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SEMANTIC TRANSPARENCY AND NUMBER MARKING IN ARABIC AND OTHER LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Every language has its share of odd or idiosyncratic words, expressions, idioms, and collocational ranges for its vocabulary. For example, Arabic has many lexemes, phrases and expressions which use the plural, but which translate into English in the sg. The plural in the datum in question is overtly marked in Arabic, and what it refers to can be explained in terms of the notion of a semantically transparent plurality; e.g., *ʕilmu llahajaat* (science/NOM/the dialect/PL) 'the science of dialects' = 'dialectology'. Semantic transparency can be defined as a literal cognitive mapping of an idea, thought or concept, or as 'guessability' for the native speaker. Thus, 'eye doctor' is semantically transparent, since native speakers know the meanings of 'eye' and 'doctor'; however, 'ophthalmologist' is semantically opaque since its morphemic parts are not readily discernable. Returning to the notion of 'dialectology', from the viewpoint of the logic of semantic and cognitive structure, 'dialectology' studies dialects, usually many dialects — not merely one, and thus the marking of the plural makes logical sense. In other words, the Arabic plural marking instantaneously denotes reference to numerous dialects (in the plural!) — the object of the study of dialectology.

The aim of this essay is to shed light on conceptual structure in human cognition by examining aspects of its linguistic representation. It looks at a formal property of morphological structure, viz., number marking from its conceptual perspective. The basic thesis of the article is that a sg. (noun) in English may often be rendered as a plural (noun) in Arabic (Modern Standard and the colloquials), and that this common trait of the language can be explained or accounted for cognitively in terms of the notion of semantic transparency.

Using a cognitive linguistic framework directly linked to thought and conceptual structure, this research suggests that an Arabic speaker conceives of the mental construct *ʕilmu llahajaat* as a plural-

ity parallel to the plural notion inherent in *maʕluumaat* 'information'. 'Mountain climbing' similarly is *tasalluqu ljibaal*, 'the climbing of mountains', or 'body building' is *kamaalu l?ajsaam*, 'the perfection of the bodies'. Of course, the English speaker knows (or is aware of the fact) that mountain climbing involves a huge effort, and one must usually practice climbing many mountains to become proficient in the sport. The interesting thing here is that this very idea of practicing climbing numerous mountains is made semantically transparent in Arabic by the use of the overt plural marking, as opposed to the unmarked sg. of English. The aforementioned subjects are thoroughly explored in this essay, with many examples from Arabic and other languages provided for illustrative and comparative purposes. Although Arabic prefers pluralization in a majority of examples, there are several notable exceptions to the general tendency in various lexical items and expressions. Reasons will be adduced to explain the majority of these.

1.0. **Introduction**[1]

Even the great linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir, who had enormous respect for and knowledge of a myriad of linguistic data from numerous languages and dialects, downplayed the status of words in the realm of linguistics (quoted in Mandelbaum 1949: 432): 'This superficial and extraneous kind of parallelism is of no real interest to the linguist for the linguistic student should never

[1] A version of this paper was presented to the faculty and students of the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on May 2, 2000; the faculty and students of the Orientalisches Institut, University of Leipzig on November 20, 2000; as well as the Institut für Orientalistik, University of Vienna on November 23, 2001. Another version was presented to the joint session of the 29th North American Conference on Afroasiatic Linguistics (NACAL) and the 211th meeting of the American Oriental Society in Toronto, Canada, on March 30th, 2001. Yet another version was presented to the members of the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, Institute for Advanced Study, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia, on January 23, 2002; at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, on November 5, 2002; at the University of Leeds as the Terrence F. Mitchell Memorial Lecture on November 25, 2002; at the University of Durham on November 26, 2002; at the Edinburgh Institute for the Advanced Study of Islam and the Middle East at the University of Edinburgh on November 28, 2002; at the Facultade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro on December 19, 2002; Arizona State University on April 2, 2003; and at the Annual Conference on Arabic Studies, University of Bucharest, on June 2, 2003. My thanks to all those in attendance, on all these occasions, for stimulating discussions.

make the mistake of identifying a language with its dictionary.'[2] It is, of course, of little wonder then that today's theoretically-minded linguists find lexis, at least in the traditional sense, to be devoid of any serious linguistic interest or scientific merit to the study of language with a capital 'L' or even a small 'l'. In my view, the lexicon and the study of lexis in general have, unfortunately, been relegated to last place in the research endeavours of most contemporary linguists.[3] Lexis may be defined as the study of words[4] in all their ramifications, including their specific forms, contexts, denotations, connotations and collocations. Thus, I am saddened to report that Sapir's remark still rings true today, especially for the recent linguistics Ph.D., who in all probability, is a syntactician, formal semantician, or phonologist, since lexicographers are, for the most part,

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The Arabic transcription is fairly standard, except that I use capital letters for the emphatics and geminated vowels for long vowels. I am using the symbol DH throughout for the voiced emphatic interdental stop (the *Taa'* with a dot on top). These were chosen for purely practical reasons of word-processing, and most, if not all, linguists should have little difficulty recognizing the Arabic data.
The following abbreviations are used: ECA = Egyptian Colloquial Arabic; MSA = Modern Standard Arabic; sg. = singular; pl. = plural; m. = masculine, fem. = feminine.

[2] Some interesting remarks on the lexicon may be found in Pawley (1986), and Kiraz (2001: 15, 20) summarizes the state of the art of morphology and its interfacing with grammar in general.

[3] Pawley (1993: 125) quite astonishingly asserts that 'since the 1960s the lexicon's status in theoretical linguistics has gone up. Instead of being an appendix, it has moved closer to the heart of grammar.' If this were true, how could one explain the paucity of lexical research of the type exemplified here by theoretical linguists?

[4] Maybe the layman has got it right all these centuries when s/he states that a language is, in a manner of speaking, nothing more than a bunch of words strung together. Such expressions as 'I would like to have a few words (also 'a word') with you', 'he is very wordy', 'they exchanged a few words', 'not even a discouraging word was heard', 'My word!', 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me', 'what's the good word?', 'I give you my word', 'my word is my bond', or 'a word to the wise' and 'words of wisdom' are further testimony to the fact that the word is at the very core of language and thus of major linguistic concern. Is there a master of any language, i.e., an orator or major writer, who does not have a large lexicon, in addition to having the knowledge of how to use it effectively?

not even considered linguists, nor is their field part of modern mainstream linguistics. I believe it is safe to say that most of today's active publishing scholars in linguistics are simply not interested in words, expressions, or their translations into specific languages, with the possible exception of specialists in genetic linguistics and experimental psycholinguistics (studying bilingualism). One might even say that lexical semantics is not where the action is for most semanticists, syntacticians, and linguists. One of the goals of the present discussion is that it stimulates a change of direction in the interests of some of the field's practitioners thereby broadening their and the field's linguistic horizons.

1.1. *The importance of lexis in linguistic theory*

As I view things, knowing sufficient words in a foreign language will enable one to communicate (e.g., even if it is in a pidgin language or foreigner talk); however, a knowledge of the grammar of a language with minimal vocabulary will not allow one to say very much, even though the output will be grammatical, reducing conversation to trivial inanities (can one talk about Plato, Hegel, Camus, politics, or just about the weather or pizza and beer?). Practically speaking, the former situation is a better one than the latter, I believe, assuming that the bottom line is meaningful communication on a wide variety of interesting and meaty subjects. Speaking personally, if I were dropped from a plane into Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania, I would much prefer to know Swahili words rather than have a knowledge of Swahili syntax and phonology. Good foreign language teachers have always intuitively known that their most proficient students had a large vocabulary while the less-gifted students had a weak or mediocre knowledge of the words of the language. Certainly, lexicographers, translators, and specialists in various languages (and others, to be sure, including many lay persons) can appreciate the beauty and intricacy of the lexicon in a many-splendored way which would make the language humorist Richard Lederer of *Anguished English* and *Verbivore* fame proud.

2.0. The study of Arabic vocabulary: The basic thesis

The aim of this essay is to shed light on conceptual structure in human cognition by examining aspects of its linguistic representation. It looks at a formal property of morphological stgructure, viz., number marking from its conceptual perspective. Its basic thesis is

that a sg. (noun) in English and other languages may often be rendered as a pl. (noun) in Arabic (MSA and Arabic colloquial dialects), and this common trait of the language can be explained or accounted for cognitively in terms of the notion of semantic transparency, a cognitive mapping of conceptual structure (see 3.0. for details with illustrations). This fact has not only not been recognized nor properly investigated, but is also a phenomenon which is a pervasive characteristic of the language, as is the triconsonantal root or the distinction between diptote and triptote. Moreover, I have attempted to explain the why of this fact, have endeavoured to relate it to number marking in general, and have provided reasons for the exceptions to the rule. Needless to say, as one can see from the title, this work deals primarily with semantic transparency and number marking in Arabic.[5] In it, we shall take a good, hard look at the Arabic lexicon with respect to the aforementioned linguistic parameters. However, there are references, for comparative and typological purposes, to other languages. It asserts that a language is basically[6] its words and their meanings — not its grammar (syntax or morphosyntax), nor its phonology (many fluent speakers have pronounced foreign accents) and morphology (even native-speaking children say 'goed' for 'went' or 'foots' for 'feet', and we have considerable variation throughout the English-speaking world in past-tense forms, such as 'dived', the standard British English word, and 'dove', and so on), and knowing a language is, first and foremost, an internal digestion of lexis (both free and, to a certain extent, bound morphemes, the latter certainly

[5] I should point out that the English translations presented are rarely my own; rather, they occur in the Arab countries in various contexts (usually in published format), and many can also be found in dictionaries of all persuasions. I have relied especially on Wehr (1974), certainly adequate but far from perfect.

[6] It is not my purpose to enter into polemics here. Of course, grammar and phonology are important, and I certainly do not maintain otherwise. However, it seems to me that lexis is also crucial in linguistic theory but extremely malnourished, probably since there is no general theory of consequence in this domain, and moreover, no theory of the interfacing of the lexicon and grammar. Since vocabulary is also potentially infinite (cf. *grandson*, *great-grandson*, *great-great-grandson*, *great-great-great-grandson*, etc.), it seems to me that it is just as complicated as the potentially infinite set of sentences that make up the core of syntactic concerns. Of course, no native speaker of any language can master all the vocabulary found in large dictionaries for various reasons. I will, however, let other linguists debate this complicated 'red herring', since it is beyond the scope of this essay. I will add, however, that I do not think today's linguists even know where to begin to look for a comprehensive theory of lexis and the interfacing of lexis and grammar, particularly from the cross-linguistic perspective of research in linguistic typology and language universals, as is evidenced by the language facts presented in this essay.

being intertwined with grammar, at least in the traditional sense). Almost every Arabist, living or dead, is or was of the opinion that the most difficult thing about Arabic is its 'infinite' vocabulary.[7] Further, one can have a decent knowledge of Arabic grammar and yet still have severe difficulty in reading Arabic literary texts or comprehending formal university lectures or sermons, simply because of a deficiency in Arabic vocabulary which, like English, is certainly rich — some might even say colossal. I am not sure about the extent to which this may be true with other languages, yet I suspect it is true with most or even all languages with enormous written literatures over a period of many centuries.[8]

Every language has its share of odd or idiosyncratic expressions, idioms, and vocabulary-collocational ranges for its words. This is all well known, of course. Often, translating into Arabic from a Western language involves doing things the Arabic way; e.g., 'good taste' is *ðawq saliim* lit., 'a perfect taste', or 'natural death' is *mawt ʔabyaD*,

[7] Although I have never counted them, Arabic *supposedly* has approximately 6,000 different words relating to camels and camel paraphernalia (and not just 'camel', and this may very well be true if one counts all dialects and all genres of the language), 350 words for 'lion', and so on. This is but a part of Arabic linguistic mythology, and I believe many a language has a mythology associated with its vocabulary from one perspective or another. The Arabic case was first discovered by Josephs von Hammer-Purgstall in his book *Das Kamel*, submitted on December 1, 1852 to the philosophical-historical series of the Wiener Akademie. It appeared some four years later as volume 7 of the *Denkschriften* series. Krotkoff (1992) has studied this work cataloguing all 5,744 terms given (there are 30 words for different kinds of milk camels alone). (In this connection, the reader is encouraged to read that there are only a dozen to two dozen words relating to 'snow' in Eskimo, and any report to the contrary has been labelled a 'hoax' by Pullum [1991: 159–71] in a famous piece about intellectual curiosity, integrity, and honesty.) This number was rounded off to 6,000, and thus entered the linguistic, anthropological, and ethnographical handbooks, textbooks, and general treatises, much as the numerous words for 'snow' did (pointed out, in fact, by Krotkoff [1992: 261–2]). As it turns out, the numerous words for 'snow' were a hoax, and perhaps many of the camel words are not really words *per se*, but rather metaphoric expressions for camels. This entire topic deserves a re-assessment, but is certainly beyond the scope of my remarks here.

Of course, (Classical) Arabic grammar enjoys its international reputation for being extraordinarily difficult (by Arabists, general linguists, and the lay public), although I readily admit that such a designation is loaded with severe linguistic and intellectual pitfalls.

[8] I have no proof of this contention — only my own *Sprachgefühl*. Of course, standardized tests (SAT, PSAT, GRE, LSAT, GMAT, etc.) in the USA measure or are supposed to measure the vocabulary of the test-taker. The so-called fact that knowing numerous multisyllabic words somehow correlates with intelligence and success in college or later on in life is, in my opinion, based on false premises.

lit., 'a white death'[9] (also more literally, *wafaat Tabiiʕiyya*). Further, the American Indians, today's politically correct Native Americans, are *alhunuudu lḥumr*, lit., 'the Red Indians'.[10]

Many years ago, Aramco (Arabian American Oil Company), now Saudi Aramco, translated 'Safety first!' into MSA literally as *assalaamatu ʔawwalan*. Then, when it was discovered that this translation was almost meaningless to an Arab, i.e., a culturally significant meaning was not being processed the way it was initially intended by the translators, the correct, i.e., culturally equivalent translation was provided: *ʔubʕuduu* (ECA *ʔibʕidu*) *ʕan ilxaTar*, lit., 'be distant from danger!'. One could say that the first translation was based on a European framework, i.e., a way of thinking or handling of the situation (the ghosts of Sapir and Whorf!). A parallel phenomenon is to think of a word as having only one possible translation, such as 'degree' for 'grade' (*mark is awkward in American English in the following context) for *daraja*: *'Professor, can I speak with you about my degree?' (i.e., 'grade').[11]

Trying to mould Arabic into a European framework is a serious problem for both linguists and learners, and apparently even for Arabic textbook authors. A review by a native speaker, who also happens to be a linguist, of one such textbook (Mace 1996) points out over a hundred errors of 'wrong, or inappropriate' usage (Alosh 2001: 127). How can this be possible in this day and age of modern linguistics? Many of the errors are precisely the types of un-Arabic 'thinking' demonstrated by a lack of proper understanding of what we are calling lexis; e.g., one cannot say *ħalqak ʔaḥmar šadiid* 'your throat is

[9] Lane (1885: 2741) has translated this as 'sudden death', which might be more accurate than 'natural' (although I have seen reference to the latter meaning in various sources), and further he also lists *mawt ʔaswad* as 'death by drowning and asphyxiation' (ibid.). These are rare literary expressions, to be sure. In Italian, *morti bianche* (generally in the pl.) refers to 'fatal accidents in the workplace', whereas *voci bianche* means 'preadolescent male voices in opera' (courtesy Mauro Tosco, p.c.). Here 'white' is connected with innocence. This latter meaning also shows up in the English expression 'white lie'.

[10] When native speakers of Arabic speak English, one may actually hear the calqued 'the Red Indians', the British English expression, which sounds awkward or even downright bizarre to an American English speaker (it is not listed in *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, [3rd ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993]). The race associated with Native Americans in MSA is *aljinsu/alʕirqu lʔaḥmar*, lit.,'the red race' (courtesy Huda Ghattas, p.c.).

[11] Many of my Saudi Arabian students at King Saud University, Riyadh in 2000 used this English sentence. I had to explain to them that a 'degree' is something one obtains after graduation, having satisfied all the requirements (usually *šahaada*; however, also *daraja*).

very red', lit., 'strong red'. Rather, *ʔaħmar kaθiir* (colloquial *ktiir*), lit., 'much red' is the correct rendering for MSA and dialectal Arabic, according to Alosh (2001: 1128). It is precisely this thinking in an Indo-European language, i.e., English, which is responsible for *biwaasiTati TTariiq* 'by road' (lit., 'by means of the road') for the correct *barran* (lit.,'by land') (ibid.). After reading this devastating review by Alosh, the linguist is in a state of disbelief as to the number and types of errors displayed in a textbook for Arabic penned by a nonnative expert and published by a distinguished university press. The fact of the matter is that Arabic is notoriously difficult in the area of the collocational ranges of its lexemes and its phraseology. The example of *faasid* 'corrupt' is illustrative (Abdul-Raof 2001: 30): *niDHaam faasid* 'corrupt regime'; *ʔaxlaaq faasida* 'very bad manners'; *kalaam faasid* 'idle talk' (but according to Huda Ghattas, p.c., 'language embellished with lies' or 'bad language' [the more common meaning] only); *ʕaqiida faasida* 'false faith'; and *laħm/ħaliib/bayD faasid* 'rotten, bad meat/milk/eggs'. The word *faasid* has all the adjectival meanings cited above plus the following (Wehr 1974: 713): 'foul'; 'spoiled'; 'decayed'; 'vicious'; 'wicked'; 'empty'; 'vain'; 'unsound'; 'false'; 'wrong'; 'imperfect'; plus the expression *dawr faasid* 'vicious circle' (Wehr, ibid.; however, the current MSA expression is *ħalqa mufraɣa*).

Before going further, it is important to admit the MSA data used in this study are not exhaustive, but are certainly indicative of the overall patterning of the language. One could add more examples to my corpus of similar types of data, but I do not think that they would be of a radically different nature from those presented herein. In general, I have chosen examples from among fairly common vocabulary items and expressions.

3.0. Semantic transparency

There is, surprisingly, not a huge literature on the subject of semantic transparency. One of the major comprehensive works on semantics of the past two decades (Allan 1986) contains only four references to this topic (Vol. I, pp. 204–5, p. 223, and p. 225). One can define the notion of semantic transparency as a literal cognitive mapping of an idea, thought, or concept. Carmeli and Shen (1998: 172) have operationally defined it as 'guessability', while Seuren (1986) defines it as a 'tendency to maintain a one-to-one relationship between underlying semantic structure and surface form' (quoted in *Language and Language Behavior Abstracts* 1973–2000/12, AN 8805886).

Bermudez and Macpherson (1998: 7–8) quote Robert Van Gulik's quite useful definition, 'The extent to which a representation is semantically transparent is a matter of how readily and completely its content or meaning is accessible to the user of the representation', and commentary:

> phenomenal representations, of the sort associated with normal conscious experience, involve a very high degree of semantic transparency. Indeed, they are so transparent that we normally 'look' right through them. Our experience is the experience of a world of familiar objects — of desks, chairs, coffee cups and beech trees. Moreover, this transparency is to some extent *an immediately experienced feature of our conscious life*.

Turning to a more visual level, representing 'three' as 'III' (the Roman numeral) allows the meaning to become instantaneously recognizable or **transparent** (much more so than the Arabic numeral '3' or the alphabetic representation *three*). Of course, this is an iconic representation as well, and in this instance, iconicity and transparency are, more or less, functionally equivalent. Bauer (1983: 19) asserts that 'a lexeme is said to be **transparent** if it is clearly analyzable into its constituent morphs and a knowledge of the morphs involved is sufficient to allow the speaker-listener to interpret the lexeme when it is encountered in context.' As examples, he cites *coverage*, *postage*, etc., whereas *carriage* should be, given its etymology but is opaque instead, in addition to *airmail* (transparent) and *blackmail* (opaque) (ibid.). In the last example, *black* is related to the negative and sinister ideas of *blackball*, *blacklist*, *black magic*, *Black Death*, *Black Thursday*, and so on, as its etymology clearly demonstrates.[12] Bauer (1988: 189) further notes that to the extent that the relationship between a word's form and its meaning is obscured, the construction *must be opaque* (emphasis mine).

There can be little doubt that semantic transparency makes a word easier to learn by reducing its difficulty, i.e., its opacity. Basically, if

[12] I think a case can be made for the implicit assumption that no monomorphemic words can be transparent; however, Judith Rosenhouse has noted (p.c.) Hebrew proper names which can be related to other words: *Adam* to *ʔadama* 'earth', *Havva* to *ħayya* 'living thing' (fem.), and *Moshe* to *maša* 'to take out of the water'. In thinking about this for quite some time, I believe the originally monomorphemic (in English from a synchronic point of view) *McDonald's* (proper name) Corporation has devised a means whereby the *Mc* has over time come to be considered a prefix which has to do with this particular corporation's products; e.g., *McMuffin*, *McChicken*, *McNugget*, *McVeggie*, and so on. A discussion of this point, however, is beyond the scope of this essay.

one knows simple vocabulary, such as 'eye' and 'doctor', one can easily comprehend what an 'eye doctor' is. However, this is untrue with 'ophthalmologist', since this word is semantically opaque, i.e., its morphemic parts are not instantaneously recognizable (unless one has studied Greek or is aware of its etymology via background or training). There seems to be quite a bit of evidence demonstrating that 'morphological processes which retain transparency are more productive than those which do not because of their transparency' (Bauer 2001: 54). Palmer (1981: 35–6) asserts that semantically transparent words have meanings that can easily be determined from the meaning of their parts; however, with opaque words (i.e., the direct opposite), this is not possible. Thus a word such as *teacher* is transparent, since it can be analyzed as *teach* + agentive *–er*, whereas *porter* is opaque, since one cannot analyze it as a verb **port*, which can be related to the meaning of the actual word *porter*.[13] Muysken (2000: 981), however, explains this notion in terms of three basic principles: (1) uniformity (maximum uniformity of semantic categories), (2) universality (the minimum of reliance on rules), and (3) simplicity (minimum processing from deep to surface structure and *vice versa*).[14] To cite examples from English and German, English *glove* or the pseudocompound *boycott* (which has nothing to do with *boy* and **cott* does not exist) is opaque,[15] whereas German *Handschuh* (lit., 'hand' + 'shoe') or English *lipstick* (it sticks to your lips, and is also long, like a stick)[16] is transparent. Cruse (1986: 37–40) addi-

[13] Many may recognize a root PORT < Latin *portāre* 'to carry' (cf. French *porter* 'to carry' and *porte* 'door'), as in the word *teleportation*, yet I think this base is not transparent for native English speakers, with the exception of the etymologically gifted. The word *teleportation* is conspicuously absent in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghten Mifflin, 1993), but is listed in *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996: 1482). Cf. also a word such as *cooker* 'stove' (cf. also 'pressure cooker') = *cook* + *-er*, which is different from *minister*, which is not **minist* + *-er*.

[14] What this means is that it is easy to process the surface form because it is, more or less, equivalent to the deep or conceptual form. These three principles were first proposed by Seuren and Wekker (1986). As Feldman and Soltano (1999) have clearly demonstrated, semantic transparency is a definite factor in morphological processing.

[15] Bauer (2001: 110) asserts that *buttercup* is an 'opaque compound': '…the meaning is not easily derivable from the meanings of the parts.' However, to my way of thinking, this is probably not a compound at all, since the meaning 'herb' is not found in either *butter* nor *cup*. However, there does seem to be a resemblance to the color 'yellow' (reminiscent of the color of butter), and furthermore, it is cup-like in shape.

[16] I think one can make a case for both nominal and verbal association here (cf. also *Chapstick*, a brand name which has become a generic for a medication for

tionally makes the important point that there are degrees of transparency and opacity,[17] and Ullmann (1967: 290–2) offers a fine taxonomy of the nature of opaque and transparent words. In English, various sets of nouns are *marked for plurality* to indicate the notion of plurality or collectivity (viz., a group nature), i. e., nonsingularity:

(1) names of certain substances or items (groceries, greens [green vegetables], leftovers, oats, coffee grounds, etc.),[18]
(2) names of things in a fixed location (stairs, bleachers, catacombs, etc.),
(3) names of certain places (plains, steppes, etc.),
(4) names of quasiduals (trousers, scissors, pajamas, jeans, shorts, etc., which take the numeral classifier 'pair of', as in 'three pairs of jeans').[19]

On the other hand, the traditional mass nouns in English can often be singularized (e.g., *rice*, *grain of rice*, *furniture*, *piece/stick of furni-*

chapped lips). It would be interesting to devise an experiment to determine to which morpheme native speakers do relate the 'stick' suffix. Mauro Tosco (p.c.) notes here that nouns are usually more semantically prominent than verbs because they stand for objects or 'real' things (even though there are, of course, abstract nouns). I believe most native speakers would think of the noun rather than the verb, but some might think of both. Judging from the German *Lippenstift* 'lip' + 'pin; peg; crayon', however, Tosco would appear to be right. In this connection, Smith (1995), quoted in Bauer (2001: 111), is worthwhile quoting here as well: '…individual speakers of a particular language probably do not internalize their morphemic knowledge in the same way.'

[17] Libben (1998: 37) notes, correctly in my estimation, that words, such as *shoehorn*, are partially opaque, since the first part is known whereas the second is not. Bauer (2001: 52) also discusses a hierarchy of transparency as formulated by Dressler (1985). It seems clear that suppletion, as is shown, does create opacity (e.g., *be* vs. *am*, etc.).

[18] We do have 'grocery store', 'leftover meat', 'oat meal/bran', but no *'coffee ground', except perhaps in extenuating circumstances; e.g., 'The kitchen was so clean I couldn't even find a coffee ground on the counter'. Words such as 'oats', 'trousers', etc. have been designated *pluralia tantum* and have been studied in various languages (e.g., Hebrew *ʔĕlōhīm* 'God' with m. pl. *-īm*). Of course, there is also the category of *singularia tantum*, e.g., 'rye'.

[19] This division is a simplification of a very complicated situation. English is very rich in *pluralia tantum*: *wits*, *goings-on*, *condolences*, *congratulations*, etc. Furthermore, *male servant* pluralizes as *male servants*, whereas *manservant* takes *menservants* (doubly marked pl.) (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1649). Words such as *cattle* and *clothes* have no sgs., whereas *glasses* (*spectacles*), *greens*, etc. have no sgs. with matching meanings. Further, one can say 'two pairs of trousers', whereas the rapid, casual speech equivalent of this is 'two pair a (for the more formal 'of') trousers'. The numeral makes the pl. marking of pairs redundant, and thus it is susceptible to loss.

ture, *stitch of clothing* [but no **stitches of clothing*], etc.). It is also important to keep in mind that many English speakers consider technical pls., such as *lice* and *bacteria*, as unmarked sgs. (very tiny items naturally viewed as occurring in the pl.); thus, *bacterium* and *louse*[20] occur in the speech of acrolectic users only (*die*, pl. *dice*, and *datum*, pl. *data*, are other examples of this, as well as the [erroneous from a prescriptive perspective] occurring *phenomena*, pl. *phenomenas*; *criteria*, pl. *criterias*, etc.). It should be noted that *insignias* has gained wide acceptance for *insignia*, originally the pl. of *insigne* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 348).

It should be pointed out that some research has been carried out on semantic transparency in specific languages.[21] With reference to the Anglo-Saxon and Greco-Roman sources of the English lexicon, e.g., Corson (1985: 109) has this to say: 'Transparent Anglo-Saxon derived words are also "structurally" accessed more efficiently than complex Greco-Latin words of similar length. Words with derivational suffixes such as "*-ward*", "*-ness*", "*-ful*", and agentive suffixes such as "*-er*", are accessed more readily than words with Greco-Latin suffixes such as "*ion*".' McWhorter (1998) argues that the prototypical creole has only semantically transparent derivational affixation, and pidginistics and creolistics are two areas in which considerable effort has been devoted to trying to explain this phenomenon. Most recently, Braun and Plag (2003) have attempted to prove that on the basis of Early Sranan (spoken in seventeenth-century Suriname), the semantic transparency hypothesis is wrong, and thus one concludes that semantic opacity exists in creoles. They rightly consider the entire notion of semantic transparency and opacity as a gradient concept, i.e., as a continuum (similar to the nature of diglossia, much better understood as polyglossia).

Insofar as I am aware, this is the first study on semantic transparency and number marking in a Semitic language. Data from MSA, specifically noun pls.,[22] are examined below within the framework of

[20] The sg. *louse* is listed in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993: 802), pl. *lice*; however, as is noted therein, there are instances in which 'louse' pluralizes as 'louses', i.e., the slang meaning of *louse* (= 'a mean and despicable person'), which overrides the nonslang meaning. Paul Newman notes (p.c.) that one only gets 'delouse' and not *'delice'. James Dickins informs me (p.c.) that, quite interestingly, the word 'swine' only takes a pl. in the slang sense, i.e., 'dirty swines' cannot refer to pigs in British English. This is also largely true of American English, insofar as I am aware.

[21] See Zwitserlood (1994) for Dutch; Buring (1991) for German; and Barkai (1978) for Israeli Hebrew.

[22] We will not be concerned with what the formal semantic properties of plurality entail, for which the reader is referred to Schwarzschild (1992), which discusses

semantic transparency to demonstrate that words, such as 'dialectology', directly demarcate the study of dialects (in the pl.!), and thus instantaneously reveal the meaning of plurality via their transparency, as opposed to the opacity of English, using as it does, the equivalent sg. term. MSA, in fact, has many nouns which occur in the pl. and are equivalent to a sg. in English; e.g., *maʕluumaat* 'information' (see further below); *musaaʕadaat* 'aid'; *naSaaʔiħ* 'advice'; *DuɣuuT iqtiSaadiyya* 'economic pressure'; *Taaʔiraat* 'aircraft' (lit., 'airplanes'); etc. Many other examples will be discussed in Sections 7.0. and ff.

4.0. MSA special (or unusual from the Western perspective) expressions and vocabulary

Let me begin by proclaiming that Arabic is 'famous' for the way it does things.[23] Consider, e.g., 'strong' and 'weak' coffee or tea are expressed not with the 'usual' words meaning 'strong' and 'weak', but rather with *θaqiil* 'heavy' and *xafiif* 'light'. In other words, 'strong' coffee is 'heavy', and 'weak' coffee is 'light'. It should make instantaneous sense that weak coffee is lighter in colour than strong coffee. This is not an idiomatic usage; rather these nouns collocate in this semantic context with the adjectives which normally mean 'heavy' and 'light'. Every language surely must have an enormous number of these types of collocational restraints which are entirely lexical in nature. Consider further an expression such as 'jet lag' *farqu lwaqt*, lit., 'difference of time';[24] 'black and white' *ʔabyaDu wa ʔaswad*, lit.,

the 'sums' and the 'group' approaches. Kang (1994) is devoted to the semantics of common nouns in Korean in light of the denotation of pls. and mass terms. The author summarizes his conclusion (very relevant to this work) in the abstract (1994: 1): 'Then, the semantic domain of Korean count nouns are (sic) shown to be much like those of English count nouns except that the denotation of a syntactically sg. count noun in Korean may include a semantically plural domain as well as a singular domain.'

[23] I suspect this 'fame' is a language universal, since every language is 'famous' for something unique or unusual. It may take considerable effort for the linguist to discover these unusual features, however.

[24] It is important to note that neither the words for 'jet' nor 'lag' figures in the translation. Insofar as I am aware, there is no other way to render 'jet lag' in Arabic. Interestingly enough, all informants consulted reject *farqu zzaman* and *farqu zzamaan* (*zaman* and *zamaan* are two synonyms for *waqt* 'time'). There are many such examples of this phenomenon between Arabic and English. Robert D. Angus (p.c.) tells me that 'jet lag' in Mandarin Chinese is, coincidentally, *shí chā* 'time difference' or 'time lack', depending on the literal-mindedness of the translation.

'white and black';[25] 'green with envy' *ħiqd ʔaswad* (lit., 'black', according to Abdul-Raof 2001: 29; however, in checking with Yasir Suleiman and Huda Ghattas, p.c., this is incorrect and means 'bitter hatred'); 'honeymoon' *šahru lʕasal*, lit., 'month of honey';[26] 'fire insurance' *taʔmiin Didda lħariiq*, lit., 'insurance against the fire'; 'life insurance' *taʔmiin ʕalaa lħayaat*, lit., 'insurance on the life'.[27] These phrases are, like the words 'heavy' and 'light', quite different from idioms, such as *Dahika ʕalaa ððuquun/lliħaa* 'to mock'; 'to fool s.o.', lit., 'to laugh on the beards (pl.!)',[28] and Islamic expressions, such as *faaTiru ssamaawaati walʔarD* 'creator of the heavens and the earth'; cf. 'our Father, which art in heaven' — not heavens, although Eng-

[25] This word order is so characteristically unlike that of English, yet is reminiscent of the word order of Romance languages (e.g., Italian *bianco e nero*). Further examples in MSA with reverse word order, when compared to that of English, include: *laylan wa nahaaran* 'day and night', *almuðnibu walbariiʔ* 'the innocent and the guilty', etc. We may state that this is the way Arabic does it or works. Cf. Hebrew *paxot o yoter* 'more or less', lit., 'less or more'.

[26] Often, it is remarkable that Arabic ('honey month' = 'honeymoon') matches up with English as closely as it does, as in 'honeymoon' (etymology not really known, but a proposal [*American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd ed., Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1993: 652] states that the new marital relationship wanes like the moon after its full-moon phase), considering the fact that the languages are very different in structure and vocabulary, not to mention cultural underpinnings and interrelationships. One can instantaneously recognize the semantic connection between 'moon' and 'month'. Arne A. Ambros (p.c.) relates that the Arabic is calqued from a Western language, noting further that the German for 'honeymoon' is different (*Flitterwochen*). He also comments that traditional Islamic culture does not have this concept. Still, if this is a calque, why is it not **qamaru lʕasal* 'the moon of honey'? Of course, we tend to focus, as linguists, on the differences between the two languages, and I do not pretend to imply that they are not considerable.

[27] Cf. such English collocations as 'insured against fire', 'insure your house in case of fire', 'buy insurance for fire'; 'buy insurance on your life', 'insure your life', 'your life is insured for …', etc. The Arabic collocations with prepositions are semantically very transparent when compared with English 'life insurance' and 'fire insurance'. In English, one should note expressions such as 'war against drugs', which is not equivalent to a 'drug war'. The first refers to a situation of prevention, whereas the second implies that violence is taking place.

[28] Wehr (1974: 536) also lists the sg. *ðaqan* as possible, and further stipulates that in Egyptian and Syrian/Lebanese/Palestinian Colloquial Arabic, this expression means 'to pull someone's leg', or 'to make fun of s.o.'. *Daħika* with the preposition *ʕalaa*, *bi-*, or *min* is 'to mock' (Lane [1874: 1771] records only *min* and *bi-*), probably as a result of shortening, can mean 'to mock' as well as 'to fool s.o.'. The aforementioned expressions are radically different. Consider further the example of 'garage', which in English is a place to park your car and get it repaired as well. In Arabic one parks in a *garaaj* (Saudi Arabia *mawaaqif*, but sg. *mawqif* in Lebanon), but one repairs it in a *warša*, short for *waršatu ttaSliiħ* 'repair shop'.

lish does have a pl. of this word in use; e.g., '(Good) Heavens! and Heavens to Betsy!'[29]

Let us now delve into the fascinating realm concerned with the meaning of MSA lexemes, the subject which is at the very core of this essay. It should be kept in mind that the lexicon is not to be considered a grab-bag of idiosyncratic and unpredictable material, but rather should be subject to the same kinds of language universals observable in phonology or syntax, i.e., there is a field which I would call 'lexemic universals', e.g., collocation and particularization, which has implications for universals in phonology, syntax, and semantics. I begin by asserting that MSA has many words which translate 'nice': *Tayyib*, *ħasan*, *jayyid*, *xayr*, etc.; however, when one renders 'the weather is nice', the correct translation is *laTiif*, which collocates with the word 'weather', *jaww* (however, note *Ta?s ħilu* 'nice weather' in Lebanese Colloquial Arabic). To take another example, although *basiiT* usually is glossed as 'simple', it can also render the notion of 'basic', often *?asaasii*. Every language is tricky in this regard, since lexical particularization is involved (cf. the classic case of French *savoir* and *reconnaître*, each of which translates 'to know').

5.0. Number in language[30]

Normally, 'book' = *libro* in Spanish, *Buch* in German, *pustaka* in Sanskrit, *sɛfɛr* in Israeli Hebrew, etc., i.e., a sg. is rendered by a sg.[31] Some languages with pls. use sg. nouns with numerals (e.g., Hungar-

[29] 'Seventh Heaven', incidentally, is a borrowing from Arabic-Islamic thought (the dwelling place of God and the angels) or from Jewish (cabbalist) lore or from both. Let me mention a Koranic expression (29:44; 30:8): *xalaqa llaahu ssamaawaati wal?arD* 'God created the heavens and the earth'. In Arabic, the word 'heavens' is pl., although there is a sg. *samaa?* 'heaven'. There is also the expression *samaa?u ssamaawaat* 'the highest heaven'. The German translation of this concept is 'Himmel und Erde' = 'heaven and earth' in the sg. This mirrors the English translation of Genesis 1:1 (*The Holy Scriptures*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1959: 3): 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' in which the sg. 'heaven' renders Hebrew *šāmayim*, a m. pl. ending in *-im* 'heavens', although formally it looks like a dual in *–ayim. The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford 1991: 2) renders 'the heavens'. *La Sainte Bible* (Toronto 1983: 5) renders this *le ciel* in the sg.

[30] MSA has a dual number, which is beyond the scope of this investigation. This paper concerns itself with sgs. and pls. Ullmann (1989) is the standard reference work on number in Arabic.

[31] Beard (1982) proposed that number is lexically determined, and is thus part of derivation rather than inflection.

ian), and this fact is independent of word order typology. Turkish usually has a sg. with numerals; however, there are some notable exceptions ('The Seven Dwarfs', or 'The Seven Islands' with the pl. *–lar*: *Yedi Adalar* [the latter example is courtesy of James Dickins, p.c.]). With numerals, MSA has either a sg. or pl. depending on the numeral employed. After the numeral 11, MSA uses a sg. where English uses a pl. However, let us leave the situation of number and numerals aside since it is beyond the scope of this discussion, and even seems to be tangential to it.

First of all, it is important to note that a sg. noun in a given language may occur in a pl. form.[32] Consider Spanish (*el*) *tocadiscos* '(the) record player' = lit., 'plays records' (a sg. with the literal implication that it is 'something which plays records', however, a pl. in form with *–s*, *los tocadiscos* 'the record players'). This is semantically transparent for number in that a 'record player' is designed to play numerous records (although only one at a time), i.e., its normal function is designed to play many records as it is overtly marked by the pl. suffix. Is there a record player anywhere which has *normally* only played a single record? The prototype 'record player' plays many records, even if an actual record player does not always manage to do so (let us say it breaks after it has played the first record).[33] There is a parallel here to English 'glasses', 'scissors', 'pajamas',[34] etc., in that the native speaker is aware, albeit perhaps subconsciously, that 'glasses' with the pl. sibilant consists of two pieces of glass (or with modern technological advances, plastic, in which case 'glasses' is a technical misnomer).[35] Second of all, there are examples of original pls. in a

[32] In this connection, I should point out that the Ethio-Semitic language, Zway, has borrowed Arabic *ʔayyaam* 'days', but uses it to mean 'day'. Kaye (2002: 237) hypothesizes that this is perhaps a "cognitive sort of mapping of this word into the pl. manifestation of 24 hours (hence the notion must be expressed by a pl.)." It is also possible that the pl. was much more frequent than the sg. *yawm ~ yoom*, and thus it was borrowed in the pl. Rainer Voigt and James Dickins (p.c.) remind me that Turkish *talebe* 'student', *tűccar* 'merchant', etc. derive from the Arabic pls. of these words.

[33] Mauro Tosco (p.c.) notes here that there are hundreds of examples of this type of compound in Romance languages; e.g., Italian *giradischi* (turn/records) 'record player'.

[34] Normally, there is no **pajama*; however, the sg. does occur in compounds, such as *pajama-party/-top*, *trouser-press*, and so on. This is probably true for all the *pluralia tantum*. (Some native speakers do have a sg. *trouser*, however, and recently, one can observe the backformation *pant* in American advertisements.)

[35] Very fascinating in this connection is British English 'drinks driving' (many drinks) for American English 'drunk driving' (not *'drunks'), but driving drunk certainly implies having had numerous drinks. I owe this observation to Laurence

lending language which have become sgs. in English; e.g., Italian *spaghetti* is a pl.; however, it is sg. in English (one can say 'can you check out the spaghettis in the supermarket and buy the cheapest one?). Furthermore, when things are thought of in the pl. in the conceptual structure of the native speaker, this may influence, for one reason or another, the unmarked underlying form. For example, Tiersma (1982: 837) cites Israeli Hebrew child language (based on Berman 1981: 276) sgs. and pls., such as *yeled* 'child', pl. *yeledim* (vs. adult *yeladim*), and so on, with the exception of *cdaf*, pl. *cdafim* 'shell' ([c] = [ts]), where the pl. stem is the basis for the analogical formation via back formation (adult *cedef*, pl. *cdafim*). The reason (quoting again research in Berman 1981) for this is that shells are most often found in great quantities on the beach, and thus the word, quite naturally, is more commonly heard in the pl. This fact, in turn, serves as the input to the generalization. Tiersma (1982: 839–41) also cites the fact that languages borrow items from other languages in the pl. form simply because these entities or things are spoken about in the pl. or envisioned more often than not in mass or in pl. (groups); e.g., 'gloves', 'fruits', 'vegetables', 'shoes', 'tiles', 'flowers', etc. The languages cited are Karok, Telelcingo Aztec, Chamorro, Acoma, and Yokuts. In other words, what all this boils down to is that human cognition processes a *shoe*, an *eyebrow*, or a *nail*, etc., in the pl. as its most normal or unmarked state.[36]

A cognitive semantic approach to singularity and plurality in terms of the native speaker's conceptual structure may be best illustrated by the following phenomenon in English. Although *ten days* is formally pl., a sentence such as 'that ten days we spent in Florida was fantastic' demonstrates that a pl. nominal has been respecified as a sg. It is also possible to say: 'Those ten days we spent in Florida were fantastic'. Someone who says 'that' and 'was' thinks of the entity of

Surfas (formerly of the U.K.), but he reports that upon checking with other British informants and dictionaries, the present-day term is 'drink-driving', perhaps as a result of consonant cluster simplification. Still, he confirms the realistic usage of the pl. Perhaps this is reflective of older usage which is no longer current. British English also uses 'drunk driving', probably an American English borrowing. In this connection, let me note that British English seems to mark the semantic transparency of plurality more than American English; e.g., British English 'antiques dealer/market', 'medical devices distributor', and 'drugs giant/company/charges' vs. the sg. usage of these in American English. Of course, an antique dealer (American) must certainly deal with many antiques, and so on. My thanks to Laurence Surfas for these data, p.c.

[36] This is an obvious truism in societies around the globe in that one *normally* does not buy just one shoe, one glove, or one nail, etc.

'ten days' as one unit, presumably, and a speaker who uses the pl. 'those' and 'were' cogitates the pl. 'ten days'. Further, one can say: 'Another three days are/is going to be needed'. This respecification of pls. as sgs. is explained in detail with many fine examples in Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 354). This type of cognitive semantic analysis and a general cognitive approach become key in examining the MSA pl. data which are presented in Sections 6.0. and following.

I have already pointed out that a sg. in one language is sometimes rendered by a pl. in another. As illustrative, if one were to translate the title of a book by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, *Classifiers* (Oxford 2000), into a language that has no pl. category, it seems to me the rendering would of necessity be 'Classifier'. After all, to be quite Whorfian about it, we are (more often than most linguists are willing to admit) at the mercy of our native tongues.[37] Of course, the aforementioned book deals with many classifiers — a semantically transparent fact to linguists. However, if the language does not have number (e.g., Chinese), then it must render the pl. 'Classifiers' as 'Classifier'.[38] In English, another possible title for the book would have been 'The Classifier', but not *'The Classifiers', which I believe is most awkward.[39] In this connection, it is quite understandable that a word such as *media*, historically the pl. of *medium*, is, in essence, a pl. and is translated into MSA as a pl.

wasaaʔilu/ʔajhizatu lʔiʕlaam (means/equipment/the media) 'the media' as in the phrase,

wasaaʔilu lʔiʕlaam Saamita (means/the media/silent) 'the media is silent'. The final *–u* marks the nominative case. It is usually unimportant for the gloss, and thus is omitted in the examples which follow.

One can also understand the pl. nature of the following by considering each from the conceptual point of view (all use MSA pls.; Abdul-Raof 2001: 40–1):

[37] The reader is directed to an informative account of Whorfianism relevant to this discussion in Fishman (1985), which contains reference to his other essays on this subject as well as those by others.

[38] It should be noted that Mandarin Chinese *šū* can be translated as both 'book' and 'books', although the language has no pl. category; however, a few words ([+human] nouns), e.g., *tóngzhìmən* 'comrades', take the pl. suffix *–mən*. Japanese and Korean have similar structures to Chinese. 'Classifiers' is *liàng cí*, lit., 'measure word(s)' in Mandarin (thanks to Robert D. Angus for this datum, p.c.).

[39] I can well imagine a language in which this grammatical notion is absent, and thus a translation is not possible, or at least, is imprecise at best. Another possible English version might be 'The Classifiers of the World's Languages.'

Siɣaaran wa kibaaran (young PL/ACC/and/old PL/ACC) 'young and old'
našratu l?aħwaali ljawiyya (report/the conditions/weather) 'weather forecast'
waħdatu l?araaDii (unity/the lands) 'territorial integrity'
ħaalatu (T)Tawaari? (state/[the] emergencies) '(a) state of emergency'
ħarbu ?adɣaal (war/thickets) 'jungle warfare'
ħaqlu ?alɣaam (field/mines) 'minefield'
ħarbu ʕiSaabaat (war/gangs) 'gang warfare'
xiyaanatu lwuʕuud (betrayal/the promises) 'breach of promise'
hijratu lʕuquul (migration/the minds) 'brain drain'

Let me now just cite one further instance in a context (Abdul-Raof 2001: 16):

al?iʕSaaru baqiyat ?aa0aaruhu (the hurricane/remained/effects/its) 'As for the hurricane, its effect (MSA pl.! [his translation; perhaps better: 'The hurricane's effects remained']) remained'.

These examples demonstrate that the Arabic *mind* sees or has seen, at one stage in the history of the language, these concepts in a pl. setting and marks an overt pl.

To make things more complicated, there is also the possibility of an English pl. equaling an MSA sg.[40] Consider expressions such as 'women's liberation' = *taħriiru lmar?a* and 'women's rights' = *ħuquuqu lmar?a*. This can be explained, in all likelihood, as a calque from French *la libération/les droits de la femme*. Italian also uses a sg. here: *diritti dell'uomo* 'human rights'; however, one normally hears a pl. in *diritti delle donne* 'women's rights'; *diritti dei bambini* 'children's rights'; and *diritti degli anziani/handicappati/immigrati* 'the elderly's/handicapped people's/immigrant's rights'. Suffice it to mention that there are probably other examples of this phenomenon which should be investigated in their own right.

We also note the case of many MSA collectives and some fem. sg. nouns being translated as English pls.; *šajar* 'trees' and *mutaSawwifa* 'Sufis'. They are, however, a subject in themselves, tangential to the main ideas of this essay, and slightly beyond the scope of my remarks here.

[40] Robert D. Angus notes (p.c.) that when a child, e.g., says that his brother called him *names*, it can refer to one bad word, i.e., be a sg.

6.0. Semantic transparency in English and German

English and German share many cognates, yet work very differently in terms of the semantic transparency of compounds. In English compounds, one normally uses the sg., such as *babysitter* (one cannot say **sitter off/for babies* in the pl. with the meaning 'babysitter'; e.g., 'I need to hire a babysitter for tonight', and not *'I need to hire a sitter of babies for tonight'). In Australian English, the equivalent term for *babysitter* is also in the sg., viz., *child minder* (to which Australian informants have added that there is an archaic-sounding **minder of children*). British English has *child-minder* (*The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, [3rd ed., New York 1996: 254]). The aforementioned facts are related to the following ungrammatical phrases: a 'player of records' is not equivalent to a 'record player', nor is the 'building of bodies' the same as 'body building'. Consider the ungrammaticality of the second sentence: (1) My favorite activity is 'body building', and (2) *My favorite activity is the 'building of bodies'.

German has words such as *Kindergarten* 'kindergarten, preschool' specifically marked for pl. (the major concern of this essay), where *Kinder* is the pl. of *Kind* 'child' (since a school is normally intended for many children), but it also has words such as *Buchhandlung* 'bookstore'.[41] I have been told by a few native speakers of German that *Bűcherhandlung* may actually occur in some spoken dialects (it is not recorded in any dictionary I consulted). Also, it probably occurs as well in German child language and in *Gastarbeiter* German.[42]

[41] Cf. Israeli Hebrew *gan yəladim*, lit., 'garden of children', a direct calque of the German (= MSA *rawDatu l?aTfaal* 'kindergarten', lit., 'garden for the children'). Hebrew also has sgs.; e.g., *bet (ha)sɛfɛr* 'school', lit., 'house of (the) book'. In this connection, consider Hebrew *asa rəvaxim* (pl.) 'earn a profit', not the sg. *rɛvax*. Since a profit is thought of as lots of money, one can easily comprehend the pl. r*əvaxim* 'profit'.

[42] Cf. the following in German: *Bűcherei* 'library (usually for nonscholarly books)', *Bűcherbus* 'bookmobile'; *Bűcherrevisor* 'auditor', *Bűcherschrank* 'bookcase, bookstand', *Bűcherstűtze* 'bookend', *Bűcherverzeichnis* 'catalogue', *Bűcherfreund* 'booklover', *Bűcherkunde* 'bibliography', *Bűchermensch* 'scholar', *Bűchernarr* 'bibliomaniac', *Bűcherweisheit* 'book learning' (also in the sg., *Buchweisheit*), and *Bűcherwurm* 'bookworm'.

Consider also the following: *Kinderfrau* 'nurse', *Kinderfräulein* 'nanny', *Kinderfűrsorge* 'child welfare', *Kinderheilkunde* 'pediatrics', *Kinderhort* 'day nursery', *Kinderjahre* 'childhood', *Kinderlied* 'nursery rhyme', *kinderlos* 'childless', *Kindermädchen* 'nurse', *Kindermärchen* 'fairy tale', *Kindermehl* 'infant cereal' (now archaic), *Kindermord* 'child murder', *Kindermőrder* 'child murderer' (with the last two, one or more children could have been killed), *Kindernahrung* 'infant food', *Kinderpflege*

Does the child, or the foreigner, for that matter, somehow at some level of abstraction conceive of a 'bookstore' (British English 'bookshop') as a 'store for many books'? What all this comes down to, and what I am suggesting, is that semantic considerations are of paramount importance in terms of an underlying conceptual structure as an ingredient in (dare I say 'cause' of?) language change. The fact that a 'bookstore' sells numerous books may eventually trigger the development (as a result of analogy to the general pattern of other pl. compounds) of *Buchhandlung* to the pl. form **Bűcherhandlung*.[43]

7.0. The use of the plural in MSA for the singular in English[44] — see the numerous examples presented below:

Sudanese Colloquial Arabic demonstrates semantic transparency in the following example (cf. the aforementioned 'III' for '3', Indonesian fully reduplicated *buku-buku* 'books', or Bontok partially reduplicated *anak* 'child', *ananak* 'children') in which the reduplication is a more or less iconic representation of plurality, i.e., two or more of the en-

'child care', *Kinderpistole* 'toy pistol', *Kinderpsychologie* 'child psychology', *Kinderraub* 'kidnapping', *Kinderräuber* 'kidnapper', *Kinderschreck* 'bogeyman', *Kinderschule* 'kindergarten', *Kindersprache* 'child language', *Kindersterblichkeit* 'infant mortality', *Kinderstube* 'nursery', *Kinderwagen* 'pram', *Kinderwäsche* 'baby linen', *Kinderzeit* 'childhood', *Kinderzimmer* 'nursery'. According to one German informant, *Kindsmőrder* is a 'child murderer', while the pl. *Kindermőrder* is a '(multiple) child murderer'.

Of course, it is impossible in this paper to survey languages of the world in this connection, although I admit that a typological approach to this phenomenon would pay handsome dividends. One interesting fact, e.g., discovered by Mary Haas (1978: 306), is that in Creek, cloth-like objects take the dual when the verb is dual, but the pl. elsewhere, and all liquids take the pl.

[43] Of course, how long this might take is anyone's guess. Linguistics simply has not yet developed the scientific know-how (somehow, 'methodology' is not the right word to use here) for the accurate prediction of future developments, even along the lines of the record of the weather forecaster.

[44] Needless to say, these are very easy to mistranslate. There are also cases of a sg. in MSA which can be translated as a pl. in English; e.g., *niDHaamu lmuruur* 'traffic regulations' (Wehr 1974: 901). These should be studied in their own right. Certainly relevant in this connection are expressions such as Spanish pl. *buenos dias* 'good morning' = French sg. *bon jour*, Italian sg. *bon giorno*, and Portuguese sg. *bom dia*. Here I would say that in Spanish the hidden assumption is to have numerous good mornings, i.e., may each and every morning be a good one. This is similar to 'Happy Holidays!' = 'Merry Christmas', 'Happy Hannukah', and the like, although historically speaking, 'Happy Holidays' probably referred to both Christmas and New Year, hence the pl. designation. The covert idea conveyed is to have many merry Christmases. Cf. also Portuguese pl. *férias maravilhosas* 'great holiday'.

tity in question is quite similar to the iconicity present in the Roman numeral III: *Tanna* 'to buzz' vs. *TanTan* 'to buzz (around)', which can only be used of more than one insect (courtesy James Dickins, p.c.). However, English does not operate in this manner (e.g., such expressions as 'dogcatcher' = 'someone who catches many dogs professionally', 'dog lover' = 'someone who loves dogs in general', etc.). Of course, the sg. in English and other languages can be used to indicate a collective or generic. Needless to say, every language has exceptions,[45] and it is a worthwhile task for linguists to explore and try to explain these in any scientific way possible.[46] See Section 10.0. below for the "exceptions" with the formation of the sciences in MSA.

An excellent place to begin to understand the Arabic *mind* (Patai 1973) in this connection (and the general relationship between Arabic language and culture) is to consider the following MSA and English equivalents. I believe it is safe to state that an 'ophthalmologist' operates on many eyes, not only one eye, over a long career. Thus

> *duktuuru (l)ʕuyuun* (doctor/[the]eyes) 'eye doctor' = 'ophthalmologist' is the correct rendering in MSA. An 'eye hospital' deals with numerous eyes; thus, it is translated as
> *mustašfaa lʕuyuun* (hospital/the eyes) 'eye hospital'.[47]

MSA uses (prefers might be a better word) the pl. *luħuum* for 'meat':

> *laa ʔuħibbu lluħuum* (NEG/I like/the meats) 'I do not like meat'

[45] One notes in English expressions such as 'men's/gents' room' (reminiscent of the MSA pl. constructions, i.e., 'room for men', etc.), 'ladies' room', 'facilities' = 'toilet' = 'bathroom' = 'WC'. Even on the outside of the doors to the rest rooms, one often encounters 'Gents' = 'Gentlemen' = 'Caballeros', 'Men', etc. — only pls. Where words are not used, then the pictorial representation is of one man or woman, never two or more men or women. Where the meaning is visually clear, there is the further reason of financial consideration, and one picture or icon is cheaper than two or more.

[46] One can imagine lecturing to an audience of two for one reason or another (one male and one female). The lecturer must still begin with 'Ladies and Gentlemen' — not *'Lady and Gentleman'. The latter might conceivably be uttered in a joking/humorous context of some sort. Here I would regard the pl. as the 'frozen' or default form. In older styles of British English, the sg. expression would have been 'Madam/My Lady and Sir' (courtesy Laurence Surfas, p.c.).

[47] One notes that 'eye witness' in MSA is *šaahid ʕiyaan* (the latter is vocalized *ʕayaan* in Jordanian Colloquial Arabic). It does not use the word 'eye' at all; rather, the precise nuance relies on *ʕiyaan*, a verbal noun of Form III *ʕaayana* = 'to see' (incidentally, also the common verb 'to see' in Ugaritic, a kindred substratal Semitic language of greater Syria), lit., 'a witness of seeing'. Lebanese Colloquial Arabic has only *šeehid* for this. MSA displays many examples of this type of nominal compound in which a verbal noun is used as the second member of the construct state.

In translating 'he doesn't appreciate what I do', one must notice that 'what I do' is considered 'numerous things' in MSA; thus, the appropriate rendering requires a pl. for the last word:

laa yuqaddiru ʔaʕmaalii (NEG/he appreciates/my works)

Consider also:

ʔalʔaʕmaaru biyadi llaah (the lifetimes/in the hand of /God) 'one's life[time] is in God's hands'

The first word literally means 'lifetimes'. It is rendered a pl. since (presumably) the presupposition is that a human being has a life on this earth and another in the next world. As with the expression,

ʕalaa lʔaqdaam 'on foot' (see 7.1., I)

where this might suggest a dual, MSA renders 'lifetime' in the pl. Of course, English pl. 'hands' is strikingly different in this regard from MSA sg. *yad* 'hand'.

Let us now take up the lexeme 'money' in MSA, since one can easily see the tie-ins to the notion of plurality. In Arabic colloquials, the word is usually *filuus* or the like, the pl. of *fils* 'a small coin'. In MSA, *ʔamwaal* 'money; properties' is preferred over its sg. *maal*:

laa tubaʕθir ʔamwaalak (NEG/you SG waste/monies/your SG) 'do not waste your money'

This brings up the matter of an item which can be usually thought of in the pl., such as

almunšaʔaatu lḥayawiyya (the installations/the vital) 'infrastructure'

since one is talking about many structures or levels in this conceptualization. Thus, one can easily comprehend why this is rendered in the pl. Further, in rendering a phrase such as 'resistance to disease', one notes the pl. in MSA:

muqaawamatu lʔamraaD (resistance/the diseases)

since there are many diseases to which one may be susceptible.[48] In translating a phrase such as 'the raising of capital', the presupposition is that one is in need of quite a large sum of money; thus,

tanmiyatu ruʔuusi lʔamwaal (development/heads/GEN/the monies)

[48] Another possible rendering of the phrase 'resistance to disease' is *muqaawama Didda lʔamraaD*.

In Adeni Colloquial Arabic, *ʔantaaf* (pl.) is a 'penniless person', lit., 'all the money is plucked' (< *nataf* 'he plucked') = Lebanese Colloquial Arabic *mantuuf* 'plucked', and Adeni Colloquial Arabic *ʔangaas* is a 'morally debased person' in the pl., presumably because many impurities/profanities are present in this type of individual.

7.1. Seven basic examples of MSA plural = English singular:

I. *ʕalaa lʔaqdaam* (on/the feet) 'on foot'. Since one walks to a place on two feet, the pl. is quite sensible, i.e., one should note the semantic transparency with which the cognitive operation is grammaticalized. German, however, like English, renders this as *zu Fuβ* 'on foot', which displays semantic opacity, not semantic transparency.[49] The underlying implication is that one does not normally walk to a place on one foot.

II. *Saalatu lijtimaaʕaat* (room/the meetings) for 'meeting room' or 'conference room'[50] — *γurfat ijtimaaʕaat* 'meeting room' is also used for *γurfatu lijtimaaʕaat*.[51] The fundamental idea here via the pl. marking is that this particular room has been designed for many meetings or conferences.

III. *maʕluumaat* and *istiʕlaamaat* 'information'[52] — cf. *maʕluuma* 'piece of information', a relatively new coinage via back formation (cf. Spanish *información*[53] and English foreigner talk **informa-*

[49] I owe to James Dickins (p.c.) the following interesting observation. By contrast to 'on foot', in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic 'I saw him with my own eyes' is translated as *šuftu biʕayni* (with a sg.). This parallels Lebanese Colloquial Arabic exactly (courtesy Huda Ghatttas, p.c.). Let me hasten to add that when one says 'by hand' in Arabic, a sg. is used: MSA *bilyad*, colloquial *bilʔiid*. This is perhaps to be explained as follows. The basic, hidden idea is that when one, e.g., makes something by hand, one hand is dominant. Thus, there is in the mind of the native speaker the idea of singularity present in the underlying conceptual framework involved. So too with one eye being dominant or better than the other in the aforementioned expression involving 'eyes'.

[50] The English translation *'conference and presentation room' is common in the written English used in Saudi Arabia; however, I have used an asterisk since it is awkward.

[51] Arne A. Ambros suggests (p.c.) that the former means 'a meeting room', whereas the latter is 'the meeting room'. Jonathan Owens (p.c.) comments that the former could be construed as 'the room where the meeting in question will take place', whereas the latter suggests a room specifically designed for numerous meetings. In my experience, there were, in fact, no differences in actual usage when both of these were written outside the 'meeting room' in question.

[52] The second word really means 'asking for information' (e.g., at a hotel reception desk; however, in English the normal translation is just 'information').

[53] In Spanish, *una información* = 'a piece of information'; however, 'to ask for

tions 'information' and many other examples of this sort, such as Chinese [Foreigner] English "Times Schedule," in which many "times" are represented on a schedule sheet).[54]

IV. *quwwatu lḥuduud* (control/the borders) 'border control'. The pl. makes excellent semantic sense since a border is long. Similarly, *ʕalaa lḥuduud* (on/the borders) 'at the border'. Since there is usually a lot of space to a border, it is thus considered a pl.

V. *almarDaa lmuʕaaqiin*, (the sick PL/the handicapped/PL) 'the handicapped patients'[55] = 'handicapped parking'. This rendering is context dependent, having been observed in front of a parking space in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for *xaaSS bilmuʕaaqiin* or *lilmuʕaaqiin* 'special (especially) for the handicapped', 'for the handicapped' respectively, both of which are more literal translations of 'handicapped parking'.

VI. *rafʕu lʔaθqaal* 'weightlifting', lit., 'the lifting of weights'. This makes perfectly good sense since the idea is to lift many weights numerous times.

VII. *ziiru nisaaʔ* 'womanizer'. *ziir* means 'a large clay jar'; *-u* is the nominative of a *status constructus*, and *nisaaʔ* means 'women'. This metaphoric expression seems to refer to a man who is in the habit of storing women in a large clay jar, at least in his own mind.

information about s.o.; to request a file or dossier about s.o.' = *pedir informes*. The pl. *informaciones* refers to all the news (from diverse news outlets) about a concrete event or person; e.g., *las informaciones sobre la catástrofe* 'the news about the catastrophe'. It does not have a truly abstract sense. My thanks to Gonzalo Rubio (p.c.), who clarified a number of points concerning this matter.

[54] The Chinese English example of 'Times Schedule' is courtesy of Robert D. Angus (p.c.), who also reports that 'information' is countable in Chinese. The pl. is more semantically transparent than the sg. and is unmarked in English and Spanish. This reasoning can be used to explain Portuguese *pasta de dentes* 'toothpaste', in which the pl. *dentes* accounts for the fact that the purpose of toothpaste is to clean one's teeth (cf. the opaque Spanish *pasta dental/dentifrice*, but also the sg. *dolor de muelas* 'toothache', lit., 'pain of molars', which uses a pl.). Cf. Spanish *el paraguas* 'the/umbrella', lit., 'the/for waters', since an umbrella protects one against much water, and *el abrelatas* 'the/can opener', lit., 'open cans', i.e. it is used to open many cans.

[55] This should be *almarDaa lmuʕaaquun* in the nominative case with *–uun*, since the meaning is that of a subject noun phrase, 'the handicapped patients'. However, *-uun* is not used in any Arabic colloquial dialect, since it has been replaced by the oblique ending *-iin* . This may be considered an aspect of diglossia, since the colloquial *–iin* has been used. It is very unusual in Saudi Arabia to see colloquial Arabic written, as opposed to the situation in Egypt, in which ECA is sometimes encountered, especially in advertising. It is also conceivable that the *–iin* ending is via ellipsis from *xaaSS bilmuʕaaqiin* or *lilmuʕaaqiin* 'special (especially) for the handicapped'.

7.2. The syntax of the MSA genitive constructions

We will now be concerned with the syntactic analysis of the MSA phrases we present in Sections 9.0. and following, many of which are genitival or construct (*status constructus*) noun phrases (called in MSA *ʔiDaafa*-constructions). While it is true that a pl. is the norm in these types of expressions, it is also true that if the noun occurs in the sg., the abstract or generic interpretation may be lost. In English 'mountain climbing' may be defined as 'the climbing of mountains', 'the climbing of many a mountain', or 'climbing mountains'; however, the name of the sport is *only* the sg. 'mountain climbing' — not *'mountains climbing' or the like. Similarly, the 'building of bodies' vs. 'body building', and all the other compounds in English which can, for the most part, be related to the noncompound formations. In MSA, the only possible translation of the sport *mountain climbing* is to use the pl. *jibaal*. The sg. *jabal* would be used to denote 'a mountain', or with the definite article 'the mountain', in the so-called *ʔiDaafa*-construction. Also, the name of the sport is *body building*, not the 'building of bodies' or the like. The semantic analysis proposed here explains much more than a syntactic one possibly can. It is especially important to note that a pl. occurs with the use of concrete nouns; thus, *rukuubu ddarrajaat* 'biking', but with the more abstract *albaħr* 'sea', we note *rukuubu lbaħr* 'navigation', and *rukuubu lhawaaʔ* 'aviation' (lit., 'riding [in] the air'). The fact that one says *rukuubu lkanw* 'canoeing' is due to the loanword nature of the second word considered a collective. Thus it parallels *rukuubu lxayl* 'horseback riding', in which *xayl* is a collective.

8.0. Semantic transparency involving *kutub* 'books'

daaru lkutub 'bookstore' (lit., 'house of books'); also 'publishing house' for some native users, although *daaru nnašr* is much more common; cf. Geʿez [Classical Ethiopic] *beta mAs'afEft* 'house of books' for 'library' (courtesy Grover Hudson, p.c.) (also *markazu bayʕi lkutub*– a calque < English),[56] *maktaba* (lit., 'a place for books', probably the most common word for 'bookstore' throughout the Arab world, used also ambiguously with the meaning 'library'; Lebanese Colloquial Arabic *maktabe* means both 'library' and 'bookstore'), *kitaabxaana* and *kutubxaana* (the former with *kitaab* 'book' seems un-Arabic to me and probably reflects Ottoman Turkish struc-

[56] I have seen this written example in Amman, Jordan.

ture, whereas the latter, with the pl. *kutub*, typifies the authentic Arabic word-formation strategy);[57] *kutubii* (also *baaʔiʃu kutub*), pl. *kutubiyya* 'bookseller, book dealer, book salesman' (Wehr 1974: 812 lists only *kutubiyya*; however, *kutubiyyuuna* certainly occurs ([courtesy Huda Ghattas, p.c., who rejects the *–iyya* pl.]); *maxzanu kutub* (archaic) ~ *xazaanatu lkutub* 'bookstore'.

9.0. Further examples of 'broken' (Ablaut) or sound feminine plurals (-aat):

taqwiimu lʔasnaan 'orthodonture' (lit., 'the straightening of teeth'); *ħuquuqu TTabʃ* 'copyright' (lit., 'rights of printing'); *qismu šuʔuuni TTalaba* 'Department of Student Affairs'; *ħarbu ʔasʃaar* 'price war'; *annuquušu SSaxra* 'Rock Art';[58] *mubarridaat, mašruubaat*[59] 'Refreshment Bar' (lit.,'cold drinks; drinks; beverages; refreshments'); *qismu lʔafraad* 'personnel department'; *qismu lmuštarayaat* 'purchasing department'; *farʃu lʔalbaan* 'dairy department'; *qismu/qalamu lħisaabaat* 'accounting department'; *muraajiʃu ~ mudaqqiqu lħisaabaat* 'auditor, comptroller'; *ʔilmaamaat* 'résumé';[60] *ʔidmaanu lmuskiraat* 'alcoholism'; *xaTTu lʔanaabiib* 'pipeline'; *musakkaraat ~ sukkariyyaat* 'candy, confectionery' (usually thought of as 'a lot of' or 'much', and the second choice is much more common*); raqSu lbuTuun* 'belly dance' (also *raqSu lbaTn* < (probably) English or a Standard Average European [Whorfian] language [Wehr 1974: 64 lists both]);[61] *taðammuraatu ~ šakaawaa lħariif ~ zzabuun ~ lʃamiil*

[57] *xaana* is the Persian word for 'house' (Modern Persian *xaanê*), which was borrowed into Turkish, and then also from Turkish into Arabic during Ottoman times. These words are archaic, although *ʔagzaxaana* 'pharmacy' is still quite common, especially in Egypt and the Sudan. Arne A. Ambros (p.c.) notes that in Ottoman Turkish *kutubxaane* is more common than *kitaabxaane*.

[58] This expression, which was seen in the National Museum in Riyadh, is not correct from a grammatical point of view. This was a typographical error for the *status constructus nuquušu SSaxra*, paralleling *qubbatu SSaxra* 'the Dome of the Rock'.

[59] This word might connote 'alcoholic beverages' for some speakers, who prefer to add the word *ɣaaziyya* 'carbonated' for 'soft drinks'. *miyaah ɣaaziyya* is 'carbonated water' or 'mineral water' (Wehr 1974: 664).

[60] This is a very rare word in the Arab world. Usually, the occurring translation is *xulaaSa* or *mulaxxaS ~ talxiiS*.

[61] Indeed, one could try to make a case that in the pl., many bellies belonging to many girls are moving as opposed to just one, just as *kamaalu lʔajsaam* (perfection/the bodies) 'body building' involves (in the cognitive/conceptual sense) the idea of many athletes competing in competitions, never just one athlete. It would be difficult to prove that this is the case, although some native speakers from the

'customer complaint';[62] *alʕalaaqaat maʕa zzabaaʔin* 'customer service';[63] *jarraaħu lʔasnaan* 'dental/oral surgeon'; *mudarrisu ʔalʕaab* 'athletic coach';[64] *saaħatu lʔalʕaab ~ malʕab* 'athletic field'; *masku ddafaatir* 'bookkeeping'; *masku lħisaabaat* 'accounting'; *tasaariiħ* 'permission, authorization' (Wehr 1974: 406; note the sgs. in Wehr!);[65] *saaʕaatii* 'clockmaker'; *maħkamatu ljinaayaat* 'criminal court'; *mujahhizu ljinaazaat* 'mortician' (lit., 'preparer of funeral processions', not in use in most of the Arab world; in ECA, e.g., the term is *ħanuutii*); *ʕilmu lištiqaaq ~ diraasatu štiqaaqi lkalimaat* 'etymology' (lit., the study of the derivation of words'; the first one here is the most common, while the second is to be found in Doniach 1972: 397); *almuhmalaat* 'dead-letter office', according to Wehr (1974: 1035), but a mistake according to Huda Ghattas (p.c.), who asserts it

Gulf countries, when queried, have actually suggested this as a hypothesis to explain the facts. Many native speakers have related that the pl. sounds much better than the sg., and further, they envisage many ladies doing this successively. Originally, this entire conception is Western, since most Arabs consider *raqS baladii* or *šarqii* 'local' or 'Eastern dancing' the equivalent. Also, *hazzu wasT* 'the shaking of the waist or middle' is a possible rendering for 'belly dancing'. What is significant is that the pl. *albuTuun* sounds much better than the sg. in the aforementioned term; however, I reiterate that this term is a calque from a European language. My thanks to Zeinab Ibrahim and Huda Ghattas (p.c.) for sharing their thoughts on this with me.

[62] This is not really an Arabic concept; however, it is becoming more common to see in Saudi Arabia as a result of American and possibly British influence there. The word *ħariif* is archaic in this context. While the first noun is pl., the second is sg., probably as a result of being a calque of the English. One would expect, following the cognitive linguistic principles outlined in this essay, the pl. of the word for 'customer'. Huda Ghattas (p.c.) states that *azzabaaʔin* 'customers' in the pl. should be used here.

[63] Another way to render this is the double pl. *xadamaatu zzabaaʔin*. See preceding note.

[64] Informants much prefer the addition of the word *arriyaaDiyya* 'sports' to this term, which should also be definite with *al-*. A good translation of 'athletic coach' in MSA is *mudarrib riyaaDii*.

[65] Wehr (1974: 511) also notes *taSriiħ*, pl. *taSaariiħ* 'permission; official permit; declaration' from a different root with the emphatic Saad. Huda Ghattas (p.c.) tells me that Wehr's data here with the non-emphatic *siin* are erroneous.

[66] This is taken from Wehr (1974: 758). Huda Ghattas (p.c.) has never heard the pl., but rather has only experienced the sg. *Tariiq* in this expression. Wehr (*loc. cit.*) does record the sg. meaning only, 'the middle of the road'. In this case, English and Arabic match up. In a few other cases which are fascinating to explore in themselves, English has a pl. matching up with a sg. in MSA and Yemeni Arabic, respectively: *taħriiru lmarʔa* 'women's liberation', and 'pollution in the streets' *talawwuθ fii ššaariʕ* (Watson 2002: 136, 138). See further the end of Section 5.0.

means 'trash'; *ʕalaa qaariʕati TTuruq* 'on the open road';[66] *qušuur* 'garbage, dandruff'.[67]

10.0. The (pl.) sciences[68]

ʕilmu Tabaqaati lʔarD 'stratigraphy; geology'; *ʕilmu lʔasaaTiir* 'folklore';[69] *ʕilmu hayʔati lʔajsaam ilħayyati wa tarkiibihaa* 'morphology (biology)' (Doniach 1972: 790); *ʕilmu takwiini lkalimaati wa tarkiibihaa* 'morphology (philology)' (Doniach 1972: 790); *ʕilmu TTuyuur* 'ornithology'; *ʕilmu lʔasmaak* 'ichthyology'; *ʕilmu lʔaħyaaʔ* 'biology' (also [Wehr 1974: 635] **lħayaat*);[70] *ʕilmu nnabaat(aat)* 'botany'[71] (possibly via phonological avoidance strategy —

[67] Isn't there usually a lot of both 'garbage' and 'dandruff' around when one refers to these? For example, 'take the garbage out!' implies a bag/container of it. Similarly, 'John has dandruff' implies that there are many flakes on his jacket, which explains why this is rendered in the pl. The meaning 'garbage' is from Wehr (1974: 764); however, none of the informants consulted used this word for 'garbage' (usually MSA sg. *qumaama*, but Wehr [1974: 789] also has the unused *qamaaʔim*, but pl. *faDalaat*). In Lebanon, the word in use is *ʔišri* for 'dandruff' and *zbeeli* for 'garbage', both sg. (courtesy Huda Ghattas, p.c.).

[68] All these sciences use the pl. Oddly enough, 'we have science today' (a student talking about a class) is translated into MSA as *ʔalyawma ʕindanaa ʕuluum* (lit., 'sciences'). In this connection, cf. the excelent translation of Badawi, Carter and Gully (2004: 242) of *wawaǰadnaa lbayta saakinan sukuun alqubuur* 'and we found the house as silent as a grave' (lit., 'graves').

[69] I have encountered this in Saudi Arabian usage. This might be better translated as 'mythology', since 'folklore' is *θaqaafa šaʕbiyya*, or with the pls. *ʕaadaat wa taqaaliid šaʕbiyya*. Although not MSA, Sudanese Colloquial Arabic has pl. *šaʕbiyyaat* 'folklore; popular culture' (Bergman 2002: 376).

[70] Wehr had access to an enormous number of Arabic texts via the prodigious efforts of his outstanding hard-working assistants who most likely encountered **ʕilmu lħayaat* for 'biology' in a real text (this also occurs in *Almunjid fii llugha walʔadab walʕuluum*, Beirut: Catholic Press, 1908: 527). In my opinion, this would have been a calque of the Greek 'the science of life' (or another language which borrowed this word from Greek). The authentic MSA way to say this is 'the science of living things', in the pl.! *ʔaħyaaʔ* is the pl. of *ħayy* 'living thing'. In checking this with numerous native speakers, **ʕilmu lħayaat* was unanimously rejected. Let us consider also 'anthropology' = *ʕilmu lʔinsaan*, also a calque from Greek (in many dictionaries, including *Al-Mawrid* [many editions; e.g., 1972: 52, Beirut: Dar El-Ilm Lil-Malayēn]) for my suggested *ʕilmu taariixi taTawwuri lʔinsaan* 'the science of the history of the development of humankind' = *(ʕilmu) (l)ʔanθroobooloojiyaa* (Wehr 1974: 30 and Doniach 1972: 48), which is its most usual rendition in the Arab world today. This is parallel to *ʕilmu ljuɣraafiyaa* 'geography'. Huda Ghattas (p.c.) informs me that she studied *ʕilmu lʔinsaan* 'anthropology' in Beirut at the *jaamiʕatu bayruuti lʕarabiyya.*

[71] Although there are two possible renderings for 'botany', in Arab universities

see 11.0.); *ʃilmu lʔaaθaar* 'archaeology'; *ʃilmu lmaʕaani* 'semantics' ('rhetoric'[72] [Wehr 1974: 650], although Wehr [1974: 74] also has *ʃilmu lbalaaɣa* and *ʃilmu lbayaan* [1974: 88] for this); *ʃilmu lʔaSwaat* 'phonetics' (much more commonly *Sawtiyyaat* with the pl. *-aat*); *ʃilmu llahajaat* 'dialectology'; *ʃilmu lmufradaat* 'lexicography' (cf. *mufradaat* 'vocabulary' and *bilmufradaat* 'in detail', but *mufrad* 'sg.' [Wehr 1974: 704]); *ʃilmu lmaʕaajim* 'lexicology'*; ʃilmu waDHaaʔifi lʔaʕDaaʔ* (also *lbadan* 'of the body' as the last word) 'physiology', lit., 'the science of the functionalities of the organs' (also [Wehr 1974: 1030] *ʃilmu lwaDHaaʔif* via truncation or clipping of the last word; also the middle word can be clipped giving *ʃilmu lʔaʕDaaʔ*); *ʃilmu ljaraaθiim* 'bacteriology'; **ʃilmu ððarraat* 'nuclear physics' (Wehr 1974: 635) for *ʃilmu lfiizyaaʔi ððarriyya* or *ʃilmu lfiizyaaʔi nnawawiyya*);[73] *ʃilmu lmaʕaadin* 'mineralogy'; *ʃilmu TTufayliyyaat* 'parasitology'; *ʃilmu nnumiyyaat* 'numismatics';[74] *ʃilmu lkumbyuutaraat* 'computer science'; *ʃilmu lmaTmuuraat/ lħafriyyaat* 'paleontology'; *ʃilmu ssawaaʔil* 'hydraulics'; *ʃilmu lħašaraat* 'entomology'; *ʃilmu lʔaʕraaqi lbašariyya* 'ethnology' (also *ʃilmu lʔajnaas* [*wa ssulaalaati lbašariyya*]); *ʃilmu lʔaxlaaq* 'ethics'; *alʃuluumu ssiyaasiyya* 'political science';[75] *riyaaDaat ~ riyaaDiyyaat* 'mathematics';[76] *ħisaabaat ~ muħaasabaat ~ ħifDHu/masku ddafaatir* 'bookkeeping' (lit., 'bills', 'invoices' for the first two aforementioned, according to Wehr [1974: 176]; Huda Ghattas [p.c.] rejects these literal meanings for *ħisaabaat ~ muħaasabaat* stating that 'calculations' is the correct rendition); *ʔiħSaaʔiyyaat ~ ʃilmu lʔiħSaaʔ* 'statistics'.[77]

the science is known only as *ʃilmu nnabaat*, without the fem. pl. marking *-aat*. See further in Section 11.0.

[72] In Classical Arabic *ʃilmu lmaʕaani* was a branch of rhetoric dealing with figurative language, such as metonymies, allegorical expressions, variant readings, interpretations, syntactic analyses, etc.

[73] Huda Ghattas (p. c.) informs me that she has heard *ʃilmu ððarra* numerous times, but not in the pl. This is perhaps formed on the analogy to the other sciences which use the sg. for 'nuclear physics' (e.g., *ʃilmu lmuħaasaba* 'accounting'; see further Section 10.1.).

[74] This was actually seen in Saudi Arabia. Another possible rendering is the pl. *ʃilmu nnuquud (wa nnayaaʃiin)* (according to Karmi 1991: 632).

[75] Notice the pl. *ʃuluum* contra *ʃilmu ssiyaasa* 'politics' and *siyaasatu lʕaalam* 'world politics', since this may possibly be seen as part of the oneness of Arab-Islamic culture.

[76] It is the latter form which has been borrowed by Persian, not the former. The reason for this is that the former term was probably even rarer many centuries ago. Today, it is not used.

[77] Wehr (1974: 183) also gives *ʔiħSaaʔiyya* in the sg., rejected by Huda Ghattas (p.c.). One must render the name of the science as *ʃilmu lʔiħSaaʔ*.

10.1. Exceptions with the sciences in the singular

There are some notable exceptions to the pl. with the sciences. How does one explain these? For the answer to this question, one must look to the Arabic *Weltanschauung*, i.e., the monolithic notion that there is only one language, which the one God speaks and in which He has revealed His holy book, viz., Arabic, with its unique features. It is called in Arabic *luɣatu DDaad* 'the language of the *Daad*' (a letter of the alphabet).[78] Arabs are even known as *annaaTiquuna biDDaad* 'the speakers with the *Daad*'.[79] They possess one book (*alkitaab* = 'the Koran', lit., 'the book'),[80] one Prophet, Muhammad, in a long line of prophets before him, and one God (it says in the Koran *ʔallaahu ʔaħad* 'God is one'). All the sciences which follow *somehow* developed particularly with the one language, Arabic, and the one religion, Islam, as the target. As Jonathan Owens reminds me (p.c.), the following are classical/medieval sciences, and the newer ones tend to be in the pl.

- *ʕilmu lištiqaaq* (science/the derivation) 'etymology'
- *ʕilmu lʔusluub* (science/the style) 'stylistics' — not **ʕilmu lʔasaaliib*[81] (science/the styles)
- *ʕilmu SSarf* (science/the inflection) 'morphology'

[78] Arabic *ʔarD* = some Arabic dialects *ʔarDH*, Aramaic *ʔarqaa/ʔarʕaa*, Hebrew *ʔɛrɛS*, Akkadian *ertṣe/itu*. Arabic emphatic /D/, which is unique to the Semitic languages, is preserved in many colloquial Arabic dialects, whereas the cognate languages have done their best to get rid of it, although it is attested in Geʿez and Sabaean, but the phonetic characteristics in each are unknown. It was probably a lateralized emphatic stop in Proto-Semitic, with Spanish *alcalde* 'mayor' preserving the lateral pronunciation < Arabic *alqaaDi* 'the judge'.

[79] Arabic is allegedly the only language in the world with this phoneme (see preceding note on the /Daad/). Using it, another synonym for 'Arabic language' is the expression *luɣat muDar* 'the language of Mudar' (originally a tribe in Arabia). The presence of the emphatic /D/ is not a coincidence, in my view, and is reminiscent of the *Daad* itself. Suleiman (2003: 59–60) has a fine discussion of the *luɣatu DDaad* (see also preceding note).

[80] Of course, there is a parallel in English with 'the Good Book' = 'the Bible'. The Koran is also known as *al-bayaan* 'the statement', which is related to the word *mubiin* 'clear'.

[81] I doubt whether *ʔusluubiyyaat* 'stylistics' is acceptable and used, although some linguistic consultants said it was, whereas *luɣawiyyaat* and *lisaaniyyaat* 'linguistics' both commonly occur. The latter term is more frequent in Syria and the Levant in general than the other Arab countries. *Almawrid* (1972: 832) and Karmi (1991: 999) give *ʕilmu ʔusluubi lkitaaba* and *ʕilmu dilaalaati lʔalfaaDHi wataTawwurihaa* for 'stylistics' respectively. Yasir Suleiman (p.c.) tells me that he has seen it translated as *ʕilmu lʔusluub, ʔuslubiyyaatu naSS*, but not as *ʕilmu ʔusluubi lkitaaba*.

- *ʕilmu nnaħw* (science/the syntax) 'syntax; grammar'
- *ʕilmu lluɣa* (science/the language) 'linguistics', 'lexicography', 'philology'
- *fiqhu lluɣa* (jurisprudence/the language) 'philology'
- *ʕilmu ddi/alaala* (science/the indication) 'semantics';[82]
- *ʕilmu lbadiiʕ* (science/the marvellous) 'the science of metaphors and of good style'
- *ʕilmu lbalaaɣa/lbayaan* (science/the eloquence/clearness) 'rhetoric'

The aforementioned sciences are all in the sg. Thus, **ʕilmu/fiqhu lluɣaat*, e.g., are ungrammatical,[83] since in Arabic there is only *one* language, i.e., one language par excellence: *luɣatu lqurʔaan* 'the language of the Koran'. In other words, all of these which pertain to language and culture are sgs. symbolizing one language, Arabic, one book — the Koran — in the one clear language (*Al-Kitaab Al-Mubiin* 'the clear Koran'), and the one way of life, Islam.[84] Let me

[82] *ʕilmu lmaʕaanii* 'semantics' is, like *ʕilmu lʔaSwaat* 'phonetics', conceived of as dealing with the meanings of words in dialects or languages, not just in Arabic. To put it in slightly different terms, for the idealized native speaker, there are many sounds and many meanings in Arabic and in other languages. See also n. 72.

[83] Waheed Samy (p.c.) reports that **ʕilmu lluɣaat* (according to dictionary usage) occurs in Egypt for the sg. *ʕilmu lluɣa*. Since the pl. is, as I have shown, so very common in the designation of the sciences, this can be explained as the result of analogy with the pl. conceptualization. My own feeling is that this pl. form requires a detailed investigation in Egypt and throughout the Arab world. Other informants report that the pl. designation also occurs in MSA. I could not locate the pl. in any dictionary consulted, however.

[84] Related to one language is the idea of one pure Islamic society and the oneness of Muslims (note the singularity of the following!). This explains *ʕilmu lijtimaaʕ* 'sociology'; *ʕilmu ttarbiya* 'pedagogy'; *ʕilmu ljabr* 'algebra'; *ʕilmu lmanTiq* 'logic' ('manner of speaking/diction/eloquence' [Wehr 1974: 974]); *ʕilmu SSiħħa* 'hygiene'; *ʕilmu nnafs* 'psychology'; and *ʕilmu ssiyaasa* 'politics'. Wehr (1974: 767), strangely enough, gives *ʕilmu liqtiSaadi ssiyaasii* for 'political science; political economy; economics', but also *ʕilmu liqtiSaad* for 'economics' (ibid.). Downright puzzling, however, are *ʕilmu lħisaab* 'arithmetic' and *ʕilmu lħayawaan* 'zoology', both of which, one would think, could be logically justified in pls. For the latter terms, one can perhaps justify them since one is referring to the operation of arithmetic calculation (calculating), which is one, and to the entire species of all animals as a whole, which is one, and thus sg., i.e., it is considered a prototype. Rendering 'geometry' as *ʕilmu lhandasa* makes sense in that *handasa* is an abstract noun meaning 'engineering'. Cf. also *ʕilmu lwiraaθa* 'genetics', *ʕilmu TTibb* 'medicine', *ʕilmu lmuħaasaba* 'accounting', or *ʕilmu ttašriiħ* 'anatomy'. It should be kept in mind that *ʕilmu lfalak* 'astrology; astronomy' can best be understood as 'the science of the orbit (sg.) of celestial bodies (pl.)', thus MSA does not use the pl. *ʔaflaak* 'celestial bodies'. It should be noted that often the *ʕilm* part can be dropped; e.g., *alħisaab* 'arithmetic' (the usual term in the Arab world), or *(ʕilmu) (l)luɣawiyyaat* and *(ʕilmu) (l)lisaaniyyaat* 'linguistics'. For 'astronomy', *Almunjid fii*

note that my hypothesis is just that — a hypothesis. This is impossible to prove, and further, what does one mean by the word 'proof'? If one puts forward a better explanation to account for the aforementioned exceptions, I will gladly abandon my opinion and adopt another.

10.2. Theology

The rendering of 'theology' is particularly fascinating and tells us something about the relationship between language and culture in the Arab world. One can say:

ʕilmu ddiin (science/the religion) 'the science of religion' (i.e., the science of the one religion, the only religion for most Arabs = Islam, also given in various sources as *ʕilmu lkalaam* [science/the word], translated in Wehr [1974: 838] as 'scholastic theology'), *ʕuluumu ddiin* 'the sciences of religion',[85] or *ʕilmu lʔadyaan* 'the science of religions,[86] out of respect for the other religions in the Islamic tradition (Judaism and Christianity), or perhaps all religions — involving what is referred to in English as the study of 'Comparative Religion' (in the sg.)

From an Islamic perspective, however, animism, shamanism, etc., would not be placed into this religion taxonomy. Religions involving idolatry of any kind are also problematic for reasons too obvious to mention here (e.g., Buddhism — recall that the Taliban government in Afghanistan destroyed the ancient statues of the Buddha there, although one can presumably talk about *addiinu lbuuðii* 'the Buddhist religion' in MSA, which might reflect a non-Arabic *Weltanschauung*).[87] Here, I would also venture to speculate that the former

llugha walʔadab walʕuluum, (Beirut 1908: 527) lists *ʕilmu nnujuum* 'the science of the stars', which is not in Wehr (1974), while other dictionaries give *ʕilmu ttanjiim*. The latter probably also means 'astrology', since the medieval Arabs did not differentiate between astronomy and astrology.

[85] In this connection, let me mention Modern Persian constructions with *ʕuluum* 'sciences': *ʕuluum-e siyaasi* 'political science', *ʕuluum-e falsafi* 'philosophy', *ʕuluum-e axlaaqi* 'ethics', *ʕuluum-e ijtimaaʕi* 'social sciences', *ʕuluum-e riyaazi* 'mathematics', *ʕuluum-e diini* 'religion', *ʕuluum-e Tabiiʕi* 'natural science', and *ʕuluum-e behdaašti* 'hygiene'. Haïm's *English-Persian Dictionary* (9th ed. Teheran 1369: 533) cites for the latter *ʕilm-e behdaašt*, and also records *ʕilm-e axlaaq* 'ethics' (1369: 301), *ʕilm-e sarvat* 'political economy' (1369: 934), and *ʕilm-e ijtimaaʕ* 'sociology' (1369: 1148).

[86] There are also the derivatives from the root for 'god', *ʔlh*: *ʕilmu llaahuut* 'theology' and *ʔallaahuutiyya* < *laahuut* 'divinity'. Other dictionaries list *ʕilmu ʔuSuuli ddiin* and *alʕilmu lʔilaahii*.

[87] Here the word *diin* 'religion' may be a metaphor or is used quite broadly via

term in the sg. is the original, i.e., the real Arabic manifestation of this lexemic process, whereas the latter in the pl. is *somehow* a later addition, probably via analogy to the other sciences, and perhaps also influenced by a Western *Weltanschauung*. Most Muslims (again hedging my bet) believe that there is only one true and correct religion.[88] James Dickins (p.c.) remarks that this is surely true of most Christians, some Jews, and Bahais, but not Hindus.

Another apparent exception also has some relationship with divination:

ʃilmu rraml (science/the sand), also *Darbu rraml* (striking/the sand) 'geomancy' (defined as 'divination by means of lines and figures or by geographic features'), for an expected **ʃilmu rrimaal*, since *rimaal* is the pl. of *raml* 'sand'; however, the collective *raml* is still thought of as a mass noun or a group of items, so it is not so exceptional. It would be impossible to say **ʃilmu rramla* with the sg. (*nomen unitatis*) *-a*, because that would rule out any abstract meaning.

10.3. Further examples of MSA plural forms

mukaafaħatu lmuxaddiraat 'drug prevention' (lit., 'the [negative] struggle[89] of drugs'); *aliqtiSaadiyyaat* 'the economy' (according to Wehr [1974: 767], but Yasir Suleiman, p.c., cites *iqtiSaadiyyaatu dduwali lɣaniyya* 'the economies of the rich states'; probably Wehr's citation is best considered a calque < English 'economics', the *–s* of which was considered to be a pl. marker via an erroneous linguistic analysis); *raqmu ħafiiDHati nnufuus* 'identity card number';[90] *maktabu* (for older *qalamu*) *lmuxaabaraat* 'Intelligence Bureau'; *almuxaabaraat* 'Secret Police'; *qalamu lquyuudaat* 'Bureau of Vital Statis-

semantic extension — much like the fact that you can call a six-year old boy 'a young man', although he is not literally a man.

[88] Once again, let me reiterate that it is not my purpose to enter into polemics here. Certainly, every Muslim I know or have ever known shares this opinion. Perhaps the pl. formation *ʃilmu lʔadyaan* (originally) pays homage to the other two revealed Middle Eastern religions — Judaism and Christianity.

[89] MSA has another word from the same root (*kifaaħ*) with the same English meaning; however, this is 'struggle' in a positive sense (this is not shared by every user of MSA, however). One could also translate the term as 'the battle against drugs', since *mukaafaħa* also means 'battle'. The lexical particularization between Arabic and English is an intricate area of linguistic research, which explains why it remains *terra incognita*. Arne A. Ambros (p.c.) notes that the former is preferred if subject (*kifaaħu ššaʃb* 'the struggle of a people'), but the latter with an object (*mukaafaħatu lmuxaddiraat* 'drug prevention').

[90] This occurs commonly in Saudi Arabia; lit., 'number of the preservation of the identities or selves' = *raqmu lhawiyya* in Lebanese Colloquial Arabic.

tics' (Wehr 1974: 804);[91] *madxalu ssayyaaraat* 'driveway' (a very artificial [Western] concept in MSA; however, note the pl.!); *kamaalu l?ajsaam* 'body building' (lit., the perfection of the bodies'); *tasalluqu ljibaal* 'mountain climbing'; *rukuubu ddarraajaat* 'bicycle riding; biking'; *rukuubu lxayl* 'horseback riding' (*xayl* is a suppletive collective of *ħiSaan* 'horse', which is defined in the *Kitaab Al-ʕAyn* by Alkhalil ibn Ahmad as 'a group of horses' [courtesy of Zeinab Ibrahim, p.c.]); *kulliyyatu lħuquuq* 'Law School'; *kulliyyatu lʕuluum* 'College of Science(s)';[92] *almulaaħaqaatu ljinsiyya* 'sexual harassment' (lit.,'sexual chasings or pursuits');[93] *al?aʕTaal* 'repair (service)' (Saudi Arabian MSA usage); **qawaaʕidu lmujaamalaat* 'etiquette' (probably a calque < English, lit., 'rules for courtesy' [Wehr 1974: 137]) for *maraasi(i)m*, as in *maraasimu ttašriifaat* 'court etiquette', or *mudiiru lmaraasiim ~ ttašriifaat* 'chief of protocol'; also 'etiquette' (not 'court etiquette') (*qawaʕidu*) *?aadaabi ssiluuk*; *ʕaSru ðða rra wa SSawaariix* 'the age of the atom and the rocket' (note the incongruence of the sg. and pl.!) for **ʕaSru ðða rra wa SSaaruux*;[94] (*ħisaabu*) *lmuθallaθaat* 'trigonometry'; *kaatibu lħisaabaat* 'accountant'; *qaaʕatu mu?tamaraat* 'conference hall' and *qaaʕatu lmu?tamaraat*; *qaaʕatu* or *radhatu muħaaDaraat* and *lmuħaaDaraat* 'lecture hall' (Wehr 1974: 335);[95] *maasiku dafaatir* 'bookkeeper; *mujallidu kutub* 'bookbinder'; **Saaniʕu ?aħðiya* 'shoemaker' (in some Arabic dictionaries) for *?iskaafii* (Wehr 1974: 164 gives *Saaniʕu l?aħðiya* and *ħaðða a?* as well); **Saaniʕu ?aqfaal* 'locksmith' (in some Arabic dictionaries) for the archaic *qaffaal*; *Tabiibu (l)?asnaan* 'dentist'; *ʕarabatu l?aTfaal*

[91] This is an old designation for *maktabu ?iħSaa?i nnufuus*.

[92] One thinks here of the famous *daar ulʕuluum* 'College of Science', lit., 'house of sciences', affiliated with Cairo University. Also, the 'Faculty of Science' in universities throughout the Arab world is known as *kulliyyatu lʕuluum*.

[93] Huda Ghattas (p.c) asserts that *taħarrušaat* is the more common expression. This meaning is not listed in Wehr (1974: 168), who gives glosses such as 'meddling' and 'uncalled-for interference'.

[94] Many informants have strong differences of opinion on this one, some accepting the asterisked double sg. Mauro Tosco (p.c.) offers the interesting idea that there are many different types of rockets, but atoms are perceived to be the same in popular parlance, since protons, neutrons, and electrons are not visible to the naked eye, like grains of sand. Italian works just like MSA, with a sg. for 'atom' (*l'era dell'atomo*), but with reference to the Cuban missile crisis, Italian uses *la questione dei missili a Cuba* 'the problem of the rockets in Cuba'. Cf. *ʕilmu ðða rra* 'nuclear physics' (see further n. 72).

[95] Wehr (1974: 335) has the awkward English *'lecture room' for 'lecture hall', although the former may be used in English by some for a smaller nonauditorium-style hall. Huda Ghattas (p.c.) shared her intuition that the forms without the definite article implied a rental whereas the form with article implied the reverse.

'baby trolley (carriage)'; *alʔamʕaaʔu lɣaliiDHa*, but *almaʕyu/almaʕiyyu_lɣaliiDH* 'large intestine' is a calque < English (Wehr 1974: 916); *alʔamʕaaʔu ddaqiiqa* 'small intestine';[96] *ʔakalaat sariiʕa* and *wajabaat sariiʕa* (sgs. *wajba* or *ʔakla xafiifa/sariiʕa*) and *wajabaat xafiifa* (*sariiʕa* is calqued from English) 'fast food';[97] *alʔanbaaʔ*, *alʔaxbaar* 'news' (*nabaʔ* = *xabar* = 'news item'); *ʔidaaratu lʔaʕmaal* 'business administration'; *rajulu ʔaʕmaal* 'businessman'; *mubiidaat* 'insecticide';[98] *miyaah muqaTTara* 'distilled water';[99] *miyaahu lʔamTaar* 'rain water'; *muqaTTaraat* 'liquor' (obsolete expression for *mašruubaat ruuħiyya ~ kuħuuliyya*); *muʕaddaat* 'equipment'; *maktabu/maqsamu/markazu ttilifuunaat/littiSaalaat* 'telephone/communication central office'; *maktabu ssafariyyaat* 'travel agency';[100] *ʔawsaax* 'dirt' (a pl., but note also the abstract sg. noun *wasaaxa*); *qismu lmašaariiʕ* 'Project Division'; *Tabiibu lʔamraaDi ljildiyya* 'dermatologist'; *Turuqu lmuwaaSalaat* 'traffic routes'; *buyuuʕ(aat)*[101] *jabriyya* 'compulsory sale by auction' (Wehr 1974: 86); *bilaadu lʔalʕaab* 'Toyland' (lit., 'the countries of toys'); **sarraaqu ljuyuub* 'pickpocket'[102] for *naššaal* (*Al-Mawrid Al-Qareb*, 1977: 287); *ʕaSiiraat*, *ʕaSaaʔir* 'juice'[103] (as a sign in front of a juice bar) and *alʕaSaaʔiru TTaazija* 'fresh juice'; *alʕiyaadaatu ttaxaSSuSiyya* 'specialist clinic';[104] *mudiiru lʕiyaadaat* 'clinic director';[105]

[96] Cf. in English 'an operation on my small intestine/large intestine/intestines', but not *'an operation on my intestine' because *'the intestine' is ungrammatical. Cf. the situation of the different usages of *sometime/sometimes* and *sport(s) coat/car*, which is beyond the scope of my remarks here.

[97] Some informants assert that *wajba xafiifa* means only 'snack'.

[98] One notes also *mubiid*, in my opinion a back formation. However, *mubiidu lħašaraat* definitely also occurs for 'insecticide'.

[99] Due to reasons of semantic transparency, I believe colloquial Arabic *mayya* < *miyaah*, not its sg. *maaʔ*. Many informants prefer the sg. *maaʔ muqaTTar* for 'distilled water'.

[100] One also encounters *maktab safar*, in my view, a calque based on English.

[101] Once again, I suspect the pl. with *–aat* is the most authentic MSA style. Huda Ghattas (p.c.) asserts that this term is not used. Rather, the current designation is *bayʕ bilmazaad*, which can be either compulsory or not.

[102] This is certainly a calque; however, the pl. *ljuyuub* 'the pockets' typifies the MSA style. Some dictionaries report *sallaalu ljuyuub* and *Tarraar*.

[103] This is a relatively new coinage and very Saudi Arabian MSA as well as colloquial, since Wehr (1974) does not record a pl. for *ʕaSiir* 'juice'. Some informants, who tended to be purists, did not accept a pl. for this word.

[104] I believe a 'clinic' is considered as consisting of many departments with many doctors.

[105] See preceding note. Presumably, a 'director of clinics' would be the same in MSA and would result in ambiguity with the sg. I suspect, however, this is a moot point, since no one can be the director of more than one clinic. If that person ex-

dawratu lmiyaah 'WC'; *Sa/unduuqu liqtiraaħaat* 'suggestion box'; *mustawdaʕ ʔadawaati lmaaniʕ* 'Almana Medical Store';[106] **waqtu/ ʔawqaatu/saaʕaatu ddawaam* 'working (office) hours, lit., times of permanency, fixed time (for work)', since there are numerous hours involved.[107]

10.4. The words for 'snow' and 'rain'

The words for 'snow' and 'rain' are also indicative of a concept ripe for the idea of plurality, as with liquids in Creek (see n. 42). The former is MSA *θalj* (collective [with *θuluuj* as its pl.]) 'snow'. The latter is *maTar* (collective [with pl. *ʔamTaar*]) 'rain'.[108] In Yemeni Arabic, I found it much more common to hear the pl. rather than the collective for each of these. Qafisheh (2000: 557) glosses both the sg. and pl. as 'rain'. In a similar vein, let us turn to the cognitive semantic analysis of an expression such as 'to hold one's breath', which is *ħabasa ʔanfaasahu*. The use of the pl. *ʔanfaas* 'breaths' conjures up an iconic depiction of a person ready to hold his breath by breathing in and out many times (numerous cycles of inhalation and exhalation) before actually beginning the act of holding his or her breath. Thus, the sg. *nafas* does not begin to express the pictorial nuances as well as the pl., and is therefore less semantically transparent.[109]

10.5. Parallels with English

To cite a parallel of the idea with English pls. and the notion of transparency, when one is a fan of a sports team, one often marks the overt *–s* of the pl. in order to signify the entire team rather than an

isted, he would normally carry the title of 'general director' or something to that effect, e.g., *almudiiru lʕaamm* (a favorite Arabic expression). The usage reported on here is particularly Saudi Arabian.

[106] The English translation was, in fact, observed in Riyadh. It is the pl. realization which is most significant here.

[107] *waqtu* in the sg. is, I believe, a translation based on an English premise: 'time for work', 'free time', 'leisure time', etc., whereas *waqtu (miiqaatu) SSalaat* '(appointed) prayer time' is considered to involve only one permanent or fixed time and is probably authentic, with a pl. *ʔawqaatu SSalaat* for, e.g., all five prayers.

[108] In Lebanese Colloquial Arabic, the word for 'rain' is *šiti ~ šita* = MSA *šitaaʔ* 'winter' = Maltese *šita*. The Semitic word *maTar* has not survived in this dialect for some inexplicable reason.

[109] Arne A. Ambros (p.c.) notes that the pl. *ʔanfaas* is used as a visual aid for *nafas*, which can easily be read and misunderstood as *nafs* 'soul'. He further comments that this is the reason *nafas* is avoided in MSA. Grover Hudson (p.c.) notes that perhaps the Arabic expression is related to the English 'take a breath' rather than 'hold one's breath'.

individual player on that team. Thus, one is a *Rams fan*, *Mets fan*, *Nets fan*, *Chiefs fan*, *Saints fan*, *Lions fan*, and so on.[110] One is not a **Ram fan*. Similarly, one attends a *Knicks game*, a *Sonics game*, a *Blazers game*, etc. The fundamental analysis here is that a 'Rams fan' = 'a fan of the Rams', and not a *'fan of the Ram'. Although I have not polled American English native speakers nor done any kind of controlled experiments, I recognize that there may be some exceptions to the general tendency in the aforementioned rule. Using my own English as a yardstick, one can talk about attending a *Falcon/s*'[111] *game*, a *Jaguar/s' game*, or a *Panther/s' game*. However, it is also grammatical (again using my own variety of English as an example) to go to a *Ram game*, but impossible for me to go to a **Red game* (the National League team, the *Cincinnati Reds*, short for *Redlegs*). Rather, the correct and occurring term is a *Reds(') game*. Incidentally, although most Americans talk about a *mice-infested* hospital, some do use the less semantically transparent *mouse-infested* hospital.[112] The aforementioned facts are worthy of a separate cross-linguistic study. James Dickins (p.c.) notes other sgs: *rat-infested sewers*; *shark-infested waters*; *crocodile-infested swamps*. Here, the overt *–s* suffix *blocks* the pl. forms, whereas 'mice' and 'lice' have no suffix, and thus *blocking* does not take place (see Bauer 2001: 16 for a discussion of *blocking*).

11.0. Phonological avoidance strategy

Certain phonotactic sequences are avoided in MSA, such as *uu* + *ii*

[110] The examples for this section are taken from American English. Paul Newman (p.c.) suggests the following hypothesis, viz., that the conditioning factors are phonological, i.e., rhythmic in the monosyllabic Rams/Mets/Nets fan, but forms such as Jaguar, Falcon, etc. are disyllabic with initial stress. To a certain extent he might be right. This still does not account for the free variation encountered (see the following note); however, his idea is certainly worthy of followup. See Pinker (1999: 181) for a discussion of 'Celtics fan' and the like, which, like 'singles bar', is an exception to the general rule.

[111] The more common spelling, I believe, is without the apostrophe, however. Let me hasten to add that for some, the apostrophe might be erroneous. Note forms such as *Rams game*, *Bears victory*, and *Reds lead* vs. *Angel game*, *Dodger lead*, and *Tiger victory*. James Dickins (p.c.) relates that in British English one is a *Spurs fan*, and the football team is commonly called *The Spurs*. It should be kept in mind that English does have a hyphenated rule which calls for a sg. marking: *all-girl band*, *four-man bobsled*, *social-science topic*, *four-book series*, *all-star team*, *four-point lead*, etc. (courtesy of Robert D. Angus, p.c.).

[112] No hospital can be infested with only one mouse, since that would be a contradiction of terms. Cf. *lice-infested*, and not *louse-infested*, *bacteria-infested*, not *bacterium-infested*, *streptococci-infested*, not *streptococcus-infested*.

or *y*. Thus, the following examples of *-aat* + *-aat* in two successive words is dysphonic via what is referred to in Arabic as *našaaz* 'dissonance; discord' > *-at* + *-aat* (i.e., vowel shortening brought on by dysphony):

qaaʕatu lḥafalaat for **qaaʕaatu lḥafalaat* 'banquet halls',[113] but the following was noticed in Riyadh, in 2000: **Saalaat ḥafalaat wa ʔafraaḥ* 'banquet and wedding halls' (for *Saalatu lḥafalaat wa lʔafraaḥ*). It seems as though there is no way to disambiguate the sg. 'hall' from 'halls' in this context. An avoidance strategy is the most probable explanation as to why *ʕilmu nnabaat(aat)* 'botany' may lose its pl. marking *-aat*.[114] This might also explain (although only in one word) why Arab universities refer to 'botany' as *ʕilmu nnabaat*.[115]

12.0. Transfer of Arabic plurality notions into English via interference modification

I have been collecting data for this essay for many years. The most amazing thing to me after all this time is just how pervasive this phenomenon is in Arabic.[116] In fact, the idea of pl. function is so ubiquitous in MSA that one can find evidence of the plurality notion transferred over into English via interference modification based on the original MSA expression. I will discuss only two cases; however, I believe there are many more awaiting discovery. Written on mailboxes in Saudi Arabia, the English translation of sg. *albariid* 'mail' appears

[113] Technically, one would need the *–aat* to express the pl. 'banquet halls', one would think; however, this is an actual example from daily life and the *–aat* did not appear. Was this simply a *mistake* in the spelling, or was there much more to it? Huda Ghattas (p.c.) related that this was simply an error. I am not so sure.

[114] Still a valuable discussion of the interrelationships between phonology and syntax is Hetzron (1972). According to several informants, it is not euphonic to have *–aat* followed immediately by *–aat* in a second word, and several native speakers reasoned that the sequence of two identical long vowels in this case is an instance of *našaaz*, and thus to be avoided. However, there certainly are native speakers who disagree.

[115] This is an extremely rich and intricate topic and beyond the scope of my central focus in this essay. Arne A. Ambros (p.c.) suggests that *nabaat* occurs here since its basic meaning is 'growth; vegetation', which fits in perfectly with the idea of 'botany' in an abstract sense.

[116] I am also astonished that no one, to the best of my knowledge, has published anything on this before.

[117] In British English, *post* (American English *mail*) means letters, packages, etc. (pl.!); e.g., 'has the post (American 'mail') arrived yet?' Grover Hudson (p.c.) notes that *posts* occurs in Ethiopian English probably for the same reason that it occurs in the Arab world. Amharic *posta* is the word for 'mail' (see the following note).

as *posts*.[117] This *–s*, which is not grammatical in English, is a transfer of the *idea* of plurality which underlies *albariid*, i.e., that the mailbox is intended for mailing many letters, postcards, etc.[118]

The second example is *naDHDHaaraat*[119] 'eyeglasses' in the pl.,[120] which Wehr (1974: 976) notes, "with singular meaning: a pair of eyeglasses." I am not aware of the sg. *naDHDHaara*[121] 'glasses' being used on any billboard or side of a building in an Arab country for advertising purposes. Rather, the pl. is used. The English translation of this is *opticals*,[122] which is ungrammatical in English. The *–s* is, without question, the overt attempt to mark plurality as in the preceding example, or the idea that one may purchase many pairs of glasses from the business in question, or the fact that many pairs are also observable in the establishment itself. This word is further related to *naDHDHaaraatii* 'optometrist; optician', and the basic idea here is that an optometrist or optician deals with many pairs of glasses and many customers, and thus this fact must be marked with the pl. *-aat*.

13.0. Summary and conclusion

This essay has utilized numerous data to show that (1) words, such as 'dialectology', directly demarcate the study of *dialects*, and thus in-

[118] This might be the explanation of Italian *poste*, the pl. of *posta*, which is used only for official purposes (*poste Italiane* 'Italian mail', or *poste e telegrafi* 'post office', colloquially *posta*, e.g., *lavorare alla posta* 'to work at the post office'). Cf. other uses of the pl. for officialese, such as *ferrovie* 'railways' (courtesy of Mauro Tosco, p.c., who also suggests that these might be calqued from French).
The collective notion of *bariid* in the sg. is paralled by 'prayers' = *Salaat*: *aSSalaatu xayrun min annawm* 'Prayers are better than sleeping', which can also be translated as 'Praying' 'is better than sleeping', or 'Prayer' 'is better than sleep' (in the abstract generic sense).

[119] I am using the symbol DH throughout for the voiced emphatic interdental stop (the *Taa?* with a dot on top).

[120] It is fascinating to compare Hebrew *miškafayim* 'glasses', which is a dual ending in *–ayim*. Also relevant here is MSA *miqaSS* 'scissors', which is a sg., pl. *maqaaSS*.

[121] There is an interesting parallel here (courtesy Zeinab Ibrahim, p.c.). The word 'mustache' is *šaarib*, pl. *šawaarib*, depending on the view as one whole or two parts. According to Wehr (1974: 463), it is frequently dual (reflecting the two parts) *šaaribaan*.

[122] I can imagine an old-fashioned advertisement reading 'Specs' or 'Spectacles' = '(Eye)Glasses'. Today, however, the advertisement would read 'Eyewear'. For me, 'spectacles', like 'bloomers' and 'knickerbockers', is quite old-fashioned and not commonly used. The last two of these words are probably not even known by many of today's American youth.

stantaneously reveal the meaning of plurality via their transparency, as opposed to the opacity of English, using as it does, the equivalent sg. term; elaborating further on this, one may conclude that the semantic transparency of Arabic often contrasts with the semantic opacity of English, (2) certain facts of MSA and exceptions to the rules can be explained with reference to the overall, general Arabic (and Islamic) *Weltanschauung*, thus reaffirming that language cannot be divorced from culture — neither in its learning nor in its proper scientific investigation, (3) lexis is just as important, if not more so, for an overall mastery of language as is grammar/phonology and cannot be neglected by linguistic theoreticians nor abruptly dismissed by them as irrelevant to a theory of language,[123] and (4) semantics (especially of words and their collocations and collocational ranges) is still, as it was during Leonard Bloomfield's day of the early twentieth century, the weak point in language study. To this end, one must note the signs of a radical shift presented in Talmy (2000), which considers language to have two subsystems, grammatical and lexical. It is the latter which is responsible for the content of utterances (2000: I, 21–2), and content is, in my view, often just as important as structure, if not more so. One must consider pidgin languages as evidence of this where the content is everything and the structure minimal.

It follows from the above remarks that a major concern of modern linguistics should be in lexis and grammar-lexis interfacing, i.e., exactly how does a language phrase certain expressions or concepts (excluding the well-known anomalies of idiomaticity)? I am not saying that all lexis can be tied to cultural phenomena, but some clearly can, such as is obvious with the Arabic expression *ʔin šaaʔa llaah* 'If Allah wills', usually best translated into idiomatic English as 'hopefully', and so on. While English and MSA do have many similar strategies *vis-à-vis* lexis, as in the negative connotations of 'ox' (oxen being dumb in each language) and 'chicken' (meaning 'a coward' in both), there are many profound differences. For instance, *buuma* 'owl' in MSA is considered stupid, according to Abdul-Raof (2001: 46);[124] however, owls are considered by many to be wise in English.

[123] As a reaction to the transformational-generative grammar of the 1970s, Richard A. Hudson developed Word Grammar, which attempted to interface syntax and the lexicon by considering word dependencies. One is also reminded of Charles F. Hockett's Word and Paradigm model, but this applied to morphology rather than lexis *per se* (see Hockett 1954).

[124] Abdul-Raof is Iraqi and this usage probably reflects an Iraqi Arabic *Weltanschauung*. Yasir Suleiman (p.c.) notes that an 'owl' is associated with 'bad omens', such as death, in Arabic culture, not stupidity. Huda Ghattas (p.c.) was also

To my way of thinking, semantic transparency is a most useful construct allowing the linguist to make general observations that apply to the vocabulary of a language in terms of cognitive semantic structure, as this essay demonstrates. This line of thought, it seems to me, should be vociferously encouraged. Knowing a sufficient number of words of a language and their collocational ranges can add up to native-like fluency. Personally speaking, it is this skill in foreign language learning which requires this supreme and noble effort. Most, if not all, languages have a device to express differences and degrees of numerosity, and this study demonstrates just how different Arabic structure is from that of English, resembling more, in several ways, the nature of German (e.g., in the conceptualization of the plurality of *Bűcher* 'books' in compounds).[125] I am the first to admit, however, that a few Arabic lexemes appear not to occur in the pl. for any systematically explainable reason, at least as is presently known or understood. As to the question of why some languages seem to have more semantic transparency than others, besides the well-known cases of pidgin and creole languages, this should be a fruitful area for semantic typologists to research in the future.

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unaware of the association with stupidity. This symbolism (also shared by many speakers of English) deserves to be thoroughly investigated in the Arab world as well as elsewhere.

[125] Obviously, the comparison is limited, but the German examples in n. 42 are germane and illustrative of the contention being made.

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