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 other Arabic dialects. 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 Arabic.

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, VOS, and SOV (Alsalem, 2012), as illustrated in (5).

(5) a. SVO

\[
\text{Ahmed-u ?kala t-tuffaha-ta}
\]

\[
\text{Ahmed-NOM eat.3SG.M.PST the-apple-ACC}
\]

‘Ahmed ate the apple.’

b. VSO

\[
\text{ʔkala Ahmed-u t-tuffaha-ta}
\]

\[
\text{eat.3SG.M.PST Ahmed-NOM the-apple-ACC}
\]

‘Ahmed ate the apple.’

c. OVS

\[
\text{ṭ-tuffaha-ta ?kala Ahmed-u}
\]

\[
\text{the-apple-ACC eat.3SG.M.PST Ahmed-NOM}
\]

‘Ahmed ate the apple.’

d. OSV

\[
\text{ṭ-tuffaha-ta Ahmed-u ?kal.a}
\]

\[
\text{the-apple-ACC Ahmed-NOM eat.3SG.M.PST}
\]

‘Ahmed ate the apple.’

e. VOS

\[
\text{ʔkala t-tuffaha-ta Ahmed-u}
\]

\[
\text{eat.3SG.M.PST the-apple-ACC Ahmed-NOM}
\]

‘Ahmed ate the apple.’
f. SOV

Ahmed-u ʔtuttafa-ta ʔkala

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 ʔkala, while in SVO, the focus is on the subject, and in OVS, the focus is the object ʔtuttafa-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 muttadaʔ, which is ʔhmed-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. ʔhmed-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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Affix</th>
<th>Verb + Affix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>-tu</td>
<td>daras-tu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>-naa</td>
<td>daras-naa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-ta</td>
<td>daras-ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-ti</td>
<td>daras-ti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>-tumaa</td>
<td>daras-tumaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-tum</td>
<td>daras-tum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-tunna</td>
<td>daras-tunna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>daras-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>daras-at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-aa</td>
<td>daras-aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-ataa</td>
<td>daras-ataa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-uu</td>
<td>daras-uu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-na</td>
<td>daras-na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Perfective forms.
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*. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Affix</th>
<th>Verb + Affix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>ؕ-א</td>
<td>ؕ-א-דרusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>na-درusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ta-</td>
<td>ta-درusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ta-iin</td>
<td>ta-درus-ينا</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ta-aani</td>
<td>ta-درus-aani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ta-aani</td>
<td>ta-درus-aani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ta-uuna</td>
<td>ta-درus-uuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ta-na</td>
<td>ta-درus-na</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ya-</td>
<td>ya-درusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ta-</td>
<td>ta-درusu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ya-aani</td>
<td>ya-درus-aani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ta-aani</td>
<td>ta-درus-aani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-uu</td>
<td>دارس-uu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-na</td>
<td>دارس-na</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

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-PRSThe-lesson-ACC
   ‘He doesn’t write his lesson.’

   b. lam tu-safer
   the-lady-NOM NEG.PST 3SG.F-travel.PRS
   ‘The lady did not travel.’

   c. lan y-safer
   Khalid-NOM NEG.FUT 3SG.M-travel
   ‘Khalid will not travel.’

(9) a. *laakatab-a l-dars-a
   NEG write.3SG.M-PST the-lesson
   ‘He did not write the lesson.’
b. *ʔal-fatat-u  lam  safara-t  (10)  a. *t-tullaab-u  daras-uu  laa
the-lady-NOM  NEG.PST  travel.3SG.F  the-students-NOM  study-PST.3MP  NEG
'The lady did not travel.'  'The students studied.'

c. *Khalid-u  lan  safar-a
Khalid-NOM  NEG.FUT  travel.PST.3S.M
‘Khalid will not travel.’

Benmamoun (2000) provided a syntactic representation for this first group of negative elements. He stated that negative markers in Arabic head their own functional projections and that the NegP projection occurs between the tense phrase (TP) and verb phrase (VP). Thus, negative elements in Standard Arabic occupy the head of Neg (as cited in Alsalem, 2012), as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Syntactic representation of first group of negative elements.

The verb cannot move to tense across the negative head to yield an ungrammatical form. These sentences are ungrammatical because they violate minimality, as illustrated in (10), taken from Aoun, Benmammoun, and Choueiri (2010).

2.3.2 Second group of negative markers in Standard Arabic  The second group comprises laysa, which only occurs with present tense. It agrees with the subject in gender and number, as in (11), where laysa becomes laysa-t to indicate that the following subject is singular and feminine.

(11)  a. laysat  t-talibat-u  ya-drusunna
NEG.3SG.F  the-student-NOM  3PL.F-study
‘The students don’t study.’
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.

\[(12) \quad \text{a. } maa \text{ } saafar-at \text{ } Hind-un \]

\[\text{NEG } \text{travel.pst.3sg.f } \text{Hind-nom}\]

‘Hind did not go on a trip.’

\[\text{b. } maa \text{ } yu-saafiru \text{ } Samr-un \text{ } ?illa \text{ } fii \text{ } s-sayfi \]

\[\text{NEG } \text{3sg.m-travel.pre } \text{Amr-nom} \text{ except in the-summer}\]

‘Amr travels only during the summer.’

\[\text{c. } maa \text{ } muhhammadun \text{ } kaatib-un \]

\[\text{NEG } \text{Mohammad writer.3sg.m-nom}\]

‘Mohammad is not a writer.’

\[\text{d. } maa \text{ } hindun \text{ } hazinatun} \]

\[\text{NEG } \text{Hind sad.adj}\]

‘Hind is not sad.’

\[\text{Figure 5. Tree diagram of (12c).}\]

3 Sentential negation in Jizani Arabic

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 Jizani Arabic. Jizan is a city in the southwest corner of Saudi Arabia, bordering Yemen to the south.

In Jizani Arabic, sentential negation is expressed by three elements in verbal sentences: the proclitic *ma*, the single negator *miʃ*, and the bipartite negative marker *ma...ʃ*. 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 ?kal, 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 Jizani Arabic 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 y?kal. In (13e), the verb is in future tense; negating a future-tense clause via ma...f results in an ungrammatical sentence in Jizani Arabic.

(13) a. ma-kal-f
   l-walad futur-uh
   NEG1-2SG.M-eat.PST-NEG2 the-boy
   breakfast-his
   ‘The boy didn’t eat his breakfast.’

b. *kal-f
   l-walad futur-uh
   eat.PST.3SG.M-NEG2 the-boy breakfast-his
   ‘The boy didn’t eat his breakfast.’

c. l-walad ma-kal-f
   futur-uh
   the-boy NEG1-3SG.M.eat.PST-NEG2 breakfast-his
   ‘The boy didn’t eat his breakfast.’

d. ma-ykal-f
   l-walad futur-uh
   NEG-eat.PST.3SG.M-NEG the-boy breakfast-his
   ‘The boy didn’t eat his breakfast.’

e. *ma sa-kal-f
   l-walad futur-uh
   NEG FUT-eat.3SG.M-NEG the-boy breakfast-his
   ‘The boy will not eat his breakfast.’

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.
Table 3. Examples of pronouns with ma-ʃ.

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

(14)  a. ma-huwa-ʃ jameel

NEG1-he-NEG2 beautiful

‘He is not beautiful.’

b. ma-hum-ʃ t-tullab

NEG1-they-NEG2 students

‘They are not students.’

3.2 Single negative marker miʃ The negator miʃ 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 miʃ 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 miʃ is only allowed to negate nominal clauses in Jizani Arabic. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate (15c)-(15d).
(15) a. Huwa ُمض jameel

he NEG beautiful

‘He is not beautiful.’

b. Hiya ُمض Jameel-a

she NEG beautiful-f

‘She is not beautiful.’

c. Hum ُمض t-tullab

they NEG students

‘They are not students.’

d. Ahmed ُمض jameel

Ahmed NEG handsome.M

‘Ahmed is not handsome.’

e. Al-bayt-u ُمض kabir

the-house-NOM NEG big

‘The house is not big.’

f. *Al-walad-u ُمض katab
dars-uh

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

lesson-his

‘The boy did not write his lesson.’

3.3 Negative marker ma In Jizani Arabic, 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.
4 CONCLUSION

This paper highlighted the varied syntax of sentential negation in Standard Arabic and Jizani Arabic. 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 ma do not carry tense or agreement. Next, ma and associated negative markers in Jizani Arabic were discussed. The discontinuous negative marker ma...ʃ appears with verbal sentences, the independent negative marker mi ʃ 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 ʃ developed from the word ʃay ‘thing’ (Ouhalla & Schlonsky, 2002). Benmamoun (2000) stated that ʃ seems to have evolved relatively recently to reinforce ma. Finally, from the data provided in the Jazani Arabic section, the negative particles ma and -ʃ are not found in Standard Arabic. In addition, the use of the negative particle ma in Jazani Arabic is similar to ma in Standard Arabic.

REFERENCES


