Kitāb Sībawayhi

SYNTAX AND PRAGMATICS

AMAL E. MAROGY

BRILL

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For Mary

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PREFACE

Sībawayhi (d. 180/796) and his *Kitāb* have been a familiar part of the study of Arabic grammatical science for many centuries. While controversy still surrounds the formative period of Arabic grammar as a fully-fledged science, the *Kitāb* unquestionably marks a significant milestone in the history of Arabic grammatical thought. Apart from its intrinsic importance as the earliest extant text of Arabic grammar, the *Kitāb*'s principal importance lies in its lasting influence on the way we still approach Arabic and understand its mechanisms.

Why *Kitāb Sībawayhi* yet again?[1] It is not simply because the first written treatise on Arabic is unusual in the sense that it is the greatest single linguistic undertaking ever embarked on by a non-native speaker. Nor is it merely because of its unchallenged authority, thoroughness and completeness; or its unique and fascinating corpus of linguistic data of the then living 'good' Arabic.[2] The reason behind my choice lies much deeper than this: the *Kitāb* contains a wealth of linguistic insights and views whose full potential has not yet been realised and whose contribution to the development of Arabic as well as to general linguistics as a whole should not be underestimated. To interpret these insights and views as they were originally conceived in this challenging, but nevertheless, harmonious whole, will provide us with adequate tools of explanation and exposition for complementing what has already been investigated and written about the *Kitāb.*

It is true that Sībawayhi has managed to develop a new format for an integrated and systematic body of linguistic knowledge to provided unique insights into the working of the Arabic language and its system of relation, balance, and interplay. However, his penetrating account of language has not escaped controversy, for all too often Sībawayhi has been accused of being too cryptic in his approach and analysis. My intention in writing this book has been to examine these charges

[1] For the most recent work on the *Kitāb* see Baalbaki (2008).

[2] The *Kitāb* is the first of its kind in the history of Arab linguistics in aiming to approach language from the point of view of linguistic analysis of unparalleled number of authentic utterances. Basing himself on Yāqūt's study (1992), Sara (2007: 3) points out that Sībawayhi took the trouble to gather some 9,735 utterances, not counting the thousands of instances of morphological inflection and derivation.

and to highlight the fact that Sībawayhi's linguistic description requires critical interpretation, distinct but complementary.

It is both ironic and unfortunate that the complementarity of syntax and pragmatics, which is one of the most important and fascinating aspects of Sībawayhi's endeavour, should be misunderstood and neglected for so long. My main task is to investigate the fallacy of the one-sided attitude to language ascribed to Sībawayhi, whether formal or functional, and restore the neglected complementary account of syntax and pragmatics to its focal position in the *Kitāb*. It is part of Sībawayhi's remarkable achievement that when this Complementarity is established as the guiding principle, we come to grasp more fully the depth of his approach to language.

In offering a complementary interpretation of the *Kitāb* that accounts for and identifies concepts and terminology that Sībawayhi has left as informal and implicit, I adopt certain modern linguistic terminology and principles in a way that indicates a significant variance with the approach of some modern Arabists. These Arabists tend to believe it possible to construct or reject Arab linguistic tradition and/or our knowledge of it by either applying modern linguistic theories to it or by simply comparing the two linguistic models. The answers I present in this book stay clear of applying entire linguistic theories to the *Kitāb*. As a result of this, I have been able to undertake a detailed study of the evidence I seek in them while keeping at bay the dangers of ignoring the constraints pertaining to the linguistic models under study. In other words, resorting to modern linguistic terminology and principles is dependent in large part upon their internal evaluation within the linguistic model from which they originate, just as their suitability for elucidating linguistic behaviour described in the *Kitāb* largely depends upon how successful the analysis of a particular linguistic problem or issue is.

The present account should thus provide a clue to the principal dimension on which the linguistic analysis of the *Kitāb* proceeds, and illustrate that there is no incompatibility between modern explanatory theories of language and the *Kitāb* when terms and principles dealing with the same linguistic phenomena are carefully transplanted to a congenial soil such as the *Kitāb*. There are a number of important advantages attached to this manner of conducting linguistic analysis. On the one hand, this method provides the necessary means to make the linguistic potential of the *Kitāb* accessible to the modern reader; on

the other hand, it allows an elaboration of a genuinely new account of the procedures and mechanisms employed by Sībawayhi in his speech analysis. The end result should offer us clear priorities and explicit points of reference in relation to modern linguistics. As the discussion evolves, we will come to see that this is the way forward since there is little danger of Arabic having structures and mechanisms of any other language or linguistic tradition foisted upon it and thus distorting it.

This mode of understanding the interaction between the two linguistic systems not only merits attention but its omission may hinder any real progress towards the aims set for this book. An effective and scholarly treatment of issues most relevant to the study of the *Kitāb* and its interaction with modern linguistics ultimately permits us to view Arab linguistic tradition from the right perspective, i.e. a tradition based on a linguistic model with its own idiosyncrasies, and therefore neither subordinate nor superior. Differences in language systems are by no means mutually exclusive: it is true that different linguistic traditions have developed different methods of language analysis, but it is equally true that these methods show undeniable, albeit at times obscure, parallelisms. By using the *Kitāb* as a prototype of traditional Arab linguistics, it is exactly these obscured parallelisms which I aim to uncover in my investigation.

In this book I intend to develop two completely new arguments and show their strong correlation: historical and linguistic. The historical argument in chapter one revolves round the neglected hub of pre-Islamic Arab culture, viz. al-Ḥīra. Arabs from the Peninsula flocked to al-Ḥīra, and its court attracted the most illustrious Arab poets. Additionally, al-Ḥīra's mark on the origin of the Arabic script remains indelible. As the discussion unfolds, it will become clear that the problems with which Arabists were faced in their attempts to construct the pre-Sībawayhian and Sībawayhian phase will remain insoluble until this link with al-Ḥīra's social and intellectual legacy is established. The decisive consideration is that the history of Arab linguistics in particular and early Islamo-Arabic culture in general requires the recognition of al-Ḥīra's social, religious and cultural features in terms which define and explain the intellectual heritage in early Islamic period. I shall argue that the fourth/tenth century is the true watershed in the development of Arab linguistics and its sources, as a wave of critical judgement washed over the biographical data of its authors and questions of attribution (cf. Talmon 1997: 100–1). Hence scholars' typical

cautious approach to Arabic medieval sources as shown below. I hope to show in due course that this is not a mere twist of fate, as it coincides with the date when al-Ḥīra finally slid into oblivion.[3]

The central linguistic argument in the remainder of the book turns around the notion of Complementarity. This notion offers an ideal framework within which Sībawayhi's insightful considerations on language are best approached and analysed. Seen in the particular light of Complementarism which links grammatical forms to their pragmatic uses, the *Kitāb* easily becomes recognisable as communicative grammar *par excellence*. With the analysis of all the data gathered, it is not difficult to bring the latent Principle of Complementarity (cf. Leech 1983) which underpins Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis to the reader's notice.

A stronger complementary orientation is therefore highly recommendable, as it offers adequate grounds for solving some of the pertinent problems which have fully or partially been left unanswered, such as the problem of *definiteness* and *inversion* in nominal sentences. By means of case studies I demonstrate that Complementarism is instrumental in setting right an established confusion over the concept of *ibtidāʾ* and *mubtadaʾ* in nominal sentences. Concomitantly, I closely scrutinize the legitimacy of applying partial or entire western theoretical models to the *Kitāb*.

This book is organised in five chapters and each chapter is designed to provide a scaffolding of data and arguments which will help us unveil various scenes of linguistic behaviour dealt with in the *Kitāb*, and thus deepen our appreciation of the significance and richness of all the available data. The first chapter is an enquiry into the traditional account of the *Kitāb* and Sībawayhi's background as the founder of Arabic grammar and linguistics. It also presents for the first time a series of historical accounts closely related to al-Ḥīra and its legacy as the missing link that will dispel the mist of uncertainty surrounding the formative period of Arab linguistics.

The controversies surrounding the origin of the *Kitāb* and the biographical data of its author have sparked off a debate which continues to date. Some introductory sections on Sībawayhi's life are characterised by their narrative form and are telling examples of written biographical accounts based on oral improvisations. Admittedly, problems

[3] al-Ḥīra was largely deserted by the end of the third/ninth century.

of provenance and composition in Arabic sources, especially those dating back to the fourth/tenth century onwards, have often constituted a general and, at times, an insurmountable academic challenge, but it is equally true that the little known cannot be disclosed in any other way. I believe that it is important to introduce the wider audience to these data cautiously for various reasons. Firstly, the Arab audience and some Arab scholars still hold these traditional accounts as true. Secondly, if we are to set ourselves radically against Arabic sources and/or completely ignore them, our decision will inevitably imply the risk of missing the opportunity to fully appreciate and assimilate an essential component of a cultural phenomenon inherent to the language under study. Finally, these accounts give us an insight into common patterns of oral narratives that are often improvised to make up for the missing data. In a nutshell, these accounts provide a unique opportunity not only to investigate their reliability but more importantly to identify the causes behind the process of improvising these accounts in the first place.[4]

After the first chapter, the questions I am basically concerned with in chapter two are whether Sībawayhi's linguistic reasoning rests only on the generally assumed principle of syntactic motivation, or is pragmatically motivated as well. The conclusion toward which I will be working is that syntax, pragmatics and their interdependence are the key to Sībawayhi's holistic view of linguistic analysis and methodology.

Chapter three deals extensively with the issue of *definiteness* and *identifiability*, and the part they play in determining word order in nominal sentences. Of the five main chapters in this book, chapter four is central while the findings in chapter two and three are complementary to it in that they are used to clarify a longstanding oversight of the distinction between the *topical* and *thematic ibtidāʾ* in the *Kitāb*. To this end, I undertake a study into the nature of nominal utterances in Arabic. The linguistic principles determining the ability of certain elements to occupy the 'initial' position in such utterances are examined in detail. I argue that the distinction made by Downing (1991) between Topic, Theme and 'initial' position accurately clarifies the distinction made and intended by Sībawayhi when dealing with the issue of the

[4] Cf. legendary stories briefly referred to in chapter one, such as that which attributes the foundation of Arabic grammar to ʾAbū l-ʾAswad ad-Duʾalī, and the controversial accounts surrounding the two grammar 'schools' of Baṣra and Kūfa.

ibtidāʾ in the *Kitāb*. In chapter five I summarise and present the results of the present analysis and their wider implications for the study of Arab linguistics.

Throughout the book I approach the *Kitāb* as a source of data and of constant stimulus. At the same time I seek explicatory inspiration in modern linguistics without trying to mould the *Kitāb* into a particular modern theory. Consequently, this book is far from being a simple comparative study between Sībawayhi and any modern western linguist, neither does a pure application of a particular modern theoretical model to the *Kitāb* fall within the book's ambit. Modern linguists are appealed to whenever their concepts, definitions or principles reflect what can essentially be described as the same linguistic phenomenon or way of reasoning as in the *Kitāb*. To put it differently, I borrow modern theoretical language to bring evidence to support Sībawayhi's conceptual framework and so make his implicit metalanguage underpinning the *Kitāb* accessible to a wider public.

In order to follow the stipulated lines of investigation, I will in the first instance be working downward from a global communicative model to smaller linguistic units. The account moves from analysing general linguistic principles applicable to speech as a whole toward their specific implications for the issues of definiteness, *identifiability* and word order. The analysis is then narrowed down to a detailed account of *verbless* nominal utterances, on the one hand, and the underlying *thematic* and *topical* strata of the *ibtidāʾ*, on the other. As will become clear in due course, both issues have escaped traditional as well as contemporary notice.

Every chapter begins with preliminary observations and ends with a summary where reference is made to the important points raised. Throughout this book, substantially representative quotes from the *Kitāb* will be examined for their ability to offer adequate answers to the question and issue under discussion. References to the paragraphs quoted from the *Kitāb* are to the Būlāq and Derenbourg editions respectively.

Arabic terms or data are transliterated and italicised, while general linguistic terms are capitalised. As far as the Latin names of nominal inflections are concerned, I adopt Carter's terminology: the term 'independent' will be used for *ar-rafʿ*, instead of 'nominative', and the term 'dependent' will replace 'accusative' for *an-naṣb*. For *al-jarr*, I resort to the widely used term of 'oblique'. My choice is justified by the fact that

Carter's terminology does more justice to the literal meaning contained in the Arabic terms than other common terms. The term 'independent' is by far a more accurate description of *ar-rafʿ* as it underlines the freedom of a *ʿāmil* 'operans'. The 'dependent' form, on the other hand, underlines the dependence of the term affected on a verbal or a verb-like *ʿāmil* and is thus more readily recognisable as the form assigned by virtue of a verbal power. In keeping with a common academic convention, the word *Ibn* has been abbreviated to *b.* when it does not appear at the start of a name.

It is worth mentioning that it is beyond the scope of this book to provide a diachronic study of traditional Arab linguistics. I wish to stress at the outset that I have by no means been exhaustive or definitive in treating the ideas expressed by later grammarians on issues under discussion. That is why I will be limiting my references to later grammarians and only turn to them whenever necessary to make a particular point in the *Kitāb* under discussion more clear. In other words, the *Kitāb* and its analysis of the language and linguistic behaviour of native speakers remain the focus of attention throughout the book.

To conclude, it is important to reiterate that this book should by no means be construed as an apologia for Sībawayhi. It is rather an invitation to abandon the misleading and traditional *either-or* approach to language in favour of a more integrated framework based on a better understanding of Sībawayhi's intellectual and social milieu and on the Complementarism of syntax and pragmatics.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Whereas most Arabists agree that nothing is known with certainty about the origin of Arabic grammar, it is a fact beyond dispute that the *Kitāb* is placed at the centre of the formation of Arab linguistics and grammar. The impact of the first comprehensive written work on Arabic grammar was so profound that it set the tone for later Arab grammarians.

The type of obstacles in the way of discovering the origin of Arabic grammar may seem insuperable, but a plausible theory can still be formulated as to the rise and development of traditional Arab linguistics in the early Islamic period. The Arab kingdom of Ḥīra is advanced as the missing link in the search for satisfactory answers to some pending issues related to the formative stage of Arab linguistics in general and to Sībawayhi's intellectual and social milieu in particular. If Sībawayhi is not explicitly informative about al-Ḥīra's role in his *Kitāb*, it certainly contains implied references to it. As the discussion progresses, al-Ḥīra's intellectual and social legacy emerges from total negligence to the centre of the stage. Without al-Ḥīra Sībawayhi's linguistic heritage and the opposition with which he and his work were faced, can only be understood as a series of fragmented survivals from a misty older past. Moreover, the *Kitāb* is known to have the merit of preserving some prior discussions related to linguistic issues and basic technical concepts, without revealing, however, the full extent of these discussions. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that there was no need for Sībawayhi to do so, simply because these discussions were considered common knowledge among specialists of the time, just as was the contribution of al-Ḥīra's intellectuals and their interaction with their Kūfan colleagues. The following quotation summarises well what al-Ḥīra meant for the early Islamic period:

> Among the Late Antique milieus whose religious and cultural patterns should have exerted an essential influence on the emergent Islamic culture is the Arab principality of the Lakhmids at al-Ḥīra (ca. 300 until 602 C.E.). Situated at the West bank of the Middle Euphrates, at the fringes of the desert, it was located not only on the Roman-Sasanian frontier,

> but also in close proximity to the Arab tribes of the peninsula. Here, all the elements that define Islam's Late Antique heritage were to be found, namely, Christian-Aramaic, Arabic-Bedouin, Jewish and Persian influences. Together with Najrān in South Arabia, it was one of the main Arab urban and political centers of Late Antiquity, a kingdom whose court attracted poets and merchants from all over the peninsula. (Toral-Niehoff 2009: 1)

Another issue closely linked to the early formation period of Arab linguistics is the question of initial foreign influences, such as Greek, Syriac, Persian or Indian (see for instance Troupeau 1976: 12–14). Admittedly the debate on foreign influences has not been shelved completely, as no conclusive proof has so far been positively identified. Except for a few attempts to ascribe Greek grammatical influence to the *Kitāb* (cf. Hasse 1788; Merx 1889; Rundgren 1976 and Versteegh 1977), the prevalent opinion among western Arabists today,[1] such as Versteegh,[2] Owens (1988), Bohas et al. (1990) and Carter (2004) does not deviate a great deal from the traditional Arabic view. As for a possible link between Sībawayhi and Aristotle,[3] nothing has been proven yet.[4] In any event, the differences between the two are significant enough that any direct dependence of Sībawayhi on Aristotle is made unlikely (cf. Itkonen 1991: 126ff).[5] I argue that the elements which may be considered by some scholars as clear evidence of foreign influences in the *Kitāb* are by no means attempts at plagiarism on the part of Sībawayhi. They reflect rather the intellectual environment, notably Christian and Jewish, in Sībawayhi's time.

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[1] Talmon (1990: 266) identifies Weiss's study (1910) and Weil's 1915 article as the first evidence in favour of an original Arab linguistic system. He further points out that the next round of articles refuting the Greek influence would be published by Diem (1970–1), then by Carter (1972) and Troupeau (1973; 1976; 1978; 1981).

[2] Versteegh distanced himself from his own conclusions regarding a possible Hellenistic influence on the *Kitāb* (cf. 1993: 200).

[3] Suleiman (1990: 246–7) seems to have found a middle ground between those in favour of Greek influence and those opposing it, in which the influence of both the Greek intellectual tradition and Islamic religious sciences on the development of Arabic linguistic traditions is said to be possible.

[4] While there is no evidence in support of a possible Greek influence on the *Kitāb*, logical and philosophical influences are tracked by Talmon (1990) in the *Maʿānī l-Qurʾān*. Five major points in the syntactic theory of the Kūfan linguist al-Farrāʾ are put forward as material evidence of Aristotelian influence.

[5] Even Itkonen, a non-Arabist, dismisses the occurrence of some similarities as evidence for Aristotelian influence.

The formative period of Arab linguistic thinking is shrouded in mist, for we only have medieval biographical and literary accounts that are usually related to the decay of correct Arabic and mostly connected with the wrong use of case endings (cf. for instance the dominant story of ʾAbū l-ʾAswad ad-Duʾalī (d. 69/688), who was secretary of the fourth caliph ʿAli b. ʾAbī Ṭālib to whom the tripartite division of speech is attributed). Generally speaking, this account is hardly taken seriously by western scholars, and among those who challenged it are Carter (1972), Bohas et al. (1990: 1), and Talmon (1985) who claims Ibn ʾAbī ʾIsḥāq to be the first true grammarian. This issue will be dealt with in conjunction with an attempt to answer a question that has remained unanswered, namely 'Why would this science develop on the shores of the Euphrates, and why would its most outstanding scholars belong to foreign nations, in particular to Persians?' (Goldziher 1994: 9).

The discussion will be conducted in two parts. While the first part is a synthesis of the historical and intellectual background to the *Kitāb*, the second part deals with the *Kitāb* within the wider context of Arab and general linguistics as approached by Arab and western scholars. After beginning with a broad and traditional outline of the person of Sībawayhi, a more detailed presentation of Sībawayhi's cultural and social milieu follows. In this respect the introduction of al-Ḥīra to the discussion is indispensable for filling the vacuum of information in the Arabic sources dealing with Sībawayhi's life and work. Taking into account the problem of the reliability of biographical data documented in Arabic sources, I will first provide a representative sample of these data, whose content will be weighed against the historical and social data we have about al-Ḥīra. This approach will make it possible to establish with greater clarity al-Ḥīra's role in the formation of early Islamic culture and identity, and thus be fruitfully brought into the equation as the one important piece of the puzzle that was missing. A brief diachronic treatment of al-Ḥīra's political, cultural and social history will help us reveal the evolution of persistent problems, such as the Kūfan-Baṣran dichotomy and the issue of a possible foreign influence in the *Kitāb*. Moreover, it permits a further probing of Sībawayhi's claims to being the authority in linguistic matters and that his linguistic judgements are based on the authority of *all Arabs*.

The status of the *Kitāb* among Arab and western scholars forms the focus of the two last sections respectively. Topical studies are presented, and data of general interest are extracted and analysed. It is beyond my aim to give an exhaustive account of all the materials available in the

field. Rather, the presentation of the materials that have a bearing on our topic is accompanied by an assessment of data's merit and usefulness, and is meant to serve as an induction of Sībawayhi's linguistic heritage to two target audiences, i.e. Arabists and non-Arabists. With this end in view, a group of Arab grammarians is selected and briefly introduced. Their role is ancillary and their selection is based upon the sole criterion that their linguistic thinking is necessary to build an accurate picture of Sībawayhi's linguistic reasoning. The final section is an outline of western views on Sībawayhi's work and methodology, and is meant to be a representative spectrum of post-1960 analyses. Finally, traditional Arab linguistics will be shown to attract increasingly the attention of general linguistics.

1. Life

Early biographical and literary sources predating the fourth/tenth century rarely mention Sībawayhi (Bernards 1997: 4), and the little known about him is anecdotal and mostly lacks uniformity. However, resources seem to agree on the fact that Sībawayhi was born of Persian parents, most probably in al-Baiḍāʾ in Šīrāz around 135/752 and prematurely died in his forties in Fāris. His name means 'little apple' or 'apple fragrance'[6] in Persian.

His full name varies from ʿAmr b. ʿUṯmān as mentioned by Ibn Qutayba (d. 270/889) in the *Maʿārif* (1969, 544: 15) to ʿAmr b. ʿUṯmān b. Qanbar (cf. Zubaydī's (d. 379/989) *Ṭabaqāt an-Naḥawiyyīn wa l-Luġawiyyīn* (1984: 66)) and ʾAbū Bišr ʿAmr b. ʿUṯmān b. Qanbar (cf. Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Buġyat al-Wuʿāh* 1965: 229).

Sībawayhi presumably arrived in Baṣra sometime in the second half of the second/eighth century to undertake his studies in religious law, and is said to have started studying Arabic after publicly making a serious grammatical mistake, i.e. using the wrong case ending in a *laysa* structure when reciting back the following *Ḥadīṯ*: ما من أحد من أصحابي إلا من لو شئت لأخذت عليه ليس أبا الدرداء 'there is no one among my Companions that I would not take exception to, if I wanted to, but not ʾAbū

[6] This translation is the result of confusing the Persian diminutive *Seboe* 'little apple' with the words *sib* 'apple' and *būy* 'scent' (Carter 2004: 9). The claim that '-ūyh' refers to scent in Persian has been refuted by Hārūn in his introduction to the *Kitāb* (I 1966: 3–4).

l-dardā'.[7] He is reported to have said *laysa ʾabū* (for *ʾabā*)[8] *l-dardāʾi* (cf. az-Zubaydī 1984: 66; Carter, 2004: 10). After this incident he decided to join al-Ḫalīl b. Aḥmed (d. 175/791–2) and study grammar.

Sībawayhi is believed to have had several teachers[9] and authoritative informants. Two names, however, stand out not only for their role in his linguistic formation, but also for their significant intellectual contribution to the *Kitāb*, viz. al-Ḫalīl and Yūnus b. Ḥabīb (d. 183/799–800). While most of al-Ḫalīl's linguistic views are accepted, Sībawayhi mostly disagrees with Yūnus.

Yūnus, who outlived both Sībawayhi and al-Ḫalīl, is mentioned 217 times in the *Kitāb*. He helped to establish the authenticity of the *Kitāb* and came to Sībawayhi's defence by refuting allegations of misconstruing al-Ḫalīl's linguistic views (cf. Carter, 2004: 27; Hārūn, I 1966: 19). As for the renowned lexicographer and linguist, al-Ḫalīl, Sībawayhi is known to be his favourite pupil. Al-Ḫalīl is even quoted greeting Sībawayhi as مرحبا بزائر لا يمل 'welcome to a visitor one never gets tired of' (al-Zubaydī 1984: 68; II Suyūṭī 1965: 229). According to Carter (2004: 28), 'the personal relationship between the two was obviously one of extreme affection from the master and boundless respect from the pupil.'[10] Al-Ḫalīl was mentioned 608 times in the *Kitāb*, a sign of the major influence he had on Sībawayhi's formation and work. His contribution to the *Kitāb* is not limited to a particular area but covers syntax, phonology and morphology. However, his most important input to the *Kitāb* is the pragmatic emphasis he placed on speech as a communicative event (Carter, 2004: 30–31), which was undoubtedly a key factor in the development of the complementary approach that became the hallmark of the *Kitāb* as argued in this research.

Sībawayhi is known to have had only a few students, al-ʾAḫfaš al-ʾAwṣaṭ (d. 215/830) being the most prominent. Although a speech impediment (cf. below) is one of reasons given to account for this small number of students, his premature death might be advanced without reservation as the main reason. In any event, if we assume the story about Sībawayhi's speech impediment to be true, lack of verbal eloquence to convey his vast and detailed knowledge has certainly

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[7] Translation taken from Carter (2004: 10).

[8] Thus using the independent instead of the dependent form.

[9] For further detail cf. Versteegh (1993: 161ff) and Humbert (1992: 21–5).

[10] Ibn Qutayba (1969, 541: 20) describes al-Ḫalīl as 'intelligent, kind, discerning and a poet'.

been made up for by the written masterpiece he produced (cf. II Suyūṭī 1965: 229; Zubaydī 1984: 67; Hārūn 1966: 16).

The *Kitāb* is the only book that Sībawayhi has to his credit and it appeared posthumously. It was probably dictated by Sībawayhi himself to his friend and pupil al-ʾAḫfaš al-ʾAwsaṭ, who then put it together as a book after his master's death.[11]

Although Sībawayhi's name is traditionally associated with the 'Baṣran school', one of the three linguistic hubs situated in three Iraqi cities, Baṣra, Kūfa, and Baghdad,[12] a careful examination shows that his method can hardly be identified with any 'school's' method. His method combines *qiyās*, 'analogy' or 'systematic regularity',[13] characteristic of the 'Baṣran school' with *samāʿ*, 'observed data', usually associated with the 'Kūfan school'. (cf. Carter 'Sībawayhi' in *EI*: 2006).

Sībawayhi's name is also associated with a well-known linguistic debate, the so-called *Masʾalat az-zunbūr* 'the hornet's question' (cf. Sezgin *GAS* ix, 52; Talmon 1986; 1988; Bernards 1997: 6–7; Carter 2004: 13), which took place in Baghdad between Sībawayhi and al-Kisāʾī (d. 183/799)[14] in the presence of the vizier Yaḥyā b. Ḫālid al-Barmkī (d. 182/798), and according to some sources (cf. az-Zubaydī 1984: 69) in the presence of the hostile student of al-Kisāʾī, al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822), al-ʾAḥmar (d. 194/809) and two others. Sībawayhi's Kūfan rival is reported to have won the debate. After this defeat, Sībawayhi returned to Fāris where he died in 180/796.

The hornet's debate was the Kūfans' favourite story and it was used quite happily against Sībawayhi to accuse him of neglecting the speech of the Arabs. Being a non-Arab, Sībawayhi suffered from discrimination and bitter recrimination due to his Persian origins and alleged lack

[11] According to an amusing anecdote, a jealous wife was the reason why Sībawayhi died before he could publish his work. The Baṣran maid to whom he got married, was too much in love with him to put up any longer with the book that claimed her husband's entire attention. She decided to burn his work while he was out. Upon discovering his loss, Sībawayhi is said to have fainted, repudiated her once he regained consciousness and started his work all over again. It seems that a great deal of what was compiled by Sībawayhi during Ḫalīl's life was lost too. If there is a shred of truth in this anecdotal evidence, it means that the version we have now is post-Ḫalīlian (see Al-Ḥadīṯī 1974: 87–88).

[12] As from the second half of the third/ninth century.

[13] See Versteegh's discussion of this term in 'The origin of the term 'qiyās' in Arabic grammar' (1980: 7–30).

[14] Al-Kisāʾī was not only a linguist but also one of the seven authoritative Qurʾānic readers (cf. Owens 1990: 6–7).

of a good command of Arabic. He was even described as ألكن 'stammer' by ʾAbū Mūsā al-Ḥāmiḍ (d. 305/918) and أعجم لا يفصح 'a non-Arab who could not speak Arabic well', by his fierce Kūfan critic al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822), (cf. Carter 2004: 11–2).

The Kūfans' accusation, however, is quite dubious because, as will become clear in the next sections and chapters, Sībawayhi's main concern and sole *raison d'ĕtre* for writing the *Kitāb* was not the speech of Arabs in general but that of trustworthy Arabs, especially what he calls اللغة العربية الجيدة 'good old Arabic' (II Sib 424/474), hinting thus at الحجازية '*al-ḥijāziyya*' which he describes as اللغة الأولى القدمى 'the first and oldest language [variant]' (II Sib 41/37). In order to demonstrate how unfounded the Kūfan charges are, let us first turn our attention to key cultural and social factors in the present discussion.

2. Cultural and Social milieu

A full understanding of Sībawayhi's linguistic description requires a critical historical interpretation, which is distinct but complementary. Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis is interwoven with social and cultural realities, and all the attestations in his *Kitāb* are records of the speech of the Arabs within their social and cultural context. In the following sections, pertinent data on Arab tribal presence in the second/eighth century will be extracted from historical sources. There is a substantial amount of data in the *Kitāb* that are still waiting to be uncovered and which point to al-Ḥīra, whether explicitly or implicitly. In the following sections we shall explore some features which show Sībawayhi's world of informants and the tribal map of al-Ḥīra as interlocking pieces of a puzzle. This will help us to illuminate some problems and uncover others.

2.1. *Al-Ḥīra: a synoptic view*

The ancient city of Ḥīra[15] was located about 3 miles to the south of Kūfa and was known for its palaces, churches and monasteries, but especially for its attractive climate, which became proverbial among

[15] Also known as Ḥirtā or Ḥirtā d-Nuʿmān in Syriac, which points to its origin as a nomadic encampment.

Arabs: يوم وليلة بالحيرة خير من دواء سنة 'Better a day and a night in al-Ḥīra than a year's worth of medicine'. It was the seat of a small Arab kingdom under the rule of the Laḫmid dynasty and had a great strategic importance due to its location within the border regions of the Sasanian Empire. Al-Ḥīra was created by the Sassanids as an Arab shield to absorb and repel the attacks of its enemy,[16] and the Laḫmids, a staunch ally of the Sassanids, had two major tasks. On the one hand, they were the effective Arab agents of the Sassanids who sought to keep other mighty Arab tribes under control by entering into alliances with them. On the other hand, they had to defend the Empire mainland not only from the regular attacks staged by the unmanageable Arab Nomads,[17] but more importantly to keep the Byzantines and their Arab ally across the Syrian Desert, the Ġassānids, in check. The rivalry between the two Empires of Persia and Byzantium translated into wars between their Arab vassal kings, the Laḫmid Munḏir and the Ġassānid Arethas (al-Ḥāriṯ) respectively. In fact, the Ġassānid vassal kingdom was no more than the Byzantine reaction to the Laḫmids' hostility (cf. Shahīd 1988: VII/181 ff).[18]

By the end of the sixth century and beginning of the seventh century the region of the Arabian Peninsula had become a bone of contention between the Persian and Byzantine empires.[19] Being situated in the far North of the Ḥijāz, al-Ḥīra had close commercial and political ties

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[16] Besides al-Ḥira, the Sassanids established other border military encampments to control regular Bedouins attacks, such as Ubulla and Anbār. Ubualla, which was part of the Laḫmid kingdom, became a major port for the indian trade in both Sasanian and Islamic periods, as well as the anchor for the southeastern end of the Sasanian desert frontier. In the late sixth century, Ubulla was part of the Laḫmid kingdom. In the seventh century Ubulla turns out to be of major fiscal importance, due to its status as a revenue source generated from the taxes collected on the Indian trade (Morony, op. cit., 161–2).

[17] Among the main hostile nomad tribes were the Taġlib, Ibn Wā'il and Bakr ibn Wā'il, (Toral-Niehoff, op. cit., 5).

[18] The struggle between the two powers and the animosity between the three contemporary Arab figures the Laḫmid Munḏir, the Ġassānid Arethas and the Abyssinian Abraha brought an end to their respective Semitic groups, and paved the way for the Islamic conquest of their regions (Shahīd 1988: VII, fn. 2).

[19] Regarding this rivalry between the two empires, Kister (1968: 143) refers to Qatāda's allusion to the Persians and Byzantines in his commentary on the following *Qurānic* verse (VIII, 26), وَاذْكُرُوٓاْ إِذْ أَنتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ تَخَافُونَ أَن يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فِي الأَرْضِ 'And remember when you were few and abased in the land and were fearful that the people (*an-nās*) would snatch you away'. He quotes Qatāda's description of the sorrowful economic situation of the Ḥijāzi Arabs and their weakness as being 'confined on top of a rock between Fāris and Rūm'.

with the Ḥijāz,[20] and an-Nuʿmān III (583–ca. 602 A.D.) is known to have annually sent a *laṭīma* (caravan of spices) to the market of ʿUkāẓ.[21] The close commercial ties between al-Ḥīra and Mecca camouflaged an important power struggle between the two cities, as the Persian tried to extend the orbit of their influence to the Ḥijāzī region through the Laḫmids, who tried to secure the loyalty of the Arab tribes on the peninsula through pacts and alliances.[22]

In 602 the Laḫmid kingdom collapsed after king an-Nuʿmān b. al-Munḏir[23] was deposed and killed by the Sasanian king Ḫosrou Parwīz (590–628 A.D.). This incident was the first in a series of events that led to sweeping changes in the region that irrevocably reshaped its social and religious map. An-Nuʿmān's murder ushered in deep Arab indignation[24] followed by a new era of political instability.[25] Shortly after, the first phase of a successful campaign of conquest was launched against al-Ḥīra and the frontier fortress of Mesopotamia was conquered by the Muslim army under Ḫālid b. al-Walīd in 12/633.[26] However, the major turning point in the struggle for control over the rich alluvium came after the battle of al-Qādisiyya in 16/637, when Muslim forces led by Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ wrought the final defeat of the Persians and brought the Sasanian empire to an end in 60/651.

After the Islamic conquest, al-Ḥīra was linked in a particular way to the history of the first ʿAbbasid caliphs. It was chosen as a temporary or main residence by *inter alia* the first ʿAbbasids caliph as-Saffāḥ 'The bloodshedder', al-Manṣūr, Harūn ar-Rašīd[27] and al-Waṯiq. However,

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[20] This mountainous region had two prominent commercial centres: Mecca and aṭ-Ṭāʾif.

[21] Ġanīma (1936: 203–4).

[22] A case in point is mentioned by aṭ-Ṭabarī when shortly after 531 A.D. Munḏir III was made king of ʿUmān, Baḥrayn, al-Yamāma, and other parts of Arabia including the commercial town of aṭ-Ṭāʾif (Peters 1999: xxiv).

[23] Also known as an-Nuʿmān III and is mentioned once in the *Kitāb* (I Sib. 110).

[24] Cf. Donner (1981: 172) and Ġanīma (op. cit. 233).

[25] Prior to the Arab conquests, the violent death of king Ḫorsou II, in addition to the immediate long struggle between and the Sasanian and Byzentine Empires made the two empires a soft target for the rising political power of al-Medīna.

[26] During ʿUmar's reign (13–34/634–44) Muslim armies invaded both Iraq and Syria under Ḫālid b. Walīd and defeated Sasanian and Byzentine forces. After the final defeat of the Byzantine forces in the Battle of *Yarmūk*, Ḫālid was dismissed by ʿUmar from the supreme commander (Spuler 1960: 19).

[27] Al-Ḥīra became the seat of the caliphate in 180/796 but ar-Rašīd had to move to Baghdad after being chased away by the Kūfans. However, he returned to it a few years later when he was on his way back from a pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed in the palace of ʿAwn al-ʿAbādī (Ġanīma, op. cit. 13).

al-Ḥīra began to decline little by little when the nearby military encampment of Kūfa was built and by fourth/tenth century Muslim geographers seem to have given little or no attention to it.[28] The following passage well summarises al-Ḥīra's fate after the Islamic conquest of Iraq (al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-Mamālik* 1992, I: 360 s609):

> ولم يزل عمران الحيرة يتناقص مُذ بُنيت الكوفة إلى أيّام المعتضد بالله، فإنّه استولَى الخراب عليها، وكانت فيها ديارات كثيرة ورُهبان لحقوا بغيرها من البلاد لاستيلاء الخراب عليها [...] وقد كان جماعة من خلفاء بني العبّاس ينزلونها لطيب هوائها وصفاء جوّها وقرب الخَوَرنَق والنَّجف منها. وكانت مدّة هذه الحيرة من أول وقت عِمارتها الى وقت خرابها [عند بناء] [...] الكوفة خمسمائة سنة وبضعا وثلاثين سنة.
>
> The urban decline of al-Ḥīra continued ever since al-Kūfa was built[29] till the reign of al-Muʿtaḍad,[30] when it fell into ruin. It used to have many monasteries and monks, who joined other communities due to its falling into ruin [...] and a group of the Banī al-ʿAbbas Caliphs settled in it on account of its fair climate, clear sky and its close proximity to [sc. the famous Palace of] al-Ḫawarnaq and an-Najaf. The days of this Ḥīra since its establishment till its decline when al-Kūfa [was built] amount to some five hundred and thirty years.

In view of the passage above, it is quite likely that there was some link between Sībawayhi and al-Ḥīra. Given that Sībawayhi died during the reign of Harūn ar-Rašīd, it is almost certain that he either visited al-Ḥīra himself or at least had some informants and contacts there. The validity of this hypothesis can be further verified by the fact that Sībawayhi must have been, in part at least, a contemporary of the prolific Kūfan writer and leading historian of pre-Islamic Arabia, Hišām al-Kalbī, generally known as Ibn al-Kalbī

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[28] Ibn Ḥawqal (who was born in Nisibis) seems to be the last one to mention it as he points out that its surviving population was sparse and scattered. The last entry on al-Ḥira comes from his famous book written in 366/977 Ṣūrat l-ʾArḍ, in which he tell us that al-Ḥira 'Est une ville très ancienne, édifiée sur un excellent terrain: Les édifices sont espacés, la population y est devenue clairsemée et il ne reste plus que très peu d'habitants, car elle a souffert de la prospérité de Kufa, dont elle est séparée par environ une parasange (Ibn Ḥawqal [Kramers-Wiet] I 1964: 232 s239). Hereafter, it is no longer mentioned.

[29] The decline of al-Ḥīra and the rise of Kūfa in its vicinity are comparable to the decline and disappearance of the old Christian Najrān (Saudi Arabia) and the rise of another Islamic Najrān in its vicinity, and the decline of imperial capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon (Madāʾin) in favour of the rising 'Abbasid capital Baghdad which was again built in its vicinity.

[30] He reigned between 279–289/892–903.

(120/737–204/819 or 206/821). Being a descendant of a well-established Muslim family in Kūfa,[31] Ibn al-Kalbī's ancestoral tribe, Kalb, was one of the most prominent Christian tribes both in pre-Islamic and early Islamic period that became a main ally of the Umayyads in Syria. Curiously enough, it was not his own tribe or any other illustrious Arab tribe that claimed so much of his attention, but it was the Laḫmid dynasty and its seat al-Ḥīra (Shahīd 1984: 351; 353).[32] In his search for data, Ibn al-Kalbī is said to have consulted the archives and tablets of the Christian communities of al-Ḥīra (cf. Atallah, 'al-Kalbī', *EI*, 2009). The following passage should provide us with a conslusive detail regarding the status of al-Ḥīra in Ibn al-Kalbī's time, and hence in Sībawayhi's:

> His [sc. Hišām] birthplace, Kūfa, was quite close to Ḥīra, the great Arab center of pre-Islamic times, which in the time of Hishām was still a flourishing city and a favourite resort even for some Abbasid caliphs (Shahīd, op. cit. 351).

2.2. *Population*

Before the rise of Islam, the population of al-Ḥīra consisted mainly of the Arabs, Jews, the 'Aramaeans'[33] who spoke and wrote in Syriac, the Himyarites (Ancient Yemen), the Abyssinian (Ethiopia) as well as a small Persian elite (cf. Shahīd 1988: ix). In what follows we will be concerned with two groups that are relevant to our present discussion, namely the Persians and Arabs.

Morony's description of the Persian distribution and social structure in ancient Iraq provides us with valuable information (1984: 188–213). It suffices to mention, however, that a Persian minority that had been present in Sasanian Iraq had survived the Islamic conquest, but in a different capacity. Captivity and forced relocation, defection and migration were the main factors behind the presence of different Persian groups in Islamic Iraq (ibid. 197–9). The first group was represented by captured Persian women and children who were initially deported to the Ḥijāz and Madīna,[34] but soon were also being relocated in the

[31] He is the son of the famous Qurʾānic exegete Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī.

[32] He is also known as ʾAbu ʿl-Munḏir, which reflects his admiration for al-Ḥīra and its famous king, after whom he is said to have named his son Munḏir (Shahīd, op. cit. 353).

[33] Also known as Nabaṭ al-ʿIrāq in Arabic sources.

[34] Some captives, Arabs and non-Arabs returned later to Iraq as *mawālī* (Morony, op. cit., 227).

new garrison towns of Kūfa and Baṣra. The second group was mainly represented by Persian soldiers known as the *Ḥamrāʾ*, who converted to Islam and became allies or *aḥlāf* of the Banu Tamīm and joined the Muslim army in Iraq after the early victories. Finally, the presence of the third group was based on individual initiatives of Persians who settled in the cities of the new rulers mainly but not exclusively after their conversion to Islām. Sībawayhi would most probably have belonged to this group.

As far as the Arab population is concerned, al-Ḥīra was characterised by its complex and multitribal map. The Arab inhabitants of al-Ḥīra were divided into three groups: the *Tanūḫ*, who were nomads or semi nomadic group, the *ʿIbād*,[35] who formed the ruling elite and were the real inhabitants of al-Ḥīra, and finally, *al-Aḥlāf* 'confederates' who did not belong to any of the two previous groups and were thus inferior to them. The *Aḥlāf* consisted of newcomers from different tribes who were allowed to settle in al-Ḥīra as a part of a *ḥilf* 'covenant' between them and the people of al-Ḥīra (passim).[36] The most important group in al-Ḥīra, the *ʿIbād*, formed a community of splinter tribes that shared the Christian faith and whose members were referred to as *ʿAbād*: والعباد بالفتح قبائل شتى من بطون العرب اجتمعوا على النصرانية بالحيرة والنسبة اليهم عبادى. They included northern Arabs, such as the Tamīm, to which the prominent ʿIbādī family of ʿAdī b. Zayd belonged, southern Arabs such as the Azd / Māzin and the Laḫm, which included the Banū Marīna, a branch of the ruling family and the main rival of ʿAdī b. Zayd. Some ʿIbādī were from Banū Ṭayyiʾ and Liḥyān, while others belonged to Rabīʿa, Muḍar and Iyād, and Kalb. (cf. Rothstein 1899: 19; Donner 1981: 4; Toral-Niehoff 2009: 4).[37]

On the eve of the Muslim conquest of Iraq and Syria, the west bank of the Euphrates was characterized by a strong presence of local Arab tribes and nomadic groups. During the first phase of the conquest,

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[35] They are mentioned once in the *Kitāb* (I Sib 292: 17).

[36] The Tamīmī clan of the Banū Ayyūb was at first one of the *Aḥlāf tribes* but its members soon gained prominence and became key players in the political and intellectual life of al-Ḥīra (passim).

[37] The title ʿIbād was restricted to the Christian Arab population of al-Ḥīra and the surrounding area (Rothstein, 1899: 19). Even though Christian poets such as al-Mutalammis, his nephew Ṭarafa (from the tribe of Ḍubayʿa) and the poet Maymūn al-Aʿshā (from Qays b. Thaʿlaba of the Bakr b. Wāʾil), frequented the court of the Laḫmid kings, they were never referred to as ʿIbādī. (Toral-Niehoff, op. cit.: 4). Conversely, the poet ʿAdī b. Zayd and the renowned translator Ḥunayn b. ʾIsḥāq were referred to as al-ʿIbādī, the latter's full name being ʾAbū Zayd Ḥunayn ibn ʾIsḥāq al-ʿIbādī.

loyal Ḥijāzī tribesmen such as the ʾAnṣārīs and Ṯaqafīs formed the core of the Muslim army that attacked al-Ḥīra. However, Yemeni tribesmen from Bajīla, Azd, Maḏḥaj, Kinda, Ḥaḍramawt, among others, formed the core of the Muslim force under Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (Donner 1975: 132–3). After defeating the Sasanian troops, Saʿd and his army were encouraged by caliph ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭab to migrate and settle in the sacked Sasanian Imperial capital of Ctesiphon, but soon after most, of Saʿd's forces that included a Ḥijāzī faction, various contingents from Yemeni tribes mentioned above, in addition to tribesmen who stemmed from Taġlib, an-Namīr and ʾIyād moved to the newly established military garrison of Kūfa (Donner, op. cit. 138–9).[38] There were also increasing numbers of non-Arab Muslims or *mawālī* who emigrated from Persia after it was conquered.

Islamic conquests were accompanied by planned relocation of local Muslim converts as a way of consolidating the group of Muslim newcomers in the garrison cities and forging their new identity. That is how Ḥīrī converts from tribes of Quḍaʿa, Tanūḫ and Kalb and some Ṭāyyiʾ members settled in Baṣra as allies of the South Arabian tribe of Azd. Tribesmen from Tamīm, Taġlib, ʾAsad and the majority of Ṭayyiʾ, for instance, settled in Kūfa. The Bakr b. Wāʾil, on the other hand, was well-represented in both garrison cities (Morony, op. cit. 228).

Unlike their Arabist Umayyads predecessors,[39] the ʿAbbasids welcomed support from non-Arab Muslims known as *mawālī*, who became a schismatic force and consequently assisted the first ʿAbbāsid Caliph in overthrowing the Umayyads. The defeat of the Umayyads cleared the final hurdle for the *mawālī*, especially the Persians, and

[38] Mesopotamian Arab converts to Islam from local tribes such as ʾAsad, Tamīm, Taġlib, an-Namīr and ʾIyād who fought alongside the Muslim army were encouraged to move and settle at Ctesiphon as well. However, the need for pasturage, among other factors, motivated a planned relocation of these tribesmen to Kūfa (Morony, op. cit. 226).

[39] When the Umayyads seized power in 41/661 non-Arab Muslims such as Persians, Egyptians and Turks formed a lower class and were treated as second class citizens. The Umayyad Empire was an ethnocentric dynasty where the ruling Muslim Arab elite taxed non-Arab adherents of any faith, including Islam. Non-Arab Muslims were not only excluded from government and the military, but were required to pay the same tax collected from adherents of other religions as well. In fact, '[…] the association between Arab ethnicity and rule was so strong that they found it easier to offer tax exemptions to Arabs, regardless of their religion, than to non-Arab Muslims!' (Bennison 2009: 22). In their administration, the Umayyads depended heavily on educated Arabs and on experienced Greek and Syriac-speaking Christian scribes who had served the Byzantines and Sasanians.

helped them regain their influence and status which they had lost under the Umayyad rule. Major administrative changes took place as early ʿAbbāsid caliphs adopted the Sasanian administrative model, and the bilingual abilities of Persian administrators were especially appreciated and earned them an ethnic reputation as Bureaucrats (ibid. 53).

The ʿAbbāsid period was the age of great intellectual achievement, especially during the reign of Hārūn ar-Rašīd (170–193/786–809) and his successors. It was marked by the acquisition of new knowledge and, mainly through Nestorian Christians, Muslims had gained access to Greek knowledge of natural sciences, mathematics, astronomy, geography and medicine.[40] As mentioned earlier, 'Arabized Persians fared particularly well under the ʿAbbasid dynasty',[41] and the power of some lineages such as the Barmakids, reached the height of deciding on the heir to the 'Abbasid's throne.[42]

Sībawayhi arrived in Baṣra at the height of the ʿAbbāsid period, but also at the height of a period of strong sense of group identification which was marked by a deep rooted tribal loyalty among Arabs and Arabised Persians who were raised as *mawālī* or were children of *mawālī*, or were members of the native landed aristocracy. No wonder that a newcomer like Sībawayhi was perceived of as an outsider and this should account for the hostile reaction he received from established coreligionists and compatriots such as al-Kisāʾī and his entourage.[43] Al-Kisāʾī was not only Hārūn ar-Rašīd's tutor, but his courtier and close companion also. He later became the tutor of Hārūn's two heirs, al-ʾAmīn (193–197/809–813) and al-Maʾmūn (197–217/813–833). Al-Kisāʾī is known to have participated in spectacular debates which he often won. The occurrence of his contest with Sībawayhi in the presence of Yaḥyā b. Ḫālid al-Barmkī and al-ʾAḥmar (d. 193/809)

[40] Jewish and Christian physicians were organised in the *Jundīšāpūr* Acadamy (Spuler, op. cit. 56).

[41] Bennison (op. cit. 28).

[42] There are claims of several cases of foster-relationships between the first three generations of 'Abbasid caliphs and the Barmakid, the most noteworthy is the foster-relationship between Hārūn ar-Rašīd and the son of Yaḥyā b. Ḫālid al-Barmkī, Hārūn's special secretary and vizier as early as 161/777–8 (Abbott 1946: 63–4). Even though Yaḥyā was jailed and heavily fined for misuse of power at some point in his career, he was nevertheless reinstated in his post thanks to the intervention of Hārūn's influential mother Ḫayzurān (ibid. 55). Note that Yaḥyā is the vizier who presided over the debate between Sībawayhi and al-Kisāʾī (cf. Supra).

[43] The superiority of the Ḥirī Arabs and their attitude towards a match between a Muslim newcomer and an Arab woman from al-Ḥīra may give us a clue in this respect, as the "match was considered oppressive by her family and the village" (Donner 1975: 48).

is thus quite plausible. The importance of his victory over Sībawayhi becomes all the more obvious if we take into account the fact that reluctant al-Kisāʾī was burdened with the unpleasant task of finding a substitute tutor. The outcome of the contest only confirms al-Kisāʾī's intention to disqualify his Baṣran rival as a potential tutor and ensure instead the appointment of his favourite soldier-student al-ʾAḥmar (Abbott 1946: 174–6). With this in mind, it is possible to understand Sībawayhi's subsequent return to his homeland after his defeat and his tragic death. These facts also shed light on the causes of the Kūfan long-lasting derisive sentiments towards Sībawayhi.

Although the *Kitāb* is silent on al-Ḥīra, a quick look at Troupeau's index of the tribe names mentioned in *al-Kitāb* reveals a clear similarity with the complex multitribal map of al-Ḥīra and the two garrison cities of Kūfa and Baṣra in Sībawayhi's days (cf. Troupeau 1976: 245ff). Nearly all Arab tribes were represented and Ḥijāzī emigrants or their decendants must have boasted about the الحجازية '*al-ḥijāziyya*' as اللغة الأولى القدمى 'the first and oldest language [variant]'(II Sib 41/37). Closely related and equally important is the issue of Sībawayhi's assertion that some of his attestations or linguistic judgements are based on the authority of *all* Arabs. We shall encounter *all Arabs* in the Namāra script, which is related to al-Ḥira. Al-Ḥira's reputation as a great centre of Arab culture was still alive in Sībawayhi's days and this fact could justify formulating the hypothesis that Sībawayhi was well acquainted with al-Ḥira and its cultural life.

2.3. *Cultural history*

Al-Ḥīra was an active transmitter of culture and learning prior to and during the early Islamic period. Located at a major economic, religious and cultural crossroad, it became what Morony (op. cit. 10) describes as 'a place of cultural creativity and a centre for cultural diffusion'.[44] The beginning and diffusion of the Arabic script, the most illustrious Arabic poets and their most celebrated poems known as *al-Muʿllaqāt* 'odes'[45] are but a few instances whose history is inextricably intertwined with al-Ḥīra and its kings.

[44] Morony applies his description to Iraq in general, but it is clear his description mainly implies the rich Iraqi alluvium, particularly al-Ḥira.

[45] Literally 'the suspended'.

An excellent illustration of this fact is seen in the first Arabic inscription, namely the Namāra inscription, which dates back to 328 A.D. The funerary inscription is an epitaph of the Laḫmid king of al-Ḥīra, Imruʾ al-Qays,[46] King of all the Arabs: تي نفس امرء القيس برعـمر وملك العرب كلّه ذو أصر [...] التاج وملك الأسدين ونزار و وملوكهم [...] وملك معّد و وبين بنيه 'Ceci est le tombeau d'Imruʾlqais fils de ʿAmr, roi de tous les Arabes, celui soumit (les deux tribus) d'Asad, (celle) de Nizār et leur rois [...] qui soumit la tribu de Maʿadd, qui répartit entre les ses fils [...]'.[47] A quick glance at the inscription shows that the claim of Imruʾ al-Qays' dominion over all the Arabs is not exaggerated since he reigned over the two tribes of ʾAsad, Nizār and Maʿadd, which constituted nearly all the Arabs or the majority of them (cf. Shahīd: 1984: 35–43; Abbott 1939: 4). The principle importance of this physical evidence, apart from its intrinsic historical value, is that it provides sufficient background for Sībawayhi's assertion that particular linguistic judgements were based on the authority of all Arabs. This argument is fortified by the historical link of this phrase with al-Ḥīra and its kings.

Muslim sources[48] in general uphold the link between the beginning of Arabic writing and al-Ḥīra. According to al-Balāḏurī (1866: 471–4) North Arabic was first committed to writing in Buqqa (near al-Ḥīra) towards the end of the fifth century A.D. by three tribesmen of Ṭayyʾ who codified the Arabic alphabet on the basis of the Syriac and taught it first to the people of al-Anbār, and from there it spread to al-Ḥīra. The beginning of Arabic writing in the Ḥijāz is also related to al-Ḥīra, as Ḥarb b. ʾUmayya b. ʿAbd Šams is advanced as the first person to write in Mecca and is said to have learnt writing from a Ḥīrī Christian (cf. Ġanīma 1936: 55; Abbott 1939: 5ff).[49] Not only the adult Ḥīrīs had the reputation of being literate, but their children also were known to

[46] His conversion to Christianity is a plausible explanation for his burial in a church in Namāra far away from his native city. This conversion would most probably have jeopardised his position as a vassal king in the Zoroastrian Persia and caused his defection to the Christian Byzantium, where he became their vassal-king (Shahīd: 1984: 33).

[47] The Arabic text of Namāra and its French translation by Dussaud (1902; 1903) are quoted by Shahīd (1988: 179) and (1984: 31–2) respectively. There are other translations such as that of Beeston (1979) and many others since, but I have chosen Dussaud's for mere convenience.

[48] Cf. *Maʿārif* of Ibn Qutayba; *Tārīḫ of aṭ-Ṭabarī* (d. 310/922) and *Aġānī* of al-Iṣfahānī (d. 357/967). For a full discussion see Endress (1982).

[49] Traditionally four types of pre-Islamic scripts are distinguished: Hīrī, ʾAnbārī, Makkī and Madanī.

have had attended literacy classes in schools attached to churches or monasteries, when some of the most renowned poets of the time such as al-Mutalammis (Jarīr b. ʿAbd al-Masīḥ) were still illiterate (cf. for instance Ġanīma ibid.).[50] Unlike the illiterate al-Mutalammis, the *ʿIbādī* poet ʿAdī b. Zayd belonged to an illustrious literate clan of scribes who were held in high esteem by the local Persian elite of the *dihqān*s, the Sasanian Emperor, the Laḫmid kings and other Arab tribes alike. Just like his father and his son later on, ʿAdī had been educated at the Sassanian court and his grandfather Ḥammad, who was a secretary to the king of al-Ḥīra, is assumed to be the first literate man in his family.[51] He taught his son, Zayd, the Arabic script *first* and only later Persian: وكان زيد قد حذق الكتابة العربية في الحيرة وكان زيد أول من كتب العربية في ديوان كسرى (ibid. 54).

The Laḫmid dynasty is known for being a patron of learning and culture. During the reign of king ʿAmr b. Hind (554–570 A.D.),[52] al-Ḥīra attracted poets from different tribes and became the literary hub. King ʿAmr very often had delegations to entertain and Arabs coming to seek his judgment in their affairs and conflicts: وقصده الشعراء من مختلف القبائل واضحت الحيرة في ايامه منتدى علم وادب واقبلت عليه وفود وحكّمه العرب في امورهم وحسم النزاع بينهم (ibid. 183). Among the poets who frequented his court were al-Mutalammis who is mentioned no less than 36 times in the *Kitāb*, and his nephew Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd, one of the seven *Muʿllaqāt* poets.[53] What is more, king ʿAmr himself was decapitated by ʿAmr b. Kalṯum,[54] one of the two *Muʿllaqāt* poets who are said to have recited their poems in his presence, the other being al-Ḥariṯ b. Ḥilliza (ibid. 191–2).

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[50] The letters of Ṭarafa and his uncle al-Mutalammis is a showcase for children's literacy in al-Ḥīra. *ṣaḥīfat al-Mutalammis* 'the sheet of al-Mutalammis' became proverbial for a person carrying his own death warrant. Being suspicious of the letter's content, al-Mutalammis threw king ʿAmr's letter of introduction in the river and escaped after asking a young Ḥīrī lad to read it for him. Ṭarafa, on the other hand, who refused to heed his uncle's warning, continued his journey carrying the letter, only to meet his death.

[51] Being a contemporary of the three founders of the Arabic script, he most probably learnt to write in Arabic besides Persian (Abbot, op. cit. 5).

[52] His mother is Hind al-Kubrā, a cousin of the well-known pre-Islamic poet Imruʾ al-Qays and founder of the Dayr al-Hind al-Kubrā, one of the most famous monasteries in al-Ḥira.

[53] He is mentioned eight times in the *Kitāb* (I: 47;146; 377; 381; 382; 392; 501; II: 330; 457).

[54] He is mentioned twice by Sībawayhi.

The last of the Laḫmid dynasty, king an-Nuʿmān b. al-Munḏir[55] (583–ca. 602 A.D.) aslo championed the cause of knowledge and literature. He was fond of poetry and poets and had Arabic poems copied for him and written down in folios which he then placed in his palace's safes: وازدهرت العلم واينعت الآداب بالحيرة في أيامه وكان مولعا بالشعر والشعراء فنسخوا له اشعار العرب ودوّنوها في الكراريس فجعلها في خزائن قصره (Ġanīma op. cit. 207). Having ʿAdī b. Zayd[56] as his tutor and guardian, his love for poetry and learning can readily be explained. An-Nuʿmān's court was much sought by poets and among those who frequented his court were an-Nābiġa al-Ḏubyānī[57] who was his boon companion, Labīd,[58] Ḥātim aṭ-Ṭāʾī,[59] Ḥassān b. Ṯābit,[60] and of course ʿAdī b. Zayd[61] to mention but a few names. As mentioned earlier, ʿAdī mastered Arabic and Persian, in both their spoken and written forms.

The Arabic-Syriac bilingualism of the *ʿIbād* is a fact beyond dispute,[62] and even though the ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra came under the influence of the Syriac speaking population, they kept Arabic as their everyday language. A case in point is ʿAdī b. Zayd, known also as the Christian poet of al-Ḥīra, who must have spoken Syriac besides Arabic and Persian (cf. Shahīd 1984: 354; Ġanīma, op. cit. 56–8). Another telling example would be Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, the most famous ʿIbādī translator in the ʿAbbasid times who spoke at least Syriac and Greek besides Arabic, his mother tongue. Like most Christians in Sasanian Persia, the *ʿIbād* of al-Ḥīra used Syriac as their church language: 'Being Arabs and adherents of Syriac Christianity at the same time, they maintained close contacts with their neighboring coreligionists and functioned as a cultural transmission belt between Persia, Byzantine Syria and the Arab Peninsula' (Toral-Niehoff, op. cit. 1).

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[55] Also known as an-Nuʿmān III. His name appears once in the *Kitāb* (I Sib 110).

[56] Following in his father's footsteps, ʿAdī was entangled in the political struggles under the last Laḫmid dynasty, which cost him his life even though he played a vital role in an-Nuʿmān's rise to power. He was a kind of a secretary of Arab affairs at the Sasanian court.

[57] Quoted by Sībawayhi 27 times.

[58] Quoted by Sībawayhi 16 times.

[59] Troupeau provides three attestations even though he mistakenly indicates it as being quoted twice (Sib I: 155; 413; II: 255).

[60] Quoted by Sībawayhi 10 times.

[61] Quoted 5 times by Sībawayhi (I: 59; 83; 316; 407; II: 408).

[62] For a more detailed discussion see for instance Abbott (6; fn. 36).

2.4. *Kūfa-Baṣra Dichotomy*

Concerning the much debated issue of the Kūfan-Baṣran grammatical schools, scholars tend to agree that the Kūfa-Baṣra dichotomy is a fourth/tenth century invention.[63] Admittedly, there is clear evidence to support the general opinion and so dissociate Sībawayhi from either 'school', but introducing al-Ḥīra to the discussion will shed illuminating light on the whole issue, albeit in a preliminary way that has to be explored further, and will help us to understand the psychology or the necessity behind such an invention. I will argue that it would be more accurate to talk of the emerging of two rival cities, rather than schools.

The first important point to keep in mind is of a geographical nature. The lands that became the administrative territory of the *ʾamīr* of Kūfa 'governor of Kūfa' after the Islamic conquest coincided with what was known as 'the Quarter of the West' during the reign of the Sasanian king Ḫosrou Parwīz. When in 22/643 the *ʾamīr* of Kūfa ʿAmmār b. Yāsir was describing his territory to caliph ʿUmar, he included al-Ḥīra and its land, Bābil and its land and Madāʾin and its surroundings (Morony, op. cit. 141; 155). In fact, here lies the key to our understanding of the causes of the Kūfa-Baṣra dichotomy.

Another closely related issue is the urgent need for a distinctive Islamic identity. Since "every first-generation Muslim was a former pagan, Magian, Jew, or Christian. (…) it was inevitable that the ideas and attitudes brought by converts from their former religious traditions would affect the way they dealt with religious issues as Muslims" (Morony, op. cit. 431). That is why they were encouraged to move from their native cities and lands and settle in newly established military outposts where they could join their coreligionists from the Peninsula (cf. supra). This move was a vital step in forging and enhancing the new Muslim identity. The major turning point, however, came under the ʿAbbāsid rulers of the ninth century, when the Islamic element grew more dominant, partly due to the increasing number of the non-Arab *mawālī* in the administration and the army, but mainly due to a social and demographic transformation that became obvious by the end of

[63] For a full discussion on the two linguistic schools and their reality see Weil (1913) and Owens (1990: 1–3) which offers a summary of Weil's views; Pellat (1953: 129ff); Talmon (1981; 1982); Goldziher (1994: 35–7); Bernards (1997: 11ff); Carter (1999; 2000: 263–72); Baalbaki (2008: 21–4). See also Talmon (1985b) who points out the existence of another early grammatical school situated in the Medīna, whose activities ceased only at the end of the first century of the ʿAbbāsid era.

third/ninth century. Muslims were no longer a minority in Iraq; they now outnumbered other religious groups.[64] What is more, the dividing line between the Islam and the Arabic element started to blur and the two structures soon began to conflate.[65] Religious communities were more clearly delineated and there were no mixed tribes and families any longer.[66] Intellectual Muslims must have felt, therefore, in a position to offer an alternative, free from any non-muslim identification (cf. the origin of vowel signs, attributed to ʾAbū l-ʾAswad in Arabic literature;[67] Ibn al-ʾAnbārī (infra); the introduction of the term *kūfi* by Ibn an-Nadīm for the Arabic script derived from the Hīrī script, and the flush of biographical and historical literature). Muslim intellectuals such as al-Fārābī, who studied under a Nestorian Christian priest, Yūḥannā b. Ḥailān, had to show self-restraint when acknowledging the merits of non-Muslim scholars or teachers (cf. Watt: 2008: 11; 17).

Although the issue of possible foreign influences was hardly raised by early Arab grammarians, we can confidently assert that such influences are undeniable since, as mentioned earlier, first-generation Muslims were all converts from diverse religious backgrounds, and they were still very much influenced by their religious and cultural heritage. According to Goldziher (1994: 8), Arab cultural history tends, in general, to be silent about possible initial foreign influences in any field of culture, e.g., the connection emphasised by Kremer between the theological debates of some Islamic theological schools and those alive in the Oriental Church in the first Islamic century. In this respect, Al-Ḥīra is a prototypical example. Being located on the border between

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[64] By the end of the sixth century, Christians were the single largest religious group in Iraq, followed by the Jewish community. (Donner 1981: 168–9; Morony, op. cit. 332).

[65] Donner (1975: 4–5) points out that in order to underline their religious motives, the word 'Arab' was never used by traditional Muslim scholars to describe Islamic conquests. He further argues that it is necessary to keep the two terms separate if we are to understand the causes for the success of the Islamic conquests.

[66] Cf. the development of Arabic scripts with its distinguished Christian and Islamic type. 'From the 10th century on, the Christian Arabic script begins gradually to lose its similarity to the Syriac scripts on the one hand and become more and more like the current Muslim scripts on the other hand, until eventually it becomes very difficult to distinguish the one type from the other […] the reluctance of the Syrian Christians to yield up their language and script completely is seen in the emergence of the Garšūnī—Christian Arabic written in Syriac characters' (Abbott, op. cit. 21).

[67] For other linguistic innovations attributed to ʾAbū l-ʾAswad see Versteegh (2001). It is common knowledge that long exposure to Aramaic prompted the adoption of diacritical and vowel signs from Syriac in the Arabic script.

Sasanian Iran, the stronghold of the diophysite[68] Nestorians, and Byzantine Syria, the stronghold of the Monophysites, it was the scene of unceasing missionary activities of the two theological factions. The diophysites seem to have consolidated their position in al-Ḥīra during the late sixth century, as evidenced by an-Nuʿmān III and his family becoming Nestorians. (Morony, op. cit. 360). In Islamic times, the *ʿIbād* had definitely become Nestorians and al-Ḥīra hosted important theological academies, while al-Anbār became the seat of the Babylonian rabbinical school *Nehardea.* When the School of *Nisibis*, an important centre of Nestorian theology, was closed in 540 A.D., its scattered students founded monastic schools at al-Madāʾin, al-Ḥīra, Kasker and Maysan, the most important of which was that of al-Madāʾin, where the Patriarch resided (Donner 1981: 169).

If we call to mind that greater Kūfa actually included al-Ḥīra, Bābil and al-Madāʾin and their surroundings, it becomes clear why this military outpost in particular emerged as an unrivalled intellectual centre. Its association with the early development of variant readings and interpretations of the *Qurʾan*,[69] and concomitantly with the early development of Arab linguistics and grammar[70] reveals an unmistakable parallelism with the theological debates taking place within its boundaries, where Biblical exegesis, semantics and history formed the core of intellectual and cultural activities of the highest calibre. As for Baṣra, the existence of Nestorian Christian schools on its territory is adduced by the story of a Persian called Bar Sahdē who died in 127/745 at the age of ninety. He seems to have immigrated from Istaḫr to Baṣra, where he received instructions in the Nestorian Christian schools and became a monk.[71] We not only have reports of Persian converts to Christianity that were still occurring, but also of Magian butchers who were still active in the city (Morony, op. cit. 199).

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[68] They emphasised the dual nature of the incarnation. They opposed the views of Cyril of Alexandria and refused to use 'Theotokos' for the Virgin Mary (Becker 2008: 194).

[69] Most typically represented in the person of Ibn Masʿūd, who was the judge and treasurer of Kūfa.

[70] For a detailed study, see Versteegh (1993). Goldziher tried to draw our attention to an interesting link between Šīʿism and the initial stages of Arabic grammar and pointed out that 'Abū l-'Aswad himself is counted among the members of this sect' (Goldziher 1994: 3–4).

[71] Sībawayhi's move to Baṣra in order to study Islamic law seems consonant with the migration pattern taking place around his time.

It is quite plausible then that Muslim scholars in Baghdad felt the need to have their counterpart of the prestigious Christian theological schools of Edessa-Nisibis and rabbinical schools Nehardea-Sura.[72] That Kūfa and Baṣra were the best candidates to fulfil the job, is *mutatis mutandis* evidenced from the following passage:

> […] Kūfah and Baṣrah did not start their careers as Muslim cities until the second decade of Islam. But these cities were located close to Anbār and Ḥirah in ʿIraḳ, Kūfah being but a few miles south of Ḥirah. We have already seen the major role the two earlier cities played in the evolution of Arabic writing, and it is but natural to expect them to have developed a characteristic script to which the newer cities of Kūfah and Baṣrah fell heir, so that for Kūfic and Baṣran script one is tempted to substitute Anbāran and Hiran.[…] our study so far shows that the script in of Ḥira must have been *the* leading script in the 6th century and as such must have influenced all later scripts, including the Makkan-Madīnan (Abbott 1939: 17).

In considering al-Ḥīra's influence in the formative stage of intellectual Islam, we have seen several strands coming together: the intellectual atmosphere of Al-Ḥīra which was imbued with Nestorian and Babylonian Rabbianic influence,[73] the concentration of the cultural and intellectual activities in Kūfa, al-Madāʾin, and Baṣra, the central position of Qurʾānic exegesis within these activities, and the supremacy of Kūfan exegetes and grammarians till the end of the third/ninth century.[74] On the basis of the data so far, we are now in a position to deal with the identity of one of Sībawayhi's enigmatic groups, the *naḥwiyyūn*.

2.5. *The Naḥwiyyūn*

While there is no proof, there is ample evidence to support the presence of lively grammatical debate prior to the *Kitāb* itself (cf. Talmon 1982: 29; Sezgin, *GAS* ix, 26; Carter 2004: 4; Bohas et al. 1990: 1). The evidence can be deduced not only from the advanced linguistic reasoning and sophisticated comments about language which the *Kitāb* contains, but from reference made by Sībawayhi to such debates when quoting

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[72] Major centres of Biblical scholarship that played a key role in the development of Babylonian Judaism. Rabbinic theological, historical and ethical discussions conducted in these schools, developed into Babylonian *Talmud*.

[73] Not to mention the Sasanian influence, albeit more administrative than theological.

[74] Versteegh (1993: 9) quotes as-Sijstānī complaining about Baghdadi grammarians' persistence in using Kūfan terms instead of the Basran ones, such as *ḫafḍ* for *jarr*, and *ṣifa* for *ẓarf*.

his teachers and other 'grammarians' or the *naḥwiyyūn*. This may partially account for the nearly total absence of purely theoretical discussion of principles and technical jargon in the *Kitāb* which should have been familiar to people at that time (cf. al-Baġdādī, Ḫizānah I: 179).

The group of the *naḥwiyyūn*, a term usually used to refer to 'grammarians', has been a point of contention. Carter (1972) initially described these people as amateur linguists who were interested in the way of speech. Although he accepts in a later paper (1985a: 265) the hypothesis that this anonymous group of linguists mentioned by Sībawayhi 20 times (cf. Troupeau 1976: 200)[75] were engaged in sophisticated linguistic discussion, he nevertheless maintains that their main interest lay in the manner the *Qurʾān*, and possibly poetry, was recited (cf. Carter: 2004: 4–6).

The other viewpoint is represented by Talmon (1982), according to whom, the *naḥwiyyūn* were fully-fledged grammarians, contemporary to Sībawayhi, and who may have been his predecessors including Yūnus and ʿIsā (ibid. 29). He declines to equate their collectivity with anonymity. Moreover, technical terms which occur in the *Kitāb* such as *qalb* 'change of meaning' and *ṣifa* 'adjectival qualifier' are attributed to them. We might reasonably assume that Sībawayhi did depend on earlier tradition (ibid. 21–2; 25) or rather was well-acquainted with the linguistic debates and their jargon.

Another interesting point is Talmon's hypothesis that al-Farrāʾ was 'an heir of the grammatical teaching of the *naḥwiyyūn,* the mainstream of grammarians until Sībawayhi's time.' (2003: xi). It is commonplace that pre-Sībawayhian syntactic terminology was derived from non-technical vocabulary used in commentaries on the *Qurʾān*. This, however, does not apply exclusively to Muslim exegetes. Interreligious debates were recurrent in early Islam[76] and exposure to Christian and Jewish traditions and exegeses was clearly reflected in some commentaries, e.g., the commentary of the grandfather of the ʿAbbāsids and the

[75] I know of at least one omission, i.e. Sībawayhi (I 433/385). What makes this case interesting is that the *naḥwiyyūn's* argument is described as *lā yastaqīmu*, i.e. not the right argument, while most of their other usages they recommend are usually censured as قبيح 'structurally incorrect'.

[76] See, for instance, Hunter (2007) on the two-day dialogue that took place in 165/782 between the Patriach of the Church of the East, Timothy I, and the third ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mahdī.

father of Qurʾānic exegesis,[77] Ibn ʿAbbas (d. 68/687–8), who quoted in his commentary two Jewish converts, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār and ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām. Kaʿb, a former *ḥāber*,[78] and ʿAbd Allāh belonged to an exegetical 'jüdisch gefärbte Schule' affiliated to Ibn ʿAbbas (cf. Sezgin *GAS* i, 25–8); the commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), whose views on divine anthropomorphism were met with strong motions of censure because '[…] bei seinen Erklärungen seiner Phantasie freien Lauf ließ und die knappen Darstellungen des *Qurʾān* mit den Überlieferrung der Christen und Juden ergänzen wollte' (Sezgin *GAS* i, 36–7); and the commentary of ʾAbū l-Ḥajjāj Mujāhid (died between 100/718 and 104/722) who is said to have frequently sought the opinion of Christian and Jewish scholars (Sezgin *GAS* i, 29).

This takes us now to the next stage in our discussion, namely the identity and task of the *naḥwiyyūn*. There are three factors to consider in this regard. The first important factor is the structre of the Monastic schools. Modelled on the school of Edessa and especially that of Nisibis, they had a three-tierd system of instruction: the office of the *mahjyānā* 'elementary instructor', whose task was to teach the pupils the alphabet, the system of vocalization, and basic aspects of reading and writing; the *maqryānā* 'reader' and the *məphašqānā* 'exegete' who was the authoritative interpretor and the head of the school. The *maqryānā* had the task of teaching the students at a more advanced level, and his office is compared to that of a 'grammarian' in classical eduction. (Becker 2006: 71; 87). "It is not clear where the work of the reader ended and that of the exegete (*maphašqānā*) began. This is again similar to what we find in the classical system, in which the students would often begin to acquire the principles of rhetorical theory from the grammarian prior to their move over to an actual rhetor" (ibid. 88). A further interesting detail is that Muslim children had initially to rely on Christians for their instruction. Among the challenges facing Christians after the Islamic conquest, and which were dealt with in the canons of Jacob of Edessa (d. 89/708), we find the question whether a Christian priest is allowed to teach Muslim children how to read and write (Versteegh 1993: 29).

The second factor is the concept of *istiqāma*. Although I will be anticipating some points that will emerge fully in the next chapter

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[77] Veccia Vaglieri, L. "ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās', *EI* 2009.

[78] '[…] the scholarly title immediately below *rabbi* current among Babylonian Jewish scholars, is presumed to be equivalent to the Arabic *ʿālim*' (Schmitz, 'Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, Abū Iṣḥāḳ b. Mātiʿ b. Haysuʿ/Haynūʿ', *EI* 2009).

when we consider the term *istiqāma*, it is however strategically imperative if we are to formulate a plausible hypothesis about who the *naḥwiyyūn* really are. Regarding the religious context within which the concept of *istiqāma* appears, it is worth drawing attention to the foreign origin of the word *aṣ-ṣirāṭ* 'path, way' in the Qurʾānic collocation الصراط المستقيم 'the right path'. Given its foreign origin and the fact that the word *aṣ-ṣirāṭ* mostly appears in combination with the term *mustaqīm*, it is quite possible that this concept was borrowed from Christian and Jewish sources.[79] "There is an ancient connection between *istiqāma* and the 'straight path', and indeed 'right', 'straight' and "ortho-[dox] (= 'the right teaching') are all the same concept, that of a straight line."[80]

Since the term *naḥw* denotes in the first place the right way of speaking, reading, interpreting and behaving (cf. Carter, 1968: 115ff), it might be related somehow to the Syriac/Hebrew root *tqn*. 'Adjectives from the root *tqn* are used in the sense of "right", "correct" (*taqna*, *taqqina*) and indeed in medieval Syriac-Arabic lexicons the Arabic definition often uses terms such as *mustaqīm, istiqāma*. However, I did not find any references to the use of these terms in specifically Syriac grammatical texts, though since the terms are rather generic, there is no reason why they should not be used. […] In Rabbinic Hebrew the root *tqn* has the sense of "correct" or "standard rule"'.[81] Since the term *naḥw* in the *Kitāb* denotes the right way of speaking, it possibly originated from the monastic and rabbinic schools where students learned how to 'read' the Bible correctly, recite psalms properly, and how to be virtuous, i.e. behave in an ethical and just way.[82]

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[79] "*ṣirāṭ* derives ultimately from the Latin *strata*, via Greek and Aramaic, then Syriac (Jeffery, 'Foreign vocabulary', 195–6). This foreign origin was recognised at an early stage by scholars, including Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Naḳḳāsh̲ (cf. al-Suyūṭī, al-Itḳān fī ʿulūm al-Ḳurʾān, nawʿ 38, Beirut 1407/1987, 437)." (Monnot, 'Ṣirāṭ', *EI* 2006).

[80] Carter (June 2009, in personal communication).

[81] "[…] to refer to the possible background of the term *mustaqīm* in terms from the root *tqn* in the Syriac or Rabbinic Hebrew traditions […]. For Syriac this would be the long *Thesaurus of Payne-Smith*, which cites medieval Syriac-Arabic dictionaries, such as Ibn Bahlūl, where adjectives from the root *tqn* are translated *mustaqīm*. For Rabbinic Hebrew, see dictionary of Marcus Jastrow *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*." (in personal communication, G. Khan May 2009).

[82] Cf. the tasks of *məphašqānā* 'exegete' and *maqryānā* 'reader/grammarian' in Becker (2006: 77ff).

Finally, on the basis of what Sībawayhi tells us in his chapter dealing with declinable foreign words (II Sib 342/), it is likely that the term *mustaqīm/ istiqāma* is cognate with *taqna, taqqina*. We are told that the Arabs tend to gloss loanwords so as to adapt them to their new Arabic environment by substituting some of their letters or changing their vowelling: وربما غيّروا حاله عن حاله في الاعجمية فابدلوا مكان الحرف الذي هو للعرب عربيا وغيّروا الحركة [...] وانّما دعاهم الى ذلك أن الاعجمية يغيّرها دخولها العربية (ibid.).[83]

After this attempt to penetrate a bit more deeply into the relationship between the term *naḥw* and *istiqāma*, we may now be in a position to take a tentative step towards identifying the *naḥwiyyūn*. On the basis of the data gathered so far, we may describe the *naḥwiyyūn* as heterogeneous group[84] of possibly non-Arab Christian and Jewish scholars,[85] فالعرب تنصب هذا والنحويون أجمعون 'The Arabs put it in the dependent form and so do all the *naḥwiyyūn*' (I Sib 394/347), with consummate mastery of Arabic, hence their involvement in linguistic debates (cf. I Sib 167/140; 227/194).[86] Their non-Arab identity is revealed in a particular way in the chapter dedicated to the anomalous usage of the *naḥwiyyūn* that deviates from that of the Arabs (I Sib 167/140), and further in the chapters where the majority of their examples are rejected as being artificially constructed, not said by the Arabs (I Sib 194/164; 241/206; 382/335,[87] II 107/106; 156/160).

These *naḥwiyyūn* were mainly concerned with the formulation of rules for the case/mood inflexions of nouns and verbs and employed *qiyās* 'analogy' and hierarchy of grammatical elements as their main analytical tools (cf. Talmon 1982: 18). That the *naḥwiyyūn*'s views were

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[83] An in-depth study of the link between *taqna*, *taqqina,* the verb أتقن 'to master or speak well a language' i.e. to speak it properly and *mustaqīm/ Istiqāma* will be the subject matter of a forthcoming article.

[84] '[...] وإنما ذكرنا هذا لأن ناس من النحويين يفرقون بين التنوين وغير التنوين' but we have mentioned this because a group of the *naḥwiyyīn* distinguishes between the *tanwīn* and *non-tanwīn*' (I Sib 227/194).

[85] Most probably they were exegetes and not grammarians in the full sense of the word.

[86] Versteegh (1993: 161) assumes a possible link between those scholars who occupied themselves with the text of the *Qurʾān* [or rather with exegesis in general], and those who approached Arabic as a subject worthy of study.

[87] Troupeau mistakes the line 20 for line 15 and he fails to mention the occurrence of the term in I Sib 432/385.

considered by Sībawayhi weighty enough to be discussed, and so find their way into the *Kitāb,* is evidenced by statements such as وإلا خالف جميع العرب والنحويين '[…] or else [sc. the usage] would contradict what all Arabs and the *naḥwiyyūn* say' (I Sib 226/193).

3. The Kitāb

Although a full discussion of the linguistic rules and principles governing the *Kitāb* as a whole will be the subject topic of the following chapter, two distinguishing features characterising its linguistic analysis will be briefly referred to, i.e. the theory of *ʿamal* 'operation' and the method of *qiyās* 'analogical reasoning'.

The theory of *ʿamal*[88] is closely related to the phenomenon of the *iʿrāb* 'inflection', and is concerned with the effect of a *ʿāmal* 'an operator' upon a *maʿūl fīhi* 'an element operated on' where a change in word endings is brought about, as for example the mood endings of the imperfect verbs and the dependent form assigned to terms affected by a verbal power.

The method of *qiyās*, on the other hand, is a key method of analysis often employed by Sībawayhi and is based on drawing inferences about similar accidental grammatical effects exhibited by divergent structures, for instance the structural resemblance between the operation of the interrogative particle *kam* on what follows it and that of *ʿišruna* 'twenty' on *dirhaman* (cf. discussion in I Sib 291/250 and in chapter four).

The *Kitāb* consists of three major parts. In part one Sībawayhi expounds on grammatical rules and related linguistic phenomena syntactically as well as pragmatically. In part two, morphology, which encompasses nearly the entire second volume, is focused upon, followed by phonology in part three. The seven introductory chapters known as *ar-Risāla*[89] set out the basic presuppositions of grammar and

[88] For further discussion of the theory of *ʿamal* see for example Levin (1995).

[89] *Ar-Risāla* 'The Epistle' refers to the chapters in which the theoretical basics of the Arabic language were set out. It has been commented upon separately by fourth/tenth century grammarians such as al-Zajjājī. *Ar-Risāla* forms the core of al-Zajjājī's work *al-Īḍāḥ*, and some notions in *ar-Risāla* are said to be inherited from the *naḥwiyyūn* (cf. Carter 1972, Troupeau 1973, Talmon 1982: 18, Versteegh 1977).

discuss the following topics (cf. I Sib 1–13/1–10; Levin 2000b: 253; Carter, 2004: 65–7):

1. Chapter one deals with *kalām* 'speech' and its parts.
2. Chapter two deals with the inflectional system and case/mood endings;
3. Chapter three deals with the two fundamental elements of speech which the speaker cannot dispense with, i.e. *musnad* 'subject' and *musnad ʾilayhi* 'predicate';
4. Chapter four discusses the relationship between *lafẓ* 'linguistic form' and *maʿnā* 'lexical meaning';
5. Chapter five deals with miscellany of linguistic phenomena that deviate from the norm;
6. Chapter six focuses on the proper/right and the improper/wrong way of speech; and
7. Chapter seven is dedicated to discussing poetic licence.

The third and sixth introductory chapters are of special interest for the present and will be dealt with in detail in chapters four and two respectively. What must be emphasised here is that the fourth introductory chapter stands out as the only known chapter in the *Kitāb* that explicitly deals with semantics, i.e. the relationship between form and lexical meaning.

In chapter four of *ar-Risāla*, Sībawayhi says that it is a property of the speech of the Arabs to have different forms corresponding to different meanings such as جلس 'he sat' and ذهب 'he went', or to have two different forms sharing the same meaning (i.e. synonymous) such as ذهب 'he went' and انطلق 'he went away', and finally to have the same form conveying two different meanings (i.e. polysemous) such as; وجدت عليه 'I felt intense anger against him', from موجدة 'intense anger'[90] and وجدت 'I found' from وجدان الضالة 'finding a lost camel' (cf. I Sib 7–8/7).

Regarding the term *maʿnā* 'meaning' in the *Kitāb*, Carter (2004: 69–71) distinguishes three types of grammatical meaning in the *Kitāb* which are primarily associated with *kalām* and the intention of the speaker. He also distinguishes three morphological aspects of meaning and discusses instances of phonological meaning (ibid. 71–2).

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[90] Versteegh (in van Bekkum 1997: 241) translates وجدت عليه as 'I fell in love with him' from موجدة 'passion'.

Versteegh argues that Sībawayhi mainly uses the notion of meaning, in the formal sense of the word, to denote the syntactic function of the linguistic categories under discussion (2001: 75). Most importantly, he draws our attention to the fact that the link was severed between *maʿnā* in the *Kitāb* and its traditional association with the interpretation of the revealed text (ibid.; in van Bekkum et al. 1997: 239–44).

In fact, all the elements mentioned above are present in the *Kitāb* when the term *maʿnā* is under focus: the meaning of the utterance is expressed formally to make the intention of the speaker known to the listener and is stripped of any religious connotation. Attention is drawn to the fact that the term *maʿnā* also has a pragmatic aspect attached to it which operates in tandem with the formal aspect of meaning (cf. discussion below in chapter two).

The *Kitāb* might be described as an instance of communicative grammar i.e. a grammar whose main purpose, according to Leech,[91] is to relate syntax, pragmatics and semantics to each other. It is worth underlining that in the *Kitāb*, Sībawayhi holds a long dialogue with us, which more often than not requires unremitting mental effort. In many cases, Sībawayhi's complex and apparently inconsistent style might be the immediate result of interrupting the discussion of a particular topic, just to be picked up again a few pages or chapters further (cf. the discussion of *ḥāl* in Carter 2002). However, if we bear his conversational style in mind, we will cease to be puzzled by these frequent interruptions and resumptions.[92]

It is significant that all the data used in the *Kitāb* to illustrate syntactic rules and/or pragmatic principles are real data obtained from the speech of Arabs. This means that the pragmatic aspects of speech developed by Sībawayhi differ from the pragmatics developed by medieval grammarians and linguists. Islamic disciplines, such as theology and legal theory flourished in the medieval period and the study of language was imbued with religious considerations. In his work on medieval Islamic pragmatics, Ali (2000) underlines the interpretive quality of the *ʾUṣul l-fiqh* 'principles of jurisprudence' and shows that grasping the intention of Allāh and Muḥammad, as made manifest in

[91] Cf. Leech (1983: 152).

[92] In his 2002 paper, Carter draws our attention to the non-linear thinking of Sībawayhi and finds a parallel between the qualities of hypertext and *intratextuality* exhibited by the *Qurʾān* and the way the content of the *Kitāb* is arranged.

the *Qurʾān* and *Sunna* 'normative custom' respectively, was fundamental in the Muslim legal system and thinking.

3.1. *Sources of the Kitāb*

There is enough indication so far to infer where Sībawayhi's priorities lie. The highly esteemed speech of the Arabs relegates the *Qurʾān* and poetry to a subsidiary role, and allocates the *Ḥadīṯ* 'Prophetic tradition' no role whatsoever.[93] Proverbial expressions are recognised as non-productive (cf. Carter, 2004: 47–8). Because it is the language of the *Qurʾān*, a grammatical and linguistic analysis of Arabic has always been attributed a secondary instrumental role by the exegetes on the one hand, and the formalists who came after Sībawayhi, on the other. These two groups had the written text as their common point of departure, the text of the *Qurʾān*, its codices and variant readings in case of the former group, and the text of the *Qurʾān*, the *Kitāb* and ancient poetry in the case of the latter group. In this respect, the *Kitāb*'s originality is claimed by the central position it gives to the Arabic language as the sole object of study and analysis, while the *Qurʾān* and poetry were used as mere means of attestation. While the three material sources just mentioned, i.e. the *Qurʾān*, poetry and the *Ḥadīṯ*, are briefly dealt with first, a full discussion of the status of the speech of Arabs in the *Kitāb* will be the subject matter of chapter two.

3.1.1. *Qurʾān*

Contrary to what Al-Ḥadīṯī (1974:174) claims,[94] it is the speech of Arabs and not the *Qurʾān* that functions as the primary material source in the *Kitāb*. Apart from the due reverence shown by Sībawayhi to what he believes to be the revealed word of God, the latter is further treated as one more reliable source of linguistic data besides poetry. This is substantiated by the fact that there are only 421 Qurʾānic passages in the the *Kitāb* (Carter, 2004: 44) out of 9,735 utterances.

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[93] Traditionally, four data sources are identified for studying Classical Arabic: pre-Islamic poetry, the *Qurʾān*, the *Ḥadīṯ* and other prophetical literature such the *sīra* and finally the narratives of *ʾAyyām al-ʿArab* (cf. Hopkins 1984: xxxvii). Doubts have been raised as to the reliability of these sources as absolute and authentic witness to the oral and verbal Arabic stemming from the periods they are said to refer to, i.e. immediately before and after the emergence of Islam (cf. ibid. xxxvii–xlvi).

[94] For a full discussion see Ḥadiṯī (1974: 147–61). Her views represent the prevailing opinion among Arab scholars on the status of the *Qurʾān* in the *Kitāb*.

In this respect, two points should be mentioned. First, in spite of Sībawayhi's awareness of the status of the *Qurʾān* as a holy book, the doctrine of *iʿjāz* 'inimitability' of the *Qurʾān* does not seem to have been an issue for him: *Qurʾānic* verses are quoted as evidence for a particular grammatical point or usage only. Second, when Qurʾānic verses are dealt with, reference is often made to various *maṣāḥif* 'codices' (cf. I Sib 481/430; 411/365; 422/376) and *qiraʾāt* 'variant Readings',[95] some of which are described as weak 'وهذه لغة ضعيفة' and uncommon 'وهي قليلة' (cf. I Sib 28, 29; II 311; Carter, 'Sībawayhi' in *EI* 2006; Owens 1990: 5–6). Sībawayhi usually quotes a particular verse according to one of the well-known Readings, which may differ from the Reading of Ḥafṣ that later became the predominant version (cf. Al-Naffāḥ 1970: 7).

Before proceeding further, it is important to bear in mind that the Readings were still evolving in Sībawayhi's time and that the text of the *Qurʾān* had not yet been finalised, even though a more or less well-defined copy was available then. This may explain why some verses quoted in the *Kitāb* are different either in form or content. A telling instance is the following verse which is only found in *Kitāb* in its quoted form: كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوٓاْ إِلاَّ سَاعَةً مِّن نَّهَارٍ بَلاغٌ 'as though they had tarried but an hour of daylight'. Sībawayhi is, however, alleged to have confused the two Qurʾānic verses below (Al-Naffāḥ 1970: 26; 44):

• كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوٓاْ إِلاَّ سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ

> […] as though they had tarried but an hour of the day, recognising each other (Q 10.45)

• كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوٓاْ إِلاَّ سَاعَةً مِّن نَّهَارٍ بَلاغٌ

> [It will be] as though on the day that they shall see what they are promised, they had not tarried but an hour of daylight (Q 46.35).

Further, preference is sometimes given to syntactic structures that deviate from the ones occurring in the *Qurʾān* or are analogical to them, e.g. the case ending in nominal sentences preceded by the negation particle *mā* (Levin 1994: 215; 2000: 254). According to Sībawayhi (I 28/21), the predicate of the nominal sentence introduced by *mā* takes the independent form in the Tamīmī dialect, by analogy with the

[95] For more on the early grammarians' attitude towards the *qiraʾāt* see Baalbaki (1985).

interrogative particle هل and which is the norm, e.g., ما عبدُ اللهِ أخوك ''Abdullāhi [is] not your brother [independent]'. Conversely, the dependent form assigned to the predicate by the Ḥijazīs as in ما عبدُ اللهِ أخاك ''Abdullāhi [is] not your brother [dependent]', is the form found in the Qur'ānic verse ماهذا بشرًا 'This [is] not a human being [dependent]' by analogy with the defective verb ليس 'is not'(cf. Q. 12/13; I Sib 28/21–2).[96]

Here follow some more instances of anomalous Readings quoted by Sībawayhi. Al-Naffāḫ mentions four such Readings (1970: 30; 35; 44 respectively):

- (Q 11.72) وَهَـٰذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا 'and this [is] my husband [being] an old man [dependent]'. According to Sībawayhi, the independent form is also permissible and Ibn Mas'ūd is said to have read this verse as وَهَـٰذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخٌ 'and this, my husband, [is] an old man [independent]' or 'and this [is] my husband [who is] an old man [independent]' (I Sib 258/220; 269/230). The Reading with the dependent form is not mentioned in the *Kitāb*, but still is accountable for syntactically as شَيْخًا 'an old man [dependent]' fulfils the function of a circumstantial qualifier (cf. I Sib 256/218).
- (Q 17.76) وَإِذًا لَّا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلَافَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا 'in that case they would not have stayed after thee, but a little while'. Sībawayhi indicates that he was informed about إذن being used in some *maṣāḥif* 'codices' in وإذن لا يلبثوا خلافك إلا قليلا 'well then, they will not stay after thee, but a little while', and that he heard a Bedouin reading it as وإذن لا يلبثوا 'well then, they will not stay' (I Sib 411/366).
- (Q 25.25) وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ تَنزِيلًا 'and angels will be sent down, descending in ranks'. Ibn Mas'ūd's reading of this verse, viz. وأنزل الملائكة تنزيلا 'and angels will be sent down, descending in ranks' provides Sībawayhi with another argument to substantiate his point that some verbal nouns are tolerated even though they are used with a verb other

[96] Interestingly enough, Sībawayhi (I 28/22) mentions that the Tamīmīs use the independent form when reciting this verse except for those who are acquainted with the codex ومثل ذلك قوله عز وجل ماهذا بشرا في لغة أهل الحجاز وبنو تميم يرفعونها إلا من عرف كيف هي في المصحف.

than the corresponding verb from which they are derived. This is because the two verbs involved, share the same meaning, e.g., أَنزل (IV form) and نُزِّلَ (II form) 'to send down' (II Sib 244/260).

- (Q 43.76) وَمَاظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُواهُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ 'and we wronged them not, but they it was they who were the wrongdoers [dependent]'. Sībawayhi (I 395/348) ascertains that many Arabs say[97] وماظلمناهم ولكن كانواهم الظالمون 'and we wronged them not, but they it was they who were the wrongdoers [independent]' in which case the independent word الظالمون 'wrongdoers' functions as a predicate to the pronoun of separation هم 'they', while the *Qurʾānic* verse treats الظَّالِمِينَ as the predicate of *kāna* to which the dependent form is assigned (cf. I Sib 394–6/346–9 for further discussion of ضمائرالفصل 'pronouns of separation').

Contrary to his attitude towards the superiority of structures stemming from the speech of the Arabs (cf. Carter, 2004: 45), Sībawayhi does not encourage his readers to imitate Qurʾānic structures. This makes his linguistic endeavour remarkably consistent and renders theological arguments superfluous for his purpose.

3.1.2. *Ḥadīṯ (Prophetic Tradition)*

The origin of *Ḥadīṯ* is one of the most controversial issues which has been subject to various conflicting interpretations and whose reliability provoked considerable discussion and has not ceased to arouse doubts (cf. Motzki 2004; Robson, 'Ḥadīth', in *EI* 2006). It should come as no surprise that the *Ḥadīṯ* material in the *Kitāb* is limited to five fragments only, since Sībawayhi chose his linguistic data with painstaking attention to authenticity and reliability. Moreover, unlike Qurʾānic verses, *Ḥadīṯ* quotations are treated as ordinary speech. It seems that Sībawayhi did not realise that they were part of the *Ḥadīṯ* (cf. An-Naffāḫ 1970: 7; Al-Ḥadīṯī (1974: 168–76).[98] Let us first have a look at three fragments:

[97] This is an example of an anonymous Reading.

[98] This lack of knowledge could be ascribed to the absence of written *Ḥadīṯ*, as some traditions considered copying forbidden (cf. Robson, 'Ḥadīth', in *EI* 2006).

• أني عبد الله آكلا كما يأكل العبد وشاربا كما يشرب العبد.

I am ʿAbdullāh, eating as a slave eats and drinking as a slave drinks.

Regarding this fragment, an-Naffāḫ (1970: 57), asserts that it could not be found in any book of the laws and traditions of practices and sayings of the prophet.

• ما من أيام أحب إلى الله فيها الصوم منه في عشر ذي الحجة

There are no days more favourable with God to fast on than the [first] ten [days] of the month ḏī l-Ḥijja.

Here, too, an-Naffāḫ (ibid. 58) admits his failure to find Sībawayhi's version in any of the canonical *Ḥadīṯ* literature. However, it seems to be related to two *Ḥadīṯ* accounts with different wording (ibid.).

• كل مولود يولد على الفطرة حتى يكون أبواه هما اللذان يهودانه وينصرانه

Every child is born with a true faith but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian.

This famous fragment is found in the books of tradition but in a different form (cf. ibid. 57).

3.1.3. *Poetry*

It might be unreasonable to suggest that Sībawayhi considered poetical language in any way inferior to the speech of Arabs, since there are far too many verses quoted in the *Kitāb* to ignore the need for analysis (cf. Levin 1994). The fact that he dedicates a whole chapter to poetry and poetic licence in the *Risāla* (I Sib 9–13/7–10) demonstrates that he was fully aware of the linguistic potential of these verses. In this chapter, Sībawayhi deals with poetic licence in Arabic and all sorts of linguistic irregularities that are permissible in poetry but not in ordinary speech.

Poetic data were originally quoted without attribution, and it is al-Jarmī who first counted 1,050 verses and identified all poets' names except for 50. More recently, Jumʿa (1980) has identified 1,056 lines, 116 among which were attributed to 231 poets in 26 tribes (Carter, 'Sībawayhi' in *EI* 2006).

For Sībawayhi, poetical structures belong to a special realm governed by the rules of poetic licence and therefore should not be imitated in everyday language. It should not pass unmarked that even

when discussing poetry verses, Sībawayhi does not omit reassuring his reader that all the verses quoted were heard recited by trustworthy people فكل هذه البيوت سمعناها من أهل الثقة (I Sib 468/417). Undoubtedly this is another sign of Ḥīrī influence, where poetry still occupies pride of place and where the term 'trustworthy people' would have sometimes applied to the Arabs of al-Ḥīra.

3.2. *Status of the Kitāb*

Langhade (1985: 107) points out that as early as the fourth/tenth century the *Kitāb* was considered the absolute starting point for Arab linguistics as an autonomous discipline. The bibliographical work the *Fihrist* of Ibn an-Nadīm which dates from the same period describes it as 'unequaled before his time and unrivaled afterwards' (I 1970: 111). According to Bernards (1997), the earliest documented trace of the *Kitāb*'s authoritative position in any Kūfan or Baṣran works dates as far back as Ṯaʿlab (d. 219/904) and al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898). Al-Mubarrad's role is shown to be instrumental in establishing the *Kitāb*'s unchallenged authority and obtaining its acclamation as the '*Qurʾān* of grammar'.[99]

In fact, the *Kitāb* was faced with neglect at first and fierce criticism came mainly from rival Kūfan linguists, such as al-Farrāʾ, author of *Maʿānī l-Qurʾān*,[100] and Ṯaʿlab, who was al-Mubarrad's contemporary and leader of the Kūfan 'school'. Ṯaʿlab is quoted declaring that Sībawayhi was only one of forty-two other people who worked on the *Kitāb*.[101] It is quite possible that political factors played a decisive role in the initial indifference to the *Kitāb.* The gradually waning dignity of the Kūfan scholars after al-Kisāʾī and al-ʾAḥmar might explain the change in mood towards the *Kitāb* from total neglect to its acclamation. Although Kūfan scholars have been the most ardent critics of the *Kitāb*, surprisingly enough, its chief transmitter, al-Mubarrad, had initially written a book to refute Sībawayhi's linguistic reasoning titled *Radd ʿalā Kitāb Sībawayhi* (cf. Bernards 1997 for a full discussion). His initial criticism of *Sībawayhi* might be interpreted as an attitude of

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[99] ʾAbū aṭ-Ṭayyib, *Marātib* (1955: 65).

[100] For details on *Maʿānī* see Kingberg 1996.

[101] *Fihrist* of Ibn an-Nadīm 'قرأت بخط أبي العباس ثعلب اجتمع على صنعة كتاب سيبويه اثنان وأربعون أنسانا منهم سيبويه' (1872: 51).

conformity to contemporary prevailing patterns that developed naturally into an implicit sign of political correctness towards caliphs' personal tutors, who happened to be Kūfans.[102] Al-Mubarrad withdrew his criticism of the *Kitāb* later and wrote *al-Muqtaḍab* instead, which is considered to be a simplified version of the *Kitāb*.[103]

It is significant that by al-Mubarrad's time, first hand enquiries about the speech of the Arabs were a practical impossibility, for 'good old Arabic' had ceased to be a living language by then. In contrast, Sībawayhi's endeavour was successful because he was a linguist of great originality in a privileged position which enabled him to gain linguistic information straight from trustworthy Arabs as well as from reliable informants and teachers.

If we pursue this line of thinking, the later scarcity of native speakers of 'good old Arabic' must have gained the *Kitāb* considerable prestige once its value was established as the best and most authentic data bank of the extinct Classical Arabic. By setting the amount of authentic data and detailed analysis contained in the *Kitāb* against the backdrop of the linguistic developments and the remarkable interest aroused in the *Kitāb* in the fourth/tenth century, it should come as no surprise that the *Kitāb* was placed on a par with the *Qurʾān* and was acclaimed the '*Qurʾān* of grammar'.

There is yet another point worth highlighting regarding the scant attention Sībawayhi received in early biographical and grammatical sources. Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, Sībawayhi's main purpose in composing the *Kitāb* was purely linguistic as he was concerned with keeping a detailed record of how the Arabs with the best command of the language spoke Arabic. Sībawayhi's deviation from the primarily religious motive for studying Arabic might be the reason for sidelining the *Kitāb* and its author. The most fundamental point in our discussion is upheld by Gully's footnote (1995: 22):

> Medieval grammarians were not just linguists in the conventional sense of the word but were also required to display varying degrees of 'interpretive' qualities for the purposes of exegesis.

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[102] In defence of his defeated tutor, Hārūn ar-Rašīd, for instance, is quoted reproving al-Kisāʾī's rival in the contest: 'By Allah, Kisāʾī's mistake, joined to his good breeding, is better than your right answer joined to your bad manners.' (Abbott 1946: 175–6).

[103] The lack of systematic approach in *al-Muqtaḍab* is obviously due to its origin, i.e. a compilation of lecture notes (cf. Sellheim, 'al-Mubarrad, Abu 'l-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Akbar al-Ṯumālī al-Azdī', in *EI* 2006).

There is no doubt about the absence of this interpretative quality from Sībawayhi's work. Ironically, the impact of the shift in the approach to Arabic from exegetical studies to that of grammatical analysis (cf. Versteegh 1997: 11ff; van Bekkum et al. 1997: 227–84) might have calibrated the shift in opinion from nearly total neglect of Sībawayhi's *Kitāb* to the recognition of its unchallenged superiority as a noteworthy achievement. As from the second half of the third/ninth century, *Kitāb Sībawayhi* established itself as an indispensable source of data and inspiration. Quite a few commentaries were written on the *Kitāb* such as as-Sīrāfī's and ar-Rummanī's (cf. Sezgin *GAS* ix, 58–63 for a list of commentaries on the *Kitāb*; I Hārūn 1966:36–41; Al-Ḥadīṯī 1974:174).

3.2.1. *Arab Grammarians*

The period between 750 and 1500 A.D., has been linguistically speaking, highly productive. More than 4000 names of grammarians and linguists have reached us, whom we know were engaged in the study of Arabic grammar and linguistics (van Bekkum et al. 1997: 227). Unlike the works of later Arab grammarians, whose descriptive component was subsumed under an overwhelmingly normative and prescriptive content, the descriptive character of the *Kitāb* went far beyond pure description of linguistic phenomena with painstaking detail. Sībawayhi's descriptive method examines, with a thorough analysis, linguistic phenomena of a living language by identifying their sources, weighing their adequacy and passing a judgement on them.

So far we have been concerned with Sībawayhi's contemporaries. However, what is characteristic of post-Sībawayhi Arab linguistics is that grammarians abandoned his complementary method and clung to the formal and theoretical aspect of his linguistic theory. As a result, rigorously normative and detailed methods were developed to become the mould into which Arabic language was made to fit. Langhade's description (1985: 111) can fittingly be applied to these grammarians as he states:

> Sensible avant tout à l'aspect essentiellement oral de la langue et conscient de ce que cette langue représente, il cherchera, en multipliant les enquêtes, à recueillir le maximum données pour les organiser et les rationaliser.

Another salient feature of the late third/ninth century and beginning of the fourth/tenth centuries was the introduction and incorporation of logical conception and philosophical notion in linguistic and Islamic sciences (see for instance Versteegh 1977; Bohas et al. 1990: 8–14).

Fourth/tenth century Baghdad became the intellectual and economic centre *par excellence* and attracted people from all over the Islamic world. Under the influence of an intensive translation activity by logicians, and as a result of their methodology and newly-coined vocabulary,[104] grammarians in Baghdad set about defining grammatical notions, compiling and organising a comprehensive linguistic system. One of the most prominent grammarians of this period is Ibn as-Sarrāj (d. 319/928) whose name is associated with the name of the leading philosopher of the time, al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). His work *Kitāb ʾUṣūl fī an-Naḥw* 'The principles of Grammar' clearly demonstrates the influence of logical reasoning and rational methodology (cf. Bohas et al. 1990: 10–11; Carter 2000: 270). Admittedly this period was characterised by linguistically fertile and distinguished minds, nevertheless the *Kitāb*'s novelty and originality never wore off. Without prejudice to their achievement, linguistic works produced by later Arab grammarians were more often than not pedagogical by nature and were essentially a commentary on the *Kitāb* or on particular aspects of its linguistic theory.

It is beyond the scope of this book to explore the full extent of later grammatical works in relation to the *Kitāb*, as the process might well demand lengthy and separate chapters. Moreover, the clear influence of Greek logical and philosophical thinking on later Arab linguistics has prompted me to provide a rough outline of a group of the most prominent Arab grammarians of the medieval period. These grammarians will be quoted only when their contribution is deemed indispensable for elucidating some theoretical aspects of the *Kitāb* under discussion. It is worth noting that, except for Ibn Jinnī,[105] the selected grammarians were all jurists.

3.2.1.1. az-Zajjājī (d. 337/949)

He was a pupil to both Ṯaʿlab and al-Mubarrad. In addition to the *al-Jumal*, he composed one of the first works on the causes of grammati-

[104] The most distinctive feature of the logicians' work as described by Langhade (1985: 112) is 'l'aspect créateur de leur travail, l'apport qui s'opère par leur traductions… tout un vocabulaire s'est formé progressivement.'

[105] Ibn Jinnī's linguistic method is said to have been influenced by the science of *fiqh* and especially by doctrine of the Ḥanīfī legal school (cf. I *al-Ḫaṣāʾiṣ*, al-Najjar's edition, pp. 40–1).

cal phenomena, *al-Īḍāḥ fī ʿIlal an-Naḥw*, which is a commentary on the *Risāla* of Sībawayhi (see Versteegh 1995a for further discussion).

3.2.1.2. as-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979)
A grammarian of Muʿtazilī[106] leanings. His most famous work is his commentary on the *Kitāb*. He is said to have made the first copy himself in 3,000 leaves. In spite of its shortcomings, Sīrāfī's *Šarḥ Kitāb Sībawayhi* is described as the best of all *Šurūḥ* ever written on the *Kitāb* and the most complete (cf. Fāʾiz 1983: 8–9, 29, 37 and Sezgin, *GAS* ix, 99). Extracts from as-Sīrāfī's commentary were added to the margin of the *Kitāb* (cf. Būlāq's edition) and were extensively quoted by Jahn in his German translation of the *Kitāb*.

3.2.1.3. ar-Rummānī (d. 384/994)
Another Muʿtazilī grammarian and pupil of Ibn as-Sarraj. He is the author of a commentary on the *Kitāb*, of whom it was said that he blended logic with grammar 'كان يمزج كلامه بالمنطق'. Fāʾiz (1983: 15) offers a telling description of ar-Rummānī, which is taken from *Muʿjam l-ʾUdabāʾ* (75/14):

النحويون في زماننا ثلاثة: واحد لا يفهم كلامه وهو الرماني، وواحد يفهم بعض كلامه وهو الفارسي وواحد يفهم جميع كلامه وهو السيرافي.

> There are three types of grammarians nowadays: one whose speech is [totally] incomprehensible, that is ar-Rummānī, one whose speech is partly comprehensible, that is al-Fārisī, and one whose speech is completely comprehensible, and that is as-Sīrāfī.

3.2.1.4. Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002)
The greatest grammarian of this period was a Muʿtazilī too. His most important work that has survived is *al-Ḫaṣāʾiṣ fī ʿIlm Uṣūl ʿArabiyya*, on methodology, in addition to his *Sirr Ṣināʿat l-Iʿrāb* which deals with phonetics.

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[106] This is the dominant ultra-rationalist theological school in the fourth/tenth century. Muʿtazila were strongly influenced by the Greek philosophy and adhered to the doctrine of *Tawḥīd* 'unity and oneness of God' and argued that the *Qurʾān* was created 'not eternal' and that true faith requires understanding not just saying the words. Caliph al-Maʾmūn who encouraged the debates of theologians and philosophers at his court in Baghdad, decreed in 212/827 that all Muslims should adhere to the doctrine that the *Qurʾan* was created.

3.2.1.5. Ibn al-ʾAnbārī (d. 577/1181)
Is the author of the *al-ʾInṣāf fī Masāʾil l-Ḫilāf bayn an-Naḥwiyyīn l-Baṣriyyīn wa l-Kūfiyyīn*, the first documentation of the Kūfan-Baṣran debates. Ibn al-Anbārī is quoted as saying that the compilation of his book that elucidates the differences between the Kūfan and the Baṣran linguistic views was the result of a demand by jurists to model them on the way the difference between the two legal schools of ʾAbu Ḥanīfa and aš-Šāfiʿī was formulated (Goldziher 1994: 51).

3.2.1.6. Ibn Hišām (d. 761/1360)
His most important work *Muġnī l-Labīb ʿan Kutub al-ʾAʿarīb* was written for those who were concerned with exegesis and the inimitability of the language of the *Qurʾān*. He was a professor of *Qurʾānic* exegesis, hence his concern with the theological pragmatics and the language of the *Qurʾān* rather than with ordinary speech and poetry (cf. Gully 1995).

It is worth noting that Ibn Hišām was described by Ibn Ḫaldūn as أنحى من سيبويه 'a better grammarian than Sībawayhi'.[107]

3.2.2. *Western Scholars*

As mentioned earlier, this section is by no means an exhaustive account of all the research done concerning the *Kitāb*, but it gives an indication of the many valuable contributions whose impact went beyond the limits of Arab linguistics to arouse the interest of general linguists (cf. Itkonen 1991; van Bekkum et al. 1997; Auroux et al. 2000). Derenbourg was the first to publish the full text of the *Kitāb* in Paris between 1881 and 1889.[108] A complete annotated[109] German translation of the *Kitāb*

[107] Gully (1995: 2) argues that Ibn Ḫaldūn actually meant that Ibn Hišām's linguistic analysis of the *Qurʾān* was more subtle than Sībawayhi's. According to Carter (personal communication June 2009) "what Ibn Ḫaldūn means is that Ibn Hišām was more useful to Islam through his theoretical and pedagogical achievements than Sībawayhi was". Note the function of the *maqryāna* 'reader' and the *məphašqāna* 'exegete' mentioned above.

[108] The 1887 Calcutta edition was the next version of the *Kitāb* to be published. The Egyptian Būlāq edition appeared in 1898–1900, and was reprinted in Baghdad in 1965. The Būlāq edition contains selections from the commentary of as-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979) and the *Taḥsīl ʿAyn al-Ḏahab* of al-Šantamarī (d. 476/1083). Hārūn republished the *Kitāb* in 5 volumes in 1968–77.

[109] Extensive notes are mainly based on as-Sīrāfī's Šarḥ and Ibn Yaʿīš's commentary on az-Zamaḫšarī's *Mufaṣṣal*.

Sībawaihis Buch über die Grammatik übersetzt und erklärt was made by Jahn in 1895–1900, and in 1976 Troupeau published his *Lexique-Index du Kitāb de Sībawayhi*, still an indispensable tool when studying the *Kitāb*.

The most significant contribution to the study of the origins of Arabic grammar and particularly of the *Kitāb* is attributed to Carter and especially to his unpublished doctoral thesis which represented a milestone in Sībawayhan studies. According to Versteegh (1995b), the former's articles in the early seventies (1972; 1972a; 1973; 1973a)[110] represented the first serious linguistic analysis of the Arabic grammatical tradition. Special mention should be made of the 1972 article where the main ideas about sentence and speech are set out. This article was a pioneering attempt to compare Sībawayhi with western grammatical theories and its overall value is not affected by the fact that it still requires a thorough investigation. In his 1973 article, Carter draws parallels between the Arabic method of substitution and modern constituency analysis. His most recent book *Sībawayhi* can be considered as the tool *par excellence* for the purpose of becoming acquainted with Sībawayhi, the *Kitāb* in general and the terminology and methods contained in this work in particular. The practicality of the book is enhanced by a list of resources added in the further reading section.

Carter primarily refutes any Hellenistic influence in the *Kitāb* and considers it to be more of a hindrance than a help to understand the *Kitāb* properly (cf. Carter 1969: 45ff). He underlines the legal and ethical origin of the linguistic terminology used in the *Kitāb* instead. To this effect, he has painstakingly shown that there is a parallel between the technical terms used in the *Kitāb* and terminology proper of Islamic law '*fiqh*' and ethics (1969; 1972; 1991; 2004). Presently he is in charge of the Sībawayhi Project, initiated in 1997. The project aims to produce a Hypertext edition of the *Kitāb Sībawayhi*. Although incomplete, it serves as a source of all sorts of useful information and resources related to the *Kitāb*.

Mention should be made of Mosel's *Die syntaktische Terminologie bei Sībawaih* (1975) which discusses in detail the technical terms used by Sībawayhi. Another valuable contribution is Humbert's *Les voies de la transmission du Kitāb de Sībawayhi* (1995), in which more than seventy manuscripts of the *Kitāb* were identified. As shown above, Bernards'

[110] They are largely based on linguistic issues raised in his doctoral thesis.

Changing Traditions, al-Mubarrad's Refutation of Sībawayhi and the Subsequent Reception of the Kitāb (1997) threw light on the part played by al-Mubarrad in establishing the *Kitāb* as the most authoritative work on the Arabic language. In the *Arabic Linguistic Tradition* (Bohas et al. 1990) the *enunciative hypothesis* is introduced as an important element in Sībawayhi's methodology. It is based on operations performed by the speaker in order to achieve a specific effect on the listener. Families of utterances are analysed to show their basic similarities and differences (what he is doing in fact is to discuss a rule or a principle and then its application) in terms of enunciative operations performed at the level of *ʾilġāʾ* 'neutralisation' and *iʿmāl* 'operation' which have a direct consequences on the use of the case endings (ibid. 38ff).

Most of Talmon's works (1982; 1984; 1985a; 1985b; 1986; 1987a; 1988; 1990; 1997; 2003) are dedicated to the study of the origins of Arabic grammar and its early history, i.e. linguistic centres and systematic grammarians in the period prior to Sībawayhi.

Other studies of special interest include Levin's *Arabic Linguistic Thought and Dialectology* (1998), which is a collection of 17 articles published previously and offers a terminological and analytical study of various linguistic aspects dealt with in the *Kitāb*, such as Sībawayhi's attitude to spoken language, *ʾimāla* 'opening a vowel', *ʿamal* 'operation' etc.

Versteegh's prolific contribution to our knowledge of the Arabic grammatical tradition deserves a special mention. Among his works directly related to the study of the *Kitāb* is *The Explanation of Linguistic Causes. Az-Zaǧǧāǧī's Theory of Grammar* (1995a). In other works such as *Grammar and Qurʾānic Exegesis in Early Islam* (1993), an attempt is made to relate grammatical terminology in the earliest commentaries to our knowledge of the earliest grammarians from the biographical literature. This work distinguishes itself by elucidating the role of semantics within the Arab linguistic tradition and by identifying the intention of the speaker in grammar with the *Qurʾānic* meaning.

In the light of the *Qurʾānic* exegesis, the grammatical notion of *ʾiḍmār*, for instance, is convincingly claimed to be related to the word *ʾiḍmār* in the exegesis which implied the speaker's hidden thoughts and the tendency not make his intention fully known, hence, the commentator's task to reveal the intended meaning by affecting the necessary change either by the addition or deletion of words (cf. Versteegh 1993: 146–51).

As for Owens, he mainly studies Arab linguistic tradition in the light of modern western linguistics. His approach to Arab syntactic theory

is characterised by its analysis as a variant of dependency theory and valency grammar (1988; 1989; 2003).[111] Although his contributions are rightly hailed by general linguists as they show thoughtful and detailed comparisons, they nevertheless indicate the possible risk of anachronism one can run when attempts are undertaken to evaluate Arab linguistics in terms of western linguistic models (cf. the accepted term of 'government' for *ʿamal* (1988: 38ff); the correlation between *ʾaṣl/farʿ* and marked/unmarked and the resemblance drawn with generative/transformational grammar (ibid. 218–220; 2000b: 296–8).[112]

This section will be brought to an end with a brief note on the interest shown in Arab linguistics by general linguists (cf. Comrie's 1991 article 'On the Importance of Arabic', and Itkonen's *Universal History of Linguistics* 1991; van Bekkum et al. 1997; Auroux et al. 2000). In spite of his lacking indispensable scholarly credentials as an Arabist, some points raised by Itkonen are worth looking at, and accordingly his work should be judged only on its merit of introducing the Arab tradition as another worthwhile linguistic tradition besides the Indian, Chinese and Greek (ibid. 1). Unfortunately, the word 'universal' leaves a lot to be desired (cf. Versteegh 1995b: 12).[113]

Basically, Itkonen (op. cit. 125–161) had to make a choice between two authoritative but conflicting views of Carter and Owens and finally decided to opt for Owens's views on the basis of congeniality (op. cit. 161 n. 1). Oddly enough, Itkonen argues in favour of measuring Arabic linguistics with western norms, ignoring thus the two specialists' essential point on which they both agree, viz. 'to avoid value judgements and try to understand rather than to judge' (ibid. 162, n. 16).

Itkonen (op. cit. 156) gives the impression of having seized for a while the essence of Sībawayi's linguistic thinking when he states that 'it does seem curious that Sibawayhi combines his formal syntax with such pragmatic or discourse-analytical considerations' (ibid.), but his high expectations seem to have been disappointed as he proceeds. 'One

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[111] For further discussion on whether medieval Arab linguistic theory can be viewed in the light of modern linguistic theories, and in particular in the light of dependency theory cf. Kouloughli (1999; 2000) and Owens' reply to Kouloughli's 1999 article (2000a).

[112] See also Ayoub and Bohas (1983), who claim that the Arab linguists operated with a notion of 'abstract representation' and were thus effectively transformational grammarians *avant la lettre*, a claim refuted by Itkonen (1991: 147–8).

[113] Later works on universal linguistics in which the Arab tradition was included and discussed (cf. above) were wisely entrusted to specialists in the field.

might expect any 'interactional' conception of language to contain a well-developed semantic component but Sibawayi does not' (ibid.). In an attempt to establish the cause of Sībawayhi's failure to live up to expectation, Itkonen is quick to pass a snap judgement on the *Kitāb* as he explains (ibid.):

> The reason for this state of affairs might be that in his thinking there are two strands which he is not quite able to harmonize, but of which, on the other hand, he cannot bring himself to discard either the one or the other. His successors were in this respect more straightforward.

Itkonen's analysis ultimately falls short of its goal due to a fundamental weakness in the measures by which he imprudently gauged Sībawayhi's method, combined with a rather superficial knowledge of traditional Arabic linguistics. One of the main goals in the next chapter is to address such rash value judgements by underlining the importance of the Complementarity Principle in Sībawayhi's linguistic thinking.

Summary

Sībawayhi's name is associated with a monumental linguistic work which immortalised it, namely the *Kitāb*. In spite of the initial neglect it was met with, the *Kitāb* soon gained ground thanks to al-Mubarrad. By the fourth/tenth century, the *Kitāb* was presented as the prototype of the Baṣran linguistic thinking. As a result, the supremacy of the 'Baṣran' tradition was imposed, and other rival linguistic traditions were superseded.

Apart from its intrinsic importance as the indisputable authority on the Arabic language, the *Kitāb's* deep significance also lies in its underestimated value as a complementary and reliable historical source of information on the social and tribal transformation that accompanied early Islamic conquests. Its data becomes all the more valuable in view of the scarcity of early Arabic sources before the third/ninth century.

In this chapter I have argued for the first time that al-Ḥīra is the key in understanding the early development of Arabic grammatical science. Al-Ḥīra has been the thread that ran through this chapter as well as the key to answer many questions that were left unanswered, or at best left open. This illustrious city which was eclipsed by the nearby emerging military garrison Kūfa, was not only a highly important centre of the pre-Islamic Arabic culture but was shown to be the matrix within which Early Arab linguistics grew and developed. The

Kitāb is advanced as an invaluable eyewitness account of the social, tribal, cultural and religious situation in eighth century Iraq. The whole endeavour aimed also to provide highly plausible answers to pertinent problems such as the identity of the *naḥwiyyūn* and the Kūfa-Baṣra dichotomy.

The *Kitāb* proved to be a big landmark in the development of Arab linguistic tradition, if not its starting point. Among all Arabic works on grammar and linguistics, the *Kitāb* stands out above them all, due to the shift in focus it brought about from exegetical and semantic to syntactic and functional. Unlike the approach of his rival, al-Farrāʾ, pure linguistic argumentation held pride of place in Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis, where he rarely invoked semantic or exegetical arguments.

Clearly the speech of the Arabs was Sībawayhi's first source of material evidence, and, as such, it was given priority above the *Qurʾān* and poetry. A hypothesis has been reemphasised as to why the *Kitāb* was being neglected and criticised. The presence of native speakers of 'good old Arabic' and the absence of exegetical and religious elements in his linguistic analysis have been adduced as plausible causes.

Sībawayhi's remarkable achievement distinguishes itself from later grammarians not only through its descriptive character but rather through his data that exclusively comes from living usage, and against which the validation of linguistic views are tested. In other words, the prescriptive character of later grammarians is due to their lack of real data and complete dependence on Sībawayhi's corpus of spoken Arabic, besides the *Qurʾān* and poetry.

The status of the *Kitāb* among Arab grammarians and western scholars has been the subject matter of the last two sections. The amount of research conducted and works published on the *Kitāb* are a clear indication of the interest that Sībawayhi's major and only work has aroused ever since it was acclaimed as the *Qurʾān* of Grammar. This interest does not seem to have diminished but only increased.

CHAPTER TWO

COMPLEMENTARITY

Whereas the historical background of the *Kitāb* and Arab linguistics in general has been the focal point in the previous chapter, this chapter aims to provide us with deeper and/or new insights into the linguistic tools and mechanisms employed by Sībawayhi in his work.

The present chapter falls within the interpretative domain of global linguistic principles that not only seem to underpin some western linguistic theories but also turn out to have upheld the first systematic and comprehensive treatise on Arabic language and linguistics. I will be bringing these principles into focus, because they strikingly dovetail those used in the *Kitāb Sībawayhi*. Once unravelled, readers of Sībawayhi will find these principles familiar, and as I proceed, I shall explicitly refer to them wherever parallels are drawn.

Since unity of language will be shown to be the dominant feature of the *Kitāb*, approaching it from the right angle requires the presupposition of the two necessary poles of Sībawayhi's method, i.e. syntax and pragmatics and the complementarity of functional and formal explanations.

Generally speaking, the history of western and Arab linguistics has been dominated by a formal approach to language, with a system of rules employed as a standard gauge of the acceptability/grammaticality and unacceptability/ungrammaticality of a structure. Sībawayhi can therefore be argued to be one of the first grammarians who successfully managed to strike a balance between the formal and functional components of human speech.

In order to prevent confusion, I should emphasise that modern linguistic language is borrowed to serve as a medium to illustrate Sībawayhi's approach to Arabic. This means that this chapter is not intended as a comparative study between Arabic and modern linguistics nor are linguists quoted randomly, just because some similarities of approach are traced. Modern linguists will be referred to only when certain aspects of their linguistic model or insights efficiently and accurately convey fundamental insights found in the *Kitāb* and translate them into modern language. In short, my aim is to pinpoint where Sībawayhi's linguistic thinking intersects with modern linguistics.

To illustrate this point I might refer for instance to the fact that Sībawayhi's reliance on native speaker knowledge is comparable to the Chomskyan approach to language which states that the borderline between grammatical and ungrammatical structures can only be drawn by native speakers. This correspondence with the Chomskyan view does not exclude the relevance of Lyons's statement (1977: 34–5) that an essential part in the communication process is based on the congruence between the communicative intention of the speaker and its recognition by the listener as being the intended receiver, which forms part and parcel of Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis.

Leech's communicative approach to language has proved to be the most adequate medium for our purpose and the reasons are twofold. First, it involves a fruitful interaction among the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels underlying the language. Second, there is a great deal of common ground between Leech's linguistic account and Sībawayhi's. In fact, the whole thrust of this account is that it studies language as a system of human communication and gives prominence to the complementarity of syntax and pragmatics in such a way that it escapes a rigid *either-or* approach to language. Within the framework of a complementary approach, syntax and pragmatics are equally important factors in the analysis of language.

Given that the Principle of Complementarity forms the core of the present study, I will be approaching language as 'a simultaneous bundle of syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and phonological features'. These feature are decoded instantaneously, and not in any particular sequence.[1] What is more, the plurality of these linguistic features and their non-linearity are the underlying principle of the simplest utterance produced.

[1] In the light of his paper 'Patterns of Reasoning: Sībawayhi's Analysis of the Ḥāl' (2002), Carter argues that 'modern theoretical linguistics rather overlooks that the relationship between deep and surface structure, and the transformations involved, are only in a logical sequence, not a temporal one, but sometimes this is forgotten. Perhaps only in word order can we speak of a linear element. Years ago the phoneme was defined as a *'simultaneous bundle of distinctive features'* and nobody, I think, ever stopped to ask how this plurality of features is decoded instantaneously, not in any sequence. Ibn Jinnī and others were partly aware of this when they argued that logically consonants come before vowels but in practice, they are of equal importance… It might be possible then to speak of a *'simultaneous bundle of syntactic features'* in the same spirit, i.e. a plurality of features decoded instantaneously' (in personal communication, 2004).

In order to examine the implication of Complementarism, I shall first deal with the utterance as a basic unit of linguistic analysis and then turn to the criteria determining its communicative value and well-formedness. An essential prerequisite for an utterance is that it should be *mustaqīm*. By *mustaqīm*, Sībawayhi broadly means that the utterance should be meaningful to the listener and should successfully convey the intended information, otherwise the speech becomes *muḥāl* 'nonsensical and unviable'. Key notions such as *intelligibility, grammaticality, corrigibility* and their relationship with the concept of *istiqāma* are highlighted.

The next section places a special emphasis on the communicative aspect of language and consequently, the communication act as an event is dealt with in detail. Two pragmatic strategies, i.e. Negotiability and Motivation, on the one hand, and Conventionality on the other, form the foci of the next two sections, given their relevance to the discussion of Complementarity and their being in line with a more comprehensive and communicative approach to grammar. This chapter is concluded with a short summary.

1. Utterance tuning parameters

Sībawayhi's linguistic assumptions and criteria can prove to be of particular interest for general linguistics on two accounts. First, the principles underlying his theoretical system show a striking correspondence with propositions that were considered as self-evident in the account of traditional linguistic analysis. Second, his line of linguistic argumentation and explanations exhibits features of global validity, that are still found in western linguistic theories, as will become clear in the remainder of this book.

As far as traditional linguistics is concerned, Lyons (1971: 172) confirms that the *pre-theoretical* or *primitive* notion of utterance forms the starting point of any linguistic analysis, and that the notion of utterance is considered more primitive than that of word, sentence or morpheme. By *pre-theoretical* or *primitive* he means to say that the application of this notion is independent of any technical definitions or postulates of linguistics (ibid.).

Having said this, Harris's definition of *utterance* is preliminary to our further discussion, for his definition will be shown to contain an essential element that conveys the way the speech of the Arabs is analysed by Sībawayhi. For Harris, an utterance is 'any stretch of talk, by one

person, before and after which there is silence on the part of the person' (1951: 14).[2]

Sībawayhi's descriptive conduct seems to be congruent with the way traditional linguists set about describing linguistic phenomena. Probably, the most prominent feature is that Sībawayhi's attention was turned to the *kalām* 'speech, talking'. This is because his analysis was based on the pre-theoretical notion of attested utterances rather than that of theoretical sentences. Besides, the term *jumla* 'sentence', employed by later grammarians, does not seem to rivet Sībawayhi's gaze. In fact he never used the term *jumla* at all in that sense, since the pre-theoretical utterance and its situational context were what claimed his attention in the first place.

This takes us neatly to Sībawayhi's comprehensive vision of language, i.e. language is mainly listener-oriented. There is a complex interplay between the production of right and communicatively successful utterances by the speaker, and the analysis and recognition of the meaning intended by the listener.[3] For Sībawayhi each utterance in theory begins with a vocative expression or *nidāʾ* addressed to the listener (I Sib 316/274):

لأن أول الكلام أبدا النداء إلا أن تدعه استغناء بإقبال المخاطب عليك فهو أول كل كلام لك به تعطف المكلّم عليك فلما كثر وكان الأول في كل موضع حذفوا منه تخفيفا.[4]

> The first part of every utterance is always a vocative; unless you leave it out because you can dispense with it by the fact the listener is facing you. It is the first part of every speech by means of which you conjoin the person you are talking to, but since it was frequent in their speech and was first in every position, it was deleted for the sake of lightness.

The fact that each utterance's end is marked by silence is clearly stated in the following passage where the word *sukūt* (silence) is employed (I Sib 261/222):

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[2] Further on resemblance between Harris's definition and Sībawayhi's analysis of utterance see Carter (1973: 150).

[3] Lyons (1971: 158*ff*) speaks of the analysis ('recognition') of a corpus of utterances and the synthesis ('production') of grammatical sentences as two alternative approaches to grammar and lexicon.

[4] As-Sīrafī (206[a]) إن المتكلم إذا تكلم فلا بد من مخاطب يخاطبه بكلامه الذي يتكلم به لأنه يقول يا فلان كان الأمر كذا وكذا وإذا كان المخاطب مقبلا عليه يجوز أن تدع يا فلان باقباله عليه 'When the speaker produces an utterance, he needs a listener to whom he can address himself, because he usually says 'O such and such what happened was so and so', and if the listener is standing before him, it is permissible then to leave 'O such and such' out.

ألا ترى أنك لوقلت فيها عبدُ اللهِ حسن السكوت وكان كلا ما مستقيما كما حسن واستغنى في قولك هذا عبدُ اللهِ.

> Do not you see that if you said 'In there [is] ʿAbdullāhi', it would be structurally correct to mark its end with silence, and as speech it would be right and communicative just as it would be structurally correct and semantically self-sufficient to say 'This [is] ʿAbdullāhi'.

There is clear evidence of Sībawayhi's complementary approach in this excerpt where structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects of speech are highlighted, for *ḥusn as-sukūt* is a structural feature and *istiġnāʾ* is a semantic feature. We are told that it is right to say فيها عبدُ الله 'In there [is] ʿAbdullāhi' as it meets the structural and pragmatic requirements of a communicatively viable and complete utterance.[5]

It is worth noting that unlike the *sukūt, waqf* (pausal form) does not necessarily mark the completion of an utterance, but its end, after which silence is possible. *Waqf* primarily belongs to the morpho-phonological domain rather than to the syntacto-pragmatic domain. It is optional at certain boundaries and is marked by the lack of final inflection form and the use of *sukūn* (cf. for instance I Sib 1; 2; 300; and II Sib 28; 31). In other words, other extraneous elements may be added after the *waqf*, if the communicative value of the utterance is impaired, while the *sukūt* by nature excludes any such addition, since it is intrinsically linked to the *istiqāma* that tells the speaker when to stop. The following passages give us pause for thought:

واعلم أن الأسماء المبهَمة التي توصَف بالأسماء التي فيها الألف واللام تُنزَل بمنزلة أي وهي هذا وهؤلاء وأولئك وما أشبهها وتوصَف بالأسماء وذلك قولك يا هذا الرجلُ ويا هذان الرجلان صار المبهَم وما بعده بمنزلة اسم واحد وليس ذا بمنزلة قولك يا زيدُ الطويلُ من قبل أنك قلت يا زيدُ وأنت تريد أن تقف عليه ثم خفت أن لا يُعرف فنعتّه بالطويل وإذا قلت يا هذا الرجلُ فأنت لم ترد أن تقف على هذا ثم تصفه بعد ما تظن أنه لم يُعرف فمن ثم وُصفت بالأسماء التي فيها الألف واللام لأنها والوصف بمنزلة اسم واحد كأنك قلت يا رجل. (I Sib 306/265)

> You should know that the demonstratives that are qualified by nouns bearing the *ʾalif-lām* have the same status as 'which'. These are 'this', 'these', 'those' and the like. They may be qualified by nouns as in يا هذا الرجل 'You man!' and يا هذان الرجلان 'You two', so the demonstrative noun

[5] Structural well-formedness is not always necessary, as will be demonstrated below.

> and what comes after it became like one noun. However, they do not have the status of 'You Zayd the tall', because you uttered 'O Zayd!' with the intention to stop, but then feared he would not be recognised, so you described him as 'the tall'; but if you said يا هذا الرجل 'You man!' it would not have been your intention to stop after هذا 'this' and then describe him after suspecting he would not be recognised. So the demonstratives are qualified by nouns bearing the *ʾalif-lām* because they and the qualifier have the status of one noun as if you said يا رجل 'O man!'

وقال الخليل إذا قلت يا هذا وأنت تريد أن تقف عليه ثم تؤكده باسم يكون عطفا عليه فأنت بالخيار إن شئت نصبت وإن شئت رفعت وذلك قولك يا هذا زيدٌ وإن شئت قلت زيدا.
(I Sib 307/266)

> Al-Ḫalīl said that if you say يا هذا 'O such and such' with the intention to pause there and then corroborate it by means of a conjoined noun, you have the choice between the dependent form or the independent form, such as your saying 'You, Zaydun [independent]' and if you wish, you may say '[You], Zaydan [dependent]'.

Two conclusions follow from our discussion so far: first, that a right and communicatively successful utterance, i.e. *mustaqīm*, constitutes the starting point of Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis; second, native speakers intuitively delimit the utterance by silence when they consider it to be grammatically complete and semantically self-sufficient. In other words, silence is employed as a formal marker of the recognisability of the speaker's communicative intention and the end of every utterance.

A digression might be necessary at this stage, for this account of the utterance as a basic linguistic unit in the *Kitāb* will be incomplete without commenting on two terms that are related to the analysis of speech, i.e. the formal notion of the *jumla* and the notion of the *ʾifāda* or *fāʾida* (information/conveying information).

Ibn Jinnī is one of the few grammarians to distinguish between *kalām, qawl*, and *jumla*[6] in a formal way. According to Ibn Jinnī (I: 17), the *kalām* or speech refers to any independent formal utterance or expression conveying a meaning and is called *jumal* by the grammarians: أما الكلا مفكل لفظ مستقل بنفسه، مفيد لمعناه وهو الذي يسميه النحويون الجمل. *Qawl*, on the other hand, might be defined as any formal utterance pronounced,

[6] For more see for example Owens (1988: 36–8) and Talmon (1988).

be it complete or incomplete: وأما القول فأصله أنه كل لفظ مَذِل به اللسان، تاما كان او ناقصا. Put differently, *qawl* may also refer to any speech sound or group of sounds you enunciate. For Ibn Jinnī (ibid.), every *kalām* is a *qawl* but not every *qawl* is *kalām*: فكل كلام قول، وليس كل قول كلاما.

To Ibn Jinnī's mind, the *kalām* substantially consists of sentences that are self-sufficient and do not need any complement: إن الكلام هو الجمل المستقلة بأنفسها، الغانية عن غيرها (I Ibn Jinnī 19; 32). The main difference between a *kalām* and a *jumla* is that the *kalām* refers to speech in general and is a wider notion than the *jumla*. In other words, the *kalām* is seen as a collective noun used to designate any number of complete [sc. meaningful] sentences, be it one, two or more sentences: فالكلام إذا إنما هو جنس للجمل التوام، مفردها، ومثناها ومجموعها (ibid. 27).[7]

To conclude, I may turn back to modern linguistics and summarise the discussion as follows: without using explicitly the term *qawl,* a similar incongruity between 'utterance' and 'sentence' is succinctly expressed by Harris as he states that 'the utterance is, in general, not identical with the 'sentence' (as that word is commonly used), since a great many utterances in English, for example, consist of single words, phrases, 'incomplete sentences', etc. Many utterances are composed of parts which are linguistically equivalent to whole utterances occurring somewhere' (cited by Lyons 1971: 172).

As for the term *fāʾida* 'informativeness', it is a key notion in the later Arabic theory of language but is never used by Sībawayhi himself. *Fāʾida* seems to have substituted Sībawayhi's notion of *istiqama* and instead of employing the word *mustaqīm* to qualify the *kalām*, later grammarians' preference went to *jumal mufīda*, i.e. 'informative sentences'.

When analysing terms such as مستقيم 'right and communicative', جائز 'permissible', حسن 'grammatically well-formed', جميل 'fair', محال 'wrong, unviable, twisted', قبيح 'grammatically ill-formed', and رديء 'vile, bad', the formal concept of *jumal mufīda*, may cast shadow on the way these terms are understood, i.e. to have bearing on the structural aspect of the speech only. However, the truth of the matter is that these words

[7] Owens (ibid. 37–8) mentions Ibn Hišām as the grammarian who makes explicit the implicit distinction drawn between *kalām* and *jumla* by al-Fārisī. A *kalām* for Ibn Hišām 'is an informative, purposeful expression' while a *jumla* is 'composed of a verb and noun…or topic and comment' (ibid. 38). For a detailed study of *kalām* and *jumla* see Talmon (1988).

are primarily used in the *Kitāb* to assess an utterance pragmatically and express the approval or disapproval of a particular usage of grammatical construction against the functional backdrop of what one says or hears (cf. discussion below).

This section will be concluded with another term used by Sībawayhi, which has not been given due attention, and yet is a telling example of how linguistic discussions reported in the *Kitāb* are deeply rooted in Complementarism, i.e. the term *baʿīd* 'remote = remotely plausible'. Let us first have a look at the following passage (I Sib 388/341):

وهذا بعيد وإنما جاز هذا على قول شاعر قاله مرة في شعر ثم لم يسمع بعده مثله.

> This [usage] is only remotely plausible and it is permitted because a poet used it once in a poem, after which no one has ever again heard of anything similar.

Generally speaking, the term *baʿīd* is used in connection with the choice of case endings and the meaning of the utterance associated with that choice.[8] It usually appears in pair with comparative terms such as:

- ʾaqrab 'closer = more plausible' as in, والنصب عربي كثير والرفع أجود لأنه إذا أراد الإعمال فأقرب إلى ذلك أن يقول ضربت زيدا وزيدا ضربت ولا يعمل الفعل في مضمر ولا يتناول به هذا المتناول البعيد وكل هذا من كلامهم 'and the dependent form is good Arabic and is common but the independent form is better, for, if the operation of the verb was intended, it would be more plausible for him to say 'I hit Zaydan [dependent as direct object]' and 'Zaydan [dependent as direct object] I hit', in which case the verb is not made to operate on a pronoun, as such operation is only remotely plausible; [still] all this is found in their speech' (I Sib 42/32).
- ʾawlā wa-ʾaqrab 'more appropriate and more plausible', as in the discussion of the dependent form of إصبعًا 'finger' in ادفع الشرَّ ولو إصبعًا 'Push the evil away from you even by a finger's length'. Sībawayhi expounds that the dependent form is more appropriate and more plausible than the independent form for the following reasons. First, we are told that it is structurally incorrect to link the dependent term إصبعا 'finger' with an operator that makes it independent: لا

[8] Cf. I Sib 136/114; 271/232; 307/266; 388/341; 393/346; 398/351; 401/355; 402/356; 429/382.

يحسن أن تحمله على ما يرفع لأنك إن لم تحمله على إضمار يكون ففعل المخاطب أولى وأقرب فالرفع هي هذا وفي ائتني بدابة ولو حمارٌ بعيد كأنه يقول ولو يكون مما تأتيني به حمارٌ ولو يكون مما تدفع به إصبعٌ (cf. I Sib 136/114). Second, if the suppressed verb is not understood to be the verb كان 'it was', it should be the same verb used in the utterance to address the second person, i.e. دفع 'he pushed'. At this stage of analysis we are clearly moving from the structural to the pragmatic plane, mainly because there is nothing structural to justify the preference for the suppressed verb دفع. The use of this verb is argued to be more appropriate and plausible, because the independent form in this case and in 'Bring me a riding animal even if it was a donkey [independent]' suggests something only remotely plausible: we are made to understand that by opting for the independent form, the speaker would imply 'even if that which you were bringing me was a donkey' and 'even if the means by which you were pushing it away was a finger', which are obviously too far-fetched.

These examples suffice to illustrate that terms such *baʿīd, ʾaqrab* etc. are not structural criteria but refer to a mode of argumentation, i.e. something which Sībawayhi regards as 'plausible' or 'only remotely plausible'. Admittedly structural well-formedness is paramount in the *Kitāb*, but that is only one side of the story. As I demonstrate in the following sections, Sībawayhi keeps inviting us to rise above the limitations of a formalist approach and appreciate the bigger and complementary picture of language.

2. Complementarism

It has long been recognised that the linguistic map has been divided along the lines of formalist and functionalist camps. We only need to throw a quick glance at the recent literature and the conclusion reached will be that the situation has remained almost static.[9]

[9] The polarisation of the linguistic approach into formalist and functionalist is not the only one, as Lyons (1991: 189) mentions three dichotomies, viz. descriptive vs. historical and comparative linguistics, microlinguistics vs. macrolinguistics and finally theoretical vs. applied linguistics. In his work on word order in Arabic, Dahlgren (1998: 17–19) neatly expounds a polarisation into the American deductive vs. European inductive approach to linguistics. These two methods are complemented by empirical investigation. Givón (I, 2001: XV–XVII) takes rather a dim view of this

However, the focus of attention in this book differs in that the complementarity of syntax and pragmatics is given prominence, without which any serious effort to present a satisfactory explanation of the language is doomed to fail. The way grammar will be approached is partly inspired by Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics* and mainly developed along the lines of Complementarism, as formulated below:

> In essence, the claim will be that grammar[10] (the abstract formal system of language) and pragmatics (the principles of language use) are complementary domains within linguistics. We cannot understand the nature of language without studying both these domains, and the interaction between them. The consequences of this view include an affirmation of the centrality of formal linguistics in the sense of Chomsky's 'competence', but a recognition that this must be fitted into, and made answerable to, a more comprehensive framework which combines functional with formal explanations (Leech 1983: 4).

The foregoing passage confirms that both formal and functional aspects are necessary for a reliable account of language, as pragmatics can offer answers to questions that formal grammar fails to satisfy. In fact, 'pragmatics deals with language at a more concrete level', since it is concerned with the verbal use of language in a particular situation, while abstract static entities such as sentences (in syntax) and propositions (in semantics) form the focus in grammar (Leech 1983: 14). I would argue that linguistic behaviour is rooted in pragmatics, and to grasp the nature of language itself we also need to understand how language is used in communication.

Especially noteworthy is the fact that not even Arab linguistics has escaped this division. This becomes more evident when we consider the following passages in which Sībawayhi is accused of being either too formal or too functional in his account:

- For the most part, Sibawayhi includes only syntactic arguments in his explanation of linguistic phenomena, whereas al-Farra' very

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polarisation and by paraphrasing Kant he rightly points out that 'while structures without functions are plainly senseless, functions without structures are downright lame. The hallmark of biological design is that organisms perform their adaptive functions with structured organs.' (ibid. XV).

[10] 'I shall refer to the formal language system as GRAMMAR, in opposition to PRAGMATICS, which may also, in a more general sense, be regarded as part of the domain of linguistics. This use of grammar, although broad, corresponds to a current use of the term to denote the study of the language system as a whole, e.g., in 'transformational grammar' (Leech 1983: 10).

often invokes semantic constraints in his linguistic argumentation (cf. Dévényi 1990a, b) (Versteegh, in van Bekkum et al. 1997: 241).

- His exposition is far from clear and operates with logical categories which seem to have little bearing on the syntactical distinction (Rabine 1951: 183).
- Typologically, grammatical and linguistic systems can be divided into two rough classes: on the one hand, those which analyse utterances in terms of formal relationships between their components; on the other hand, those which analyse them in terms of operations performed by the speaker in order to achieve a specific effect on the allocutee. Our claim is that Sībawayhi's approach basically belongs to the latter category, while the classical grammarians' typically belongs to the former (Bohas et al. 1990: 38).[11]

The passages above do not purport to offer a full account of the general situation in Arab linguistics but simply a broad and realistic outline of it. The problem with classical grammarians who came after Sībawayhi might be explained by them neglecting pragmatics and separating it from grammar, so the result was two sciences existing next to each other, viz. *naḥw* 'grammar' and *balāġa* 'rhetoric'.[12] As mentioned above, only the *'Uṣul l-fiqh* 'principles of the *fiqh*' retained and developed the pragmatic aspects precisely because legal theorists needed them (cf. Ali 2000 for a full discussion).

When dealing with grammatical phenomena, Sībawayhi builds his grammar on the basis of Complementarism of syntax and pragmatics. For him the acceptability of a given utterance is the result of the interplay of pragmatic and syntactic factors. He is aware of the fact that neglecting pragmatics will thwart any effort to present a satisfactory explanation of the language and the linguistic behaviour of its speakers.

As a system of communication, language is made up of elements which are diverse and whose interrelations are determined by rules and principles. Grammatical rules[13] and pragmatic principles are

[11] In his book dealing with theories on language and linguistics Frayḥa opts for a rather simplistic solution as he reduces language to meaning and argues further against the formal approach of language (1973: 169). Basic terms which form part and parcel of the Arabic linguistic tradition such as *musnad* and *musnad 'ilayhi*; *mubtada'* and *ḫabar* are disqualified as redundant and burdensome. He opts (ibid.: 179–180) for الموضوع and الخبر, which neatly correspond to the functional terms Theme and Rheme.

[12] See for example Baalbaki (1983).

[13] Grammar can be described as prescriptive, as we speak of grammatical rules which are either correctly applied or not. However, this distinction is not absolutely watertight as the rules are not always so clear-cut.

constantly brought into play by the speaker when conveying a message to the listener, so as to make sure the listener can interpret the message correctly.

As far as modern linguistics is concerned, Lyons (1971: 43) posits three traditional functions of language: *descriptive, expressive* and *social*, and basically any communication act involves the three functions at once. For Lyons, the main task of a linguist consists of describing how people speak or write, not how they ought to speak or write. In other words, the linguist's role is primarily descriptive and to a lesser degree prescriptive.

Sībawayhi the linguist fulfils this requirement; his method is rarely prescriptive[14] for his main concern is to describe the Arabic language as its native speakers use it. That is why his linguistic information heavily draws on the Arabs' judgement, besides his other two sources, namely, the text of the *Qurʾān* and Classical Arabic poetry.[15] The Arabs' final authority is integrated by Sībawayhi into the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels of his grammatical analysis.

Native speakers' judgement is considered indispensable to the *Kitāb*'s linguistic analysis since a native speaker is in a position to determine subtle semantic or pragmatic differences between sentences and usages.[16] Whenever accounting for a linguistic phenomenon becomes more of a problem, the superiority of the native speaker's judgement is reaffirmed, as 'the Arabs by no means speak a bastard tongue, because this is simply the way they are': إذا رأيت عربيا كذلك فلا ترينه خلط في لغته ولكن هذا من أمرهم (II Sib 236/284).[17]

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[14] One of the few prescriptive chapters in the *Kitāb* is the sixth chapter that outlines what is right and intelligible (الاستقامة من الكلام) and wrong and contradictory (الإحالة) in Arabic (see discussion below).

[15] Sībawayhi's penchant for the speech of the Arabs becomes especially significant in the paragraph dealing with the negation of nominal sentences by *mā*, as he chooses the Tamīmī nominative predicate rather than the Ḥijāzi dependent predicate used in the *Qurʾān* (I Sib 21,21) (cf. Levin 1998: XII 215).

[16] Mastering pragmatic principles is probably what makes the judgement of a native speaker indispensable and more reliable. These principles possibly form one of the least straightforward domains to be conquered by a learner of a foreign language.

[17] This portrays clearly how the Arabic language was treated: perfect without any possible blemish, as it is created by God. Consequently, its structure was there to be analysed and certainly not to be prescribed (cf. Versteegh, 2001: 75).

As a rule of thumb, a construction is accepted or rejected depending on the way the Arabs speak and on what they use and allow in their speech فاستعمل من هذا ما استعملت العرب وأجز ما أجازوا 'so use what the Arabs use and allow what they allow' (I Sib 206/175). Sībawayhi does not fail time and again to urge anyone of his readers who wants to speak Arabic properly to let himself be guided by the principles laid down by the usage and speech of the Arabs فإنما تجريها كما أجرت العرب وتضعها في المواضع التي وضعن فيه 'treat them as the Arabs treat them and put them in the place they put them in'. A couple of lines further down the same paragraph he resumes that one is obliged to make words behave as the Arabs make them behave and to mean what they mean فهذا يدلك ويبصرك أنه ينبغي لك أن تجري هذه الحروف كما أجرت العرب وأن تعني من عنوا بها 'so this proves to you and shows you that you have to treat these expressions as the Arabs treat them and intend the same meaning they wish to convey through them' (I Sib 166/138).

There is no doubt that Sībawayhi regarded the way the Arabs speak binding and authoritative, but it is nevertheless true that he was particularly meticulous about choosing his informants, and the trustworthiness of their judgement is graded on a scale. Some varieties are equally accepted by Sībawayhi كلا القولين حسن جميل 'both utterances are structurally well-formed and fair' (II Sib 378/419), while others are rejected in spite of some Arabs using them. He argues that these constructions contradict what most Arabs with the best command of good Arabic use (I Sib 217/184):

> ومما جرى نعتا على غير وجه الكلام هذا جحرُ ضبٍ خربٌ فالوجه الرفع وهو كلام أكثر العرب وأفصحهم وهو القياس لأن الخرب نعت الجحر والجحر رفع ولكن بعض العرب يجره وليس بنعت للضب.
>
> And what is irregularly treated as an epithet is for example, 'This is a desolate [independent] lizard's [oblique] hole [independent]', where the independent form [sc. of 'desolate'] is the right option according to the established norms. Moreover, it is common in the speech of most Arabs with the best command of good Arabic and is the correct analogical form, because 'desolate' is an epithet of 'hole' and 'hole' stands in the independent form. However, some Arabs put it [sc. desolate] in the oblique form even though it is not an epithet of 'lizard'.

Since Sībawayhi's linguistic judgements were based on the authority of the Arabs with the best command of good Arabic, he consequently

felt confident enough to approve or disapprove ways of speaking as acceptable or unacceptable. Occasionally, a certain way of speaking is censured as incorrect for failing to take into account the requirements of good Arabic, واعلم أن ناسا من العرب يغلطون فيقولون إنهم أجمعون ذاهبون وإنك وزيدٌ ذاهبان 'you should know that some Arabs err and say 'إنهم أجمعون ذاهبون' and 'إنك وزيدٌ ذاهبان' (I Sib 290/250). For Sībawayhi these are instances of the Arabs' inconsistency in their speech (see also I Sib 198/168, 93/77 and II 91/88).

As mentioned above, critical judgements are also passed over other linguists' claims, such as those made by Sībawayhi's master al-Ḫalīl (I Sib 388/341) and Yūnus (I Sib 131/111; 401/355). The following passages show us how Yūnus's and al-Ḫalīl's linguistic claims respectively, are critically assessed and evaluated by Sībawayhi:

وزعم يونس أنه سمع أعرابيا يقول ضرب منٌّ منًّا وهذا بعيد لا يتكلم به ولا تستعمله العرب ولا يستعمله منهم ناس كثير. (I Sib 402/356)

> And Yūnus claimed that he heard a Bedouin saying 'ضرب منٌّ منًّا'. However, this way of speaking is farfetched and uncommon, and it is not employed by the Arabs or by many Bedouins.

وزعم الخليل أنه يجوز له صوتٌ صوتُ الحمار لأنه تشبيه فمن ثَمّ حسن أن تصف به النكرة وزعم الخليل أنه يجوز أن يقول الرجل هذا رجلٌ أخو زيدٍ إذا أردت أن تشبهه بأخي زيدٍ وهذا قبيح ضعيف لا يجوز إلا في موضع الاضطرار ولو جاز هذا لقلت قصيرٌ الطويلُ تريد مثلُ الطويلِ فلم يجز هذا. (I Sib 181/151)

> And al-Ḫalīl claimed that it is permissible to say 'He has got a voice, the donkey's voice' because a comparison is intended, in which case it is good [Arabic] to qualify the indefinite [voice] by the definite [the donkey's voice]. He also claims that it is permissible to say 'This [is] a man Zayd's brother' if you intend to compare the man with Zayd's brother. However, this usage is structurally ill-formed and feeble, and is only permissible in cases of absolute necessity, for if this had been permissible, it would have been equally permissible to say 'short the long' intending 'like the long', but this is not permitted.

Sībawayhi basically wants us to realise that his source of information or informants are reliable, trustworthy and that their Arabic is considered good and widespread. Phrases such as فمن يوثق بعربيته 'the one whose Arabic can be trusted'; بعض العرب الموثوق بهم 'Some Arabs who could be trusted; ناس من العرب يوثق بعربيتهم 'A group of Arabs whose Arabic is

trustworthy'; and وسمعنا عربيا موثوقا بعربيته 'we heard from an Arab whose Arabic can be trusted' are scattered throughout the *Kitāb*. Further he assures his readers that his explanations are grounded in a firm foundation of good Arabic, hence his statement: ولو أن هذا القياس لم تكن العرب الموثوق بعربيتهم تقوله لم يلتفت إليه ولكنا سمعناها تنشد هذا البيت جرا 'If this derived analogy was not used by the Arabs, whose Arabic is trustworthy, no one would have even paid attention to it. But we have heard them using the oblique form when reciting this verse' (I Sib 227/194). On another occasion he states that سمعنا جميع ما ذكرنا لك من الإمالة والنصب في هذه الأبواب من العرب 'All that has been mentioned about the phenomenon of *a*-raising and back-vowel *a* in these chapters, we have heard from the Arabs' (II Sib 271/294).

By way of concluding this section, I claim that the importance attached to the proper speech of the Arabs becomes clear once we learn to appreciate the significance of the communicative effectiveness and the weight given to it in Sībawayhi's linguistic model. This communicative model and its underlying pragmatic strategies are the subject matter of the next three sections.

2.1. *Communication act as an event*

It is true that the communicative aspect of language is not the sole determinant factor of its structure, as conceptualisation is a function that necessarily precedes any communicative act. In other words, a common ground is needed before one can embark on the communicative act.

Producing utterances is a goal-oriented activity. When we perform a speech act, our main concern is how to convey relevant information of some situation or state of affairs to the listener. Every speech act comprises of a *locutionary* or *literal meaning*, and *illocutionary meaning* or *force* which amounts to the change we want to bring about in the listener so as to prompt him to do something.

Rigotti and Cigada (Cigada 2004: 131) argue in the same line; the communicative act is an event[18] which comes to the receiver as an invitation to get involved in the speech act. Hence, the speaker does not limit himself to producing an utterance but also evokes the listener's

[18] An event denotes any occurrence that affects participants involved in a speech act and consequently brings a change about (cf. Cigada op. cit. 131, fn. 1).

involvement and engages him as a participant in the event. They argue further that this involvement could vary and be intended as information, a request, a promise or a threat, as a result of which a change is bound to take place in the listener, and this change is the core sense of the communicative event.

In order to achieve the communicative goal intended, the speaker needs first to make an assumption of the listener's state of mind prior to performing an act aimed at influencing the latter's mental representation and knowledge of the real world (Lambrecht 1994: 43; passim). Although the meaning of an utterance entails both the listener's involvement and the change produced in him, 'the message already has a sense of its own, as it is coherent and consistent with the speaker's communicative intention' (Cigada 2004: 132, fn. 1).

When people communicate, they say things meaning one particular thing or not meaning what they say literally. In fact, Grice's conversational implicatures[19] were devised to explain sentences in which a speaker appears to mean more than he says. There can be, and not rarely is a difference between what is actually said (sentence meaning) and what is really meant (utterance meaning). Furthermore,

[19] Grice's theory of conversational implicature is governed by four 'maxims' of a Cooperation Principle (CP). According to Grice, the CP makes our 'conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage of which it occurs, by accepted purpose and direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (1989: 27). For the sake of completeness, I mention below the four 'maxims' of the CP (ibid. 26–7):

The maxim of Quantity:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not give more information than is needed.

According to Grice the CP is not infringed by overinformativeness but is simply a waste of time.

The maxim of Quality or The maxim of Truthfulness

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The maxim of Relation:

1. Be relevant.

The maxim of Manner:

1. Be clear.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

depending on the speech situation,[20] language can be used to inform or misinform, and the information conveyed can be either true or false. Consequently, pragmatic principles or maxims can deliberately be ignored or broken, sometimes for personal reasons (e.g. wishing to mislead), and other times for rhetorical purposes, e.g., exaggeration, irony, etc. even though the speaker does not necessarily fall short in speaking the language properly or observing its grammatical rules consistently when overriding these pragmatic maxims. Still, communication might be hampered to a greater or lesser extent depending on the pragmatic maxims breached and their effect on the clarity of the speaker's intention.

In any event, a proper discussion of the metalinguistic context, consisting of common-ground knowledge shared between the speaker and listener and the Cooperative Principle maxims (CP), is possible only and only if the linguistic and grammatical structure is taken into account and presupposed. It is worth noting that this Complementarity is not only operative at a higher linguistic level, i.e. between syntax and pragmatics, but also at a lower level, i.e. the inter-complementarity of pragmatic principles.

The Complementarity of the CP and other pragmatic principles, such as the Politeness Principle (PP) and Irony Principle (IP),[21] which were introduced by Leech (1981: 7; 82 respectively), and the principle of the speaker's disposition to make his intention manifest in order to contribute to the ongoing conversation (cf. Ali, 2000: 201)[22] form part of the same comprehensive pragmatic picture.

A full treatment of the above mentioned principles would take us too far afield and consequently will not hold us up here any further. However, the PP and IP principles will be dealt with more extensively,

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[20] In a speech situation, the following elements should be present: addresser and addressee, context, goals, illocutionary act, and UTTERANCE, its time and place, and possibly other elements (Leech 1983: 15).

[21] Adjacent to the PP principle is the so called second-order Principle of Irony (IP), delineated by Leech (ibid.: 82) as follows: 'If you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn't overtly conflict with the PP, but allows the listener to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature.'

[22] Besides Ali's work *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics. Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication* pragmatism in Arabic has been dealt with by a number of Arabists, such as Moutaouakil's 'La notion d'actes de langage dans la pensée linguistique arabe ancienne' (1990) where he analyses the pragmatism of al-Sakkākī, and Burubuzan's 'Exclamation et actes de langage chez Sībawayhi' (1993) in which a comparison is drawn between Grice and Sībawayhi.

as to the best of our knowledge, these two principles have not been analysed before as key components in Sībawayhi's communicative approach to language.

The discussion of the PP principle in the *Kitāb* will follow an introduction to the principle as envisaged by Leech. One of the objections raised to the PP principle will also be alluded to briefly. According to Leech (1983: 80), the PP basically hinges on rules of tact and consideration for others in accordance with accepted social usage, and thus it complements the CP when it fails to provide a satisfactory pragmatic interpretation. Although forms of politeness might considerably differ cross-linguistically and cross-culturally, people are still expected to be polite and to communicate with each other according to the social norms valid.

The following example, taken from Leech (ibid. 80–1) illustrates how the PP sometimes is given precedence to CP:

A: We will all miss Bill and Agatha, won't we?
B: Well, we'll all miss BÍLL.

On a closer examination of B, we notice that B has not been as informative as required by the Quality Principle. In fact, B has only confirmed part of A's opinion, and yet the implicature we all derive from B's reply is that Agatha will not be missed. As Leech rightly suggests, B could simply have added '…but not Agatha' without being untruthful, irrelevant or unclear (ibid. 81), in other words, the speaker did not fall short of the listener's expectation. However, B, deflects from being too informative to assert the social function of language, as a result of which, the PP is introduced to restore the pragmatic balance. This example displays how the PP as a strategy is used to alleviate a communicative tension, and how communication might be disturbed or even brought to a halt if one fails to observe the rules of politeness and friendliness.

I shall suggest that the PP is implicitly present in the *Kitāb* and subsumed within Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis. Thanks to his master al-Ḫalīl, Sībawayhi was fully aware of the social function of language, and of the importance of being on one's best linguistic behaviour when speaking Arabic (cf. I Sib 214/182; 349/346; Carter 1973: 149). In the chapter concerning pronouns of separation (I Sib 349/346), Sībawahyi points out the social obligation imposed on the speaker to be informative: the speaker is bound to continue and finish the utterance once he started his speech act (cf. the discussion of the term *sukūt* above). In this particular chapter, the speaker is reminded that

the *mubtadaʾ* cannot possibly dispense with what follows, and that the listener expects the speaker to mention something about the noun with which his utterance was started. If the speaker fails to live up to the listener's expectation, Sībawahyi warns the former that his speech would not only be considered corrupt and faulty, but more importantly his behaviour would be unacceptable, i.e. impolite, فإذا ابتدأت فقد وجب عليك مذكور بعد المبتدأ لا بد منه وإلا فسد الكلام ولم يسغ لك (ibid.).

The PP as a linguistic principle has come under criticism from Brown and Levinson who reject among other reasons Leech's unnecessarily proliferating maxims (1992: 6–7). Mey (2001: 79–82), on the other hand, assesses the PP against the backdrop of friendliness and casts doubt about what might be considered as polite. Especially the degree of politeness contained in commands and imperatives are developed as a counter-argument. Mey (ibid.) denies the PP and IP the same pragmatic rank attributed to the CP, and states that the necessity of the PP to uphold the CP and 'rescue it', is open to doubt.[23]

In fact, the *Kitāb* provides us with enough arguments in support of the PP, for it is important to bear in mind that the term Politeness here is not used in the strict sense of the word as a synonym for *friendliness* but in the broad sense of it. In the present context, *politeness* primarily bears on the speaker's linguistic behaviour to meet listener's expectation. It is true that some principles are more easily broken than others, sometimes intentionally, but it is always done for particular communicative purposes within specific situational context. As mentioned above, the ultimate purpose of the pragmatic principles that uphold each other is to ensure the completeness of the utterance and the informativeness of speech. Whether offers or commands are involved, *politeness* within its communicative context is a basic linguistic principle and no one is exempt from speaking in a way that is socially and linguistically correct, nor is he or she excused for being openly rude to other people.[24] In short, the PP has a wider linguistic application that reaches beyond the vagueness of cooperation and limitations of friendliness.

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[23] A similar attitude is found in Brown and Levinson (cf. 1992: 7).

[24] Carter underlines the fact that *muḥāl* utterances are wrong because either the speaker or listener 'so abuses the structures and conventions of the language that he casts himself out from his linguistic community' (1973: 149). We should bear in mind, that grammatical terms in the *Kitāb* nearly all come from ethics (= law), not from linguistics (= logic).

Being a complementary principle to the PP and CP, the IP states that the listener should indirectly arrive to an offensive remark, if such a remark cannot be avoided. In his discussion of Irony (mock-politeness) and Banter (mock-impoliteness) Principles, Leech (ibid. 142–5) describes the IP as a 'substitute for impoliteness' (ibid. 142), as it not only allows the speaker to circumvent the rules of politeness and social correctness, but also provides him with a tool to express his unconcealed false politeness that mounts to mockery without being openly rude.

The following example taken from al-Ḥūfī's work *'al-Fakāha fī 'Adab* (1966: 96) upholds the existence of IP and PP in Arabic and illustrates what it means to be 'politely' offensive by making an indirect offensive remark in the form of a question:

قال إمام العبد لأحد أصدقائه
ما قولك يا إمام في قصيدة المتنبي التي مطلعها:[25]
عيدٌ بأيّةِ حالٍ عُدتَ يا عيدُ بمَا مَضَى أمْ لأمرٍ تجْديدُ
وهو يريد الإشارة إلى قول المتنبي في القصيدة
لا تَشْتَرِ العَبْدَ إلاّ وَالعَصَا مَعَهُ إنّ العَبيدَ لأنْجَاسٌ مَنَاكِيدُ
ففطن إمام العبد لما يريد صديقه، فقال على الفور:
ما كُنْتُ أحْسَبُني أحْيَا إلى زَمَنٍ يُسِيءُ بي فيهِ كَلبٌ وَهْوَ مَحْمُودُ

A friend of ʾImām the slave put to him the following question, 'What do you think of al-Mutanabbī's poem starting with the following verse:

> Festival day—with what circumstance have you returned, day of Festival? With what has happened in the past, or with some matter quite new that is to occur in you?

Hinting thus to another verse of the poem which goes:

> Do not buy a slave without buying a stick with him, for slaves are filthy and of scant good.

ʾImām the slave got it immediately and replied:

> I never thought I should live to see the day when a dog would do me evil and be praised into the bargain.

[25] This is a satire composed by al-Mutanabbī one day before he left Egypt. The English translation is based on Arberry's (1967).

ʾImām the slave has thus managed to return the indirect offensive remark of his friend by another indirect offensive remark on the pretext of proving his command of the poem. In other words, ironic statements are examples of communicative effectiveness and are basically used to convey a contradictory meaning through exaggeration or understatement. Structural devices such as imperatives, and interrogatives are means through which the speaker manages to prevent the listener from taking the offensive statement at its face value. They often entail a breach of the maxim of Quality, and their absurdity gives away the true sentiments and assumptions of speaker, for they are meant to be 'politely' offensive or sarcastic (cf. Leech, op. cit. 142–5).

Although it is not easy to find much discussion of the IP in non-Qurʾānic sources, Sībawayhi tacitly acknowledges this principle in the chapter discussing the unconnected *ʾam* 'or'. Sībawayhi's secular example (I Sib 484/434) آلسعادة أحب إليك أم الشقاء 'Is bliss dearer to you than wretchedness?' is part of his long discussion of *Qurʾānic* sarcasm. Sībawayhi argues that in this instance the speaker knows that 'bliss' is dearer to him than wretchedness and that the person asked will answer 'bliss' to this rhetorical question, but the speaker wants to bring listener insight and tell him something. The ironic tone of this purported question reminds us of Leech's rhetorical question 'With friends like him, who needs enemies?' (1983: 142).

Better known examples are thus taken from the *Qurʾān* as evidenced by one of a few instances quoted by Sībawayhi (I 484/433–4): أم أتخذ مما يخلق بنات وأصفاكم بالبنين 'Or [rather] did He choose daughters of all that He has created while honouring you with sons?' (Q43.16). As in the previous instance, Sībawayhi emphasises that both Muḥammad and the Moslems know well that God did not choose a son and that this ironic question is only intended to make them realise how wrong the people he addresses are.

Besides ironic questions, the use of the imperatives to express irony is also present in the *Qurʾān*. In fact, Qurʾānic sarcasm is a rhetorical tool that frequently occurs in passages threatening unbelievers with the punishment of hell and all sorts of pains awaiting them, e.g., وبشّر[26] الذين كفروا بعذاب أليم 'proclaim to the unbelievers the good tidings of a painful doom' (Q9.3) and ثم صبوا فوق رأسه من عذاب حميم، ذق إنك أنت العزيز

[26] This word has rarely been rendered accurately in various English translations consulted. As for Sale (1923: 194), he has opted for the word 'denounce'.

الكريم ‘then pour on his head the torture of boiling water, [saying] ‘Taste this; for you[27] are the mighty, the honourable’.[28] (Q44.48–9) The ironical character of these two instances is substantiated respectively by the occurrence of the verb بشر that actually means ‘give glad tidings’ of going to hell to the disbelievers, and the lofty words of praise that are addressed to someone tormented by boiling water being poured on his head and that stand in sheer contrast with the pitiless contempt shown for him. In this way, the communicative effectiveness is achieved by means of the unmistakeable sarcastic tone wrapped in a thick veil of praise.

A final instance might be فأهدوهم إلى صراط الجحيم ‘and guide them along the path of Hell’ (Q 37.23) instead of guiding them along الصراط المستقيم ‘the right path’. According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, the word ṣirāṭ appears 45 times in the *Qurʾān* and it is almost always introduced by the verb *hadā* ‘to guide’ having God as its Agent. Only once is the word ṣirāṭ used in combination with the word hell to designate the evil way, while it is qualified in 33 times out of 45 by the word *mustaqīm* ‘right, proper’ (Monnot, ‘Ṣirāṭ’, *EI* 2006).

It is evident that these statements cannot be interpreted at their face value and that the PP and IP are implicitly but clearly present in the *Kitāb* and that the real intention of the speaker is paramount for Sībawayhi.

This brings us now to the next stage, namely the recognition of the speaker’s intention. The following excerpt shows that we should not take utterances in a sense other than the sense intended, i.e. reproach (I Sib 172/144):

> وذلك قولك أتميميًّا مرة وقيسيًّا أخرى وإنما هذا أنك رأيت رجلا في حال تلون وتنقل فقلت أتميميًّا مرة وقيسيًّا أخرى كأنك قلت أتُحوّل تميميًّا مرة وقيسيًّا اخرى فأنت في هذه الحال تعمل في تثبيت هذا له وهو عندك في تلك الحال في تلون وتنقل وليس يسأله مسترشدا عن أمر هو جاهل به ليفهمه اياه ويخبره عنه ولكن وبخه بذلك.
>
> As your saying ‘Are you a Tamīmī [dependent] on one occasion and a Qaysī [dependent] on another?’ This is because you saw a man in a state of changing and affectation, so you said ‘Are you a Tamīmī on one occasion and a Qaysī on another?’ as if you said ‘Do you turn youself into a Tamīmī at one time and into a Qaysī at another?’ In this way you

[27] And not *Allāh*!
[28] Note that the attributes ‘Mighty and Honourable’ are epithets of *Allāh*.

> confirm that he is in two minds and that is how you see him in a state of changing and affectation. However, the listener is not asked about something he does not know so that the speaker makes him understand and inform him about it, but rather he is rebuking him.

Formally speaking, اتميمياً مرة وقيسياً أخرى is a question, but the speaker does not intend to ask the hearer about something to inform him about what he ignores.[29] The speaker is using an indirect way to rebuke somebody for his affectation and inconsistency. I argue that Sībawayhi in this passage is bringing a new focus to the speaker's intention and social rightness when delivering an offensive message. The most convenient and socially accepted way is to allow the listener arrive to the blunt point gradually so as to make sure that the friendly relationship is maintained. Further in the chapter, Sībawayhi (I 173/144) reiterates that the speaker does not wish to inform people about something they ignore but only wanted to insult the person concerned: فلم ترد أن تخبر القوم بأمر قد جهلوه ولكنك أردت أن تشتمه بذلك.

Regarding the issue of praise and blame seen in the light of the speaker's intention, it might be helpful to briefly point out that there is a similarity to be traced between Sibawayhi's views and Aristotle's as expounded in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, even though it is not possible within the compass of this book to discuss at length the conceptions of the nature and function of Aristotle's moral theory.

Carter (1968: 132) has already touched upon a parallelism that exists between the Aristotelian ethical triads and Sībawayhi's legal[30] triads, which indicate that linguistic criteria could also be ethical criteria. Aristotle's ethical terms of *just*, *lawful* and *fair* parallel Sībawayhi's linguistic notions of *mustaqīm*, literally 'straight', *jāʾiz* 'permissible' and *ḥasan*, (literally 'beautiful') while *unjust, unlawful* and *unfair* coincide with of ġayr *mustaqīm* 'unjust', *ġayr jāʾiz* 'unlawful' and *qabīḥ* 'unfair'.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (Ackrill 1987: 387*ff*) discusses the correlation between voluntary passions and actions and the praise/blame bestowed on them. Since voluntary actions involve the agent's free will or intention, they become eligible to receive approval or raise objection. To illustrate this point, Aristotle gives us the example of sailors caught in storm, who decide to throw the goods overboard.

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[29] Note the historical and tribal realities implied in this simple utterance. A detailed study of the historical and cultural dimension of such utterance is beyond the scope of the present analysis, but will be the subject matter of a forthcoming publication.

[30] Cf. Sībawayhi's legal background as a jurisprudence student who came to Baṣra to study *fiqh* (Zubaydī 1984: 66).

Considered in itself, the action can hardly be described as praiseworthy, but when seen in relation to the sailors' intention, i.e. saving their own lives and that of others, their act becomes noble and even praiseworthy, while failure to carry it out is bound to provoke a reaction against it.

Although the point of focus differs in Sībawayhi and Aristotle, i.e. linguistic and moral respectively, they both put special emphasis on the intention of the speaker/agent and the situational context as determining factors. We should bear in mind that these factors are also standard elements of legal theory. Let us first have a look at the following paragraph taken from Sībawayhi (I Sib 257/219):[31]

> وذلك أن رجلا من إخوانك ومعرفتك لو أراد أن يخبرك عن نفسه أو عن غيره بأمر فقال أنا عبدُ اللهِ منطلقًا وهو زيدٌ منطلقًا كان محالا لأنه إنما أراد أن يخبرك بالانطلاق ولم يقل هو ولا أنا حتى استغنيت أنت عن التسمية لأن هو وأنا علامتان للمضمر وإنما يضمر إذا علم أنك قد عرفت من يعني إلا أن رجلا لو كان خلف الحائط أو في موضع تجهله فيه فقلت من أنت فقال أنا زيدٌ منطلقًا في حاجتك كان حسنا.
>
> If for instance a relative or an acquaintance of yours wants to inform you about something related to himself or somebody else and says 'I [am] ʿAbdallāh going away [dependent]' and 'He [is] Zayd going away [dependent]' it is wrong and absurd, because he only wants to inform you about the departure. He will not say 'he' or 'I', until you dispense with naming them, because 'he' and 'I' are two signs of the suppressed [i.e. pronominalised] noun and one only pronominalises when he knows that you know who he means. The exception is when a man is behind a wall or somewhere where you cannot know who he is, and you ask him 'Who are you' and he replies 'I [am] Zayd, going about your business', then it is structurally correct.

The importance of the situational context, in both Aristotle and Sībawayhi, speaks for itself, for the former relates the end of the action to the occasion,[32] while the latter the correctness of speech to the timing of the utterance and the circumstances in which it occurs. In other words, the ethical and linguistic responsibility lies squarely with the sailor and the speaker, respectively. What is more, the criteria used by Aristotle to distinguish between acting 'by reason of ignorance' and

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[31] See also the discussion in Carter (1968: 252), on whose translation parts of the present English translation are based.

[32] Both the terms, then, 'voluntary' and 'involuntary', must be used with reference to the moment of action (Ackrill 1987: 388).

acting 'in ignorance'[33] could be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the linguistic behaviour of speakers of Arabic as judged by Sībawayhi. When non-native speakers commit linguistic errors, they do so non-voluntarily, i.e. not knowing what they ought to say and their speech is sometimes labelled either as خبيث 'Abominable' (cf. the word 'wicked' used by Aristotle) or قبيح 'incorrect' (cf. Aristotle's 'liable to blame'). Native speakers, on the other hand, would commit errors involuntarily, i.e. as a result of lacking knowledge of a particular circumstance of the utterance, hence the attitude of linguistic tolerance to some of such errors based on the authority of native speakers. The linguistic principle to be applied in such cases is the fact that the Arabs by no means speak a bastard tongue (cf. above).

At this point, we may cast our minds back to the issue of the situational context in the *Kitāb*. It is clear by now that an utterance is constructed to convey one particular meaning and when elision takes place, that same particular meaning should be recoverable from non linguistic information that makes up for the elided words as shown below:

أو رأيت رجلا يسدد سهما قبل القرطاس فقلت القرطاسَ واللهِ أي يصيب القرطاس وإذا سمعت وقع السهم في القرطاس قلت القرطاسَ واللهِ أي أصاب القرطاس.
(I Sib 130/109)

Or you saw a man firing an arrow at a target and said 'the target [dependent], by God!' that is to say, it will hit the target, and if you heard the arrow hitting the target, you would say 'the target [dependent], by God!' that is, the arrow has hit the target.

فإنما رأيت رجلا قاصدا إلى مكان أو طالبا أمرا فقلت له مرحبًا وأهلًا أي أدركت ذلك وأصبت فحذفوا الفعل لكثرة استعمالهم إياه فكأنه صار بدلا من رحبت بلادك وأهلت كما كان الحذرَ بدلا من احذر ويقول الراد وبكَ وأهلًا وسهلًا وبكَ أهلًا فإذا قال وبكَ وأهلًا فكأنه قد لفظ بمرحبًا بكَ وأهلًا. (I Sib 149/124)

When you see a man making for a place or asking for something and you reply saying مرحبًا وأهلًا 'you welcome' intending you have reached your destination and got what you were asking for. So the verb is elided by virtue of its frequent usage and as if it comes to stand instead of 'May

[33] For a full discussion see Eth. Nic. 1110[b] in Ackrill (1987: 389) and Barnes (II 1984: 1753–4).

> your country become spacious and sociable' in the same way as 'Caution!' [dependent] is used instead of 'be careful'. The person who replies would say وبكَ 'and to you'; أهلاً وسهلاً [you have come to a people who are like your kinsfolk and have trodden a smooth region] and وبكَ أهلاً 'welcome to you'. If he said وبكَ وأهلاً it is if he uttered مرحبًا بكَ وأهلاً.

The foregoing passages are interesting as they illustrate how linguistic information and the distinctions in meaning that run through speech in general are dependent on non linguistic information. 'Do you see what I mean?' is an interesting question we tend to use often, but it is an important one as well. Non linguistic information combines physical as well as mental elements that help the hearer to tell the difference between identical structures that can only be spotted in terms of extra-linguistic elements.

In the first passage, Sībawayhi speaks of someone catching sight of an arrow being fired at a target or hearing the sound of a target being hit. Twice does the man utter القرطاسَ والله 'The target [dependent], by God', where neither the lexical form, nor the case ending help us account for the meaning intended by the speaker, as we are dealing with identical structures in both cases. Of course, this usage rests on the basic assumption that alike sentences do not always convey similar meaning, and that different meanings will correspondingly have different effects on the listener.

In the second passage, Sībawayhi proceeds to consider the origin of مرحبًا وأهًلا (Welcome!). Here too his analysis is inextricably bound up with non linguistic information, i.e. when you catch sight of a man heading somewhere or looking for something. Sībawayhi suggests the idea that the context and frequent usage in speech of مرحبًا وأهًلا make the verb redundant, as the intention of a visitor or seeker can readily be deduced from the context and likewise the reply to it.

There is a resemblance in Sībawayhi's approach to the influence of the context of speech and Lambrecht's notion of elements of the text-external world (1994: 38):

> Elements of the text-external world do not have to be established by speakers via discourse representations but may be taken for granted by virtue of their being present in, or recoverable from, the speech setting. Linguistic expressions designating such text-external elements are referred to as deictic expressions […] Among the deictic expressions of a language are those which denote (i) the speaker and the addressee

(I, You, etc.), (ii) the time of the speech event and points in time measured with reference to it (e.g. now, yesterday, tomorrow, etc.), (iii) the place of the speech event and places situated in relation to it (here, there, etc.), and in general all expressions whose meaning can only be understood with reference to some aspect of the text-external world.

Observing an action or hearing the sound accompanying a particular action could be considered text-external elements, which render the distinction in the intended meaning possible and provide the grounds to assert the importance that the structure of the language corresponds to the structure of reality surrounding the speech situation. Essentially, if the speaker wants to communicate some information in the form of a linguistic signal, the listener should derive the same information from the signal received. It could happen that the linguistic signal may give rise to uncertainty or misunderstanding, in which case non-linguistic signals play an important role in the process of communication by upholding the 'intentional transmission of information'.[34]

The following passage from the *Kitāb* (279/240–1) pinpoints the precise function of text-external elements and displays a fine appreciation on Sībawayhi's part of their inherent importance, i.e. to help the hearer listen to where the utterance is going:

هذا باب يكون المبتدأ فيه مضمرا ويكون المبنى عليه مظهرا. وذلك أنك رأيت صورة شخص فصار آية لك على معرفة الشخص فقلت عبدُ اللهِ وربي كأنك قلت ذاك عبدُ اللهِ أو هذا عبدُ اللهِ أو سمعت صوتا فعرفت صاحب الصوت فصار آية لك على معرفته فقلت زيدٌ وربي أو مسست جسدا أو شممت ريحا فقلت زيدٌ أو المسكُ أو ذقت طعاما فقلت العسلُ ولو حدثت عن شمائل رجل فصار آية لك على معرفته لقلت عبدُ الله كأن رجلا قال مررت برجلٍ راحمٍ المساكينَ بارٍ بوالديه فقلت فلانٌ والله.

This is the chapter where the subject/topic is elided and the predicate is overt. It is, for instance, when you see the figure of a person which becomes for you an identifying mark that enables you to recognise the person, and so you say 'Abdullahi [independent], by God', it is as if you were saying 'That [is] ʿAbdullahi [independent]' or 'This [is] ʿAbdullahi [independent]'. And when you hear a voice and you are able to identify the speaker by the sound of his voice, so that it becomes his identifying mark, you say 'Zayd*un* [independent], by God'. If you say upon touching a body or smelling a perfume 'Zayd*un* [independent]' or 'Musk' [independent] or if you taste some food and say 'Honey' [independent], and if

[34] Cf. Lyons (1977: 32).

you are told about the good qualities of someone so that they become his identifying marks which enable you to recognise him, you say ''Abdullah [independent]'. It is the same as when someone says 'I passed by a man who is merciful to the poor and dutiful toward his parents', upon which you say '[it must be] Such and Such, by God'.

2.2. *Istiqāma, grammaticality and the speaker's intention*

It is clear that a successful communication event is gauged by the facility with which the listener manages to identify the speaker's message and intention in the right way, hence the importance of speaking Arabic correctly (cf. I Sib 22/17). However, the importance attached to the listener's expectation of understanding what the speaker tries to put across is not only technical but also social. Consequently, judging an utterance mainly leans toward cognitive relevance and social appropriateness. For Sībawayhi, *istiqāma* which implies conveying the intended meaning rightly and successfully is a key concept in his discussion and is closely linked to the PP.

In order to come to a conclusive argument about the points raised so far, it might be as well to briefly comment on the sixth chapter of the seven introductory chapters generally known as *ar-Risāla* 'the Epistle'. In this particular chapter Sībawayhi sets out pragmatic and grammatical parameters necessary to gauge the communicative value of utterances in Arabic,[35] and provides an outline of speech acts that convey information successfully and rightly (الاستقامة من الكلام), speech acts that are wrong and contradictory (الإحالة), besides other possible combinations:[36]

هذا باب الاستقامة من الكلام والإحالة. فمنه مستقيم حسن ومحال ومستقيم كذب ومستقيم قبيح وما هو محال كذب
فأما المستقيم الحسن فقولك أتيتك أمس وسآتيك غدا
وأما المحال فأن تنقض أول كلامك بآخره فتقول أتيتك غدا وسآتيك أمس
وأما المستقيم الكذب فقولك حملت الجبل وشربت ماء البحر ونحوه

[35] According to Carter (1973: 148) utterances are not treated as logical propositions by Sībawayhi, and hence no judgement is expressed as to the truth or falsehood of these utterances when he discusses the rightness and wrongness in speech.

[36] Carter (2004: 61–65) gives some space to this chapter in his book *Sībawayhi* where he emphasises the ethical and legal origin of the technical terms used. The English translation of the chapter is based on his translation (ibid. 62).

وأما المستقيم القبيح فأن تضع اللفظ في غير موضعه نحو قولك قد زيدًا رأيت وكي زيدٌ يأتيك وأشباه هذا
وأما المحال الكذب فأن تقول سوف أشرب ماء البحر أمس

Chapter on rightness and wrongness in speech. There is *mustaqīm ḥasan* 'right and good', *muhāl* 'wrong', *mustaqīm kaḏib* 'right and false', *mustaqīm qabīḥ* 'right and bad' and *muḥāl kaḏib* 'wrong and false';

> 'Right and good' is when you say *ʾataytuka ʾams* 'I came to you yesterday' and *sa-ʾātīka ġadan* 'I shall come to you tomorrow';
>
> 'Wrong' is when you contradict the beginning of your utterance with the end of it, e.g. *ʾataytuka ġadan* 'I came to you tomorrow' and *sa-ʾātīka ʾams* 'I shall come to you yesterday';
>
> 'Right and false' is when you say *ḥamaltu l-jabala* 'I carried the mountain' and *šaribtu māʾa l-baḥri* 'I drank [all] the water of the sea';
>
> 'Right and bad' is when you put an expression in what is not its place,[37] e.g. *qad Zaydan raʾaytu* 'Indeed I Zayd have seen' and *kay Zaydun yatiyaka* 'so that may come Zayd to you' and such like; and
>
> 'Wrong and false' is when you say *sawfa ʾašrabu māʾa l-baḥri ʾamsi* 'I shall drink [all] the water of the sea yesterday'.

Taking into account the discussion in previous chapters and sections, an attentive reader will not fail to track down the presence of an underlying principle of Complementarism in this chapter.

Of crucial importance is the fact that the concept of *istiqāma* is a necessary and sufficient condition of communication. The *istiqāma* can putatively be defined as an umbrella pragmatic principle that encompasses other pragmatic principles such as the PP or social rightness, *intelligibility* and in particular informativeness and communicative viability. Moreover, the term *istiqāma* is not concerned with syntax or grammatical correctness, but is clearly associated with pragmatic correctness and semantic completeness.[38] The following passages taken

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[37] Note the use of the word *place* here and the similarity of its application to the structural view of language. According to the structural tradition, every element has its own 'place' in a system, and whose function or value is derived from its distribution and relation with other elements in the system.

[38] Cf. (I Sib 130/110) وإنه لا يستقيم واحد منهما إلا بالآخر فشبهوا الجواب بخبر الابتداء وإن لم يكن مثله في كل حاله كما يشبهون الشيء بالشيء وإن لم يكن مثله ولا قريبا منه 'The one is incomplete without the other, so they likened the Apodosis (sc. of *'in*) to the Predicate even though it is not

from Sībawayhi (I 22/17) help us to neatly expound the interaction between *istiqāma* and the PP as it is dealt with in the *Kitāb*:

لا يستقيم أن تخبر المخاطب عن المنكور وليس هذا بالذي ينزل به منزلتك في المعرفة.

> It is not *mustaqīm* to inform the listener about something indefinite, as the latter is not something by which he [= the listener] will be put in the same status as yourself regarding the definite.

In order for our speech to be *mustaqīm*, common-ground knowledge with the listener is required, because we need to talk about something or somebody known to both of us or at least identifiable by us. In this way, we fulfil the maxim of manners and social correctness. It is important to bear in mind that when Sībawayhi observes that it is not right to talk to the listener about something unknown, he implies that his main concern is as much pragmatic as it is grammatical.[39] The bottom line is that we breach the PP, if our point of departure is unknown to the listener, for our listener must be an equal partner in the communication process.

In the same vein, sentences such as 'I came yesterday' and 'I shall come to you tomorrow' are not only socially right and meaningful, but also grammatically well-formed (حسن), while سوف أشرب ماء البحر أمس 'I shall drink [all] the sea water yesterday' is utterly wrong because it is both nonsensical '*muhāl*' and false '*kaḍib*'[40] and because the communicative intention of the speaker is beyond any identification. In short, the former instance is *mustaqīm* and the latter *twisted and unviable*.

سآتيك أمس 'I shall come yesterday' is absurd '*muhāl*' because of the contradictory element it contains which makes it nonsensical. In other

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similar in every respect, just as they liken something to something else even though they are different and far from being alike'. The pragmatic relationship between the subject/topic and Predicate is underlined here and analogy makes it viable to compare the pragmatic relationship of nominal and conditional structures in spite of their divergence. This instance brings home the importance of pragmatic completeness as a prerequisite for successful communication.

[39] According to Owens (2006: 92), acceptability in the *Kitāb* is related to what is structurally acceptable.

[40] However, there is no direct correlation between the falsehood of an utterance and its being *muhāl* as logical truth was irrelevant to Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis.

words, the communicative intention of the speaker is rendered obscure and unidentifiable.

The next instances are rather controversial utterances and are placed somewhere between grammatically well-formed *mustaqīm* utterances and those that miss their communicative point: حملت الجبل 'I carried the mountain' and شربت ماء البحر 'I drank [all] the water of the sea' and قد زيدا رأيت 'Have I Zayd seen' and كي زيد يأتيك 'So that may come Zayd to you'.

Sentences such as حملت الجبل 'I carried the mountain' are qualified by Sībawayhi as *mustaqīm* but false. The problem with this grammatically well-formed and *mustaqīm* utterance is that it is false because it does not conform to reality in general nor to the linguistic reality within its situational context in particular. What Sībawayhi is trying to tell us here corresponds closely to Mey's Communicative Principle (2001: 68–9)[41] that avoiding false impressions is a basic communicative principle, and no matter how logical and truthful the utterance may sound, it will miss its communicative point if it causes any confusion or uncertainty.

Given that politeness is a key factor and an essential communicative principle, avoiding false impressions is tangible evidence of politeness. Therefore, regardless of the utterance's structural correctness and informative value, creating erroneous impressions of reality obscures the communicative intention of the speaker and hampers its right interpretation by the listener. It is also a principle which Sībawayhi takes for granted that Muslems do not lie to each other as a condition of their faith.[42]

As for قد زيدا رأيت 'have I Zayd seen', Sībawayhi depicts this utterance with the wrong word order as *mustaqīm*, but structurally ill-formed (القبيح). A particular implication of analysing *mustaqīm* but grammatically ill-formed utterances is that the communicative value of such utterances is based on the binary notion of *mustaqīm* and scalar notion of grammaticality.

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[41] Mey's Communicative Principle is a variant of Grice's Principle of Relevance. It is worth mentioning that Grice admitted experiencing difficulties with the exact formulation of the Principle of Relevance and related questions (1989: 27).

[42] Carter (in personal communication, 2007).

My claim is explicitly sustained by other similar cases discussed in the *Kitāb*, for instance ويحتملون قبح الكلام حتى يضعوه في غير موضعه لأنه مستقيم ليس فيه نقص[43] 'they tolerate grammatical ill-formedness in the speech so that words are put in places other than their own. This is because it still is *mustaqīm* without contradiction (نقض)' (I Sib 12/9). Another example that involves grammatical ill-formedness as a result of the wrong application of rules of elision is: وقال إن أفضلهم كان زيدٌ وإن زيدًا ضربت وإنه كان أفضلهم زيدٌ وهذا فيه قبح وهو ضعيف 'And he said 'إنه ضربت على قوله إنه زيدًا ضربت' by analogy with his saying 'إن أفضلهم كان زيدٌ' and 'إن زيدًا ضربت', but all this is grammatically ill-formed and [its meaning] weak' (I Sib 290/249). In short, *mustaqīm* utterances are not limited to grammatically well-formed and ill-formed, but extends further to cover a kind of ill-formed utterances that are sanctioned as *corrigible*.[44]

For Sībawayhi, the communication act is maintained as long as utterances are *corrigible*, that is to say the listener is still able to interpret them successfully and rightly.[45] However, once the utterances become nonsensically ungrammatical, i.e. their meaning and the speaker's intention are beyond identification, the communication process is violated.

Although we are bound by the Quality maxim (cf. p. 16: fn. 19) to be informative and complete, there are cases in which the social context makes it possible for us to leave out or elide words. This is only possible when the speaker is able to make his communicative intention known to the listener, and more importantly, the listener is able to identify the speaker's intention and thus identify the missing or elided word(s), or as worded by Sībawayhi (I 376/328):

فكل ذلك حذف تخفيفا واستغناء بعلم المخاطب بما يعنى.

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[43] Jahn (I 1895: 26) mentions نقض 'violation; contradiction' as an alternative reading for نقص 'deficiency'.

[44] *Corrigibility* refers to 'an ungrammatical utterance that a native speaker can not only recognize as unacceptable, but can also correct' (II Lyons 1977: 379–80).

[45] When mistakes are made against certain grammatical rules, native speakers tend to correct the mistake because they still are able to identify the meaning intended, or as-Sirāfi (177[a]) formulates it وتبين ذلك في لفظ من يحاوره هذا معروف في كلام الناس 'Its meaning became clear from the utterance of his interlocutor, for it is known in the speech of people'.

> So all this is elided for the sake of lightness and self-sufficiency resulting from the listener's knowledge of the meaning intended.

There is a chapter in the *Kitāb* (I Sib 141/119) dedicated to utterances whose verb is elided due to their frequency in the speech of the Arabs and the status of proverb they have acquired. As mentioned above there are linguistic as well as extra-linguistic features that count towards the complete meaning of the utterance, therefore in هذا ولا زعماتك 'This [is the truth] and not your assertions', the verb أتوهم 'I do not think' is understood (cf. ولا أتوهم زعماتك 'I do not think your assertions are true')[46] because it is frequently used in their speech and its meaning can readily be inferred from the speech situation as it is obvious that the speaker intends to reject the assertion of the listener ينهاه عن زعمه.

The conclusion that might be drawn from our discussion so far is that the PP principle is the upshot of grammatical correctness and the right usage of Arabic and that the term *istiqāma* implies also being brief, orderly, clear and avoiding uncertainty (cf. Grice's maxim of manners on p. 42).

Throughout this section, I have highlighted the interdependence of pragmatic principles and grammatical rules. Special emphasis has been placed on the key role of pragmatic principles, by virtue of which the intention of the speaker is made known beyond the confines of the formal rules. Admittedly pragmatic principles 'impose weaker constraints on language behaviour than grammatical rules: they can only be predicative in a probabilistic sense' (Leech 1983: 48), while grammatical rules are binding: 'the rules of a language (e.g. the rules for forming tag-questions in English) normally count as an integral part of the definition of that language, but maxims do not' (ibid.: 8). And yet, it is possible for a *mustaqīm* utterance to be grammatically ill-formed, provided that it is *corrigible* and that the intention of the speaker remains identifiable; which amounts to the absence of any incoherent or contradictory elements.

2.3. *Negotiability and Motivation*

Pragmatics can be said to be concerned with the meaning of a speech act in a particular situation and the information conveyed by it; and thus

[46] Cf. discussion in Howell (I.I 1968: 199) and Lane (I, III: 1233).

be different from Semantics, whose main function is to study the meaning expressed by a particular sentence. While meaning in Semantics is concerned with lexical meaning and is defined in abstraction from speaker's intention, Pragmatics studies meaning relative to the speech context and to what is intended by the speech act.

According to Lambrecht (1994: *passim*), one should distinguish between the information conveyed by the utterance of a sentence and the meaning of the sentence. While the meaning of the sentence is a function of the linguistic expressions of which it is made up, and is thus invariable, the information value of an utterance is largely determined by the mental state of the interlocutors. Whether a given piece of propositional meaning can be considered informative depends on the communicative situation in which it is uttered.

Since there are no clear-cut rules to regulate the meaning of an utterance, both the speaker and listener usually resort to two key pragmatic strategies, viz. Negotiability of pragmatic factors and Motivation.[47] By Negotiability we refer to "the indeterminacy of conversational utterances (…) by leaving force unclear" (Leech 1983: 23). Negotiability allows the speaker to leave the meaning of the utterance open for the listener to decide between one force and another, since there are no fixed rules to narrow down the choice. Motivation, on the other hand, explains why a particular force is chosen rather than the other.

A parallel may perhaps be drawn between these remarks and Sībawayhi's approach to Arabic grammar in general. The *Kitāb* being characterised by its practicality, it is a rather detailed empirical work full of useful examples, whose main purpose is to highlight not only the formal aspects of the language, but also to penetrate into the native speaker's mind and the situational context surrounding the utterance produced.

By and large, Motivation and Negotiability seem to be closely associated with one another in the speech situation. It is true then to say that the speaker sets conversational goals for the listener, and the listener should be in a position to recognise the speaker's intention and grasp the intended meaning. 'Meaning' in pragmatics is the result of a reciprocal process that depends on both the speaker and listener and

[47] Cf. the discussion of definiteness and *identifiability* below.

its recognition by the latter.[48] In what follows, the analysis of certain passages from the *Kitāb* will serve to describe how Negotiability and Motivation were implicitly taken into account by Sībawayhi.

2.3.1. *Negotiability in Sībawayhi*

As mentioned earlier, the speaker may leave a margin of Negotiability to choose between one force and another as illustrated in the example given by Leech (op. cit. 24):

- If I were you, I would leave town straight away.

Depending on the situational context, this utterance can be interpreted as a piece of advice, a warning or a threat. Although the hearer might interpret this utterance as a threat, the speaker will be always able to make use of indeterminacy of pragmatic factors and claim it was a piece of advice (ibid.).

There are traces in the *Kitāb* of utterances which bring out a striking similarity with Leech's instance as shown in the verse أعبدًا حل في شُعبى غريبا 'Are you a slave who has come to Šuʿabā as a stranger?' (I Sib 170/144). Sībawayhi argues that the dependent *ʿabdan* 'slave' can be interpreted in two different ways, i.e. as a vocative expression or reproach: فيكون على وجهين على النداء وعلى أنه رآه في حال افتخار واجتراء فقال أعبدًا أي أتفخر عبدًا.

The hearer can choose between two possible interpretations based on reciprocity between the speaker and the hearer: (1) It can be interpreted as a vocative expression where *ʿabd* 'slave' is made dependent by the fact of being called, meaning 'O slave who has come to Šuʿabā as a stranger'; (2) It can be interpreted as a rebuke because the speaker saw someone boasting and bragging, so he said 'What! are you boasting, you a slave, who has come to Šuʿbā as a stranger?' to reproach him.

In the chapter dealing with expressions of reproach (cf. I Sib 252 /215), Sībawayhi tells us that utterances such as أتاني زيدٌ الفاسقَ الخبيثَ 'Zayd came to me, the base [dependent] the wicked [dependent]' and وامرأته حمالةَ الحطبِ 'and his wife, [I revile] the carrier [dependent] of firewood' (Q111: 4) are intended as expressions of reproach. Owning to inde-

[48] Meaning is approached by Leech (1983: 34–35) as a 'reflexive intention' whose fulfilment consists in its recognition by the listener.

terminacy of force, Sībawayhi points out that 'the carrier of firewood' for instance should not be interpreted as a predicate of 'his wife' but as an insult.

This indeterminacy of force is also evidenced by as-Sīrāfī's (177[a]) observation that the speaker's intention determines ultimately the real sense of his utterance.[49] He points out that the same formal structure can be interpreted as a praise, reviling or reproach, depending on the speaker's intention, e.g., when saying 'so and so is an upright person!' or 'so and so is valiant!', the speaker might well intend a mockery of someone's behaviour والذي يصيره مدحا وثناء أو شتما وتقبيحا قصد المتكلم به إلى ذلك وربما قصد بقوله فلانٌ فاضلٌ وفلانٌ شجاعٌ إلى الهزء به.

It is important to bear in mind that Negotiability is not the same as *lubs* 'uncertainty' as the former is obviously a rhetoric means that is used to enhance the communicative effectiveness while the latter is a sign of a communicative deficiency that should be avoided in speech at all times.

2.3.2. *Motivated use of case endings*

Whenever case endings are mentioned in Arabic, we inevitably tend to associate them with syntax.[50] It is true that case endings serve to identify the syntactic function fulfilled by nouns and some categories of the verb,[51] nevertheless, I shall prove in what follows that there is a real link between the use of case endings and pragmatics.

In the *Kitāb* the listener is ordinarily presented with utterance and their possible meanings, while the task of motivating the listener's choice in favour of the intended meaning rests upon the speaker's shoulders. A classic example is the use of the same verbal noun in أنا قاتلٌ غلامَك 'I shall be the killer [independent *tanwīn*] of your slave [dependent]' as an instance of the *tanwīn-naṣb* construction with its verbal effect on the word that follows it, and in أنا قاتلُ غلامِك 'I am

[49] See also Carter (2002: 8) where the speaker's intention is said to often be the sole syntactic determinant even though it is linked to extra-linguistic factors.

[50] Case ending was a matter of accounting for the *'āmil's* operation on the word affected. The *'āmil,* either expressed or implied, was an indispensable syntactic tool in Arabic grammar (cf. Versteegh, 2001: 75).

[51] Imperfect verbs in Arabic (*al-af'āl l-muḍāri'a li-l-asmā'*') receive case endings due to their formal resemblance to the noun. Imperfect verbs may take the independent, dependent and jussive form.

the killer [independent] of your slave [oblique]' as an instance of the iḍāfa-construction with its nominal effect. Other examples from Sībawayhi include the following (I 260/221–2):

> هذا باب يرتفع فيه الخبر لأنه مبني على مبتدأ أو ينتصب فيه الخبر لأنه حال لمعروف مبني على مبتدأ فأما الرفع فقولك هذا الرجلُ منطلقٌ فالرجل صفة لهذا وهما بمنزلة اسم واحد كأنك قلت هذا منطلقٌ...وأما النصب فقولك هذا الرجلُ منطلقًا جعلت الرجل مبنيا على هذا وجعلت الخبر حالا له قد صار فيها فصار كقولك هذا عبدُ الله منطلقًا إنما يريد في هذا الموضع أن يذكر المخاطب برجل قد عرفه قبل ذلك وهو في الرفع لا يريد أن يذكره بأحد وإنما أشار فقال هذا منطلقٌ فكأن ما ينتصب من أخبار المعرفة ينتصب على أنه حال مفعول.
>
> This is the chapter where the predicate takes either the independent form because it is built on the subject/topic or the dependent form because it is a *ḥāl* to a definite noun built on a subject/topic. An instance of the independent form is your saying 'This man [is] going away [independent as predicate]' in which case 'the man' is an adjectival qualifier of 'this' and the two have the status of a single noun as if you said 'This [is] going away' […] As when it takes the dependent form, an instance would be 'This [is] the man [independent as predicate] going away [dependent as *ḥāl*]', where you build 'the man' on 'this' and then make the predicate [*munṭaliq*] a *ḥāl* to indicate the state of the man in the act of going away, so it parallels your saying 'This [is] ʿAbdullāhi [independent] going away [dependent]'. When the predicate is made dependent, it is to remind the listener of somebody he already knows, while on assigning the independent form to it, the speaker does not want to remind him of anyone but simply to point to someone, hence his saying 'This [is] going away [independent]'. It is as if when the predicate of the definite noun is made dependent, it is made so to indicate a situation in which the action is done.

I am on solid ground in claiming that the case assignment and speaker's choice between predication and '*ḥāl*' is for a great deal pragmatically motivated, i.e the communicative intention of the speaker is instrumental in determining the syntactic position of the word. I might argue that the main purpose of case assignment is in fact to help the listener differentiate between two close, nonetheless divergent meanings intended by the speaker. When *munṭaliq* 'going away' takes the independent form, the speaker simply wants to point to a certain person and provide some information about him, i.e. he is going away. Conversely, if *munṭaliq* takes the dependent form, the speaker essentially intends to remind the listener of a acquaintance or somebody he already knows, and only additionally describe his state as going away.

It is as if the speaker wanted to say to the listener انظر اليه منطلقًا 'look at him in the act of going away' (cf. Sib 256/218). In a nutshell, the focal point of the first utterance 'This man [is] going away [independent as predicate]' is the act of going away, while identifying a mutual acquaintance and focussing the listener's attention on him, form the main point of interest in the second utterance 'This [is] the man [independent as predicate] going away [dependent = *ḥāl*]'.

Before moving on to the next point, it can be noted that until the present day, the pragmatic motivation of case assignment in Arabic and the communicative value attached to it, have not been sufficiently clarified. In his recent work *A Linguistic History of Arabic*, Owens (2006: 88ff) dedicates a chapter to the study of the origin of the case endings system in Afro-Asiatic languages in general and in Arabic in particular. Although special emphasis is placed on Sībawayhi's analysis of case assignment in Arabic (ibid. 87–101), the Complementarity Principle is not taken into account, when discussing free case variation (cf. ibid. 93–6). Owens pursues the traditional line of reasoning of later grammarians by approaching the issue from a purely morpho-syntactic angle, while neglecting one of the defining characteristics of Sībawayhi's linguistic mindset and linguistic model, i.e. the pragmatic component.

It is beyond the scope of this book to enter into a full-scale study of case assignment in Arabic, but the discussion so far leaves little room for doubt that pragmatics and its complementarity with syntax can shed new light on the study of case endings.

2.3.3. *Motivated reduction*

Leech (1983: 67) provides us with another complementary maxim, i.e. the maxim of Reduction which can be defined as the principle of 'reduce where possible'. However, reduction should be restrained whenever ambiguity crops up and the *istiqāma* of the speech is endangered. The Principle of Reduction covers three linguistic strategies, viz. pronominalisation, substitution and ellipsis or deletion.

The Principle of Reduction in Arabic is closely related to *istiġnāʾ* or semantic self-sufficiency. Reduction is shown to be motivated because *istiġnāʾ* is inseparable from *istiqāma*. The complementarity of *istiġnāʾ* and *istiqāma* is a necessary ingredient the speaker needs to take into account if he intends to deliver a complete message as well as save

time, effort and any superfluous words when involved in a speech act (cf. Carter 1968: 229).

ʾIḍmār 'pronominalisation or rather suppression' is a term we encounter very often in the *Kitāb*, and is one of the areas where *reduction* is motivated. Troupeau (1976: 132) has recorded 90 occurrences of *ʾIḍmār* and 76 occurrences of its variant *muḍmar*.

The first rule of *ʾiḍmār* we can infer from the *Kitāb* is that we can only pronominalise when the hearer knows what kind of word has been suppressed.[52] Pronouns such as *he* and *I* are signs of a suppressed or concealed noun because the listener is able to recognise the person they refer to (I Sib 257/219) لأن هو وأنا علامتان للمضمر وإنما يضمر إذا علم أنك قد عرفت من يعنى.

Regarding the relationship between the verb and the noun, Sībawayhi speaks of three possibilities in which the *ʾiḍmār*[53] of the verb (verb suppression) may or may not occur: an overt verb that cannot possibly be suppressed; a 'suppressible' verb which is usually made overt, and a suppressed verb which necessarily remains covert (I Sib 149/125) الفعل يجري في الاسماء على ثلاثة مجار فعل مظهر لا يحسن إضماره وفعل مضمر مستعمل اظهاره وفعل مضمر متروك إظهاره.

Sībawayhi proceeds with the discussion of the three possibilities in order to show us how to apply them correctly, and his discussion bespeaks the necessity of the situational context. The three options are illustrated by means of three examples, the first of which concerns a man to whom no mention was made of any hitting, nor did it occur to him to hit anyone. If we approach the man and say *'*Zayd*an*' [dependent], intending 'Hit Zaydan [dependent as direct object]', the lack of a clear situational context will impair his understanding of what we mean, unless the verb is expressly mentioned, أما الفعل الذي لا يحسن إضماره فإنه أن تنتهي إلى رجل لم يكن في ذكر ضرب ولم يخطر بباله فتقول زيدا فلا بد له من أن يقول اضرب زيدا.

As for the second example, in which the verb may either be retained or suppressed, the listener is implied to have already been acquainted

[52] Cf. Owens (1988: 192–3) for the discussion of pronominalisation in other grammarians.

[53] Versteegh (1997: 16–7) links the origin of the term *ʾiḍmār* with one of the earliest commentaries on the *Qur'an* and which was written by the exegete *Muqātil* ibn Sulaymān (d. 767). He quotes Muqātil twice (Q. 12/5 *Tafsīr* II, 318.13 and Q. 33/50 *Tafsīr* III, 501.2) where this term is used to refer to the implicit presence of suppressed elements necessary to get the real meaning of the two *Qur'ānic* verses.

with the 'beating plans'. In other words, when we utter 'Zaydan [dependent]', the situational context prompts the listener to derive the implicature 'I want you to hit Zaydan', وأما الموضع الذي يضمر فيه وإظهاره مستعمل فنحو قولك زيدًا لرجل في ذكر ضرب تريد اضرب زيدًا.

Regarding the suppressed verb which is never expressed overtly, Sībawayhi refers us to the chapter beginning with إياك 'take care!' down to the مرحبًا وأهلًا 'welcome!' (cf. I Sib 138/177–149/124) where the two reasons for the verb suppression are succinctly given, i.e. the speech is lengthy, and the element suppressed occurs so frequently in the speech of the Arabs that their meaning is readily recoverable.

Saʿat al-kalām 'latitude of speech' is another example of Motivation. It is the result of a conventional 'bending' of the rules of speech, as a term assumes the syntactic status of an elided term without impairing the intelligibility of the utterance, e.g., واسأل القريةَ 'Ask the village' and يا سارقَ الليلةِ أهلَ الدار 'O, thief of the night [who steals from] the people of the house' (I Sib 89/75). In *saʿat al-kalām* the speaker permits himself to dispense with the exact maxims and rules of speech, because he knows that the listener is capable of reconstructing the elided element and restoring the intended meaning without much difficulty. In other words, semantic motivation makes it possible for the hearer to interpret the first instance as 'ask the people of the village' and 'O thief who will steal tonight from the people of the house' in the second instance (cf. Versteegh 1983: 172–3; Owens 1988: 191).

Finally, Ellipsis or deletion refers to omitted words or phrases which are necessary for a complete syntactical construction but not for the meaning intended by the speaker. Deletion can only occur when the term omitted is frequent in the speech and the recoverability of the meaning is guaranteed. There is in fact no lack of evidence of deletion in the *Kitāb*,[54] as we are reminded that the term has been elided due to its frequent usage حذف في الكلام لكثرة استعمالهم (I Sib 279/240) and to *istiġnāʾ* or contextual self-sufficiency, for the listener recognises the meaning intended without much ado حذفها في الأول استغناء بعلم المخاطب أنه لا يعني غيره (I Sib 124/103). It might be relevant to point out that pro-

[54] Apart from Sībawayhi, Ibn Jinnī (d. 943/1002), for instance, does not deem it necessary for a sentence to have all the words explicitly uttered, if the meaning remains complete and unaltered (Mehiri 1973: 360), in other words if the meaning still is identifiable. See also Mehiri (ibid.: 392–3) where Ibn Jinnī's discussion of Ellipsis and Reduction in al-*Ḫaṣāʾiṣ* is reproduced.

verbial expressions exhibit the necessary factors for an elision to take place and as mentioned above the verb may be deleted if the expression enjoys a quasi-proverbial status هذا باب يحذف منه الفعل لكثرته في كلامهم حتى صار بمنزلة المثل (I Sib 141/119), and also because the Arabs know the meaning in their hearts لما في صدورهم من علمه (I Sib 196/166).

It is important to bear in mind that uncertainty restricts deletion. Sībawayhi does not fail to hammer home that the bent of our mind is opposed to any uncertainty of meaning, and that elliptic expression must remain meaningful, or else the deletion is meaningless. The passage below clearly shows how he was led to postulate an unchangeable rule in linguistic behaviour (I Sib 128–9 /108):

واعلم أنه لا يجوز أن تقول

- زيدٌ وأنت تريد أن تقول ليُضرب زيدٌ أو ليَضرب زيدٌ إذا كان فاعلا
- ولا زيدًا وأنت تريد ليضرب عمرٌو زيدًا
- ولا يجوز زيدٌ عمرًا وأنت تخاطبني فإنما تريد أن أبلغه أنا عنك أنك قد أمرته أن يضرب عمرًا وزيد وعمرو[55] غائبان فلا يكون أن تُضمر فعل الغائب.
- وكذلك لا يجوز زيدًا وأنت تريد أن أُبلغه عنك أن يضرب زيدا لأنك إذا أضمرت فعل الغائب ظن السامع الشاهد إذا قلت زيدًا أنك تأمره هو بزيد فكرهوا الالتباس.

So you should know that you may not say:[56]

- 'Zayd*un*! [independent]' meaning 'Let Zayd be hit' or 'Let Zayd [Active agent] hit' if Zayd fulfils the function of Agent;
- 'Zayd*an* [dependent]' while intending 'Let ʿAmr*un* [independent] hit Zayd*an* [dependent]';
- 'Zayd*un* [independent] ʿAmr*an* [dependent]' is not permissible if you were addressing me, because what you really want me to do is to convey a message on your behalf to him [sc. Zayd] that he should hit ʿAmr, while both Zayd and ʿAmr are absent, in which case you are not allowed to elide the verb of a third person.
- Likewise, it is not permissible to say 'Zayd*an* [dependent]' if you expect me to convey a message to him on your behalf that he [sc. ʿAmr] should hit Zayd, because if you elided the verb of the third person, the present listener would assume that by saying 'Zayd*an* [dependent]', you are asking him to hit Zayd, and they [sc. the Arabs] dislike uncertainty.

[55] Beyond the reach of perception by sense or of mental perception (I.VI Lane 1955: 2314).

[56] Note the resemblance it bears to verb suppression discussed above.

What makes the four cases above dysfunctional is the discrepancy between the actual and intended receiver of the message. There are no situational signals that identify the intended hearer or else draw the hearer's attention to the speaker (cf. Lyons 1977: 34). Moreover, the presence of proper nouns, taken out of their situational context is particularly problematic. Unlike pronouns, proper nouns are lexical expressions, which do not necessarily identify the participants or discourse roles of speaker, listener and third party (cf. Siewierska, 2004: 1–2).

If we analyse the first and second instances, the first problem to be identified with them is the uncertainty they contain, for the only linguistic elements given are the agent and the direct object respectively, without any specific situational context or linguistic habit that justify the deletion. The third instance is not eligible for a deletion, due to the linguistic rule that prohibits a verb associated with a third person from being elided. The fact that the listener is present does not justify the deletion even though he has the task of conveying the message to a third person. The reason is that the listener would assume himself to be the agent of the elided verb. The fourth instance is considered dubious as the listener is made to believe that he is the one to hit Zayd, while in actual fact he is asked to convey the message of hitting Zayd to a third person. As a rule, the verb associated with a third person must remain overt.

It is clear that the pragmatic meaning, rather than the lexical meaning, is under study here and that the conclusive argument still is the authority of native speakers who dislike uncertainty in speech. In short, Sībawayhi is trying to tell us that '[T]he correct use of person markers in a language requires knowledge not only of the existing person forms and the syntactic and discourse-pragmatic rules governing their distribution but crucially also of the social relations obtaining between the speech-act participants and the third parties that they invoke' (Siewierska, 2004: 214).

2.4. *Conventionality*

Conventionality is another pragmatic strategy discussed by Leech (1983: 25), and it simply refers to the lack of extralinguistic foundations for and arbitrariness of grammatical rules and categories. However, the complementary character of language points out that there is a further dimension to this rather one-sided account of grammar, i.e. a metagrammar.

Basing himself on a metagrammar that provides pragmatic explanations of the universal features of grammars in general, Leech (ibid.) makes a distinction between two types of conventionality: the Absolute Conventionality and Motivated Conventionality.

2.4.1. *Absolute Conventionality*

The Absolute Conventionality of the rule is based on established practice or accepted standards. /mæn/ for instance, is the pronunciation of the English word designating an adult male human being. There is no motivation as to why it is pronounced in this way except for being in accordance with the absolute conventional rule of English pronunciation.

Absolute Conventionality in the *Kitāb* is represented by the bedrock argument of following the practice of the Arabs and making words and utterances behave as the Arabs make them behave. We might have a look at a few instances where syntax gives us little hold and the only thing that is left for us to do is to resort to the linguistic authority of the native speakers and follow their lead.

In the chapters dealing with expressions of command, well-wishing, reproach, salutations etc., there are passages that map exactly on to Leech (I Sib 156–177/131–149). These chapters form part of a large discussion of structurally related utterances and expressions and deal with indefinite *maṣdars* 'verbal nouns' that take either the dependent form by virtue of a suppressed verb, or the independent form, as a means to invoke a wish of well-being or evil on the listener. The instance below (I Sib 166/138) summarises and illustrates the point raised:

> ألا ترى انك لو قلت طعامًا لك وشرابًا لك ومالاً لك تريد معنى سقيًا لك أو معنى المرفوع الذي فيه معنى الدعاء لم يجز لأنه لم يستعمل هذا الكلام كما استعمل ما قبله فهذا يدلك ويبصرك أنه ينبغي لك ان تجري هذه الحروف كما أجرت العرب وأن تعنى ما عنوا بها.
>
> Do not you see that if you said طعامًا لك, شرابًا لك and مالاً لك intending the meaning of either سقيًا لك 'May God give thee rain' or that of the independent form which conveys the meaning of a prayer, it would not be permissible because these expressions are not used in the same way as the previous ones are used. This shows you and makes you realise that you are obliged to treat these words as the Arabs treat them and mean what they mean.

There is obviously a lack of direct correlation between a particular grammatical construction and meaning: there are neither fixed meanings

associated with a particular formal structure nor identical structures that always convey the same meaning. Admittedly طعامًا لك and شرابًا لك share the same formal structure with سقيًا لك, 'May God give thee rain!' but they do not convey the same meaning of a prayer expressed by either سقيا لك 'May God give thee rain' or other independent verbal nouns discussed in the same chapter such as سلامٌ عليك 'Peace be with thee' and ويحٌ لك etc. 'Woe to thee!'

Further, in chapter 64 (I Sib 160/ 133) we are told that the *maṣdar* expressing a prayer and an imprecation may be annexed to personal pronouns in ويلكَ, ويحكَ, ويسكَ and ويبكَ which all mean 'Woe to thee!' , but not in سقيكَ which should mean the same as سقيًا لك 'May God give thee rain'. This is simply because that is the way the Arabs treat them ولا يجوز سقيك إنما تجري ذا كما أجرت العرب.

Likewise, expressions of commiseration are instances of Absolute Conventionality as Sībawayhi tells us that words such as 'the poor' and 'the miserable' and the like are used to express pity and commiseration but this is not true of every adjectival qualifier or noun, hence the advice to express one's commiseration by using the expressions of commiseration used by the Arabs والترحم يكون بالمسكين والبائس ونحوه ولا يكون بكل صفة ولا كل اسم ولكن ترحم بما ترحم به العرب (I Sib 255/ 217).

Another telling example of Absolute Conventionality is that expressions such as هو مني معقدَ الإزارِ 'He is as near to me as the place where I do up my tunic' is allowed but not هو مني مجلسَك 'He is as near to me as your sitting place' or هو مني مربطَ الفرسِ 'He is as near to me as where the horses are tied' (I Sib 206/174–5). Sībawayhi can find no motivation for this but to use what the Arabs use and allow what they allow themselves: فاستعمل من هذا ما استعملت العرب وأجز منه ما أجزوا (ibid.).

Phonology is one of the fields where Absolute Conventionality is the prevailing rule as shown in the following quotation (cf. II Sib 162/166):

> ومن الكلام ما لا يدرى أنه منقوص حتى تعلم أن العرب تكلم به فإذا تكلموا به منقوصا علمت أنها ياء وقعت بعد فتحة أو واو لا تستطيع أن تقول كذا لكذا كما لا تستطيع أن تقول قالوا قدم لكذا ولا قالوا جمل لكذا.
>
> There are words that are unknown to have a final weak radical until you have heard the Arabs using them. Only when they make the final radical weak, will you know that is should be a *yā'* after a *fatḥa* or a *wāw*, but you can find no motivation for this just as you have no grounds to motivate why they call this a 'foot' or that a 'camel'.

In this chapter, Sībawayhi emphatically repeats that the final radicals of some words are unknown to us until we have heard the Arabs using them. In short, the verdict sounds as follows وإنما تعرفه بالسمع 'you only come to know it [sc. the form] after hearing it'.

2.4.2. *Motivated Conventionality*

In contrast to Absolute Conventionality, the Motivated Conventionality of a rule is not only a matter of adhering to convention, but is both reasonable and predictable by dint of motivated extra-linguistic goals. The main prerequisite for Motivated Conventionality is semantic self-sufficiency and recoverability of meaning as illustrated in the following examples taken from Leech (1983: 26):

[1] Good luck! = 'I wish you good luck'
[2] Bad luck! = 'I regret your bad luck'

Leech proceeds to consider the elements of Conventionality and Motivation contained in the two instances above. Regarding Conventionality, the fact that Good luck is used as an expression of well-wishing rather than of congratulating the hearer on his good luck is a matter of [absolute] Conventionality. Equally, Bad luck functions as a means of expressing our sympathy on the grounds of Conventionality, for although bad luck and misfortune have the same sense, 'Misfortune!' cannot randomly replace 'Bad luck!' to express commiseration to someone (ibid.).

As for motivation, the important role of the PP is quite discernable. The PP guarantees that the only meaning to be associated with 'Good luck!' is wishing somebody good luck. Similarly, the social rightness prompts the listener to understand that by uttering 'Bad luck!' we want to show our sympathy and regret our neighbour's bad luck. This is all possible because Motivated Conventionality makes the intention of the speaker predictable and the message conveyed accessible to the listener in its entirety. In short, the PP is the motivation that determines the sense of 'Good luck!' as 'I wish you good luck' while 'Bad luck!' cannot mean but 'I regret your bad luck'.

If we examine the *Kitāb*, we will find a large sample of expressions which prove Sībawayhi's submission to Arab usage and its underlying motivated conventionality. This is specially reflected in the extensive coverage of the use of the dependent form when the verb is suppressed and its expression has been abandoned due to semantic self-sufficiency: هذا باب ما ينتصب على إضمار الفعل المتروك إظهاره استغناء عنه (cf. I

Sib 138ff/116ff). In order to show his reader that proverbs and similar expressions are predictable from some motivation, Sībawayhi states at the beginning of his lengthy discussion that he will give us examples of this with the suppressed verb restored so that we may know what the Arabs want to say, وسأمثله لك مظهرا لتعلم ما أرادوا (I 138/116):

> وأما النهي فإنه التحذير كقولك الأسدَ الأسدَ والجدارَ الجدارَ والصبيَّ الصبيَّ فإنما نهيته أن يقرب الجدار المخوف المائل أو يقرب الأسد أو يوطئ الصبي وإن شاء أظهر مع هذه الأشياء ما أضمر من الفعل فقال […] لا توطئ الصبيَ واحذر الجدارَ ولا تقرب الأسدَ.
>
> 'The lion! The lion!', 'The wall! The wall!', 'The boy! The boy!' You cautioned him against the cracked inclined wall, approaching the lion and causing the boy being trodden upon. If the speaker wants to express in these cases the suppressed verb, he might say […] 'do not tread upon the boy', 'Beware of the wall' and 'Do not approach the lion'.

There is evidence that the PP motivates the meaning intended by 'The lion! The lion!' and 'The boy! The boy!' It upholds the speaker's intention to express polite rather than impolite utterances and prompts the hearer to interpret 'The lion! The lion!' as a warning not to expose himself to the lion and to guard the boy from being harmed in 'The boy! The boy!'

Motivated Conventionality is an illustration of a not infrequent procedure in language, in أهلَك والليلَ 'Your family [dependent] and the night [dependent]', the sense of the utterance is still recoverable even after reducing the speech and suppressing the verb. Sībawayhi points out that the hearer should interpret this expression as advice meaning 'betake yourself early to your family before the night and beware of the night' كأنه قال بادر أهلك قبل الليل وإنما المعنى أن يحذره أن يدركه الليل (cf. I Sib 138/117).

Expressions such as هنيئًا مريئًا 'Wholesome and salutary!' and ترباً وجندلاً 'Dust and stones!' are other instances of Motivated Conventionality. Here, conventionality is supported by the use of joined adjectival qualifiers and concrete nouns significant of a prayer or a curse, because by هنيئًا مريئًا 'Wholesome and salutary!' the speaker intends 'May you Eat and drink it with enjoyment!' (cf. I Sib 159/133), while by saying ترباً وجندلاً 'Dust and stones!' the speaker wants to invoke evil on someone meaning 'May God make dust and stones to cleave his hands' (cf. I Sib 158/132). All these instances show that the structure aspect of

the expressions, i.e. coupling of words and repetitions, is a matter of conventionality, while what is meant is motivated.

This discussion will be concluded with the following passage that summarises the criteria related to the nature of the data Sībawayhi consistently takes into account when dealing with linguistic phenomena (I Sib129 /108):

> وهذه حجج سمعت من العرب وممن يوثق به يزعم أنه سمعها من العرب من ذلك قول العرب في مثل من أمثالهم اللهم ضبعًاوذئبًاإذا كان يدعو بذلك على غنم رجل وإذا سألتهم ما يعنون قالوا اللهم اجمع او اجعل فيها ضبعًا وذئبًا كلهم يفسر ما ينوي وإنما سهل تفسيره عندهم لأن المضمر قد استعمل في هذا الموضع بإظهار.

> These are proofs that they were heard form the Arabs and from a trustworthy person who asserted that he had heard them form the Arabs, as when they say in one of their proverbs اللهم ضبعًا وذئبًا 'O God, a hyena [dependent] and a wolf [dependent]'. If you ask them what they mean, they say 'O God, unite or place among them a hyena and a wolf!' and they all explain what it means, for what is meant is readily explained because the suppressed verb had been expressed in this place.

The criteria that Sībawayhi's comprehensive approach is underlining in the passage above are (1) trustworthiness of his source of information (2) authenticity of the utterances produced, which is reflected in the conventional use of the proverb اللهم ضبعًا وذئبًا 'O God, a hyena and a wolf' (3) the interdependence of pragmatic and syntax, which is reflected in motivation of both the inflectional form and the intended meaning as an imprecation upon someone's flock and which is based on Arab usage.

The instances above convincingly show that Complementarity is very much at the heart of the present discussion. Pragmatic principles serve as a complement that is needed to make up for the whole communicative picture in language. It is true that grammatical rules are conventional, but restriction to or exemption of existing rules is in the first place pragmatically motivated, or as Leech puts it (1983: 27):

> In so far as grammar is motivated, it is motivated at least in part by pragmatic considerations. For example, grammar is to some extent adapted to such needs as performing illocutionary acts while at the same time being polite and cooperative. It would not be surprising to discover, in more ways than have so far been suggested, that grammar is like it is because it is useful.

Summary

In the light of the *Kitāb*'s holistic approach, I argue that 'communicative grammar' is the operative word here. The overall thrust of this communicative grammar is to achieve the *istiqāma of speech* and *grammaticality* by describing the correct way of speaking Arabic as the Arabs themselves speak it. Hence, the established authority of the Arabs as the reference point *par excellence*. However, only trustworthy Arabs with the best command of good Arabic were endowed with such authority.

In this chapter I also brought into focus the interdependence of formal and functional elements in Sībawayhi's analysis of Arabic, which was abandoned by later grammarians. It has become clear that for Sībawayhi, as it is for Leech, the Complementarity Principle is not only operative at the syntacto-pragmatic level, but also at the inter-pragmatic level, as case shown by the complementarity of the PP and IP with the CP.

One major point that has emerged from the present discussion is the relevance of the social and pragmatic dimension to the linguistic issues discussed in the *Kitāb*. In this respect, I have underlined the role of the PP and IP whose significance to Sībawayhi's linguistic theory has slowly been grasped if not completely ignored.

Throughout this chapter, I analysed various passages from the *Kitāb* so as to make a case for the adequacy of looking for a common ground that early Arab linguistics shares with modern models beyond the sterile application of such models to Arabic. Further I highlighted basic evaluative notions of the utterance such as *istiqāma, grammaticality*, and *corrigibility* and their link with the speaker's intention. I have demonstrated that *istiqāma* is an indispensable principle if speech acts are to convey information successfully and rightly. By discussing other linguistic principles and mechanisms such as Negotiability, Motivation, Absolute Conventionality and Motivated Conventionality, I have shown that although Sībawayhi did not use these terms himself, he nevertheless makes frequent use of the linguistic principles to which these terms refer, and against which usages and structures are measured and clarified.

As will become clear in the next chapter, one corollary of the principles discussed so far is the recurrence of Sībawayhi's complementary vision of language and his comprehensive approach to linguistic phenomena, which are applied not only at the level of a larger class as utterances, but also at a more basic level of its components, viz. definiteness.

CHAPTER THREE

DEFINITENESS AND IDENTIFIABILITY

In the previous chapter, inadequacies of the one-sided formal account of the *Kitāb* have been addressed by underlining the complementary character of Sībawayhi's linguistic approach. In this chapter I shall look at Sībawayhi's analysis of the concept of *maʿrifa* and its role in determining word order in nominal sentences.

Throughout this chapter evidence will be provided that Sībawayhi does not approach the term *maʿrifa* 'something known' and its lexical antonym *nakira* 'something unknown' as a separate and insulated syntactic component of language, nor is it context-neutral. *Maʿrifa* is approached as an umbrella term which covers a *'simultaneous bundle of syntactic and pragmatic features'*, and as this chapter unfolds, some of these features will prove to be easier to decode, and other may be more prominent than others may.

Before proceeding any further, I should like to add a terminological note concerning the confusion of the term *maʿrifa* and *nakira* with the syntactic categories of definite and indefinite. For the reader's benefit the terms will further be used as equivalents but only in the broadest sense of the term. The view of definiteness advanced here rests upon the consideration that it is a morphosyntactic category that imperfectly grammaticalises the pragmatic category of *identifiability* (Lyons 1999: 282; Lambrecht 1994: 92).

Being a necessary requirement to test the complementary model I claim to underpin Sībawayhi's analysis of definiteness, some basic observations are made in the first section about definiteness and *identifiability* as viewed in modern linguistics. Then I proceed to argue that the analysis of the five definite classes distinguished by Sībawayhi is carried out from a complementary angle and that it covers the notion of grammatical definiteness and pragmatic *identifiability*. Some space is also given to proper nouns whose definite status presents us with a challenge of classification and requires some comment. Briefly, there is a general line of division drawn by Sībawayhi between the type of definiteness associated with proper nouns and that associated with the nouns bearing the definite article *ʾalif-lām* as the former are said to be

definite by the simple fact of being proper nouns (II Sib 22/22). Hierarchy of the five definite classes is dealt with next.

Much of the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to word order in the Arabic nominal sentence. As part of the discussion, verbs are brought in. Parameters determining word order in Arabic are examined in greater detail and simple affirmative nominal sentences are assessed to see if they fall within these parameters. The occasional occurrence of indefinite nouns in the 'initial' position, which runs counter to the fundamental rule of definiteness as formulated in the *Kitāb*, is also accounted for. In the following section, the behaviour of the verb *kāna* is interpreted in the light of the rule of definiteness. Finally, a reorientation is suggested in the way I account for the occurrence of verbs in the 'initial' position even though they are traditionally considered '*nakira*'. The analysis of verbs as initial elements is shown to be an interesting offshoot of the present discussion. This chapter will be concluded with a brief summary.

1. Preliminary observations

Roughly speaking, the notion of definiteness is based on the distinction between referents that are particular and thus accessible to both the speaker and the hearer and those which are not. Allowing for cross-linguistic differences in expressing definiteness,[1] definite nouns are prototypically marked by determiners such definite article(s),[2] demonstratives and possessives, while indefinite nouns may be marked by indefinite marker(s) or by the very absence of such markers.

Criticism has often been levelled at the rather restrictive formal view of definiteness. English generic nouns are a classic example to argue against such view, because these nouns can hardly be bracketed together with the straightforward indefinites for the mere fact of lacking determiners. What is more the use of an indefinite marker does not necessarily mean that we are dealing with an indefinite noun, for instance the word 'tomorrow' or 'yesterday' in English are formally indefinite but functionally very specific and entirely dependent on the moment of speech. The following instances taken from C. Lyons

[1] For a typological study of the definite article and definiteness in general see (Krámský 1972: 73ff).

[2] Krámský (ibid. 187) states that all Slavic languages, except for Bulgarian and some Russian dialects, lack a definite article.

(1999: 2) well illustrate the lack of concordance with the complementary distribution of the English definite and indefinite markers:

- I bought *a car* this morning.
- I bought *the car* this morning.

When examining the instances above, two points emerge with clarity, the first of which is that 'a car' cannot be analysed as a simple indefinite because the speaker is clearly referring to a particular car. Second, the two instances unquestionably defy formal analysis of definiteness and establish the interlocutors' knowledge of and their acquaintance with the referent as the only determining factor. C. Lyons (ibid.) draws our attention to the fact that the speaker's knowledge of 'a car' is most probably not shared by the hearer while both the speaker and the hearer can readily identify 'the car'.

There are thus essential pragmatic and cognitive factors to be taken into account when dealing with definiteness, one of which is the concept of *identifiability*. *Identifiability* is argued to be the reason behind the general opposition to approaching definiteness as a syntactic category only. A systematic survey of linguistic research into definiteness reveals a preference to view it as a semantic or pragmatic affair (cf. Chesterman 1991; C. Lyons 1999: 274–5; I Givón 2001: 459). Basically, a nominal referent described in terms of *identifiability* is specifically recognised by both the speaker and listener as part of the speech situation at the moment of utterance.

The discussion so far raises a few subtle but essential points. The first point is that *identifiability* rather than definiteness is to be approached as a universal linguistic category that imperfectly and non-universally map on to the grammatical category of definiteness (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 84). In concrete terms this means that a nominal referent is definite when it is *identifiable*.

Second, the existence of a referent is taken for granted when assessing its *identifiability*. The crucial element in this respect is the speaker's assumption that identifiable referents are accessible to the listener because they have a certain mental presentation or trace in the hearer's mind which the speaker can invoke in a given speech situation (cf. Lambrech op. cit. 78; I Givón 2001: 459).

Third, definiteness has in the first place to do with the speaker's assessment of the listener's mental representation of referents and states of affairs. The following passage taken from Givón (op. cit. 459) should convey in a concise way what definiteness essentially is about:

> When speakers mark a referent in discourse as definite, using various anaphoric and/or definite grammatical devices, they aim to ground it into some pre-existing mental representation in the hearer's mind. Such grounding serves to establish a specific connection, in the mind of the hearer, between the definite referent's current text-location and its pre-existing mental trace.

Givón (ibid.) distinguishes three mental structures into which nominal referents are grounded by means of definite and/or anaphoric devices and which corresponds to three best known mental models within cognitive psychology (1) Mental model of the shared *current speech-situation* (working memory, current attention focus), (2) Mental model of permanent generic-lexical knowledge (permanent semantic memory) (3) Mental model of *the current text* (long-term episodic memory). Only the first two will be dealt with in more detail as the third type is less relevant for our present purpose given the fact that Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis is limited to simple utterances and their situational context.

In the mental model of the shared *current speech-situation*, grounding nominal referents to the current speech situation is according to Givón (ibid. 460) based on these referents being *deictically accessible* to the speech participants. This *deictic accessibility* may be expressed by means of the referent's identity with either speech participant, hence the use of personal pronouns as a grammatical marker, or else by the spatial or temporal proximity of the referent to the speech participants, in which case, demonstratives and adverbs of location and time are the grammatical markers used.

Within the Mental model of permanent *generic-lexical knowledge*, Givón (ibid. 461–2) ascribes the definiteness of the nominal referents to the fact that members of the same speech-community share the same lexicon. Here the speaker relies on the hearer's permanent semantic memory and 'presume nothing more than the standard precondition for all lexicalised communication' (ibid. 461). The 'global accessibility' of definite referents in this model correlates with the relevant social unit: the definiteness of 'the sun' in '*The sun* came out' stems from its accessibility to all humans, while 'the president' in '*the president* has resigned' is accessible to the hearer within a nation-state context and 'Daddy' in '*Daddy* is home' within the context of a family.[3]

[3] All three instances in this paragraph and the next one in the following paragraph are taken from Givón (op. cit. 461).

Another related case to this model is the associative use of referents as in 'She went into a *restaurant* and asked *the waiter* for *the menu*.' The definiteness of *the waiter* and *the menu* is due to the fact that they are inherently associated with restaurants. According to Lambrecht (1994: 91) the associative use of referents makes it possible for the listener to indirectly identify them as parts of an already established frame or schema.

As I embark next upon exploring the notion of definiteness in the *Kitāb*, I show that *identifiability* is crucial in determining the syntactic category of definiteness in Arabic and that the points raised in this section are not an uncharted territory for Sībawayhi.

2. Definiteness in the Kitāb

According to Sībawayhi, nouns in Arabic are conceived as being originally *nakira* 'indefinite'. They become *maʿrifa* 'definite' only at a later stage by means of the speech context or through grammatical devices such as the definite article and annexation. The chief plank on which the rule of definiteness rests is thus the primacy of indefiniteness as the unmarked state and the subordination of definiteness. This logical priority[4] of the indefinite is formulated by Sībawayhi (I: 16/5) as follows:

واعلم أن النكرة أخف عليهم من المعرفة وهي أشد تمكنا لأن النكرة أول ثم يدخل عليها ما تُعرف به.

> And you should know that the *nakira* is regarded lighter than the *maʿrifa* by the Arabs and more fully declinable, because indefiniteness ranks first, and only at a later stage is it prefixed by that which makes it known.

It should be noted that the knowledge the listener has of a referent, whether prior or contextual, and his ability to identify it is of paramount importance. This fact is confirmed and expanded by as-Sīrāfī (I: 163[b]–164[a]) as he states:

اعلم أن التعريف يتعلق بمعرفة المخاطب دون المتكلم وقد يذكر المتكلم ما يعرفه هو ولا يعرفه المخاطب فيكون منكورا كقولك الرجل لمخاطبه في داري رجل ولي بستان وعندي صديق لي وقد يجوز أن يكون المتكلم أيضا لا يعرف كقول الرجل لمخاطبه أنا في طلب غلام اشتريه ومنزل أكتريه ولا يكون قصده لشيء بعينه.

[4] For more on the importance of priority and primacy in Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis see Balbaaki (1979).

> You should know that definition is connected with the knowledge of the listener rather than the speaker's. The speaker might mention something known to him but not to the listener, in which case it is bound to be treated as indefinite, as in your saying 'In my house [is] a man', 'I have an orchard' and 'In my house [is] a friend of mine'. It might be the case that the speaker too lacks knowledge as when someone says to his listener 'I am looking for a slave to buy and a house to rent' while not intending something in particular.

So definiteness has much to do with the listener's knowledge of something as a distinguished entity from other things. Whether the speaker knows what he is talking about or not is not material, for the use of a definite noun necessarily calls for the listener's ability to identify the referent. Now the role of the listener has been established as the determining factor of definiteness, we may turn to the five definite classes distinguished by Sībawayhi (I 219/187):

> فالمعرفة خمسة أشياء الأسماء التي هي أعلام خاصة والمضاف إلى المعرفة إذا لم ترد معنى التنوين والألف واللام والأسماء المبهمة والإضمار.

> There are five definite classes which are proper names, the *muḍāf* 'annexed' to the definite when the speaker does not intend the meaning of *tanwīn*, the *ʾalif-lām*,[5] vague nouns and the *ʾiḍmār* 'pronouns'.

After enumerating the five classes, Sībawayhi moves on to look at each determiner in more detail so as to place it in the context of adjectival agreement, i.e. its ability to be qualified by the other classes and/or qualify other classes adjectively. I argue that Sībawayhi combines formal and functional aspects in his account as he simultaneously sets about clarifying the nature of the different types of definiteness associated with each of them, as shown below:

1. *Proper nouns* such as Zayd; ʿAmr and ʿAbdallāh. Sībawayhi posits that proper nouns are definite because they are particularised signs by means of which only one individual of a kind to the exclusion of the others is made known and identified: وإنما صار معرفة لأنه اسم وقع عليه يعرف به دون سائر أمته (I Sib 219/187)

[5] The term *ʾalif-lām* is used by Sībawayhi to refer to nouns made definite by means of prefixing the definite article *ʾalif-lām* to them. I shall stick to Sībawayhi's usage when discussing definite nouns bearing the *ʾalif-lām*.

2. the *muḍāf* 'annexed' to the definite when the speaker does not intend the meaning of *tanwīn*,[6] e.g., هذا أخوك 'This is your brother [independent]' and مررت بأبيك 'I passed by your father [oblique]' and the like. The annexed terms become definite by virtue of the *kāf* to which they are annexed and because the *kāf* is meant to single out a particular entity in itself to the exclusion of others: أن الكاف يراد بها الشيء بعينه دون سائر أمته (I Sib 219–20/187)
3. The *ʾalif-lām*[7] as in البعير 'the camel'; الرجل 'the man'; الفرس 'the horse' and the like. In all these cases the speaker reminds the listener of a man or an animal he had known before, and it is this particularising character of the *ʾalif-lām* that marks the difference between a definite noun with a prefixed *ʾalif-lām* and the indefinite.[8] Sībawayhi clarifies that when we say مررت برجل 'I passed by a man' we claim to have passed by an individual of the kind. In contrast, by prefixing the *ʾalif-lām* to it we can draw upon the listener's prior knowledge of the man: فإنما تذكره برجل قد عرفه فتقول الرجل الذي من أمره كذا وكذا ليتوهم[9] الذي كان عَهِده بما تذكره من أمره 'it is because you remind the listener of a man

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[6] This refers to the discussion in Sībawayhi (I 210–11/179–80) where active participles are shown to function as a noun in an 'improper' annexation construction such as such ضاربِك 'your striker' in مررت برجلٍ ضاربِك 'I passed by a man [oblique] your striker [oblique]'. Sībawayhi argues that ضاربِك is an indefinite adjectival qualifier which has the sense of the man's intention to strike you, as if he said مررت برجل ضاربٍ زيدًا 'I passed by a man, a striker [oblique—*tanwīn*] of Zayd [dependent—*tanwīn*]' (ibid.). Earlier in the *kitāb* we are told the Arabs remove the *nūn* or *tanwīn* from the participle for the sake of lightness but without losing the meaning of separation that prevents *ʾiḍāfa* 'annexation', so the active participle ضاربِك 'your striker' is a noun used as an alternative to the elided *tanwīn* and it behaves exactly as غلامُ عبدِ الله 'the slave of 'Abdillāh' in form but not in meaning or effect because the removal of the *tanwīn* and assignment of the oblique form to it does not change its meaning at all and does not make it definite (cf. I Sib 38–4/71).

[7] Traditionally, Arab grammarians distinguish between two types of definite article, namely *lām al-jins* 'generic article' and *lām al-ʿahd* 'article of familiarity'. Ibn al-ʾAnbārī, for instance, deals with the different kind of the definite article in Q 71 and states:'الرجل' أن سبيل الألف واللام أن يدخلا لتعريف الجنس، كقوله تعالى:(إن الإنسان لفي خسر) وكقولهم خير من المرأة' [...] أو لتعريف العهد، كقوله تعالى: (كما أرسلنا إلى فرعون رسولا فعصى الفرعون الرسول) أو يدخلا على شيء قد غلب عليه نعته فعُرف به، كقولك: الحارث، والعباس، والسماك، والدبران (II Inṣāf: 522).

[8] Although Generic nouns in English are pragmatically definite but syntactically indefinite, it is a language particular fact about Arabic that generic nouns are nearly always accompanied by the prefixed *lām al-jins* (the generic *lām*).

[9] For more on the term '*tawahhum*' see Baalbaki 1982.

he had known before so you say 'the man whose business is this and that' so that he can visualise someone known to him doing what you are mentioning about his business (I Sib 220/187).

4. Vague nouns 'demonstratives' such هذا 'this [mas.]'; هذان 'these two [mas]'; تلك 'that [fem.]'; أولئك 'those [mas.]' etc. (cf. I Sib 220/187 for more demonstratives).[10] Vague nouns are said to be definite because they become nouns of indication that point a particular individual out to the exclusion of others of its kind وإنما صارت معرفة لأنها صارت أسماء اشارة إلى الشيء دون سائر امته (I Sib 220/188). In other words, vague nouns are definite by dint of their deictic character.
5. Pronouns: [overt] pronouns are for instance هو 'he'; أنا 'I'; أنتم 'you – [mas. plur]' etc. and the [suffixed pronoun] *tā'* as in فعلتُ (I did); the *wāw* in فعلوا 'they did'; the *nūn* and *ʾalif* in فعلنا 'we did' etc. As far as covert pronouns are concerned, Sībawayhi (I: 220/188) speaks of الإضمار الذي ليست له علامة ظاهرة *ʾiḍmār* 'pronominalisation' without an explicit sign as in قد فعل ذلك 'He had done that'; the *kāf* in رأيتك 'I saw you'; the *ʾalif* and *nūn* in رأيتنا 'you saw us' and غلامنا 'our slave' etc. Sībawayhi argues that we only suppress a noun when we know that the listener has identified who or what we are talking about and that we mean something in particular: لأنك إنما تضمر اسما بعد ما تعلم أن من تحدِّث قد عرف من تعني أو ما تعني وأنك تريد شيئا بعينه (ibid.).

Taking the various definite classes into consideration, it is worth emphasising that a cut-off point in determining definiteness and indefiniteness will hold at all times; it is true that a definite entity may have a lower degree of *identifiability*, but never too low to be treated as indefinite. The discussion of the interrogative pronoun *man* 'who(m)' and its indefinite variant with inflection will help to make the distinction clear.

By analogy to the interrogative pronoun أي 'which', Sībawayhi points out that the inflected form of *man* differentiates between gender, number and case of the indefinite noun (I Sib 401–3/354–6):

[10] Cantarino (II 1974: 30) notes that although vague nouns are mostly used with spatial meaning only, the demonstrative pronouns are still used with the psychological standpoint in mind. In other words, هذا 'this' refers to something that is considered more important or more closely related to the person speaking, while ذلك 'that' and ذاك 'that' express a more remote attitude.

هذا باب من إذا كنت مستفهما عن نكرة اعلم أنك تثني من إذا قلت رأيت رجلين كما تثني أيا وذلك قولك رأيت رجلين فتقول منين [...] وأتاني رجلان فتقول منان وأتاني رجال فتقول منون [...] وإن قال رأيت امرأة قلت منه.

This is the chapter concerning *man* 'who (m)' when you enquire about an indefinite noun. You should know that you dualise *man* if you say 'I saw two men', in the same way as you dualise أيّا 'which of the two'. This is when you say 'I saw two men' and someone replies *man*ayn 'whom [dependent, m. dual] are the two men' [...] and 'Two men came to see me' to which the reply is *manān* 'Who [independent, mas. dual] are the two men?' and to 'Men came to see me' one replies *manūn* 'who [independent, mas. plur] are the men' [...] and if someone says 'I saw a woman' you reply *mana* 'who [dependant, fem. sing] is she'.

In the chapter following the discussion of the inflected *man*, Sībawayhi (I 403/356) refers to the difference with the other type of *man* in its use with definite nouns:

هذا باب ما لا يحسن فيه من كما يحسن فيما قبله وذلك أنه لا يجوز أن يقول الرجل رأيت عبد الله فتقول منا لأنه إذا ذكر عبد الله فإنما ذكر رجلا تعرفه بعينه أو رجلا أنت عنده ممن يعرفه بعينه فإنما تسأله على أنك ممن يعرفه بعينه إلا أنك لا تدري أالطويل هو أم القصير أم ابن زيد أم ابن عمرو فكرهوا أن يجرى هذا مجرى النكرة إذا كانا مفترقين وكذلك رأيته ورأيت الرجل لا يحسن لك أن تقول فيهما إلا من هو أو من الرجل.

This is the chapter where the usage of the inflected *man* is structurally incorrect because it is not permissible for someone to say 'I saw ʿAbdallāh' and you reply *manā* [dependent, m. sing] 'whom' because when he mentioned ʿAbdallāhi, he mentioned a man in particular you know personally or to whom you are among those who know him in particular. Therefore you should ask him as someone who knows the man in particular but you do not know if he is the short or the tall one; Zayd's son or ʿAmr's. This is because they dislike treating proper names as indefinite, for they are two different things. Likewise with regards to 'I saw him' and 'I saw the man', it is structurally incorrect to use anything but من هو 'who [-inflection] is he' or من الرجل 'who [-inflection] is the man'.

We might be uncertain about which ʿAbdallāhi the speaker means, but this uncertainty does not justify the use of *man* 'who(m)' which takes the inflection corresponding to the syntactic function of the person asked about, since the inflected form of *man* is exclusively used in reference to an indefinite noun or entity.

Before we move on to the next section, I should like to highlight the difference between three terms that keep recurring throughout our

discussion of definiteness and which might cause some confusion, i.e. *lubs* 'uncertainty', *nakira* 'unknown' and *mubham* 'vague'.

The term *lubs*[11] is a sign of communicative failure as the hearer fails to grasp the meaning intended by the speaker due to its obscurity and lack of clarity. A sentence such as كان حليمٌ أو رجلٌ 'A patient was' or 'A man was' (cf. I Sib 21/17) is disapproved as an utterance because it is not right and it misses its communicative point.

The term *nakira*, on the other hand, involves the hearer's ignorance of a particular nominal referent which makes it unknown to him at the moment of speech; while the term *mubham* means that something is vague and needs further specification in the sense that it is applicable to every nominal entity within the confines of the situational context. Vague nouns are called so not because they are unknown to the hearer but rather because they may be applied to point out every individual or thing. In other words, they are separable form the nominal referents they indicate hence their generality of application to every nominal referent that the speaker can point out for the hearer.

2.1. *Criteria of Adjectival Qualifiability*

Before entering upon a full-scale treatment of adjectival agreement in the five definite classes, it is worthwhile at this point to indicate two principles that codetermine the ability of a definite noun to be adjectively qualified. First, an adjectival qualifier must concord with its antecedent in definition, i.e. only a definite term can qualify another definite term in the same way as an indefinite term cannot be qualified but by another indefinite term والمعرفة لا توصف إلا بمعرفة كما أن النكرة لا توصف إلا بالنكرة (I Sib 220/188). Second, an adjectival qualifier may not be more particular than its antecedent: if a definite noun turns out to be insufficiently identifiable, the speaker may increase the degree of its *identifiability* but only by means of qualifier that is less particular or have an equal rank (I Sib 221/188).

We are invited to confine our attention to the fact that all five classes but one, i.e. pronouns, are 'qualifiable' and that the qualifying term must be definite (I Sib 220–4/188–91). This is no accident, given the syntactic and communicative consequences entailed (cf. for

[11] See also Reckendorf (1921: 273–4) where he discusses some instance of *lubs* and *iltibas* 'Zweideutigkeit'.

instance الرجل كبير ‘The man is tall’ and الرجل الكبير ‘The tall man’). In what follows, I shall deal with each class separately where the Arabic text of the *Kitāb* is quoted first and then followed by a corresponding explanatory translation. The page numbers of the quoted Arabic text will be indicated at the beginning of the English translation:

1. واعلم أن العَلَم الخاص من الأسماء يوصَف بثلاثة أشياء: بالمضاف إلى مثله وبالألف واللام وبالأسماء المبهمة فأما المضاف فنحو: مررتُ بزيدٍ أخيك والألف واللام نحو قولك: مررت بزيدٍ الطويلِ وما أشبه هذا من الإضافة والألف واللام وأما المبهمة فنحو: مررتُ بزيدٍ هذا وبعمرٍو ذاك.

Sībawayhi (I 220/188) tells us that *proper nouns* may be qualified adjectively by three things: (1) a noun annexed to that which has the rank of proper noun[12] as in مررت بزيدٍ أخيك ‘I passed by Zayd your brother’ (2) the *ʾalif-lām*, as in مررت بزيدٍ الطويلِ ‘I passed by the Zayd the tall’ (3) a vague noun as in مررت بزيدٍ هذا وبعمرٍو ذاك ‘I passed by this Zayd and that ʿAmr’.

2. والمضاف إلى المعرفة يوصف بثلاثة أشياء: بما أضيف كإضافته وبالألف واللام والأسماء المبهمة وذلك: مررتُ بصاحبِك أخي زيدٍ ومررتُ بصاحبِك الطويلِ ومررت بصاحبك هذا.

The *muḍāf to the definite* (I Sib 220/188) may be qualified adjectively by three things: (1) a noun similarly annexed to a definite term other than the *ʾalif-lām* as for example, مررت بصاحبِك أخي زيدٍ ‘I passed by your friend Zayd’s brother’[13] (2) the *ʾalif-lām* as in مررت بصاحبِك الطويلِ ‘I passed by your friend the tall’ (3) a vague noun as in مررت بصاحبِك هذا ‘I passed by this your friend’.

3. فأما الألف واللام فتوصف بالألف واللام وبما أضيف إلى الألف واللام لأن ما أضيف إلى الألف واللام بمنزلة الألف واللام فصار نعتًا كما صار المضاف إلى غير الألف واللام صفةً لما ليس

[12] Sībawayhi refers to all the nouns annexed to a definite noun other than the *ʾalif-lām* and which rank with proper nouns (see discussion below no. 3).

[13] Note that Reckendorf (1921: 65), for instance, says that that the relationship between ‘Zayd’ in ‘your brother’ in جاءني زيدٌ أخوك ‘Zayd your brother came to me’ is that of *badal* ‘apposition’, while that in جاءني أخوك زيدٌ ‘Your brother Zayd came to me’ is described as *ʿaṭf l-bayān* ‘explanatory coordination’.

فيه الألف واللام نحو مررتُ بزيد أخيك وذلك قولك: مررتُ بالجميل النبيل ومررتُ بالرجل ذي المال.

The *ʾalif-lām* (I 220–1/188) may adjectively be qualified by (1) the *ʾalif-lām*, as for example, مررت بالجميل النبيل 'I passed by the handsome the noble', (2) that which is annexed to the *ʾalif-lām*, as for example, مررت بالرجل ذي المال 'I passed by the man the possessor of wealth' (I Sib 220/188). The latter case is possible because a noun annexed to the *ʾalif-lām* ranks with the *ʾalif-lām* and therefore can function as an adjectival qualifier in the same way as a definite noun, annexed to a definite other than the *ʾalif-lām*, realises the function of an adjectival qualifier of a definite noun that does not bear the *ʾalif-lām* as for example, مررتُ بزيد أخيك 'I passed by Zayd your brother'.

4. واعلم أن المبهمة توصَف بالأسماء التي فيها الألف واللام والصفات التي فيها الألف واللام جميعًا. وإنما وُصفتْ بالأسماء التي فيها الألف واللام لأنها والمبهمة كشيء واحد والصفات التي فيها الألف واللام هي في هذا الموضع بمنزلة الأسماء وليست بمنزلة الصفات في زيد وعمرو إذا قلتَ مررتُ بزيدٍ الطويلِ لأني لا أريد أن أجعل هذا اسمًا خاصًا ولا صفةً له يُعرف بها وكأنك أردت أن تقول مررت بالرجل ولكنك إنما ذكرت هذا لتقرّب به الشيء وتشير إليه. ويدلّك على ذلك أنك لا تقول: مررتُ بهذين الطويل والقصير وأنت تريد أن تجعله من الاسم الأول بمنزلة هذا الرجل ولا تقول: مررتُ بهذا ذي المال كما قلت: مررتُ بزيدٍ ذي المال.

Sībawayhi (I 221/189) asserts that *vague nouns* 'demonstrative nouns' may be modified by the *ʾalif-lām* and by epithets bearing the *ʾalif-lām*, i.e. by all definite common nouns and epithets bearing the *ʾalif-lām*. However, it is important to realise that the syntactic relation under discussion is appositional rather than adjectival. When vague nouns are modified by common nouns bearing the *ʾalif-lām*, the two words form one appositional term. In case of epithets bearing the *ʾalif-lām*, they rank likewise with nouns rather than with adjectival qualifiers of Zayd and ʿAmr when one says 'I passed by Zayd the tall'. Vague noun هذا 'this' is mentioned to indicate the proximity of something and to point it out. The proof is that no one says 'I passed by these two, the tall and the short' while intending to make the epithets qualify the first noun [i.e. vague noun] as does 'man' in 'this man' nor does he say 'I passed by this, possessor of wealth' in the same way as someone can say 'I passed by Zayd, the possessor of wealth'. This point if further fine-tuned by Sībawayhi as he observes (I Sib 221/188–9):

وإنما منع هذا أن يكون صفة للطويل والرجل أن المخبِر أراد أن يقرّب به شيئا ويشير إليه لتعرفه بقلبك وبعينك دون سائر الأشياء. وإذا قال الطويل فإنما يريد أن يعرّفك شيئًا بقلبك ولا يريد أن يعرّفكه بعينك فلذلك صار هذا يُنعت بالطويل ولا يُنعت الطويل بهذا لأنه صار أخصَّ من الطويل حين أراد أن يعرّفه شيئا بمعرفة العين ومعرفة القلب. وإذا قال الطويل فإنما عرّفه شيئًا بقلبه دون عينه فصار ما اجتمع فيه شيئان أخصّ.

'This' is barred from functioning as an adjectival qualifier of 'the tall' and 'the man' because the speaker wanted it as a means to bring something closer and point to it so as to make it known to you mentally as well as visually to the exclusion of all other things. When he says 'the tall', the speaker wants to make something known to you mentally without making it known visually. That is why 'this' is adjectivally qualifiable by 'the tall' but 'the tall' cannot be qualified by 'this' for 'this' has become more particular when the speaker wanted to make something known to you visually as well as mentally. In contrast, when he says 'the tall' the speaker makes it mentally known to the listener but not visually. So what combines two things is more particular.

This passage provides us with a strong hint about the highly particular nature of vague nouns that combines two ways of knowing things, i.e. mentally and visually. In other words, the referent pointed out by a vague noun must be present in the speech situation so that the speaker can indicate its spatial proximity to the hearer. This observation will prove decisive when we come to ranking the five definite classes.

5. واعلم أن المضمر لا يكون موصوفًا، من قِبل أنك إنما تضمِر حين ترى أن المحدَّث قد عرف مَن تعني، ولكن لها أسماء تُعطَف عليها، تعمّ وتؤكد، وليست صفة؛ لأن الصفة تحلية نحو الطويل، أو قرابة نحو أخيك وصاحبك وما أشبه ذلك، أو نحو الأسماء المبهمة، ولكنها معطوفة على الاسم تجري مجراه، فلذلك قال النحويون صفة. وذلك قولك: مررت بهم كلهم، أي لم أدعْ منهم أحدًا، ويجيء توكيدًا كقولك: لم يبق منهم مُخبّر وقال بقي منهم. ومثله أيضًا: مررتُ بهم أجمعين أكتعين، ومررتُ بهم جُمَعَ كُتَع، ومررتُ بهم أجمعَ أكتعَ، ومررتُ بهم جميعهم. فهكذا هذا وما أشبه ومنه مررتُ به نفسِه ومعناه مررتُ به بعينه.

Muḍmars 'pronouns' are the final definite class we are to deal with. Sībawayhi asserts that this class cannot be qualifed because the speaker only suppresses a noun when he is sure that the listener exactly knows who or what is referred to. However, there is a [restricted] group of nouns with which pronouns are coordinated and whose function is to generalise and corroborate but not qualify them adjectively. This is because pronouns cannot function as an adjectival qualifier that may denote a feature as 'tall', a relationship as 'your brother', 'your friend'

etc. or resembles vague nouns but they may be coordinated with nouns and behave syntactically like them. It is worth noting that the term *ṣifa* given to them by the *naḥwiyyūn* does not denote an adjectival quality but designate the meaning of generalisation and corroboration these nouns confer on pronouns. In other words, these nouns are used in apposition to pronouns to which they refer by means of an appropriate personal suffix. Therefore 'I passed by them all' and all other variants expressing the same idea as in 'I passed by them, all of them' confer a generalising meaning that the speaker did not miss any one out. The corroborative meaning is made clear in the expression 'No informant remained, and he said in fact some did'.

Among the five definite classes discussed so far, one class has been the bone of contention among Arab grammarians concerning its rank on the scale of definiteness, viz. proper nouns. In what follows, a more detailed discussion of the main features of proper nouns aims to reveal evidence necessary to appreciate the traditional discussion on ranking proper nouns.

2.2. *Proper Nouns*

The first general point that should be made is that proper names in most languages such as English are not necessarily accompanied by determiners to grammaticalise their definiteness. However, there are languages such as Albanian and Modern Greek, where proper nouns do take a definite article, e.g., *ho Georgos* 'George' in Greek (Lyons 1999: 121–4). Further, it will emerge from the discussion below that this pattern is liable to disruption, as determiners are occasionally employed to achieve a specific communicative purpose which necessitates the specifying or recategorising of proper nouns (cf. Lyons 1977: 177–229; C. Lyons 1999: 21–2; 121–4 for a more detailed discussion of proper nouns).

In the previous sections we have come to the conclusion that proper nouns in Arabic are highly identifiable and are therefore considered definite because they usually refer to only one individual of a kind or prototype it, as illustrated below (I Sib 263/224–5):

إذا قلت هذا زيدٌ فزيدٌ اسم لمعنى قولك هذا الرجل إذا أردت شيئا بعينه قد عرفه المخاطب بحليته أو بأمر قد بلغه عنه قد أختص به دون من يعرف فكأنك إذا قلت هذا زيدٌ قلت هذا الرجل الذي من حليته ومن أمره كذا وكذا بعينه فاختص هذا المعنى باسم علم يلزم هذا المعنى.

> And when you say 'This [is] Zayd*un*' Zayd is then a meaningful noun equivalent to 'this man', intending thus an entity itself that is known to the listener in himself or by virtue of something heard about him which distinguishes him from any other person the listener knows. So when you say 'This [is] Zayd*un*' it is as if you said 'This man whose description is such and such and whose business is precisely so and so. The speaker assigns thus a particular noun to what necessarily pertains to this meaning.

If entities identified as unique dispense with the *ʾalif-lām*, how can we then account for the formal indefiniteness of the definite proper nouns, and the fact the *ʾalif-lām* becomes a necessary definiteness marker of some of them? In order to demonstrate which proper nouns do or do not inherently need the *ʾalif-lām*, it is necessary to show what defining factors remain constant. Onto the answer to this question, I graft elements which are not necessarily new but are often overlooked as interesting factors in the analysis of proper nouns.

One of the illustrative examples is the word *šamsun* 'sun'. In dealing with surnames and nicknames, Sībawayhi points out that although *šamsun* is a ordinary indefinite noun in Arabic that needs the *ʾalif-lām* to mark its definiteness, in some cases it is still treated as a definite noun by itself, i.e. without the *ʾalif-lām* as shown below (II Sib 49/47):

> ليس عربي يقول هذه شمسٌ فيجعلها معرفة إلا أن يُدخل فيها ألفا ولاما فإذا قال عبدُ شمسَ صارت معرفة لأنه شيئا بعينه فلا يستقيم أن يكون ما أضفت اليه نكرة.

> No Arab would say هذه شمسٌ 'This [is] sun' and makes *šamsun* definite without prefixing the *ʾalif-lām* to it. However, when he says عبدُ شمسَ '[the] sun-worshipper', *šamsun* becomes definite because the name denotes something in itself and it would not be *mustaqīm* that the element to which the noun is annexed be indefinite.

The line of thought pursued in the discussion is rather difficult to follow, as Sībawayhi is merely stating facts about the definite status of *šamsun* without any further explanation as to why the *ʾalif-lām* is necessarily prefixed to the *šamsun* in one case but not in another. Being totally unaware of the fact that *šamsun* was already formally definite, as-Sīrāfī (327[a]) resorts to semantic arguments when raising the question as how to justify prefixing the *ʾalif-lām* to *šamsun* notwithstanding its uniqueness:[14]

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[14] As-Sīrāfī is hinting at the fact that unique terms such as *šamsun* are usually disassociated from the *ʾalif-lām*.

فإن قال قائل فلما احوجنا إلى تعريف الشمس بالألف واللام ولا شمس غيرها في الدنيا، قيل له قد يسمى ضوء الشمس شمسا كقول القائل لا تقعد في الشمس وإنما يريد ضؤها وتقول شمس البصرة أحر من شمس الكوفة وجرم الشمس واحد وإنما تريد ضؤها.

> If someone wonders why do we need to define the sun by means of the *ʾalif-lām* while there is no other sun in the world, the answer would be that the sun light could be called sun as in 'Do not sit in the sun' and what he intends is its light only and you might say 'the sun of Baṣra is hotter than the sun of Kūfa' while the star of sun is one; but by which you actually intend its light.

As-Sīrāfī and possibly other grammarians are clearly barking up the wrong tree, for the apparent anomaly can be accounted for without the need of splitting hairs. The *tanwīn*[15] on *šamsun* is usually explained as a survival of the old Semitic -m/-n suffix, which was a definite article. In his discussion of the so-called '*nunation*' and '*mimation*', Krámský (1972: 148 n. 63) provides the answer to this question:

> The so-called 'nunation' or 'mimation' is a specific feature of Semitic languages. It consists of the ending *-m*(*a*) or, in other languages, *-n*(*a*/*i*) added to the forms of the status rectus. This ending seems to have originally a determinative function of a certain definite article (cf. J. Kuryłowicz, 'La mimation et l'article en arabe', *Archiv orientální* XVIII, 1/2 [1950]) […] Later however, the determinative function of the mimation/nunation became extinct […] With regard to the obliteration of the determinative function of mimation/nunation Old Arabic and Southern Peripheral developed a new definite article so that the forms with mimation/nunation began to be regarded as indefinite. At the same time mimation/nunation was impossible in status constructus and pronominalis. Thus the rule developed according to which any noun which is in any way determined (by article, or by another noun, or by a possessibe pronoun) has no mimation/nunation whereas any noun not determined in such a way possesses it.

Lane (I.IV 1507) ascribes the definiteness of *šamsun* without the definite article in عبدُ شمسَ '[the] worshipper of [the] Sun' to the fact that *šamsun* used to refer to the daytime star or the luminous object that

[15] *Tanwīn* in Arabic is in the first place a marker of an inflected and fully declinable noun, and only in one of its secondary functions a marker of indefiniteness. Besides the *Tanwīn at-tamakkun* 'declinability' and *tanwīn at-tankīr* 'indefinition', there is for instance *tanwīn al-muqābala* 'correspondence', *tanwīn at-tarannum* 'trilling', etc. for further discussion see for instance Wright (1967: I 235; II 390) and Carter (1981: 19–22).

some Arabs used to worship. The imperfect declension is the result of the term being either a determinate female noun or a female proper noun altered from الشمس 'the sun'. Additionally, a poet is quoted by Lane (ibid.) swearing by the sun كلا وشمسَ لنخضبنهم دما 'Nay verily, by Sun, we will assuredly dye them with blood.'

The definite article in *šamsun* might be contrasted here with the use of the inseparable definite article in النجم 'the star'. The indefinite form of النجم 'the star' is usually used to refer to any star, but it acquires the rank of a proper noun and is predominantly applied to الثريا 'Pleiades' when it inseparably bears the *ʾalif-lām* (cf. discussion in I Sib 265/227).[16] What emerges from the data so far is that the definite article becomes inseparably prefixed to *šamsun* 'sun' to mark a new linguistic and social development reflected in *šamsun* losing its original status as a proper noun of a specific idol and acquiring the rank of a common noun treated as a proper noun that denotes prevalence of application to a large star in the sky that gives heat and light.

Surprisingly some proper names lose their particularising character when they are inseparably accompanied by the definite article. This occurs once the proper name ceases to behave as such and acquires the features of a generic noun. As a consequence, it restores its status as an epithet to which the noun originally alludes, e.g., *al*-Ḥāriṯ 'a plougher or tiller of land' and *al*-ʿAbbās 'a man having a hateful face; the lion'. In this case, *al*-Ḥāriṯ and *al*-ʿAbbās are epithets applied to a class whose members are not necessarily so named, but to whom the specific characteristics denoted by the two epithets are attributed.[17]

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[16] Cf. discussion in Howell (I.I 1986: 14–6) where he states that النجم 'the star' refers to every asterism known to the speaker or listener but is predominantly applied to الثريا 'Pleiades'. Other instances are الكتاب 'the Book' and المدينة 'the City' which may refer to every book or city but are prevalently applied to *Kitāb Sībawayhi* and to *Mecca* respectively.

[17] A comparable case is found in the chapter dealing with proper nouns used generically (I Sib 263–5/224–6) which, unlike Zayd, are applicable to every member of a class and not only to one individual, e.g., أبو الحارث and أسامة to refer to every lion and أبو الحصين, ثعالة and سمسم to every fox (cf. the name Reynard the Fox in English). Sībawayhi argues that هذا أبو الحارث 'This [is] Abū l-Ḥāriṯ', is used as a generic noun intending 'This is the lion' i.e. this whose name I heard of or this of whose alike I know. In other words, the speaker does not intend to point to a specific entity already known to the listener from prior knowledge in the same way as Zayd is known to him.

Sībawayhi (I, 267/ 228) deals with this issue and acknowledges his master al-Ḫalīl as his informant:

> وزعم الخليل إنما منعهم أن يدخلوا في هذه الأسماء الألف واللام أنهم لم يجعلوا الرجل الذي سُمّي بزيد من أمة كل واحد منها يلزمه هذا الاسم ولكنهم جعلوه سُمّي به خاصا وزعم الخليل أن الذين قالوا الحارث والحسن والعباس إنما أرادوا أن يجعلوا الرجل هو الشيء بعينه ولم يجعلوه سُمّي به ولكنهم جعلوه كأنه وصف له غلب عليه ومن قال حارثٌ وعباس فهو يجريه مجرى زيد وأما ما لزمه الألف واللام فلم يسقطا منه فإنما جعل الشيء الذي يلزمه ما يلزم كل واحد من أمته.
>
> Al-Ḫalīl claims that these names [sc.ʿAmr, Zayd] do not take the definite article as they did not make the man called Zayd one of a class so named, but they used it as a name given to him specifically. Al-Ḫalīl also claims that those who say al-Ḥāriṯ (the ground tiller), al-Ḥasan (the handsome) and al-ʿAbbās (the stern) intend to identify the man with one of these characteristics, not to use them as his proper name but as if it was a prevalent attribute of the man. Those who say Ḥāriṯ and ʿAbbās, treat them as Zayd [sc. as proper nouns], while those who prefix the *ʾalif-lām* to the noun without ever dropping it, intend to attribute to the man what is attributed to each one of his class.

It is clear that Sībawayhi wishes to bring home that whether to retain or suppress the definite article in this particular case is not a trivial detail; the definite article prefixed to the proper noun is paramount to convey a meaning that cannot possibly be obtained otherwise.

The passages discussed so far might provide us with the answer to the question posed by Carter (1981: 261 point 11.722 n1) as to whether the Arabs regarded singular nouns such as *al-muʿtazila* (the collective name for a hyper-rationalist school of theology) or *al-qadariyya* (another school of theology that denied free will) as generic proper names or as a variety of the personal proper name. It seems doubtful that *al-muʿtazila* and *al-qadariyya* would be treated as personal proper names that are prevalently applied to one group (cf. the sun, the star). These names are used generically to refer to a group of theologians with a predominant quality, viz. hyper-rationalistic theological

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For Sībawayhi, the reason behind endowing the lion with a specific noun applicable to the whole class of lions, is that the generic term أسد 'lion' shows the same behaviour as the indefinite and indeterminate رجل 'man' (see discussion above). Hence, the need for 'something made mentally specific' (cf. Carter 1981: 260) that is applicable to each member of the class of lions.

view, just as al-Ḥasan (the handsome) and al-ʿAbbās (the stern) are employed to point to a man with one of these characteristics as his prevalent attribute, and not as his proper name.

Context is another crucial factor in the present discussion and it might be useful to make some general notes on contextual factors and take up *deixis*[18] and the speech situation as a further point.

An entity is made accessible either by the familiarity of the speech participants with it or from the environment and circumstances surrounding it. The *deictic accessibility* of definite entities (cf. for instance personal pronouns, demonstratives, spatial and temporal qualifiers) is the result of their spatiotemporal proximity 'the here and now', their visibility or identity with either the speaker or the listener involved in a speech situation. (I Givón 2001: 460). The speech situation in its turn is usually employed as a point of reference that makes the present moment the deictic centre for time, the present spot the deictic centre for space, and the speaker and listener the deictic centre for person (Comrie 1985: 14–6). Having said this, the context might provide other deictic centres, e.g., the verb *come* that usually denotes an action towards the speaker or listener (ibid. 16).

The context shows that a proper noun designates more often than not a specific person. This is supported by the presence of a social deictic element contained in proper names that the speaker aims to convey by focusing the listener's attention on the referent within a specific speech situation. Sībawayhi (I, 263/225) expands on this topic as he underlines the fact that uniqueness of reference, as an idiosyncratic feature of definiteness, is contingent on context:

> إذا قلت هذا الرجل فقد يكون أن تعنى كماله ويكون أن تقول هذا الرجل وأن تريد كل ذكر تكلم ومشى على رجلين فهو رجل فإذا أراد أن يخلّص ذلك المعنى ويختصه ليعرف من تعنى بعينه وأمره قال زيدٌ ونحوه.

> When you say 'This [is] the man' you may intend his bodily vigour. You might also say 'This [is] the man', intending that every male who speaks and walks on two legs, is a man,[19] and if he wants to render the meaning clear and specific so that he may know who you exactly mean, he will say Zayd or the like.

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[18] The Greek word *deixis*, which originally means 'pointing' or 'showing', stands for 'identification by pointing' in modern linguistics (Lyons 1991: 166).

[19] Sībawayhi is obviously making a reference to *lām al-jins* (the generic *lām*), a term never used in the *Kitāb*.

This passage shows that the difference between two definite classes is worked out from the context and that accordingly a distinction is made between the various meanings conveyed by *ʾalif-lām* and the specific meaning intended by the speaker when using a proper name.

Now I shall turn to one of the chapters in the *Kitāb* (I Sib 264/225), in which I point out the presence of subtle hints to *deictic accessibility* as an underlying principle in Sībawayhi's discussion of proper nouns:[20]

> وإنما منع الأسد وما أشبهه أن يكون له اسم معناه معنى زيد أن الأسد وما أشبهها ليست بأشياء ثابتة مقيمة مع الناس فيحتاجوا إلى أسماء يعرفون بها بعضهم من بعض ولا تحفظ حلاها كحفظ ما يثبت مع الناس ويقتنونه ويتخذونه ألا تراهم قد اختصوا الخيل والإبل والغنم والكلاب وما ثبت معهم واتخذوه بأسماء كزيد وعمرو .
>
> The lion and the like are not allowed to have a proper name with a meaning similar to Zayd's, as the lion and the like are not permanent entities staying with people that would need a proper noun to be distinguished from each other, neither are their attributes remembered as those of what people own and domesticate. Do not you see that horses, camels, sheep, dogs, and other permanent [i.e. domesticated] entities are given proper names just like Zayd and ʿAmr.

The chief interest in this paragraph lies not only in the importance of spatial proximity as a deictic element, but also in the permanence of entities and personal traits which vindicate the use of proper nouns in the first place. Putting together the various elements discussed so far, I argue that *identifiability* resulting from 'social deixis', which I extend[21] to cover spatial and temporal proximity, visibility, permanence of entities and personal traits, is the *raison d'être* for using proper nouns.

It should be emphasised that the criterion of permanence does not necessarily presuppose immobility, for nouns indicate a certain mode of permanence and stability, even though the entity itself is mobile

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[20] The correlation between proper nouns and spatial proximity might be an allusion to Sībawayhi's statement (I: 284/245) that spatial proximity is more fully declinable than remoteness and therefore one cannot say إن بعدك زيد 'Verily far off from you [is] Zayd' but you can say إن قربك زيد 'Verily, close to you [is] Zayd'.

[21] This term, which I adapt and expand its application, is originally used by Siewierska (2004: 214–5). She points out that the lexical encoding of social deixis is expressed by means of titles, kinship terms, first names, surnames, nicknames, and the combinations of these.

(Maritain 1937: 54). This stability does not indicate the static or immobile state of the entity per se, but rather the stability of its essence and nature, e.g. time and movements as such will always keep their nature, i.e. time and movement respectively (ibid.).

Permanence of essence or nature is the argument used by Sībawayhi to justify the definiteness of geographical names and the comparison drawn between أبانان 'two mountains' and زيدان 'two zayds' is thought-provoking. As set out above زيد 'Zayd' is definite, unlike the indefinite أبان 'a mountain' whose definiteness should be marked by the *ʾalif-lām* or any other determiner.

When proper nouns are made dual or plural, they lose their specific character and become applicable to each member of a whole class so named, in which case their definiteness must be grammaticalised by means of the *ʾalif-lām* or other determiners as the *Kitāb* states (I Sib 268/229):

> فإن قلت هذان زيدان منطلقان وهذان عمران منطلقان لم يكن هذا الكلام الا نكرة من قبل انك جعلته من امة كل رجل منها زيد وعمرو وليس واحد منهما [....] الا ترى انك تقول هذا زيد من الزيدين أي هذا واحد من الزيدين فصار كقولك هذا رجل من الرجال.
>
> If you say 'These [are] two departing Zayds' and 'These [are] two departing ʿAmrs' then this utterance [i.e. two Zayds and ʿAmrs] can not be but indefinite, since you make it a member of a class in which every man is Zayd and ʿAmr and not only one of a kind [...] Do not you see that you may say هذا زيد من الزيدين 'This [is] a certain Zayd' intending this is one of the Zayds, in which case it becomes similar to your saying هذا رجل من الرجال 'This [is] a certain man'.

The definite article and possibly other determiners become indispensable, if the same proper name, e.g. Zayd, is shared by a number of persons so named. Conversely, if we speak of two mountaintops or a mountain range, no definite article is needed to indicate the definiteness of the dualized or pluralized form (I Sib 268/229):

> وإنما فرقوا بين أبانين وعرفات وبين زيدَين وزيدينَ من قبل أنهم لم يجعلوا التثنية والجمع علما لرجلين ولا لرجال بأعيانهم وجعلوا الاسم الواحد علما لشيء بعينه كأنهم قالوا إذا قلنا ائت بزيد فقد قلنا هات هذا الشخص الذي نشير لك إليه ولم يقولوا إذا قلنا جاء زيدان فإنما نعني شخصين بأعيانهما قد عُرفا قبل ذلك وأثبتا ولكنهم قالوا إذا قلنا جاء زيد بن فلان فزيد بن فلان فإنما نعني

شيئين بأعيانهما فهكذا تقول إذا اردت أن تخبر عن معروفين وإذا قالوا هذان أبانان وهؤلاء عرفات فإنما أرادوا شيأ او شيئين بأعيانهما اللذين نشير لك إليهما.

> Indeed, they made a distinction between *ʾAbānayn* and *ʿArafāt* on the one hand, and the two Zayds and Zayds [plural] on the other, for they did not use the dual and plural forms [sc. of Zayd] as proper nouns for two specific men or more, while they use the singular form as a proper noun for a specific individual. It is as if they [sc. the Arabs] confirmed that by uttering 'Bring us Zayd' they mean 'bring us the person we are pointing out for you' but they did not say that by uttering 'Two Zayds came' they mean two specific persons known to us from a prior knowledge and whose identity is established. However, they confirmed that by saying 'Zayd, the son of such and such and Zayd, the son of such and such came' they intend two specific individuals, as if they wanted to tell us about two previously known persons; but if they say 'These two [are] *ʾAbānayn*' and 'Those [are] *ʿArafāt*' then they intend one or two specific things to which we are pointing out for you.

This point is further demonstrated by Sībawayhi in the beginning of his *Ktīāb* (I 16/12) where he states that spatial qualifiers are closer to humans than temporal ones, as the former are endowed with proper names such as Mecca and Oman etc. Moreover, they have their own specific proportion or determined measures that are not found in other places or contained in them such as mountains, valleys, and seas. What is more, unlike time, places are material entities فالأماكن إلى الأناسى ونحوهم أقرب ألا ترى أنهم يختصونها بأسماء كزيد وعمرو في قولهم مكةُ وعمانُ ونحوهما ويكون فيها خلق لا تكون لكل مكان ولا فيه الجبل والوادي والبحر والدهر ليس كذلك والأماكن لها جثة.

Sībawayhi (I, 268/229) tell us that the permanent character of mountains and places, unlike man and beast, account for them being experienced as unique and make them eligible to be treated on the same footing as proper nouns:

لأنهم جعلوا أبانين اسما لهما يعرفان به وليس هذا في الأناسي ولا في الدواب إنما يكون هذا في الأماكن والجبال وما أشبه ذلك من قبل أن الأماكن والجبال أشياء لا تزول.

> Because they made [Mt.] *ʾAbānayn* a noun for them to be known by it. However, this cannot be applied to people nor animals but only to places, mountains, and the like because places and mountains are permanent things.

To conclude, I sum up the main features of proper nouns: (1) they are definite in themselves and not by virtue of something affecting

them or that which follows them.[22] Far from being pedantic Sībawayhi (I Sib 309/268) reiterates this idea when he provides the following proof: ومما يدلك على أنه ليس بمنزلة الألف واللام أنه معرفة بنفسه لا بشيء دخل فيه ولا بما بعده. The *ʾalif-lām* cannot be put on the same footing as proper nouns, since the definiteness of the latter is not ascribed to anything affecting it directly or indirectly. (2) When the *ʾalif-lām* is attached to a proper noun, it causes the latter to lose its distinctive feature of an individual, while a common noun may acquire the status of a proper noun when inseparably prefixed with the *ʾalif-lām*, in which case it denotes prevalence of application (3) According to Sībawayhi's master al-Ḫalīl (I Sib 223/190), proper nouns may appear only in apposition with the nouns with which they are coordinated: واعلم أن العلم الخاص من الأسماء لا يكون صفة لأنه ليس بحلية ولا قرابة ولا مبهم، ولكنه يكون معطوفًا على الاسم كعطف أجمعين وهذا قول الخليل رحمه الله، وزعم أنه من أجل ذلك قال يا أيها الرجل زيدٌ أقبلْ. That is to say, proper nouns cannot possibly be used as an adjectival qualifier but only in apposition to the nouns coordinated to them as in يا أيها الرجل زيدٌ أقبلْ 'You man, Zayd, come here' for they neither denote a feature, a relationship or something vague.

Far from being a pedantic way of explanation, Sībawayhi reminds us that his purpose is primarily to elucidate different kinds of factors that control the correct use of the *ʾalif-lām* with common nouns and proper names as shown in the passage below (I Sib 267/228):

> فإن كان عربيا نعرفه ولا نعرف الذي اشتق منه فإنما ذاك لأنا جهلنا ما علم غيرنا أو يكون الآخر لم يصل اليه علم وصل إلى الأول المسمى.
>
> If it is a [well-formed] Arabic noun which we know but are ignorant of its derivation, it is only because we are ignorant of what others know or else because the most recent [users] did not attain the knowledge of their predecessors.

2.3. *Hierarchy of definiteness*

In this section, I shall go one stage further in the analysis of Sībawayhi's treatment of definiteness and argue that a distinction of the five definite

[22] Sībawayhi is clearly hinting at the *muḍāf* 'annexed': لأن المضاف إنما يكون معرفة ونكرة بالمضاف إليه 'the *muḍāf* 'annexed' is made definite or indefinite depending on the term to which it is annexed' (II 49/46).

classes is based on a kind of hierarchy of definiteness.[23] The hierarchical order will be shown to relate more precisely the syntactic behaviour and degree of adjectival qualifiability of each category to its corresponding definite nature.

I should like to emphasise that Sībawayhi does not draw up a list explicitly ranking the definite classes in order. And yet in the light of what the *Kitāb* mentions about them and the degree of their *identifiability*,[24] the following tentative conclusions may be advanced. These conclusions are based on the bedrock principle that the class which does not need qualification has a higher degree of *identifiability* and that the speaker should always begin with what is more particular and thus more identifiable فإنما ينبغي لك ان تبدأ به[25] وإن لم تكتف بذلك زدت من المعرفة ما يزاد به معرفة.

For Sībawayhi, pronouns top the list of definiteness in Arabic. They enjoy the highest degree of *identifiability* simply because suppression of nouns necessitates the listener's explicit and exact knowledge of what or who the speaker means. It is this certain knowledge that renders naming the person to whom the pronoun refers redundant and makes its suppression allowable. The important point here is that pronouns cannot be qualified adjectivally and are only coordinated with certain nouns that provide the meaning of generalisation and corroboration.

Vague nouns are argued to rank second on the list of definiteness. On the one hand, their non adjectival qualifiability indicates that they cannot be made more identifiable than they are, because they themselves combine two ways of knowing and are thus employed to make the entities pointed out known mentally and visually to the exclusion of all the other things. On the other hand, the appositional relationship they have with the nouns following them has to do with their

[23] I would like to make a reference to Lambrecht's Topic Scale of Acceptability which shows some kind of affinity with Sībawayhi's approach to the different classes of definiteness, especially with regard to the mental effort involved in determining the position of elements on both scales. Allowing for a certain amount of cross-linguistic variation, Lambrecht measures the degree of pragmatic well-formedness of a sentence containing a topic expression by the position of the topic referent on the following scale: THE TOPIC ACCEPTABILITY SCALE: beginning with *Active Topics* as most acceptable and *Brand-new Unanchored* as least acceptable, and in between come the so called *accessible topics; Unused; Brand-new* and *Anchored Brand-new*. Passing them in order, each requires a higher mental effort of the listener (Lambrecht 1994: 164).

[24] According to Carter (1981: 251 point 11.711 n. 1), the hierarchy of definite elements was developed by the time of al-Mubarrad and later grammarians.

[25] Sībawayhi is referring to what is more particular.

vague nature and generality of application rather than with the need to increase the degree of their *identifiability*.

Proper nouns are ranked third after the vague nouns due to their susceptibility to indefiniteness. Once they lose their particularity and specificity, they are recategorised as common nouns and the *ʾalif-lām* is necessarily prefixed to them as in هذا الزيد أشرف من ذلك الزيد 'This Zayd [is] more noble than that Zayd'[26] i.e. when one or two individuals are picked out from a number of people each named Zayd.

There is yet one point regarding proper nouns that should be made clear, namely that although they are said to be qualifiable by vague nouns as in هذا زيد 'this Zayd', this should not be taken to mean that هذا 'this' is less particular than Zayd. We have seen that the *ʾalif-lām* is also coordinated with vague nouns in appositional relationship, but it is out of question that the *ʾalif-lām* makes vague nouns more particular. As mentioned earlier, vague nouns are applicable to every nominal referent which they make more particular, and not vice versa, because of the two ways of knowing they combine. Moreover, they have an appositive rather than qualificative relationship with the definite nouns, with which they are coordinated.

The *ʾalif-lām* appears bottom of the list as the vaguest class of definite nouns and is said to border on indefinite nouns. To this effect Sībawayhi states instances with definite nouns bearing the *ʾalif-lām* and ranks them with their indefinite counterparts, as for example, هذا العالم حق العالم 'This scholar [is] a thorough *scholar* [+ the *ʾalif-lām*]' which he ranks with هذا عالم حق عالم 'This [is] a thorough *scholar* [– the *ʾalif-lām*]' (I Sib 224/191). The status of the *ʾalif-lām* as discussed by Sībawayhi might become more clear after considering the following paragraph taken from C. Lyons (1999: 6) where he succinctly describes the comparable position of the English definite article:

> *The* is a 'grammatical word' with no descriptive lexical content, and therefore contains nothing which can itself identify a referent. The most it can do is invite the listener to exploit clues in the linguistic or extra-linguistic context to establish the identity of the referent. The article has been said by many writers to 'pick up' an entity, but this is inaccurate; *the* may be about *identifiability*, but not identification.

[26] The example is quoted in Howell (I.I 1986: 17).

Bearing this in mind, as-Sīrāfī's comment (I: 164[b]) may shed more light on the behaviour of the *ʾalif-lām* in the instances mentioned in the *Kitāb*:

إن ما فيه الألف واللام أبهم المعارف وأقربها إلى النكرات لأن منها ما ينعت بالنكرات كقول القائل إني لأمر بالرجل غيرك فيكرمني ويقوم لي وإني لأمر بالرجل مثلك فيعينني إذا لم يقصد قصد رجل بعينه [...] ويدل على ذلك أيضا أن من المعرفة بالألف واللام ما يستوي في معناه الألف واللام وتركهما وذلك نحو قولك شربت ماءً وشربت الماءَ.

> That which bears the *ʾalif-lām* is the vaguest of definite nouns and the closest to the indefinites because some of them are adjectivally qualifiable by indefinites as when not intending a particular man in person someone says 'Verily, I shall pass by a man [definite in the original Arabic text] other than you, and he will receive me with honour and rise in respect for me' and 'Verily, I shall pass by a man [definite in the original Arabic text] like you and he will assist me' [...] Another proof is that the difference in meaning of some definites by means of the [– ʾalif-lām] is alike with or without the *ʾalif-lām* as for example, 'I drank some water' [– *ʾalif-lām*] and 'I drank water [+ ʾalif-lām]'.

The point as-Sīrāfī is trying to make here is that definite nouns bearing the *ʾalif-lām* are the vaguest definite class and the closest to the indefinites, hence their ability to be qualified by indefinite nouns. Moreover, there are definites bearing the *ʾalif-lām* whose meaning is alike whether bearing an *ʾalif-lām* or not.

Only one category remains to be ranked on the list, i.e. the *muḍāf* 'annexed' to the definite. As mentioned above, in annexation a noun derives its definiteness from the definite noun to which it is annexed and should thus rank with it. This means that nouns annexed to the definite cannot possibly be ranked as one homogenous class, as the noun annexed to a definite other than the *ʾalif-lām* is regarded more particular than the one annexed to the *ʾalif-lām*.

It should be clear by now that the *ʾalif-lām* can only be qualified by a noun annexed to the *ʾalif-lām*, as for example, مررت بالرجل ذي المال 'I passed by the man the possessor of wealth'. Consequently, an utterance such as *مررت بالرجل أخيك '*I passed by the man your brother' is not allowed because 'your brother' is more specific than 'the man' given that the word أخ 'brother' is annexed to a proper noun and its suppressed form[27] as Sībawayhi explicitly tells us (I 220/188):

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[27] Sībawayhi alludes to the fact that pronouns in annexation have the same rank as proper nouns because they are their suppressed form.

وإنما منع أخاك أن يكون صفة للطويل أن الأخ إذا أضيف كان أخصَّ لأنه مضاف إلى الخاص وإلى إضماره فإنما ينبغي لك أن تبدأ به وإن لم تكتفِ بذلك زدتَ من المعرفة ما تزداد به معرفة.

> 'Your brother' is not allowed to function as an adjectival qualifier to 'the tall' because when 'brother' is annexed, it is more particular by dint of its annexation to a proper noun and its suppressed form. That is why you should begin with it and if you deem it insufficient, you increase its *identifiability* by that which serves to increase its *identifiability*.

Before proceeding to the final conclusion on the rank of the *muḍāf* to the definite, it might be expedient to provide a brief glimpse of the post-Sībawayhian views on definiteness, which will help us appreciate Sībawayhi's approach much better. In what follows I shall point out the major innovations in the definiteness theory after Sībawayhi which, to the best of my knowledge, have not been dealt with before.

The treatment of definiteness hierarchy in the *Inṣāf* (II Q.101) will help us to understand the gist of the later traditional theory of definiteness. Ibn al-ʾAnbārī (II: 417–9) gives us first an outline of the divergent views regarding the rank of the five definite categories. Since the dispute between the Kūfans and the Baṣrans is his work's *raison d'être*, Ibn al-ʾAnbārī indicates the *identitifiability* degree of vague nouns and proper nouns as the source of their disagreement and dedicates most of his discussion to determining which of the two classes should be ranked first.

Ibn al-ʾAnbārī starts with the Kūfans' position that vague nouns enjoy a higher degree of *identifiability* and as such are 'more definite' than proper nouns, while the Baṣrans hold quite the opposite opinion. For them proper nouns come first in order and are more identifiable than vague nouns.[28] Sībawayhi is mentioned next with the class of pronouns topping his list of definiteness, followed in order by proper nouns, vague nouns, and definite nouns by virtue of the *ʾalif-lām* prefixed to them. The *muḍāf* to the definite appears bottom of the list. Interestingly enough, Ibn as-Sarraj places vague nouns before pronouns and proper nouns,[29] while as-Sīrāfī's scale of *identifiability*

[28] Ibn Jinnī, for instance, mentions pronouns first, then proper nouns and vague nouns in the third place followed by the *ʾalif-lām* and finally annexation (1976: 40).

[29] Ibn as-Sarraj (II 1988: 32–3) indicates that unlike all the other definite classes, vague nouns are the only class that is modified by common nouns when there is a cause for uncertainty. This is the reason given by him as why vague nouns and the common nouns modifying them are treated as one appositional unit فالمبهم يحتاج الى أن يميز بالأجناس عند الالباس، فلهذا صار هو وصفته بمنزلة شيء واحد، وخالف سائر الموصوفات، لأنها لم توصف

is topped by proper nouns, followed by pronouns and vague nouns. For both Ibn as-Sarraj and as- Sīrāfī the *ʾalif-lām* lies second from the bottom and the *muḍāf* to the definite at the bottom of the list.

Two errors ought to be indicated here: first, there is no evidence that Sībawayhi considered proper nouns more identifiable than vague nouns. What Sībawayhi clearly states in this regard is that we can only suppress that which is known to the hearer without specifying the class or limiting it to proper nouns; other definite classes whether vague nouns or the *ʾalif-lām* are also known to the hearer and there is nothing that prevents the speaker from suppressing them. I hypothesise that the scale of definiteness attributed to Sībawayhi is an attempt by Ibn al-ʾAnbārī to define it in terms congruent with the Baṣrans'.

Second, there is enough evidence to reject the post-Sībawayhian classification, including the one unjustly attributed to Sībawayhi, which assigns the lowest degree of *identifiability* to the *muḍāf* to the definite and places it at the bottom of the scale after the *ʾalif-lām*. We have already reached the conclusion that this definite class cannot be approached as a homogenous group, as the definite classes to which a noun may be annexed are too heterogeneous to be lumped together. Given that the rank of this class depends on the definite noun to which the *muḍāf* is annexed, this leads me to conclude that the *muḍāf* annexed to a definite noun other than the *ʾalif-lām* ranks higher on the scale than both the *muḍāf* to the *ʾalif-lām* and inferentially the *ʾalif-lām*. Correspondingly, a *muḍāf* to the *ʾalif-lām* ranks with and *surely not* lower than the *ʾalif-lām*.

Regarding the rank of proper and vague nouns, Ibn al-ʾAnbārī (op. cit. 418) asserts to be in favour of the Kūfans' argument: والذي أذهب إليه هو ما ذهب إليه الكوفيون. The Kūfans argue that vague nouns are made known to the hearer mentally as well as visually while proper nouns are made known only mentally, and we have seen that that which is known in two ways is more particular than that which is made known in one way only (ibid. 417). This argument is consolidated by the fact that proper nouns are susceptible to indefiniteness as for example مررت بزيد الظريف وزيد آخر، ومررت بعمرو العاقل وبعمرو آخر 'I passed by the witty Zayd and by another Zayd and I passed by the clever

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بالاجناس. For a more detailed discussion of classes of definiteness see Ibn as-Sarraj (ibid. 31–45).

ʿAmr and by another ʿAmr', and also when they are made dual or plural. This susceptibility to indefiniteness necessarily entails the definiteness of proper nouns being marked by the *ʾalif-lām* once they lose their particularity (see discussion of proper nouns above). In comparison, vague nouns cannot admit the definite article and are therefore resistant to indefiniteness. The Kūfans conclude that that which does not admit indefiniteness is more identifiable than that which is susceptible to indefiniteness. Therefore, vague nouns should rank with pronouns in that they are more identifiable than proper nouns in the same way as pronouns are (ibid.): وما لا يقبل التنكير أعرف مما يقبل التنكير فتنزل المضمر منزلة العلم وكما أن المضمر أعرف من الاسم العلم فكذلك المبهم. The Baṣrans' argument that proper nouns should rank before vague nouns is based on the fact that proper nouns were originally put to denote only one individual of a kind to the exclusion of the others. The argument is developed in a manner that mirrors the Kūfans' and is applied *mutatis mutandis* to proper nouns, for they are likened to pronouns that rank higher than vague nouns and by inference are placed before them.

To refute the Baṣran view, Ibn al-ʾAnbārī (ibid.) maintains that the particularising character of proper nouns is not an exclusive feature of these nouns but are shared by all the other definite classes. He clarifies that the primary state of any definite noun is to denote something particular in itself beyond any uncertainty that necessitates further qualification, as is the case of pronouns. Once the definite class become qualifiable, the loss of its primary state and original exclusive character is evident. In a nutshell, such a class cannot possibly be ranked with pronouns. With all this largely in mind, I shall next consider the role of definiteness in determining the word order in nominal sentences.

3. Definiteness and non-arbitrariness of word order

At the heart of the linguistic analysis of word order as a correlative of definiteness, is the following question: 'Can an utterance start with an indefinite noun without jeopardising its communicative efficiency?' At first sight, this ostensibly simple question appears to call for a simple answer, but as the discussion advances, it will become clear that various factors, syntactic as well as pragmatic, co-determine word order and the position of the indefinite noun in the sentence. Complementarity

and the notion of *identifiability* are proved to be particularly important in upholding the speaker's choice.

Concerning the correlation between the non-arbitrariness of word order and definiteness, two points need to be taken into consideration. First, the communication act should necessarily rest on a common point of departure shared by both the speaker and the listener. Second, language is informative in the first place and its main purpose cannot be circumscribed to the simple assertion or denial of the existence of entities (Lyons 1991: 162), nor can it be limited to the mere introduction of new entities. The informative aspect might temporarily be put off, but is unlikely to be overlooked altogether. In other words, the speaker may introduce a new entity to the listener but in preparation for the informative part with which he intends to provide the listener.

Broadly speaking, providing new information demands of the speaker a relevant background knowledge of the listener's mental state and expectations, as the listener is assumed to either lack the new information, or hold a different or contrary view to the speaker's. As a rule of thumb, the amount of new information provided is preferably limited to one per clause (cf. II Givón 2001: 223).

Keenan's 'Functional Principle' reveals what could be considered a basic linguistic principle necessary to determine the relationship between definiteness and word order as stated below (1974: 299, cited by Lambrecht 1994: 156):

> […] to evaluate the truth of a simple sentence we must mentally identify the referent of the subject and then determine whether the predicate holds of it or not.

Keenan advises us to keep separate the two cognitive tasks of interpreting the information provided by the speaker and that of determining the referent about which information are being provided. This is mainly due to the listener's inability to process a sentence that provides information about an entity devoid of any pragmatic reality for him (Lambrecht 1994: 156; 166).

If we apply Keenan's principle to everyday language,[30] an equational sentence such as **A man is patient* does not only contain uncertainty but also lacks in relevance and informativeness proper to a commu-

[30] Keenan's Functional Principle does also apply to Arabic just as it does to English, and most probably to other languages. Leaving the aspect of truth aside, its application is best manifested in those chapters of the *Kitāb* dealing with equational sentences (see discussion below).

nicative act. The main problem with this sentence lies in the absence of any pragmatic reality or context to which the listener can possibly relate. In a nutshell, it is the *unidentifiability* rather than the *indefiniteness* of the Subject/topic which makes such a sentence unacceptable. Conversely, a sentence such as *A book is on the desk* is an acceptable English sentence even though it is rather uncommon. The more natural option will be the stressed *there* placed in the front position and delay the indefinite Subject. Lambrecht (ibid.: 179) states that the main pragmatic difference between the *deictic there* and the *existential there* is that the former indicates an entity in the text-EXTERNAL world, while the latter simply introduces it into the INTERNAL world of the text.

Having established a set of criteria against which definiteness and word order can further be discussed, the role of definiteness in determining word order in Arabic nominal sentences and the status of indefinite nouns that occasionally do occur in the 'initial' position will be our main concern in the next three sections.

3.1. *Word Order in Arabic Nominal Sentences*

In accordance with our method of using Sībawayhi's principles as the backbone of the discussion, I shall look at some basic ideas on definiteness in the *Kitāb* and give an account of the assumptions and principles in general and of how Sībawayhi handles the phenomenon of definiteness in speech in particular. At the outset, I should like to note that the utterances I am concerned with here might as well be labelled as 'verbless nominal sentences', i.e. sentences with non-verbal predication.[31]

The first assumption concerns the vital role of definiteness in determining the linear position of the *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' and *ḫabr* 'predicate' in the nominal sentence (I 22/17):

فالمعروف هوالمبدوء به ولا يبدأ بمايكون فيه اللبس وهوالنكرة [...] فكرهوا أن يبدؤا بما فيه اللبس ويجعلوا المعرفة خبرا لمايكون فيه هذا اللبس.

> The definite is what one begins with, and one does not begin with that which contains uncertainty which is the *nakira* 'indefinite' […] The Arabs dislike to begin with something containing uncertainty and make the *maʿrifa* 'definite' predicate to what contains this uncertainty.

[31] Cf. I Sib 41/31 for discussion of nominal sentences with verbal predication.

There is a natural order in nominal sentences where the definite subject/topic originally precedes the predicate which can be a noun, a participle (including adjectives), or a spatiotemporal qualifier (I Sib 278/239):

واعلم أن المبتدأ لا بد له من أن يكون المبنى عليه شيأ هو هو أو يكون في مكان أو زمان.

> You should know that the *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' must have something built on it which is identical to it or [which occurs] in place or time.

However, when the subject/topic is indefinite or unidentifiable, the natural word order gives way to the primacy of the rule of definiteness and inversion of positions[32] is bound to take place (I Sib 165/137):

[...] لأن الابتداء إنما هو خبر وأحسنه إذا اجتمع معرفة ونكرة أن تبدأ بالأعرف وهو أصل الكلام ولو قلت رجل ذاهب لم يحسن حتى تعرفه بشيء فتقول راكب من بني فلان سائر [...] فاصل الأبتداء للمعرفة.

> [...] Because the *ibtidāʾ* 'predication structure' is but a statement and when a *maʿrifa* 'definite noun' and *nakira* 'indefinite noun' come together, it is structurally better to begin with that which is more known, for this is the original state of speech and if you say 'A man [is] going' it won't be good Arabic unless you make it identifiable by means of something, so you say 'A rider [upon a camel] from such and such tribe [is] travelling' [...] The original state of the *ibtidāʾ* is to [begin with] the *maʿrifa* 'definite'.

In linear terms, we have clearly a structural organisation whereby a definite noun precedes an indefinite noun. In this excerpt Sībawayhi establishes the criteria for a predication structure where we are told that a statement can only be made about something known to the listener, that is why an utterance such as رجل ذاهب 'A man [is] going' has no communicative value and is bad Arabic. Now the general rule of definiteness has been delineated, I go on to narrow down the focus so as to make a set of principles and rules governing the discussion of definiteness recognisable.

As long as both the subject/topic and predicate are definite, permutability is allowed even though the subject/topic will by common

[32] Not of functions, as will be made clear in chapter four.

consent precede the predicate.[33] So when the distinction between the subject/topic and predicate is blurred as in زيد أخوك 'Zayd [is] your brother', and أفضل من زيد أفضل من عمر 'A better than Zayd [is] a better than ʿAmar' we cannot but assign the subject/topic to the front position if we are to avoid uncertainty about which term fulfils what function.

However, in case of أبو يوسف أبو حنيفة ''ʾAbū Yūsuf [is like] ʾAbū Ḥanīfa', the listener won't experience any communicative inconvenience when ʾAbū Ḥanīfa's name comes before ʾAbū Yūsuf's, because he knows well that the speaker's intention is to liken ʾAbū Yūsuf to ʾAbū Ḥanīfa and not vice versa. Also in the following verse, it is beyond any dispute that the poet wants to inform us that those referred to in the poem consider their sons' children like their own children; otherwise the meaning won't be *mustaqīm* (cf. Howell I.I 1986: 110–11, Ibn Hišām II 1986: 452):

بنونابنوأبنائنا، وبناتنا بنوهن أبناء الرجال الأباعد

> Our children [are] the children of our sons, but our daughters, their children [are] the children of the most alien men.

In case of possible uncertainty, there is *huwa* 'he' and other related pronouns that assume the function of *ḍamīr al-faṣl* 'pronoun of separation' and operate as an extraneous element employed to maintain a clear distinction between the definite subject/topic and definite predicate

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[33] This can be inferred from Sībawayhi's discussion of the subject noun of *kāna* and its predicate (I 22/18) where both terms are definite as in كان اخوك زيدًا 'Your brother [independent] was Zayd [dependent]' and كان زيدٌ صاحَبك 'Zayd [independent] was your friend [dependent]'. According to Ibn Hišām (II 451) derived nouns are said to always function as a predicate even when preposed 'وقيل المشتق خبر وإن تقدم نحو 'القائمٌ زيدٌ. I doubt whether Sībawayhi would have totally agreed with this as he formally states (I Sib 187/156) that when some *maṣdars* that function as a predicate take the *ʾalif-lām*, it is structurally correct to begin the utterance with them and it is structurally weak to start with the indefinite: فلما أدخلت فيه الألف واللام وكان خبرًا حسن الابتداء وضعف الابتداء بالنكرة. This is because they acquire enough force to function as a *mubtadaʾ* and enjoy the same status as 'Abd Allāh and the man وإنما استحبوا الرفع فيه لأنه صار معرفة وهو خبر فقوي في الابتداء بمنزلة عبد الله والرجل (ibid.).

(cf. I Sib 395/ 347–8).[34] Regarding an instance such as كان عبدُ الله هو الظريفَ "Abdullāhi [independent] was the clever [dependent]' Sībawayhi argues that this pronoun is used to distinguish the definite noun before it from the definite noun after it and indicate that the second term is a predicate not a member of the same constituent, i.e. a mere adjectival qualifier or an apposition. Sībawayhi does not fail to mention here that his argument is based on al-Ḫalīl's authority ذكر هو ليستدل المتحدث أن ما بعد الاسم ما يخرجه مما وجب عليه وأن ما بعد الاسم ليس منه وهذا تفسير الخليل (I Sib 394/ 347).

When an indefinite subject/topic is still identifiable[35] because it is made more particular by means of an expressed or implied epithet, the rule of definiteness ceases to be obligatory and either order is acceptable. As a result, the following utterances are considered permissible:

- عندي رجل كريم 'In my house [is] a noble man'.
- رجل كريم عندي 'A noble man [is] in my house'.[36]
- عندنا رجيل 'In my house [is] a small/contemptible man'.
- رجيل عندنا 'A little/contemptible man [is] in my house'.

Clearly a degree of *identifiability* has been conferred on the noun by the expressed epithet 'noble',[37] and the implied epithet in the diminutive رجيل which is synonymous with رجل صغير 'a small man' or رجل حقير 'a contemptible man' (see for instance Wright II 1967: 254; Howell I.I 1986: 88ff; 112–3 for further discussion).

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[34] See also Wright (II 1967: 258–60); Howell (I.II 1986: 547–551); Brockelmann (1969: 134–5) and Cantarino (I 1974: 34–6) for further details.

[35] Since the types of utterances we are dealing with are simple affirmative nominal sentences, utterances with indefinite subject/topic preceded by a negation or interrogative noun are not of immediate interest to our purpose (cf. Wright 1967: 261; Howell, I.I 1986: 91; Brockelmann 1921: 136 for more details).

[36] Brockelmann (1969: 135–6) states that 'Auch vor das determinierte Subjekt kann ein derartiges Predikat treten, doch liegt dann der logische Akzent auf dem Subjekt, z. B. عندي زيدٌ 'bei mir ist Zaid', während in زيد عندي der logische Akzent auf dem Pradikat liegt: 'Zaid ist bei mir'.'

[37] Traditionally, this is known as *taḫṣīṣ* 'specialisation' which can be described as an 'intermediate level between absolute indefinition and pure definition' (Carter 1981: 377, point 19.71 n1). Note that all the Arabic instances discussed here and in the next section are either locative or verbal utterances.

In the same vein, the degree of the *identifiability* conferred on the indefinite noun explains why an utterance such as رجل من الكرام عندنا 'A man of the nobles [is] in our house' is permissible, while رجل من الناس جاءني '*A man of men came to me' is not allowed. The reason behind it is that there is no material sense in qualifying a man to be an individual of mankind, which is after all something the hearer already knows. By contrast, it makes sense for the hearer to know that the man the speaker is mentioning belongs to the nobles (cf. Howell I.I 1986: 89).

When the subject/topic is indefinite and the predicate a *ẓarf* 'spatiotemporal qualifier', the predicate must be preposed and the subject/topic postposed:

- في الدار رجلٌ 'In the house [is] a man'
- عندك امرأة 'In your house [is] a woman'

In comparison, the following utterances are not permissible:[38]

- رجلٌ في الدار '*A man [is] in the house'
- امرأة عندك '*A woman [is] in your house'

Essentially the argument in favour of inversion is based on the fact that definite *ẓurūf* fulfil the function of 'elements of frame' in a speech situation which set the scene for the main participants to be introduced into (cf. I Givón 2001: 474). In addition, the pre-positioning of *ẓarf*-type or prepositional phrases in locative sentences does not affect the function of subject/topic assumed by the noun following it.

The principle of inversion in Arabic can be accounted for within the traditional Arabic as well as modern linguistic theories. Criticism levelled against the principle of inversion and the traditional account of the inverted nominal sentence theory (cf. Beeston 1970: 68; 70; 1974: 475 and Kouloughli 2002) is based on the belief that the initial element is associated with the function of the subject/topic. The association

[38] Blachère (1958: 49) says that although word order in Arabic is relatively variable, the front position is ordinarily occupied by the term the speaker wants to emphasise and fix the hearer's attention on, while the following position is occupied by what he describes as "le terme le plus long ou le plus riche de sens ou de sonorité' (ibid.). Oddly enough, he does not take into consideration the vital rule of definiteness as he proceeds: 'En phrase nominal, l'ordre habituel est: sujet+attribute+complement […] Mais l'attribut gouverné par une préposition peut précéder le sujet. رجل في الدار "في الدار رجل– (ibid. 50).

of these two terms lays the foundation for erroneous views such as that the *topic* is usually but not exclusively a noun phrase. This point and other related issues were outlined in Marogy (2004) and will be addressed at length in chapter four. It suffices to mention here that the correlation between definiteness and the non-arbitrariness of word order, on the one hand, and the obligatory transposition rule, on the other, is embodied in the non-permutability of the syntactic functions of the preposed and postposed elements even though a change in the linear order of the two constituents is inevitable.

3.1.1. *Indefinite Nouns and the Initial Position*

As a counter-argument to the rule of definiteness,[39] instances are usually provided of indefinite nouns in the 'initial' position. Some Linguists such as Meyer 1992; Tomlin and Rhodes 1992 *inter alia* went so far as to suggest that fronted referents tend to be indefinite (I Givón 2001: 278). Before tackling these claims, let us begin with the following examples, the first four of which are taken from C. Lyons (1999: 229):

1. *A man I work with* has won the pools.
2. *A prisoner* has won the pools.
3. *A man* has phoned several times.
4. *A surprising event* then occurred.
5. …and then *a boy* came in (Lambrecht 1994: 168)
6. *A boy* was run over by *a car*! (ibid.: 169)

Many other examples could be given, but all will have this one feature in common, namely that all the indefinite nouns are either identifiable nouns or their identity is made redundant as the focus of the communication act is shifted from the specific identity of the main participant to the event participated in. The fact that none of these examples are syntactically isomorphic with the Arabic verbless sentence being discussed here is not relevant to the present analysis.

C. Lyons (1999: 229) describes the indefinite subject noun phrase in the first instance as 'an individual completely new to the discourse', and yet it still fulfils the function of Topic. In contrast, the indefinite nouns in the other examples are, according to him, less likely to fulfil the function of Topic. It is relatively easy to account for the indefinite

[39] And also counter to the Prague School's suggestion that there is a universal tendency to front the Topic or Theme and postpose the Focus or Rheme (cf. I Givón 2001: 277).

noun occupying the front position in the first instance, simply because it cannot be treated as a simple indefinite on the account of the relative sentence 'I work with' that narrows down the indefinite possibility of men to a specific man alongside whom I work (ibid.). In other words the added descriptive value by virtue of the relative sentence makes the indefinite noun identifiable and hence eligible to occupy the 'initial' position.[40]

However, the nouns occupying the front position in the remaining instances are simply indefinite without any further qualification (except sentence 4), and yet the utterances are perfectly acceptable English sentences. The reason behind this linguistic behaviour is twofold, viz. the utterance under discussion is either of the *event-reporting* type (cf. sentences 2, 3, and 6), or else it contains a presentational verb such as *occurred* and *came in* (cf. sentences 4 and 5 respectively) whose main function is to introduce a new entity into a discourse (for more details see Lambrecht 1994: 168ff and C. Lyons 1999: 229).

Casting our mind back to the examples 2, 3 and 6, the point is that they are all verbal sentences of the *event-reporting* type whose primary function is to report on an unexpected event or some unusual state of affairs, such as winning the pools by a prisoner. Pragmatically speaking, the fact that the winner is a prisoner is more important and more relevant to the listener than establishing the prisoner's identity. As a result, the communicative value of the utterance is valid, since the speaker is not being less informative and newsy when talking about the indefinite referent.[41] Theoretically speaking, such utterances could be the answer to the implicit question 'What's happened today?' or 'Anything to report?' (C. Lyons, op. cit. 229).

As for the instances with presentational verbs, it is obvious that the chief aim of these sentences is the introduction of a new participant into the scene, so as to create a common ground with the listener and prepare him to receive the information the speaker wishes to convey about the participant. It might be as well to note the presence of the non-deictic element of reference[42] such as *then* in presentational

[40] Note the striking similarity with the so-called *taḫṣīṣ* 'specialisation' referred to above.

[41] The speaker will probably be more easily inclined to make the identity of the prisoner known if he happened to be an infamous criminal, in which case the participant becomes equally important if not more important than the event itself.

[42] Other instances of non-deictic elements of reference are *suddenly, once* etc. (*cf.* the opening sentences of the Arabic stories below).

sentences. What is more, the situational context of these sentences implies an element of suddenness or surprise (cf. the use of the word *surprising* in sentence 4).

To sum, indefinite nouns are not fronted indiscriminately, but only when they are considered to be important (I Givón 2001: 278).[43] To this, I may add that only *pragmatically important* indefinites, in short identifiable indefinites, are fronted to occupy the 'initial' position in an utterance.

So far I have been looking at the distribution of English representational and *event-reporting* type of verbs on the one hand, and stative verbs on the other. The same linguistic phenomena are paralleled in Arabic and indefinite nouns are placed in the 'initial' position on the basis of similar linguistic principles and mechanisms.

Traditionally, the Arabic story telling tolerates indefinite subjects/topics in the 'initial' position, e.g. the fables of Luqmān. Touma (2001) provides us with a collection of Arabic fables from Luqmān (dating before 6th century), al-Muqaffaʿ (8th century), al-Šarīšī (12th–13th century), al-Qalyūbī (16th–17th century), to name but a few. Out of 19 quoted fables that are attributed to Luqmān, only two of them do not have an indefinite subject/topic in the 'initial' position (Touma op. cit. 79; 84 respectively):

- قال العوسج، مرة للبستاني
  'The thorn bush once said to the farmer'
- البرد والحر تخاصما فيما بينهما، من منهما يقدر أن يجرد الإنسان الثياب
  'The cold and the heat argued with each other about which of them was able to make a person take off his clothes'.

The first instance is a verbal sentence with a definite agent, and the second begins with two definite abstract nouns. The 17 remaining stories are distributionally equivalent, for the opening sentence in nearly all of them shows the same pattern, that is to say an indefinite noun

[43] Dahlgren (1998: 220) vaguely refers to the fact that the word order is influenced by the referent being known or unknown, important or not important. He concludes that a referent both known and important tend to occupy the initial position. However, no mention has been made of the tendency of 'unknown' and important referents to occupy the initial position. However, he makes a reference to Givón's hierarchy in topicality where human is more topical than non-human, definite more than indefinite, more involved participants more than less involved ones: speaker, listener, other subject, direct object, others (ibid. 2001: 21–2).

in the 'initial' position followed by the non-deictic expression *once*, which in its turn is followed by a specifying verbal sentence as made clear in the selected opening sentences below:

- غزال، مرة، مرض
  A gazelle once became ill
- أرنب مرة عبرت على لبؤة
  A rabbit, once, passed by a lioness
- أسد، مرة، شاخ وضعف
  A lion, once, became old and feeble
- مرأة، مرة، كان لها دجاجة
  A woman, once, had a chicken
- صبي، مرة، رمى نفسه في نهر ماء
  A little boy, once, jumped into the river
- ديكان تقاتلا، ففر الذي انغلب
  Two cocks fought against each other, and the loser ran away
- كلاب، مرة، أصابوا جلد سبع
  Dogs, once, got a lion's skin

All the other stories in the book have a verb in the 'initial' position, usually a narrative verb in the passive voice such قيل 'it was said', حُكي 'it was narrated' etc. Only al-Qalyūbī surprises us by following Luqmān's example and he begins his story as follows:

- أسد وثعلب وذئب اصطحبوا، فخرجوا يتصيدون
  A lion, a fox and a wolf got friendly and went out to hunt together

The instances of indefinite nouns in the front position show a parallelism with the English presentational type of sentence discussed above, for all Luqmān's instances can be described as opening sentences with a presentational value. Obviously, the storyteller does not intend to predicate about the subject/topic but rather his aim is to introduce to the listener a participant in the event. Interestingly, the indefinite participants are unanimously characterised by the fact that they are common nouns and have a verbal predicate. Taking this into consideration, the translation of Luqmān's opening sentences should be

something like 'There was once a lion that turned old and feeble' or 'Once upon a time, there was a lion that turned old and feeble'. Conversely, the focal point of the initial sentences in the stories about 'the thorn bush' and 'the heat and the cold' is not introductory but rather of the *event-reporting* type.

Other factors that confer *identifiability* on indefinite nouns in Arabic and make them eligible to occupy the front position are the infringement of the normal course of nature and the use of the particle *ʾiḏā* of surprise'. In the former case, and instance such as شجرة سجدت 'a tree bowed down' is permissible because there is a material sense in predicting the act of bowing down of a tree. So in contrast to an utterance such as رجل مات 'A man died', there is something highly unusual about شجرة سجدت 'a tree bowed down' that makes the utterance informative (cf. I.I Howell 1986: 94). The same goes for instances with the *ʾiḏā* of surprise such as خرجت فإذا أسد بالباب 'I went out and lo, a lion was at the door!' (quoted in Howell I.I 1986: 98), where the occurrence of the indefinite after the particle *ʾiḏā* is justified due to the sense of unexpectedness it conveys, for it is not an everyday occurrence to meet a lion upon leaving one's house.

As a case in point, the indefinite noun occupying the front position in بقرة تكلم 'a cow is talking', should not pose a problem once its original context is restored. بقرة تكلم is taken from the *Ḥadīth* (Prophets. 451), where Mohammed had been asked for his opinion about two unlikely stories. Much to everyone's surprise, he seems to affirm the likelihood of such events and confirms that he himself, together with ʾAbū Bakr and 'Umar, believe the following story:

بينما رجل يسوق بقرة إذ ركبها فضربها، فقالت: إنا لم نخلق لهذا إنما خلقنا للحرث، فقال الناس: سبحان الله بقرة تكلم![44]

> While a man was driving a cow, he *suddenly* rode over it and beat it. The cow said 'We have not been created for this, but we have been created

[44] Note that the form of the verb is *takallamu* is the Ḥijāzī variant of stem V *tatakallamu*. The speakers in the *Ḥadith* are nearly always Ḥijāzīs and it is amazing how often they express themselves in the correct Ḥijāzī dialect forms (in personal communication Carter 2007).

> for ploughing.' On that the people said [in astonishment], 'May God be glorified, a cow is talking!

A few lines further, a similar story is told concerning a talking wolf this time. The same affirmation follows at the end of the story and the same reaction is reported of people flabbergasted by this unusual event, who are quoted saying, سبحان الله، ذئب يتكلم! 'May God be glorified, a wolf is speaking!'

Strictly speaking, the word بقرة 'a cow' and ذئب 'a wolf' cannot be considered simple indefinite nouns, since there are strong pragmatic elements that make these two indefinite words identifiable. Here too, the normal course of nature is infringed because talking does not belong to a cow's or wolf's nature (cf. the prisoner who has won the pools or the tree that bows down). Further, there is also an element of surprise and unexpectedness clear from the reaction of people. Finally, it is true that these utterances are nominal but significantly their predicate is verbal, which adds a qualifying value to the indefinite noun and confers a degree of *identifiability* upon it.

If we look at the English and Arabic instances throughout this section, we can readily reach the conclusion that 'a cow' and 'a prisoner' for instance share the same pragmatic feature that differentiate them from simple indefinites, namely that of being *pragmatically salient indefinite*s. They both exemplify a typical individual of their kind which happens to be involved in an event out of the ordinary. Particularly, in these two instances there is also an element of surprise and unexpectedness that creates the necessary context for the indefinite nouns to become *pragmatically salient indefinite*s and thus occupy the front position. The bottom line is that such utterances are still informative and comprehensible thanks to the uniqueness of their context which delimits what is formally indefinite and makes it identifiable beyond uncertainty.

A final seemingly counter-example to the rule of definiteness is the sentence of حمار على المنبر 'a donkey [is] in the pulpit!' discussed in Mohammad (2000: 18). Mohammad claims that the sentence has a literal meaning, i.e. 'a donkey [is] in the pulpit to give a speech', as well as a figurative meaning, i.e. 'an absolute idiot [is] in the pulpit to give a speech'. Besides being just another instance of an utterance with a *pragmatically salient indefinite*,[45] an alternative interpretation may lead

[45] Mohammad speaks of 'a unique indefinite subject' (2000: 18).

us back to the principles of Irony and Politeness, to whose rules the speaker seems to adhere. I hypothesise that indefiniteness in this case is used as a linguistic device to make an indirect offensive remark and thus safeguard the pragmatic Principle of Politeness.

Before we conclude this section, it is worth noting that *inversion* of حمار على المنبر 'a donkey [is] in the pulpit!' does not seem to pose a problem in Modern Written Arabic (MWA), and على المنبر حمار 'In the pulpit [is] a donkey' is perfectly acceptable. However, Palestinian Arabic does not allow *inversion* in this particular case and is said to be less tolerant of word order variations than MWA (ibid.: 18; 46), upholding thus my claim that the pragmatic principles of Politeness and Irony might be responsible to some extent.

3.1.2. *Kāna and its sisters 'Kāna wa 'aḫawātuhā'*[46]

Kāna wa 'aḫawātuhā or *kāna* and its related verbs are operators that affect nominal sentences by making the subject noun independent and the predicate dependent. They are also called *nawāsiḫ* 'cancellers'[47] because they suspend the case agreement in the nominal sentences affected and in case of *kāna* and its related verbs, they assign the dependent form to the predicate instead of the independent form.

Traditionally, a distinction is made between *kāna an-nāqiṣa* 'defective *kāna*' that cannot possibly dispense with the *predicate* and *kāna at-tāmma* 'complete *kāna*' that only needs an *agent*.[48] Since these terms are not found in Sībawayhi, I shall call the first type of *kāna* 'temporal *kāna*', and the second type of *kāna*, 'factual *kāna*'. These terms are based on Sībawayhi's description of the two functions of *kāna* (I Sib 21/16–7):

> كان ويكون وصار وما دام وليس وما كان نحوهن من الفعل مما لا يستغني عن الخبر تقول كان عبدُ اللهِ أخاك فإنما أردت أن تخبر عن الإخوة وأدخلت كان لتجعل ذلك فيما مضى [...] وقد يكون لكان موضع آخر يقتصر على الفاعل فيه تقول قد كان عبدُ اللهِ أي قد خُلق عبد الله وقد كان الأمرُ أي وقع الأمر.

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[46] Regarding this anthropomorphism, Anghelescu (1985: 6) argues that technical terms analogical to terms expressing organic or social relationships reflect the teleological vision Arab grammarians had of the structural relationship between the different linguistic elements.

[47] Other *nawāsiḫ* are *'inna* and its related verbs, *ẓanna* and its related verbs.

[48] For references regarding the discussion of the two types of *kāna* in traditional Arabic grammars see Levin (1979: 185 n. 1).

> *Kāna* and *yakūn* 'was and will be',[49] *ṣāra* 'to become', *mā dāma* 'as long as it remains' and *laysa* 'not to be' and similar verbs cannot dispense with the predicate, as for example, 'Abdullāhi [independent] was your brother [dependent]' because you wanted to comment about the brotherhood and made *kāna* operate on it to place it in the past […] *Kāna* may have another function which is limited to the agent, as for example, 'Abdullāhi [independent] was', intending 'Abdullāhi was created' and 'something was', intending 'something occurred'.

The passage above implies that predicates of *kāna* and its related verbs are accidental to the subject noun, and in case of *kāna*, its function is to denote past 'existence in act' (cf. factual *kāna*) or 'existence in time' (cf. temporal *kāna*) (cf. Maritain 1937: 61). Temporal *kāna* whose main function is to express an aboutness relationship that does not hold at present, corresponds thus to what is traditionally known as *kāna an-nāqiṣa*, i.e. structurally incomplete, while the function of the *factual kāna* which corresponds to the traditional *kāna at-tāmma*, i.e. structurally complete, is to state that something existed in the past or that something happened in the past.[50]

For the sake of clarity, it might be convenient to briefly refer to the three kinds of predicative relations established by Sībawayhi (I 276/237),[51] viz, الذي هو هو 'full identity' such as هذا زيدٌ الطويلُ 'This [is] Zayd*un* [independent] the tall [independent]'; الذي هو هو وليس من اسمه 'partial identity',[52] which is marked by the presence of a semantic link but lack of constituent membership such as هذا زيدٌ ذاهبًا 'This [is] Zayd [independent] going [dependent]'.[53] Finally we have relations in which the qualifier is neither part of the term qualified nor identical with it such as الذي ليس به ولا هو من اسمه هذا درهمٌ وزنًا 'This [is] a dirham per

[49] *Yakūn* is always a modalised 'copula' which may mean 'will be', 'could be', 'might be' etc.

[50] Although *kāna an-nāqiṣa* will, at all times, place the nominal sentence in the past, we *should bear in mind that tenses in Arabic, as in other Semitic languages, originally did not relate verbal actions to any definite temporal reference point. They rather express completion or incompletion of the verbal action. This is why 'Both tenses in Arabic can express the verbal idea in any of the three temporal usages, future, present, or past' (I Cantarino 1974: 58 n. 19).*

[51] For a more detailed discussion see chapter four.

[52] Also described as 'logical inclusion' (in personal communication, Carter 2003).

[53] Note that the *ḥāl* clarifies 'vague exterior aspects pertaining to rational beings and other' (Carter 1981: 368). These aspects are usually transient and are valid at the moment of speech.

measure'[54] The lack of concordance or the non-identity will be shown in due course to be an adequate linguistic argument which Sībawayhi uses quite often to account for the dependent form of various grammatical structures in the *Kitāb*. It suffices to mention here that whether permanent or transient, terms belonging to the first and second type of predicative relations clearly stand in referential relationship, while the link between non-identical terms can only be drawn by inference.

In the chapter dealing with *kāna* and its sisters (I Sib 22/17–8), Sībawayhi touches on the requirement for and the restriction on the use of indefinite subject noun in the *kāna* structure as he states:

وأعلم أنه إذا وقع في هذا الباب نكرة ومعرفة فالذي تشغل به كان المعرفة لأنه حد الكلام لأنهما شيء واحد وليس بمنزلة قولك ضرب رجلٌ زيدًا لأنهما شيئان مختلفان وهما في كان بمنزلتهما في الابتداء إذا قلت عبدُ اللهِ منطلقٌ تبتدئ بالأعرف ثم تذكر الخبر وذلك قولك كان زيدٌ حليمًا وكان حليمًا زيدٌ لا عليك أقدمت أم أخرت إلا أنه على ما وصفت لك في قولك ضرب زيدًا عبدُ اللهِ فإذا قلت كان زيدٌ فقد ابتدأت بما هو معروف عنده مثله عندك فإنما ينتظر الخبر فإذا قلت حليمًا فقد أعلمته مثل ما علمت وإذا قلت كان حليمًا فإنما ينتظر أن تعرّفه صاحب الصفة فهو مبدوء به في الفعل وإن كان مؤخرا في اللفظ فان قلت كان حليمٌ أو رجلٌ فقد بدأت بنكرة ولا يستقيم أن تخبر المخاطب عن المنكور [...] ألا ترى أنك لو قلت كان رجلٌ منطلقًا أو كان إنسانٌ حليمًا كنت تلبس لأنه لا يستنكر أن يكون في الدنيا إنسان هكذا.

And you should know that if there is under this chapter an indefinite noun and a definite one, it will be the definite noun which is preoccupied with *kāna* because that is the norm of speech, also because the two terms refer to the same thing and do not have the status of your saying 'A man hit Zayd' in which the two terms [the agent and direct object] are two different things. The two terms in *kāna* have the same status as in the *ibtidāʾ* when you said 'ʿAbdullāhi [is] going away', for you begin with the more known and then you mention the predicate, so for instance you say 'Zayd*un* was patient' and 'Patient was Zayd*un*' regardless whether you front the more known term or delay it, for it is similar to what I have described to you when you said 'Zayd*an* [dependent as direct object] hit ʿAbdullāhi [independent as agent]. When you say 'Zaydun [independent] was' you start with the term which is known both to him [sc. the listener] and to you, and he will be waiting for the predicate. When you say 'patient' you inform him about that which is known to you [alone], but when you say '[He] was patient [dependent]'

[54] If the predicate is a spatiotemporal qualifier, it is neither part of the term qualified nor identical with the *subject noun*, as 'one' cannot 'be' 'in' a place in the same way as one can 'be' 'good' or 'tall' (in personal communication Carter 2003).

> the listener will be waiting for you to let him know who is the possessor of this attribute, for he is the initial term within the verbal sentence even though this term is formally delayed, but when you say 'Patient [independent] was' or 'A man [independent] was' you commence then with an indefinite term, and it is not *mustaqīm* to predicate about something unknown to the listener.[55] […] Do not you see that when you say 'A man was going away' or 'A person was patient' you cause uncertainty, as no one would [ever] deny that such a man would exist somewhere in the world.

There are some points relating to the syntactic and pragmatic behaviour of *kāna* and other related verbs which emerge from the passage above and which may be conveniently made here. First, this passage shows that a transitive verb such as *ḍaraba* 'he hit' involves two terms whose either definiteness is sufficient for the speech to be intelligible. At this stage it should be noted that the principle of non-identity (NIP) governing the relation between the two participants, i.e. the agent and the direct object, is not immaterial.[56] Regardless of their definiteness, the two terms can be inverted thanks to their non-identity: an utterance such as ضرب رجلٌ زيدًا 'A man hit Zayd' is permissible because the informative part that the listener is interested to know about is the fact of hitting Zayd rather than identifying the person who did the hitting. Conversely, the *kāna* type of verbs involve two terms in a predication or 'aboutness' relationship and as such the *kāna* structure has the status of a nominal sentence that is subject to the rule of definiteness. What *kāna* has in common with other 'real' verbs[57] is the permutability of its subject noun and predicate, providing that the subject noun

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[55] This is unmistakably a clear reference to the PP (see pp. 46–7 and passim).

[56] The same linguistic phenomenon is mirrored by Rice (1987: 106) in her doctoral thesis which underlines the reality of the non-identity principle and its importance when dealing with transitivity: 'This notion of the incorporation or integration versus, the continued distinction of the two participants lies at the heart of a common assumption about semantic transitivity—that the subject and object participants must be maximally differentiated. This differentiation may involve any number of contrasts depending on the event being predicated. For instance, the subject and object may need to be conceived of as physically distinct, or as both distinct and different in character.'

[57] Ar-Rummānī (1979: 47).), for instance, speaks of *real* and non-*real* verbs. Real verbs, such as *ḍaraba* are comparable to event-reporting type of verbs as they indicate an action, while non-real verbs, such as *kāna* (to be), lack the meaning of *individuated event* and are limited to express an aboutness relationship (cf. Schapiro, 2000: 98–9). See also Levin (1979: 205–7). It is worth noting that for Sībawayhi the distinction is reflected in the way the chapters dealing with types of verbs are arranged in order (cf. I Sīb 13–26/10–20).

is definite. The *inversion* in *kāna* structure is comparable to the *inversion* of the agent and direct object in 'real' verbal sentences and the reason given by Sībawayi is that the independent subject noun of *kāna* is pronominalised, just as is the agent of the verb *ḍaraba*. In this way the effect of the verb as an operator is satisfied and the fronting of the direct object and the predicate is allowed.[58]

Further, I claim that what Sībawayhi actually hints at is when saying that هو مبدوء به في الفعل وإن كان مؤخرا في اللفظ is that when *inversion* takes place, there are two levels to be distinguished when analysing word order, i.e. a linear or formal level and a pragmatic level. As far as the linear order in ʿZayd*an* [dependent as direct object] hit ʿAbdullāhi [independent as agent] is concerned, the agent obviously follows the verb and the fronted direct object. However, at the pragmatic level the agent still comes before the verb and the direct object given that every action is undertaken by an agent (see discussion in the next section for more detail).

The account just given is transposed by Sībawayhi to the *kāna* structure when he concludes that despite the *inversion* the subject noun of *kāna* still is the initial element about which the speaker provides information the listener expects from him. Consequently, it is permissible for the fronted indefinite predicate in كان حليمًا زيدٌ 'Patient was Zayd*un*' to formally precede the definite subject noun, since the hearer realises that the subject noun which he pragmatically conceives as the first element in the *kāna* structure is only delayed.

At the other end of the scale, problems arise when the subject noun is neither definite nor identifiable as in كان إنسانٌ حليمًا 'A man was patient' or كان رجلٌ منطلقًا 'A man was going away'. Such utterances are described as uncertain, because they lack the informative value necessary to maintain the speech act and thus make something known to the listener he did not know before.[59] The underlying arguments in Sībawayhi's analysis are best translated into modern language by quoting Lambrecht (1994: 156) whose conclusion shows a remarkable degree of affinity with Sībawayhi's:

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[58] The importance of satisfying the role of the verb as operator is the condition *sine qua non* for an inversion to take place (cf. also I Sib. 41–3/ 31–2 in which he deals with Transposition as discussed in chapter four).

[59] Weiss (1985: 622) refers to the fact that the knowledge of particulars was seen by Muslim orthodox theologians as the highest or truest type of knowledge and statement about them as having the highest communicative value.

> In pragmatic terms: one cannot assess the information value and the relevance of a statement about a topic if one does not know what the topic is. Sentences whose topic referents have an insufficient degree of pragmatic reality for the interlocutors are therefore difficult or impossible to interpret.

A final point to be made is about the dependent form assigned to the predicate of *kāna*. In his article on *kāna*, Levin (1979: 185–213) carries out a meticulous research to show that Sībawayhi's actually equates the *ḫabar* of *kāna* 'predicate' with the direct object of a transitive verb. Further, he argues that the relation between the agent and the direct object of *kāna* corresponds to the relation governing a subject/topic and a predicate in an Arabic nominal sentence. What Sībawayhi (I 20/16) emphasises in this regard is that *kāna*, unlike *'inna*,[60] is a fully-fledged verb that is not only able to operate on the subject/topic of a nominal sentence in the independent form and on the predicate in the dependent form besides taking the suffixes of bound direct object pronouns, but it also allows the permutability of its subject noun and predicate. Although the arguments put forward are well-documented, they still are not very convincing, as he immediately has to admit that *kāna* only resembles the verb *ḍaraba* 'he hit' in its grammatical operation or *'amal*, but not in the act expressed by it.[61]

However, the fact that *ḍaraba* and *kāna* are treated in two different chapters (cf. Levin 1979: 187, n. 17) is not a matter of trivial detail that is to be waved aside. The chapter dealing with transitive verbs such as *ḍaraba* 'he hit' is a chapter on the agent of a verb whose grammatical effect passes over to an object 'هذا باب الفاعل الذي يتعدى فعله إلى مفعول' (I Sib 13/10). In other words, priority is given to the agent of the transitive verb which forms with the verb a self-contained unit that may take a direct object but not necessarily. The chapter dealing with *kāna* on the other hand, gives priority to the effect of the verb that necessarily extends beyond the subject noun to the predicate, and most importantly where the subject noun and predicate denote the same thing and where the predicate is indispensable هذا باب الفعل الذي يتعدى

[60] *'Inna* does enjoy some verbal power (see discussion in chapter four for further details).

[61] According to aš-Širbīnī the resemblance between the subject noun of *kāna* and an agent of a transitive verb on the one hand, and the predicate of *kāna* and a direct object of a transitive verb on the other is only meant figuratively (cf. Carter 1981: 206). It is not fortuitous that Arab grammarians call the subject of *kāna* sentences *'ism kāna* and do not refer to it as its 'agent' simply because there is no 'act'.

اسم الفاعل إلى اسم المفعول واسم الفاعل والمفعول فيه لشيء واحد [...] ولا يجوز فيه الاقتصار على الفاعل (I Sib 20/16).

It is quite far-fetched to equate the subject noun of *kāna* and its predicate with the agent and direct object of a verbal sentence, mainly because the grammatical and semantic relationship governing an agent and direct object in a verbal sentence differs from that governing the subject noun of *kāna* and its predicate. In the long passage quoted above, Sībawayhi clearly states that *kāna*'s subject noun and predicate stand in a predication relationship, while the agent and the direct object are two different things and involve two different participants لأنهما شيء واحد وليس بمنزلة قولك ضرب رجلٌ زيدًا لأنهما شيئان مختلفان. In other words, the subject noun of *kāna* structure differs from the agent of *ḍaraba* in that there is no 'act' in *kāna* as one cannot do 'being' to the predicate in the same way as one can do 'hitting' to the direct object.

Having said this, I shall turn now to the next point of our discussion and to the fact that some Arabists (cf. II Fleisch 1979: 196 n. 1; Carter 1981: 327; 2002) attribute the dependent form of *kāna's* predicate to the fact that it is a kind of a *ḥāl* 'circumstantial qualifier'. However, there is a major obstacle to this argument, namely that the dependent form of the necessarily indefinite term *ḥāl* (cf. I Sib 158/189) is ascribed to the fact that it is structurally redundant because it only occurs after the completion of an utterance.[62] Conversely, the predicate of *kāna an-nāqiṣa*, which may be definite, is structurally necessary and cannot possibly be left out as it carries essential information on its subject noun without which the utterance will not be complete. To put it differently, syntactic completeness is one of the determining factors for an element to be considered a *ḥāl*, a condition which obviously does not apply to the predicate of *kāna* at all.

Apart from the two objections just stated, there still are a number of essential features shared by the two notions which may account for their dependent form. First, the predicate of *kāna* is separated from its verb by a subject noun in the same way as *ḥāl* is separated for its verb by an agent. The Separation Principle (Carter, 2002: 9; Owens 1990: 107–9) states that an operator, i.e. the verb, will cause the non-

[62] Cf. the principle of *'išrūna dirhaman* '20 dirhams' phrase as a *locus probans* to demonstrate that all elements after complete units will tend to take the dependent form (Carter 1972; see also discussion in chapter four).

adjacent element such as the direct object, the *ḥāl* or the predicate of *kāna* to take the dependent form.

Second, I argue that the predicate of *kāna* and the *ḥāl* are only partially and not truly identical with its subject noun or its antecedent[63] respectively. Carter (2002: 8) shows that the use of the *naṣb* 'dependent form' is determined by other factors besides syntactical completeness such as identity/non-identity and constituent membership that is usually marked by the agreement or lack of agreement in case and definiteness.

Regarding the dependent form assigned to the predicate of *kāna*, I may underline the similarity it bears to *ḥāl* in that it lacks full identity with its subject noun at the moment of speech, as *kāna* refers to something which does not hold at present any more. In the light of this fact, the relationship referred to above between *kāna*'s predicate and its subject noun as referring to the same thing, should be interpreted as a relationship of non-membership rather than full identity. In other words, the transient state to which *kāna*'s predicate refers can never be identical with the subject noun at the moment of speech.

3.2. *Verbs and the initial position*

After establishing the complementary role for definiteness and word order in nominal sentences and in the *kāna* structure, verbal sentences seem to present us with a challenge, because verbs are said to be *nakira*, and yet they occupy the 'initial' position without any particular problem. In fact, the 'indefiniteness' of verbs is seen as an established linguistic reality that is acknowledged by all the Baṣran and Kūfan grammarians.[64]

As for Sībawayhi, in one of the introductory chapters of the *Kitāb* (I Sib 6/5), he seems to be hinting not so much at the 'formal

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[63] It is worth noting that both the antecedent of the *ḥāl* and the *subject noun* of *kāna* must be definite or at least identifiable.

[64] When discussing the so-called 'indefiniteness' of verbs in Arabic, az-Zajjājī (1959: 119) provides us with a conclusive argument in favour, as he invokes the authority of all Arab grammarians, Baṣrans as well as Kūfans, and builds his argument on their unanimous opinion يقال لهم: أولا ما دليلكم على أن الافعال كلها نكرات؟ الجواب أن يقولوا: الدليل على ذلك اجتماع النحويين كلهم من البصريين والكوفيين على أن الافعال نكرات 'It is said to them: 'But how do you prove in the first place that all verbs are indefinite?' Their answer is: 'This is proved by the unanimous agreement of all grammarians, Basrans as well as Kufans, on the fact that verbs are indefinite'' (Versteegh: 1995: 202).

indefiniteness' of the verb but rather at its syntactic and pragmatic incompleteness as he states:

ألا ترى أن الفعل لابد له من الاسم وإلا لم يكن كلاما والاسم قد يستغني عن الفعل وتقول اللهُ إلهنا وعبدُ الله أخونا.

> Do not you see that the verb cannot dispense with the noun for fear of not being a valid utterance, while the noun may dispense with the verb, so you say '[the] God [is] our God' and ''Abdullāhi [is] our brother'.

The key to understand the passage above is the semantic self-sufficiency of the noun which stands in contrast to the incompleteness of the verb in isolation (I Sib 40/30):

الفعل لا يخلو من الفاعل وإنما قلت ضربتُ وضربني قومك فلم تجعل في الاول الهاء والميم لأن الفعل قد يكون بغير مفعول ولا يكون بغير فاعل.

> The verb can not be isolated from the agent, and when you said 'I hit and your people hit me' you did not affix the *hā'* and the *mīm* [pronoun of the third person mas. plur.] to the first verb because it can dispense with the object but not with the agent.

The same idea is found in other grammarians such as Ibn Jinnī and az-Zajjājī to mention but a few. Ibn Jinnī (I, 20) argues that قام '[he] stood' cannot be stripped of a pronoun functioning as the agent if it is to communicate the intended meaning, because a verb in isolation does not make sense and hence a verb such as قام is inconceivable without its agent.[65]

Az-Zajjājī (1995: 100) reiterates in chapter 19 of the *'iḍāḥ*, that the verb cannot dispense with the agent والفعل إذا ذكر لم يكن (بد) من الفكر في فاعله because 'when a verb is uttered, one has inevitably to think of its agent, for a verb and its agent are inseparable and a verb cannot possibly exist without an agent'.[66] لأنه لا ينفك منه، ويستحيل وجوده من غير فاعل

Although a full treatment of verbal utterances is beyond the scope of the present study, there are a few points worth raising which stem directly from the correlation between definiteness, *identifiability* and word order. The first point is that the dichotomy verbal sentence-

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[65] The Arabic text goes ألا ترى أنك إذا قلت قام، واخليته من ضمير، فإنه لا يتم معناه الذي وضع في الكلام عليه وله لأنه إنما وضع على أن يفاد معناه مقترنا بما يسندإليه من الفاعل (Ibn Jinnī I, 20).

[66] Cf. Versteegh (1995a: 177).

nominal sentence or what is later called *jumla fiʿliyya* and *jumal ismiyya* is absent in the *Kitāb*. I find this to be an expression of Sībawayhi's common sense and consistency, mainly because that which is given prominence in the *Kitāb* is the way the Arabs speak and we know that the Arabs place a noun or a verb in the 'initial' position in order to achieve their communicative goal and not merely to comply with established rules. It is remarkable that in the *Kitāb* Sībawayhi deals with nominal utterances more extensively than with verbal utterances (cf. discussion of the notion of *ibtidāʾ* in chapter four, which is primarily applied to nominal utterances but not exclusively). What is more, when dealing with verbal utterances and types of Arabic verbs, it is the agent rather than the verb that Sībawayhi brings into focus (cf. I Sib 13–26/10–20). In spite of attempts to prove that the distinction between the two types of utterances can be inferred from the *Kitāb* (see for instance Levin 1985; 2000: 258), Levin admits that Sībawayhi, unlike al-Mubarrad and later other grammarians such as Ibn Yaʿīš, did not deal with the question of classifying a noun that precedes its verbal predicate as *fāʿil* or *mubtadaʾ* (1985: 124). This is exactly the reason why talking about the SV and VS word order in Arabic is inaccurate and smacks of misapplied western concepts.[67] Even though the VS order should not normally pose serious problems since the overt agent follows the verb in Arabic, it nevertheless eclipses an essential feature of the verbal sentence in Arabic and distracts attention from the agent to be unduly given to the verb. To the best of my knowledge the central role of nouns in Arabic verbal utterances has gone unnoticed. On the other hand, the SV order is equally problematic not only because the western notion of subject and Arabic agent are not the same but more importantly because the initial noun in a statement with a verbal predicate does not fulfil the function of the agent but that of a *mubtadaʾ*.[68]

[67] It is worth mentioning that Greenberg (1966) has identified six types of word order: SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS, and OSV. The first three types are the most common types. For more details on language universals and word order see for instance Comrie (1989); Carnie and Cuilfoyle (2000); Fassi-Fehri (1993: 16–75) and Dahlgren (1998: 95–113).

[68] Dahlgren (2001: 20; 31), for instance, speaks of a higher rate of SV order in the *Qurʾān* when we have important subjects, particularly *Allāh*, than other subjects.

The second point underlines the fact that there are no non-finite verbs in Arabic. The personal form of the verb[69] enables it to stand by itself as a complete verbal sentence with an agent being indicated by the personal pronoun affixed to the verb. The finite nature of verbs stresses the vital role of the agent, which is to relate the action to a particular entity that the speech situation renders accessible to the listener.

The third point suggests that when dealing with word order it would be more accurate to speak of the *fāʿil—mubtadaʾ* dichotomy than the *verb- mubtadaʾ*. We only need to cast an examining look at the heading of the chapters dealing with types of verbs to appreciate the argument on which the claim is based: they all (I Sib 13/10–19/14) begin with هذا باب الفاعل [...] 'This is the chapter on the agent (...)' as in هذا باب الفاعل الذي يتعداه فعله إلى مفعول 'This is the chapter on the agent the operation of whose verb 'crosses over' to the object', i.e. transitive (I Sib 14/12) and هذا باب الفاعل الذي يتعداه فعله إلى ثلاثة مفعولين 'This is the chapter on the agent the operation of whose verb 'crosses over' to three objects', i.e. tritransitive (I Sib 19/14). Moreover, it is not fortituous that Sībawayhi's term for 'passive' is the *object of the unnamed agent* (cf. Carter 2004: 108).

The fourth point is related to the priority of the noun that 'successfully signifies all that is intended to signify entirely on its own' (Weiss 1985: 614). Cantarino argues in the same line and notes that a noun in the independent form is semantically self sufficient to such a degree that it 'can by itself state the existence of the idea expressed by the noun and also its presence in a definite place' (I Cantarino 1974: 5), and its ability to act in so far it can act.

The final point concerns the *identifiability* or contextual predictability of the pronominalised agent affixed to the verb. As mentioned earlier, the speaker and the listener usually constitute the reference point for person even though it is possible to have other deictic centres for person, provided these are clear from the context.

Having said this, I argue that the fact that Arabic verbs are said to be *nakira* should not be interpreted in terms of the formal dichotomy definiteness/indefiniteness but rather in terms of syntactic incomplete-

[69] The verb form provides the listener with the relevant information present in, or recoverable from the speech situation, such as person, gender and sometimes number, depending on the position of the verb in the utterance.

ness and vagueness. The term *nakira* here has to do with non-identification rather than with *non-identifiability*. The bottom line is that there are only finite verbs in Arabic and no verb can appear without an agent whether overt or pronominalised. Our mind tends to differentiate the agent from the verb as the first identifiable element which may appear without the verb (cf. verbal nouns), while no verb in Arabic is conceived without its agent. In the latter case, the differentiation of the agent from the verb aims to distinguish the elements, not to separate them.

Admittedly an agent is an agent insofar as he or she undertakes an action, but it is equally true that no action is conceivable without an agent, for every action flows principally from an agent who is deictically accessible (see supra) and whose existence is taken for granted. To put it differently existence precedes action not only because the agent comes prior to any action but mainly because its existence does not need any assertion.[70]

Regarding a possible second deictic centre, it should be noted that there is no cut and dried answer to the question whether tense in Arabic is deictic or not.[71] A discussion of tense and aspect in Arabic will take us too far afield, but I should like to refer to some conflicting views very briefly. Rabin, for instance, is quoted saying that 'Semitic has either aspects that express tenses or tenses that express aspects' (Hetzron 1997: xvi).[72] *According to Cantarino (I 1974: 58) Arab grammarians have avoided the difficult question of determining the exact value of the Arabic tenses*, while Fassi-Fehri claims that Arab

[70] Regarding the existence of referents, Carter states that Arabic nominal sentences 'do not assert but simply presume the existence of their subject.' (1995: 28). This idea is valid cross-linguistically as Lambrecht (1999: 179) states that mere assertion of the existence of some referents is rather limited in everyday communication.

[71] Deictic time reference is contingent on the speech context for its interpretation, while non-deictic temporal reference is context independent (Eisele 1990: 180 quoting Lyons 1977). Deictic time reference is expressed through both grammatical means (verbal 'tense') and deictic time adverbials such as *yesterday; tomorrow*, etc. Non-deictic time reference is only expressed through non-grammatical means, i.e. no morphological or morphosyntactic marking of the verb, and through non-deictic time adverbials such as calendar time and clock time (ibid. 182). It is important to bear in mind that a deictic distinction in not only limited to past and present, but could equally be viewed as past and non-past or any other degree of proximity to the time of speech (cf. II Lyons 1977: 678).

[72] According to Comrie (1985: 14) tense is deictic because it relates entities to a reference point, while aspect is non-deictic, since analysis of the internal temporal constituency of an event is quite independent of its relation to any other time point.

traditional grammarians view inflected verbs as tensed and asserts that verbal morphology expresses deictic or relative tense in appropriate contexts (1993: 150). Eisele ('Aspect' in *EALL* I. 2006: 199–201) argues in the same line as Fassi-Fehri and claims that tense in Arabic do grammaticalise time reference since perfect verbs in Arabic do refer to past time, while imperfect verbs usually make a reference to a non-past (present or future time).[73]

Summary

This chapter aimed to elucidate Sībawayhi's understanding of definiteness as I exposed misconceptions about this term and tried to put them right. To this end, I began with a systematic exploration into the nature of definiteness and have discussed insufficiencies associated with the one-sided formal approach. The pragmatic notion of *identifiability* is proved to be a crucial element in the interpretation of definiteness and word order in the *Kitāb*. I have expanded upon the idea that *maʿrifa* is primarily anchored in the knowledge the listener has of the referent, while a noun is considered *nakira* 'unknown' as it necessarily implies the listener's ignorance of the referent.

After establishing the definite nature of each of the five definite classes in Arabic and assessing their ability to be adjectivally qualified, proper nouns have been put under the microscope to examine their susceptibility to indefiniteness. Social deixis which covers permanency and spatial proximity has been shown to be among the defining principles for Sībawayhi to argue in favour of the definiteness of proper nouns. Next, some tentative steps were taken towards reconstructing the implied hierarchy of definiteness in the *Kitāb*, and errors in later grammarians were also pointed out. The discussion of ranking proper nouns and vague nouns on the scale of indefiniteness has illustrated the difficulty traditional grammarians were faced with.

Further, the rule of definiteness which takes into account the notion of *identifiability* has been proved to be the application cut off on word order in Arabic nominal sentence, and the presence of indefinite nouns in the front position was observed to be among these elements

[73] For further discussion on tense and aspect in Arabic see for instance Messaoudi (1979); Eisele (1990: 180–5; 1999: 31–4) and Fassi-Fehri (1993: 141–56).

that cannot be accounted for by means of the syntactic dichotomy of definite/indefinite.

Being operators that affect nominal sentences by making the subject noun independent and the predicate dependent, *kāna* and its related verbs were given some space where the rule of definiteness and *identifiability* turned out to hold even in a *kāna* type of structures.

Finally, without getting into a full-scale account of verbal sentences, I have given a brief consideration to the occurrence of verbs in the 'initial' position, Since verbs are traditionally regarded as indefinite, this aspect was explored, and attention drawn to three facts, the first of which is that there are only finite verbs in Arabic where the agent is morphologically grammaticalised in the finite form of the verb. Second, a correlation between the occurrence of the 'indefinite' verbs in the 'initial' position and the notion of *identifiability* has been established. The conclusion I arrived at is that the term *nakira*, which is traditionally used to describe Arabic verbs, should be interpreted in terms of non-identification and vagueness rather than in terms of *non-identifiability*. Third, the type of predicate is paramount in determining the eligibility of an indefinite referent to occupy the front position, for the restriction on indefinites is lifted once we have a verbal predicate, while the linear position of the indefinites in a simple predication is subject to the principle of *inversion* and/or other strict pragmatic factors. The intention of the speaker is thus decisive in determining the eligibility of an indefinite referent to occupy the 'initial' position and assume the role of subject/topic.

In the light of the discussion of definiteness and *identifiability* as a case study of the complementary approach in the *Kitāb* I am now on a solid ground when I aim to establish an analogical relationship in the next and final chapter between Theme, Topic and the 'initial' position on the one hand, and the notion of *mubtada'* and *ibtidā'*, on the other.

CHAPTER FOUR

MUBTADA', TOPIC AND THEME

We have already seen that a shared common ground between the speaker and listener serving as the starting point of an utterance is one of the most basic requirements for any form of effective communication, hence the importance of the rule of definiteness and the significance of the 'initial' position in an utterance.

This final chapter will go into more detail on the nature of nominal sentences and the factors motivating various structural elements to occupy the 'initial' position in such sentences. Many of the insights gained so far will help us draw an analogy between modern concepts such as Theme, Topic and 'initial' position, and the Arabic notions of *mubtada'* and *ibtidā'*. What I actually seek to do is to pinpoint concepts and principles whose comparison will throw light on Sībawayhi's description and analysis of nominal sentences in Arabic. However, the similarities found should not be taken to mean uniformity, but rather lack of crucial discrepancies.

It is important to point out that it is by no means my aim to provide a full-scale analytical study of the Theme, Topic and their realisations in the three main structural—functional theories i.e. Dik's Functional Grammar (FG), Van Valin's Information Structure and Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). At this point it might be as well to remark that these theories do not themselves form the focus of the present study, as they are shown by Butler (II 2003: 477) to lack Chomskyian descriptive adequacy[1] and explanatory adequacy in accounting for why the language is the way it is (ibid. 485ff). However, since they extensively deal with the Theme, Topic and 'initial' position, it is imperative to bring first the confusion of terminology and concept between Topic and Theme to the fore, and then determine what generalisations can be made about them and their realisations away from the confines of an individual theory or school.

[1] Descriptive adequacy is concerned with describing the structural information represented against the backdrop of the linguistic knowledge of a native speaker.

A useful starting point for the discussion is then a summary of relevant research so as to tackle the problem of terminological indeterminacy and avoid the pitfalls associated with it. The required preliminary review of relevant studies in the first section is developed into a brief but workable scheme of the three structural—functional theories mentioned above.

Among the various functional models available, Downing's model is the one I adopt, not only because it is the model whose analysis of Topic and Theme come closest to the notions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ibtidāʾ*, but also on account of its internal coherence and strong arguments. Downing's approach will be shown to be instrumental in supplying fresh conceptual insights when accounting for the notions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ibtidāʾ* in the nominal sentence, as it helps me to distinguish two different strata in the notions of the *ibtidāʾ* and *mubtadaʾ*.

Further, *inversion* occuring in Arabic nominal sentences is accounted for by taking two principles into consideration: (1) the ability of any constituent to occupy the 'initial' position in an utterance and realise the function of Theme (2) the permanent link between, on the one hand, thematic *ibtidāʾ* and Theme as the point of departure and on the other, *mubtadaʾ* and subject/topic as the element about which something is said.

The *ʾinna* structure is brought in for its obvious syntactic influence on the nominal sentence. Contrary to what is unanimously believed by traditional Grammarians as well as Arabists, I demonstrate that Sībawayhi discussion of *ʾinna*'s operation has been misinterpreted. By analogy with the operation of *ʿišrūna* 'twenty' on *dirhaman, ʾinna*'s operation consists of assigning the dependent form to the *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' while leaving the *ḫabar* independent, i.e. unaffected by *ʾinna*'s operation.

1. Introductory Remarks

The term Topic and predicate was first introduced by Hockett in 'A course in Modern Linguistics' where he mentioned that 'the speaker announces a Topic and then says something about it' (1958: 201). The term Theme on the other hand, originated with the School of Prague (cf. Firbas 1964; Daneš 1970) and it was first defined by Mathesius as 'that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation and from which the speaker proceeds' (translated in Firbas 1964: 268 and cited by Butler, II 2003: 113).

It is worth noting that Weil (1844) was the first to discuss the dichotomy of a point of departure and goal of discourse, which provided inspiration for later linguists to develop the terms Theme and Rheme. Weil (1978: 29) stated:

> There is then a point of departure, an initial notion which is equally present to him who speaks and to him who hears, which forms, as it were, the ground upon which the two intelligences meet; and another part of discourse which forms the statement (l'énonciation), properly so called. This division is found in almost all we say.[2]

Topic and/or Theme have been in a particular way the focus of all structural functional theories such as Dik's Functional Theory, Van Valin and LaPolla's Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). In an extensive study of the three structural functional theories spread over two volumes, Butler (2003) provides us with an invaluable source of information and an in-depth study of the functional grammar. The three theories are analysed separately, compared with each other and assessed in terms of the goals they set for themselves. The first chapters of the second volume treat among others the information structure (Theme and Rheme, Topic and Focus, Given and New) in a great detail.

In what follows, a rather brief sketch of the three functional theories, largely based on Butler's work, aims to facilitate our search for an adequate definition of Topic and Theme. But before I turn to consider these theories, there are several important points to take into account and which aim to help us avoid common misconceptions and errors that are usually associated with a random application of modern linguistic theories to Arabic.

First, although Sībawahyi typically does not name linguistic principles and categories used in his analysis, they are mostly described in sufficient detail as to evidence his awareness of their analytical value. This is why an attempt is undertaken to bring to light these principles and categories by comparing them with similar categories identified by modern linguists for western languages. This coincidental similarity should be interpreted as an indication of the universality of these principles and categories and a means to clarify an apparent indeterminacy.

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[2] Note the striking similarity with Sībawayhi's definition of the predication structure (cf. the discussion of the *ibtidā'* on pp. 125–6).

Second, the fact that the focus of attention is on verbless nominal sentences is not a trivial matter. By choosing this type of utterances, I emphasise the wide divergence between the type of utterances dealt with in western communication theories and those dealt with in the Arabic communication theory in general and the *Kitāb* in particular.[3] Verbal sentences are the only type of sentences on which most Western linguistic theories are necessarily entirely based, including those in which the verbs are copulas expressing modes of being without a well-defined beginning and end. Arabic, by comparison, may begin with the verbless i.e. equational sentence in which there is no verbal copula.[4] Weil (1978: 24–5) succinctly describes this indispensible presence of the verb as follows:

> We say, 'The lion is a beast with a mane,' 'This man has talent,' exactly as we say 'The lion has torn his prey.' Even when the attribute is not expressed by a verb, but by an adjective or a substantive, there is need of a verb to give the sentence life.

Third, the aim of this chapter is not to study one particular theory in detail so as to apply it to Arabic, but rather to look into the possibility of locating parallel concepts and linguistic phenomena present in other linguistic traditions, compare them with the ones occurring in Arabic and study their similarities and divergences. The theories under discussion act as a mere guide, not a straitjacket: observable parallel phenomena examined in both modern linguistics and the *Kitāb* are used in the first place to unearth evidence about implicit but clear linguistic principles in the *Kitāb* that remained obscure so far.

Fourth, most of these theories are placed within the wider context of discourse, which is not what characterises the instances given in the *Kitāb*. Although, Sībawayhi seems at first sight to have limited him-

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[3] Fassi-Fehri is one Arabic linguist who fiercely criticised traditional Arab linguistics by approaching Arabic as a VS language (1981: 307; 1982: 39ff). His 'modern' or rather his Chomskyan analysis of Arabic, is mainly based on verbal sentences while nominal sentences are at best left on the sideline. A telling example is his treatement of Topicalisation, which he defines as follows (1982: 44): 'Les structures que je désignerai comme topicalisées sont des phrases où une catégorie majeure (normalement nominale) est placée à gauche du verbe. Cette catégorie peut être un NP, un PP, un AdvP ou un AP.'

[4] Cf. fn. 161 above. See also Carter (1995) and Elamrani-Jamal (1983: 134ff) for more on 'copula' in Arabic equational sentences.

self to simple utterances[5] he nevertheless provides his readers with the necessary extra-linguistic context at the moment the utterance is produced, besides discussing its internal linguistic properties.[6]

Fifth, concepts such as Topic, Theme on the one hand and *mubtadaʾ* and *ibtidāʾ* on the other are examined far from any internal manipulation and in a way that allows for language-specific divergences, which are related to the internal structure of every language.[7] There are two particularly important problems to be identified in this respect,[8] the first of which is related to a certain confusion of terminology as the result of using terms and types of categories in profusion. The discussion of three functional theories reveals a tendency of modern linguists to use different terms, mostly coined by the linguist self, to refer to the same concept or use the same term to denote partially or completely different concepts in support of their own theory of viewpoints. This tendency is also mirrored by modern Arabic linguistics (cf. for instance the discussion of the term Topic in Ayoub and Bohas (1983), Kouloughli (2002) and Fassi-Fehri (1981; 1982; 1993).

The second problem is related to the tendency of Arabic linguists to dismiss traditional Arabic concepts and principles simply because they do not fit into the adopted 'modern' framework. Fassi-Fehri (1981: 302), for instance, rejects what he calls descriptive concepts such as *mubtadaʾ, ḫabar, ism, nāsiḫ* for being inadequate. Instead of the

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[5] Cf. for instance, Abdul Raof's criticism that as far as Arabic is concerned, both traditional and modern linguistics is sentence-based with no attention paid to the actual text, as a result of which the pragmatic aspect of the language is set aside (1998: 5–6).

[6] Although the term Discourse implies 'a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a SENTENCE', in general it refers to 'a set of utterances which constitute any recognizable SPEECH event (no reference being made to its linguistic structure, if any), e.g. a conversation, a joke, a sermon, an interview' (Crystal, 2003: 141–142). If we examine Sībawayhi's examples, the conclusion we can easily draw is that the majority of the instances discussed in the *Kitāb* are provided with their context and the circumstances surrounding the utterance when it was produced.

[7] Some previous attempts to discuss linguistic phenomena in Arabic such as the analysis of verbless nominal sentences (Eid 1991), the use of copula in Arabic (cf. Bahloul 1993) and the position of subjects in nominal as well as verbal sentences (cf. Plunkett 1993) have been hampered by excessively being concerned with applying the linguistic theory of choice (in this case the generative approach of Chomsky) rather than analysing the structure of Arabic itself. Typically, these kinds of research tend to employ a very limited set of rather unnatural sentences which are carefully picked and chosen to meet the requirements. See also Fassi-Fehri (1993: 45–7) for his unnatural examples and explanations that aim to uphold his 'modern' analysis of Arabic.

[8] A particularly illuminating analysis of 'Arab' and 'Arabic' linguistics is found in Carter (1987/88).

mubtada', he adopts the western notion of Subject (ibid. 307ff), and the *ḫabar* is dismissed for the following reason (ibid. 306): [9]

> […] il correspond à deux fonctions avec des propriétés différentes: le complément prédicatif (ou XCOMP) qui se trouve dans les phrases copulatives, et le commentaire qu'on trouve dans les phrases disloquées.

To investigate and formalise my concepts, Topic, Theme and 'initial' position will be first briefly reviewed in the three main structural-functional theories. The discussion shows that the Theme is approached in a variety of ways, e.g. as an extraneous element in Dik's FG, or with no role assigned to it as in RRG. In Halliday's grammar, however, Theme is pivotal to the thematic structure.

As for Topic, it is also approached form different angles. According to Dik, it denotes a referent about which something is said, while Van Valin and LaPolla view it as part of the pragmatic concept of Presupposition. Halliday reduces Topic to a sort of Theme and argues that it actually covers two different notions, namely that of Given and Theme.[10]

Regarding the 'initial' position, a note should be made of the fact that Halliday's understanding of the 'initial' position does not coincide in any way with Dik's and Van Valin and LaPolla's notion of 'initial' position. The instance below taken form Butler (II 2003: 171) illustrates this point:

- On Wednesday, the Duke of Kent will open a major new research and development centre […].

According to Halliday, the 'initial' position is occupied by 'on Wednesday' and as such is part of the clause. Dik and Van Valin and LaPolla analyse it differently, one approaches it as an extra-linguistic constituent and the other as a left detached position (LDP) respectively. However, they both agree that 'the Duke of Kent' is the element assigned to the first position of the clause.

We cannot enter here into a full scale discussion of the instance above, but it suffices to say that Sībawayhi might have agreed with Dik and Van Valin's view on this, as a spatiotemporal qualifier has no position and can become *mulġā*, i.e. has its functions neutralised.

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[9] For further examples of misapplications of western theories to Arabic see Carter (op. cit. p. 208 and passim).

[10] This confusion is reflected in other linguistic works, Lyons (1999: 228), for instance, defines Topic as the point of departure.

2. Three structural-functional Theories

In what follows, central defining characteristics of each theory are considered in a review of the three theories. This review is intended to reveal points of parallelism and divergence between the notions of Theme, Topic and 'initial' position. What matters here is to see how one approach rather than another makes it easier to understand Sībawayhi.

2.1. *Dik's Functional Grammar*

Dik's Functional Grammar (FG) approaches language as a means of communication in social and psychological contexts. It abandons the formal view that syntax is an autonomous and self-contained system and places language within a wider pragmatic framework. In his introduction to FG, Dik (1980: 2; 1997a: 8) clearly establishes the priority of pragmatics over semantics and semantics over syntax. Only a marginal role is assigned to syntax as a formal means through which complex meanings can be expressed. Further, Dik builds his linguistic model on three poles: pragmatic adequacy, psychological adequacy and typological adequacy (1980: 2; 1997a: 13). Typological adequacy is clearly reflected in the considerable amount of languages referred to and studied (cf. Butler I 2003: 39).

Two pairs of pragmatic functions are distinguished in the FG, i.e. Topic and Focus, and Theme and Tail. Topic is a pragmatic category and it hinges on aboutness as it 'represents the entity 'about' which the predication predicates something in the given setting' (Dik 1980: 16), while Focus represents what the speaker considers the most essential part of information for the hearer. In other words, Focus as a pragmatic concept covers what 'is relatively the most important or salient information in the given setting' (ibid.).

As far as my analysis is concerned, Dik's approach is viewed as problematical for two main reasons: first, his functional model hardly complies with the main principle upon which this research is based, i.e. complementarity of syntax and pragmatics. His functional grammar obviously lacks syntactic adequacy, as the only syntactic information provided is limited to the functions of Subject and Object (Butler II 2003: 453–4). Second, as Butler asserts, Dik's work not only shows 'serious deficiencies in pragmatic and discoursal adequacy' (ibid. 457), but these deficiencies spill over to the relationship between discourse-oriented and formal considerations when accounting for the pragmatic

functions and their assignment. This is especially true when dealing with the notion of Topicality (ibid. 81).

Four types of Topic (New Topic, Given Topic, Sub-Topic and Resumed Topic) are identified by Dik and are said to be marked grammatically.[11] The discussion of the four types will be disregarded at this stage not only for their irrelevance to our purpose, but also because their status has raised serious objections. Siewierska (1991: 161), for instance, remarks that the characteristics of New Topic are in many aspects, more closely associated with Focus than with Topic, while Mackenzie and Keizer (1991) have called for abandoning the concept of Topic altogether in an attempt to offer a solution to the confusion about Topic and Focus.[12]

Regarding the notions of Theme and Tail,[13] Dik (1980: 15–6) treats them as extraneous elements that fall outside the predication proper. The Theme is a constituent that precede the predication while the Tail is simply an afterthought to the predication. Here too, FG shows further flaws as far as the distinction between the position of Theme and Tail and their pragmatic function is concerned. The theory posits, on the one hand, that the position of pragmatically important elements should be dissociated from their pragmatic function. On the other hand, special positions are assigned to Theme and Tail, i.e. the P2 and P3, respectively. The association of the two functions with fixed positions were abandoned in Dik's later work (Dik: 1997b: 401–2 and cited in Butler II 2003: 94).

Arabic was one of the languages to which Moutaouakkil (1989) tried to apply Dik's FG. He undertook a study on the applicability of the four pragmatic functions of Focus, Topic, Theme and Tail in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Dahlgren 1998: 38). Unfortunately, Moutaouakkil's discussion shows rather serious flaws as he falls into the trap of analysing unnaturally constructed instances. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that applying a theoretical model is not just a matter of transferring labels and terms from one language to the

[11] There are terms and types of categories in profusion which are not always clearly defined and distinguished, such as Contrast Focus, Parallel Focus, Completive Focus, Counter-Presuppositional, etc. Dik seems to have carefully chosen and/or constructed examples to validate his theory (*cf.* discussion in Butler II, 2003: 89*ff*).

[12] According to Butler (ibid. 81*ff*; 158) this conclusion was drawn after examining Dik's theory and his account of Topic in depth.

[13] The notions of Theme (and Rheme) have been adopted by Systemic Functional Grammar from the Prague School. However, the two notions assume a different function in the two schools as stated below.

other, let alone when the overall picture of the theory under discussion is rather blurred.[14]

The discussion below is mainly based on Dahlgren (1998: 42), where one of the Moutaouakkil's instances is analysed according to FG criteria. A useful starting point for the discussion might be the model proposed by Moutaouakkil of word order in the MSA:

Theme, CO {Foc/Top} V S O X, Tail

In this model CO stands for clause operator, while X is the position of any other constituent, which not only lacks a syntactic function but also a pragmatic function capable of assigning the so-called 'special position'[15] to the constituent in question. Further, according to this model, there is place for only one Topic or Focus in the preverbal slot. By applying this model to Arabic, Moutaouakkil ascribes the ungrammaticality of the following example to the rule that only one Topic or one Focus can occupy the position before verbs (Dahlgren, ibid.):

- **l-kitāba (foc.) Zaydan (top.) 'a'ṭaytu.*
- 'It is the book that I gave to Zayd.'[16]

When examining the instance above, the first thing that strikes us is its unnaturalness, for it is a constructed sentence that only serves to uphold a theoretical linguistic model.[17] Further, objection might be raised against the way the definite article is transliterated in the beginning of the utterance, i.e. *l-* instead of *al*. Most importantly, this instance showcases how a modern linguist theory is misapplied to a wrong utterance. In fact, such utterance not only breaks the norms of general linguistics that animate referents should come before inanimate

[14] Cf. Butler (II, op. cit. 457) where Dik's work is shown to be seriously lacking in pragmatic and discoursal adequacy.

[15] Elements fulfilling particular pragmatic functions such as Topic or Focus tend to occupy special positions such as the clause 'initial' position (cf. Dik 1997a:403, cited by Butler II, 2003:69).

[16] 'The translation of this example is widely wrong. The only possible translation is the very unnatural 'The book [to] Zayd I gave'.' (in personal communication Carter 2007).

[17] The so-called verbs of the heart أفعال القلوب might present this model with a problem so as to account for زيدٌ صادقٌ ظننت or زيداً صادقاً ظننت, although the former, i.e. the independent form, is preferred to the latter, i.e. the dependent form. When the verb separates the first and second object, the dependent form, rather than the independent, is preferably assigned to the preposed first object. Consequently, زيداً ظننت جاهلاً is preferable to زيدٌ ظننت جاهلاً (Wright II 1997: 51).

referents, but it also breaks the norms of good Arabic according to which the second object should normally follow the first object so as to avoid uncertainty (cf. I Sib. 41–3/ 31–2).[18]

More examples that are erroneous have cropped up in other functional works of Moutaouakkil. Carter (1987/1988: 214, n. 25), for instance, has identified serious misprints and wrong structures in Moutaouakkil (1984), e.g. *ʾinna mā ṣafaḥtu Zaydan*. Such evidence casts doubt on the validity of his modern approach to Arabic.

2.2. *Information Structure and Role and Reference Grammar*

The theory of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) first introduced by Foley and Van Valin in 1984 was further developed in Van Valin (1993a, 2005) and Van Valin and LaPolla (1997). It mainly analyses non Indo-European languages and is typologically oriented.[19]

RRG views language as a communicative system and consequently analyses the communicative function of grammatical structures. Its approach to grammar is concerned with the interaction of syntax, semantics and pragmatics but semantics play a central role. RRG dismisses Old and New information as being rather misleading.

RRG sees Topic as a part of the more general concept of Presupposition. What is more this theory has also abandoned the traditional syntactic functions of Subject and Object for lack of universal validity and opted to work with the notion of 'Privileged Syntactic Argument'. This theory also reveals lack of terminological unity as there are terms and semantic roles in abundance such as Nuclear and Core operators, Effecter, Mover, Emitter Agent, Patient, Location, Theme, Actor, Undergoer to name but a few.

Since there is a considerable overlap between RRG and Lambrecht's view and since total pinpoint accuracy is of no consequence for

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[18] This is also confirmed by al-Qazwīnī (1975: 207 §80) who states that the agent should always precedes the object and the first object should always come before the second object: وأما تقديم بعض معمولاته على بعض فهو إما لأن أصله التقديم ولا مقتضى للعدول عنه كتقديم الفاعل على المفعول نحو ضرب زيدٌ عمرًا وتقديم المفعول الأول على الثاني نحو أعطيت زيدًا درهمًا

[19] The theory is well summarised in Butler (I 2003: 40–3; 119–151). For a detailed summary please visit http://linguistics.buffalo.edu/research/rrg/RRGsummary.pdf (in order to access the summary, please use the 'Search UB <http://search.buffalo.edu/>' box and type 'rrg summary').

the present study, the discussion will, for mere convenience, be based on Lambrecht's analysis of the Information Structure in *Information Structure and Sentence Form. Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representation of Discourse Referents* (1994).[20]

Lambrecht points out that the structure of a sentence determines the formal organisation of the sentence and reflects speaker's assumptions about the hearer's state of knowledge and awareness at the time of the utterance. This relationship between speaker assumptions of the mental state of the hearer and formal sentence structure are embedded within a component called the 'information structure', which is regulated by rules and conventions of grammar. This means that Information Structure analysis is mainly concerned with the relationship between the structure of sentences and their linguistic and extralinguistic context, and especially with the so-called Allosentences. Allosentences refer to pairs of sentences that are semantically equivalent but differ from each other formally and pragmatically, e.g. active sentences vs. their passive equivalents (Lambrecht 1994: 6).

Among the categories analysed within the information structure are Presupposition and Assertion, Topic and Focus. Presupposition is the term given to Old information,[21] also known as Given or Presupposed information and it refers to 'the sum of 'knowledge' evoked in a sentence which a speaker assumes to be already available in the hearer's mind at the time of utterance' (Lambrecht 1994: 50). New information or Assertion, on the other hand, denotes 'information added to that knowledge by the utterance itself.'

Topic is conceived as a pragmatic relation in a given sentence, but is equated neither with the Presupposition nor with any participant in the discourse. Topic is part of the pragmatic Presupposition which is necessary to make the utterance accessible for the listener, and is seen as a referent about which relevant information is given to increase the listener's knowledge.

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[20] Lambrecht formulates the Principle of the Separation of Reference and Role, which basically states that for communicative considerations, it is better to separate introducing a referent from talking about it in the same clause. The main function of Reference-Oriented referents is to name the Topic by means of a lexical NP, while Role-Oriented referents designate the Topic referents anaphorically of deictically (*cf.* 1994: 184*ff* for further discussion).

[21] Within the information structure Old and New information are dissociated from old and new referents.

However, we might have a constituent or phrase about which information are given and which designates a Topic referent in the sentence, this constituent is called Topic Expression. The mere existence of a Topic referent in the real world is not enough to be part of the Topic expression; it should be part of the discourse world and mental state of affairs of the interlocutors when uttering the sentence. This difference between a discourse referential expression and non-referential expression in the discourse is demonstrated by the following pair of sentences taken from Karttunen (1969) and cited by Lambrecht (1994: 155–6):

a. Bill has a car. It is black.
b. Bill doesn't have a car. *It is black.

The NP *a car* in (b) is obviously not a referential expression as it lacks enough pragmatic relevance for the speech participants, while it is a discourse referent in (a) and therefore it is possible to refer to it anaphorically even though it is indefinite. Lambrecht concludes that only referential expressions can be Topics and non-referential ones such as the dummy *it* or the existential *there* cannot possibly function as Topic expressions.[22]

Associating Topic *expression* with constituents including identifiable referentional entities only has been criticised by Gómez-Gónzalez (1996a) as it neutralises among others, the difference made between clausal and discourse Topics (cf. Butler, 2003: 111 for further discussion).

Taking into account the central role given to typological adequacy in RRG, I would like to make two observations about the relevance of Information structure to how Arabic is approached in the *Kitāb*.[23] The first observation is about Lambrechts discussion of the three domains of grammar where he rightly points out (1994: 11):

> Syntax may be autonomous in its own domain, but by its nature it must provide the resources for expressing the communicative needs of speakers.

I claim that chapter two of this book has amply shown that the paragraph just quoted embodies one of the fundamental principles in

[22] The accentable deictic adverb *there* as in *There is John* is a Topic expression. In the discussion below it will become clear why I cannot agree with this view.

[23] I am not aware of any functional study of the Arabic language based on Lambrecht's Information Structure.

Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis that systematically approaches syntactic features of simple utterances from a pragmatic angle. For convenience sake, let us have a look at the following instance where the link between syntactical concordance and communicative effectiveness is under focus (I Sib. 211/180):

ومن النعت أيضا مررت برجل لا قائمٍ ولا قاعدٍ جُر لأنه نعت كأنك قلت مررت برجلٍ قائمٍ فكأنك تحدث من في قلبه أن ذاك الرجل قائمٌ أو قاعدٌ فقلت لا قائمٍ ولا قاعدٍ لتخرج ذلك من قلبه.

> Another instance of an adjectival case agreement is 'I passed by a man [oblique] neither standing [oblique] nor sitting [oblique]'. The oblique form is used because they [i.e. standing and sitting] are adjectival qualifiers, and it is as if you said 'I passed by a man [oblique] standing [oblique]' and as if you were talking to someone who had in mind that that man was standing or sitting, hence your saying 'neither standing nor sitting' to set it [i.e. the hearer's mental presentation of the man] out of his mind.

In this example, Sībawayhi sets the scene and provides us with two components of the information structure as described above, i.e. the syntactic argument and the speaker's assumptions of the mental state of the hearer. The syntactic component is made clear by means of case agreement which indicates that the items concerned are adjectival qualifiers. The interaction with pragmatic factors such as speaker's assessment of the addressee's state of mind and presupposed information is obvious enough to make any further predicate on the passage above redundant.

Another important point observed by Lambrecht is that there is no one-to-one match between the intention of the speaker and a fixed syntactic form (1994: 26):

> Speakers do not create new structures to express new meanings. They make creative use of existing structures in accordance with their communicative intentions.

If we turn to the *Kitāb*, we will readily conclude that this is another predominant feature in Sībawayhi's analysis of the language, for he often seeks to explain the rationale for the use of inflectional forms, especially the choice between the independent and dependent forms in the light of communicative effectiveness. The following quote exemplifies this creative use of existing structure which is determined by the meaning intended (I Sib 161/134):

وسمعنا بعض العرب الموثوق به يقال له كيف أصبحت فيقول حمدُ الله وثناءٌ عليه كأنه يحمله على مضمر في نيته هو المظهر كأنه يقول أمري وشأني حمدُ الله وثناءٌ عليه ولو نصب لكان الذي في نفسه الفعل ولم يكن مبتدأ ليبنى عليه ولا ليكون مبنيا على شيء هو ما أظهر.

> We heard a trustworthy Arab being asked 'How are you doing?' to which he answered 'Thank [independent] to God and praise [independent] to Him' as if he correlated the expression syntactically with something concealed in his mind and which is identical with the overt expression [that functions as a *ḫabar*], as if he said أمري وشأني حمدُ الله وثناءٌ عليه. 'My affair and my business [is to express] praise [independent] to God and veneration [independent] of Him'. But when he uses the dependent form, that something concealed in his mind will be a verb, and not a *mubtadaʾ* on which it [sc. the overt expression] is built or that [sc. a *ḫabar*] which is built on something identical with the overt expression.

The paragraph shows that the subtle nuances of the meaning intended are communicated by the choice the speaker makes of the appropriate inflectional form that would enable the listener to catch these nuances. The elliptical expression حمدُ الله وثناءٌ عليه 'praise be to God and veneration of Him' is formally adapted to the intention of the speaker and is made to function either as a *ḫabar* 'predicate' to a suppressed mubtadaʾ 'subject/topic', hence the independent form assigned to it, or else as an absolute object to an elided verb that takes the dependent form. The reason for using the dependent form in the latter case is set out earlier in the chapter where حمدًا 'Praising God [dependent]' is equated with the Arabs' saying أحمد الله 'I praise God' (cf. I Sib 161/134).[24]

2.3. *Systemic Functional Grammar*

This section is largely based on Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1994). Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a text-oriented theory that is mainly concerned with language in use. Semantics plays a central role in SFG and language is approached as "a system of meaning, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized" (Halliday 1994: xiv). Unlike the two previous theories, typological adequacy is not central to SFG.

Mention has already been made of the fact that the verb is pivotal to western linguistic theories. This fact is one of the main points emphasised by Halliday's Functional grammar where reality is viewed

[24] Cf. the elliptical English expression 'Thank God', i.e. '[I] thank God'.

as 'being made up of Processes'; even being is seen as a mode of action (op. cit. 106). In other words, he confirms that all clause types in English are processes, whether they express action as in 'John threw the ball' or ascription as in 'Mary is a teacher' (Halliday 1968: 190), where an attribute is necessarily assigned to the participant (ibid.: 181).

Although Halliday uses the Prague school terminology Theme-Rheme in his linguistic analysis, he partially rejects Mathesius's definition of Theme (cf. above) and points out that there are two levels of analysis mixed up in this definition, i.e. the Theme-Rheme structure (Thematic Structure) and Given-New structure (Information Unit). The Theme is redefined as 'the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned' (Halliday 1994: 37) and is usually identified by its first position in the clause. The Theme thus combines three inseparable features: that of being the starting point of a message, what is talked about, and finally its fixed 'initial' position. The Rheme is 'the remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed' (ibid).

The concept of Topic is abandoned by Halliday for reason of ambiguity ascribed to the fact that the Topic encompasses two separate pragmatic concepts of Theme and Given (ibid. 38). Instead, topical Theme is introduced,[25] and is recognised as 'the first element that has a function in transitivity' and which makes part of the Theme together with anything preceding it (ibid. 53).

Halliday (ibid. 43–4) distinguishes between marked and unmarked Theme. In English the thematic status is expressed by position in sequence: Theme comes first and the Rheme follows. The distribution pattern of unmarked thematic structures shows that the function of Theme is typically realised by the Subject in the declarative mood. In contrast, the function of marked Theme is realised by other constituents such as Complements, Adverbial groups and Prepositional Phrases when assigned to the 'initial' position in an alternative marked thematic structure. In sum, a marked Theme is any constituent other than the Subject brought to occupy the 'initial' position. And yet, an initial Subject can become a marked Theme in any mood type other than the declarative, as shown in Downing's example (1991: 123):

[25] The term Topical here is related to the concept of topic as used in topic-comment dichotomy (cf. Halliday 1994: 38).

- *The Gauls* sacked what?
- *You* sack Rome!

It is worth noting that Halliday (1994: 181–2; 196–7) draws an interesting parallel between the Theme and the significance of 'initial' position in other structures lower than the clause. In both the verbal group and the nominal group in English, the 'initial' position realizes a structural function that relates the first element to the 'speaker-now'. In the nominal group, the orientation of 'speaker-now' is realised by the deictic element, whether specific such as *the, this* and *my* or non-specific such *a* and *some*. The verbal group, on the other hand, begins with the Finite that carries the deictic meaning of tense and relates the process to the 'speaker now'.

Halliday's treatment of the Theme allows for a concept of multiple Themes (1994: 52–54). The Hallidayan Theme will include only one necessary ideational element[26] i.e. topical Theme, but may include *modal* Themes (please, surely, may be), *vocatives* (Anne, Doctor, etc.), *structural* Themes (if, so, when, but, etc.), *conjunctive* Themes (then, besides, etc.) and *continuative* Themes (Well, oh, Yes, No, etc.). Further, he suggests that although it does not occur frequently but it is possible for these conjunctions to be followed by a marked Theme as in 'I enjoyed literature, but grammar I couldn't stand' (ibid. 51). This is brought out by the following examples taken from Butler (II op. cit. p. 117 and p. 118 respectively) where the Theme is in bold type:

- *Perhaps we* can go fishing now. (BNC GUF 1383)
- *Perhaps now* we can go fishing.

These examples show that the ideational element is the final element in the Theme (ibid. 118).

Within the information dichotomy Given-New, Given is closely related to what is recoverable and predictable, while New implies non-recoverable or unpredictable information (Halliday op. cit. 296). Although the Thematic structure (Theme and Rheme) and Information unit (Given and New) do not conflate with each other automatically, they do share a semantic bond. The Theme will usually but not always fall within the boundaries of Given information, as the speaker needs to start with something known or identifiable by the listener, while New information will be the proper area for the realisation of the

[26] The ideational element can be a participant, circumstance or process.

Rheme. In other words, Theme is speaker-oriented while Given is listener-oriented, for the point of departure, chosen by the speaker, needs to be considered as known or given by the hearer (ibid. 299–300).

Halliday distinguishes three patterns of meaning in the clause which he calls metafunctions, i.e. Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual. The Ideational component of meaning (1994: 179)[27] is related to the content of the message, usually represented as a process with associated participants and circumstances. As for the Interpersonal meaning, he approaches it as an expression of social roles designated to interlocutors in the form of a verbal exchange between them, such as the role of questioner or respondent when asking or answering a question. Finally, the Textual meaning is concerned with the organisation of the text and the relation between text and context or situation.

Now we have reached the end of the preparatory sections, it is obvious that providing a transparent and well-defined terminology that reaches beyond the limits of a specific theoretical construction presents a challenge. However, I have solid foundations on which to build the subject matter of the next section that will provide a more detailed picture of Downing's view on Topic and Theme.

2.3.1. *Downing's view on Topic, Theme and the 'initial' position*

In her article 'An alternative approach to theme: A systemic-functional perspective', Downing (1991) investigates the importance of the 'initial' position and its relationship with the Topic, Theme and their realisations. While adopting Halliday's view regarding the Theme, she rightly argues that identifying Topic with the Theme is rather misleading.

Backtracking a bit, Halliday defined the Theme as the element that serves as the point of departure of the message (*sc. passim*), while he identified the Topic with the first ideational element that represents its point of departure. Thus, the Topic falls within the Theme's remit and forms a type of Theme called topical Theme.

Downing (1991: 120) identifies the source of confusing Theme with Topic as follows: on the one hand, the Topic, Subject and 'initial' position are usually concurrent in a simple declarative sentence, e.g. 'John' in '*John* ran away', where 'John' nicely fits into the category identifying Topic, Subject and the 'initial' position as one and the same. On the other hand, the linguistic phenomenon of Topicalisation upholds the

[27] See also Butler (I 2003: 168).

identification of the Topic with the 'initial' position. It might be as well to remind ourselves that Topicalisation refers to syntactic constructions in which a constituent is moved to the front position and placed before the Subject, hence its identification as a Topic such as *Quite a genius* in '*Quite a genius* he is' (ibid.).[28]

Following Halliday's lead in maintaining the Thematic Structure separate from the Informational Unit, Downing (1991) sticks to the Hallidayan concept of Theme but argues in favour of dissociating the Theme in the sense of 'initial element' from the Topic. She underlines that although the two notions may coincide, they do not necessarily mean that they are the same, just as the Theme and Given are differentiated, even though they are often realized by the same elements.[29] Downing formulates further her trenchant observation as follows (1991: 127):

> Topic will identify what a particular part of the text is about, while Theme (or initial element) presents the point(s) of departure of the message. We would still have the advantage of 'multiple Themes', with the difference that the first ideational element need not represent the cut-off point between Theme and Rheme. In other words, while all Topics would still be ideational, the first ideational element is not necessarily the Topic.

On basis of Downing's observation, we will now highlight the most distinctive features associated with the notions of 'initial' position, Theme and Topic. Given that the 'initial' position is intrinsically linked to the Theme, there will be a considerable overlap in their features.

The 'initial' position is syntactically neutral: various structural and pragmatic elements may occupy this position for the simple fact of being the point of departure for the message. However, the 'initial' position is highly significant from the cognitive and communicative point of view because there must be an initial common ground between the speaker and the listener upon which the utterance is further built up.

For Downing (2006: 222) the Theme 'is identified as the first clause constituent and communicatively is the point of departure of the mes-

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[28] In line with Downing, is more accurate to talk about *Transpositioning* and *Thematisation* rather than Topicalisation.

[29] As mentioned earlier, Given means 'here is a point of contact with what you know' (and thus not tied to specific elements in clause structure), whereas Theme means 'here is the heading to what I'm saying' (Halliday 1970b: 163 cited by Downing, op. cit. p. 121).

sage.' Although the speaker is completely free to choose between a marked and unmarked Theme, both the speaker and the listener attach a great communicative significance to the Theme: the speaker chooses the point of departure that serves for the hearer 'as a signal, creating expectations and laying the foundations for the hearer's mental representation of how the message will unfold.' (Downing and Locke 2006: 224).

The Topic is fundamentally a nominal participant (II Givón 1984: 253) and is associated with the main referential entity of the utterance. Topics are thus nouns or nominal phrases with the role of the main participant in the semantic structure of the clause. Downing (2006: 226) summarises the main cognitive features associated with major Topic entities as follows:

1. The Topic is actively involved in the event described and it initiates the action.
2. The Topic function has much to do with the focus of attention and is arranged in an empathy hierarchy: the speaker is at the top of the scale, followed by the listener, other human beings and then animals. Physical objects appear before abstract entities that are relegated to the bottom of the scale.
3. Definiteness is another feature of the Topic and is described as a subjective factor as it depends on the empathy the speaker and the listener have of the Topic. Once the degree of familiarity with the Topic has been established, it is easily accessible and is definite.
4. The Topic is the most salient participant in the communication event.

Downing observes further that these features mainly coincide with those associated with the Subject, but not necessarily so with the Theme. The Topic is always a nominal entity that the message is about, while the Theme may be any element the speaker selects to function as the point of departure for his message.

Downing (1991: 128ff) proposes three groups of initial elements to describe different types of frameworks. The first group is *Participant* Themes, whose function is to set up individual frameworks and denote entities that the message is about. The second group is *Spatio-temporal* Themes that set up circumstantial frameworks. The function of this type of Themes is primarily to set the scene for the predication. Finally, *Discourse* Themes which establish subjective and logical

frameworks, and whose function is not even remotely connected to the referents with which the message is concerned. This group will not be dealt with any further for lack of relevance to the subject matter of the present discussion.[30]

Upon closer examination it is clear that the sentence types beneath Downing's analysis are exclusively verbal. Not only does she view Topic as a participant in an event, but she (1991: 122) willingly accepts two main Hallidayan assumptions that have been brought earlier in the discussion: first, the 'initial' position provides the deictic element needed to determine which way the remainder of the message unfolds. Second, the Theme is viewed as an element in a transitivity structure. Such a structure is concerned with what the clause is about and typically involves an action with participants, i.e. a main participant and a goal, in addition to circumstances. In this representational structure the main participant is normally assigned to the 'initial' position[31]

It is perhaps time go into some more detail about an important difference in analysis between Arabic and English utterances. The reasons underlying this difference are threefold. First, *verbless* nominal sentences are part and parcel of the Arabic communication theory, while they are nonexistent in English,[32] where a copula is always needed in equational sentences. Second, the deictic element provided by the 'initial' position in Arabic nominal sentences is inherently linked to the rule of definiteness and principle of identifiability, as brought out in the pervious chapter. Third, the Subject and the *fāʿil* 'agent' do not only have a different order in the sentence but also bear a fundamentally diverse relationship to the 'initial' position.

Let us consider the Subject first. It is true that the 'initial' position is the unmarked position of the Subject, but it is equally true that this position is dissociated from the syntactic function of the Subject. Weil (1844: 25) hits the nail on the head as he argues that when the

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[30] For a historical overview of the status of the particle see for instance Gully (1995: 116ff).

[31] This is also clear in Weil's two possible word orders: the *ordinary order* where the point of departure comes first and is followed by the goal; and the *pathetic order* where the order of the two elements is reversed and the goal of the discourse is put first. The *ordinary order* is said to reflect the movement of the human mind and the latter the movement of the imagination and the soul (1844: 33–53, also cited in Dahlgren 1996: 25). It is worth mentioning that one of the principles governing the *pathetic order* might be the principle that safeguards the 'predictability of which way the clause goes'.

[32] I am not talking here about elliptical utterances.

point of departure is different, it is because the goal of the discourse is different and not because the syntactic functions of the elements transposed have changed. His Latin examples below aim to clarify the point (ibid.):

- *Idem ille Romulus Romam candidit.*
- *Hanc urbem candidit Romulus.*
- *Candidit Romam Romulus.*

Weil (ibid. 26) continues that although the syntactic functions of the transposed elements did not change, the point of departure, as the common ground between the speaker and listener, as well as the goal of the utterance actually did. The fact that syntactic functions remained the same is ascribed to the fact that the sensible and exterior action itself remained the same. In short, syntax does not change because it is the image of sensible facts, in contrast, word order may change because it reflects the movement of the human mind and the order in which ideas are produced (ibid).

If we focus our attention now on Arabic verbal sentences we will readily come to the conclusion that the *fāʿil* 'agent' and the 'initial' position mutually exclude each other. The 'initial' position not only deprives the *fāʿil* from its function as an agent in a verbal sentence but also converts the verbal sentence into a nominal one where the *fāʿil* assumes the function of *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' and the verbal sentence realises the function of *ḫabar* 'predicate'. This explains why verbal utterances will not be dealt with in the remainder of this chapter.

In the next section, I shall examine the realisation of the Topic and Theme in Downing's model and look particularly at the participant role in identifying the Topic. In this model only a participant Theme that conflates with the Subject is equated with the Topic and is thus labelled as 'topical Theme'.

2.3.2. *Participant's role in identifying Topics*

When analysing the structure of a given language from the experiential point of view, we can make a distinction between three elements present in that structure: process, participants and circumstantial elements, if any.

Based on this tripartite analysis of the linguistic structure, typical functions are assigned to main groups and phrase classes such as verbal, nominal and adverbial groups and prepositional phrases. Verbal groups will realise the function of the process in the clause and

nominal group that of participants. In the majority of cases, the main participant turns out to be the Subject. Adverbial groups and prepositional phrases typically serve to express circumstances. Halliday (1994: 109) gives the following characterisation of the three functions:

> The concepts of process, participant, and circumstance are semantic categories which explain in the most general way how phenomena of the real world are represented as linguistic structures.

The distinction made above is an important one for the identification of the Topic and Theme in Halliday's and Downing's models. The following example quoted in Downing well illustrates the difference in approach between the two models. She begins with analysing the Theme according to Halliday's model (op. cit. 125):

1.	topical	*Towards the end of his life*, (1)
2.	*structural*	Freud concluded *that* (2) *he* (3)
3.	topical	was not a great man, *but* (4)
4.	*structural*	*he* (5) had discovered great
5.	topical	things. *Arguably* (6), *the*
6.	*modal*	*reverse* (7) might be true.
7.	topical	

Downing points out that we run into difficulty with identifying the first ideational element, i.e. *towards the end of his life* as necessarily topical Theme in the first clause, while '*he*' is the topical Theme in the second and third. She readily accepts the *reverse* as the topical Theme in the fourth clause; *that* and *but* as structural Themes and *arguably* as a modal Theme.

Perhaps this is the place to digress a little and call attention to a further angle on the meaning of the Theme in Halliday's model. Although it is not my aim to go into a detailed discussion of this complex area, it would be as well to bring to the fore a possible affinity between Halliday's Theme and what Sībawayhi understood by the grammatical *maʿnā* 'meaning'. As far as I know, this point has not been touched upon before. The key factor in this discussion is the combination of the two aspects covered by the Hallidayan Theme, i.e. 'what the message is about' and 'the starting point for the message'. In order to establish this affinity, I shall first deal with the Theme and then devote some space to the examination of the grammatical *maʿnā* 'meaning', for which I acknowledge my debt to Carter (2004).

We saw that the Theme is claimed by Halliday to be an informational component that defines the speaker's angle from which the remainder

of the message ensues, and that the thematic material extends from the beginning of the clause up to, and including, the first ideational element. The consequence for both the Theme and the 'initial' position is that the Theme is not so much a constituent as a movement from the beginning of the clause (1994: 52). This entails that the 'initial' position is not what defines the Theme but the means by which this function is realised (op. cit. 38). Meaning for Halliday becomes thus the realisation or construal of the structure as a whole, i.e. the total configuration of functions (ibid.: *sic passim*). Furthermore, Halliday (ibid. 48–52) makes a reference to two groups of elements which are thematic by default, not by option. The first group is that of adverbs and prepositional phrases which fulfil the function of conjunctive Adjuncts such as *in fact, moreover, meanwhile, otherwise* etc. and modal Adjuncts such as *probably, evidently, in general* etc. Adjuncts are typically thematic but not necessarily so. The second group which is obligatorily thematic consists of conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *because* etc. and relatives such as *who*, *where*, *whatever* etc. The thematic status of conjunctions for instance 'comes as part of a package, along with the meaning of the conjunction' (ibid. 51).

As has been brought out earlier in this study, the *maʿnā* 'meaning' in the *Kitāb* has in the first place to do with the total meaning of the utterance and the intention of the speaker. That is to say it cannot be seen as the sum of the lexical meanings of the individual parts of the utterance, hence the use of the expressions *maʿnā l-kalām* 'the meaning of the utterance' (I Sib 420/375) and *maʿnā l-ḥadīṯ* 'the meaning of the statement' (I Sib 50/39). Moreover, the word *maʿnā* invariably occurs with function terms such as معنى التنبيه والتعريف 'meaning of attracting attention and definition' (I Sib 48/37); معنى القسم 'the meaning of swearing an oath' (II Sib 146/149); معنى الرفع 'the meaning of putting a word in the independent form'[33] (I Sib passim); معنى النصب 'the meaning of putting a word in the dependent form'[34] (I Sib 166/138 and passim). Having said this, I claim that the correlative relationship between the Theme and the 'initial' position strikingly reflects

[33] That is to say 'the meaning of *ibtidā*'.

[34] That is to say 'the meaning of a verbal power that operates on the word and puts it in the dependent form.'

the correlation between *maʿnā* 'meaning', *mawḍiʿ* 'place'[35] and *manzila* 'status', as discussed in Carter (2004).

Carter (op. cit. 69–71) points out that the difference between *maʿnā l- nidāʾ* 'the meaning of the vocative' and *mawḍiʿ l-nidāʾ* 'a place for the vocative' (I Sib 327/325) is limited to the analytical level only. There are two analytical aspects to be distinguished here. On the one hand, the 'meaning of the utterance' forms the focal point if the speaker's intention to call someone is under discussion. On the other hand, the 'place' that the vocatives occupy will become the focal point if the speech act itself is under discussion. Carter concludes that this explains why the *maʿnā* in the *Kitāb* is used to refer to any of the function 'place' terms.

Another point discussed by Carter is that the *ḥarf* 'particle' against the backdrop of *maʿnā* is recognised as a means of indicating a given function.[36] Interestingly enough, the 'place' these particles occupy in an utterance is normally the beginning of the utterance or the 'initial' position. Particles such as *ḥurūf l-nidāʾ* 'the vocatives', *ḥurūf l-istifhām* 'the interrogatives' etc. will typically occupy the 'initial' position as evidenced in the following quotations (I Sib 278/239; 316/274 respectively):

فمعنى أين في أي مكان وكيف على أية حالة وهذا لا يكون إلا مبدوأ به قبل الاسم لأنها من حروف الاستفهام.

> The meaning of *where* is 'in what place' and that of *how* 'in what state' and either should be begun with and placed before the noun because they are particles of interrogation.

أول الكلام أبدا النداء إلا أن تدعه استغناء بإقبال المخاطب عليك.

> The first part of every speech is always a vocative, unless you leave it out because you dispense with it by the fact that the listener is standing before you.

Keeping in line with Halliday's view of the Theme, these particles might be said to realise a deictic or 'pointing out' function that has the general sense of 'I am asking you' or 'I am calling you' etc. (cf. Halliday 1994: 51). I argue that the difference between *maʿnā* and *mawḍiʿ* can now be explained by the fact that *mawḍiʿ l-nidāʾ*, which is normally the

[35] *Mawḍiʿ* 'place' stands for *mawḍiʿ fī l-kalām* 'place in the utterance'.
[36] For a detailed discussion of '*ḥarf jāʾa li-maʿnā*' see Levin (2000a).

'initial' position in an utterance, is 'not what defines the meaning of the vocative but is the means by which this meaning is *realised*' (cf. above).

I also claim that the correlation between *maʿnā* and *mawḍiʿ*, which emerges from Sībawayhi's discussion, is instrumental in bringing out one important difference between the Hallidayan Theme and Downing's Theme. The conclusion I draw here is that the difference between Halliday's Theme and Downing's Theme marks two different analytical levels of 'aboutness'. Halliday's 'aboutness' is primarily pragmatic and extends to the global meaning of the utterance, i.e. what the whole utterance is about. In contrast, Downing's 'aboutness' is a syntacto-pragmatic notion that is concerned with identifying the main participant in the utterance, hence her argument in favour of dissociating the Topic from the Theme.[37]

Clearly, much more research is required in this area, but the hypothesis about a relationship between *maʿnā* in Sībawayhi and the Hallidayan Theme has been demonstrated to be at least plausible. The discussion may fittingly be concluded by the following statement made by Scaglione in his introduction to Weil's work (Weil 1978: xi) which summarises the argument I tried to adduce in support of a common ground between the Theme and *maʿnā*; we only need to replace 'Weil' by 'Halliday' or 'Sībawayhi':

> Generally, Weil's system could be characterized as a contexualist one: for him the specific arrangement of the parts of a discourse cannot be comprehended without knowing the total meaning of the clause, i.e. what is in it as well as what precedes it.

After this long but necessary digression, I may turn now to Downing's analysis of the same text that had been analysed according to Halliday's understanding of the Theme. We will see not only a different but also a more satisfactory way of analysis when the global meaning of the utterance is not the main concern. In Downing's model, *Freud, he* (in the second and third clause) and *the reverse* are Topics while *towards the end of his life*, *that*, *but* and *arguably* are all Themes (op. cit. 127–8):

[37] According to Butler (II op. cit. 175), the most persuasive evidence in support of something akin to Halliday's attempts to find a single overall meaning for the Theme lies in a view that explains how utterances are constructed and interpreted rather than in the grammatical aspects of initial positioning, as most linguists and functionalist believe.

1. *ideational*	*Towards the end of his life* (1),
2. ideational (+ Topic)	*Freud* (2) concluded *that* (3)
3. *structural*	*he* (4) was not a great man,
4. *ideational* (+Topic)	*but* (5) *he* (6) had discovered
5. structural	great things. *Arguably* (7),
6. *ideational* (+Topic)	*the reverse* (8) might be true.
7. *modal*	
8. ideational (+Topic)	

Downing concludes that only when the Theme coincides with the Subject and Topic in one wording, can we speak of a topical Theme. When the Theme is realised by a Spatiotemporal Adjunct it is called temporal Theme, as it creates a time-space frame within which the participant chain develops. When some other elements, such as the Object or Complement are assigned to the 'initial' position, we have then to do with a marked Theme (Downing, 2006: 222).

Downing (ibid. 128–34) examines the issue of aboutness at length and consequently makes careful distinctions. She attaches a considerable importance to the distinction between the role of Circumstantials and the function of Topic. The conclusion she reaches is that the function of Topic cannot possibly be realised by an Adjunct, and that, semantically speaking, it would be as misleading to describe the purpose of using Adjuncts as directly related to fulfilling the role of participants, as it would amount to identifying them with 'what the clause is about or concerned with'. Adjuncts are extraneous elements in the clause that affect neither its meaning nor its form. Rather than announcing a Topic, the main function of Circumstantials is to provide a spatial, temporal or other circumstantial framework for the message. Downing argues further that fronting Adjuncts does not affect the mood structure[38] nor the predictability of which way the clause is going. (cf. the discussion of the status of *away* in '*Away ran the terrified horse*' in Downing 1991: 126).

However, Circumstantials are not the only category which is excluded from the Topical status, but fronted Complements in relational processes are likewise excluded. In her treatment of fronted

[38] The status of Adjuncts may *mutatis mutandis* be compared to that of *ẓurūf* 'spatiotemporal qualifiers' that do not affect the mood of the utterance even when preposed, while particles that have a grammatical meaning obligatorily occupy the 'initial' position and affect the mood of the utterance.

Attributes or Complements, Downing advances 'Furious they were' as an example of a predication in which the Attribute is fronted and yet excluded from fulfilling the function of Topic, as the participant role in the semantic structure is fulfilled by *they* rather than *Furious* (ibid).

The final pertinent note to the discussion is about the behaviour of Complements in relational processes or predication. Halliday (1994: 119) remarks that the term 'relational' does not refer to 'being' in the sense of existing, but emphasises an 'aboutness' relationship in which two parts to the 'being' are related. In other words, the main purpose of using relational processes is not to prove the existence of the two parts but to determine the relationship between them. This relationship can be either attributive or identifying. The identifying terms are typically definite and hence reversible, e.g. '*Tom is the leader* / *The leader is Tom*' (ibid.). Conversely, the attributive terms are not reversible, that is to say the pair '*wise is Sarah*' and '*Sarah is wise*' are not to be considered as two systematically related forms (ibid. 119–20). The question that arises, then, is what the word 'reversible' really means.

In order to give an adequate reply, we need to take into account the complementarity of pragmatics and syntax, because what Halliday implies is that unlike syntactic positions, pragmatic functions are not reversible in an attributive structure. An utterance such as '*Wise is Sarah*' is acceptable not as the reversible form of '*Sarah is wise*' but as an alternative marked Thematic structure where the Attribute *wise* occupies the 'initial' position and fulfils the function of the Theme, and certainly not the syntactic function of the Subject.

After presenting Downing's analysis of the Topic, Theme and 'initial' position and by mainly drawing on her views, I argue that there is correspondence rather than absolute identity between these terms and the Arabic notions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ibtidāʾ*. This correspondence will prove useful in unravelling what Sībawayhi really meant by these two terms.[39]

[39] The following sections are a revised and expanded discussion of my Al-ʿArabiyya article (2004: 77–100).

3. Mubtadaʾ and ibtidāʾ: an alternative approach to an old problem

Now we have established the basic notions of the Topic, Theme and their relation to the 'initial' position, we will turn to deal with the notions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ibtidāʾ* in the light of Downing's insights. I give in what follows a detailed description of how these terms overlap with the two necessary terms of the nominal structure in Arabic.

My task in this section is to demonstrate that Sībawayhi consistently employs the term *ibtidāʾ* 'beginning' to distinguish two strands of the predication structure from each other and for which Sībawayhi has no explicit term himself: *Thematisation*, and what I shall label as *Topicalisation*.[40] *Thematisation* or thematic *ibtidāʾ* is advanced as a term intrinsically linked to the 'initial' position and is used to gloss the pragmatic structure of *musnad-musnad ʾilayhi* 'Theme-Rheme'. What I shall call *Topicalisation* or topical *ibtidāʾ* henceforth is intrinsically linked to Downing's Topic and is used to gloss the syntactic structure of *mubtadaʾ—ḫabar* 'subject/topic-predicate'.

I show that a further terminological indeterminacy of *mubtadaʾ* arises from the distinction drawn between the thematic *ibtidāʾ* and topical *ibtidāʾ*. I argue that this indeterminacy is mainly related to their common morphological root *b-d-ʾ* and to the derived form of the passive participle which both notions of *ibtidāʾ* share. The term *mubtadaʾ* in the *Kitāb* is not only seen as a technical term to denote the function of Topic but is also the initial noun within a thematic *ibtidāʾ* structure. In other words, Sībawayhi uses the same term, i.e. *mubtadaʾ* to label two distinct functions in a predication structure which correspond to the functions of Topic and Theme.[41]

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[40] As pointed out earlier, the term Thematisation is used to replace the less accurate term of Topicalisation.

[41] This terminological indeterminacy is not limited to the predication structure but is described by Carter (2002: 4) as a characteristic of the *Kitāb* terminology, the reason being Sībawayhi tendency not to separate the real world from the linguistic world. Carter (2004: 53–4) shows that technical terms are frequently used in a literal and technical sense, such as the *ḥāl* 'state or circumstance' which is used both literally for the extralinguistic state or circumstance described in the context of the utterance, and technically for the grammatical notion of the dependent noun that fulfils the function of circumstantial qualifier. Other examples of ambiguous technical terms are *badal* 'substitution', *iḍāfa* 'annexation', *kalām* 'speech', *ism* 'noun', *fiʿl* 'action', *maʿnā* 'meaning', *mawḍiʿ* 'place' and *manzila* 'status'. However, the *ḥarf* is different because even though it is used at a different linguistic level, it is nevertheless used consistently as

Important evidence of my claim occurs in the following passages from the *Kitāb* that are devoted to the discussion of the predication structure. At risk of being repetitive, each passage will be commented on separately for reasons of clarity but the discussion will be ended with a general conclusion. Sībawayhi states (I Sib 7/6)

1. هذا باب المسند والمسند إليه وهما مالا يستغني واحد منهما عن الآخر ولا يجد المتكلم منه بدا فمن ذلك الاسم المبتدأ والمبني عليه وهو قولك عبدُ اللهِ أخوك وهذا أخوك ومثل ذلك يذهب زيدٌ فلا بدّ للفعل من الاسم كما لم يكن للاسم الأول بدّ من الآخر في الابتداء ومما يكون بمنزلة الابتداء قولك كان عبدُ اللهِ منطلقًا وليت زيدًا منطلقٌ لأن هذا يحتاج إلى ما بعده كما حتياج المبتدأ إلى ما بعده واعلم أن الاسم أول أحواله الابتداء وإنما يدخل الناصب والرافع سوى الابتداء والجار على المبتدأ ألا ترى أن ما كان مبتدأ قد تدخل عليه هذه الأشياء حتى يكون غير مبتدأ ولا تصل إلى الابتداء ما دام مع ما ذكرت لك إلا أن تدعه وذلك أنك إذا قلت عبدُ اللهِ منطلقٌ إن شئت أدخلت رأيت عليه فقلت رأيت عبدَ اللهِ منطلقًا أو قلت كان عبدُ اللهِ منطلقًا أو مررت بعبدِ اللهِ منطلقًا فالمبتدأ أول كما كان الواحد أول العدد والنكرة قبل المعرفة.

This is the chapter on *musnad* [i.e. that which is propped up] and *musnad ʾilayhi* [i.e. what is propped on]. They are two terms which one cannot do without the other, neither can the speaker do without it, an instance would be the initial noun (*al-ʾism l-mubtadaʾ [bihi]*) and what is built on it (*mabnī ʾilayhi*), as in your saying ʿAbdullāhi [is] your brother' and 'This [is] your brother'. Similar to that is 'Zayd is going/goes out' because the verb must have a noun just as the first noun cannot do away with the other in the *ibtidāʾ* [*thematic*]. What may have the status of *ibtidāʾ* [*thematic*] is your saying ʿAbd Allāh was going away' and 'Would that Zayd were going away' because this needs what comes after it just as the *mubtadaʾ* [*Topic+ Theme*] needs what comes after it. You should know that the primary state of the noun is the *ibtidāʾ* [*topical/thematic*] and that operators of dependence, independence, except in the case of *ibtidāʾ* [*topical*], and obliqueness occur before the *mubtadaʾ* [*Topic + Theme*]. Do not you see that when the initial noun [*mubtadaʾ*] has these things coming into it, it loses its 'initial' position and ceases to be first unless it lets go of them. When you say ʿAbdullāhi [independent] [is] going away [independent]' you may place 'I saw' before it and say 'I saw ʿAbdallāh [dependent] going away [dependent as *ḥāl*]' or ʿAbdullāhi [independent] was going away [dependent]' or 'I passed by ʿAbdillāhi [oblique] [while he was] going away [dependent as *ḥāl*]'. So the *ibtidāʾ* [*thematic/topical*] is the first just as one is the first of the numbers and indefiniteness is prior to definiteness.

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a 'particle' with a specific meaning in syntax, 'morpheme' in morphology and 'phoneme' in phonology (ibid. 120–1).

Here Sībawayhi explores the two basic relationships involved in the formation of an utterance as a message, i.e. *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi*. It is important to note that the term *musnad* is relatively insignificant in the *Kitāb* and only appears four times in the *Kitāb* (I Sib 7/6; 256/218; 278/239 and II 66/61). Moreover, it is used in the most general sense and in relation to the 'initial' position to denote the initial term.[42] In the passage above, the two terms of *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi* are presented as indispensable parts of an utterance with a fixed position assigned to it: *musnad* is assigned to the 'initial' position and *musnad ʾilayhi* comes after it, just as the *Rheme* follows the Theme in the thematic structure. In a combination such as *ism l-mubtadaʾ* [*bihi*]—*mabnī ʿalayhi*,[43] it is obvious that the term *mubtadaʾ* is related to thematic *ibtidāʾ* and not to *topical ibtidāʾ*, and that the word *mubtadaʾ* here is an adjectival qualifier of a noun with which the utterance begins. There is ample evidence in this chapter that *Thematisation* is at the heart of the matter and that the terms of *ibtidāʾ* and its related morphological term *mubtadaʾ* are intrinsically linked to discussion of the 'initial' position.[44] The distinctive feature of *mubtadaʾ* as 'subject/topic' and its related term topical *ibtidāʾ* are somewhat blurred, because *mubtadaʾ* '*subject/topic*' in this chapter occurs in its unmarked 'initial' position and therefore nicely map on to non-technical or thematic *mubtadaʾ*.

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[42] For a full discussion of *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi* see Levin (1981: 145–65) and Talmon (1987b: 208–22). According to Levin, Sībawayhi's understanding of *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi*, which al-Mubarrad adopts, differs from that of later Arab grammarians. He rightly states that Sībawayhi was concerned with the linear order of *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi* and not with their syntactic functions, while later Arab grammarians approached them as two syntactic functions, the function of predicate being fulfilled by the *musnad* and that of subject by the *musnad ʾilayhi*.

[43] For a detailed discussion of the term *al-mabnī ʿalayhi* see Levin (1985: 299–352).

[44] One significant instance is the chapter dealing *al-afʿāl l-muḍāriʿa li-l-asmāʾ* 'imperfect verbs' (I 409/363–4) where Sībawayhi argues that 'imperfect verbs' take the independent form because they resemble the noun in that they may occur in the place that is normally occupied by a *mubtadaʾ* as in يقول زيد ذا 'Zayd [2nd in linear order] is saying [1st in linear order] this', or by a predicate as in زيد يقول ذاك 'Zayd is saying that' or other places where a noun would take the independent, dependent or oblique form as in هذا زيدٌ يقول ذاك 'This [is] Zayd*un* saying that' and مررت برجلٍ يقول ذاك 'I passed by a man [oblique] saying this'. For more details on the term *muḍāriʿ* in the *Kitāb* see Carter (1998).

2. هذا باب الابتداء فالمبتدأ كل اسم ابتدئ ليبنى عليه كلام والمبتدأ والمبني عليه رفع فالابتداء لا يكون إلا بمبني عليه فالمبتدأ الأول والمبني ما بعده عليه فهو مسند ومسند إليه (I Sib 278/239).

This is the chapter on *ibtidāʾ* [*thematic/topical*]. The *mubtadaʾ* [*subject/topic*] is every noun that is begun with in order to build speech on it, and *mubtadaʾ* [*subject/topic*] and what is built on it are independent, for the *ibtidāʾ* [*thematic*] cannot exist without something built on it, and the *mubtadaʾ* [*Topic + Theme*] is first and what is built on it is next, therefore they are *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi* [*Theme-Rheme*].

Upon analysing this paragraph, the conclusion to be drawn is that *Topicalisation* is central to the discussion here, and that Sībawayhi's attention is focused on the technical *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' and its unmarked 'initial' position. The fact that *mubtadaʾ* is defined as every initial noun on which speech is built, does not mean that Sībawayhi is underlining the linearity of its 'initial' position but rather its status as the first element in an information unit, whether preposed or postposed, and about which something is said. Further the syntactic nature of *mubtadaʾ* is brought to the fore by dint of the reference made to the dependent form it takes and which is also assigned to the predicate. Unlike the previous passage, *Thematisation* (cf. the use of *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi* at the end of this paragraph) is referred to nearly as an afterthought, which clearly indicates that this is only the unmarked position of topical *mubtadaʾ*.

3. هذا باب ما ينتصب فيه الخبر لأنه خبر لمعروف يرتفع بالابتداء قدمته أو أخرته[45] وذلك قولك فيها عبد الله قائما وعبد الله فيها قائما فعبد الله ارتفع لابتداء لأن الذي ذكر قبله وبعده ليس به وإنما موضع له ولكنه يجري مجرى الاسم المبني على ما قبله. ألا ترى أنك لو قلت فيها عبد الله حسن السكوت وكان كلاما مستقيما كما حسن واستغنى في قولك هذا عبد الله وتقول عبد الله فيها فيصير كقولك عبد الله أخوك إلا أن عبد الله يرتفع مقدما كان أو مؤخرا بالابتداء (I Sib 261/222).

This is the chapter on the predicate that takes the dependent form because it is a predicate to a definite noun made independent by virtue of *ibtidāʾ* [*topical*], whether preposed or postposed as in your saying 'In there [is] ʿAbdullāhi [independent as subject/topic] standing [dependent]' and "Abdullāhi [independent as subject/topic] [is] in it standing [dependent

[45] The position of the Topic whether preposed or postposed is not restricted here since it is definite.

> as *ḥāl*]' and ʿAbdullāhi is made independent by virtue of *ibtidāʾ* [*topical*], because what is mentioned before it and after it is not part of it but a place for it and it has the same status as a noun [*sc. ḫabar*] built on what comes before it. Do not you see that when you say 'In there [is] ʿAbdullāhi [independent]' it is good to mark its end with silence, and is *mustaqīm* in the same way as it is structurally correct and semantically self-sufficient to say 'This [is] ʿAbdullāhi'. You may say ''Abdullāhi [independent] [is] in there' which is similar to your saying ''Abdullāhi [independent] [is] your brother' except that ʿAbdullāhi is made independent whether preposed or postposed by virtue of *ibtidāʾ* [*topical*].

This passage provides us with the conclusive argument in favour of the distinction we have drawn between the two types of *ibtidāʾ*, as Sībawayhi unambiguously states that ʿAbd Allāh in ''Abdullāhi [independent] [is] in there' takes the independent form whether preposed or postposed by virtue of *ibtidāʾ*. The *ibtidāʾ* here might be analysed as a sort of an abstract operator ''*āmil maʿnawiyy*' that affects the *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' in a nominal sentence, as most Arab grammarians did (cf. Levin 1995: 221–4; Carter 1981: 190, para. 9.11).[46] However, *ibtidāʾ* here clearly emphasises the status of *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' as the first presupposed element in a predication structure about which something is said and which is marked by the independent form assigned to it regardless its linear position in the utterance. If the *mubtadaʾ* is forced to the second position, for a syntactic or pragmatic consideration or a combination of both, the *mubtadaʾ* does not lose its status as subject/topic neither does it lose its independent form assigned to it by virtue of the *ibtidāʾ* but only its 'initial' position. This explains why Sībawayhi maintains that what acted upon the *mubtadaʾ* when postposed is just what acted upon it when it was occupying the 'initial' position and that the independent form is assigned to it whether preceding the *ḫabar* 'predicate' or following it. What is more, the element replacing the subject/topic, assumes the same syntactic behaviour as the predicate (cf. I Sib. 278/239–240 quoted below).

Two fundamental issues regarding the notions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ibtidāʾ* are covered in these passages. First, the *ibtidāʾ* is inherently linked to the 'initial' position and therefore necessarily coincides with the notion of Theme. Second, the *ibtidāʾ* is also associated with the

[46] Medieval Arab grammarians tried to account for the notion of *ibtidāʾ* within the framework of *ʿaml* 'operation' theory and approached it as an abstract operator but their attempt to reconcile the two notions proved to be problematic (for a full discussion see Peled 1992: 146–71).

function of *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' and with the independent form assigned to it. In other words, the *mubtadaʾ* is primarily a formal category that denotes the word *about* which the speaker starts speaking, while the *ibtidāʾ* is a verbal noun and therefore, in Sībawayhi at least, a linguistic function that primarily refers to the word *with* which the speaker starts speaking.[47]

Further examination of the elements realising the function of *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' leads us to another semantic feature that distinguishes it as such, i.e. being the main participant in the sentence. On basis of this analysis, we argue that inverted nominal sentences in Arabic occur because the *mubtadaʾ* remains the subject/topic, i.e. the main participant, regardless of whether the function of the Theme is assumed by the *mubtadaʾ* or a preposed *ḫabar* as shown in the next section.

For mere convenience, *mubtadaʾ* will be henceforth used to denote the subject/topic function while *ibtidāʾ* will be used as an equivalent of Theme or 'initial' position, unless otherwise specified.

3.1. *Inverted nominal sentence and types of ḫabars*

As mentioned earlier, *ḫabar* 'predicate' is the term built on the *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic' and is indispensable in order to complete the statement. The 'initial' position is thus the unmarked position of the *mubtadaʾ*, followed by *ḫabar*. In the following passage on topical *ibtidāʾ*, Sībawayhi (I Sib 278/239) succinctly deals with the main types of *ḫabar*s and the nature of the mutual semantic relationship they share with the *mubtadaʾ*:

وأعلم أن المبتدأ لا بد له من أن يكون المبني عليه شيئا هو هو أو يكون في مكان أو زمان وهذه الثلاث يذكر كل واحد منها بعد ما يبتدأ.

> You should know that what is built on *mubtadaʾ* [subject/topic] must be something identical with it or be situated in a place or time. Each of these three is mentioned after beginning with *mubtadaʾ* [subject/topic].

These are in essence the three sorts of *ḫabar*s that Sībawayhi sees as relevant for the discussion of *inverted* nominal sentences.[48] *Ḫabar* must

[47] Generally speaking, the *ibtidāʾ* not only determines the mood of the utterance but also its type as nominal, locative or verbal.

[48] Below I shall deal with another classification involving the identity, inclusion and non-identity relationship between *mubtadaʾ* and *ḫabar*.

be either something fully or partially identical with its *mubtadaʾ* or a spatiotemporal qualifier. It should be clear by now why the verb is not included even though it can realise the function of *ḫabar* in a nominal sentence, as illustrated in the following excerpt (I Sib 41/31):

هذا باب مايكون فيه الاسم مبنيا على الفعل قدم أم أُخر ومايكون فيه الفعل مبنيا على الاسم. فإذا بنيت الاسم عليه قلت ضربت زيدا وهو الحد لأنك تريد أن تعمله وتحمل عليه الاسم [...] وإذا بنيت الفعل على الاسم قلت زيد ضربتُه فلزمته الهاء وإنما تريد بقولك مبني عليه الفعل أنه في موضع منطلق إذا قلت عبدُ الله منطلقٌ فهو في موضع هذا الذي بُني على الأول وارتفع به فانما قلت عبدُ الله فنبهته ثم بنيت عليه الفعل ورفعته بالابتداء.

This is the chapter in which the noun is built on the verb, whether preposed or postposed and the verb is built on the noun. When you build the noun on the verb, you say 'I hit Zayd*an*', and this is the regular form because you want to make the verb operate and make the noun dependent on it [...] If you build the verb on the noun, you say 'Zayd [independent] I hit him' and you are bound to link the *hāʾ* 'him' to the verb. By saying that the verb is built on it, you mean that the verb occupies the same syntactic position as 'going away' when you say 'ʿAbdullāhi [is] going away', so it has the same syntactic position as that of 'going away' which was built on the first noun and was made independent by it [its operation], because you only said ʿAbdullāhi to draw his attention and then built the verb on it and made it independent by virtue of *ibtidāʾ* [*topical*].

That 'verbal' *ḫabar* is not ranked alongside the other types of *ḫabar* is not a matter of omission on the part of Sībawayhi; quite the reverse, for his choice is structurally motivated.[49] In fact, the title of the second excerpt provides the clue as to why a verbal sentence is excluded from the group of *ḫabars* listed above. We are told that when a noun is built on the verb, its function does not alter whether preposed or postposed [case (1)]. On the other hand, when a verb is built on a noun, it must come after the noun [case (2)].

The question that imposes itself then is how to tell the difference between cases (1) and (2) when in case (1) the noun is preposed and in case (2) the noun permanently occupies the 'initial' position. The answer is that the preposed noun in case (1) is a direct object that

[49] Cf. Ayoub and Bohas (1983: 36–9) for an outline of some orientalists' view which flagrantly deviates from Sībawayhi's and other traditional Arab grammarians'. Fleisch (1968: 166), among others, is quoted saying 'Est verbale la phrase dont *le prédicat est un verbe*; est nominale la phrase dont *le prédicat est un élément nominal*.'

takes the dependent form. Conversely, the noun referred to in case (2) is a *mubtada'* which takes the independent form. The inference we may draw now is that in case (1) the agent is barred from the 'initial' position for a clear structural reason, i.e. an initial independent noun will necessarily convert the verbal sentence into a nominal one. As mentioned above, Sībawayhi (I 41/31) emphatically states that *mubtada'* is every noun on which a predicate is built. Unless the predicate is a verb, inversion does not affect the function of the *mubtada'*. On the other hand, preposing 'verbal' *ḫabar* will necessarily convert the nominal sentence into a verbal sentence, in which case the applicability of the principle of inversion ceases. It is therefore not a matter of trivial importance that the transposed term in the verbal utterance is not the agent but the direct object. I would like to point out that in this passage Sībawayhi is making a clear distinction between *inversion* and what I shall call *transposing*, and that *inversion* is typical of nominal utterances while *transposing* is limited to the noun fulfilling the function of agent in a verbal utterance. To put it differently, *inverting terms* does not involve any change in the syntactical function of the preposed term, while *transposing the agent* endows it with a new syntactic function, i.e. *mubtada'* 'subject/topic'.

When dealing with *transposing* (cf. I Sib. 41–3/31–2), Sībawayhi underlines the fact that the 'operation' of the verb should first be satisfied when preposing or postposing the terms affected. This means that a verb may be built on a noun which is made independent with the proviso that the verb affects a substitute pronominal suffix linked to the transposed antecedent co-referent.[50] Similarly, it is possible to prepose the object if the verb[51] can operate on an overt pronoun with an anaphoric reference to the object. The preposed object is said to be dependent by virtue of a suppressed verb. Sībawayhi (43/32) points out that we can say زيدٌ لقيت أخاه 'Zayd*un* [independent] I saw his brother [dependent]' or زيدا لقيت اخاه 'Zayd*an* [dependent] I saw his brother [dependent]' because when the verb operates on one of two elements semantically connected to each other, it is as if the other undergoes

[50] وانما حسن أن يبنى الفعل على الاسم حيث كان معملا في المضمر وشغلته به ولولا ذلك لم يحسن لأنك لم تشغله بشيء (I Sib. 42–3/32).

[51] Not in case of a ditransitive verb, however (see discussion above).

the same verbal operation. Notice that the latter example is made-up and is not said: وهذا تمثيل لا يُتكلم به (ibid.).

We may briefly refer to the so-called *jumla ḏāt wajhayn* 'bi-aspectual sentence',[52] e.g. زيدٌ رأيت أباه 'Zaydun [independent] I saw his father'. Bravmann (1953: 2–3; 28–9) is one of the linguists who tried to account for this particular structure in the light of modern linguistics by comparing it to the Indo-European phenomenon of extraposition and more specifically to a cleft sentence, taking German as his point of departure.[53] Although his analysis predates all similar modern linguistic analyses of the Arabic structure by half a century, it, nevertheless, shows that even then there were attempts to mould Arabic into alien linguistic shapes. This particular Arabic sentence is by no means a mirror image of the European cleft sentence but a specific type of nominal sentence with a specific communicative purpose, hence its frequent use by the Arabs (cf. Bravmann 1953: 1).

Bravmann's formal analysis presents us with two problems. First, his formal approach falls short of a complementary view indispensable to the analysis of such complex sentences. Second, the function of *zaydun* cannot possibly be compared to the Indo-European Subject, simply because *zaydun* is the subject/topic of a nominal sentence consisting of a noun and a verbal sentence that fulfils that function of predicate (cf. discussion above). What is special about this sentence is that Zayd is resumed by a pronoun in the verbal predicate. When we say Zayd*un māta ʾabūhu* 'Zaydun his father died', we are fulfilling a basic linguistic rule, which is to start with an element identifiable by the hearer and in this case *zaydun* who happens to be the subject/topic of the sentence and the point of departure.[54]

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[52] See discussion in Carter (1972: 488).

[53] According to Bravmann (op. cit. 22; 29–30) there are three intermediate stages to be distinguished in the so-called penetration process of an original 'isolated natural subject' (INS) into the interior of the sentence. The first stage is that of transforming INS and the NP (natural predicate) into a grammatical subject and predicate respectively, as a result of which we get the complex nominal sentence Zayd*un—raʾaytu ʾabāhu* 'As for Zayd-I saw his father'. This complex sentence becomes Zayd*un-raʾaytu abāhu* 'Zayd is (one) whose father I saw' thus treating the predicate as an adjective clause. In the final stage, the initial noun loses its subject function and any other possible syntactic function as a result of restoring the subordinate predicate clause to its original independent status.

[54] When we say *Zaydun māta abūhu* 'Zayd his father died' we intend to comment to the hearer about something that befell Zayd by referring to his father's death. In other words, the hearer does not necessarily need to know Zayd's father, but will be

After this short digression, we may turn back to the analysis of nominal sentences with non-verbal predicates. In my 2004 article, optional *ḫabar* inversion was concluded to occur above all in the nominal sentences that are typically opened by a *ẓarf*[55] or a prepositional phrase, in the same way as an agent-direct object inversion may occur in a verbal sentence.[56] However, *ḫabar* inversion becomes obligatory once the *mubtada'* is indefinite and beyond identifiability.

Objections have been raised by a few Arabists who seriously questioned the validity of *inversion* as a linguistic principle in Arabic locative utterances (cf. Beeston 1970: 68; 70; Kouloughli 2002). A fierce criticism of *inversion* in locative sentences is found in Beeston (1974: 475) who categorically rejected it as a myth. To prove his point, Beeston (ibid.) provides us with the following instance of a *theme-predicate* structure, which supposedly well exemplifies the problem with the 'inverted non-verbal sentence':

- *fī wasṭi hāḏihi l-madīnati qaṣrun manīʿ*.

  In the middle of this city, there is a strong castle.

In this utterance the word *qaṣrun* 'castle' is argued to be 'unquestionably' the predicate while *fī wasṭi hāḏihi l-madīnati* 'in the middle of this city' is the theme, and hence there is no 'inverted non-verbal sentence' where a prepositional phrase is followed by an 'indefinite' noun. Obviously, Beeston omits certain details which make the explanation of such utterances more plausible. One point to notice is that the 'indefinite' *qaṣrun* 'castle' is in fact identifiable, as the expressed adjectival qualifier *manīʿ* 'strong' makes it more particular and thus identifiable. In other words, except for motivated communicative purposes, there is nothing against *qaṣrun manīʿ* 'a strong castle' occupying the 'initial' position, due to the status of definiteness conferred on *qaṣrun* 'castle'.

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interested to know about his father's death which only makes sense when put in relation to Zayd and possibly the pain the death might have caused to Zayd. If the listener had known Zayd's father well, the speaker would have probably said *'Abū* Zayd *māta* or simply *māta 'abū* Zayd, depending on the speaker's intention.

[55] The term *ẓarf*, lit. 'vessel, container', is used metaphorically to denote expressions of time and space in the dependent form. See Carter ('*Ẓarf*' in *EI* 2006b) and Talmon (1997: 64f) for more.

[56] In this specific type of *inversion*, the constituents order is as follows: verb-direct object-agent. I should like to reiterate that the agent must follow the verb or else it will lose its function as agent and become *mubtada'*.

This can be inferred from the following passage taken from the *Kitāb* (I Sib 278/239–240):

> هذا باب ما يقع موقع الاسم المبتدأ ويسد مسده لأنه مستقر لما بعده وموضع والذي عمل فيه فيما بعده حتى رفعه هو الذي عمل فيه حين كان قبله ولكن كل واحد منهما لا يستغني به عن صاحبه فلما جمعا استغنى عنهما السكوت حتى صارا في الاستغناء كقولك هذا عبد الله وذلك قولك فيها عبدُ اللهِ ومثله ثَمَّ زيدٌ وههنا عمرٌ.
>
> This is the chapter on what occurs in the place of the *mubtadaʾ* [*Topic*] and replaces it because it is a location for what comes after it and a position. And that which operated on it when it came after it and caused it to take the independent form is just what operated on it when it was before it. However, neither of them can do without the other and when combined, they form a self-sufficient unit that can be marked by silence, so that in their status of self-sufficiency they became similar to 'This [is] ʿAbdullāhi', as for example 'In there [is] ʿAbdullāhi [independent]' and likewise 'There [is] Zaydun [independent]' and 'Here [is] ʿAmrun [independent]'.'

Although a strong correlation between indefiniteness and *inversion* in nominal utterances has been indicated earlier, there are apparently pragmatic and communicative reasons for *inversion* when it is not necessitated structurally. Consequently, 'In there [is] ʿAbdullāhi' and "Abdullāhi [is] in there' are equally acceptable, the only difference lies in the angle chosen by the speaker to communicate his intention. This shows that the linear order of *mubtadaʾ* and *ḫabar* depends on their definiteness and degree of identifiability and is hence dissociated from the syntactic function they realise. In order to elucidate the full picture of *inversion*, we will now move on to consider the three types of *ḫabar*s mentioned by Sībawayhi and analyse their behaviour and capability to occupy the 'initial' position.

Upon examining nominal sentences more thoroughly and by drawing inspiration from Halliday's (cf. 1994: 119–24) and Downing's insights, the conclusion I reach demonstrates that the 'initial' position can only be occupied by two sorts of *ḫabars* out of three: the first type of *ḫabars* that are intrinsically related to the *mubtadaʾ*, I shall call *identity ḫabars*. In an equational sentence with an *identity ḫabar*, the *mubtadaʾ* and *ḫabar* are identical and always refer to one another, e.g. عبدُ اللهِ أخوك "Abdullāhi [is] your brother'. There is a subset of the *identity ḫabars* that has a total identity relationship with the *mubtadaʾ* but not an exclusive one. The *ḫabar* in this group is indefinite as it denotes

an inherent feature of the *mubtadaʾ*, but is shared by other members of the class, e.g. عبدُ اللهِ رجلٌ "Abdullāhi [is] a man', where ʿAbdullāhi is clearly a man among many others. For the sake of easy reference, I shall label this group of *ḫabars* as *indefinite identity ḫabars*.

The second group of *ḫabars* which I shall call *participial ḫabars* refer to accidental properties which are only partially identical with the *mubtadaʾ* and are external to it, as for example زيدٌ قائمٌ 'Zayd*un* [is] standing', and عبدُ اللهِ طويلٌ "Abdullāhi [is] tall'. *Participial ḫabars* cover all verbal adjectives, both participles[57] and the so-called *ṣifāt mušabaha b-ism l-fāʿil wa l-mafʿūl* 'adjectives assimilated [by the speaker] to the agent noun and the object noun'.[58] It should be noted that properties indicated by participles are usually transient by nature, while those indicated by adjectives exhibit permanent qualities or features.

The third group which I call *locative ḫabars* express a spatiotemporal relationship with the *mubtadaʾ* that excludes every kind of identity with it. Unlike the other two types of *ḫabars, locative ḫabars* take the dependent form as a sign of their non-identity with the *mubtadaʾ* and to indicate that their properties are external to the *mubtadaʾ* and unable to alter it as such.

Formulated in Sībawayhi's language, *identity ḫabars* are both identical with the *mubtadaʾ* and part of the same term. *Participial ḫabars* are identical with the *mubtadaʾ* but do not form a part of the same term, while *locative ḫabars* are neither identical with the *mubtadaʾ* nor part of the same term, (I 276/237):

> واعلم أن الشيء يوصف بالشيء الذي هو هو وهو من اسمه وذلك قولك هذا زيدٌ الطويلُ ويكون هو هو وليس من اسمه كقولك هذا زيدٌ ذاهبًا ويوصف بالشيء الذي ليس به وليس من اسمه كقولك هذا درهمٌ وزنًا ولا يكون إلا نصبا.
>
> You should know that things are described by that which is identical with them and is part of the same term as in your saying 'This [is] Zayd*un* the tall [independent as adjectival qualifier]'; when it [sc. describing word] is identical but not part of the same term as in 'This [is] Zayd*un* going [dependent as *ḥāl*]', or else is described by that which

[57] The term participle refers to the Arabic categories of *ismāʾ l-fāʿil* 'agent nouns' and *ismāʾ l-mafʿūl* 'object nouns'.

[58] Verbal adjectives are nouns derived from verbs and have both nominal and verbal properties. For more see Carter (*Ism al-fāʿil*' in *EALL*, 2007: 432) and Wright (op. cit. I: 131ff).

> is neither identical nor part of the same term as in 'This [is] a dirham*un* per measure [dependent]' and it can only be in the dependent form.

That the degree of the identity relationship makes it possible to draw a sharp distinction between the three types of *ḫabar* is vindicated by the passage above. However, there are a few points that call for special attention. First, هذا درهمٌ وزنًا 'This [is] a dirham per measure [dependent]' expresses with clarity the non-identity relationship between a term in the dependent form and the antecedent with *tanwīn* (cf. discussion below). Second, a distinction is made between true adjectives and *ḥāl* 'circumstantial qualifier'. There is a trace of an apparent inconsistency with the classification of three types of *ḫabars* exemplified by the occurrence of the adjective الطويل 'The tall' in an *identity* predication structure rather than in a *participial* structure. Before dealing with the issue of الطويل 'The tall' further, let us first take a look at the following passage (I Sib 273/233):

> ولا يجوز للمعرفة أن تكون حالا كما تكون النكرة فيلتبس بالنكرة ولو جاز ذلك لقلت هذا أخوك عبدَ الله إذا كان عبد الله اسمه الذي يعرف به وهذا كلا مخبيث موضوع في غير موضعه إنما تكون المعرفة مبنيا عليها أو مبنية على اسم أو غير اسم وتكون صفة لمعروف لتبينه وتؤكده أو تقطعه من غيره.

> It is not permissible for the definite to be a *ḥāl* 'circumstantial qualifier' in the same way as the indefinite is, lest it should be confused with the indefinite. If this was permissible, you could have said 'This [is] your brother [independent as predicate] ʿAbdallāh [dependent as *ḥāl*]', ʿAbdallāh being your brother's name by which he is known. But this is abominable [i.e. structurally very incorrect] speech which is put in other than its proper place, because the definite should be something built upon [= *mubtadaʾ*], or be built on another noun [= *ḫabar*] or something other than the noun [= an agent or direct object] or else be an adjectival qualifier to a definite noun so as to make it clear and corroborate it or cut it off [syntactically] from another element.

Up to this point we have been dealing with examples of simple nonverbal predication structures where both *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic'and *ḫabar* 'predicate' take the independent form as a sign of their identity relationship. Here, Sībawayhi introduces another type of predicate into the discussion, i.e. the indefinite *ḫabar li-maʿrūf* 'the [indefinite] predicate to the definite' (I Sib 261/222) or simply the *ḥāl* 'circumstantial qualifier'. The *ḫabar li-maʿrūf* is necessarily a participle that denotes a state or a circumstance' in which something occurs, and not a permanent feature previously known to the listener in itself (I Sib 273/233):

فإذا أردت الخبر الذي يكون فيه حالا وقع الأمر فيه فلا تضع في موضعه الاسم الذي جعل لتوضح به المعرفة أو تبيّن به فالنكرة تكون حالا وليست تكون شيئا بعينه قد عرفه المخاطب قبل ذلك فهذا أمر النكرة وهذا أمر المعرفة فأجره كما أجروه وضع كل شيء موضعه.

> If you want a predicate that is a circumstance in which a matter has occurred, do not put in its place then a noun which is used to elucidate a definite noun or make it clear, because the indefinite may be a *ḥāl* but not something in itself previously known to the listener. This is how the indefinite is and the definite, so treat them as they [sc. the Arabs] treat them and put everything in its place.

This passage provides yet another reason to argue that the issue of definiteness is at the heart of the predication structure analysis. Within the of group of *participial ḫabars* only indefinite participles can assume the function of *ḫabar li-maʿrūf* or *ḥāl*, while quasi participial adjectives are excluded from this function, because it is structurally incorrect for the term that qualifies the noun adjectivally, such as طويل 'tall', to assume the function of a dependent *ḥāl*. To put it differently, in a predication structure the definite quasi participial adjective الطويل 'the tall' no longer realises the function of *participial ḫabar* but that of *identity ḫabar* as it enters into a full identity relationship with the *mubtadaʾ* and becomes part of the same term. In the case of هذا زيدٌ الطويلُ 'This [is] Zayd*un* the tall' this identity relationship results in agreement between the adjectival qualifier and its antecedent.

3.2. *Reversibility of the three types of ḫabars*

Identity ḫabars, with the exception of the *indefinite*, are reversible with the *mubtadaʾ*, hence their ability not only to occupy the 'initial' position but to assume accordingly the function of *mubtadaʾ*. The initial term in an equational sentence with an *identity ḫabar* is conventionally the *mubtadaʾ* and the term coming after it *ḫabar*. This means that reversibility is rather rare unless the speech situation makes it clear that the two functions are transposed.

In what follows, the reversibility of the second type of *ḫabars* will be analysed after dealing first with locative *ḫabar*s. Regarding *locative ḫabars*, it might be useful to reiterate that the main function of spatio-temporal qualifiers and prepositional phrases is to set the scene for the communicative event; not to announce the subject/topic. As a result, they can optionally occupy the 'initial' position when the *mubtadaʾ* is

definite, but necessarily do so when the *mubtadaʾ* is neither definite nor identifiable, as shown in the previous chapter.

Indefinite identity ḫabars and *participial ḫabars* can be bracketed together since their indefiniteness does not only exclude them from functioning as a *mubtadaʾ*, and from occupying the 'initial' position. However, pragmatic evidence may render Thematisation or reversibility of *indefinite identity* and *participial ḫabars* possible. Quoting al-Ḫalīl, Sībawayhi (I Sib 278/239) sees this kind of Thematisation, for which he has no specific term, on the same plane as Downing sees it, i.e. on the plane of safeguarding the recognisability of the main participant whom the message is about and the predictability of which way the intended meaning goes:

وزعم الخليل أنه يستقبح أن يقول قائمٌ زيدٌ وذاك إذا لم تجعل قائما مقدما مبنيا على المبتدأ كما تؤخر وتقدم فتقول ضرب زيدا عمرٌو وعمرٌو على ضرب مرتفع وكان الحد أن يكون مقدما ويكون زيد مؤخرا وكذلك هذا الحد فيه أن يكون الابتداء فيه مقدما وهذا عربي جيد وذلك قولك تميميٌّ أنا ومَشنوءٌ مَن يشنؤك ورجلٌ عبدُ اللهِ [...]. فإذا لم يريدوا هذا المعنى وأرادوا أن يجعلوه فعلاً كقوله يقوم زيدٌ وقام زيدٌ قبح لأنه اسم وإنما حسن عندهم أن يجري مجرى الفعل إذا كان صفةً جرى على موصوف أو جرى على اسم قد عمل فيه كما أنه لا يكون مفعولاً في ضارب حتى يكون محمولاً على غيره فتقول هذا ضاربٌ زيدًا وأنا ضاربٌ زيدًا ولا يكون ضاربٌ زيدًا على ضربتُ زيدًا وضربت عمرًا فكما لم يجز هذا كذلك استقبحوا أن يجري مجرى الفعل المبتدأ وليكون بين الفعل والاسم فصل وإن كان موافقا له في مواضع كثيرة فقد يوافق الشيء الشيء ثم يخالفه لأنه ليس مثله.

And al-Ḫalīl claimed that 'Standing [is] Zayd' is considered bad [i.e. structurally incorrect] Arabic when you do not make 'standing' a preposed *ḫabar* built on the *mubtadaʾ* [*subject/topic*], in the same way as you postpose and prepose when you say 'Zayd [dependent as direct object] hit ʿAmr [independent as agent]. Here, ʿAmr is made independent by virtue of *hit* and, according to the norms established, should have to be preposed and Zayd postposed. Similarly, according to the normal order in it [= standing [is] Zayd], the *ibtidāʾ* [*topical*] must come first, but inversion is good Arabic, as in your saying 'Tamīmī I [am]' 'Hated [is] he that hates you, 'A man [is] ʿAbdallāh' [...]. When they do not intend this meaning and want to treat [the preposed] *ḫabar* as a verb as in 'Zayd stands up [verb precedes agent]' and 'Zayd stood up [verb precedes agent]', it would be structurally incorrect because it is a noun. For Arabs it is structurally correct for a preposed *ḫabar* to be a participle if it had the syntactic behaviour of either an adjectival qualifier that concords with its antecedent or else a noun affected by an operator. Also, there is no reference to direct object in 'someone hitting' unless it is syntactically linked to another, and so you say 'This is someone hitting

> Zaydan [dependent as direct object]' and 'I [am] the one hitting Zaydan [dependent as direct object]'. 'Someone hitting Zaydan [dependent as direct object]' cannot syntactically be on a par with 'I hit Zayd [dependent as direct object]' and 'I hit ʿAmr [dependent as direct object]'. They equally disapprove of *mubtada"*s having the same syntactic behaviour as the verb, so as to establish a distinction between the verb and the noun [= participle] even when the latter is similar to the former in many places, for something may be similar to something else and then be dissimilar to it because it is not identical with it.

It is obvious that when the speech situation provides enough pragmatic evidence, it is possible to supersede the cardinal rule of definiteness and assign an *indefinite identity* or *participial ḫabar* to the 'initial' position. Sībawayhi must have been aware of the pragmatic evidence that safeguards the 'predictability of which way the clause is going' when he states وكذلك هذا الحد فيه أن يكون الابتداء فيه مقدما وهذا عربي جيد وذلك قولك تميميٌّ أنا ومشنوءٌ من يشنؤك ورجلٌ عبدُ اللهِ 'Similarly, according to the normal order in it [= standing [is] Zayd], the *ibtidāʾ* [topical] must come first, and this is good Arabic, as in your saying 'Tamīmī I [am]' 'Hated [is] he that hates you, 'A man [is] ʿAbdullāhi'. His awareness is further upheld by the fact that he allows utterances such as رجلٌ عبدالله 'a man [is] ʿAbdullāhi' but only with the proviso that the listener does not confuse the indefinite noun for the *mubtadaʾ*. To put it differently, the listener is able to interpret the utterance as he ought to, i.e. an utterance with a preposed indefinite *ḫabar* that is built on a delayed *mubtadaʾ*.

In the case of participles, the verbal powers they enjoy put a further obstacle in their way. That is why they are disqualified not only from functioning as a *mubtadaʾ* but as a Theme in order to maintain the separation between the verb and the noun.

We may now focus our attention on a testing tool employed by traditional Arab grammarians to confirm the functions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ḫabar* in equational sentences, i.e. *ʾinna* and its related particles.

3.3. *ʾInna and its related particles*

Although the effect of *ʾinna*[59] is traditionally described as making its subject/topic dependent and its predicate independent, Sībawayhi (I 279/241) points out that the verbal effect of the five particles or

[59] On the historical syntax and semantics of *ʾinna* see Bloch (1991: 102ff).

the so-called *ʾinna* and its sisters, resembles that of *ʿišrūna dirhaman* 'twenty dirhams', which epitomises what Carter (1972) calls *tanwīn-naṣb* construction:[60]

هذا باب الحروف الخمسة التي تعمل فيما بعدها كعمل الفعل فيما بعده وهي من الفعل بمنزلة عشرين من الأسماء ولا تصرف تصرف الأفعال كما أن عشرين لا تصرف تصرف الأسماء التي أخذت من الفعل وكانت بمنزلته ولكن يقال بمنزلة الأسماء التي أخذت من الأفعال وشبهت بها في هذا الموضع فنصبت درهمًا لأنه ليس من نعتها ولا هي مضافة إليه ولم ترد أن تحمل الدرهم على ما حمل العشرون عليه ولكنه واحد فعملت فيه كعمل الضارب في زيد إذا قلت هذا ضاربٌ زيدًا لأن زيدًا ليس من صفة الضارب ولا محمولا على ما حمل عليه الضارب وكذلك هذه الحروف منزلتها من الأفعال وهي إنّ ولكنّ وليت ولعل وكأنّ وذلك قولك إن زيدًا منطلقٌ وإن عمرًا مسافرٌ وإن زيدًا أخوك وكذلك أخواتها.

This is the chapter on the five particles which operate on what comes after them in the same way as the verb operates on what comes after it. In comparison to the verb, their effect has the same status as that which *ʿišrūna* [twenty] has on the nouns and they do not behave as the verbs behave, in the same way as *ʿišrūna* does not behave as the nouns derived from the verbs [sc. participles] behave even though it has the same status. However, *ʿišrūna* is said to have the status of the nouns derived from the verb and is likened to them in this position and so assigns the dependent form to *dirhaman* as it is not an epithet or a *muḍāf ʾilayhi* and you did not want to syntactically link *dirham* to that to which *ʿišrūna* is syntactically linked but they form a single unit and so does *ʿišrūna* operate on *dirhaman* in the same way as the 'someone hitting [active participle]' operates on Zayd when you said 'This [is] someone hitting [*tanwīn*] Zayd*an* [dependent]' because Zayd is neither an epithet nor syntactically linked to the operator of 'someone hitting'. These particles relate to verbs in a similar way. The particles are *ʾinna* 'verily', *lākinna* 'but', *layta* 'would that', *laʿalla* 'perhaps' *and kaʾanna* 'as if', for instance 'Verily, Zayd*an* [dependent] [is] going away [independent]', 'Verily, ʿAmr*an* [dependent] [is] travelling [independent]' and 'Verily, Zayd*an* [dependent] [is] your brother [independent]', and the same goes for its related particles.

[60] In his article on *ʿišrūna dirhaman 'twenty dirhams' in the Kitāb*, Carter (1972: 485–96) shows how the *ʿišrūna dirhaman* construction provided Sībawayhi with the necessary tool to account for the dependent form in the absence of any verb or verbal operator. Twenty four cases, among which *ʾinna*, are briefly examined and the phrase *ʿišrūna dirhaman* is advanced as a *locus probans* to account for the dependent form occurring in all these cases. In case of *ʾinna* and its related particles, resemblance drawn between the effect of these particles and that of *ʿišrūna on dirhaman* is described as less plausible (op. cit. 492).

Basically, there are two levels of analogical reasoning to be distinguished: the higher level is represented by the analogy drawn between the operation of the five particles on their subject/topic and the operation of *ʿišrūna* 'twenty' on *dirhaman*. The deeper level is represented by the effect of *ʿišrūna* on *dirhaman* that is compared in its turn to the effect of *ḍāribun* 'someone hitting' on Zayd*an*.

Sībawayhi argues that the dependent form assigned by *ʾinna* is due to its verb-like power to operate on other words in the same way as an active participle such as *ḍāribun* is capable of exercising its verbal power on the noun coming after it. The separative function of the *tanwīn* is paramount in the present discussion, as it prevents annexation and implies on the one hand the role of the *tanwīn* as a marker of complete elements, and on the other, the ability of these complete elements to operate on other elements in the utterance and assign the dependent form to them. The *nūn* in *ʾinna* is thus responsible for the dependent form assigned to its subject/topic in the same way as the *nūn* in *ʿišrūna* affects *dirhaman*. This *nūn* is shown to separate the two non-identical elements, i.e. *ʿišrūna* and *dirhaman*, as the latter is neither an epithet for *ʿišrūna*, nor annexed to it.

The separative function of the *tanwīn* and the non-identity of *ʿišrūna* with *dirhaman* are thus the pivotal arguments adduced to account for the dependent form, as *dirhaman* is neither an epithet nor a *muḍāf ʾilayhi* 'what it is annexed to'. In other words, the *nūn* takes over the separative role of an agent in a verbal sentence that separates the verb from the direct object, as a result of which the dependent form is assigned to the direct object.

It is true that the power of *ʾinna* to assign the dependent form to its subject/ topic is derived from its resemblance to the verb, nevertheless there are two important divergences to be noted. First, *ʾinna* does not enjoy the same verbal force that an ordinary verb normally enjoys neither can its subject/topic be pronominalised as it is pronominalised in the *kāna* structure. Second, being weaker than a verb, *ʾinna* can operate on a *maʿmūl fīhi* 'the element operated on' separated by a *ẓarf* (see below) but not on a preposed one as made clear in the following paragraph taken from the chapter dealing with the five particles (I Sib 280/241):

وزعم الخليل أنها عملت عملين الرفع والنصب كما عملت كان الرفع والنصب حين قلت: كان أخاك زيدٌ إلا أنه ليس لك أن تقول كان أخوك عبدَ اللهِ تريد كأن عبدَ الله أخوك لأنها لا تصرّف تصرف الأفعال ولا يضمَر فيها المرفوع كما يضمَر في كان.

> Al-Ḫalīl claimed that *ʾinna* and its related particles operates by making elements independent and dependent in the same way as *kāna* operates and makes elements independent and dependent as when you said 'Your brother [dependent as predicate] was Zaydun [independent as subject/topic]' but it is not permissible for you to say 'As if your brother [independent as predicate] [is] 'Abdallāh [dependent as subject noun]' while intending 'As if ʿAbdallāh [dependent as subject noun] [is] your brother [independent as predicate]', because *kaʾanna* does not behave as verbs behave nor can the independent [item] be pronominalised in the same way as it is pronominalised in *kāna*.

In this excerpt, Sībawayhi seems to be only reporting Al-Ḫalīl's view on the similarity between *ʾinna*'s operation and *kāna*'s operation in assigning the independent and dependent forms to the elements operated on. By using the word 'claim' Sībawayhi is showing that this is not his view; for him the occurrence of the dependent form after the five particles is explained by the *tanwīn-naṣb* construction embodied in the phrase *ʿišrūna dirhaman*. In other words, *ʾinna* only operates on the subject/topic by assigning to it the dependent form, while it leaves the predicate and its independent form assigned to it by virtue of topical *ibtidāʾ* unaffected.

One final note should be made regarding the status of *ʾinna* and its operation. The place chosen by Sībawayhi in the *Kitāb* to deal with *ʾinna* and its related particles is not immaterial. Unlike *kāna* and its related verbs, *ʾinna* does not show up in the first chapters of the *Kitāb* that explicitly deal with the verb and its operation. My claim is further upheld by the chapter dealing with the *musnad-musnad ʾilayhi* 'Theme-Rheme' (I Sib 7/6). *ʾinna* is conspicuous by its absence when Sībawayhi refers to operators of dependence and independence that may occur before the *mubtadaʾ* (cf. quotation above on p. 179).

Having determined the extension of *ʾinna*'s operation, we are now in a position to look back over the three types of *ḫabar*s and employ the five particles as a means not only to test the reversibility of these *ḫabar*s but also to confirm our claim that *Thematisation* in the *Kitāb* is dissociated from *Topicalisation*.

The first type we will be dealing with is *identity ḫabars* as either definite term in the predication structure with an *identity ḫabar* can realise the function of *mubtadaʾ*. *Indefinite identity ḫabars* will be analysed next, together with *participial ḫabars*. The discussion will be concluded with an invesitigation into the reversibility of *locative ḫabars* in the *ʾinna* structure.

Before I proceed any further, I might as well refer back to Kouloughli's conclusion regarding the function of the independent term in the *ʾinna* structure. It should be noted that Kouloughli's conclusion that goes counter to my hypothesis, has been refuted in my 2004 article. However, it will be quoted again for the sake of clarity and completeness and shown to be problematic when applied to nominal sentences with any of the three types of *ḫabar*. Kouloughli's states (2002: 19):

> As a matter of fact 'ʾ*inna* and its sisters' quite simply assign the accusative to the first noun or noun phrase they encounter. In most cases that first name turns out to be a topic just because the normal place for a topic is initial sentence position. But if there is any chance for 'ʾ*inna* and its sisters' to introduce any noun other than a topic, then they will assign the accusative to that noun irrespective of its syntactic function.

Unless we take for granted that the function of *mubtadaʾ* is fulfilled by the first term occupying the 'initial' position in nominal sentences with *identity ḫabars*, Kouloughli's suggestion regarding the element bearing the dependent form in *ʾinna* structure will necessarily cause uncertainty as to which element realises the function of *mubtada*. If we are to avoid possible uncertainty in nominal sentences with a definite *identity ḫabar* as to which term fulifils which function, the unmarked *ibtidāʾ* structure is highly recommendable. This means that *ʾinna* will always assign the dependent form to the *mubtadaʾ* and never to an *identity ḫabar*, as it is needless to reiterate that *ʾinna* cannot operate on a preposed *ḫabar*.

If we follow Kouloughli's line of argument further, it should be possible for instances of *indefinite identity ḫabars* and *participial ḫabars* to occur after *ʾinna*:

- *ʾinna* rajul*an* [dependent] ʿAbdullāhi [independent].
  Verily A man [is] ʿAbd Allāh.
- *ʾinna* marīḍ*an* [dependent] Zayd*un* [independent].
  Verily *ill* [is] Zayd.
- *ʾinna* munṭaliq*an* [dependent] Zayd*un* [independent].
  Verily, going away [is] Zayd.

This implies that rajul*an* 'man', marīḍ*an* 'ill' and munṭaliq*an* 'going away' assume the function of the subject/topic of *ʾinna*, since the dependent form in the *ʾinna* structure is assigned to its subject/topic.[61]

[61] Note that the inability of the indefinite *rajulan, marīḍan* and *munṭaliqan* to function

However, such instances are not permissible in Arabic as will become clear in what follows.

Admittedly Sībawayhi allows sentences such as رجلٌ عبدُ اللهِ 'A man [is] ʿAbdullāhi' and قائمٌ زيدٌ 'Standing [is] Zayd*un* (cf. pp. 192–3) but only on condition that the function of the indefinite noun occupying the 'initial' position is understood to be a *ḫabar* that is manifestly built on a postposed *mubtadaʾ*. Obviously, utterances such as '*ʾinna marīḍan* [dependent] *Zaydun* [independent]' and '*ʾinna munṭaliqan* [dependent] zaydun [independent]' are inconsistent with this condition, not only because an indefinite element is barred from occupying the 'initial' position in Arabic and the indefinite participle from assuming the function of the *mubtadaʾ*, but more importantly because the predictability of which direction the message goes becomes jeopardised.

Note that the inability of the indefinite *rajulan, marīḍan* and *munṭaliqan* to function as subject/topic accounts for their unacceptability immediately after *ʾinna*. If we make them definite, we will be dealing with an *identity ḫabar* structure, where either term may assume the function of the *mubtadaʾ*.

Turning to *locative ḫabars* in the *ʾinna* structure, Sībawayhi tells us that the operation of *ʾinna* in nominal sentences with a *locative ḫabar* is not necessarily associated with the first element following it immediately, as Kouloughli claims. On the contrary, *ẓurūf* 'spatiotemporal qualifiers' appear to have the capacity of disrupting the unity of two indivisible elements that have the status of one unit such as *ʾinna* and its subject/topic without obstructing the grammatical effect of the operator. The capacity of *ʾinna* to assign the dependent form to its subject/topic in spite of it being separated by a *ẓarf* is expounded in the passage below (I Sib 280/241–2):

> وتقول إن فيها زيدا قائما وإن شئت رفعت على إلغاء فيها وإن شئت قلت إن زيدًا فيها قائمًا وقائمٌ [...] وعبد الله ينتصب بإن كما ارتفع ثم بالابتداء إلا أن فيها ههنا بمنزلة هذا في أنه يستغنى على مابعدها بالسكوت وتقع موقعه وليست فيها بنفس عبد الله كما كان هذا نفس عبد الله وانما ظرف لا تعمل فيه إن بمنزلة خلفك وانما انتصب خلفك بالذي فيه وقد يقع الشيء موقع الشيء وليس إعرابه كاعرابه.

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as subject/topic accounts for their unacceptability immediately after *ʾinna*. If we counteract the effect of their indefiniteness and make the two types of *ḫabar* definite, we will be dealing with a different structure where the two terms cease to function as a predicate and assume the function of the *mubtadaʾ*.

> You may say 'Verily, in there [predicate] is Zayd*an* [dependent] standing [dependent]' and if you wish you may put 'standing' in the independent form by neutralising the function of 'in there' [as predicate] and if you wish you may say 'Verily, Zayd*an* [dependent] [is] in there [predicate / *mulġā* 'neutralised'] standing [dependent as *ḥāl*] / [independent as predicate]' […] And ʿAbdallāh[62] is made dependent by virtue of *ʾinna* just as it was previously made independent by virtue of the *ibtidāʾ* except that 'in there' in this particular instance has the status of a predicate [sc. your brother] because nothing is needed after it so that it could be marked by silence and replace the predicate, although 'in there' is not identical with ʿʿAbd Allāh' as this [sc. your brother] was identical with ʿAbd Allāh. But 'in there' is a *ẓarf* that is beyond the operation of *ʾinna* and which has the status of 'behind you', for 'behind you' is made dependent by virtue of what is in it, and something might replace something else but their inflections still differ.

Apparently, *ẓurūf* can either assume the function of a *ḫabar* or that of a neutralised extra-syntactic element, and in either case they fall beyond the influence of *ʾinna*. Furthermore, Sībawayhi does not limit himself to telling us that *Zaydan* just as ʿAbdallāhi is affected by *ʾinna* and therefore made dependent, but goes on to illustrate that 'in there' which is a *ẓarf*, enjoys the same status as 'your brother' in ʿʿAbdullāhi [is] your brother' and is thus a *ḫabar*.

Although *ʾinna* assigns the dependent form by analogy with the effect of *ʿišrūna* on *dirhaman*, the effect of *ʾinna* is shown to extend beyond the first noun or noun phrase that comes immediately after it. This explains why utterances like إن زيدًا فيها قائمًا وقاعدٌ 'Verily, Zayd*an* [dependent] [is] in there [1. predicate / 2. *mulġā*] standing [1. dependent as *ḥāl*] and standing [2. independent as predicate]' and إن اليومَ زيدا منطلقٌ 'Verily, today [dependent as *ẓarf*] Zayd*an* [dependent] [is] going away [independent as predicate]'are possible in Arabic.

According to Sībawayhi (I Sib 280–81/242), the function of *al-yawma* 'today' [dependent] in إن اليومَ زيدا منطلقٌ 'Verily, today [dependent] Zaydan [dependent] [is] going away [independent]' is *mulġā* 'neutralised'. Rather than being an essential part of the utterance, the *ẓarf 'al-yawma'* is structurally an ambivalent element added to an already complete sentence. Differently put, the dependent form in *al-yawma* has nothing to do with the operation of *ʾinna*, but is inherent to its status as a *ẓarf*.

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[62] Reference is made to an earlier instance ʿʿAbdullāhi [is] your brother' in which ʿAbdullāhi assumes the function of *mubtadaʾ* and your brother that of *ḫabar*.

Two points emerge from the discussion so far. First, *ẓurūf* can only function as a subject/topic of *ʾinna* when they no longer function as a *ẓarf* but as a fully declinable noun as shown in my example إنّاليومَ قصيرٌ 'Verily, the day [dependent as subject] [is] short [dependent]'. Second, *ʾinna* can only assign the dependent form to one single term at a time, for if the dependent form of *al-yawma* 'today' in 'Verily, today [dependent] Zayd*an* [dependent] [is] going away [independent]' is attributed to the operation of *ʾinna*, we will remain with the dependent form of Zayd*an* to be accounted for. To summarise, *ẓurūf* occurring in an *ʾinna* structure may function either as a *ḫabar* or as a *mulġā* 'syntactically neutralised element', i.e. as if nothing was there at all. *Ẓurūf* only assume the function of *ʾinna's* subject/topic when they lose their status of *ẓurūf* and acquire that of a fully declinable noun. Finally, due to the non-identity of *ẓurūf* with the *mubtadaʾ* and to their separative behaviour, which is the result of their lack of an intrinsic syntactic status, the dependent *ẓurūf* can appear between two syntactically linked elements such as *ʾinna* and its subject/topic without obstructing the grammatical effect of *ʾinna*.

At the conclusion of this discussion, we may confirm the validity of *ʾinna*'s structure as an effective traditional testing device in analysing the functions of *mubtadaʾ* and *ḫabar*.

Summary

This chapter can perhaps fittingly be brought to a close with a remark on the significant interaction it has shown between traditional and modern linguistics, facilitating thus the task of disclosing particular aspects related to the analysis of nominal sentences in the *Kitāb*. By seeking inspiration in modern linguistic concepts and principles with a universal character, I have tried to present an integrated account of *verbless* nominal sentences and make Sībawayhi's discussion thereof more accessible by formalising what he left informal and implicit.

A re-examining of the notion of *ibtidāʾ*, based on Downing's functional model, helped me to throw new light on the behaviour of nominal sentences and to identify a number of key issues affecting their behaviour. In the same vein, Sībawayhi's insights were used to point out a mismatch between the notion of *aboutness* contained in the Hallidayan Theme and Downing's Topic.

Although Sībawayhi does not usually provide technical terms for various concepts and linguistic principles, a further investigation into the elements realising the functions of Topic and Theme has brought to the fore a neglected distinction made by Sībawayhi between two different functions implied in the notion of *ibtidāʾ*. Throughout the *Kitāb* the thematic *ibtidāʾ* or *Thematisation* is consistently kept distinct from the topical *ibtidāʾ or Topicalisation*, even when the two functions conflate.

Looking at Sībawayhi's treatment of types of *ḫabars* from a complementary angle has enabled me to fine tune their classification and distinguish three main types in function of their relationship with the *mubtadaʾ*, i.e. *identity ḫabars* with the subset of *indefinite identity ḫabars*, *participial ḫabars* and finally *locative ḫabars*. Regarding their reversibility, the conclusion reached indicates that the 'initial' position can normally be occupied by only two sorts of *ḫabars*, i.e. *identity ḫabars* and *locative ḫabars*, unless the thematisation of *indefinite identity ḫabars* and *participial ḫabars* is motivated functionally.

Further, the study has revealed that the operation and the grammatical behaviour of *ʾinna* and its related verbs is effectively illustrated by analogy with the separative function of the *tanwīn* in the *ʿišrūna dirhaman* structure. More importantly the operation of *ʾinna* has been demonstrated to be limited to its subject/topic only. Finally, we have tested the hypothesis about *ʾinna*'s operation. The findings have once more confirmed that *ʾinna* structure still is an efficient diagnostic tool that accurately determines which of the two terms in a predication structure can assume the function of *mubtadaʾ*. *Ẓurūf*, for instance, either assume the function of a *ḫabar* or that of a neutralised extra-syntactic element, in which case the *ẓarf* falls beyond the influence of *ʾinna*. Another important aspect has been highlighted, namely that the separative behaviour of *ẓurūf* allows them to separate *ʾinna* from its subject/topic without interfering with *ʾinna*'s power of making its subject/topic dependent.

There is little doubt about motivated syntactic and pragmatic arguments being employed to account for the behaviour of nominal sentences. Only when these two complementary linguistic factors are given their due weight, are we able to approach nominal sentences as were envisaged by Sībawayhi.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters of this book I have tried to give a comprehensive account of Sībawayhi's views on language. Sībawayhi's complementary approach to Arabic has been the focus of attention as I demonstrated that a purely formal or functional interpretation of the *Kitāb* flies in the face of the *Kitāb*'s linguistic data. Complementarism has been used as evidence to flesh out the bare bones scenario of quite subtle and important linguistic principles and terminology in the *Kitāb* which have not been given their due weight so far, if not overlooked altogether.

Concomitantly, I have provided new insights into the *Kitāb's* historical and linguistic arguments and underlined their strong correlation. The reflection upon the *Kitāb* and its fundamental principles has shown us that a clearer understanding of Sībawayhi's life and work presupposes the interconnection between linguistic analysis and its cultural context, on the one hand, and the complementarity of syntax and pragmatics, on the other. These two strands are not unconnected, as they may appear at first:[1] anyone who reads the *Kitāb* attentively will realize that the *Kitāb* presents a sort of a veiled life history of the Arab tribes in Iraq and their culture in early Islamic period.

While The *Kitāb*'s value as a communicative grammar forms the crux of the linguistic argument in this book, al-Ḥīra emerges as the decisive historical argument. The capital of the pre-Islamic Arabic kingdom of the Laḫmids deserves the credit for lifting the veil of uncertainty surrounding some aspects related to *Kitāb*'s terminology such as *istiqāma* and *naḥwiyyūn*. To put it differently, besides providing the historical memory of the societies and tribal groups that were important at every stage in the formation of early Islamic culture and identity, the acknowledged centre of pre-Islamic Arabic culture served as a road map to the *Kitāb* and Arab linguistics.

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[1] We had in this book only a brief glimpse of this correlation, which I shall hope to deploy in a subsequent publication, as its full dimension is still waiting to be explored further.

In chapter one I argued that al-Ḥīra is a valuable clue in our search for a clearer portrait of the person of Sībawayhi and for a better picture of the early development of Arabic grammatical science. It was advanced as the main issue in the foreground for the religious and political power struggle between the Kūfīs and the Baṣrīs, which culminated in the creation of the two grammar schools. The foregoing remarks offer a striking testimony to how al-Ḥīra's glory and decline is inextricably interwoven with the Kūfīs leading position and their marginalization by the fourth/tenth century. The converse is also true, the *Kitāb*'s initial neglect and subsequent rise to fame is tightly related to the initial glory and subsequent decline of al-Ḥīra by the end of the third/ninth century.[2]

We have seen that in spite of the *Kitāb*'s long established reputation as the '*Qur'ān* of Grammar', it was initially met with neglect and criticism before al-Mubarrad. The linguistic arguments I put forward to explain the reason why, do not deviate much from those advanced by other Arab linguists, but I feel that the conclusion does as a result of the third dimension that it has acquired by introducing key historical and political developments to the discussion. I pointed out that the enigma of the *Kitāb*'s initial neglect should cease to puzzle us once we identify the absence of exegetical elements and religious arguments, and most likely the dwindling number of speakers of 'good old Arabic' as plausible causes. However, advancing the growing influence of Islamic awareness at the expense of Arabism, and their final conflation toward the end of third/ninth century, have shed illuminating light on this intriguing issue.

It is important to observe that as the result of this development the grammarians who followed Sībawayhi were conditioned to conceive of Arabic grammar as an ancillary science. In other words, their undisputed scholarship lacked Sībawayhi's audacity to challenge the views of his predecessors and masters by confronting them with authentic

[2] Al-Ḥīra is conspicuous by its absence in the *Kitāb*. The relevant questions as to whether its omission is related somehow to other modifications that the *Kitāb* underwent in the third/ninth century is beyond the scope of this book as it will require the comparison of the many manuscripts that have been identified so far (cf. Humbert 1995 especially 57ff, Carter 2004: 36–8). Another concrete example of such modification is the insertion of names of Sībawayhi's older contemporary scholars such as al-Aṣmaʿī, Abū ʿUbayda and Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (Carter, op. cit. 24). Having said this, I still think that whatever modification has been made to the the *Kitāb* will be a matter of details rather than substance, for it would take another Sībawayhi to affect it.

data of usage taken from a living language.[3] In this regard two vital linguistic issues have been raised, namely that Sībawayhi was not interested in spinning webs of linguistic theories, and second is that Sībawayhi had holistic view of language. It is no surprise, then, that Sībawayhi tells us very little about the names of the pragmatic principles, syntactic rules and units dealt with in his work. This might seem controversial considering that if there is one obvious fact about the *Kitāb*, it is the highly developed communicative model upon which the *Kitāb* rests.

Sībawayhi's position is not only unique within Arab linguistics, but is probably unprecedented in the history of linguistics as a whole. Few non-native linguists have made so many original and lasting contributions to the language they have learnt as Sībawayhi did. The independence of his linguistic thinking is leavened with subtle analysis based on the authority of the native speakers. It is true that his approach is far from being simple but it is equally true that his approach is not only consistent but is also functional. The strength of his approach lies in the fact that it is free from preconceived notions of what a language should be and how it should operate. In short, looking at the variety of ways of conducting his research and questions suppositions, we may confidently conclude that Sībawayhi's was solid system.

The originality of Sībawayhi's linguistic achievements emerges in the clearest possible way in the shift in focus brought about in the *Kitāb* from exegesis to pure linguistics. The *Kitāb's* is a 'context-sensitive grammar': familiar linguistic and exegetical arguments are both useful and indispensible, but the extension of analysis beyond the confines of linguistics began to disclose an essential feature in Sībawayhi's attitude to language, namely, that language is in the first place a social act and a natural reflection of the cultural and intellectual realities that surround both the speaker and the listener. Sībawayhi's basic attitude towards verbal communication is that the listener's inability to recognise the speaker's intention is a clear sign of a communicative and social failure. However, this attitude is not rigidly syntactic but is combined with pragmatic principles, as reflected in his somewhat positive and tolerant attitude toward *corrigible* syntactic mistakes or what he labels as *qabīḥ* 'bad or structurally incorrect'.

[3] An exception would be Ibn Maḍāʾ al-Qurṭubī and his work *ar-Radd ʿalā an-Nuḥāt*.

Without understanding the principal characteristics of the '*istiqāma* of the speech', we will easily overlook the nature of the relationship between pragmatic rightness and syntactic correctness, namely that it is not similar but proportional. So unlike utterances containing *lubs*, utterances labelled as *qabīḥ* do not exclude the *istiqāma* of speech in the same way as false utterances recognised as such by the listener are still compatible with *istiqāma*. We have seen that false utterances such as حملتالجبل 'I carried the mountain' are qualified by Sībawayhi as *mustaqīm* simply because there is no uncertainty about its false status, nor about the speaker's intention to convey that particular message.

Enough space has been devoted to the analysis of passages where they clearly show that Sībawayhi approached syntax as a means, not an end in itself. The apparently simple utterances underpinning Sībawayhi's linguistic analysis assume a unique and authentic social and cultural dimension. That is why their examination was shown to require a complementary view that is supplemented with something more substantial, i.e. text external elements. Sībawayhi very often points out some major areas when formal structures fail to account for the nature and function of the item or structure under analysis within its wider context.

The charges of a one-sided approach levelled against al-*Kitāb* are thus unfounded, simply because they are the result of wrong questions that inevitably produce wrong responses. Surely, the challenge lies in the fact that Sībawayhi's main concern was outspokenly pragmatic rather than theoretical. As has already been indicated, he does not approach language as a set of formal rules that requires a purely theoretical knowledge; his interest lies in how trustworthy Arabs speak Arabic and use it. In other words, Sībawayhi approaches formal structure as a representation, not *per se* as an explanation. Syntax aims to offer insight into the working of the language, to recognize the system of relations and maintain balance and interplay between its components.

At present, there are clear signs of increasing interest of general linguistics in Arab linguistics and in the *Kitāb*, in particular, as the acknowledged masterpiece of Arabic grammatical thinking. Still, I have expressed particular concern about rash value judgements and lack of the necessary knowledge which might diminish the merit of such openness to Arab linguistics (cf. discussion of Itkonen's analysis of Sībawayhi in chapter one). This concern should be emerging now

as the motive behind my attempt to make the *Kitāb* more accessible to modern linguistics without doing Sībawayhi an injustice.

It is true that the presence of a comprehensive linguistic model in the *Kitāb* does not require a particularly sharp eye to perceive it but it does require a more formalised identification, hence my attempt to bring to the fore a few key informal but clearly stated general linguistic principles and insights scattered throughout the *Kitāb*. Having said this, my attempt should by no means be taken as a sign of the *Kitāb*'s unsystematic or vague method, for the problem does not lie with Sībawayhi but rather with the way we read his work: if there were no well-defined line between concepts and principles, Sībawayhi would not have been able to further his analysis and develop an advanced communicative model without using too many technical terms. Whatever the reason might be, it seems certain that Sībawayhi preferred to concentrate on the linguistic behaviour and operation of pragmatic principles and syntactic rules rather than on technical jargon.

When referring to modern linguistics in the book, I have consistently sought to bring to the fore the lack of discrepancies between Sībawayhi's views and similar views expressed by modern linguists. Possible similarity between the two views are explained by the fact that they are consonant with each other rather than by one view being subordinate to the other. Consequently, selecting modern linguistic insights has proved preferential to applying entire theoretical models, for they have provided a framework within which the integrity of Sībawayhi's linguistic heritage was more readily and precisely described.

It is important to recall here that in spite of the similarities established between Sībawayhi's views and those of western linguists, there are important structural differences that have been ignored by quite a few Arabic linguists. Most notable is the difference concerning the pivotal role the category of verbs plays in western linguistic theories *versus* the indispensable role of nouns in Arabic. My point has been that it would be more accurate to speak of the *fāʿil-mubtadaʾ* dichotomy than the *verb- mubtadaʾ* dichotomy when dealing with word order in Arabic, for Sībawayhi obviously gives more prominence to the agent than the verb when dealing with verbal utterances. It is therefore not a mere coincidence that *verbless* nominal sentences have been the focus of explicit attention in the present study, and that the irrelevance of the dichotomy of VS-SV word order to the *Kitāb* has be stressed

(cf. p. 145 above). We tend to think that the best way of throwing light on some linguistic aspects which we set aside, is by comparing it with another language. However, uncritical acceptance of terms and notions of modern linguistics has proved to yield undesirable results, jeopardizing thus every chance of a fruitful encounter between the two linguistic systems.

What is so ingenious in the *Kitāb* is the way it accounts for the most complex linguistic phenomena at a level of analysis which is equal to achievements in functionally oriented linguistic theories. One is struck for instance by the impressive resemblance of Sībawayhi's view and Weil's understanding of speech and the significance of the point of departure (Weil 1978: 30):

> For in Speech- or in Spoken language- the most important thing is the instant of conception and utterance. Into this instant is compressed all the life of speech: before it, speech had no existence; after it, speech is dead. The moment makes the individuality of thought and spoken language, and the signet of this individuality is the order in which the ideas and signs are produced.

An unmistakeable indication of affinity is the importance Sībawayhi attaches to 'the instant of conception and utterance' of the *kalām* 'speech' which in theory begins with a vocative expression or *nidāʾ* and ends with silence or *sukūt*, a feature that marks the 'individuality' and *istiqāma* of speech. Within Sībawayhi's communicative model, *istiqāma* is a key concept by virtue of which the intention of the speaker is made known beyond the confines of the formal rules of syntax. That the term *istiqāma* is not primarily concerned with syntax or grammatical correctness but rather with social rightness and principles of *intelligibility* and *politeness*, does not mean that the latter is subsumed under syntactic correctness. We only need to replace the word 'text' by 'speech' to see how accurately the following quotation reflects Sībawayhi's approach to language, and how right he was about presenting the *istiqāma* of speech the strict criterion for purposeful verbal communication:

> […] work to discover *regularities, strategies, motivations, preferences* and *defaults* rather than *rules* and *laws*. *Dominances* can offer more realistic classifications than can *strict categories*. *Acceptability* and *appropriateness* are more crucial standards for texts than *grammaticality* and *well-formedness*.[4]

[4] de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981: xv).

The foregoing paragraph lays bare the issue that is really at the heart of Sībawayhi's conception of language, that is to say, if he had to sum up the way the Arabs speak, he would have described it as being *mustaqīm* and free from any kind of *lubs* 'uncertainty'. In other words, the sole object of the *Kitāb*'s lengthy and very often arduous discussions was to show how to achieve the *istiqāma* of speech and its non-*lubs* 'certainty'. Contrary to his contemporaries or later Arab grammarians, Sībawayhi avoided any sort of bias towards making rigid linguistic generalisations, such as the one criticised by Givón (I 2000: 28), and which states that 'a rule is only a rule if it is 100% applicable'. The only rule to which Sībawayhi seems to adhere to is that of following the example of the Arabs who may bring one thing in parallel with another in spite of clear differences between the two.[5] Inferentially, the ultimate measure of success or failure in communication in the *Kitāb* is based on reciprocity between the speaker's ability to express his intention in Arabic correctly and rightly, on the one hand, and the listener's ability to recognise the speaker's intention, on the other.

Conventionality, whether Absolute or Motivated, is an area where a mechanism frequently employed by Sībawayhi links syntactic categories of grammar to the communicative realities as envisaged by the Arabs themselves. Once this fundamental linguistic principle is grasped, the learner of Arabic can see the sense behind a particular linguistic behaviour or usage. As a case in point, I have already demonstrated that the traditional approach to the Arabic system of inflections has neglected an essential analytical feature to the use of case endings by uniquely focusing on the morpho-syntactical aspects. The *Kitāb* provides ample evidence for asserting that case endings were treated by Sībawayhi as a motivated choice in the first place (I Sib 214/182):

ومنه ايضا مررت برجلين مسلم وكافر جمعت الاسم وفرقت النعت وان شئت كان المسلم والكافر بدلا كانه اجاب من قال باي ضرب مررت وان شاء رفع كانه اجاب من قال فما هما فالكلام على هذا وان لم يلفظ به المخاطب لانه انما يجري كلامه على قدر مسئلتك عنده لو سألته.

You also say 'I passed by two men, [a] Moslem [oblique] and [an] infidel [oblique]' where you make the noun collective and separate the adjectival qualifiers. If you like you can make the 'Moslem' and the 'infidel' into substitute [for two men] as though in answer to someone who asked 'By what sort of man did you pass?' and if one wishes one can use the

[5] Cf. discussion in chapter 2.

> independent form as though in answer to the question 'What sort were they?' This is the way of speaking, even if the listener does not ask out loud, because what one says follows the extent of the questions one might pose if he were to ask you.

There are quite a few points we can deduce from the passage above about the spirit of the *Kitāb*. Structurally speaking, agreement in case and indefiniteness between the two adjectives or substitutes and their antecedent marks their constituent membership. Pragmatically speaking, the choice of the case ending to mark the syntactic function can only be differentiated at a functional level where the listener provides the justification for the speaker's linguistic behaviour and structural choice. In other words, Sībawayhi expresses exactly what Lambrecht (1994: passim) said many centuries later about the structure of a sentence being a reflection of the speaker's assumption about the listener's mental state and knowledge.

Another telling example is related to the syntactic behaviour of *maṣdars*. As far as Sībawayhi is concerned, there are no hard and fast rules as to when *maṣdars* may or may not take the dependent form. A brief look at the chapters dealing with the *maṣdar*s that takes the *ʾalif-lām* discloses unquestionable instances of Absolute Conventionality. The first instance is taken from the chapter dealing with *maṣdar*s that are made independent as the result of their taking the *ʾalif-lām*, which enables them to function as a *mubtadaʾ* (I Sib 165–6/138):

> وليس كل حرف يصنع به ذاك كما أنه ليس كل حرف يدخل فيه الألف واللام من هذا الباب لو قلت: السقيُ لك والرعيُ لك لم يجز واعلم أن الحمدُ لله وإن ابتدأته ففيه معنى المنصوب وهو بدل من اللفظ بقولك: أحمد الله.

> This is not done to every word in the same way as that not every word [sc. *maṣdar*] in this chapter takes the *ʾalif-lām*, so if you say السقي لك and والرعي لك it is not allowed. You should also know that even when you begin with the *maṣdar* in 'Praise [independent] [be] to God' it still has the meaning of the dependent structure [sc. of prayer] and it is a substitute for your saying 'I praise God'.

In fact Absolute Conventionality is one of the few principles that is formally expressed by Sībawayhi and systematically applied. This is especially discernable in the following quotations, the last three of which are taken from three subsequent chapters dealing with *maṣdars* (I Sib 166/138; 186/156; 187/156; 187/156–7 respectively):

• فانما تجريها كما اجرت العرب وتضعها في المواضع التي وضعن فيها ولا تدخلن فيها ما لم يدخلوا من الحروف.

So you treat them [sc. indefinite *maṣdars*] as the Arabs treat them and put them in the places they are put and you do not introduce to them the particles they did not introduce to them.

• وليس كل مصدر وإن كان في القياس مثل ما مضى من هذا الباب يوضع هذا الموضع.

Not every *maṣdar* is put in this place even though in analogy it is similar to what have previously been mentioned in this chapter.

• وليس كل المصادر في هذا الباب يدخله الالف واللام كما انه ليس كل مصدر في باب الحمد لله والعجب لك يدخله الالف واللام.

Not all the *maṣdars* in this chapter are prefixed with the *ʾalif-lām* in the same that not every *maṣdar* in the chapter of 'Praise [be] to God' and 'Admiration [is due] to you!' takes the *ʾalif-lām*.

• وليس كل مصدر يضاف كما انه ليس كل مصدر يدخله الالف واللام في هذا الباب.

Not every *maṣdar* is annexed in the same way as that not every *maṣdar* in this chapter can be prefixed with the *ʾalif-lām* is.

The benefits of a complementary approach are also reflected in the analysis of nominal sentences and related notions of definiteness and *ibtidāʾ*. In chapter three we have found a direct correlation between the syntactic notion of definiteness and the pragmatic principle of *identifiability*, which was presented as the ultimate determiner of word order. I have observed that the *maʿrifa-nakira* dichotomy, i.e. 'something known'—'something unknown' or roughly 'definite-indefinite' is neither a separate and insulated syntactic component of language nor context-neutral. The inadequacy of the syntactic dichotomy of definite-indefinite is the result of a hasty conclusion that has neglected the crux of the problem of definiteness in the *Kitāb*. In this book, the problem of definiteness has undergone a considerable re-evaluation, a process epitomised by the introduction of the pragmatic principle of *identifiability*. As far as I know this principle has never been put forward as a crucial feature in Sībawayhi's discussion of definiteness in the *Kitāb*. I have also underlined the fact that *identifiability* implies the listener's attention directed towards a referent which he could identify in various degrees. The *identifiability* degree by the listener determines thus the referent's definiteness or indefiniteness.

Generally speaking, the cardinal rule of definiteness holds in many cases by excluding indefinite nouns from occupying the 'initial' position. Utterances such as رجلٌ ذاهبٌ 'A man [is] going' (I Sib 26/20) and كان رجلٌ ذاهبًا 'A man was going' (I Sib 165/137) are not allowed simply because they do not meet the rule of definiteness. Obviously, the morphosyntactic form of indefinite nouns is the first factor behind their unacceptability in the 'initial' position, but the syntactic form does not explain the unacceptability away completely. We have seen that the occurrence of indefinite nouns in the 'initial' position forms a counter-argument to the rule of definiteness that is hardly refutable on a formal basis only. However, the full picture is achieved by the addition of the *identifiability* principle, which crops us throughout the discussion of definiteness in the *Kitāb* and which can be adduced from the following excerpt (I Sib 26–7/20):

ولوقلت كان رجل من آل فلان فارسًا حسن لأنه قد يحتاج إلى أن تعلمه أن ذاك في آل فلان وقد يجهله. ولوقلت كان رجل في قوم فارسا لم يحسن لأنه لا يستنكر أن يكون في الدنيا فارس وأن يكون من قوم فعلى هذا النحو يحسن ويقبح.

> If you said 'A man from such and such tribe was a rider' it would be good [i.e. structurally correct] Arabic because he [sc. the listener] may need to know from you that that rider is from such and such tribe and may not have known it. If you said 'A man in a tribe is a rider' it would not be good Arabic because it is undeniable that there is a rider in the world and that he is from a tribe. This is the way of approving or disapproving it [sc. a predication structure of indefinite predicate to an indefinite *mubtada'*] as good or bad Arabic.

The passage above brings well to the fore the Complementary Principle which underpins the discussion of definiteness in the *Kitāb* and proves that the unacceptability of utterances with an indefinite noun in the 'initial' position cannot be limited to their *ungrammaticality* but rather to their lack of every informative or communicative value. In short, uncertainty or *lubs* are the underlying cause of rejecting indefinite nouns in the 'initial' position. I hope by the introduction of the principle of *identifiability* to repair the neglect of centuries and restore to the discussion of definiteness in the *Kitāb* the original complementary balance of argumentation.

One fact should be immediately obvious: the significance of the 'initial' position in the utterance and its interdependence of the rule of definiteness and principle of *identifiability*. This interdependence

gives an alternative and fresh perspective on the types of sentences in Arabic and on nominal ones in particular. Closely connected with issue of definiteness and 'initial' position is the central but problematic area of determining the type of sentence in Arabic as verbal or nominal. I have argued that it is more accurate to say that the initial term determines whether an utterance is nominal or verbal and not the mere presence or absence of a verb. The common fallacy of the 'indefinite' verbs falls once we realise that Sībawayhi actually was referring to the binary nature of Arabic verbs that consist of an agent and an action. This feature confers upon the verb a degree of *identifiability* and enables it thus to occupy the 'initial' position in the utterance.

A direct corollary of introducing the concept of 'initial' position is the clearing up of the confusion between the *musnad-musnad ʾilayhi* 'Theme-Rheme' dichotomy and *mubtadaʾ-ḫabar* structure 'subject/topic-predicate'. It is not surprising that the concept of *isnād* is rarely used in the *Kitāb*, since its only purpose is to disentangle the *thematic* strand of the *ibtidāʾ*, i.e. the point of departure, from its *topical* strand. The close relationship between the *isnād* and *ibtidāʾ* should be clear from the following passage which is also quoted above on p. 181 (I Sib 278/239):

فالابتداء لا يكون إلا بمبني عليه فالمبتدأ الأول والمبني ما بعده عليه فهو مسند ومسند إليه.

> So the *ibtidāʾ* [thematic structure] cannot exist without something built on it, and the *mubtadaʾ* [Topic + Theme] is first and what is built on it is next, therefore they are *musnad* and *musnad ʾilayhi* [Theme-Rheme].

We have seen that the interdependence between the 'initial' position, definiteness, *identifiability* and *inversion* is only comprehensible once the analysis of the Arabic predication structure is based on the underestimated pillar of Complementarity that supports the whole edifice of the *Kitāb*. The point of departure in a predication structure, i.e. the Theme, should thus be common to both the speaker and the listener, whereas the goal of discourse, i.e. the Rheme, should contain the new information the speaker wants to impart to the listener (I Sib 165/137 and quoted on p. 126):

[...] لأن الابتداء إنما هو خبر واحسنه إذا اجتمع معرفة ونكرة أن تبدأ بالأعرف وهو أصل الكلام [...] فاصل الابتداء للمعرفة.

> [...] Because the *ibtidāʾ* 'Thematic structure' is but a statement and if a *maʿrifa* 'definite noun' and *nakira* 'indefinite noun' come together, it is

> structurally better to begin with that which is more known, for this is the original state of speech […] The original state of the *ibtidāʾ* 'Thematic structure' is [to begin with] the *maʿrifa* 'definite'.

As far as the topical strand *ibtidāʾ* is concerned, further examination of the elements realising this function has led me to uncover another feature that distinguishes the *mubtadaʾ* 'subject/topic'as such, namely that the *mubtadaʾ* is the main participant in the sentence. It also provides evidence that *inversion* in *verbless* nominal sentences neither breaches nor is contrary to any linguistic or communicative principle. I have shown that *inversion* is possible because the *mubtadaʾ* remains the main participant, regardless of its linear position in the utterance and of whether the function of the Theme is assumed by the *mubtadaʾ* itself or by a preposed *ḫabar*.

On the basis of the distinction made between the topical and thematic *ibtidāʾ* I have pointed out serious terminological distortions such as the misapplication of the western concept of Topicalisation to Arabic, a concept that is shown by Downing to be inaccurate even in modern linguistics (cf. discussion above on pp. 167–8). As far as Arabic is concerned, I have suggested that *Topicalisation* or topical *ibtidāʾ* in the *Kitāb* is intrinsically linked to the syntactic structure of *mubtadaʾ-ḫabar* 'subject/topic-predicate' and it usually coincides with *Thematisation* or thematic *ibtidāʾ*. It is therefore more accurate to speak of *Thematisation* when *inversion* takes place in nominal utterances, usually for reason related to definiteness and identifiability, or when *transposing* occurs in verbal utterances, usually to emphasise the meaning of the *naṣb* 'the meaning of putting a word in the dependent form' due to the operation of a verbal element, whether overt or covert.

Before I leave the question of the two strands of the *ibtidāʾ*, it is worth pointing out the failure to assess the real extent of *ʾinna*'s operation which is traditionally said to extend beyond its subject/topic. A major inconsistency has been revealed between Sībawayhi's account of *ʾinna* and its related verbs and the traditional account in grammar after Sībawayhi. Sībawayhi's discussion has fallen into eclipse even though he took all possible pains to bring to our notice the fact that the dependent form in the *ʾinna* structure is explained by reference to *ʿišrūna dirhaman* 'twenty dirhams', where the verbal power of *ʿišrūna* is exclusively limited to *dirhaman*.

Finally, one very large and important area for consideration will be that of the *Kitāb*'s potential contribution to modern linguistic thinking. Although this book is mainly about Sībawayhi view on the Arabic

language, the significance of his work becomes all the more impressive in its continuity to bring a vital element of added value to today's discussion of Arabic grammar and linguistics in general. As a simple illustration of the kind of contribution that the *Kitāb* may make to general linguistics, I have pointed out that the conflict between the Hallidayan and Downing's concept of *aboutness* can be resolved by the distinction that Sībawayhi draws between 'meaning' and topical *ibtidāʾ*. Just as Halliday's Theme and Downing's Topic were instrumental in helping me to separate the two strands of the *ibtidāʾ*, 'meaning' in the *Kitāb* has been put forward to indicate the discoursal dimension of the Theme that correlates significantly with the 'initial' position while the notion of topical *ibtidāʾ* is shown to closely correspond to Downing's Topic, which she identifies with the main participant.

This is clearly not the place to launch into a discussion of the *Kitāb*'s arrangement but it is worth emphasising that Sībawayhi's comprehensive and in-depth account can serve as a model approach. The focus of the *Kitāb*'s contribution to general linguistics is enlarged by its inclusive character which encompasses the main components of language, i.e. syntax, pragmatics, morphology and phonology, in a way that all the four components fall within a comprehensive vision that is rarely paralleled in modern individual theories. This becomes all the more clear in Butler's evaluation of the three structural-functional theories, in which he furnishes us with a concrete proof as he admits (II 2003: 499):

> Although in this work we have not been much concerned with the levels of phonology/graphology and phonetics/graphetics, obviously a comprehensive model must include them. They tend to have been somewhat neglected in functional approaches, and deserve greater attention in the future.

The most useful function of this book would be to draw attention to the potential field of wide-ranging interchangeable and contemporary linguistic ideas underlying the *Kitāb* and which still await further exploitation. My aim would be achieved if I have been persuasive in my attempt to demonstrate that the *Kitāb*'s linguistic potentials have not been exhausted yet and that the *Kitāb* corresponds to various criteria of linguistic adequacy. What is more, it establishes an overarching linguistic pattern that allows an interaction with modern linguistics.

At the end of my journey along the pathways of the *Kitāb*, it is perhaps fitting to emphasise the opening words in the *Kitāb* هذا باب علم

هذا باب علم ما الكلم من العربية 'This is the chapter on the science of what the words are in Arabic' are not a form of window dressing. These words eloquently sum up the reason why Sībawayhi has in the first place undertaken the mammoth task of writing a comprehensive work on Arabic, i.e. to speak Arabic properly and to make known the usages and practices of good Arabic. No wonder that the very last words concluding the final discussion in the *Kitāb* are وهي عربية 'and it is [good] Arabic'.

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