

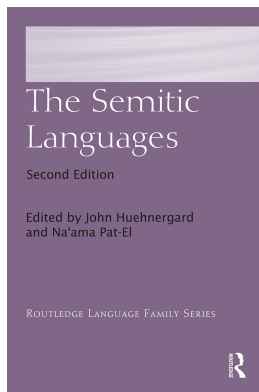
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## The Semitic Languages

John Huehnergard, Na'ama Pat-El

### Levantine Arabic

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429025563-16>

Kristen Brustad, Emilie Zuniga

**Published online on: 06 Mar 2019**

**How to cite :-** Kristen Brustad, Emilie Zuniga. 06 Mar 2019, *Levantine Arabic from: The Semitic Languages* Routledge

Accessed on: 31 May 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429025563-16>

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# LEVANTINE ARABIC

*Kristen Brustad and Emilie Zuniga*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Levantine Arabic (LA) is best described as a dialect bundle whose varieties are spoken across the Levant, in lands currently known as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestinian territories and Israel, as well as parts of Southern Turkey, in particular in the provinces of Mersin and Hatay (Map 16.1). The term is not indigenous, and it is likely that many speakers would resist the grouping on the basis that the rich phonological, morphological and lexical variation within the Levant carries important social meanings and distinctions. For this reason, standardization of Levantine Arabic is not likely to occur, despite its wide use in public life. Like Egyptian Arabic, LA is widely exported in the forms of expatriate employees, television and music, and social media. The recent trend of dubbing Turkish television serials into the dialect of Damascus (beginning around 2008) has achieved widespread popularity and made this dialect comprehensible all over the Arab world.

LA dialects vary along geographical, social, sectarian and generational lines. Sub-groupings of dialects recognizable to LA speakers include the following: the urban dialects of Damascus and Beirut, differentiated from each other mainly by vowel raising and lengthening; Druze and Alawite, both distinguished from other dialects in the region by retention of the phoneme /q/; Tripoli and north Lebanon, with distinct lowering and raising of vowels; Palestinian, distinguished by discontinuous negation with *ma*: . . . *f* (or simply *-f*) (see Chapter 17, “Egyptian Arabic”); tribal<sup>1</sup> (eastern Syria; much of Jordan; Negev; rural dialects share some of these features), stereotypically [g] for /q/, velarization of consonants (e.g., /ð/ > [ð<sup>ˁ</sup>] in Jordanian *ha:ð<sup>ˁ</sup>* ‘this’), lowering or narrowing the range of /a/, and the verb *nt<sup>ˁ</sup>a* for *ʕat<sup>ˁ</sup>a* ‘to give’. Eastern and tribal dialects in this region show affinities to Iraqi and Peninsular dialects, to which they are related at varying degrees of historical depth and contact; shared features include, in addition to [g] for /q/, the allophone [ʝ] for /k/ in the context of a high front vowel, feminine plural agreement including verb conjugations, and a lack of morphological marking to distinguish indicative and subjunctive verbal moods.

Much information is available on LA dialects in studies of individual dialects and grammatical features or sociolinguistic aspects. The prestige dialect of Damascus represents the most widely documented and described variety (e.g., Cowell 1964,<sup>2</sup> Grotzfeld 1965, Lentin 2006, Klimiuk 2013). Many texts have been published, and recordings are available on the website *Semitisches Tonarchiv* ([www.semarch.uni-hd.de/index.php43](http://www.semarch.uni-hd.de/index.php43)). Much information is also available in Behnstedt’s valuable *Sprachatlas von Syrien* (1997). Descriptions of varying depth are available for Amman (Abdel-Jawad 1981, Al-Wer 2006), the village dialects of Lebanon (Feghali 1919, 1928, Jiha 1964, Fleisch 1974), dialects in southern Turkey (Arnold 1998), Aleppo (Sabuni 1980), and eastern



MAP 16.1 THE SPEECH AREA OF LEVANTINE ARABIC

Syria (Behnstedt 1994, Jastrow 1978, Talay 1997), the tribal dialects of Jordan (Palva 1984–1986), the rural and tribal dialects of the Horan (Cantineau 1946), and Palestinian dialects, including Hebron and Ramallah (Seeger 1996, 2009, 2013), Negev (Blanc 1970, Henkin 2010) and Sinai tribal dialects (Shahin 2009, de Jong 2000, Shawarbah 2012).

The description presented here takes as its baseline the normative dialect spoken in Damascus, with a sample text from Beirut. The text is taken from a 2012 field recording of a monolingual male 85-year-old resident of Beirut with basic literacy, from which illustrative examples have been provided in the grammatical sketch when possible (e.g., [ST 7], indicating “Sample Text, Line 7”). Other unpublished examples are taken from the authors’ field recordings in Syria and Lebanon, with occasional elicited examples to fill out paradigms. Reference is occasionally made to other Arabic varieties described in this volume for comparison and contrast, especially Classical Arabic (see Chapter 15), Egyptian Arabic (see Chapter 17) and Moroccan Arabic (see Chapter 18).

## 2 WRITING SYSTEM

Until recently, it has been widely assumed that Arabic was only written in standard register. In 1988, a three-month search across Syria for anything published in LA turned up nothing. Now, however, it is possible to see LA written in many public venues as well as on the internet and in social media.

Although LA has recently come to be written in a variety of spheres, no standardized writing system exists. Like other colloquial varieties of Arabic, it is written in both Latin and Arabic scripts. Writing LA in Latin script (outside Western academic contexts)

appears to have arisen in part as a solution to the lack of Arabic script in electronic devices in the early 2000s. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this practice is currently most common in urban areas in Lebanon and Jordan, where English and French are part of the linguistic landscape, especially in interpersonal communication, as the following familial post on “What’s App” shows:<sup>3</sup>

“*M happy anniversary nchalla l 3omor kello inty w K*”  
*M happy anniversary n=fā=ħa l-ħəmər kəll=o ʔənti w K*  
 M Happy Anniversary if=willed.3MSG=God DEF-age all=POSS.3MSG SBJ.2FSG and K  
 ‘M Happy Anniversary May you celebrate it for the rest of your life you and K’

Of interest here is the spelling of ‘age, life’ as *l 3omor*, a spelling that does not reflect the normal pronunciation of this word, *l-ħəmər*, but rather appears to be a hybrid between it and the standard pronunciation *l-ħumr*, and may be interpreted as an effect of the association between writing and standard Arabic.

In another exchange, a picture of a delicious meal was posted with the caption *Tfaddalo chabeb*, a representation of the spoken form *tʃaddʔalu ʃabe:b* be-favored.IMP.2PL youth.PL ‘please help yourselves guys’, followed by the polite response (‘bon appétit!’) from two different people, spelled two different ways: *Sahhteen* and *Sahtain* (pronounced *sʔah[h]ʔe:n*). The latter example demonstrates that geminate consonants are often not represented in Latin script, reflecting unmarked Arabic script.

Writing with LA features in Arabic script is also found in interpersonal communication; while it used to be rare in the linguistic landscape in most places, this has changed rapidly; it is now common to see officially sanctioned signs written completely with spoken forms, such as the following, addressed to the president of Syria:

منحبك  
*mā-n-ħəbb=ak*  
 IND-IPFV.1PL-love=OBJ.2M  
 ‘We love you’

Of note here is that the indicative prefix *b-* is spelled in its allophonic form *m-*, which is a common articulation when added to a 1PL imperfective verb whose subject pronoun is *n-*.

Table 16.1 supplies the currently used graphemic representations of the LA phonemes (see §3.1) in both scripts, with the more common values listed first where there is variation. Consonants are listed by place of articulation, beginning with labials.

### 3 PHONOLOGY

#### 3.1 Consonantal

The phonology of LA is characterized by rich variation that patterns along social and geographical lines. It is common for various reflexes of the phonemes /q/, /θ/, /ð/, /ðʕ/, /k/ to be characterized as rural, bedouin, Christian, Druze, Muslim and so forth. But Behnstedt’s (1997, throughout) maps of Aleppo and the surrounding regions are illustrative of the difficulty of delineating individual dialects in an area that has seen massive population movements for hundreds of years.

Table 16.2 presents LA phonemes; although they constitute more than one linguistic system on a micro-level, we would argue that their salience makes them all part of a macro-system that LA speakers know and interpret.

TABLE 16.1 ORTHOGRAPHY OF LA IN LATIN AND ARABIC SCRIPTS

| CONSONANTS:            |        |                   |          |          |       |                |            |                |      |                |     |        |         |
|------------------------|--------|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|----------------|------|----------------|-----|--------|---------|
| IPA                    | b      | f                 | m        | w        | t     | t <sup>s</sup> | d          | d <sup>s</sup> | s    | s <sup>s</sup> |     |        |         |
| Latin                  | b      | f                 | m        | w, u, ou | t     | 6, t           | d          | d, 9'          | s    | s, 9           |     |        |         |
| Arabic                 | ب      | ف                 | م        | و        | ت، ث  | ط، ت           | د          | ض              | ث    | ص، س           |     |        |         |
| IPA                    | z      | z, ð <sup>s</sup> | n        | l        | r     | j              | ʃ          | ʒ              | k    | χ              |     |        |         |
| Latin                  | z      | z, 9'             | n        | l        | r     | y, i           | sh, ch, \$ | j              | k    | 5, kh, 7'      |     |        |         |
| Arabic                 | ذ، ز   | ظ                 | ن        | ل        | ر     | ي              | ش          | ج              | ك    | خ              |     |        |         |
| IPA                    | ʁ      | h                 | ʕ        | h        | ʔ     |                |            |                |      |                |     |        |         |
| Latin                  | 3', gh | 7, h              | 3        | h        | 2     |                |            |                |      |                |     |        |         |
| Arabic                 | غ      | ح                 | ع        | هـ       | ء، ق  |                |            |                |      |                |     |        |         |
| VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS: |        |                   |          |          |       |                |            |                |      |                |     |        |         |
| IPA                    | a:     | e:                | u:       | o:       | i:    | A              | u          | i              | e    | o              | aw  | aj     | ə       |
| Latin                  | a, e   | ee, ai            | o, ou, u | o, ou    | i, ee | a, e, Ø        | o, u, Ø    | e, i, Ø        | e, Ø | o, Ø           | ow  | ai, ei | Ø, e, i |
| Arabic                 | ا      | ي                 | و        | و        | ي     | ـَ             | ـُ         | ـِ             | Ø    | Ø              | ـَو | ـَي    | Ø       |

TABLE 16.2 PRIMARY CONSONANTAL PHONEMES OF LA

| Place of Articulation | MANNER OF ARTICULATION            |       |                                   |           |                     |                     |             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|
|                       | PLOSIVE                           | NASAL | FRICATIVE                         | AFFRICATE | RHOTIC              | LATERAL             | APPROXIMANT |
| Bilabial              | b                                 | m     |                                   |           |                     |                     | w           |
| Labiodental           |                                   |       | f                                 |           |                     |                     |             |
| Interdental           |                                   |       | θ ð ð <sup>s</sup>                |           |                     |                     |             |
| Dental-alveolar       | t t <sup>s</sup> d d <sup>s</sup> | n     | s s <sup>s</sup> z z <sup>s</sup> |           | r (r <sup>s</sup> ) | l (l <sup>s</sup> ) |             |
| Palato-alveolar       |                                   |       | ʃ ʒ                               | ʧ ʤ       |                     |                     | j           |
| Velar                 | k g <sup>4</sup>                  |       |                                   |           |                     |                     |             |
| Uvular                | q                                 |       | χ ʁ                               |           |                     |                     |             |
| Pharyngeal            |                                   |       | ħ ʕ                               |           |                     |                     |             |
| Glottal               | ʔ                                 |       | h                                 |           |                     |                     |             |

The phonemic status of several LA phones is still debated. Here, we consider /r<sup>s</sup>/ and /l<sup>s</sup>/ to have marginal phonemic status because in LA, they form only a handful of minimal pairs with /r/ and /l/ respectively. On the other hand, with Klimiuk (2013: 26), we do not consider [m<sup>s</sup>], [n<sup>s</sup>] and [b<sup>s</sup>] to be phonemes. Neither do we consider [p] and [v], which are common in borrowed words among some speakers and also as allophones of /b/ and /f/, to have achieved phonemic status.

Other notable features include the following:

- All consonants can be geminated.
- Pharyngealization spreads in words containing a pharyngealized consonant: *b-s<sup>s</sup>alli* > [b<sup>s</sup>-s<sup>s</sup>all<sup>s</sup>i] ‘I pray’ (√s<sup>s</sup>l<sup>w</sup>) [ST 8].

- In many (especially urban) dialects, interdentals /θ/, /ð/, and /ðˢ/ merge to stops or fricatives: /θ/ > [t] ~ [s]; /ð/ > [d] ~ [z]; and /ðˢ/ > [dˢ] ~ [zˢ]. The choice between fricative or stop appears to be socially and lexically driven and not phonological.
- The voiceless uvular plosive /q/ has reflexes [q], [ʔ], [g] and [k] that are distributed along regional, social, and lexical lines.
- The voiceless velar plosive /k/ has reflexes [k] and [ŋ].
- The voiceless glottal plosive /ʔ/ is used by some speakers, e.g., *qaba:ʔil* ‘tribes’ (taken from an eastern Syrian text, Behnstedt 2000: 538), but is generally considered to belong to educated speech.

### 3.2 Vocalic

Vowel length is phonemic in LA, and vowels often show dialectal and/or allophonic variation. Tables 16.3 and 16.4 present the vocalic inventory of LA.

Notable features include the following:

- The entire vocalic inventory of LA shows significant allophonic range. This variation is socially, geographically and phonologically conditioned. Tables 16.3 and 16.4 only indicate allophones of the low vowel /a(:)/ because it exhibits the most extreme allophonic range out of all the vowels. For example, Beirut /a:/ is raised in some phonological contexts in comparison to Damascene; the production of /a:/ in northern Lebanese and Aleppan dialects famously varies from [ɑ:] to [e:] (also phonologically conditioned); the word-final short /a/ which usually marks feminine singular nouns and adjectives varies in its allophonic range along social, geographical and phonological lines from [ɑ] to [i].
- Many LA dialects allow long vowels in closed syllables.
- Diphthongs /aj/ and /aw/ are found in some Lebanese dialects, most commonly in open syllables. In closed syllables in those dialects, as well as in all phonological contexts

TABLE 16.3 PRIMARY LONG VOWELS IN LA

|      | LONG VOWELS              |      |
|------|--------------------------|------|
|      | FRONT                    | BACK |
| High | /i:/                     | /u:/ |
| Mid  | /e:/                     | /o:/ |
| Low  | /a:/ [ɛ: ~ æ: ~ a: ~ ɑ:] |      |

TABLE 16.4 PRIMARY SHORT VOWELS IN LA

|      | SHORT VOWELS            |     |      |
|------|-------------------------|-----|------|
|      | FRONT                   | MID | BACK |
| High | /i/                     |     | /u/  |
| Mid  | /e/                     | /ə/ | /o/  |
| Low  | /a/ [i ~ ɛ ~ æ ~ a ~ ɑ] |     |      |

in the overwhelming majority of LA dialects outside of Lebanon, they correspond to long vowels /e:/ (for diphthong /aj/) and /o:/ (for diphthong /aw/).

- Long vowels /e:/ and /o:/ are also commonly found in borrowings.
- Short /e/ and /o/ constitute phonemes in at least some LA dialects. In Damascus, for example, they appear in word-final syllables (both open and closed) in such minimal pairs as this:

*/ʔā:f=o* (see.PFV.3MSG=OBJ.3MSG) ‘he saw it’ ~ */ʔā:f-u* (see.PFV-3MP) ‘they saw’;  
*/ʔən.te* (SBJ.2MSG) ‘you (masc)’ ~ */ʔən.ti* (SBJ.2FSG) ‘you (F)’

- For Damascene and Beiruti speakers, as well as speakers of some other dialects of LA especially in the Syria-Lebanon-Southern Turkey region, the central mid vowel /ə/ is a variant of both short /i/ and short /u/ (see, e.g., *əʒ-ʒəmʕa* [ST 8] ‘Friday’ and not *əʒ-ʒumʕa*).

### 3.3 Syllabification and phonotactics

Syllabification and phonotactics in LA are quite complex, even within a single dialect. Here we focus on that of Damascus, which has at least fourteen documented syllable patterns (Lentin 2006: 547; Klimiuk presents an additional eight, using an alternative syllabification, 2013: 81–6).

Syllable-initial consonant clusters of CC occur regularly; CCCV may occur as *stC* (this occurs in verbal pattern *stCaCCaC*; see Klimiuk 2013: 84). It is not uncommon for Damascene speakers to insert a short epenthetic vowel right before a word-initial consonant cluster in order to break it, though this process of anaptyxis does not seem to be imposed by the phonology of Damascus Arabic (except in the case of a word-initial CC appearing immediately after a word ending in C in the same intonational phrase; e.g. *kti:r ʔmni:h* ‘very good/well’).

In contrast, a word-final consonant cluster of CC is only tolerated if the following word starts with a vowel (even epenthetic) and both words are part of the same intonational phrase (see Table 16.5, Example 1). Table 16.5 shows the main phonotactic patterns in this dialect.

Table 16.5 shows that if a word that ends in CC marks the end of an intonational phrase or if it is followed by a consonant-initial word, a short epenthetic vowel is

TABLE 16.5 PHONOTACTICS OF WORD-FINAL CC IN DAMASCUS ARABIC

| EXAMPLE                                    | DISTRIBUTION   |
|--|--|
| 0 * <i>əl-baħr</i> ‘the sea’               | does not exist at the end of an intonational phrase  |
| 1 <i>əl-baħr əl-majjet</i> ‘the Dead Sea’  | CC occurs at the end of the first word because it is followed by a vowel with no intonational break              |
| 2 <i>əl-baħr</i> ‘the sea’                 | normal pronunciation of CC at the end of intonational phrase (epenthetic vowel is inserted to break the cluster) |
| 3 <i>əl-baħr ba:red</i> ‘The sea is cold.’ | epenthetic vowel inserted between C1 and C2 of a three-consonant cluster   |
| 4 <i>əl-baħr ʔkbi:r</i> ‘The sea is big.’  | epenthetic vowel inserted between C2 and C3 of a four-consonant cluster  |

inserted in order to break the consonant cluster. Here, we will highlight three possible scenarios:

- 1 The last word of an intonational phrase ends in CC. In this case, the epenthetic vowel is inserted in between the two consonants (see Table 16.5, Example 2).
- 2 A word ends in CC and is directly followed by another word that starts with CV or CV: within the same intonational phrase. This creates a three-consonant cluster: C1, C2 and C3. In this case, the epenthetic vowel is inserted between C1 and C2 (see Table 16.5, Example 3).
- 3 A word ends in CC and is directly followed by another word that starts with CC within the same intonational phrase. This creates a four-consonant cluster, C1, C2, C3 and C4. In this case, the epenthetic vowel is inserted at the word boundary, between C2 and C3, thus creating two CC clusters in positions where they are tolerated (see Table 16.5, Example 4).

These epenthetic vowels, like all others in LA, have no impact on word stress. They often sound like a short schwa vowel but vary slightly in quality based on the surrounding segments. As with other linguistic features, this phenomenon of anaptyxis is subject to social and regional variation.

In Damascus Arabic, word stress falls on the last superheavy syllable (CV:C or CVCC). In the absence of a superheavy syllable, stress falls on the penultimate if the word is bisyllabic. If the word contains more than two syllables and none of them is superheavy, stress falls on the penultimate if it is heavy (CV: or CVC). However, if the penultimate is light (CV), stress falls on the antepenult.

Unlike in Egyptian Arabic, long vowels in closed syllables retain their length, and it is possible to have multiple long vowels in the same word. As in Egyptian Arabic, the vowel in a word-final open syllable is always phonemically short except in one case: when a 3MSG object pronoun is added to a verb stem ending in a vowel, that vowel becomes phonemically long and attracts word stress:

|             |     |                      |
|-------------|-----|----------------------|
| /ʔaːf-u     | vs. | /ʔaː.f-u=ː           |
| see.PFV-3PL |     | see.PFV-3PL=OBJ.3MSG |
| ‘they saw’  |     | ‘they saw him’       |

In Damascus, if /ə/ (< /i/ and /u/) appears in an open, unstressed syllable, it is usually deleted (e.g. /ʔaː.leb/ ‘male student’ vs. /ʔaː.l.be/ < \*/ʔaː.l.ə.be/ ‘female student’). If this deletion creates an infelicitous consonant cluster, an epenthetic vowel is inserted in order to break it, e.g., /btəd.rə.si/ > /btəd.rsi/ > /btəd.ʔrsi/ ‘you (FSG) study’.

Of particular note in many rural LA dialects is the phenomenon of pausal forms, in which the pronunciation of a word changes when that word appears before a pause in the speech flow. This is not a unique phenomenon, since the pause has been documented to affect pre-pausal sounds at both the segmental and suprasegmental levels in many of the world languages,<sup>5</sup> but in Arabic it can cause salient enough allophonic variation that it deserves a brief mention here. While pausal systems have been found in Egypt (see, for example, Lane 1850, Dawod 1949, Woidich 1974, Blanc 1973–74), the Arabian Peninsula (Jastrow 1984 and Naim-Sanbar 1994, cited in Watson 2007) and Malta (Borg 1977), LA dialects seem particularly prone to containing a pausal system, especially (though not exclusively) in Lebanon and Southern Turkey (Jiha 1964, Fleisch 1974, Arnold 1998).



In LA, a word in pausal form can differ from the same word in its non-pausal form (traditionally called context form) in several ways, including these: vowel lengthening, raising, lowering and backing; diphthongization; nasalization; devoicing; anaptyxis (Cowell 1964, Fleisch 1974, Arnold 1998, Klimiuk 2011, Zuniga 2015).

Patterning in urban and rural dialects in the western Levant suggests historical change in a regional pausal system. Some rural dialects exhibit a pausal form ending in [e] for words that end in [i] in context. In word-final open syllables, the modern urban Beirut dialect, however, only allows [e] (see, e.g., *l-kərse* ‘the chair’ [ST 10] as opposed to *l-kərsi* in Damascus). It is likely that the Beirut dialect used to have a productive pausal system in which /i/ was produced [i] in context and [e] at the pause. The distinction between pausal and context forms subsequently diminished, until pausal [e] was generalized to all forms of the old [i]~[e] contrast (Zuniga 2015).<sup>6</sup>

#### 4 MORPHOLOGY

In general, LA morphology does not diverge from that shared by most varieties of Arabic, except that LA prefix conjugation verbs have a relatively large set of prefixes for marking indicative mood (see §4.6). As in other dialects, the dual is optional and expressed only on substantives; feminine plural forms modifying human females are found mostly in rural and tribal areas. Otherwise, standard Arabic morphological forms are generally available to LA speakers, with minor, regular phonological variation.

##### 4.1 Personal pronouns

Pronouns in LA correspond closely to pronouns in other Arabic dialects, and show regional variation as well as variation along urban vs. rural/tribal lines. Like other varieties of Arabic, LA utilizes four sets of personal pronouns:

- Subject (freestanding) (Table 16.6)
- Possessive (cliticize to nouns and prepositions) (Table 16.7)
- Object (largely overlap with possessive pronouns in form; cliticize to verbs, active participles, or to the disjunctive object pronoun stem *ja*; follow dative or possessive pronouns if present) (Table 16.7)
- Dative (formed with preposition *l*; cliticize to verbs; precede object pronouns if present) (Table 16.8)

As Table 16.6 shows, the subject pronouns in LA differentiate gender in the 2nd and 3rd persons singular, but not the 1st person. Most urban dialects do not distinguish gender in the plural, but many rural and tribal dialects have distinct M and F pronouns for 2P and 3P. Here and throughout, regional and other variants are given following the Damascene forms, but these should be understood to be token examples, and not an exhaustive list. Most information on these forms is taken from Behnstedt (1997: 543–5), where an extensive list may be found.

The suffix pronouns distinguish in form between possessive and object functions only in 1SG. Shown in Table 16.7, these pronouns cliticize directly to nouns, verbs (including active participles), pseudo-verbs (certain lexical items that carry verbal meaning and aspects of verbal syntax, including *bədd-* ‘want’ and *baʕd-* ‘still’), the object pronoun stem *ja*:- and complementizer *ʔənn-* ‘that’. The 3MSG suffix displays allomorphy after

TABLE 16.6 SUBJECT PRONOUNS

|   |      | SINGULAR                            | PLURAL                                 |
|---|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 |      | <i>ʔana, ʔani, ʔa:ni</i>            | <i>nəħna, niħna,<br/>ʔiħna</i>         |
| 2 | MASC | <i>ʔanta, ʔante, ʔint,<br/>hint</i> | <i>ʔantu, ʔanto,<br/>ʔantum, hintu</i> |
|   | FEM  | <i>ʔanti, ʔante,<br/>hinti</i>      | <i>ʔantin, ʔantan,<br/>hintni</i>      |
| 3 | MASC | <i>huwwe, hu:wa</i>                 | <i>hinni, hinnin, hinnon</i>           |
|   | FEM  | <i>hijje, hi:je</i>                 | <i>hinna, hin, hinnen</i>              |

TABLE 16.7 POSSESSIVE AND OBJECT PRONOUN SUFFIXES

|   |      | SINGULAR                       | PLURAL                                |
|---|------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 |      | POSS: =i, =e<br>OBJ: =ni, =ne  | =na                                   |
| 2 | MASC | =ak, =ek                       | =kon, =kun, =kin,<br>=kum, =kam, =kim |
|   | FEM  | =ik, =if, =fi                  | =kin, =fin, =fan                      |
| 3 | MASC | =o, =u, V=lengthening of vowel | =(h)on, =(h)in, =hum                  |
|   | FEM  | =(h)a                          | =hin                                  |

TABLE 16.8 DATIVE PRONOUNS

|   |      | SINGULAR                    | PLURAL                                |
|---|------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 |      | =li<br>CC=əlli <sup>7</sup> | =lna<br>C=ʔlna<br>CC=əlna             |
| 2 | MASC | =lak<br>CC=əllak            | =lkon, =lkin, =lkum<br>C=ʔlkon        |
|   | FEM  | =lek<br>CC=əllek            | CC=əlkon                              |
| 3 | MASC | =lo<br>CC=əllo              | =lon, =lhon, =lhin, =lhum<br>CC=əllon |
|   | FEM  | =la, =lha<br>CC=əlla, əlha  |                                       |

vowels; otherwise, variation shown in Table 16.7 is regional and/or social. However, in certain areas of northern Syria and southern Turkey, the independent subject pronoun forms are sometimes used in place of object pronouns (see e.g. Behnstedt 1997: 548–9).

In the case of doubly transitive verbs such as *ʕatʕa* ‘to give’, if both objects are pronouns, the “dative” pronoun takes the form of the object pronoun and precedes the direct object, which is attached to the object stem *ja:* and follows the indirect object pronoun: *ʕatʕa: =ni ja: -ha kəll-ha* ‘He gave it all to me’ (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 545). Verbs that take

TABLE 16.9 DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

|          |      | IMMEDIATE                  | PROXIMAL   | DISTAL        |
|----------|------|----------------------------|--|---------------|
| SINGULAR | MASC | <i>ha=</i>                 | <i>ha:da, ha:d, hajda,</i><br><i>ha:ð, ha:ð<sup>s</sup></i>    | <i>hada:k</i> |
|          | FEM  |                            | <i>ha:di, hajj, hajdi,</i><br><i>ha:ði</i>                     | <i>hadi:k</i> |
| PLURAL   |      | <i>hado:l, ho:l, hawdi</i> | <i>hado:li:k, hado:k,</i><br><i>hawdi:k, had<sup>o</sup>:l</i> |               |

direct and indirect objects show the same word order, but the indirect pronoun is dative (see Table 16.8).

The dative pronouns, given with common allophonic variants in Table 16.8, are formed with the dative preposition *\*l-* and cliticize directly to verbs.

## 4.2 Demonstratives

The demonstrative system of LA consists of three referential types: immediate, proximal and distal. Common variants of these pronouns are listed in Table 16.9 (feminine plural forms may be found in rural and tribal dialects but are not included here; see Behnstedt 1997: 550–9 for a mapping of variants across Syria). Freestanding demonstrative pronouns agree with their referent in number and, if singular, in gender. Attributive demonstrative adjectives precede the definite noun and agree in number and gender.

The genderless and numberless immediate demonstrative article, *ha=* ‘this/the’, functions to bring into discourse focus an entity that is either immediately visible or immediately accessible. The distinction between proximal and distal demonstratives is not so much one of physical distance as of temporal or metaphorical; distal demonstratives are often used to contrast one entity with another. Instances are occasionally heard of the feminine distal demonstrative modifying masculine temporal nouns: *hadi:k l-jo:m* DEM. FSG.DIST DEF-day ‘the other day’ (ST 7; cf. also Chapter 18), a phenomenon that deserves further study. Like speakers of Moroccan Arabic and many other varieties of spoken Arabic (the main exception being Egyptian Arabic), LA speakers can pair the demonstrative article with a post-nominal demonstrative pronoun for greater focus (but not contrast): *ha s<sup>l</sup>-s<sup>l</sup>abi ha:da* ‘this (particular) boy’ (Brustad 2000: 132).

## 4.3 Interrogatives

LA agrees with most other Arabic varieties in having both pronominal and adverbial interrogatives, the most common of which are: *mi:n, mi:nu* ‘who?’; *fu, ?e:f, ?e:fu* ‘what?’; *?ajj, ?anu, ?ina* ‘which?’; *?e:mta, mata, ?ejmat* ‘when?’; *we:n* ‘where?’; *mne:n, mənwe:n* ‘from where?’; *le:f, lafu* ‘why?’; *ki:f, flo:n* ‘how?’; *ka:m* ‘how many?’; *?adde:f, qadde:f, ?af qədd* ‘how much?’; and *b<sup>l</sup>ka:m* ‘for how much?’

## 4.4 Relative

The relative pronoun, invariable for number and gender, is *əlli* (variants *yəlli, halli, əl*), which can also function as an independent relative subject pronoun ‘he who, whoever,

whatever'. LA speakers occasionally use *mi:n ma* 'anyone' as a nonspecific, non-attributive relative pronoun in object or oblique position (example cited from Klimiuk 2013: 113–14):

|                                  |                |            |                |             |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>la:</i>                       | <i>tə-ħki</i>  | <i>maʕ</i> | <i>mi:n ma</i> | <i>ka:n</i> |
| NEG                              | IPFV.2FSG-talk | with       | anyone         | be.PFV.3MSG |
| 'do not talk to anyone you meet' |                |            |                |             |

See further §5.5.

## 4.5 Nominals

### 4.5.1 Inflection

LA nominals do not show case. There are two categories for gender, masculine and feminine, and three for number, singular, plural and an optional dual. Masculine gender is unmarked, and feminine nouns are normally marked with a suffixed *-a* ~ *-e*, with a few exceptions shared with other varieties of Arabic. It is possible to form dual nouns with the suffix *-e:n*, e.g., *bənte:n* 'two girls', but this specification is optional, and the plural can be used if the exact number is not of concern. Especially in the case of temporal and spatial nouns, the dual is often used in a non-exact sense: *ʒəmʕte:n* 'a couple of weeks' [ST 8]. For parts of the body, the dual ending functions as a plural (*ʔarbaʕ ʔəʒre:n* 'four legs'); the true dual of these nouns has an inserted *t* (presumably linked in some way to the feminine gender of these nouns) and the *n* is not deleted when a possessive pronoun is added: *ʔəʒʔte:n=o* 'both his legs' (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 367).

As in other dialects and Classical Arabic, pluralization in LA relies heavily on so-called broken plurals, in which the consonantal root of the singular is reformed into a new syllabic template (nonconcatenative morphology), e.g., CəCC *ʕəmr* 'age' > aCCa:C *aʕma:r* 'ages'. These plural patterns are shared with other Arabic varieties. Borrowed words may also be pluralized in this fashion: *fa:tu:ra*, PL *fwa:ti:r* invoice (< Ital. *fattura*). The MP suffix *-i:n* rarely pluralizes nouns, but may occur on adjectives modifying human or other highly salient items. The feminine plural suffix *-a:t* is rarely used in urban dialects to refer to human females, but does occur as a regular inanimate plural (see also Brustad 2007 for the use of *-a:t* as a diminutive in LA). In fact, the so-called feminine markers *-a* ~ *-e* and *-ijja* ~ *-ijje* are often associated with collective human plurals, *əl-ləbne:nijje* the Lebanese (compare also "Moroccan Arabic"). The following examples illustrate that number distinctions in the plural are not bound by the rules of standard Arabic but rather follow patterns of salience and individuation (Brustad 2000: 52). Thus, the same plural noun may be treated as either feminine singular or as plural:

|                           |                   |    |                                  |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>n-na:s</i>             | <i>b-ət-ʔu:l</i>  | or | <i>n-na:s</i>                    | <i>b-i-ʔu:l-u</i> |
| DEF-people                | IND-IPFV.3FSG-say |    | DEF-people                       | IND-IPFV-say-3PL  |
| 'People say' (collective) |                   |    | 'Some people say' (individuated) |                   |

Some adjectives have three possible forms of plural agreement:<sup>8</sup>

- (a) *tja:b*      *wəsxə*  
 clothes    dirty.FSG  
 'dirty clothes' (batch)

- (b) *kəll*     *tja:bi*                    *wəsxɪ:n*  
 all     clothes.POSS.1SG     dirty.PL  
 ‘all my clothes are dirty’ (salient)
- (c) *ʒra:ba:ti*                    *wsa:x*  
 socks.POSS.1SG     dirty.PL  
 ‘my socks are dirty’ (individuated)

#### 4.5.2 Patterns

The nominal patterns of LA are too numerous to cover here; a nearly exhaustive list may be found in Cowell (2005 [1964]: 125–70). Some of the most common singular patterns, with examples from the sample text, are CəCC (*ʕəmɾ* ‘age’), CaCCa:Ce (*ʕakka:ze* ‘crutch’), and CəCCe (*ʒəmʕa* ‘week/Friday’, -a is an allophone of final -e). Inherited Old Arabic broken plural patterns are widely productive, with only minor phonetic shifts, examples include CaCa:jiC, CCa:Ci:C, maCa:CəC, ʔəC<sup>o</sup>CCe and CCu:Ce. We may note that the comparative/superlative pattern ʔaCCaC remains productive in LA dialects, e.g., the tongue-in-cheek *ʔaʔat fi* ‘the thing at the bottom of the pile’ (lit., the “most-below” thing, from *taht*, ‘below’).

#### 4.5.3 Numerals

##### 4.5.3.1 Cardinal numerals

LA numerals and number agreement follow the patterns of other varieties of spoken Arabic, including the general lack of reverse-gender agreement between number and noun characteristic of Classical Arabic (cf. Chapter 4, §3 and Chapter 15, §4.6.3). As in Egyptian Arabic, when a numeral in LA between 3 and 10 is followed by a vowel-initial plural, a linking *t* is inserted between them; presumably this is a trace of the Old Arabic feminine marker -at.

Numerals include cardinal and ordinal sets. The cardinal number 1 is only used with a noun adjectivally and emphatically. Number 2 (masculine *tne:n* and feminine *tante:n*) may either precede a plural noun (usually animate) or follow a noun inflected by dual suffix -e:n to emphasize the exact quantity. Table 16.10 lists cardinals 1–20, of which 3–19 take independent forms when used in isolation or adjectivally, and construct forms when preceding a noun. In the latter case, the phrase may be made definite with a preceding *l-*: *əl-ʕafar sni:n əlli mad<sup>u</sup>* ‘the past ten years’. Numbers 3–10 are followed by a plural noun; all numbers above 10 require the enumerated noun to be singular.

After *ʕafri:n* ‘20’, the tens are formed by suffixing -i:n to close variants of the cardinal digits: *tla(:)ti:n* ‘30’, *ʔarbʕi:n* ‘40’, *xamsi:n* ‘50’, *sətti:n* ‘60’, *sabʕi:n* ‘70’, *tma(:)ni:n* ‘80’, *təsʕi:n* ‘90’. The hundreds and thousands are constructed by means of prefixing the short form of the cardinal. After *mijje* ‘100’ and *mi(:)te:n* ‘200’, the hundreds annex *mijje*, e.g., *tlat mijje* ‘300’, *xams mijje* ‘500’, and so forth. When the numeral occurs in a construct state, the allomorph *mi:t* replaces *mijje*, as in *xams mi:t səne* ‘300 years’. After *ʔalf* ‘1,000’ and *ʔalfə:n* ‘2,000’, the thousands are compounded with the construct form followed by *ta:la:f* (plural of *ʔalf* plus linking *t*), e.g., *tman-ta:la:f* ‘8,000’.

TABLE 16.10 CARDINAL NUMBERS 1–20

| #  | INDEPENDENT                | CONSTRUCT    | #  | INDEPENDENT   | CONSTRUCT         |
|----|----------------------------|--------------|----|---------------|-------------------|
| 1  | wa:hed, wa:had<br>F wa:hde | --           | 11 | ʔidaʕf, hdaʕf | ʔidaʕfar, hdaʕfar |
| 2  | tne:n<br>F tante:n         | --           | 12 | tʕnaʕf        | tʕnaʕfar          |
| 3  | ila:te                     | tlət, tlat   | 13 | tləttʕaf      | tləttʕafar        |
| 4  | ʔarbaʕa                    | ʔarbaʕ       | 14 | ʔarbaʕtʕaf    | ʔarbaʕtʕafar      |
| 5  | xamse                      | xams         | 15 | xamstʕaf      | xamstʕafar        |
| 6  | sätte                      | sətt         | 16 | səttʕaf       | səttʕafar         |
| 7  | sabʕa                      | sabʕ, sabaf  | 17 | sabaʕtʕaf     | sabaʕtʕafar       |
| 8  | tma(y)ne                   | tmənn, tmann | 18 | tməntʕaf      | tməntʕafar        |
| 9  | təsʕa                      | təsʕ, təsaf  | 19 | təsafʕaf      | təsafʕafar        |
| 10 | ʕafara                     | ʕafir, ʕafar | 20 | ʕəfri:n       | --                |

4.5.3.2 Ordinal numerals

Ordinal numbers 1–10 may function as attributive adjectives, agreeing in gender, with semantically definite nouns, or in construct with an indefinite noun, *ta:let be:t* ‘the third house’. Ordinal numbers 3–10 take the active participle pattern Ca:CeC. No distinct ordinal numbers exist above 10, and the cardinal numbers are used in this function.

4.6 Verbs

4.6.1 Tense, aspect and mood

Tense, aspect and mood values are indicated in LA through the use of two finite stem types, the suffix conjugation (perfective) and the prefix conjugation (imperfective), and one non-finite stative stem, the participle. The suffix and prefix stems carry aspectual meaning and temporal implication; time reference is mainly determined by moment of speech (see §5.5), but also with adverbs, and it is generally interpretable from discourse context. LA dialects are unusual among spoken Arabic varieties in distinguishing grammatically continuous/habitual Aktionsart from progressive.

The suffix conjugation is an aspectual perfective, presenting an event as a one-time occurrence with no internal contour; in unmarked usage, it tends to refer to past events. In the following example, the perfective is used (rather than the participle) because the context calls for the event to be emphasized rather than the resultant state.<sup>9</sup>

ʕomr=i      hallaʔ    sʕa:r                      halla l-ʔo:m    setta u    tme:ni:n sene  
 age=POSS.1SG    now      became.PFV.3MSG    now    DEF-day    six      and    eighty year  
 ‘My age now has reached now, as of today, 86 years’ [ST 2–3]

The suffix conjugation is also used to convey conditional mood without reference to timeframe. In LA, the prefix conjugation may also occur in conditional sentences, but the suffix conjugation carries greater conditional weight, and is obligatory for irrealis mood.

The prefix conjugation is imperfective, and describes an event or action as ongoing or unfinished; it has two distinct modalities:

- The unmarked prefix conjugation expresses either a subjunctive mood ('would, should, could'), or functions as a subordinated verb. It inflects with subject prefixes and suffixes but no aspectual prefixes.
- The indicative mood is marked with one of three prefixes to convey continuous/habitual or progressive Aktionsart, or future time reference.

In addition, the prefix conjugation forms the base of the imperative mood.

Most LA dialects utilize an indicative prefix *b-* and a progressive *ʕam* (variants *ʕamma*, *ma*), as well as an intentional *b-* and a future *rah* (*lah*, *ha*), as illustrated in Table 16.11.<sup>10</sup>

The participle forms function as the primary carriers of perfect aspect, defined as a resultative, relevant state that has ensued from the completion of an action or entry into that state: *ʔa:ʕed* 'seated' ('having sat down and still sitting'; ST 10).<sup>12</sup> Participles themselves carry no time reference and thus may be used in all time frames.

In addition to the shared active participial form Ca:Ca:CCe, PL Ca:CCi:n), LA dialects also use the form CaCCa:n (FSG CaCCa:ne, PL CaCCa:ni:n): *dʕaʕfa:n* 'having lost weight'. CaCCa:n is often (but not exclusively) used with physical or emotional states; there appears to be a degree of overlap between the two participial forms.

#### 4.6.2 Gender/number/person inflections

Both prefix and suffix conjugations inflect for person, gender and number, while the participle inflects only for gender and number (but see §5.2). Both prefix and suffix conjugations distinguish three persons and two numbers; gender is further distinguished in the singular forms of the 2nd and 3rd persons. In some rural and many tribal dialects, the 3rd person plural also has masculine and feminine conjugations; these are included in the

TABLE 16.11 GRAMMATICAL PARTICLES ON THE IMPERFECTIVE

| PREFIX  | MEANING                         | EXAMPLE   |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Ø   | Modal; non-finite (subordinate) | <i>bedd=o j-sʕallʕi</i><br>wish=OBJ.3MSG IPFV.3MSG-pray<br>He wants to pray [ST 13]   |
| <i>b-</i>   | Continuous; habitual            | <i>b -sʕallʕi</i> [ST 8]<br>IND -IPFV.1SG.pray<br>I pray [habitually or continuously]   |
| <i>ʕam</i> ( <i>b-</i> ) <sup>11</sup><br><i>ʕamma</i><br><i>ma</i> | Progressive                     | <i>ʕam= (b-) i-sʕallʕi</i><br>PROG= (IND-) IPFV.3MSG-pray<br>He is praying (now)  |
| <i>b-</i>   | Intentional future              | <i>bə-t-sʕallʕi maʕ=na nha:r əʒ-ʒəmʕaʔ</i><br>FUT-IPFV.2M-pray with=OBJ.1PL day DEF-Friday<br>Would you care to pray with us on Friday? |
| <i>rah</i><br><i>lah</i><br><i>ha</i>                               | Future                          | <i>rah n-sʕallʕi</i><br>FUT IPFV. 1PL-pray<br>We will pray, are going to pray   |

next several tables for reference. Across the Levant, phonological variation in verb conjugations involves vowel raising, lowering, fronting, backing, (un)rounding, or deletion, and is regionally and socially determined.<sup>13</sup>

In the suffix conjugation (Table 16.12), all values are marked by suffixes, while in the prefix conjugation (Table 16.13), person is marked by prefixes with the addition of suffixes to mark gender and/or plural number (except in 1st person). Tables 16.12 and 16.13 show the conjugation markers, using  $\sqrt{d}rs$  ‘study’. The prefix vowel of the prefix conjugation (Table 16.14) also varies in LA based on dialect, speaker, root type and stem. The mid-central vowel /ə/ was selected here but /a/ or /e/ are also found in some regions. The rural/tribal 2<sub>FSG</sub>, 2<sub>FPL</sub> and 3<sub>FPL</sub> suffixes end in /n/ (forms shown here are extrapolated from Behnstedt 1997: 276–9, 298–9, 309, 317).

The imperative inflects for 2nd person only, omitting the subject prefix *tə-*:  $\mathcal{H}od$  (MSG) ‘sit!’ [ST 14]; the feminine and plural suffixes remain intact:  $\mathcal{H}odi$  (FSG),  $\mathcal{H}odu$  (PL). In Palestinian and Jordanian, an initial helping vowel (which receives word stress) facilitates pronunciation of stems -CCVC; in Lebanon and urban Syrian, there tends not to be a helping vowel, and the stem vowel of 2<sub>MSG</sub> -CCVC tends to be stressed and lengthened: *ko:l u fko:r* eat.IMP.2MSG and thank.IMP.2MSG ‘Eat and Thank’ (a kind of baklava).

Participles inflect with regular nominal suffixes FSG -a ~ -e and MPL -i:n. When active participles function verbally, they can take object pronoun suffixes, in which case the feminine ending activates -t as happens in construct: *fa:jfe* seeing.PTCP.F but *fa:jfət*=a seeing.PTCP.F=OBJ.3FSG ‘seeing it’.

#### 4.6.3 Verbal stems

The basic LA verbal stem system can be seen as a somewhat less productive and phonetically adjusted version of the Classical Arabic system (see Chapter 15), in which all patterns are available to speakers in the form of specific lexical items, with predictable

TABLE 16.12 THE SUFFIX CONJUGATION (PERFECTIVE)

|   |      | SINGULAR                    | PLURAL                   |
|---|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 |      | <i>da'ras-t</i>             | <i>da'ras-na</i>         |
| 2 | MASC | <i>da'ras-t</i>             | <i>da'ras-tu (-to)</i>   |
|   | FEM  | <i>da'ras-ti (-te)</i>      | <i>da'ras-tin (-ten)</i> |
| 3 | MASC | <i>'daras-Ø</i>             | <i>'daras-u (-o)</i>     |
|   | FEM  | <i>'daras-ət (-et, -it)</i> | <i>'daras-in (-an)</i>   |

TABLE 16.13 THE PREFIX CONJUGATION (IMPERFECTIVE)

|   |      | SINGULAR                     | PLURAL                 |
|---|------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 |      | <i>ə-drus</i>                | <i>nə-drus</i>         |
| 2 | MASC | <i>tə-drus</i>               | <i>tə-drus-u (u:n)</i> |
|   | FEM  | <i>tə-drus-i (-e) (-i:n)</i> | <i>tə-drus-in (ni)</i> |
| 3 | MASC | <i>jə-drus</i>               | <i>jə-drus-u (u:n)</i> |
|   | FEM  | <i>tə-drus</i>               | <i>jə-drus-in (ni)</i> |



TABLE 16.14 VERBAL STEM PATTERNS

| PFV     | IPFV                                    | SEMANTIC   | EXAMPLE  |
|---------|---|--|--|
| CvCvC   | -CCvC                                   | depends on root semantics  | <i>ʔaʕad</i> , <i>-ʔʕod</i> ‘to sit’ [ST 14]   |
| CaCCaC  | -CaCCeC                                 | causative or transitive of CvCvC; also denominative                | <i>ʔaʕʕad</i> , <i>-ʔaʕʕed</i> ‘to seat (someone)’ [ST 14]   |
| tCaCCaC | -tCaCCaC                                | reflexive or medio-passive of CaCCaC                               | <i>tʕʕawwar</i> , <i>-tʕʕawwar</i> ‘to imagine, picture for oneself’ (cf. <i>sʕawwar</i> ‘to take a picture’) [ST 7] |
| nCaCaC  | -nCəCeC<br>-nCa:C in medial glide roots | the regular, productive passive of CvCvC                           | <i>nkamaf</i> , <i>-nkəmeʕ</i> ‘to be arrested’ (cf. <i>kamaf</i> ‘to grab’ [ST 12])                                 |
| staCCaC | -staCCeC                                | denominal, ‘to seek CCC’, or deadjectival, ‘to consider (OBJ) CCC’ | <i>stahaʔʔ</i> , <i>-staheʔʔ</i> ‘to deserve’ (cf. <i>haʔʔ</i> ‘right’ [ST 16], see for metathesis §4.6.4)           |

vowel raising, shortening and deletion (see §§3.2 and 3.3); for example, Classical *taCaC-CaC* > LA *tCaCCaC*. A rare and nonproductive innovation (or borrowing) shared with Egyptian Arabic is a combination of *st-* and *CaCCaC*, as in *stmannā* IPFV *jəstmannā* ‘to wish for’ (< *√mny*). Table 16.14 lists the productive stems in LA with an example for each; short vowel variations include *e ~ i ~ ə* and *a ~ ə*.

LA speakers use a small number of verbs of the pattern *ʔaCCaC*. These verbs show two analyses by speakers: one, analogous to Classical Arabic, manifests as IPFV *-CCeC* and PTCF *məCCeC*; the other appears as a reanalysis of the initial *ʔ* as part of the root: *CaCCaC*. Beirut informants confirm the two available participles for the verb *ʔaʕlan* ‘announce’: *məʕlənī:n* (*√ʕln*) ~ *mʔaʕlənī:n* (*√ʔʕln*) ‘having announced’. Cowell includes these reanalyzed verbs in a class he calls “pseudo-quadriliterals,” as they are based on trilateral roots. Other patterns he lists here include reduplicative *C<sup>1</sup>aC<sup>2</sup>C<sup>1</sup>eC<sup>2</sup>* and *C<sup>1</sup>aC<sup>2</sup>C<sup>1</sup>eC<sup>3</sup>*, and patterns with one of the formatives /w/, /r/, and /n/. One of these, *CawCaC*, presents in some dialects as *Co:CaC*, e.g., *bawrad* ~ *bo:rad* ‘to cool off’ from the root *√brd* ‘cold’.

It is worth noting that all verbs of the pattern *CaCCaC*, IPFV *-CaCCeC*, whether they are trilateral, quadrilateral or augmented from a transparent trilateral root, share vocalization and syllabification patterns, and all verbs that semantically allow a reflexive meaning produce it with a *t-* prefix: *tCaCCaC*, IPFV *-tCaCCaC*, e.g. *ħmar*: ‘donkey, stupid jerk’ > *thamran* ‘to make oneself into a donkey, to act like a stupid jerk’. There are moreover semantic similarities among most of these verbs: as with the Classical Arabic D stem, these verbs tend to be causative or intensive in *CaCCaC*: *daʕas* ‘to step on’ > *daʕwas* ‘to trample;’ *ʕabak* ‘to entwine’ > *ʕarbak* ‘to complicate, entangle’.

#### 4.6.4 Weak roots

Regular LA verb stems derive from roots consisting of three or four consonants. While quadrilateral roots are less common, they serve as a highly productive means of coining new vocabulary, and are commonly used to Arabicize foreign words (see §4.6.3 and §6).<sup>14</sup>

Verbs with a geminate root (possible only as  $C_1C_2C_2$ , never as  $C_1C_1C_2$ ) show metathesis, namely  $C_1aC_2C_2$ -, and take the formative  $-e: \sim aj$  before consonant-initial suffixes: *habb* ‘he liked’, *habbe:t* ~ *habbajt* ‘I liked’. However, many LA dialects, especially in the western Levant, reflect typical morphology for geminate roots in the active participle, without metathesis: *ha:beb* MSG ‘liking, wanting’.

Predictably, roots with glides or glottal stop show variations resulting from root reanalysis and/or pattern leveling. The similarities between LA and other varieties of Arabic, and the rich phonological variation across the Levant, render a detailed discussion of this topic of little benefit. Rather, we will note a few phenomena of comparative interest.

- Root-initial *w* in  $-CCvC$  (IPFV of  $CvCvC$ ) is generally maintained as /o:/, but speakers in some areas elide it; thus from root  $\sqrt{ws}^l$  we find *b-jo:..s<sup>l</sup>al* and (less commonly) *b-je.s<sup>l</sup>al* ‘he arrives’.
- In some Jordanian and Palestinian dialects, the glottal stop in  $\sqrt{?kl}$  ‘eat’ and  $\sqrt{?x\delta}$  ‘hold’ sometimes surfaces as a reflex of /w/ > /o:/, as in *jo:kal*, *jo:xad*; in many western rural and tribal dialects in the area, the active participles for these verbs are *ma:kil*, *ma:xi\delta*. These patterns do not apply to /ʔ/ as a reflex of Classical Arabic /q/ (see §3.1).
- In forms other than  $CvCvC$ , root-initial /ʔ/ varies regionally, socially and lexically, thus  $\sqrt{?zn}$  *sta?zan* ‘to take leave of’ but  $\sqrt{?hl}$  *sta:hal* ‘to deserve’.
- In most cases, and in agreement with many spoken Arabic varieties, non-root-initial /ʔ/ is pronounced /j/, thus  $\sqrt{hj}^?$  > *hajjaj-t* ‘I set up’ [ST 14].
- Root-medial glides follow predictable patterns. As in other varieties of Arabic, stem patterns in which the glide is intervocalic allow for a secondary derivation: *t<sup>h</sup>awel*, IPFV *j\delta-t<sup>h</sup>wal* ‘to become taller, longer’ > *t<sup>h</sup>a:l*, IPFV *j\delta-t<sup>h</sup>u:l* ‘to reach’ (*?id=o* *t<sup>h</sup>a:jl-e* hand=POSS.3MSG having.reached.PTCP-FSG ‘he has connections’).
- III-w roots, as in other dialect areas, tend to present as III-j roots.

#### 4.6.5 Non-finite forms

Non-finite verb forms in LA include active and passive participles and the verbal noun.

##### 4.6.5.1 Participles

We noted earlier that the active and passive participles can carry perfect aspect, but they do not carry tense. They are marked only for number and gender (gender is marked only in the singular in urban dialects, but in both singular and plural in many rural/tribal dialects). Participles also function without aspect as attributive adjectives, and, by semantic extension, nouns: *l-m\delta?awzi:n* ‘the married (people)’.

Active participle patterns closely follow those of Classical Arabic, with predictable vowel shifts, especially the shortening or loss of unstressed schwa and high vowels in open syllables: *\*ka:mifi:n* > *ke:mfi:n* PTCP.PL ‘grabbing’ [ST 12], and the shift from Classical Arabic prefix *mu* to *m(\a)*. Like Egyptian Arabic, LA makes use of the  $CaCCa:n$  pattern, but more extensively, see further §4.6.1. Active participles in verbal function are distinguished by their ability to take object pronoun suffixes. The manner of affixation in the case of FSG  $e- \sim a- + OBJ$  distinguishes most Syrian and Lebanese dialects from Palestinian and Egyptian Arabic, in that the underlying *t-* of the feminine suffix is retained: *?ana ka:tbe* ‘I have written’ (1SG write.PTCP.FSG) > *?ana ka:tbet=(h)a* ‘I have written it’ (1SG write.PTCP.FSG-OBJ.FSG).

Passive participles are largely limited to classes CvCvC and CvCCvC, taking the forms mACCu:C (*simi* ‘he heard’ > *masmu*:ʕ ‘heard’) for the former and mCaCCaC for the latter.

#### 4.6.5.2 Verbal nouns

Verbal nouns exist only as nouns in LA, not as infinitives. As such, they belong to the lexicon, not the verbal system.

### 4.7 Prepositions/adverbs

Most prepositions in LA are shared with the common Arabic lexicon with slight phonetic variation: *l-*, *ʔəl* ‘to, for’ (dative, possessive), *mən* ‘from, (made) of’, (with comparative) ‘than;’ *b* ‘at, by means of, with’ (instrumental, locative); *fi* (*fə*, *f*) (locative); *ʕa(la)* ‘on, about, against’, *ʕan* about, (away) from;’ *maʕ* ‘with’. Short unstressed vowels may be elided, and the *n* in *mən* and *ʕan* is doubled before a vowel-initial pronominal suffix (*ʕan-nak* ‘away from you’). Optionally, when *mən* is directly followed by the definite article, the *n* can elide and the vowel collapses: *mən əl-* > *m=əl-*.

The dative preposition has two main forms, *l(a)* and *ʔəl*; the former varies according to the phonetic environment, especially following two consonants and preceding a third, where epenthetic schwa can precede *l*. It is cliticized to verbs and participles, preceding a direct object (*hajjajt=allo kərse* ‘I prepared for him a chair’ ST 14), negative *ma*: (see §5.6), and relatives (*aḥsan=lak* ‘better for you’). The two may be combined for contrastive emphasis: *la=ʔəli* ‘mine!’ (see further Cowell 2005 [1964]: 477–84).

LA does not usually distinguish between lexical adverbs such as *fwajj* ‘a little’, *ho:n* ‘here’, and *hni:k* ‘there’, *he:k* ‘like that, so’, and adjectives in adverbial function. Almost any adjective can be used as an adverb in its uninflected form: *mni:h* ‘good’ vs. *nəmti mni:h?* ‘Did you sleep well?’ LA speakers make regular use of adverbs shared with standard Arabic, and these normally show the suffix *-an* (*ʔabadan* ‘at all’).

## 5 SYNTAX

### 5.1 Sentential and phrasal word order

It is a truism that word order in Arabic is flexible; however, that does not mean unprincipled. Extraposition is a common feature of Arabic in general, and the resources of stress and intonation give spoken Arabic additional tools to convey both semantic and pragmatic meaning. LA utilizes left and right dislocation to convey pragmatic functions such as focus, contrastive focus and resumptive topic.

Basic unmarked word order in declarative sentences may be either V(S)(O) or SV(O), each one functioning as a distinct typology of information packing, with subject-initial order indicative of topic-prominent, and verb-initial order of subject-prominent sentences (particularly those in which the subject is discursively new information, e.g., an indefinite noun). VO with a null overt subject is frequent in narrative discourse.

#### SVO

*l- ʕa ʒaza      b-jə-ʔʕəd-u      ʕa    l-kərse*  
 DEF-infirm.PL    IND-IPFV-sit-3MPL    on    DEF-chair  
 ‘Handicapped people sit on chairs’. [ST 10]

VS

*twaffe-t sett=i*  
 die.PFV-3FSG grandmother=POSS.1SG  
 ‘My grandmother died’.

VO

*ke:mfi:n=o tne:n*  
 grab.PTCP.PL=OBJ.3MSG two  
 ‘Two guys were grabbing him’ [ST 12]

Interrogative sentences are characterized by the fronting of the interrogative particle (see, e.g., ST 18).

Phrasal word order in LA is Head-Dependent:

P-N: *b=əl-ʒe:məʕ* [ST 8]  
 at=DEF-mosque  
 ‘at the mosque’

Dem-N: *hadi:k əl-jo:m* [ST 7]  
 DEM DEF-day  
 ‘that day, the other day’

N-N: *le:l-t əl- ʕərs*  
 night-CST DEF-wedding  
 ‘the night of the wedding’

N-Adj: *fawle kbi:re*  
 thing big.FSG  
 ‘a big deal’

N-Rel: *l-ʕazi:me lli ʕa:mil-t-əlna ja:=ha*  
 DEF-invitation REL do.PTCP-FSG-DAT.1PL OBJ=3FSG  
 ‘the invitation that she arranged for us’ (Brustad 2000: 397)

Prepositions must precede nominals in LA. Sentence position is not fixed, but adverbs often appear in post-verbal and post-adjectival position, except for *kti:r* ‘very’: *kti:r ʔmni:h* ‘very good’ or ‘very well’).

## 5.2 Types of predication

The major predicate types of LA are nominal, verbal and existential. Verbal predicates are headed by a finite verb phrase, and nominal predicates consist of a noun phrase, an adjective phrase, a prepositional phrase or a locative adverb. As one would expect, the verb *ka:n* ‘to be’ does not occur in the present tense except in habitual or modal sentences.

Aspectually charged active participles can exhibit some facets of verbal behavior; thus, it is common in LA for a predicative participle to be followed by its subject, especially when the subject is indefinite (for examples, see ST 11 and 12). The verbal character of

the participle is echoed in a distinctively Syrian-Lebanese phenomenon: when a 2FSG active participle takes an object pronoun, a “verbal” suffix *-i:* is added:

|               |   |                       |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>ʃa:jfe</i> | > | <i>ʃa:jəft=i:</i>     |
| see.PTCP.FSG  |   | see.PTCP.FSG=OBJ.3MSG |
| you (FSG) saw |   | you (FSG) saw him     |

Existential predication in LA exhibits predicate-subject word order. The category of existential predicates includes pseudo-verbs such as existential *ʃi:* ‘there is’ (variants *bi:*, *bu:* in some rural/tribal dialects) and prepositions *ʔəl=* ‘for, belonging to’ *ʃand=* (~ *ʃann=*) ‘in the possession of’ (for ‘to have’).

|                                |                              |             |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>l-ʃəmər</i>                 | <i>ʔəl=o</i>                 | <i>ħaʔʔ</i> |
| DEF-age                        | belonging.to.PREP = OBJ.3MSG | right       |
| ‘Old age has its dues’ [ST 16] |                              |             |

### 5.3 Definiteness

Any discussion of definiteness in LA must take into account a continuum of specificity and salience. On one end of the scale, indefinite, nonspecific and non-salient nouns are bare of article and attributes: *be:t* ‘a house’ (nothing identifiable or significant about it). The article *ʃi* ‘some’ adds specificity: *ʃi ʒəmʔte:n* ‘a couple of weeks or so’ [ST 8]. The indefinite modifier *wa:ħed* ‘one’ (F *wa:ħde*) may precede a bare animate noun to identify an indefinite, yet specific individual: *wa:ħed məski:n* ‘this poor guy’ [ST 11].

The definite article in LA is *l-* [*əl ~ l*]; the /l/ undergoes total assimilation to a following coronal consonant. In LA, this often (but not always) extends to /ʒ/: the speaker in our sample text says *əl-ʒe:məʃ* ‘the mosque’ then *əʒ-ʒəmʃa* ‘week’ [ST 8]. Adjectives must agree in definiteness with head nouns they modify, and are made definite by means of the definite article. Definiteness may also be expressed through the construct state (see §5.4.2).

### 5.4 Synthetic/analytic

#### 5.4.1 Analytic constructions in the verbal system

There do not exist analytic constructions in the verbal system of LA.

#### 5.4.2 Analytic constructions in the nominal system

LA nouns may occur in a genitive relationship either in construct state (direct adposition) or linked by means of a genitive exponent. Head nouns in construct remain morphologically unchanged, except for non-final feminine nouns ending in *-a*, which are obligatorily marked with *-t*. A construct may in theory extend to three or more nouns; however, this is rare except with very common or monosyllabic nouns. Only the final noun in a construct may take definite marking, and the marking of this noun determines the definiteness of the construct as a whole for syntactic purposes.

The most common analytic genitive markers in the urban Levant are *tabaʃ* (invariable in Damascus, can take F *tabaʃi:t*, PL *tabaʃu:l*) and *ta:ʃ* (F *ta:ʃt*, PL *taʃi:n*). While the

construct and the analytic genitive overlap in meaning, their usage patterns are distinct: the analytic construction allows speakers to classify an indefinite noun with nominal attribute (*warʔa tabaʔ xamsmijje* ‘a 500 [pound] note’, Cowell 2005 [1964]: 489), to place contrastive focus on the possessor and to more fluidly link nouns with more than two syllables.

## 5.5 Subordination

LA exhibits two kinds of subordination: temporal and complementation. Temporal subordination refers to the relationship between the verb tense and either (a) for a main verb, the moment of speaking; and (b) for a subordinate verb, the tense of the main clause. This relationship is one of relative tense: a perfective verb indicates an action or event that occurred prior to the moment of speech, while an imperfective verb indicates contemporaneity. In narration, one perfective verb can set the time frame for more than one event in a close sequence (see Brustad 2000: 203–12).

Temporal subordination can be clearly seen in the formation of complex tenses. The verb *ka:n* ‘be’ specifies the time reference of an action or event relative to the moment of speaking, and subsequent asyndetically linked verbs show time reference relative to it: *b-ku:n ʒi:-t* IND-IPFV.1SG COME-PFV.1SG ‘I will have come’; *ka:n-u ma: j-fu:f-u* be.3MPL.PFV NEG IPFV.3-see-MPL ‘they didn’t use to see’ (Brustad 2000: 401). The latter example shows a feature that distinguishes LA dialects in general from Egyptian Arabic: for many speakers, the imperfective in complex tenses does not take prefix *b-* in its continuous/habitual meaning (see also §4.6.1).

LA has both indicative and non-indicative complements. Non-indicative complements are normally asyndetically annexed to the main verb or pseudo-verb, and are headed by an unprefixed imperfective verb:

*fu bədd=i ʔəl=l-o*  
 what 1s. want=POSS.1SG IPFV.1SG.say=to-POSS.3MSG  
 ‘What could I say to him?’ [ST 18]

Certain temporal adverbs may be used in conjunction with the complementizer *ma* to form a subordinate clause:

*baʔd ma tna:m*  
 after COMP sleep.IPFV.3FSG  
 ‘after she goes to sleep’

Finite complements include sentence complements and relative clauses. The former can optionally (more frequently in formal speech) be introduced with complementizer *ʔənn* = ‘that’, to which some speakers attach 3MSG “dummy pronoun” = *o*, though other personal pronouns may also be used (e.g., *ʔənn=i* ‘that I’):

*nəhna m-naʔref ʔənn əl-ʒa:r ma: b-ja3ref ʒa:r=o*  
 SBJ.1CPL IND-KNOW.IPFV.1PL COMP DEF-neighbor NEG KNOW.IND.3SG neighbor=POSS.3MSG  
 ‘We know that one neighbor does not know another’.

No syntactic features distinguish direct from indirect speech; both are often asyndetically joined to the sentence, or may be introduced with ‘that’. In narrative, verb subjects may switch suddenly, the listener being expected to follow along from context:

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>ʔaʕʕat-t=o</i>                | <i>ʔʕod!</i>        |
| sat.TR.PFV-1SG=3MSG.OBJ          | sit.IMP.2MSG        |
| ‘I sat him down, [saying to him] | ‘sit down!’ [ST 14] |

Relative clauses are finite. The linking of relative clauses to their head nouns is triggered by the degree of specificity and salience of the head noun. When the head noun is salient, specific or definite, the relative clause is normally headed by *ʔalli* (*jʔalli*). When it is indefinite and nonspecific, the relative clause is asyndetically linked. In both cases, when the head noun corresponds to the object of a verb or preposition, or a possessive pronoun in a construct, a resumptive pronoun is required which matches the gender and number of the head noun:

|  |              |                          |                   |
|--|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>ma: b-t-a:xod</i>                                   | <i>ʔalli</i> | <i>b-t-iftəh=i:</i>      | <i>b=ba:l=a</i>   |
| NEG IND-3FSG-take                                      | REL          | IND-3FSG-desire=OBJ.3MSG | in=mind=POSS.3FSG |
| ‘She can’t have the one she really wants in her mind’. |              |                          |                   |

## 5.6 Negation

LA dialects utilize two main strategies of negation that may be designated as verbal and predicate (see Brustad 2000: 281–3). The basic verbal negation particle is *ma:* throughout the region:

|  |
|--|
| <i>ma: t-wæ:xəz=ni</i>                   |
| NEG IPFV.2MSG-take.offence.from=OBJ.1SG  |
| ‘Excuse me (don’t take offence)’ [ST 15] |

In many areas, /la:/ may optionally be used as a prohibitive particle in negative imperatives (Damascene example from Klimiuk 2013: 113–14):

|  |            |                |             |
|--|------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>la: tə-hki</i>                      | <i>maʕ</i> | <i>mi:n=ma</i> | <i>ka:n</i> |
| NEG IPFV.2FSG-talk                     | with       | anyone         | be.PFV.3MSG |
| ‘do not talk to anyone you might meet’ |            |                |             |

Predicate negation particles, on the other hand, show several regional variants, the most commonly heard of which are Damascene *mu:* and Palestinian *miʕ*.

|                   |            |             |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>hijje</i>      | <i>mu:</i> | <i>ho:n</i> |
| SBJ.3FSG          | NEG        | here        |
| ‘She isn’t here’. |            |             |

Beirut speakers tend to retain *ma:* even in predicative negation:

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <i>ma: mbajjan</i>       |
| NEG clarified.PTCP       |
| ‘It doesn’t show’ [ST 3] |

TABLE 16.15 NEGATIVE COPULA FORMS IN LA

| PERSON | SINGULAR              | PLURAL                 |
|--------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1      | <i>ma:ni, manni</i>   | <i>ma:na, ma:nna</i>   |
| 2M     | <i>ma:nak, mannak</i> | <i>ma:nkon, mankon</i> |
| 2F     | <i>ma:nek, mannek</i> |                        |
| 3M     | <i>ma:no, manno</i>   | <i>ma:non, mannon</i>  |
| 3F     | <i>ma:na, manna</i>   |                        |

The discontinuous negation marker *ma= . . . =f* (also a feature of Egyptian Arabic) is found in southern areas of the Levant. Within this region, the dropping of negative *ma*, resulting in verbal negation with *f* only, or the omission of *m*, resulting in *ʔa= . . . =f*, is well documented for Palestinian dialects.

LA has a negative copula consisting of the negating particle *ma:* and a suffixed pronoun. In Beirut, this appears to be an unmarked form of negation; in other dialects, it functions to negate a presupposition. In the following example, the presupposition negated is that “I” am part of society:

*ʔiza ma: fakkar-t b=ʔal-muʔtamaʕ maʕna:t=a ma:ni mən*  
 If<sub>NEG</sub> think-PFV.1SG in=DEF-society meaning-CST=POSS.3FSG NEG.1S from  
*ʔal-muʔtamaʕ*  
 DEF-society  
 ‘If I don’t think about society, it means I am not [actually] of the society’.

Common forms in Damascus and Beirut are given in Table 16.15.<sup>15</sup>

## 6 LEXICON

The lexicon of LA remains overwhelmingly Arabic, although lexical variation is found across the region; one example is ‘nose’, reflexes for which include words from roots  $\sqrt{xfm}$   $\sqrt{ʔnf}$  and  $\sqrt{nxr}$  (Behnstedt and Woidich 2005: 193). As one would expect from its long history at an important geopolitical crossroad, the LA lexicon has also accumulated loan words from other languages. Aramaic, Italian, French, Turkish, Greek, Persian and English have all contributed. However, the process of borrowing and Arabizing loan words is balanced by a process of borrowing and gradually replacing loan words with Arabic roots, a process we can witness with Ottoman Turkish words. Borrowings from Turkish that were common in the 20th century have been largely replaced by Arabic words as the generations that were born during the Ottoman Empire have passed on; for example, the Turkish *ʔa:zʕa:n* ‘water heater’ has been superseded by *saxxa:n*. More recent adoptions are predictably technological, and vary from region to region from French to English borrowings. A sampling from Beirut, where French is a commonly used language: *saljule:r* ‘cell phone’ and numerous parts of the automobile; also, some words deployed to signal social class, education, or material culture, such as *mersi*, *bōju:r*, *breve:* ‘preparatory school degree’. Borrowed words are often adopted into the morphological system of Arabic, becoming active participles: *mdapras* ‘depressed’, *mkattef* ‘kitschy’, and taking broken plurals: *fa:tu:ra:* ‘bill’ < Italian *fattura*, PL *fwa:ti:r*.



## 7 SAMPLE TEXT

The text below is taken from the field recordings of Emilie Zuniga. Despite having only a primary education, this elderly Beirut speaker is an avid consumer of news in newspapers and on television. The text begins with the speaker's answer to the question, "What year were you born?" Our transcription is phonetic, and shows the range of vocalic variation characteristic of many LA dialects. It also shows the kind of sudden shifts in voice and from direct to indirect speech with no overt marking that is characteristic of narration in spoken Arabic.

## Line 1:

*ʔalʔ u ʔəs.ʔʕ ʔmij.je u ʔsit.ta u ʕəʔ.ʔri:n*  
 thousand and nine.M hundred and six.F and twenty

## Line 2:

*'hal.la ʕom.r=i ʔhal.laʔ sʕa:r ʔhal.la l-ʔo:m*  
 now age= POSS.1SG now PFV.became.3MSG now DEF-day

## Line 3:

*'set.ta u tme.'ni:n ʔse.ne ma: ʔmbaj.jan*  
 six.F and eighty year NEG PTCP.clarified.MSG

## Line 4:

*'ma: ʔha.da ʔb-ja.ʕref ʕaʔlaj=je ʔhal.laʔ ʔha.di sint əl...*   
 NEG one IND-IPFV.3MSG.know on=1SG now DEM.FSG year.GEN DEF

## Line 5:

*ʔnaʕʕ ʔhal.laʕ m=ʔsit.ta u ʕəʔ.ʔri:n ʔxam.sa u tme.'ni:n*  
 twelve now from=six and twenty five and eighty

## Line 6:

*'sit.ta u tme.'ni:n ʔse.ne ʔhal.laʔ dxalt bə= s-ʔət.ta*  
 six and eighty year now PFV.enter.1SG LOC= DEF-six

## Line 7:

*u tme.'ni:n. ʔʔsʕaw.ri. ʔʔa.na kənt b= ha.'di:k əl-ʔo:m*  
 and eighty IMP.imagine.2FSG I PFV.be.1SG LOC= DEM.DIST.F DEF.day

## Line 8:

*b= əl. .ʔi ʔə.mʕ. ʔt-e:n b= əl- ʔza:.məʕ p-ʔsʕallʔi<sup>16</sup> nha:r əʔ-ʔəm.ʕa*  
 LOC= DEF some week-DU LOC= DEF-mosque IND-IPFV.1SG-pray day DEF-Friday

## Line 9:

*ta= ʔar.ʔi:=k ki:ʔ ʔyaʕ.ni<sup>17</sup> l-ʔin.'se:n*  
 so.that= IPFV.1SG.show=OBJ.2MSG how IPFV.3MSG.mean DEF-human.being  
*nʕa.zʕa.'ri:-t=o.*  
 viewpoint-GEN=POSS.3MSG

**Line 10:**

'ʔa:ʕed ʕa= l-'kər.se l-'ʕa.ʒa.za b-'jə-ʔ.ʕəd-u ʕa= l-'kər.se  
 PTCP.sit.MSG on= DEF-chair DEF-infirm.PL IND-IPFV.3M-sit-PL on= DEF-chair  
 b-ə.'s'all'-u  
 IND-IPFV.pray-3PL

**Line 11:**

b= ʔʒ-'ʒe:.miʕ ʒej 'wa:.hed məs.'ki:n 'mit.l=i 'he:.ke  
 LOC= DEF-mosque PTCP.coming one.M poor.MSG like=OBJ.1PL like.so

**Line 12:**

ke.m.'f-i:n=o tne:n mən ho:n mən ho:n  
 grab-PL=OBJ.3MSG two from here from here

**Line 13:**

u ʕa=l-'ʕak.ka:.'z-e:t u ʒej 'bed.d=o j-'s'all'i  
 and on=DEF-crutch-PL and coming.PTCP want=OBJ.3MSG IPFV.3MSG-pray

**Line 14:**

'ʔa.na 'rkəd-ʔ haj.jaj-t='ə.ll=o 'kə.rse ʔaf.'ʕat-t=o ʔ.ʕod!  
 I PFV.run-1SG PFV.set.up-1SG=DAT=3MSG chair PFV.sat.TR-1SG=OBJ.3MSG IMP.sit.MSG

**Line 15:**

'ʔaʕad 'he:.ke 'ʔal=li 'ʕam.m=u.<sup>18</sup> ma: t-wə:.'xəz=ni  
 PFV.sit.3MSG like.so PFV.say.3MSG=DAT.1SG uncle=VOC NEG IPFV.2MSG.hold.against=OBJ.1SG

**Line 16:**

l-'ʕa.mər 'ʔə.l=o həʔʔ 'ʔa.na... 'ʔa.na kbi:r b= əl-'ʕa.mər  
 DEF-age belonging.to=OBJ.3MSG right[s] I... I old.MSG LOC= DEF-age

**Line 17:**

ʔədde:f ʕəmr=ak ja ʕamm? ʔal=li 'ʕəm.ri sab.'ʕi:n 'se.ne  
 how.much age=POSS.2MSG VOC uncle? PFV.say.3MSG=DAT.1SG age=POSS.1SG seventy year

**Line 18:**

ʕu bədd=i ʔəl=l-o 'ʔa.na ʕəmr=i xamsa u tmeni:n sene!  
 what want=POSS.1SG IPFV.1SG.say I age=POSS.1SG five and eighty year!

‘1926. Now, my age now has reached now, today, 86 years. I don’t look it. No one can tell I am [that old]. Now, this year is [20]12 now, from [19]26, 85, 86 years [old] now, I have entered 86. Imagine. The other day, I was at the mosque, at . . . some two weeks ago, at the mosque doing Friday prayers. Just to show you how human beings see things [lit. the human being is his perspective]. [I was] sitting on the chair, umm . . . the infirm sit on chairs [and] to pray at the mosque. Along comes this poor guy, like me, sort of, two men grabbing him here and here [on each side], [he was] leaning on crutches, coming to pray. I ran over and set up a chair for him and sat him down,

saying “sit!” He sat down, he was like [imitates heavy breathing]. He said to me, Please excuse me, young man, old age has its dues, I . . . I am an old man. [I asked:] How old are you, uncle? He said to me, I am seventy years old. What could I say to him? I am 85 years old!’

## NOTES

- 1 We prefer the term “tribal” over the commonly used term “bedouin” (in Arabic *ṣarab* ‘Arabs’) because members of a tribe, or a subdivision of a tribe, are assumed to constitute a speech community, but cannot be assumed to share a nomadic lifestyle. The relationship of rural dialects in eastern Syria to tribal dialects is a matter of debate and speculation; see e.g. the discussion in Lentin (2013: 152–3).
- 2 Cowell’s *A Reference Grammar of Syrian Arabic* (1964) is one of the most thorough descriptions of any Arabic dialect especially because of its many full-sentence examples and its attention to semantic and pragmatic nuance. Most, but not all, of his data is from Damascene speakers; he normally specifies forms that are non-Damascene.
- 3 Names have been shortened to initials for privacy.
- 4 For a discussion of the phonemic status of /g/ in Damascus Arabic, see Klimiuk (2013: 54–5).
- 5 See, for example, Whalen and Beddor (1989), Aikhenvald (1996), Woodbury (2000), DeCaen (2005), and Watson and Asiri (2008).
- 6 Cairo is another example of an urban center that experienced the loss of a pausal system (Blanc 1973–74).
- 7 The gemination of *l-*, called junctural doubling, is a regular prosodic feature of the attachment of the dative pronouns to a word ending in CC in many LA dialects (with thanks to John Huehnergard).
- 8 The correspondence of different plural forms to varying levels of individuation is also attested in CA, and is comparable to CA “plural of paucity” and “plural of multitude.”
- 9 The English translation of the sentence represents a different set of aspectual priorities, and demonstrates the problems inherent in basing grammatical analysis on translations.
- 10 It is unclear whether the two meanings of the *b-* prefix derive from the same source, especially as LA shares the indicative/habitual *b-* with Egyptian Arabic, and the intentional/immediate future *b-* with Gulf dialects.
- 11 *ṣam* may be followed by indicative *b-*; this varies across dialects.
- 12 In the case of verbs of motion, we hypothesize that the progressive meaning of the participle developed from a perfective stem meaning ‘to set out to go’, and hence ‘having set out’ > ‘going’.
- 13 In Damascus Arabic, for example, it is typical for a base stem with an /a/ stem vowel (like *daras-*) to be reduced to *dars-* in the 3FS. In other dialects, the perfective stem may be reduced to *dras-* for 1st and 2nd person (see, e.g., *dxal-t* ‘I entered’, ST 6).
- 14 For formation of quadriliteral roots, see Cowell (2005 [1964]: 54, 109–24).
- 15 We have not found examples of the feminine plural forms.
- 16 Devoicing of the indicative prefix *b-* is not uncommon before a voiceless consonant.
- 17 While this verb literally means ‘to mean’, it is commonly used as a filler during conversation, as we see here.

- 18 It is common in LA dialects in particular for speakers to use familial terms reciprocally, so that an older person who is literally or figuratively an uncle can address a younger person as “uncle” using the same term that the younger person would use to address him. The suffix – o: ~ u: is a form of vocative used especially with ‘uncle’, ‘aunt’, ‘grandmother’, and ‘grandfather’.

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