Comparison of Levantine and Egyptian Arabic

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Overview

- Development of Arabic

- Comparison

  - Phonology

  - Morphology

  - Syntax

Development of Arabic

- Semitic language family

- Roughly three stages
  - Old Arabic is pre-Islamic (610 CE)
  - The codification of CLA under the Abbasids (750 CE)
  - MSA (20th century)

- *al-fusha* vs. *al-a:mmiya*

- Sedentary vs. Bedouin

History of Egyptian Arabic

- Before 7th century AD: Coptic

- Arab Conquest, Assert Islamic dominance over the Egyptians – Quranic Arabic

- Egyptian Arabic

- Influenced by Egyptian History as well as foreign languages

History of Levantine Arabic

- Levant = Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Israel, Turkey, Cyprus

- Aramaic spoken in the region pre-Islam

- Arabic quickly displaced Aramaic in the urban areas
- Bilingualism persisted in rural areas

- Similar to Egyptian Arabic

Phonology and Phonetics

- Three main divergences in consonants:
  - Alveolar affricate /ʤ/
    - /g/ in EA
    - Same as MSA in rural, but /ʒ/ in urban LA
    - *jdi:d* vs. *gidi:d* "new"

  - Interdental fricatives
    - LA: /t̪/ in informal, /θ/ in educated, /s/ in loanwords
    - EA: /s/ absent
    - *mat̪alan*/*masalan*/*maθalan* vs. *masalan* "for example"

  - Uvular stop
    - /ʔ/ in both
    - Sometimes /g/ in LA
    - *ʔa:nu:n* vs. *qa:nu:n* "law"
      but *qasir* vs. *ʔasr* "palace"

Phonology and Phonetics

- Vowels:
    - /a/ and /u/ in LA/MSA are lowered to /i/ in EA
        - e.g. *ħad͡ʒ:* vs *ħig:* "pilgrimage"

    - -/a/ (feminine ending in EA/MSA) is -/e/ in LA
        - e.g. *d͡ʒami:le* vs. *gami:la* "beautiful"

    - definite article /il/- in EA is /li/- in LA
        - e.g. *likbi:r* vs. *ilkibi:r* "the great"

Morphology

- CLA/MSA has complex nonconcatenative morphology

- Dialects tend to have a reduced version
- Markers for certain tenses differ between dialects; for example, the future tense marker.
  - *raħ-asa:fir bukra* vs. *ħ-asa:fir bukra* "I will travel tomorrow"

- More analytical compared to *al-fusha*

Syntax

Word Order

- MSA: canonically free, but VSO in practice
- Egyptian: SVO

Question Formation: Question words

- MSA/Levantine: are placed at the front of the sentence
- EA: have final placement, except when the statement is very complex
  - e.g. *ʔad:e:ʃ is:a:ʕa* vs. *is:a:ʕa ka:m* "What time is it?"

Demonstratives

- Levantine: separate set of demonstrative pronouns. As adjective, /ha-/ prefixed to definite article
- EA: does not usually differentiate between 'this' and 'that', and it succeeds the corresponding modified nouns

References

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