

DOM in Levantine Arabic: The case of collective nouns
Aya Zarka
Ben-Gurion University and McMaster University

INTRODUCTION: Differential object marking (DOM) is attested only in some Arabic dialects (Levin 1987; Bossong 1991; Aoun 1999). This talk presents novel field data from Levantine Arabic (LA) with the aim of understanding the DOM system (Aissen 2003) in LA. I show that when a singular noun has two plural forms: the sound feminine plural marking and a collective form, DOM is only possible with the sound feminine plural. The sound F.PL marking has a unit interpretation and the collective has a kind interpretation. I argue that DOM requires nouns that denote a unit but not a kind interpretation and that is represented structurally with DIVP projection (Borer 2005).

The collective (non-singular) form in (1) derives a singular form called the singulative as in (2). When the singulative suffix *-a* is added to a collective, making the noun feminine, a 'unit' reading emerges. *-a* is a classifier (Greenberg 1972; Zabbal 2002; among others), which is an instance of DIV (division), a number projection in Borer's work. Following Ouwayda (2014), I assume that (3) is the result of the affixation of *-āt* to the singulative, and not the result of its direct attachment to the collective form.

(1) Collective	(2) Singulative	(3) Sound feminine plural
a. baqar 'cows'	baqar-a 'a cow'	baqar-a-āt cow-F.SG-F.PL
b. šajar 'trees'	šajar-a 'a tree'	šajar-a-āt tree-F.SG-F.PL

(2) and (3) are count nouns with a unit interpretation. However, as opposed to (3), collectives do not allow a unit interpretation and combination with numerals (Zabbal 2002; Fassi Fehri 2012; Ouwayda 2014; Dali 2020). The data in (4) shows the two plural forms of the singulative 'cow' with DOM. The DOM marker *la-* in LA attaches only to definite nouns.

DATA:

(4) a. sara šara-at	l-baqar/l-baqar-āt	
Sara buy-3F.SG.PST	the-cow.COLL.M /the-cow-F.PL	
'Sara bought the cows.'		NON-DOM: ✓ SOUND F.PL, ✓ COLLECTIVE
b. *sara šara-at-o	la-l-baqar	
Sara buy-3F.SG.PST-3M.SG.OBJ	DOM-the-cow.COLL.M	
'Sara bought the cows.'		* DOM + COLLECTIVE
c. sara šara-at-on	la-l-baqar-āt	
Sara buy-3F.SG.PST-3M.SG.OBJ	DOM-the-cow-F.PL	
'Sara bought the cows.'		✓DOM + ✓ SOUND F.PL

DOM is banned with collectives as in (4b) but possible with sound F.PL (4c). The data in (4) raises the question: why is DOM possible with sound F.PL and not with the collective?

PROPOSAL: I propose that when a noun has two possible plural forms, DOM applies to the plural nouns that denote unit interpretation (F.PL), but not to nouns with a kind interpretation (collective). The interpretation of (4b) is 'Sara bought that kind of cows'; (4c) is 'Sara bought particular cows'. I follow Ouwayda (2014) that 'unit' nouns require DIV and I show that 'kind' nouns lack DIV.

Following Zabbal's (2002) analysis that adopts Carlson's (1977) semantics of kinds, definite collectives have a generic interpretation that comes from D. I hypothesize that DOM does not apply to nouns with generic interpretation, in our case the definite collective. However, I expect DOM to apply to 'unit' nouns with a non-generic interpretation. This is supported by (4c): 'the cow-F.PL' denote unit and refer to particular cows (non-generic), hence expected

with DOM. Finally, I provide evidence that definiteness is not enough but non-genericity and countability are trigger for DOM in LA, adding to the literature with data from an understudied language.

CONCLUSION: I demonstrate the facts with the collectives and use them as a tool for the proposed account of DOM in LA. This talk sheds new light on other Arabic noun classes and their different interpretations with DOM.

References

- Aissen, J. (2003). Differential object marking: Iconicity vs. economy. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 21(3), 435-483.
- Aoun, J. (1999). Clitic-doubled arguments. In *Beyond principles and parameters* (pp. 13-42). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Borer, H. (2005). *Structuring sense: Volume 1: In name only* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.
- Bossong, G. (1991). Differential object marking in Romance and beyond. *New analyses in Romance linguistics*, 143-170.
- Carlson, G. N. (1977). A unified analysis of the English bare plural. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 1(3), 413-457.
- Dali, M. (2020). *Gender and Number in Tunisian Arabic: A Case of Contextual Allosemy* (Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa).
- Fassi Fehri, A. (2012). *Key features and parameters in Arabic grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Greenberg, J. H. (1972). Numeral classifiers and substantive number: problems in the genesis of a linguistic type. *Working Papers on Language Universals* 9, 2-39.
- Levin, A. (1987). The Particle *la* as an Object Marker in some Arabic Dialects of the Galilee. *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik*, (17), 31-40.
- Ouwayda, S. (2014). *Where Number Lies: Plural marking, numerals, and the collective-distributive distinction*. University of Southern California.
- Zabbal, Y. (2002). *The semantics of number in the Arabic noun phrase* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Calgary).