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## The Ecology of Case in Modern Standard Arabic

### Abstract

This article studies the developmental behavior of case in Modern Standard Arabic. In the first section, I introduce the position of the case system in pre-Islamic Arabic. It is important to note that case was irrelevant in function and ambivalent in use. Despite that unstable position of case, grammarians of Arabic both medieval and modern give case a prominent position in their theoretical frameworks and in their books. Section two discusses examples from theoretical and didactic works of grammar from both Arab and Western scholars of Arabic. This prominent position allows the case system to be present both in the consciousness of users and in the structures of Modern Standard Arabic. In the third section, I will discuss examples from the modern use of case. I will show that despite the low function of case in Modern Standard Arabic it is present in the minds and texts of users.

### Keywords

language ecology, development, case, Arabic dialects, Modern Standard Arabic, Classical Arabic.

### Introduction

This article tries to explain a general phenomenon in the development of the Modern Standard Arabic structures, namely the persistence of obsolete formal expressions of a particular grammatical concept alongside the innovation instead of the innovation replacing the obsolete form. The article makes the claim that this phenomenon is caused by a particular configuration of the ecological circumstances of the language. It studies the ambivalent and variable behavior of the iconic feature of case in the Modern Standard Arabic as a reflection of the conflicting effects of contradictory ecological factors in the development

of the Arabic language. It is the purpose of this article to show, through the analysis of the case system in modern Arabic, that the linguistic and developmental situation of modern Arabic is a function of a developmental model in which there is a balance of internal and external preventative and permissive ecology; the state of the case system is a single reflex of this model.

Taking the modern linguistic situation in general (standard and dialects), we can see that all modern dialects of Arabic, urban, rural, and also Bedouin, lost the case system early in their history. These dialects seem to have lost case early in their development after the Arab conquests. Very few possible and irrefutable residues of the system linger in these varieties, if any. We can also see that the system is present, or at least available, in Classical Arabic, but it is not stable in Classical/Modern Standard Arabic, despite the low functional load of the system since the pre-Islamic times. The argument of this article is that certain prohibitive ecological factors prevent the case system from decay in Classical Arabic. These factors did not exist in the case of the dialects. Therefore, the system decayed. It is also the purpose of this article to suggest some of these prohibitive factors and demonstrate their force. The internal linguistic and external socio-cultural ecology of the case system are proposed here as the direct cause of both this lingering and ambivalent behavior.

Within Modern Standard Arabic, the presence and absence of case is not absolute. The presence of case marking in a particular text differs according to several internal linguistic and external factors. One is the types of texts; traditional texts in print often exhibit more case markings than modern texts. The presence of case marking also differs according to the subject matter of the text. News texts are the least texts in terms of case representation. In addition, the presence of case varies also according to mode; spoken Modern Standard Arabic reflects more case marking than written Modern Standard Arabic. And recited spoken texts differ in case representation from improvised spoken texts. Variation and ambivalence is not only in the presence, absence or even in the degree of presence. There is also a wide range of variation in correctness. When case is present in a text, especially spoken texts, it ranges from full correct representation to partial correct representation, to partial incorrect representation to total absence. In all of these cases, however, the shape of case in the text does not seem to carry a semantic or syntactic function. The main issue here, however, is that despite the apparent signs of decay the system suffered as early as the pre-Islamic times, and despite its low functional load, it remains in partial existence in Classical/Modern Standard Arabic (see Al-Sharkawi 2014).

This article claims that both the persistence of a malfunctioning system and its ambivalence in the current linguistic situation are a result of a combination of and balance among certain conflicting historical ecological factors. These historical factors allowed the system to persist although it decayed and disappeared in the dialects. The same factors allowed the system to be ambivalent. There

existed in the case of Classical/Modern Standard Arabic a combination of preventative external and internal ecological factors that did not exist in the ancestors of the modern dialects. The absence of these factors allowed the case system to decay and disappear completely in the dialects; but their presence prevented its disappearance in Classical Arabic and its modern offspring.

The ecology of any language in general goes beyond the mere circumstantial factors of the language family it belongs to, the numbers of speakers who use it, the communicative functions in which it is used, the countries in which it is used, its structures, the marked-ness of form, and the variability of form to include the cognitive perspectives and mental images of the language in question (Blackledge 2008: 27). While this view seems straightforward and inclusive enough, it is difficult and indeed over-simplistic (Steffensen and Fill 2014: 7) to generalize it to all languages. In this respect, there are different sides to the concept of ecology. It is, therefore, important to note that the discussion here is limited to the parts of the ecology of Arabic that are deemed here relevant to the case system.

Ecology, according to the purposes of this article, is the set of external political, social, demographic and/or internal structural factors that influence linguistic behavior, learning or perception through interaction in a particular speech community. I propose here that to understand the persistence of the case system in Classical/Modern Standard Arabic, we need to understand the ecological factors that prevented it from decay. As far as the behavior of the case system is concerned, Arabic faces two sets of ecological factors: permissive and preventative. Permissive factors allow a structural innovation to spread. We will discuss two of these factors in this article, namely the lack of functional load and the absence of the system in the dialects. These two permissive factors are dependent on the typological motivation of economy. Economy stipulates that expression should be, when possible, minimized (Croft 2003: 102). According to this principle, the dialects may have dropped the case system after it became functionally irrelevant to economize. Classical/Modern Standard Arabic did not respond to the permissive ecological factors and stands in violation of the economy principle.

Preventative ecological factors do not allow an innovation to replace the traditional form. As far as case is concerned, we can distinguish three preventative factors: iconicity, dissemination, and a change in function. Iconicity means that the structure reflects a world perspective or an attitude towards the language (Croft 2003: 102). The insistence of grammarians on directing their attention to case reflects their understanding that case marks the variety they described. This attention perpetuated the impression, which in turn, justifies the appearance of case in educational materials, dissemination. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Classical variety began to acquire new modes of expressions. When it became spoken, the redundant case system acquired a phonetic non-syntactic function. This

function helps the system linger in the consciousness and performance of the language. It is to be noticed that iconicity and dissemination make the system less marked as it becomes more frequent. These preventative factors make the case system typologically less marked.

## The Argument

The argument of this article is very simple. It takes the behavior of the case system in Modern Standard Arabic as an example for the influence of preventative ecological factors on innovating structures in this variety. Even when traditional structures such as the case system innovate and develop towards decay, and innovative forms emerge, external non-linguistic and internal structural ecological factors prevent them from replacing the traditional features with the new formal feature. These preventative factors, instead, allow the traditional form to be present and usable along side the innovation. Despite the development that was taking place in the case system since pre-Islamic times and despite that it was probably on its way to disuse as was case in the dialects, preventative external ecological cognitive and socio-cultural factors prevented Modern Standard Arabic from behaving like the dialects and abandoning the case system all together. Instead, the case system lingered in Modern Standard Arabic, albeit redundant.

The argument will be structured in three main sections. I will start by a quick look at the status of case marking in the pre-Islamic Arabic dialects. The main purpose of this section is to show that case was in a state of decay before the Arab conquests and it was not as functional as it seems in the traditional books of grammar. This section gives the structural and symbolic permissive ecologies that should theoretically allowed the case system to decay and fall to disuse as in the dialects. In the following section I will discuss the status of case in traditional and modern Arabic grammar and in didactic grammatical manuals. The main purpose of this section is to show that despite the marginal function and potential disuse of the case system since pre-Islamic times it retained a priority position in the minds and works of Arab grammarians. This section presents the preventative social (standardization) and symbolic (iconicity) preventative ecological factors, which allow the system to remain, albeit as a shadow. That combination of factors may have come from the saliency of the system in the pre-Islamic poetry and the *Qur'ān*. This section is merely a preliminary discussion of the socio-cultural and cognitive prohibitive ecologies. The third and final section shows how the case system lingers in the linguistic context of Modern Standard Arabic use. This section introduces the relevance of the case system, not as a morpho-syntactic system but as a set of word-boundary short vowels, in the new functions and modes of use Modern Standard Arabic introduced.

These new modes became additional linguistic preventative ecological factors that fortified the system against decay and total loss.

The article will conclude by stating that preventative ecological factors allowed the case system in Modern Standard Arabic to be present as a shadow iconic feature and the permissive ecological factors enabled the new modes of language use (spoken Modern Standard Arabic) to use the case system as a phonetic tool for the separation between syllables at word boundaries.

### **The Case System in Old Arabic<sup>1</sup>**

In this section, I will not discuss the use and variation of case in pre-Islamic dialects in detail. I (al-Sharkawi 2008, 2010 and 2015) discussed elsewhere. I will rather look at the functional load of the case system in pre-Islamic Arabic and its status in the dialects. The main purpose is to show that it was in a state of development, and was probably on the way to decay and disuse in all the Peninsular dialects if not decayed already in some. Despite the fact that modern dialects of Arabic do not exhibit any reflexes of the case system, and despite the fact that they have not reflected any shadows of the system since their beginning (Corriente 1973: 156) case is still present, albeit marginal in Modern Standard Arabic. From the scattered and incomplete information we have about pre-Islamic dialects from the books of Arabic grammar we can make the assumption that generally the case system was not stable. It also seems that it was less stable in some dialects than in others; the case in Hijaz and Yemeni dialects was shakier than it was in Najdi dialects at the time (al-Sharkawi 2008: 691). But in all cases the system's functional yield was minimal.

Although pre-Islamic Western Arabian dialects retained a form of the case at the end of nouns, the system lost its sensitiveness to its position within the clause. In many cases, Azd for instance, the case was kept at the end of nouns in pause position, although Classical Arabic elides case at the end of nouns in pause (al-Sharkawi 2010: 45). In addition, after the alleviated 'an and 'in the predicate takes the accusative case although these two particles lose their effect on the noun when they come alleviated in Classical Arabic (al-Sharkawi 2010: 48). In addition to insensitiveness towards morphological position, the case system lost its response to the agency of particles before the sentence. The predicate of kānain Hijaz did not acquire the accusative case, but the nominative case like the subject of the kāna sentence and like the subject and predicate of the regular nominal sentence. This is in opposition to Classical Arabic kāna sentences where the predicate acquires an accusative case while the subject acquires a nominative one. By the same token 'inna sentences in Classical Arabic give the subject an

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<sup>1</sup> For a general overview of Arabic, see Kaye (1987).

accusative case and give the predicate a nominative one. In Hijaz, however, both parts of the sentence acquire an accusative case (al-Sharkawi 2010: 49). These are, admittedly, few examples. But their mere presence is indicative.

Although examples of non-confirmatory use of case in the medieval Arabic main stream grammatical literature are few and scattered, and although they come from a host of different dialects, they are enough to indicate that before the Arab conquests of the Middle East and North Africa, the case system was not stable. Or, at least, it was in a state of variation. In addition to this, there is reliable research that indicates that this instability might have actually started much earlier than the sixth century CE. Diem (1973) studied Arabic proper names in the ancient Aramaic inscriptions of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The important aspect of these proper nouns is that at the end of each noun there is a letter indicating a vowel, u, a, or i, which formally resemble the case marking vowels of Classical Arabic and. Diem (1973: 227–237) found that around 95% of the simple nouns end in a w/u letter. The rest of the nouns ended in either a, y/i or in no vowel letter at all. Diem (1973: 235) assumes from these facts, and correctly so, that the w/u letter at the end of the majority of proper nouns can be interpreted as the nominative case in Arabic, or a shadow thereof. This letter must have been added to the noun to represent the once heard case vowel, but when the system decayed in pronunciation, it lingered in the writing system, which tends to be more conservative.

Diem further divides the corpus of proper nouns into theophoric and non-theophoric names. In the category of compound theophoric names, some nouns ended in no vowel letter at all, but some other nouns ended in a y/i letter. This letter can be interpreted as an echo of the kasra case of the construct in Arabic. As for non-theophoric compound names, there was either a w/u letter ending or no vocalic ending at all. Because non-theophoric compounds were developed later than theophoric compound names they ended with the invariable w/u vowel letter, and were added to the first part without attention to the construct state the addition creates. Diem assumes that the theophoric compound nouns ending in y/i and the simple nouns ending in w/u letters belong to an earlier period where the Nabataean Arabs retained a functional case system, because the final w and y letters must have represented the nominative and genitive cases respectively. But by the 1<sup>st</sup> century when these inscriptions were written, the Nabataean variety of Arabic must have lost its case system. The proof for this assumption is the discrepant writing of compound theophoric and compound non-theophoric nouns. The use of w/u in non-theophoric compound nouns and the y/i in theophoric compound nouns means that the case system was no longer in active use, and it was only a writing convention in the theophoric compounds (Diem 1973: 235). Diem further assumes that the use of bare nouns without a final vowel letter ending may be a reflection of the everyday reality of the case system use among Nabataean Arabs of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

In addition to the instability of the case system in that early period at that linguistic border area, the same system was functionally less than heavy immediately before the Arab conquests throughout the Arabian Peninsula. In a series of articles, Corriente (1971 and 1973) demonstrates that the system in the 6<sup>th</sup> century was not more than a redundant decaying relic of amore functional earlier system. Corriente, in fact, goes as far as to say that the case-less forms of Arabic came to being during that time and even overlapped with the case-full forms in time and in place (1971: 23), mainly because case on the eve of Islam was merely redundant as were some other synthetic features of Old Arabic. Although Classical Arabic, Bedouin dialects and even some of the urban dialects continued to use the case system on the eve of the conquests, the functional yield of the case system in these varieties was negligible. A low functional yield means that the variety in question can do without the formal feature in question. Linguistically, therefore, the presence or absence of the case system amounts to no real communicative or structural value, except probably that of social prestige (Corriente 1971: 25–28). The linguistic functional load was that low from the earliest examples we could find in Arabic, as the structural make up of the language was generally analytical in nature. What the newer varieties of Arabic after the conquests did was merely to discard that dysfunctional system (Corriente 1971: 29).

To demonstrate this point, Corriente analyzed different texts (both prose and poetry) from different periods of time. Then he applied to each case morpheme the communication test. It is a test to determine if the case morpheme is vital in communicating a semantic message or not (1971: 34). The chosen samples include texts from pre-Islamic poetry, the Qur'ān, early Islamic poetry, early second century prose, few lines from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century play and few lines from a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century novel. From the pre-Islamic poetry sample and from the Qur'ānic sample, Corriente (1971: 37–38) concluded that the functional instances of the case morphemes are indeed very rare, which indicates that the system might have been more functional in earlier stages of Arabic. From the Islamic poetry sample, Corriente notices the same lack of functional load, which means that the persistent use of the malfunctioned system acquires a non-linguistic dimension, probably a prestige one. If we look at the distribution of the case system functionality in text types, we can notice that the case system is much more functional and more physically present in verse than in prose. Corriente ascribes this phenomenon to the imitative mode of Arab poets of earlier historical artistic models (1971: 40). Case may also have played a role in the metric structure of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Zwittler's (1978) discussion of the relevance of the case system in pre-Islamic poetry.

It seems that the case system was not only functionally irrelevant in the standardization period. It may have been somewhat unstable as well.<sup>3</sup> It seems that even most conscious users of the Classical model even after its standardization make mistakes in the use of the case system. Corriente (1975) takes this uncomfortable use as a further indication to the effect of that low functional load he discussed earlier (1973 and 1975) on the utility of the system. He discusses examples of deviation from the Classical Arabic case norms in the examples and illustrations of *kitāb al-'aġānī*. Some of the examples he discusses point out to an invariable use of a number ending, such as invariable duals (1975: 52), case mixing (1975: 57), and the total absence of case marking (1975: 60). The reasons of such misuse or its implications are beyond the scope and interest of this article. It is important to note that despite the low functional load and despite the apparent lack of knowledge about, and the deviant use of, the case system, the system remains an integral part of Classical Arabic prescriptive and conscious grammatical inventory.

In fact, case may have acquired a special position in the medieval Arab grammatical mentality only with the standardization process. Owens (1998), in his attempt to determine the position of case in proto-Arabic draws the attention to terminological and interpretive issues in the case system among Early Arab grammarians. As far as we are concerned here, these issues point to the shaky position of the case system in the 8<sup>th</sup> century among even masters of the standardization process, when Classical Arabic began to be standardized. Sibawayhi puts allot of effort into making clear the distinction between lexically-determined short vowels at the end of words and syntactically determined short vowels at the end of nouns and verbs, the latter being morphological case suffixes. A final –u suffix is designated as *raf'* when it is a morpho-syntactic nominative case suffix, the final –a suffix is designated as *našb* when it is a morpho-syntactic accusative case suffix, and a final –i suffix is designated as *ġarr* when it is a morpho-syntactic genitive case suffix. The same three vowels are designated as *ḍamma*, *fatha* and *kasra* when they are lexical sounds (1998: 62). Owens (1998: 62 and 1990: 159) suggests, and I agree, that al-Farrā' earlier use of both sets of terms invariably for both cases of syntactic and lexical word-final position and word-internal positions is an indication that both phenomena were looked at as one and the same. Or, at least, they were confused. It seems that Sibawayhi's terminological distinction was an attempt to clarify this confusion.

Let us now proceed to talk very briefly about the second point Owens (1998) draws our attention to, variability.<sup>4</sup> What is interesting here is that there

<sup>3</sup> For case in pre-Islamic Arabia and early Islamic times see Fück (1950).

<sup>4</sup> On the behavior of case in pre-Islamic times and early Islamic times, see al-Sharkawi (2008) and (2010), and also see Versteegh (1984).



is a wide range of acceptability and possibility for different case ending markers on words at one and the same position in the sentence. Owens (1998: 63 ff.) introduces Sibawahi's explanations for such phenomena in Arabic grammars. He indicates (1998: 64) that such examples abound. Although Sibawahi has an evaluative terminology that allows him to rank more acceptable cases as opposed to less acceptable (see Carter 1973), Owens (1998: 65) correctly indicate that this ranking does not lead to rejection of a particular utterance or use of a case as incorrect. It usually leads to preferring one instance to another. In fact, a casual look at the *kitāb* of Sibawayhi shows that there is a lot of discussion that would indicate free variation in the use of the case system (Owens 1998: 65). In some cases, Sibawayhi explains variation by dialectal reasons, and some other times syntactic reasons are given. Interestingly, although in some cases, Sibawayhi gives his preference for one variant over another, in some other cases more than one variants are just as acceptable to him (Owens 1998: 67). If this analysis is true, the strict prescriptive case allocation and marking were a work in progress during the formative years of Arabic grammar.

In the following section, we will see that the case system remains both a theoretical pillar and an organizational element for traditional and modern grammarians when composing and organizing their often-detailed works of Arabic grammar. Indeed, it seems that the purpose of these works of grammar was to explain/describe/prescribe why and/or why not a case marker is used in a particular position. The main argument of the section is that case and its morphological markings remain such an important organizational and conceptual factor in the traditional Arab grammatical theory despite their low functional load since pre-Islamic times, their potential lack in some dialects, and even their shaky position in the minds of traditional grammarians of Arabic. Then, despite linguistic reality to which the New Arabic varieties were responding by dropping the case system in the new dialect creation in the Middle East and North Africa, grammarians were freezing a time capsule of the case system that was to linger in the Arabic language to our times.

## **Grammarians<sup>5</sup> and the Case System**

In this section, I am going to discuss how the case system functions both as an organizational factor in both traditional and modern grammars of Arabic and as the iconic feature marking the variety. I will also discuss how it operates in the purely didactic texts and educational text books in the modern times, which are presumably responsible for disseminating knowledge of Arabic grammar on a massive scale. I consider the halting effect of the grammarians' attitudes and

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on traditional Arabic grammar and Arab grammarians, see Versteegh (2003: 279–281).

works as the preventative ecological factor that prevents the case system from going into oblivion as in the dialects of Arabic, Bedouin and urban. The goal of this section is to show both that the case system is given a status in the theoretical grammatical works that is different from its status in real linguistic performance as described in the previous section. And, as far as didactic works of grammar are concerned, disseminate this presumed status to the general communities of users. Several examples of grammars are selected here for discussion, two from the classical period and the rest from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also, two didactic works were selected as illustrations, one from medieval times and also one from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This and the previous sections show together that the case system was not stable since pre-Islamic times, and was functionally not very heavy and was even absent from some varieties of Arabic. But books of grammar seem to treat the case system as an important structural component of Classical Arabic and thus provide preventative ecological factors.

1. Let us begin from the beginning of the tradition, and discuss where grammarians situate the case system in their works in the classical period and in modern times. Sibawayhi, to whom goes back the first and most detailed book of Arabic grammar in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, puts the case system in the second chapter immediately after he discusses the parts of speech. The distinction in terminology between final lexical short vowels and case ending marker suffixes aside (we have alluded to it in the previous section), Sibawayhi (*kitāb*, p. 13 ff.) introduces the short vowel suffixes on nouns and imperfective verbs. Determining what comes at the end of both and what follows one category and not the other. He introduces case markers before he introduces basic grammatical underlying principles such as marked-ness (*kitāb*, p. 20–23) and the basic tenets of his theory, i.e. *isnād* ‘agency’ (*kitāb*, p. 23–33).

When Sibawayhi introduces the functions of his parts of speech in the sentence. He starts systematically by nouns, and describes all its conditions. He discusses the nouns that accept the nominative case first. He, therefore, starts by the noun as agent of a verb and agent of a passive verb phrase (*kitāb*, 33 ff.). He then (p. 44) moves to describe the nouns that take the accusative case. He does not need to discuss the direct object of the verb for a stretch of text. He then feels obligated to explain some nouns that take the nominative and the accusative when they are not an agent or an object of the verb respectively (*kitāb*, p. 45). He explains the subject and the predicate of *kāna* and its sisters. By the same token, Sibawayhi (*kitāb*, p. 72 and 73) describes the cases where the accusative case is given to a noun when it is not a direct object. He describes the case of *mā aḥsana zaydan* ‘how good is Zayd’. He then moves to describe another case (*kitāb*, p. 73) where a particular noun is given a case after two verbs, to one of which it is an agent and a direct object to the other. Neighborhood

determines the case suffixed to the noun. If the noun to the immediate left of the verb is its agent, that noun takes the nominative case. If the noun to the immediate left to the verb is its object, it takes the accusative case. In short, he groups together different structures that have nothing in common except that they receive the same case marker either regularly or in particular cases.

Ibn ġinni, few centuries after Sibawayhi, talks about the case system in the same early position of his book *al-Luma'*. Despite the fact that the attitude of both grammarians to the subject matter is different, they both seem to hold the case system in a position of extreme importance. Ibn ġinni takes a purely formal descriptive point of view towards the language while Sibawayhi takes a syntactic/semantic approach to the same material. But both scholars talk of the case system in the same manner. Ibn ġinni, like Sibawayhi, discusses the case system after introducing parts of speech. Ibn ġinni's formal perspective dictates that he describes the position of the case system at the end of the word and allocates sections to the appearance of the different case short vowels on different types of nouns, sound, vowel-ending and vowel-and-hamza-ending and hamza-ending in different ways in the singular. He even describes the case on the six nouns. Ibn ġinni then moves to describing the case on dual and plural nouns. In discussing plural nouns, Ibn ġinni makes the distinction between sound and broken plurals, and the distinctive mark is that case on broken plural is suffixed to the final letter as it is suffixed to the singular noun. Sound plural nouns, on the other hand, change the plural suffix morpheme itself according to case between its two allomorphs –un and –in.

After introducing cases on individual nouns of different formal shapes, Ibn ġinni defines the positions that give different nouns different cases. His discussion is organized according to case. He begins first by the positions that give nouns the nominative case. Then he moves to the positions that give the nouns the accusative and the genitive cases, respectively. He then moves to describe the formal possibilities for each position, as a single word, a phrase or even a sentence. He describes then the cases where the order of position changes or even deleted all together. In discussing the nominative position, Ibn ġinni treats different syntactic phenomena, the subject and the predicate of the nominal sentence, the agent of a verbal sentence, the object of a passive verb, the subject of *kāna* and its sisters and the predicate of the *'inna* and its sisters. In discussing the accusative position, Ibn ġinni groups together the direct object, absolutes, objects of causation, predicates of *kāna*, subjects of *'inna*, objects of verbs of doubt, exception, the *ḥāl*, and *tamyīz*. By the same token, in the discussion of the genitive position, Ibn ġinni crops together objects of prepositions and second nouns in the possessive structure. The only factor in common among individual items of these groups is the case marker.

The same attitude towards case persists in modern Arabic grammar. Modern grammars written by Arab scholars are not very different. They also favor the

case system and introduce it early in the work, making the impression that the purpose of writing the grammar is to explain the use of the case system. Grammars written by Western scholars take a different perspective on the case system. Their position in these modern books, which in some cases may carry a different organizational perspective than that of Sibawayhi and Ibn ġinni, is primary. In some cases it seems that whole books are designed around the case system despite its more than apparent marginality in the structural make-up of Arabic and despite the claim of these books to address the contemporary functional rules in the Arabic language. In addition to the claim of writing the rules of contemporary Arabic, modern grammarians also make two bold claims: one being that they are recording a simplified and purified grammar of the language that avoids the complications and obsolete rules of previous works either in organization or in the data used to make the grammar or give example. The second claim is that these books assume that they give a comprehensive look of the structures of the language. Despite the fact that some of these books seem to be influenced by the western style of grammar writing (they address structures from global to local or from local to global systematically), the case system remains in all of these books a pivotal component.

Here, I will discuss two examples. Fayyād (1996: 7) claims to introduce the contemporary structures of the Arabic language in a new method of discussion. He divides his book into nine major sections, under each of which, there are several articles. Section seven deals with the sound laws and the phonological word structure in Arabic. Section eight deals with the morphological structure of the individual word, and section nine is an introduction to the language skills such as reading, writing, the use of dictionaries, and punctuation marks in contemporary Arabic. These last three sections are beyond the scope of this article. I am more concerned with the first six sections, as they are concerned with behavior of individual words and the structure of phrases and sentences in Arabic. In a manner reminiscent of traditional Arabic grammars, Fayyād introduces in section one the parts of speech and the case system. Section two introduces sentence types, while section three introduces different kinds of complementizers. Section four discusses case in different structures. Section five deals with semi-verbs and section six discusses what the author calls styles. It is a discussion of questions, negations command, and comparison and other structural formations.

In section one, Fayyād (1996: 13) states that research in Arabic is concerned with either the single word, which is the focus of morphology. Or, it can be concerned with grouping these single words into structures of phrases and sentences with the goal of assigning each word in these structures its correct case ending. To him, this is the function of syntax or the science of case marking. He then defines parts of speech in the same way Sibawayhi does. In article one, he defines the noun formally in a manner reminiscent of Ibn ġinni. He describes

its response to number, gender, definiteness and soundness (1996: 16 ff.). After that, he describes the formal structure of verbs from the point of view of tense, transitivity and soundness. After that Fayyād (1996: 52–59) describes the case system as a common denominator between nouns and the present tense of the verb. Case is treated as one of the affixes that join the end of nouns and verbs in modern Arabic. In article four (Fayyād 1996: 65 ff.) the author details how case is expressed on the noun and the verb. He described case by short vowel suffixes and cases by long vowels at the end of different kinds of nouns (duals and plurals). In addition, he describes the cases in which a noun or a verb deserves a case, but cannot be suffixed with one for a phonological reason, namely that it ends with a long vowel for instance. In such cases the case is not stated but assumed. In section one then case is introduced as a general concept and not as a structural feature that a part of speech acquires when it occupies a particular position in the sentence or phrase.

In section two, where Fayyād describes sentence types in contemporary Arabic, the case system is also prominent in the description, although the main focus seems for a while to be the word order aspect of the structure. After describing the difference between a structure and a sentence from the point of view of completeness in meaning, Fayyād explains the two basic word orders in Arabic as nominal and verbal sentence. When he describes the components of the nominal sentence (Fayyād 1996: 92) he defines the subject as a noun in the nominative that is spoken about and that usually comes in the beginning of the sentence but sometimes might be inverted. He also defines the predicate as a noun in the nominative that modifies the subject, often comes after it, but sometimes comes before the subject and completes the meaning of the sentence. The first feature of both components of the nominal sentence that the author mentions is its case marking. After enumerating the different structural types in which a predicate of a nominal sentence appears, Fayyād (1996: 93) gives examples of different kinds of predicates in nominal sentences, assigns cases to the sentence word by word, and give reasons for the case assigned. Only after that (94 ff.) he discusses cases of correct and incorrect nominal sentence structure, and the cases where a predicate precedes the subject.

Another illustration that thinking about case supersedes the formal or semantic aspect of the structure under investigation comes from Fayyād's (1996: 97 ff.) detailed discussion of the cases where a subject and/or a predicate of the nominal sentence comes in the accusative case instead of the original nominative default one. In this section Fayyād discusses a group of different structural and semantic concepts that have nothing in common except their effect on the case of the subject and predicate. He discusses *'inna* and its sisters and *lā* of absolute negation when dealing with the accusative subject, and discusses the incomplete verbs and verbs of beginning when discussing the accusative predicate. The same order of description happens with verbal sentences. Fayyād (1996: 108) defines the

two basic components of the verbal sentence as the verb and the agent of the verb, defines the agent as a noun in the nominative, and then gives examples of different verbal sentences with case on each word and justification for that case assignment. Again, because the main organizational focus is case, Fayyād (1996: 110 ff.) discusses passive voice structures because the direct object in these structures comes in the nominative and is termed a deputy of the agent. Only after discussing case, does the author move to the discussion of syntactically complicated issues of agreement between the initial verb and its agent.

Section three discusses what the author entitles complementizers. He starts (Fayyād 1996: 116) by defining complementizers as any addition beyond the subject and predicate in the nominal sentence and the verb and agent in a verbal one. He then categorizes complementizers in three categories according to case, genitive, accusative, and those that follow the case of the preceding governing noun (1996: 117). Genitive complementizers are the nouns after prepositions and the second word of a construct structure when the whole phrase is not the subject, predicate or agent of the sentence. Accusative complementizers are the most numerous in the Arabic language. They can come as one of the many objects, adverb of time and place, exception and conditional phrases. Discussing these structures in detail does not concern us here. It is interesting, though, to notice that the author introduces each item and gives examples that show all the allomorphs of the case ending marker. To give but one example, let us discuss the *maf'ūl muṭlaq* (Fayyād 1996: 123–124). The author defines it and then gives examples. He then introduces a chart with sentences that he shows the same structure in all the instances of accusative cases possible. He then gives examples (1996: 124) of the case where the accusative marker is a regular short fathā, cases where the marker is a long y letter at the final suffix, and cases where the case must be a fathā but for phonological reasons the original case cannot be represented at the end of the noun.

Although exception and conditional clauses are among the styles or sentence types that the author discusses at great length in section six of the book, he had to mention them among the complementizers as their head nouns receive the accusative case. Leaving them out without mention in the third section would have constituted a gap in the structure of the book since its organization revolves around case marking. Article four of section three introduces the followers, a group of four structural concepts that follow the case of the preceding governing noun. These are the, adjective, abolition, emphasis, and substitutives. What these have in common is that they can receive the three cases according to the position of the governing noun in the noun phrase or sentence. Unit four of the book is a summary and further exemplification for the previous three units. It groups together all the structures that receive a particular case. In article one it introduces the nominative, accusative then genitive basic sentence components. Then the followers follow in a separate article. The author starts with the four followers

that can receive all three cases then moves to those that receive a single case exclusively. In article two, the author introduces phrases and sentences that receive a case but not marking, as they are not individual words. The structure in this and the following articles is a replica of that of article one.

The rest of the units are not important for our purpose here. However, it is important to state that throughout the first three units, the case system seems to be both an organizational element and also an element of purpose or a teaching point. The point of the explanation and argument is to explain why and when a case is attached to the end of a particular noun or a verb. Unit six introduces for the first time the different word orders in Arabic and sentence types. Article one discusses negation, article two discusses questions, article three discusses conditionals, article five discusses appellatives, article six discusses exceptions, and article seven discusses comparatives. Articles four and eight through fourteen do not discuss syntactic structures, but introduce styles of pragmatic and rhetorical nature, such as wonder, hyperbole, enticing, warning, specialization, and *qasam* 'oath'. The reader should notice that there is a strong relationship between the topics discussed in the first seven articles and those that are discussed in the pragmatic and rhetorical part of the unit as I call it. That relationship is that the topics of the first seven articles are syntactic and semantic in nature. The topics of the last eight articles do not have syntactic designation that carries the meaning. From the above, it seems to me that to Fayyād, who I use to illustrate native modern Arabic grammatical thinking, at least the explicit purpose of a grammar of Arabic is to clarify and justify the case allocation. Beyond that point, the lines between semantic and pragmatic issues are blurred to an extent.

This focus goes in harmony with a general trend among modern Arab scholars of Arabic who regard the case system as an integral aspect of the structures of Modern Arabic and that it is the sign that shows the general users' linguistic capacities and skills. In many introductions of modern Arabic grammars there is an explicit concern that the capacity of the layman to allocate case to the end of words is fast dwindling and that means that the language itself is in a progressive state of decay. The danger here, from their point of view, lies in the assumption that language is the container of thought and the vehicle of expressing it. Without a proper use of the case system, therefore, the layman is thought as unable to express their thoughts, and worse still, not have proper thinking to express. It is, therefore, understandable that some scholars find it mandatory to write publications especially dedicated to the case system. Such publications, descriptive and educational, do not only perpetuate the native notion about the presumed functionality of the case system in Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic<sup>6</sup> and its relevance to mental processing and communication.

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<sup>6</sup> For general information about, and features of, Modern Standard Arabic, see McCarus (2008).

They also indicate that the Arabic language may discontinue using a particular feature, but that feature remains a living and cherished member of its structural make-up, albeit a dormant or ambivalent member.

Let us now move to the second example of modern grammars. In the introduction of his *'I'rāb Made Easy: A Study of Rules, Semantics and 'I'rāb*, Abū al-'Abbās (1996: 5) gives a statement that sums up and reiterates both the attitude and the purpose of the majority of modern Arab scholars writing on the subject. "I came to find out" he asserts "over the last 25 years of experience in public education the terrible state of the students of the Arabic language as far as accuracy and *'I'rāb* are concerned. No doubt, language is the vehicle of thought and its container. Without language, we are not able to build the thinking, proactive, and interactive student, the one who is able to express soundly his feelings, ideas and experiences. This weakness and stumbling has its dangers, especially if it expands and affects the *Qur'ān* and traditions of the prophet on the tongues of specialists and public speakers". After stating the similarity of his purpose to that of the emergence of traditional Arabic grammar, he makes the statements (1996: 6) that the purpose of writing grammar rules is to produce correct utterance, speech, reading and writing. Based on this awareness, he claims, he presented the rules of Arabic and their case marking. There is, then, no wonder that didactic grammars and books of grammar exercises focus on the production of the case system more than they focus on the reproduction of acceptable structures.

Let us now, to understand the pervasive influence of case on the Arab mind, turn to an example that illustrates the Western writers' treatment of the case system in Modern Standard Arabic.<sup>7</sup> Although the case system does not seem to be as important to Western scholars who undertake writing grammars of Modern Standard Arabic as it is to their Arab colleagues, it all the same receives sizable attention in Western grammars of Arabic. I will discuss here Ryding (2005) as I assume one example suffices to drive the point home. Ryding takes a formal structural approach to Modern Standard Arabic. She starts from the smallest unit of the language, the sound and letter, and progresses to word formation in its morpho-syntactic aspect and ends with phrases and clauses. After a brief overview of the Arabic language history, she proceeds to the sounds of Arabic and its syllable structure. Then, in article three, she moves into the morphological structure of the individual word. In this article she discusses the main principles of derivation and root-pattern systems in Arabic, and gives a birds-eye-view of the inflectional morphology in .In the description of inflectional categories of Arabic Ryding (2005: 56) discusses case and mood endings for two paragraphs at the end of the article. This brief mention is to illustrate a previous statement

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to our discussion of Ryding (2005), see also Badawi et al. (2004).



that she made earlier in the article that inflectional morphology in Arabic touches on syntax as it touches on morphology.

In chapter four, Ryding discusses basic sentence structure in Arabic. She does not start by introducing case marking like her Arab colleagues, but basic principles such as agreement, government and dependency relations (2005: 57–58). She then moves to describe basic sentence structure from a formal perspective. After determining sentences on the basis of word order, she describes noun-initial sentences and verb-initial sentences without mentioning any major role for the case system. The reader should not assume that Ryding neglected any reference to the case of words in sentences all together. When case is mentioned, it is used only as an added element to the description of the position under discussion. Let us take her discussion of equational sentences as an example. After defining these sentences as verbless (2005: 59) she proceeds to talk about the components of these sentences. They start with a pronoun, a noun or a noun phrase as the subject, and become complete with a comment on the pronoun, noun or noun phrase subject. Then she lists the structural possibilities of the comment predicate. At the end of that description, Ryding says it is an equational sentence because its two components equate one another. Under a small subtitle, “The Structure of Equational Sentences”, Ryding (2005: 59) gives formal features of the components of equational sentences. She states that the subject and predicate are both in the nominative case, if single nouns, if the predicate is a noun, an adjective, or a pronoun, it agrees with the subject in number and gender but not in definiteness, and finally, the subject is the first element of the sentence and the predicate follows, except in few cases that she goes into in no great detail (2005: 61).

In chapter five, Ryding describes the different morphological types of nouns in Arabic. In so doing, she does not mention case on nouns. In chapter six, she describes participles. Again, here she does not allude to case. Case is, however, mentioned in chapter seven, where Ryding discusses nominal gender, humanness, number, definiteness and case. She describes the form and location on different noun types in Arabic. She proceeds then to give examples for the nominative, genitive and accusative cases in their basic short vowel form and in their long letter allomorphs. The author does not seem to find it important to mention the case system again after discussing its position as an inflectional aspect in the language. The difference between Ryding on the one hand and her Arab medieval and modern Arab colleagues on the other hand is obvious. The case system seems to those Arab grammarians to be an impetus for description and a point of organization for the order of structures. To Ryding, however, the case system is merely an aspect of the inflectional morphology of Arabic. Talking about case marking happens locally when the author describes the features of a particular morphological or syntactic structure.

In the previous paragraphs of this section, I introduced the first external mental non-linguistic preventative ecological factor, namely the iconicity of the case system in Classical Arabic. I will now move to introducing the position of the case system in the didactic works of Arabic grammar in the classical and modern times. This discussion introduces another external non-linguistic preventative factor, namely the dissemination of the system from the specialists to the consciousness of the laypeople. The relevant works in the Arabic canon are divided into three main kinds. There are, first, simplified rules of the language that organize grammatical concepts in a student-friendly fashion in presumably practical manuals, illustrate them with plenty of examples, and parse the examples in great details. Second, there are grammar exercise books whose goal is to provide learners with numerous examples containing a particular grammar point in its different forms from various linguistic sources and periods of time and in varying degrees of difficulty followed by extensive drills. Third, there is a group of didactic books that is a combination of both the previous methods, where the grammar point is explained, illustrated, and followed by drills of varying sorts. In the following few paragraphs, I will give examples from the three general types, starting with simplified grammars. The main focus here is the modern context of language use. But I will start with a medieval example to show that the attitude towards case, in addition to case itself, are inherited from traditional Arab grammarians' time.

2. In his *'alfiyya*, Ibn Mālik starts by laying out the parts of speech in Arabic as usual. In so doing, he distinguishes nouns from other parts of speech by their ability to accept one or more of the case endings. The third line of the poem indicates that the distinctive markers of nouns are their ability to accept the genitive, *tanwīn*, the vocative and also the definite article. Ibn Mālik describes the verb, on the other hand, by its ability to accept the prefixes and suffixes of person, gender, number and mood. He then moves to discuss the category of the noun itself. Within nouns, he recognizes a distinction based on the ability of the noun to project the case system. He describes nouns as *mu'rab* 'case-sensitive' and *mabniyy* 'case insensitive'. In his description of the *mabniyy* words, Ibn Mālik identifies that they can end with a short vowel.

Then he moves to describe the case-sensitive words, nouns and verbs without distinction, in general. In this category, he makes the distinction between words that take the 'nominative' and the 'accusative' and those that accept one case the other words do not. The first category includes nouns and verbs, because both of them accept the nominative and the accusative. The second category includes either nouns or verbs. Nouns accept the 'genitive' and verbs do not. Verbs in turn accept *sukūn* 'no-case' and nouns do not. After this distinction, he gives the suffix marker for each case of nouns and verbs (Ibn 'aqīl, *ṣarḥ*,

41–49). He then goes on to detail the cases where long vowels can stand in the position of the short vowel case marker allomorphs, and the conditions of these replacements. Finally, Ibn Mālik explains the situations where one case replaces another. The distinction between case marking on the noun and mood marking on the imperfective verb is beyond the scope of this article. It is only important to note here that the author treats both markers as one and the same structural morphological phenomena.

Ibn Mālik, after exhausting original primary and secondary markers on words, especially nouns, goes to discuss allomorphs of words that carry case within their form. In the subject, he discusses the differential dual and masculine plural suffixes. He explains that these markers in terms of their indication to case and replacement thereof. In the *šarḥ* of Ibn ‘aql of the *’alfiyya* of Ibn Mālik the first 100 pages of the 1<sup>st</sup> volume are dedicated to cases and mood marking on nouns and verbs in their primary and/or secondary forms. The fact that case is the first topic of the didactic work and the fact that it occupies this number of pages mean that it is an important component of the grammatical structure of the language in its morphological and syntactic divisions in the imagination of the author and his generation as well. This primary and priority status of case is not limited to the medieval Arab grammarians such as Ibn Mālik and his interpretations. Modern didactic works of grammar give the case system the same degree of importance.

To illustrate, I will discuss two modern books of didactic nature, *’rāb Made Easy* (Abū al-‘Abbās 1996) and *Applied Grammar of Arabic* (Dakur 1998). The first book is published in Egypt and the second was published in Jordan. Abū al-‘Abbās (1996: 23) starts his book by the main word orders in Arabic. In his description of the nominal sentence, he states that it is composed of two components. The subject is the first and it is a noun in the nominative. The predicate is also in the nominative when it is a noun. After that the author (1996: 23–27) describes the formal features of the two basic components of nominal sentences and their distinctive features. After finishing with the basic nominal sentence, the author moves to describe the conditions in which the subject and the predicate change their original case. Abū al-‘Abbās (1996: 28 ff.) introduces *kāna* and its sisters and *’inna* and its sisters. After discussing *’inna* and its sisters, where the subject is in the accusative, the author (1996: 46) introduces *lā* of absolute negation, because it inflects the same case on its subject. The same method of description is followed with verbal sentences. It is only later on (1996: 73) that the author discusses the semantic and pragmatic differences between nominal and verbal sentences. The only logic for this order is that the author introduces the basic case and then justifies the conditions under which the case on the word is changed.

Unit two (1996: 77) describes non-essential members of both sentence types and adverbials. The author again groups them according to case. So Abū

al-‘Abbās starts with the accusative receiving ones. The first non-essential part discussed is the direct object. Then the author moves to the different kinds of objects and adverbials. In (1996: 116) Abū al-‘Abbās describes the followers that take the same case as the preceding governing noun takes. In unit three, different structures are described as *‘sālīb* ‘styles’. The author discusses exception, conditionals, and questions among other types of word order. To take but one example, Abū al-‘Abbās (1996: 129) introduces exception. He very quickly enumerates its components as the tool of exception, the excepted from and the excepted. In the following paragraph, the author determines the case of the excepted component, which is to be determined according to the condition of the words before it in the sentence. For instance, if the whole sentence is not negated and if the excepted from is verbally stated, the excepted component is in the accusative. If, however, the sentence is negated, the excepted component can either be in the accusative or in the nominative. From the example, it seems that different subtypes of exception are described because they influence the case marking on the nouns involved.

Let us now move to our second modern didactic example. Although the organizational principles of Dakur (1998) are inherently different from Abū al-‘Abbās, the case system remains an integral part of his grammatical thinking and principles of organization and order of presentation. The book moves from smaller to larger syntactic units. It starts with a lengthy discussion of the different types of pronouns in article one, then moves to adverbials and prepositional phrases in chapter three, in chapter four he discusses prepositions, in chapter five, six and seven, introduces duals, sound masculine plurals and sound feminine plurals, in chapter eight talks about the *mamnū* ‘*min aṣ-ṣarf*’ ‘diptotes’, in nine and ten discusses perfective and imperfective verbs, in eleven and twelve the author talks about the verb in the subjunctive and jussive, in chapter thirteen the author talks about the imperatives. In chapter fourteen and fifteen the author introduces the agent and the deputy of the agent, and in sixteen and seventeen comes the discussion of the subject and predicate in nominal sentences. The author takes his book, after that, to larger syntactic units. He discusses *kāna* and its sisters and *inna* and its sister, and *lā* of absolute negation. Another level follows. The author discusses additional elements to verbal sentences. He starts by the direct object and then moves to the other objects. He then discusses phrases that join the verbal sentences such as *hāl* and *tamyīz*. The author then discusses additions to the noun. The book concludes with a rather lengthy discussion of the sentence that can receive a case and those that cannot.

From the list of discussed items, it seems that although the author has a clear intent to using a sound formal structural principled organization that moves from the single word to phrases to basic sentences to additional items on each sentence type, the case system remains a pressing concept that the author

could not do away with. In fact, the author seems to presuppose that the case system is a common knowledge; the book does not introduce them at all as we have seen in the discussion of other books. However, chapter two introduces the types of words that may not accept the case system as if to justify their absence. In addition, after discussing different types of nouns and gender and number inflection, the author finds it, for one reason or another, important to discuss the nouns that can accept some case markers and not others, and those at the end of which one case marker substitutes another. The case system is also present in the discussion of all grammatical concepts. In the discussion of *'inna* and its sisters for instance (Dakur 1998: 195–209), the author starts by mentioning that *'inna* and its sisters are among the particles that change the case of the subject of the nominal sentence to the accusative and retain the nominative case on its predicate. Then a list of the sisters is presented with their meanings. Then Dakur moves to discuss the formal structure of *'inna* and its sisters. He states (1998: 196) that its subject is always a single noun while its predicate can be a noun, a nominal phrase or even a clause.

In the following discussion of the different structural types of predicate following *'inna* and its sisters Dakur gives more than one example for each type, and parses each example completely. In the parsing process, he discusses the subject as a noun, its case, and its case marker. Then moves to the structural form of the predicate, its case and case marker. The author finds it important to discuss the introduction of *-ma* after *'inna* and its sister (Dakur 1998: 198–201). Although this addition does not change the meaning or the structural formation of the sentence, the author discusses it mainly because it arrests the force of *'inna* and its sisters on the following noun, which, therefore, keeps its default nominative case. The same internal organization of other chapters is identical with the one I have just laid out. The title of Dakur's book is "Applied Grammar", but despite that title and the clear statement of the introduction that the books is geared towards a contemporary image of the functional rules of Arabic, the case system is present everywhere as if it is a functional structural feature of modern Arabic.

It is important to notice here that in all the books that I used to illustrate my views about the prominence of the case system in traditional and modern Arabic grammatical writings there is no mention of the semantic and/or pragmatic functions of the two paradigms of *'inna* and its sisters and *kāna* and its sisters. There is a strong emphasis on the influence of these particles on the case distribution among the sentence components and the change in case these particles cause when they appear in the sentence.

The same attitude towards the case system persists beyond modern grammar books that claim to be descriptive. In practical exercise books of grammar, the case system in these manuals seems also to be the purpose of grammatical analysis and the organizational principle. In some cases, one gets the impression

that the sole purpose of the book is clarify to users the case system and to facilitate the decision making process of choosing which case marker to attach to the end of the noun. Some exercise books put strong emphasis on the structural and formal aspects of the rules under study. Even in these books the case system takes a prominent position. I will discuss in the following few paragraphs an example from each of these two types of books.

‘Umar et al. (1994) introduces a book in which they claimed they collected the basic grammar rules of modern Arabic. The title of the book carries this claim: *an-naḥw al-šāsiyy* ‘Basic Grammar’. The book moves from the single components of the sentence in unit one, to the nominal sentence in unit two, the verbal sentence in unit three, and the non-essential components of sentences in unit four. In unit five, the book discusses the nouns that carry the function of verbs and in unit six it introduces special topics of Arabic grammar. Each of these units introduces a simplified and short description of the concepts under investigation and a group of grammar exercises that have mostly a recognition nature. At the end of the book there is a unit for general exercises about the whole range of grammar points discussed in the previous six units. It is probably worthwhile to give an overview of one of the unit as an illustration of how the case system fits in the book.

Unit two (1994: 335–351) discusses the basic components of nominal sentences. In the first ten pages of the unit, the authors discuss the subject and the predicate, their different structural forms, their communicative function, their original and exceptional positions, issues of agreement, and of course their case marking. At the end of this simple and clear description, comes a long list of recognition exercises. The learner is expected (1994: 345–351) to identify the components of the nominal sentence or one of them. The reader is also expected in some of the exercises to determine the type of the predicate. In some other exercises, the reader is asked to complete the sentence with a missing part from a particular structural type. In some of the exercises, the reader is required to find out if there are agreement errors, determine them and fix them. The total number of exercises is 16, five of them have to do with the case system. Exercise four (1994: 346) requires the reader to know the reason why underlined words are in the nominative case. Exercise seven (1994: 347) requires the reader to parse complete sentences mentioning the case of each and every word in the sentence with the cause for the case allocation. Exercise eleven (1994: 349) requires the reader to put a case marker on the underlined words. In exercise fifteen (1994: 351), the reader must determine the case of one sentence component in the absence of the other basic component. The last exercise (1994: 351) asks the reader to analyze the sentence for position, form and case together.

Finally, the general exercises in the last unit of the book give special attention to the case system. In the first two exercises of the unit (1994: 615),

the reader is required to put case endings on nouns and determine why the imperfective verbs acquire the subjunctive mood. In the rest of the exercises (1994: 615–633) there is always a part in which the case of the word is required.

The second example book discussed here is a book that was published continuously since 1969 under the title of *an-naḥw al-waḏīfiyy* 'Functional Grammar'. Ibrāhīm (1969: ii) states in his introduction that there are two main reasons why students shy away from the study of Arabic grammar if they can avoid it. First, studying the grammar of Arabic is not an easy task like other fields of knowledge. Second, the gain that students expect from that laborious work is less than desirable. That is, students spend allot of time and effort to study grammar which will not help them achieve, realize, or understand their environment. Many causes have been ascribed to this problem. It will not be useful here to go into the details of these reasons. Among them, however, is the nature of the topic of study, Arabic grammar. In this respect, Ibrāhīm makes a distinction between the grammar of specialists and linguists and functional practical grammar. Ibrāhīm (1969: ii) defines functional grammar as the set of rules that carry out the main task of Arabic grammar, which is the marking of individual words for case and the proper ordering of units to form sentences. Specialist grammar is beyond our interest here. Ibrāhīm (1969: iii), however, states that for practical purposes of language use, specialist grammar is not necessary. Focus must be on the simpler, more conscious and also more interesting functional rules.

Ibrāhīm starts (1969: 2) with a long table of the nouns and verbs of Arabic divided according to their case. On the far right there is the column of the nominative noun positions, then the accusative noun positions, then the genitive noun positions. To the left of these columns there are three more columns for the imperfective case in the three cases nominative, subjunctive and jussive. The author (1969: 3) then introduces another chart with the case on the right hand side and its marker on the left hand side. In the first row to the right, there is the nominative case, and to its left there is the different markers of that case: the short –u, the 'alif in the dual, the wāw in the sound plural and the retention of the final –n in the imperfective verbs. In the middle row to the right there is the accusative case. To its left, there are its different markers, the short –a vowel, the –ayn in the dual, the –īn in the sound plural, and the loss of the final –n at the end of the imperfective verbs in the subjunctive. In the third row, there is the genitive case on the right hand side. On its left, there are its markers: the final –i and –īn in the sound plural masculine. In the most bottom row, there is the zero case, and the sukūn, the loss of the final –n and the shortening of long final vowels in imperfective verbs in the jussive.

The book is then divided into ten units. The first three units deal with nouns with case, verbs with case, and estimated cases on sentences, respectively.

Units four and five deal with nouns and verbs that deserve a case but come for formal reasons as *mabniyy*. Units six and seven deal with prepositions and the particles that have more than one function. Unit eight discusses the cases where one word or phrase can be assigned more than one case either for a difference in meaning or as a case of free variation. Unit nine presents questions about all the topics of the previous eight units from different sources, the *Qur'ān*, the old and medieval Arabic poetry, modern Arabic poetry, and modern and classical prose. As for unit ten, the last unit in the book, it presents exercises in grammatical parsing. Unit one, for instance, is divided into four articles. Article one deals with nouns in the nominative, article two deals with accusative nouns while article three deals with genitive nouns. Article four is dedicated to exercises about the three kinds of cases. In the beginning of each article, there is a chart with the instances of the case under study on the right hand side column. In the middle, there is the reason for the case. On the far left column there is the case marker. Two kinds of exercises follow. The first is a set of exercises with answers. The second type is similar exercises from roughly the same sources, prose, poetry and the *Qur'ān*, but without answers.

The author now assumes that the user is able to deal with the case and its different marking. He, therefore, moves to different forms of the nouns that take the case in questions. So, he starts with different types of the agent and its deputy of the verbal sentences in a chart similar in format to the previous one (1969: 16–17). He follows it with exercises and answers and exercises without answers. He then moves to the different forms of the subject of nominal sentence and predicate of the nominal sentence (1969: 28). The author then discusses different forms of the subject of *kāna* and the predicate of *'inna* in the same format (1969: 38). The same battery of exercises is given in this section as well. At the end of the article (1969: 44), there is a section for the followers in different forms only when they come after a noun in the nominative case. It seems, after this example, that although the book claims to introduce exercises about the functional grammar of Arabic, it is built around the case marking; it aspires to enable the users to allocate the proper marker and use it with the nouns and verbs. The book did not introduce any exercises about the phrase or clause structure of the language or its morphological make-up.

In this section, to conclude, we discussed two external preventative factors that allowed the case system to linger in Arabic as a shadow structure despite the internal permissive factor introduced in the previous section, which should have pushed the system towards total loss. Not all internal linguistic factors are permissive. In the following section, I will discuss one internal preventative factor to add to the factors discussed here, namely the evolution of a new function to the case system.



## Case in Modern Standard Arabic<sup>8</sup>

After the discussion of the previous external ecological factors, I am going to discuss the effect of these factors on the actual linguistic performance of the case system in the modern context. Despite the prominent position of case and its markers in traditional and modern grammatical writings, the position of the case system in the modern linguistic context is intriguing. But it is by no means as functional in any mode of use as the degree of importance it enjoys in the works of classical Arab grammarians.

Here, it will be very useful, in order to understand the behavior of the case system, to look at it in different modes of linguistic performance: written, recited, and spoken. I will start here with the written and printed texts. Case marking is absent from the overwhelming majority of written, printed and electronic Arabic. It is, however, present in attempts to use Modern Standard Arabic as a spoken means of communication. That presence does not, by any means, entail an accurate use. Its absence from the written form of Arabic is ambivalent. It can be assumed dropped because of its minimal functional load. It can also be ascribed to a writing convention that does not represent short vowels inside or at the end of the word on the linear right-to-left direction. One can make this argument especially because case is at least attempted in the spoken mode. Because case is not a part of the native dialect morpho-syntactic structure of any native speaker of Arabic, it is learnt, and is in most of the cases incompletely learnt. Because it is also redundant, its incorrect use does not lead to communicative difficulties. Its presence in the modern linguistic and educational context, therefore, is challenging and at the same time indicative of the developmental character of Arabic. The point that I want to make clear in this section of the article is that despite the important position of the case system in old and modern grammarians' theoretical and organizational frames, the case system is not present in the modern linguistic written scene. In addition, despite the heavy pedagogical emphasis on the case system, its production, if and when it is produced, is not free of errors. It is important to keep in mind that erroneous production of the case system does not lead to communication breakdowns because the system has been redundant since pre-Islamic times and its functional yield is minimal.

Although from the first look case marking seems to be absent from the written/printed mode of Modern Standard Arabic, it is not completely so, if we give written texts a closer look. Two kinds of case marking are recorded in writing: those represented by long vowels and indefinite masculine singular accusative nouns and adjectives (Ryding 2005: 166 n. 50). Dual nouns in the nominative end with the suffix *-ān*. That suffix in the accusative and genitive

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<sup>8</sup> For information on knowing case in Modern Standard Arabic, see Parkinson (1993).

becomes *-ayn*, the written as *yā'* followed by *nūn*. Sound masculine plurals, by the same token, end in the nominative in *-ūna*, and in the accusative and genitive in *-īna*, written as *wāw* followed by *nūn* and *yā'* followed by *nūn*, respectively. Case marking with long vowels is not unambiguous. Formally, because Arabic script convention does not represent short vowels inside and at the end of the word, and because the letter *yā'* is pronounced as a diphthong and as a long vowel at the same time, there is no formal difference between the dual marker in the genitive and accusative *-ayn* and the sound masculine plural marker in the genitive and accusative *-īna*. The distinction, therefore, between *al-muslim-īna* “the Muslims” and *al-muslim-ayn* “the two Muslims” is impossible without linguistic context. The presence of the word in a phrase such as *al-'ihwān al-muslim-īna* “the Muslims Brotherhood”<sup>9</sup> makes it clear that the word is in the masculine plural genitive or accusative. For the same reasons, the dual nominative marker is ambiguous. The word *'ihwan* in Arabic can be read in two different ways: it can be read as a plural noun *'ihwān* “a group of brothers” and as a dual noun *'ihawān* “two brothers”. Again phrasal context is vital in disambiguating the word. Nominative sound masculine plurals are not as ambiguous as accusative and genitive sound plurals and duals.

Ambiguity is not the only problem with case marking in writing. In some cases, the choice of one marker for the dual or the plural over the other is problematic. The previous example is taken from a title of a news article. The full title is:

### 1

*mumaṭilī atihād-āt ṭullāb al-ḡāmi'-āt ya-ttahim-ū al-'ihwān al-muslim-īn fī at-tasabbub fī 'ilgā' inihāb-āt-him*

‘representatives of university students unions accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of causing the disruption of their elections’.

Although the title has more than one interesting phenomenon as far as the case system is concerned, the first word is important for our purpose here. Theoretically, the first word must be in the nominative, as it is the subject of a nominal sentence. Because it is a sound plural noun, the suffix plural ending must be the nominative *-ūna* and not the accusative/genitive *-īna*. Because it is a sound plural noun it must lose the final *nūn*, because it is the first word in the possessive structure. From the example, the author chose the wrong suffix plural marker *-īna*, but deleted the final *nūn* of the first word. This discussion is intended here as anecdotal. I am, by no means, stating that this is the linguistic

<sup>9</sup> The example is taken from ad-Dustur news website on Wednesday 18/04/2013, <http://www.dostorasly.com/news/view.aspx?id=a37a0cfe-b308-4ff2-9866-7e9f2e0376f6>.

behavior of the majority of users or that it is the normal choice. I am also not making the claim that the nominative case in Modern Standard Arabic has given way to the accusative and genitive markers. These are judgments we can not pass without proper statistical data. The main point here is that despite the deviant case, the message can be understood. Pending further corpus-based research, the phenomenon of lax case assignment rules seems more present in the online news website than in the print media. This, admittedly, is a personal evaluation.

Although the overwhelming majority of printed and online texts in Arabic do not include internal vowelizing and/or case markers, there is no rule against adding them on separate lines over and under the main line of the consonant and long vowel letters. There are, in fact, different degrees of recording case marking on some modern texts. It is to be noticed though that this presence is in no way a phenomenon or a trend. In many cases a book does not represent the case marking on its text, except in the traditional or classical quotes. Many examples of this phenomenon come from books in Arabic-related fields such as literature, grammar, or traditional rhetorical studies. To take but one example, I will use a book that I used before in the previous section. In *aN-Naḥw al-'Asāsiyy* 'The Basic Grammar', in explaining the basic meaning of sentences and parts of speech, the authors (1994: 11–13) give fully vowelized and case-marked sentences which they analyze. The provided examples come from a wide range of sources, some of which are traditional, some religious, and some not. When a word or more of the vowelized example is repeated, it is repeated without the internal vowel structure or case marking.

There are other texts that represent the case and mood marking on all nouns and verbs. *Al-Qawā'id al-'Asāsiyya fi an-Naḥw wa ṣ-ṣarf* 'Basic Rules of Syntax and Morphology' published by the Egyptian ministry of education as a grammar companion for high school graduate and university students provides the case system at the end of every noun and the mood marker at the end of every verb in the imperfective. This presentation is consistent in the whole book from article one which introduces basic concepts of grammar to the end of the book. Prepositions, articles, question words, and all particles do not receive a short vowel at the end. Those words, like nouns, adjectives and verbs, do not receive any internal vowelizing. Internal vowels are represented only in the active and passive participles and passive voice verbs, presumably for the sake of clarity. Interestingly, the introduction that explains the purpose and method of the book is not as consistent in the use of the case and mood markings.

In the introduction, there is a consistent internal vowelizing in the passive voice verbs and active and passive participles. Even in these cases internal vowelizing is not complete. There is no consistent case or mood marking. Few nouns receive the case marking, and there does not seem to be any logical reasoning for that eclectic assignment. In the first paragraph of the introduction, for instance, one noun and two adjectives receive case marking. The very first

phrase of the text is a prepositional phrase, the noun of which receives a kasra at the end because the noun is governed by the preposition *bi-*. Other prepositional phrases in the same paragraph do not receive any case marking. In the last sentence of the same first paragraph there is a verbal sentence. The direct object of that sentence governs three adjectives in the indefinite feminine. The first and third adjectives receive the usual *-a-n* of the accusative indefinite, while the second adjective does not. In the pre-final paragraph of the first page of the introduction there are two sentences. The first one is nominal and the second verbal in the first sentence the predicate precedes the subject. The subject is a single noun followed by an adjective. The subject, *manhağ mutamayyiz* ‘distinguished method’, receives the *-u-n* of the indefinite nominative. The rest of the paragraph does not receive any case marking. By the same token, the title of the book is a possessive structure followed by a prepositional phrase. The first word, the head noun, receives a single *-u* case and the rest of the title does not. Presence and absence of case marking, or even uneven representation, does not seem to influence the language of the text structurally.

When Modern Standard Arabic is spoken either in recitation or in improvised speech, the case system is much more prevalent, on the one hand. On the other hand, it is also much more diversified in its degrees of correctness. In the coming few paragraphs I will give examples for a correct spoken use of the case system, incorrect use of the case system in spoken and partial or total absence of the system from spoken. I will introduce illustrations for each of the previously mentioned phenomena. I do not claim here any generalizations. The data I will introduce are small and limited in its scale. There is yet to be a full-scale corpus-based study of the case system in different Arabic contexts. It is, therefore, a qualitative analysis of the phenomenon that does not claim any exhaustive nature. The statements given here are in fact no more than an idea taken from analyzing so many texts individually and manually. One might, and rightly so, make the claim that the following paragraphs are an educated impression.

In recited speech there are texts with correct full representation of the case markers, texts with correct partial representation of the case markers and texts with a total absence of the case markers. In addition, there are, of course, texts in various degrees of deviations that I will not discuss in this place. I have discussed this phenomenon in passing in section two above. From surveying many texts, it seems to me that correct partial use of the case system is the prevalent manner of case representation in Modern Arabic. But before we go into the correct partial representation of case, a quick word about full correct representation is due here. In a news report about a bull running festival in Spain<sup>10</sup> the text marks every noun for case and every verb for mood and aspect, except clause final words or phrase final words before a pause:

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_mGB05C9\\_M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_mGB05C9_M).

## 2

*Wa yu-'add-u min 'ašhar-i l-mihrağānāt-i fī 'isbānyā*

And it is considered one of the best festivals in Spain

On the first verb *yu-'add-u*, there is a marker for the indicative imperfective. The two nouns *'ašhar-i* and *mihrağānāt-i*, are marked with the genitive *kasra* as the first word follows the preposition *min* 'from' and the second is the second word of the construct structure. The last noun *'isbānyā* is not marked for the same case although it follows another preposition *fī*, because on the one hand it is a foreign word, and on the other, it is in a sentence final position. Complete accurate representation of case is especially prevalent in news media.

In some recited texts, marking for case is totally absent. It is interesting that the total absence of case is extremely rare. There are texts that exhibit minimal case marking, but very few of the recited texts lack case totally. In a 27 second news feature about a Panda giving birth to a twin cubs the reader recites<sup>11</sup>:

## 3

*Wa-humā 'awwal mawlūd Panda 'imlāqa fī al-wilāy-āt al-muttaḥida ḥaḍa al-'ām*

and they (two) are the first giant baby Panda in the US this year

If case were to be added to the end of non-verbs, *'awwal* must be assigned a nominative case because it is the predicate of the nominal sentence, *mawlūd* must take a genitive case because it is the second word in a construct, *al-wilāy-āt* must receive a genitive case as it is the object of a preposition, and *al-muttaḥida* must receive the same case because it is an adjective to the previous genitive noun. However, none of these words was assigned a case marker. In such texts, the case markers that can be left out are the short vowel markers. Long vowel markers, such as *-ān*, *-ayn*, *-ūna* and *-īna* cannot be left out, as they are a part of other number suffix morphemes.

There is also, in recited speech, correct but incomplete use of case markers. In these texts, two phenomena stand out. The first is that case marking takes place with words that have suffix pronouns and/or words in a construct structure more than any other words. The second is that there seems to be no general common selection process by which a particular noun is chosen for case marking and which word is chosen to receive one. There is a degree of variation in the phenomenon. In a news feature about the fashion of pregnant celebrities<sup>12</sup> case is not added to every word:

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOvLmYzQkro>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQDcts0iJKE&feature=c4-overview&list=UUelk6aHijZq-GJBBB9YpReA>.

## 4

*Mašāhīr wa-ḥawāmil lakinna-hunna dawm-an fī ‘ālam al-‘azyā ’-i wa-l-mūda ḥāḍīr-āt-in*

Celebrities and pregnant but they are always in the world of dress and fashion present

Two of the nouns in the previous text are marked for case: *al-‘azyā ’-i* and *ḥāḍīr-āt-in*. I will not discuss here the last noun, which is incorrectly marked for case. But *al-‘azyā ’-i* is marked for genitive because it is a second word in a construct. The word *‘ālam* is not marked for the genitive case although it follows the preposition *fī*. *Mašāhīr* and *ḥawāmil* are not marked for the nominative case although they are in the subject position. The following text follows the previous one immediately in the same news feature. But it shows differences in the case allocation.

## 5

*lam ya- ġibna fal- ḥaml-u lam ya-ḥmilhunna ‘ala al-ibti‘ād-i ‘an dunyā ar-rašāqt-i wa-l-ġamāl*

they did not hide, for pregnancy did not force them to be away from the world of slimness and beautify

The subject noun that was not marked for case in the first text is marked in the second. *ḥaml-u* is marked for the nominative case. By the same token, the object of the preposition in the first text that was not marked in the first text is marked in the second. *al-ibti‘ād-i* is marked for the genitive case because it is the object of the preposition *‘ala*. Like the previous text, *ar-rašāqt-i* is marked for genitive as a second word in a construct. It is to be noticed that the second text does not leave any word unmarked for case, except for *dunyā*, because it ends with a long vowel. The final word *ġamāl* is naturally not marked for case as all clause final words are in Classical Arabic.

Finally, recited speech can also exhibit incorrect or incomplete allocation of case marking. The user is left on his/her own to make interpretations and allocate case markers, because the printed or written texts from which they recite are not marked for case. In a court verdict recitation<sup>13</sup> the judge reads:

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7jVQfMwkkI>.

## 6

*tāniyan 'ihālat al-'awrāq 'ila an-niyābat-u al-'āma*

second, returning the files to the attorney general

The word following the preposition *an-niyābat-u* receives a nominative case, while it should according to the rules of Classical Arabic receive a genitive case because it is the object of 'ila. Total absence of case is not a very frequent phenomenon in recited speech. It is, however, very common in improvised oral production. In a 37 seconds clip of a news conference Muhammad al-Baradei spoke in Modern Standard Arabic without the use of a single case marker on a noun or a mood marker on a verb. He, for instance, says<sup>14</sup>:

## 7

*'aham šay' fī haḍihi al-marḥala huwa waqf al-'unf*

The most important thing at this stage is stopping violence

In traditional grammar, this is a nominal sentence with a subject, the head noun of which deserves a nominative case marker, and a predicate whose head noun also deserves the same case. However, the subject of this sentence *'aham šay'*, which is a possessive structure, does not get the –u suffix on the head noun or the –i suffix on the second word of the possessive structure. The predicate, *huwa waqf al-'unf*, is also a possessive structure that does not receive any case marking. This phenomenon is quite frequent in improvised spoken Modern Standard Arabic. In the following example<sup>15</sup> case is missing:

## 8

*Faqad qarrara maḡlis al-wuzarā' al-bad' fī itiḥād kāfat al-'iḡrā'āt al-lāzima*

The cabinet decided to start taking all necessary steps

The previous example is taken from a larger text that bears witness to a very frequent phenomenon in spoken improvised Modern Standard Arabic, namely the selective but consistent case marking. In such cases one case only is marked on nouns. In the larger linguistic environment of the previous text only the genitive case is marked on nouns.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47ywrCLlcWQ>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMG3UXOkzbY>.

## 9

*naẓaran lima tumaṭiluhu haḍihi al-'awḍā' min taḥdīd-in lil-'amn al-qawmī al-miṣriyy wa-min tarwī'-in ġayr maqbūl lil-muwāṭinīn li-dālika wa-stinādan lit-tafwīd aš-ša'biyy al-hā'il mina aš-ša'b lid-dawla fi-ta'āmulma'a al-'irhāb wal-'unf allaḍayni yu-hadidāni bi-taḥalul ad-dawla wanhiyār al-waṭan wa-ḥifāẓan 'alā al-'amn al-qawmiyy wal-mašālīḥ al-'ulya lil-bilād was-silm al-iğtimā'iyy wa-'amn al-muwāṭinīn Faqad qarrara mağlis al-wuzarā' al-bad' fi itihād kāfat al-'iğrā'āt al-lāzima li-muwāğahat-i haḍihi al-maḥāṭir wawaḍ' nihāyat-in laha ma'a taklīf as-sayyid wazīr ad-dāḥiliyya bi-tihād kull-i mā yalzam fi haḍa aš-ša'n*

Based on the danger for national security and unacceptable terrorizing of the citizens this situation represents, and based on the outstanding public support of the people to the government in dealing with terrorism and violence which threaten national security, state interests social peace and the security of the citizens, the cabinet decided to start taking all necessary procedures to face this danger and putting an end to it. It assigned to the minister of the interior to take all necessary procedures in this respect.

In the text at hand, the only words marked for case are those in the genitive. Other nouns are not marked for case at all. *taḥdīd-in*, *tarwī'-in* and *muwāğahat-i* follow the prepositions *min* 'from' and *li-*, respectively. *kull-i* is a second word in a possessive structure. In another audio,<sup>16</sup> the same phenomenon exists. Only the genitive case is represented on nouns. In the following text words after prepositions only receive the *kasra*:

## 10

*Lam yaḥlu min munāwaṣāt-in wa-ğidālāt-in wa-muğādalāt-in ṭarīfabayna 'a'dā' lağnat at-taḥkīm*

It was not without nice little fights, discussions, and quarrels among members of the jury.

The three words that bear a case marker are those that follow the preposition *min*. The fact that a particular case is marked and not other cases does not mean that this case marker is represented on every and each word that deserves it. For instance, there are nouns after prepositions in text 9 that do not have a case marker. *lil-'amn* is a prepositional phrase in which the noun 'amn 'security' follows the preposition *li-* without a *kasra* at its end. The same is to be said about another example prepositional phrase, *bi-taḥalul*, in which the preposition *bi-* comes before the noun *taḥalul* without the marker. By the same token, although *kull-i* receives a *kasra* because it is the second word in a possessive structure,

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRi-XNkHmQ0>.



many other nouns in the same position do not receive the case marker. *wazīr ad-dāhiliyya* ‘minister of the interior’ and ‘*amn al-muwāṭinīn*’ ‘security of the citizens’ in example 9 are also possessive structure but without case markers.

There is, in addition, incorrect representation of case marking on improvised spoken Modern Standard Arabic. The following example<sup>17</sup> demonstrates an accusative case where a nominative case marker must be used:

## 11

*'anahu ra'īs-an li-mağlis aš-ša'b*

that he is a spokes person for the parliament

The predicate of the nominal sentence after *'inna* should acquire a nominative case, but as we can see from *ra'īs-an* an accusative case marker is used instead. In another example,<sup>18</sup> an accusative case is used where it does not belong:

## 12

*'inna aṭ-tuwār lam yuḥsinū tanzīm šufūf-a-hum*

the revolutionaries did not manage organize themselves well

The second word of the possessive structure *tanzīm šufūf-a-hum* receives an accusative case instead of the *kasra*. The production of improvised spoken Arabic without case marking, with partial case marking or with erroneous case marking does not mean that spoken is not produced with full correct case marking. In a 16:44 seconds long speech,<sup>19</sup> a man of religion delivers correct case marks on all nouns and also observes pause rules without a single fault. It is important to note here that correct case marking on all nouns in a particular text is not only a function of religious contexts and men of religion. News media uses complete case marking as well. In a 2:42 minutes report on BB ARABIC<sup>20</sup> the anchor uses complete correct case marking:

## 13

*'ādatan yušakkilu fašl-u aš-šayf-i furša-t-an dahabiyya-t-an lit-tuğār-i as-sā'īna li-ziyāda-t-i mabī'āt-i-him wa-'rbāh-i-him*

Summer is usually a golden opportunity for the tradesmen who wish to increase their sails and profits

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wy2gDA51Vmk>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2QbnCTZsIs>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.youtuIn this article, I introduced the fate of local structures that undergo a degree of development. be.com/watch?v=LK5AV1j8wCg>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw-pO6GPXbk&feature=c4-overview&list=UUelk6aHijZq-GJBBB9YpReA>, (especially from 1:34-141).

In traditional grammatical theory, this is a verbal sentence, in which the possessive structure *faṣl-u aṣ-ṣayf-i* is the agent. Therefore, there is a nominative case marked on the first word, and on the second word there is the genitive markers as it is the second word in that possessive structure. The adjectival phrase *furṣa-t-an dahabiyya-t-an* is the direct object. Therefore, the first noun takes the accusative case while the second word, the adjective, follows in case marking. Prepositional phrases *lit-tuḡār-i as-sā'īna* and *li-ziyāda-t-i mabī'āt-i-him wa-'rbāḥ-i-him* are marked for the genitive because they follow *li-*. Not a single word is left without case.

## Conclusion

In this article, I tried to explain the behavior of the case system from a developmental point of view. Functionally, it was claimed all along the article that the function of the case system in determining the message of the utterance is almost zero. But, despite the marginal position of the case system in the structural make-up of Arabic, and despite its ambivalent state in the different modes of performance in the modern linguistic scene, it remains present in the consciousness of Modern Standard Arabic users. Although case is not a functional system anymore, and indeed has been so for a long time, it still remains not only in the consciousness of the user, but also in medieval and modern books on Arabic grammar.

The case system is merely an example for a general formal developmental trend in Arabic. The article is a description of what happens to structures when they innovate formally but external ecological factors remain adverse to this innovation. They remain, at least theoretically available for use, and they are used, in some cases properly, in others incorrectly and in others ambivalently. But when they are not used, no disruption in communication happens. By the same token, when they are used, the linguistic message does not gain any structural and/or semantic function. We have seen in this article that there is a difference among modes in the performance of the case system. We have seen in the written and printed mode that most of the texts do not represent the case markers at the end of nouns and adjectives. The only case representation in the written mode happens when case does not take the shape of a short vowel suffix. Masculine singular indefinite accusative markers, the dual suffix and the masculine sound plural suffix are represented (correctly or incorrectly) on nouns and adjectives, because case is in the form of a long vowel. In very few cases, the written texts represent full or partial case markers. In all degrees of representation, however, written texts do not represent communicative gaps.

In the written mode, I recorded very few deviant case markers. But in both recited texts and improvised spoken Modern Standard Arabic, there is a larger

quantity of deviant case marking. Deviation in this mode takes two shapes. It can either be by selecting a single case to attach to the end of nouns and adjective. Or, it can also be by placing the wrong case marker to the end of nouns and adjectives. Improvised spoken Modern Standard Arabic also reflects two contradictory phenomena as far as the case system is concerned. There is an apparent common practice of producing spoken Modern Standard Arabic with total absence of case. There is on the other hand a complete correct use of case on texts of considerable length. It is important to note that the use of a correct case system, incorrect case allocation, complete marking, incomplete marking, or even absence of case marking all together is not related to a particular text type. But, there are differences in degree. Case marking on recited texts can be less deviant than in improvised speech.

These rather sketchy observations are not intended here to make a generalization about development in Arabic in general. The evidence I brought in this article is merely anecdotal. It is my belief, however, that my examples emphasize the current assumption about the lack of functionality and redundancy of the case system in Arabic that may have started in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The full, correct, incorrect, partial or even the total disuse of case in modern Arabic is understandable because the case system is superfluous. It was, therefore, probably natural for the New Arabic dialects to lose the system all together. Low functional yield and the loss of case in the New Arabic vernaculars are two permissive internal ecological factors that should have pushed the case system to total absence in Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. But stronger external ideological, cultural and social arrestive ecological factors checked the progress of this innovation. Therefore, case maintains its ambivalence in the modern linguistic context. It is formally present, optionally used, variably used and dysfunctional, as we have seen earlier.

Preventative external ecological factors help keep the shadow-system present in the collective consciousness of the users of Modern Standard Arabic. Classical Arabic and its more modern version, Modern Standard Arabic, kept case. It was more functional in verse because it suited metrical purposes; and the Holy Book was revealed in full case as well. During the codification process, the case system was considered a part of the syntactic structure of what came to be Classical Arabic. We have seen in the article that traditional books of grammar proliferated the phenomenon among the users of Classical Arabic in the past. Writers of modern grammars of Arabic followed their classical predecessors. Didactic manuals of grammar, both traditional and modern, and schoolbooks of grammar disseminated the case system further and rooted it in the consciousness of users of Modern Standard Arabic. It is my understanding that the role of preventative external ecological factors is to keep functionally irrelevant structural features in the inventory of the language.

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