

Tradition, norm and practice in the use of case endings in spoken Standard Arabic

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Linguistic background

First language teaching

Doing case

Conclusion

Linguistic background

Diglossia

Low (Dialect)

- ▶ Acquired informally
- ▶ Informal situations
- ▶ Predominantly oral
- ▶ Geographical variation

High (Standard Arabic)

- ▶ Acquired in formal schooling
- ▶ Formal situations
- ▶ Predominantly written
- ▶ Geographically invariant

Linguistic background

Case endings

- ▶ *No case in the dialects*
- ▶ Mostly short final vowel on nouns and adjectives
- ▶ Three cases:
 - ▶ nominative - *u*
 - ▶ genitive - *i*
 - ▶ accusative - *a*
- ▶ Not represented in writing

ذَهَبَ أَحْمَدٌ إِلَى السُّوقِ
ذهب أحمد إلى السوق

- ▶ Syntactically redundant

First language teaching

Focus on case

“The exercise of guessing the correct *i^craab* has become a central activity in the classroom”
(Maamouri 1998)

“Indeed grammar as a whole for most people comes to mean the case endings.”
(Haeri 2003)

First language teaching

Traditional arabic grammar. Theory from the 10th century.

Grammatical description of case

- ▶ archaic constructions
- ▶ non-acceptance of modern constructions
- ▶ categories based on theoretical rather than pedagogical considerations

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Difficult

Language ideology. Case as

- ▶ giving clarity
- ▶ a characteristic of Arabic
- ▶ uncorrupted “true” Arabic

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Important

Doing case

How is this conflict negotiated in spoken SA?

“Most use them just occasionally, sprinkling them through their text at a certain rate to give the flavour of *fuṣḥā* without making it so difficult on themselves they would not be able to speak at all.”
(Parkinson 1994)

Doing case

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(Parkinson 1994)

How do people ‘do’ case?

Doing case

Liqāʿ al-yawm, Aljazeera, 2010-2011.

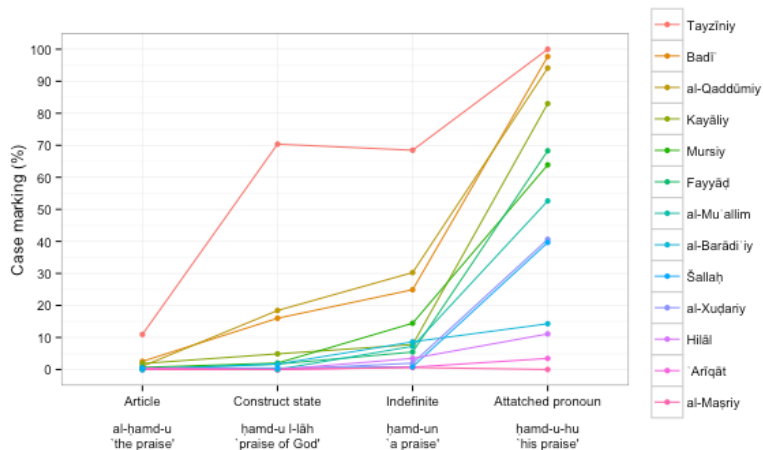
Palestinian, Syrian and Egyptian interviewees.

Educated, public figures, same venue.

	Speaker	Case endings (%)
S	Tayzīniy	44.19
E	Badī ^c	22.19
P	al-Qaddūmiy	14.71
S	Kayāliy	10.06
E	Mursiy	9.03
P	Fayyāḍ	5.32
S	al-Mu ^c allim	4.89
E	al-Barādi ^c iy	3.78
P	Šallaḥ	2.22
P	al-Xuḍariy	2.21
E	Hilāl	1.93
P	^c Arīqāt	0.5
P	al-Maṣriy	0.22

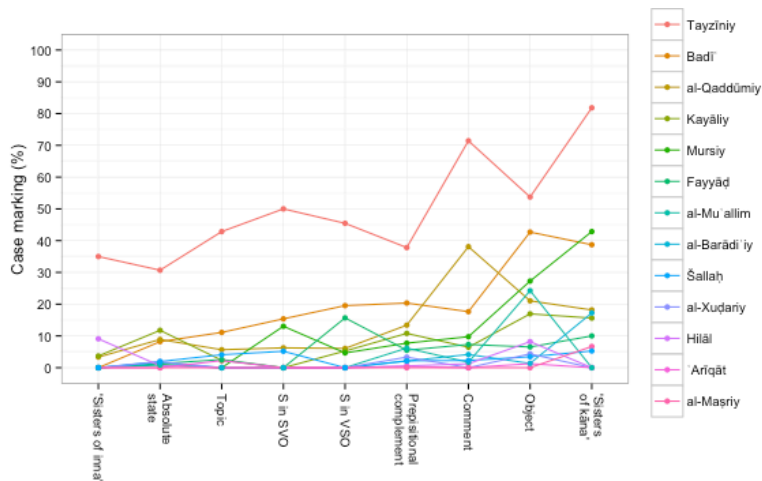
Doing case

Rates of case marking by definiteness



Doing case

Rates of case marking by case governance



Conclusion

Speakers either:

- ▶ ignore case
- ▶ develop individual style
conventionalized constraints (e.g. no case ending with definite article)

Conclusion

Oral proficiency in Standard Arabic

is not

compliance with overt norms

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Oral proficiency in Standard Arabic

is not

compliance with overt norms

is

devising ways of relaxing overt norms
(separate skill)

References

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