R e v i e w s

Pierre Larcher, *Syntaxe de l'arabe classique*, Presses Universitaires de Provence, Aix-Marseille Université, Collection Manuels dirigée par Charles Zaremba, 2017, pp. 340.

Syntaxe de l'arabe classique is a detailed but simple sketch of the phrase structure of Classical Arabic, different types of phrases and phrase groups from a discourse point of view. The bulk of the material used to build the chapters of the book come from linguistic and grammatical classes the author taught in the past five years in addition to a group of articles he published in the meantime. In the book, Larcher draws the structural map of Arabic discourse as built from simple phrases, which can be expanded into complex phrases, to form complexes of phrases with different semantic functions in what the author tagged Classical Arabic.

Larcher defines Classical Arabic not as an etymological historical stage of the language, which may or may not have structural differences with contemporary and otherwise varieties of the Arabic language. He defines it more like a construct that stands for the language of the higher classes and the socially accepted variety for written communication. To Larcher, studying this variety is both advantageous and an inconvenience. The advantage is that it is a permanent system that helps guide us in the study and use of the Arabic language. It is an inconvenient situation as the grammar of Arabic freezes at a historical stage.

After these simple introductory remarks, the author describes his outlook on the syntax of phrases in Arabic. He divides the Arabic phrase into simple phrases and complex phrases. A simple phrase is the one that coincides with a proposition. A complex phrase is the one which contains more than one proposition. The author then moves on to state that a complex phrase becomes so by coordination and subordination. In a complex phrase by coordination, there are two phrases; the first is an independent one while the second depends on the first structurally and semantically. The two component phrases are linked by a logical relationship such as cause and effect. There are also two types of subordination in a complex phrase depending on the conjunction of subordination. In addition to the juxtaposition of simple and complex phrases, the author

recognizes a third type, the complex of phrases. A complex of phrases is formed from the collection of simple and complex phrases.

In the class of simple phrases, Larcher recognizes the related simple phrase which is a verbal phrase and the segmental simple phrase which is a nominal phrase. The same division also works for complex phrases. However, the internal structure of the phrase does not play a categorization role in the book, but it serves as an underlying concept that binds the topics of each of chapters. The book is structured accordingly in three major parts: simple phrases, complex phrases and complexes of phrases.

Part one deals with simple phrases. It is by far the longest and most well detailed part of the book with its ten chapters. Some of the chapters deal with particular types of simple phrases (jussive phrases in chapter five, interrogative phrases in chapter six and exclamatory phrases in chapter seven). Other chapters deal with formative and transformative rules/processes (such as the expansion of the noun phrase in chapter two and the verb complementizes in chapter three). Chapter one is a sketch of the basic traditional and modern grammatical concepts that pertain to phrase structure. Chapter one explains the main concepts of phrase formation in Classical Arabic (gumla and Kalam) and the basic phrase morphology (verbal and nominal phrases). Although the author does not state it, these concepts are the bases on which the book is structured. Gumla is the basic grouping of words to form proposition, which in turn group to form Kalama 'discourse'. Based on the kernel structure of the basic phrase, verbal or nominal, the author continues, different possibilities of extension and rules of formation exist.

In general, the chapters of part one are designed as verbal descriptions of the structures in question followed by examples from modern standard Arabic. Even in chapter one, when the author lays out the basic concepts of the phrase structure, most examples are not from medieval sources. The author does not state from where the examples used come.

Part two, complex phrases, is comprised of four chapters: an introduction, one chapter deals with reference, one deals with connection and conjunction and another one deals with direct and indirect speech. In chapter one, structural and discursive additions made to the simple phrase to make it a complex phrase are discussed in very general terms by means of exemplification only. The examples provided in this rather short chapter are a mere prelude to the topic of the three following chapters. As one can assume from chapter one in part one and from the topics of part two, complex phrases are extensions of simple phrases. The internal structure of the chapters in part two is identical to that of part one.

Part three deals with what the author calls complex of phrases, or discourse. This part consists of eleven chapters. Like in part two above, part three starts with an introductory chapter in which structural distinctions between complex phrases and complexes of phrase are introduced. Chapters two and three deal

with circumstantial discourse and circumstantial discourse with a conditional component, while chapter four deals solely with conditional discourse. Chapters five and six discuss reactive and confirmatory discourse. Chapters seven and eight introduce causative and comparative discourse, respectively. Chapters nine and ten discuss contrastive and exceptive complexes of phrase. Chapter eleven, finally, deals with the discourse of alternatives. It seems to me that what the author calls complexes of phrases is traditionally called by Arab grammarian uslub 'style', as the discursive function intended does not require synaptic alteration or otherwise impose synaptic conditions.

In general, despite the overall pedagogical tone of the book the number of examples for every concept is minimal. There is a single example for every aspect the author discusses. Verbal explanation of the examples are very clear and compensate for the lack of examples. However, there does not seem to be an obvious particular reason for the choice of these examples from different periods in the history of Arabic and from different genra. In addition, the sources for the illustrations are not stated. It is a useful book for an elementary discussion of Arabic phrase syntax.

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