

T F Mitchell and S A El-Hassan *Modality, Mood and Aspect in Spoken Arabic (With special reference to Egypt and the Levant)* (Library of Arabic Linguistics Monograph, 11) London Kegan Paul, 1994 xx + 129 pp £55

In studies of Arabic linguistics, the complicated sociolinguistic situation of the Arabic world is more and more taken into consideration. Not only the (written) standard language and the dialects spoken at home are deemed to be of interest, but intermediate levels that could be called Educated Spoken Arabic are studied too. In 1992, Abderrahim Youssi published a grammar of the Educated variant of Moroccan Arabic, and in the present volume Mitchell and El Hassan also take as a basis the Educated variant(s), in their case those of Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Educated Spoken Arabic is not a single variant, but it represents a part of a stylistic continuum. Therefore, the authors distinguish when necessary between more and less formal styles. Moreover, there are many regional variants in Educated Spoken Arabic, not only in the phonetics of the language, but also on many points of the grammar. Nonetheless, the authors have chosen to describe the different variants together. This is a fortunate choice, as differences are not that fundamental that the overall picture is disturbed, and in this way the similarities and differences between the variants appear clearly. I cannot agree though with the authors' assertion of the one-ness of Arabic (p. 76). In fact, the large amount of variation described in this book is a decisive counter-example against this statement.

Notwithstanding the importance of stylistic and geographical variation, the book is not a sociolinguistic study. It focuses on the grammatical description of the different variants, without considering in too much detail the social interplay of different forms and constructions. Only rarely are we presented with an analysis of the conversational interaction when people use different constructions, or attach different meanings to the same syntactic construction (for example, p. 78).

The present volume is about mood, tense and aspect in Educated Spoken Arabic. As such it is one of the few books considering these subjects into detail for any variant of Arabic. Unlike what is suggested by the Arabic title, translatable as "the development of the verbal system," the book does not only treat the verbal system, but also considers in detail the many modal and aspectual particles of Arabic. Non-verbal sentences as well as verbal sentences are studied. The book consists of three chapters the first of which is a short introduction to the field. The second chapter is about modality, mood and tense. Many different subjects are treated, from factive/contra-factive/non factive distinctions to passive voice and tense distinctions. The third chapter is concerned with aspect and tense. Important observations are made about the different semantic categories of the verb and the consequences for the expression of aspect and tense. The book is closed by two appendices: one about the "ethic(al) dative" and the other about catenation. An English-Arabic glossary of

technical terms is added in order to facilitate the use of the book by Arabic readers. One would have enjoyed an English–English glossary of the same type. The specialist nature of the subject implies a large use of technical vocabulary, that not every reader may have fully internalized.

The authors do not follow a particular linguistic theory. Sometimes deletions (for example, p. 22) and transformations (p. 46) give the text a slightly generative flavor, but this does not have much influence on the main body of the text. The authors have chosen a functional departure approach. First the functions are defined, and then their linguistic expression is studied. The other point of departure, taking a linguistic form and defining its functions, is chosen occasionally, for example, in the study of the **b**-nonpast forms (p. 191f.).

The present volume is an important contribution to the study of Arabic linguistics. The description is detailed, many examples are given, and the authors do not avoid difficult issues. On the contrary, they put much emphasis on subtle semantic and pragmatic differences between constructions that at first sight seem to be equivalent.

The book is written in a rather concise style. Sometimes statements require a little bit more of an explanation. For example, in the paragraph on timeless or gnomic durativity (sentences like “The earth revolves round the sun”) we are told that “even negative particles are not tolerated, since supposed universal facts cannot normally be negated” (p. 102). I would like to know what renders intolerable a sentence like “The sun does not revolve round the earth.” Is this a grammatical restriction in Educated Spoken Arabic, or do the authors consider this sentence not an instance of gnomic durativity? In the same way, I do not understand why in multi-verb sequences the verb **to know** should “naturally” precede the verb **to forget** (p. 37). With a little bit more explanation, these types of questions could probably be avoided.

Fortunately, Mitchell and Al-Hassan give an enormous amount of examples, so many things that are not immediately obvious when reading the main text can be deduced from the examples.

The present volume is intended for a public of Arabists, and maybe, to a lesser extent, for Semitists. As is usual in Arabic dialectology, examples are in transcription, which makes the book within reach of a more general linguistic audience. Many, however, will be discouraged by the choice of the authors not to provide glosses (fortunately, translations are always given), and by the great amount of variation of a phonetic nature in the examples. This is a necessary consequence of describing the Educated Spoken Arabic variants of different countries simultaneously, but it will probably confuse many readers who do not have previous knowledge of the language.

The lay-out of the book is uncompromising, with more than 50 lines on every page, and a very small letter type. Examples are given in the same letter type as the main text and the translation, which does not facilitate reading either. One wonders why a rather clumsy transcription system has been chosen, while in the

times of modern computer technology more sophisticated (and less innovative) systems would have been possible

Still, the book is a major contribution to the field, and necessary, though difficult, reading for anybody interested in Arabic linguistics

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References

Abderrahim Youssi (1992) *Grammaire et Lexique de l'arabe marocain moderne* Casablanca Wallada

Mungaka (Bali) Dictionary, revised and translated by Johannes Stockle Cologne
Rudiger Koppe, 1992 438 pp DM 74 00

Les spécialistes des langues du Bantou des Grassfields ne peuvent que se rejouir de la parution de ce dictionnaire mungaka (bali), qui, sans l'initiative de J Stockle, et de la maison d'édition Rudiger Koppe, leur serait peut-être à jamais reste inaccessible

Le mungaka (ALCAM 900) comprend quatre dialectes parlés dans "quatre îlots de population d'importance inégale," tous situés au Cameroun¹ Le bali-ɲəna (aussi appelé bali ou mungaka), qui fait l'objet du dictionnaire, est parlé dans le district de Bali, province Nord-Ouest

La traduction en anglais du dictionnaire, à l'origine écrit en allemand par Tischhauser dans les années 30, le rend certainement accessible à un plus grand nombre d'utilisateurs, tout en s'adaptant à la situation présente des locuteurs du bali-ɲəna, la province Nord-Ouest étant l'une des deux provinces anglophones du Cameroun

En ce qui concerne la notation du mungaka, Stockle a conservé l'orthographe originale mais prend soin de donner à la (p. 32) la liste des symboles équivalents, couramment utilisés par les linguistes travaillant sur les langues de la région² De plus, les tons sont marqués (bien que, comme nous le verrons plus

1 Cette référence renvoie à Dieu et Renaud (1983) Les auteurs de cet ouvrage proposent pour le mungaka la classification externe suivante Benoue Congo Bantoïde Bantou Grassfields I st NOUN (cf. Walters et Ieroy 1989 pour une classification légèrement différente)

2 Pour des raisons de police disponible on utilise dans cette recension les symboles phonétiques donnés comme équivalents à la (p. 32) du dictionnaire sauf tɕ et dɕ, qui sont notés respectivement ts et dz, comme dans le dictionnaire