

The aim of my poster is to argue for a specificational pseudocleft analysis of certain prepositional structures associated with epistemic modality in Jordanian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, henceforth JA and MSA, respectively. In order to do so, I apply the tests in Higgins (1979), Collins (1991) and Den Dikken (2001) and systematically discuss results following properties of (Jordanian) Arabic.

A typical example of a specificational pseudocleft in English is illustrated in (1). The structure that I argue to be a specificational pseudocleft in JA and MSA is shown in (2)

- (1) What they did was kiss each other
- (2) a. (min l -) mumkin ʔanno Adam shtra haleeb (JA) [ambiguous]
 from the-possibility that Adam buy.Prf milk
- b. haleeb *(min l -) mumkin/ ʔanno Adam shtra (JA) [specificational]
 milk from the- possibility that Adam buy.Prf
 Milk was what Ahmad possibly bought
- c. Adam, (min l -) mumkin / ʔanno-h shtra haleeb (JA)
 Adam, from the-possibility that-he buy.Prf milk
 Adam possibly bought the milk

Two types of movement may appear in such structure. The subject of the matrix clause can be topicalized to pre-complementizer position where the resumptive pronoun should cliticize into the complementizer as illustrated in (2c), or the predicate of the matrix clause can also move to pre-complementizer position but without any clitic, suggesting that it is a focused constituent as illustrated in (2b). In (2b) I identify the ‘milk’ as a value and the remaining of the sentence as a variable. The prepositional Phrase (PP) is represented by the preposition *min* ‘from’ and a nominalized adjective. Traditional Arabic Grammarians e.g. Ibn 'Aqil (1367) claim that the preposition *min* ‘from’ can serve many functions, among them: partitive usage, temporal usage, spatial meaning or it may appear in contexts where it contributes no meaning whatsoever. Furthermore, there are restrictions on the type of adjective that can appear in this structure i.e. *Darori* ‘**necessity**’, *mumkin* ‘**possibility**’, *muHtmal* ‘**probability**’, *akiid* ‘**certainty**’. These adjectives express epistemic modality, which is in line with Tredinnick’s (1995) claim that pseudoclefts are compatible with epistemic modality only.

In the construction under discussion I identify this preposition as what Den Dikken (2006) defines as a relator: a functional head that accommodates the predicate and the subject in its minimal domain in (2b) given that nothing can intervene between the focused element and the PP. Furthermore, ‘min -l ‘ ‘from the’ is obligatory in this structure in both MSA and JA while it is optional in case of topicalization in (2c). I also claim, supported by Traditional Arabic Grammar, that ‘al’ ‘the’ relativize the adjectives and forms free relative.

The structure in (2) shows positive results with respect to properties associated with specificational pseudoclefts. The results were positive for connectedness, reversibility, exclusiveness presupposition and existential presupposition, and negative for NPI connectivity. The structure appears as XP < WH, suggesting that the structure is on-reversive (type B) specificational pseudocleft. I also argue that it is exhaustivity (a quantificational property), not focus, that drives this syntactic displacement.

Reference

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