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**The teaching of grammar in Arabic countries**  
A case study of the teaching of the difference between nominal  
and verbal sentences at high schools in Rabat

Bachelor's thesis

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Date: 04-07-2011

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## 1. Introduction

The Arabic grammatical tradition is a long tradition that flourished between 800 and 1500 C.E. approximately. It is usually said to have started with Sībawayh, a Persian scholar who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. He was the first non-Arab who wrote on Arabic grammar and is famous for his book *Kitāb Sībawayh* ‘The Book of Sībawayh’, which is the first written treatise of Arabic grammar in a systematic fashion. He was mainly focused on the formal and syntactic aspects of the Arabic language.

Throughout the centuries it remained both model and source for later grammarians of the Arabic language. Their orientation was generally formal and syntactic in nature. (Versteegh, 1997).

In his *Kitāb*, Sībawayh points at the difference between verbal and nominal sentences and explains these differences. Later grammarians, such as Ibn ‘Anbari and Ibn Jinnī continue these explanations. Although there arose some disputes between the Kūfans and Baṣrans about the analysis of verbal sentences, the Baṣran school of thought is the one that became dominant. The Baṣran analysis is the one that persists in the majority of analyses of later grammarians of the Arabic language. (Versteegh, 1997)

In this analysis, one of the main questions is how to analyse the sentences

Ex.1(a)     *kataba*             *zayd-un*  
wrote-3sgm     zayd-NOM  
‘Zayd wrote’

1(b)     *zayd-un*     *kataba*  
zayd-nom’     wrote-3sgm  
‘Zayd, he wrote’

According to the Arabic grammarians these two sentences are fundamentally different in nature. Ex. 1 (a) is a verbal sentence (*jumla f‘liyya*) since it starts with a verb. It consists of a verb *kataba* and an agent *zayd*, whereas ex. 1(b) is seen as a nominal sentence (*jumla ‘ismiyya*) with *zayd* as topic (*mubtada*’) and *kataba* as a

comment (*xabar*). Western grammar<sup>1</sup> gives a different analysis of the sentences in 1(a) and 1(b). They see them as mere optional alterations in word order, having the same underlying syntactical structure. The difference between the two is according to them merely stylistic.

The Arabic grammarians from the Classical period obviously had not heard of this interpretation. But at present, the age of globalization and increased contact and cooperation between countries and scholars, Arabic grammarians of the Arabic language are aware of the Western analysis. This made me curious to investigate how these two traditions affect the current language education in Arab countries, especially in view of the issue of diglossia. In all Arabic countries, next to the official variety of Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a dialectal variety exists, which is the mother tongue of the inhabitants. MSA is only acquired as a second language at school. Almost nobody is able to talk fluently in the high variety of Arabic and pupils usually do not like the rigor of grammar training in Classical Arabic. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many people were dissatisfied with Arabic language teaching in the schools. Linguistic education at school consisted mainly of dealing with old grammatical texts, such as *'Alfiyya* of Ibn Mālik (d.1273), an introductory treatise on grammar, which is one of the most popular textbooks all over the Islamic world.

Yet, already before modern times there were scholars who rejected the rigor of training in Classical Arabic. An example is the Andalusian grammarian Ibn Maḍā (12<sup>th</sup> century), who rejected the rationalistic structure of the Arabic linguistic theory completely. He went beyond the general framework of grammatical theories, demonstrating that the theoretical constructions of the grammarians were unnecessary. Ibn Maḍā's *Kitāb ar-radd* was edited by the Egyptian scholar Šawqī Ḍayf in 1947. He used Maḍā's attempt to free grammar from theory as a plea for the modernization of linguistic education. He proposes a reform of the school system, specifically in the methods of language teaching to make it more successful. In many Arab countries the modernization of language teaching actually occurred. It will be interesting to see the changes that occurred in language teaching with respect to the Classical period. To what extent does the Arabic grammatical tradition persist in modern language education? Is it influenced by the Western grammatical tradition?

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<sup>1</sup> Such as Fleisch (1986), Blachère and Gaudefroy-Demombynes (1937)

In this thesis, I will explore the way that grammar is taught in high schools in Morocco. Does the educational system in high schools still use the ‘traditional, Arabic’ grammatical system, the ‘Western/Greek’ system or a hybrid form of these? And if they use a type of hybrid form, how are the elements of the two traditions combined and are they combined in an appropriate way, i.e. correctly applying the terminology of both traditions and not confusing them? To investigate this, I looked at the explanation of the difference between the nominal and verbal sentences in Moroccan textbooks of MSA, used for educational purposes in high school and by interviewing students. My main research question is:

*How is the difference between verbal and nominal sentences explained at high schools in Morocco in Arabic language classes<sup>2</sup> and how do these explanations relate to the Arabic traditional and Western grammatical system respectively?*

In the second chapter, an introduction to the analysis of these different sentence types in the Arab grammarians from the Classical period is presented and the most important terminology<sup>3</sup> will be discussed. The next chapter continues with an overview of the linguistic situation in Morocco, the explanation of the sentence types in Moroccan textbooks followed by a comparison with the explanation presented in chapter 2. In chapter 5 the practice of the Moroccan language education is tested. Interviews with students in which they analysed different sentences will show us whether the French grammatical system might have influenced their view upon Arab grammar. I will end with the conclusion in chapter 6.

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<sup>2</sup> The generalisation to the whole country is justified here since the school books used for this thesis are being used throughout the whole country. They are all issued by the Moroccan ministry of education.

<sup>3</sup> This is only one of many differences between the Arabic grammatical tradition and the Western grammatical tradition. Apart from different grammatical analyses also different technical terms are used. It is not always possible to translate these terms in a one-to-one fashion. Terms such as ‘noun’, ‘verb’, ‘nominative’ are intimately connected with the Western grammatical tradition and the use of these as a translation for Arabic terms can distort their original meaning. For the purpose of this research I will follow Versteegh’s (1997) translation of the Arabic terms, leaving them in some cases untranslated.

## Chapter 2. The theory of sentence type in traditional Arabic grammar

One of the Classical Arabic grammarians' (AG) main units of analysis is the sentence. The sentence is minimally composed of two words, the one being *al-musnad* and the other *al-musnad 'ilay-hi*. These terms have a complicated history and were often confused, even by the AG themselves. They do not play a centrale role in the treatises of the AG, but do appear throughout their works. It is not entirely clear how the terms have developed.

According to Sībawayh and probably also al-Mubarrad, both are indispensable parts of the sentence. Levin (2010) states that in their view it is their sequence in the sentence and not their syntactic function which distinguishes them: *al-musnad* is the first indispensable part and the *musnad 'ilay-hi* is the second indispensable part of the sentence. However, in the later sources the classification criterion is entirely different from that of Sībawayh. In these sources the term *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* always denotes the subject and the term *al-musnad* always denotes the predicate in all types of sentence. In these sources it is the syntactic function that distinguishes the two terms. This interpretation of *al-musnad* and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* establishes a link with Western grammar theory of sentence type. (Levin, 2010)

Nonetheless, the grammarians continue to distinguish between verbal and nominal sentences. Ibn Hishām (*Mughnī* II, 420) said: '*fā-l-'ismiyyatu hija l-latī ṣadru-hā smun, wa-l-f'liyyatu hiya ṣadru-hu f'lun*'. In other words, the nominal phrase is the one that starts with a noun and the verbal phrase the one that starts with a verb. More important even is the remark Ibn Hishām mentions later in his treatise: '*wa-l-mu'tabaru 'ayḍan mā huwa ṣadrun fī l-'aṣl*' (*Mughnī* II, 421). 'What matters also is what is the first term in the *abstract representation*.'<sup>4</sup> Ibn Hishām's text leads to a precise distinction: a sentence is nominal if it starts with a noun *in its abstract representation*, and verbal if it starts with a verb *in its abstract representation*.

In this way, it is not the first term in the pronounced sentence that determines whether it is considered to be nominal or verbal; it is in the abstract representation that the distinction is established. It is possible that a sentence which

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<sup>4</sup> The term *abstract representation* should be interpreted here only in the theoretical framework of the Arabic Grammarians and not in any other theoretical framework.

starts with a verb in its observable form is given the status of nominal sentence, and in the same way a sentence which starts with a noun in its observable form is given the status of verbal sentence by the AG. The observable forms do not determine the status of a sentence, but rather the abstract representation.

To illustrate this approach of analysis between observable form and abstract representation, let us take a look at the following examples from the GA:

Ex. 2(a)            *qāma*    *'abū-hu*    *zaydun*  
 stood up    father-his    Zayd.NOM  
 'Zayd's father has stood up'            (Ibn ʿAqīl, *šarḥ* I, 229)

2(b)                *ʿamran*    *ḍaraba*    *zaydun*  
 ʿAmr.ACC    has hit    Zayd.NOM  
 'Zayd has hit Amr'                        (Ibn ʿAqīl, *šarḥ* I, 486)

2(c)                *ʿamran*    *ḍaraba-hu*    *zaydun*  
 ʿAmr.ACC    has hit.him    Zayd.NOM  
 'Zayd has hit Amr'

The first example starts with a verb, but is nonetheless according to the AG a nominal sentence, since it starts with a noun in its abstract representation. Conversely, sentences 2(a) and 2(b) both start with a noun, but are according to the AG verbal sentences, since they both start with a verb in their abstract representation. (Ayoub, Bohas 1981) These example are discussed in more detail in the sections on nominal phrase and verbal phrase in the remainder of this chapter.

## 2.1 The nominal sentence

The nominal sentence is composed of a *mubtada'* 'topic' and *xabar* 'comment', as is demonstrated in the following example:

Ex. 3

<i>zayd-un</i>	<i>ṭawīl-un</i>
Zayd.NOM	tall.NOM
Mubtada'	Xabar
'Zayd is tall'	

Both topic and comment are in the nominative case (*raf*). The definitions of *mubtada'* and *xabar*, according to the *Ājurrūmiyya*, are the following:

***al-mubtada'*** *huwa l-ism l-marfū' l-ārī'an l-awāmil l-lafziyya*  
'The *mubtada'* is the noun standing in the nominative, which is free from overt governors' (*Ājurrūmiyya*, p.17)

***al-xabar*** *huwa l-ism l-marfū' al-musnad ilay-hi*  
'The *xabar* is the noun standing in the nominative that 'leans' upon it (i.e. on the *mubtada'*) (*Ājurrūmiyya* p.17)

In the *Ājurrūmiyya* the definition of *mubtada'* is directly linked to the theory of *ʿamal*, which can be compared to the Western theory of government. Items at different syntactic positions are related to each other directly in terms of a dependency relation. The AG speak of a governor (*ʿāmil*) and a governed (*maʿmūl*). The governor puts the governed in some case. An important feature of the theory of *ʿamal* is that the governor should always precede the governed. Since the *mubtada'* is the first word of the sentence, it is not preceded by any other word and is thus 'free from overt governors'.

The definition of the *xabar* is in its turn linked to the concept of 'isnād. This concept denotes the relation between the *mubtada'* and the *xabar* and between *fīl* and *fā'il*. First it denoted a semantic relationship, but according to Levin (1998) from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the term *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* came to denote the subject and the term *al-musnad* the predicate, in all type of sentences. Sometimes the exact opposite terms were used, with *al-musnad* denoting the subject and *al-musnad 'ilay-*



*hi* denoting to the predicate. This is the way in which Ibn Ājurrūm uses them. The most important for us here is to note that the AG see a syntactic connection between the *mubtada'* and the *xabar* in the nominal sentence, similar to the semantic relation between *fīl* and *fā'il* in the verbal sentence.

The *mubtada'* can be either *zāhir*(visible) 'substantive', like *zayd* in example 3, or *muḍmar*(tacit) '(independent or suffixed) personal pronoun' like *huwa* 'he' in *huwa ṭawīl-un* 'he is tall'. In principle, the *mubtada'* precedes the *xabar* in the sentence. The comment can be either *mufrad* 'simple' or *ġayr mufrad* 'non-simple, i.e. compound'. If it is simple it is typically a noun, like *ṭawīl-un* in example 2.<sup>5</sup> If this is the case, there should always be an identity relation between the topic and its comment, in which both elements of the sentence talk about the same entity. If this is not the case, the utterance becomes meaningless.

However, the comment of the nominal sentence can also consist of either a preposition followed by a genitive, a circumstantial phrase, a verbal sentence or a nominal sentence. Examples of each are given below

Ex. 3(a) The comment is a *jārr* 'preposition'<sup>6</sup> followed by a noun in the genitive case  
*zayd-un fī d-dār-i*

Zayd-NOM In The-house-GEN

'Zayd is in the house'

Ex. 3(b) The comment is a *zarf* 'circumstantial noun' followed by a noun in the genitive case

*zayd-un ʿind-aka*

Zayd-NOM With-you-MASC

'Zayd is with you'

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<sup>5</sup> The AG distinguish three word classes: *ism* 'noun', *fiʿl* 'verb' and *ḥarf* 'particle'. In this division, adjectives are a sub-class of noun

<sup>6</sup> The AG do not have a term for 'preposition' like we know it. They distinguish two types of 'prepositions': *jārr* and *zarf*. It is difficult to give a precise translation of the terms, as they do not have corresponding terms in Western grammar. They both put the following noun in the genitive case.

Ex. 3(c) The comment is a verbal sentence

*zayd-un qāma ab-ū-hu*  
Zayd-NOM Stand-3.MASC.SG Father-NOM-his  
'Zayd's father stands'

Ex. 3(d) The comment is a nominal sentence

*zayd-un jāriyatu-hu dhāhibat-un*  
Zayd-NOM ongoing-NOM-his going-NOM  
'Zayd's slave (fem.) is going'

In ex. 3(a) the whole prepositional phrase, consisting of a preposition (*jārr*) and the word it puts in the genitive case (*majrūr*) occupy the position of the comment, in ex. 3(b) a circumstantial noun (*zarf*) followed by a genitive, in 3(c) a verb and its subject and in 3(d) a topic and a comment respectively. Note that if the comment consists of a sentence, either verbal or nominal, a pronoun (*damīr*) referring back to the topic is required. This pronoun is called the *‘ā’id* or *rābiṭ*. So in Ex. 3(c) the *-hu* in *ab-ū-hu* 'his father' refers back to the topic *zayd* and in 3(d) the *-hu* in *jāriyatu-hu* 'his ongoing' refers back to *zayd* and acts as a *‘ā’id*.

As stated before, in principle the *mubtada'* always precedes the *xabar*, but in some cases the fronting (*taqdīm*) of the *xabar* is permitted, preferred or required. In verse 129 to 136 of the *'Alfiyya* Ibn Mālik discusses these cases. There are two important things to note here:

1. According to Ibn Mālik the fronting of the *xabar* is preferred *'idhā mā l-ff' l kāna l-xabar*, i.e. if the *xabar* is a verb. Then instead of *zaydun qāma* one would say *qāma zaydun* and the sentence would change from a nominal sentence to a verbal sentence. Note that this type of preferred fronting is required for the verb-forms containing an implicit, 'hidden' pronoun, i.e. the third person singular such as *qāma*(3M.SG) and *qāmat*(3F.SG). After the fronting, the verb *qāma* does not contain an implicit pronoun anymore: it changed to a verbal sentence.

On the contrary, if there is an overt pronominal suffix attached to the verb, such as in *qāmā*(DUAL) and *qāmū*(3M.PL), the fronting is permitted but not preferred. If the *xabar* of the sentence *l-'amīrān qāmā* 'the two princes stood up' is fronted to *qāmā l-'amīrān*, Ibn Mālik still considers the sentence as nominal, with the verb *qāmā* as a *xabar* which is placed by inversion before the *mubtada*'. This view is however not shared by the other AG. They see both *qāma zaydun* and *qāmā l-'amīrān*<sup>7</sup> as verbal sentences, since they start with a verb.

2. Among the cases in which the fronting of the *xabar* is required, Ibn Mālik mentions the following: *idhā 'āda 'alay-hi muḍmar mimmā bi-hi 'an-hu mubīnan yuxbar*, 'if the *mubtada*' contains a pronoun referring back to the *xabar*', such as in the example *'alā l-qulūb 'aqfālu-hā* 'each heart has its lock'. In this example, the fronting of the *xabar* '*'alā qulūb*' is required, because without the fronting the pronoun suffix *-hā*, referring to the *xabar*, would precede the thing it refers to. (Djémal-Eddin, 1833)

In the eyes of the AG it makes no difference whether the *xabar* is fronted or not and whether the comment that follows the topic is a noun, a prepositional phrase or a circumstantial phrase; they are all nominal sentences. What characterises a nominal sentence according to them is the fact that it starts with a noun (*'ism*) in the abstract representation. In some cases a nominal sentences can begin with a preposition, a circumstantial noun or a verb in the overt structure, as is the case in the sentence *qāma 'abū-hu zaydun* from ex. 2(a). The AG analyse this sentence as follows: *qāma 'abū-hu* is a fronted *xabar* and *zaydun* is a postponed *mubtada*'. The abstract representation of the sentence would be as in 3(c), starting with *zaydun*. Since in the abstract representation the sentence starts with the noun *zaydun*, the AG classify *qāma 'abū-hu zaydun* as a nominal sentence. To conclude, sentences that start with a noun in their abstract representation are called nominal sentences.

<sup>7</sup> *qāmā l-'amīrān* is an example of the '*akalū-nī l-baraġīt*' 'the flees have bitten me' syndrome. In Classical Arabic, if the verb precedes the agent in a verbal sentence, there is no agreement in number between verb and agent. However, in some pre-Islamic poetry, sentences with verb-agent order were found with agreement in number between verb and agent. The AG had to account for this apparent anomaly. The general opinion among the AG was that this sentence is a special language usage of the dialect it stems from. It is a verbal sentence, consisting of a verb '*akala*', an agent *-ū*, a direct object *-nī* and an apposition to the agent, *l-baraġīt*.

## 2.2 The verbal sentence

A sentence which starts with a verb, on the contrary, is called a *jumla fī liyya* ‘verbal sentence’. This second type of sentence consists of a *fā'il* ‘agent’ and a *fī'l* ‘verb, the action’. Note that here the syntactical category of verb is meant, and not the word-class ‘verb’. An example of verbal sentences is given in 4(a)-(d) below:

Ex. 4(a)     *ḍaraba zayd-un*  
Hit.PERF    Zayd-NOM  
fi<sup>c</sup>l        fa<sup>c</sup>il  
‘Zayd hit’

Ex. 4(b)     *ḍaraba z-zayd-una*  
Hit.PERF    Zayds-NOM  
fi<sup>c</sup>l        fa<sup>c</sup>il  
‘The Zayds hit’

Ex. 4(c)     *ḍarab- tu*  
Hit.PERF    -1.SG.  
fi<sup>c</sup>l        fa<sup>c</sup>il  
‘I hit’

Ex. 4(d)     *ḍaraba- Ø*  
Hit.PERF    -3.SG.  
fi<sup>c</sup>l        fa<sup>c</sup>il  
‘he hit’

In verbal sentences the agent must always follow the verb. This can be deduced from the definition of the term *fā'il* as presented in the *Ājurrūmiyya*:

***al-fā'il huwa al-ism l-marfū' al-madhkūr qabla-hu fī lu-hu***  
‘The *fā'il* is the noun standing in the nominative whose verb is mentioned before it’ (*Ājurrūmiyya*, p.14)

This follows from the principle of *ʿamal*, in which the governor (*ʿāmil*) always precedes the governed (*maʿmūl*). In a verbal sentence, the verb acts as an *ʿāmil* upon the agent and should thus precede it.

The agent can be either *ẓahir* (overt) ‘substantive’ as in 4(a) *zayd* or *muḍmar* (tacit) ‘(independent or suffixed) personal pronoun’ as in 4(c), in which the agent is a first person singular suffix appended to the verbal form. The personal pronoun can either be denoted by a suffix, as the first person singular suffix *-tu* in 4(c), or unexpressed and implicit in the verb, as in 4(d), where the third person singular masculine nominative pronoun is implicit in the verb *ḍaraba*. Moreover, the AG hold that in most syntactic constructions the third person pronoun should be preceded by its antecedent, irrespective of whether the pronoun is denoted by a suffix or is implicit in the verb. (Levin, 1998). Consequently the AG hold that verbal sentences beginning with a verb which precedes its agent, the verb does not contain any personal pronoun of the third person, since the preceding antecedent indispensable to the occurrence of the personal pronoun is not found. In sentences as 4(a) and 4(b) the AG hold that there is no third person pronoun contained in the verb. If they would, the verb *ḍaraba* would have two agents: the implicit pronoun and the overt substantive *zaydun*. The AG consider this ungrammatical.

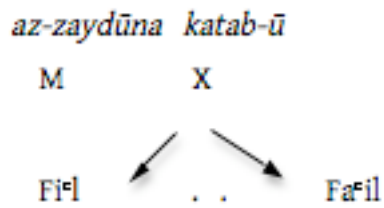
If a noun precedes the verb in the overt structure, but not in the abstract representation, the sentence is still classified as verbal. As such, the beforementioned sentences 2(b) *ʿamran ḍaraba zaydun* and 2(c) *ʿamran ḍaraba-hu zaydun* are considered to be verbal sentences. The AG analyse *ʿamran* in 2(b) as a fronted direct object, with *ḍaraba zaydun* *ʿamran* as abstract representation. In 2(c) this analysis is not possible, because there is no place from which *ʿamran* could have been fronted from.<sup>8</sup> The GA hypothesized that in 2(b) *ʿamran* is preceded in its abstract representation by a verb identical to the verb in the overt form of the sentence. This verb assigns the accusative case to *ʿamr* and is ultimately deleted. The abstract representation would thus be *ḍaraba ʿamran araba-hu zaydun*. (Ayoub and Bohas, 1981)

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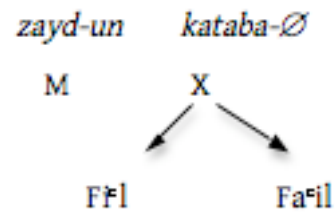
<sup>8</sup> The sentence *\*ḍaraba-hu zaydun ʿamran* would be incorrect, since the third person pronoun *-hu* referring to *ʿamran* now precedes its antecedent. As the name of antecedent already suggests, this is considered to be ungrammatical. Furthermore, the verb *ḍaraba* is *mašgūl* ‘occupied’ by the third person pronoun *-hu* and cannot have another object.

However, if the agent precedes the verb in the abstract representation, the sentence is no longer a verbal but a nominal sentence: it starts with a noun in de abstract representation. The sentences *az-zaydūna katabū* and *zaydun kataba* would be analyzed as follows:

Image 1(a)



1(b)



They are both nominal sentences consisting of a *mubtada'* and a *xabar*. The *xabar* in its turn is a verbal sentence consisting of a *fīl* and a *fā'il*. The third person verb form is preceded by its subject, and thus contains a third person pronoun. The third person plural masculine pronoun (-ū), acts as *ā'id*, referring to its preceding subject, which is its antecedent and the *mubtada'* of the nominal sentence. In the case of *zaydun kataba* the *fā'il* is an implicit pronoun, (*ḍamīr mustatir*), acting as *ā'id* referring back to the *mubtada'*.

### 2.3. The distinction between nominal and verbal sentences

The distinction in analysis between the sentences *kataba zaydun* and *zaydun kataba* is based on grammatical grounds. It has to do with two of the AG's theories: the theory of 'amal' governance' and the theory of the pronouns of the third person. Some notions from the theories led the grammarians infer that sentences such as *kataba zaydun* are verbal sentences, consisting of a *fīl* and a *fā'il*, whereas sentences such as *zaydun kataba* are considered to be nominal sentences, consisting of a *mubtada'* and a *xabar*.

As mentioned before, the AG believe that a verb must always govern a following noun as a *fā'il* in the sentence, since the governor must always precede the governed. In the example *kataba zaydun* the verb *kataba* governs *zaydun* as a *fā'il* in the nominative, but in the example *zaydun kataba* the nominative governed as a *fā'il* by the verb cannot be *zaydun*, since the *fā'il* must always follow the verb. In this sentence, the *fā'il* is the third person masculine singular pronoun, which is implicit in the verb. As there can only be one *fā'il* for every verb and a verb cannot govern both a noun and the pronoun referring back to that noun at the same time, in the sentence *zaydun kataba* the verb cannot govern *zaydun* as a *fā'il*, since it already governs the implicit pronoun referring back to it as a *fā'il*. In this sentence *zaydun* must therefore be something else: it is a *mubtada'*. (Levin 1998)

#### 2.3.1 'ibtidā'

It follows from the above presented theory that the noun in examples such as *zaydun kataba* does not stand in the nominative because of the 'amal of the verb. Also remember that the 'āmil must always precede the *ma'mūl*. If the verb cannot act as an 'āmil and *zaydun* is the first word of the sentence, the question arises what is the 'āmil that puts *zaydun* in the nominative here.

To explain the nominative of *zaydun* in *zaydun kataba*, the AG came up with the principle of *ibtidā'*. It is basically an abstract 'āmil meaning literally 'the standing in the beginning'. It affects nouns that stand at the beginning of the sentence that are unaffected by the 'amal of other words. This is also what Ibn Ājurrūm was referring to with his definition of *mubtada'* as 'the noun standing in the nominative, which is free from overt governors'

Hence, the distinction between *kataba zaydun* as a verbal sentence and *zaydun kataba* as a nominal sentence, stems from the fact that the AG hold that *zaydun* in *zaydun kataba* takes the nominative because of the ‘*amal* of *ibtida*’, whereas *zaydun* in *kataba zaydun* takes the nominative because of the ‘*amal* of the verb’. As a consequence, *zaydun* in *zayd-un kataba* is regarded as a *mubtada*’, whereas *zaydun* in *kataba zaydun* is regarded as a *fā’il*. This distinction is entirely grammatically based.

### 2.3.2 *’isnād*

The AG also see similarities between the nominal and the verbal sentence. From the tenth century onwards, the AG make a logical distinction between *al-musnad* and *al-musnad ’ilay-hi*. These terms are evidence that the AG (at least from the tenth century onwards) hold that the logical function of the *mubtada*’ in the nominal sentence is the same as that of the *fā’il* in the verbal sentence: they are both *musnad ’ilay-hi* ‘subject’. On a par, the syntactic function of the *xabar* in the nominal sentence is the same as that of the *fīl* in the verbal sentence: they are both *musnad* ‘object’. More evidence that the AG saw similarities between the components of the nominal and verbal sentence comes from other terms corresponding to *al-musnad ’ilay-hi* and *al-musnad* and by the fact that the similarity is even discussed by some of them. (Levin, 1998)



## **Chapter 3: The explanation of sentence types in the Moroccan educational system**

### 3.1 Morocco and its language policy

#### *3.1.1 The Moroccan Linguistic context*

Moroccan Arabic, or Berber (Tamazight), is for young Moroccans the most spontaneous and natural means of expression and communication. Moroccan Arabic is the mother tongue of 60% of the country's inhabitants. Despite its quantitative importance as the dominant language, Moroccan Arabic has a very low status in society. It is confined to the role of a spoken language, a dialect. Berber is the language originally spoken by the people living in Morocco before the Arab invasions. Today it is still the mother tongue of 40% of the Moroccan population. Berber language and culture are not really acknowledged in Moroccan society.

Morocco is in a situation of diglossia, with Standard Arabic as the language of prestige, used in formal contexts, and Moroccan Arabic as the language of low prestige, which is the spoken vernacular tongue. Standard Arabic is the written educated language which acquired a privileged, sacred status as the language of the holy Qur'ān. Standard Arabic is not only a foreign language for the Moroccans, but also a very difficult one. Despite these difficulties, Standard Arabic has been chosen as the official language for political and religious reasons. Standard Arabic is taught in school and in some university departments. French is the other literary language operating in Moroccan society. It is the unofficial but actual working language of many Government departments, institutions of higher education and of all major companies (Adil, 2009)

#### *3.1.2 Languages in the educational system*

The Moroccan education system includes three levels. Primary school, secondary school (which only about 35 % of the children succeed in entering) and lower- and upper- cycle and higher education, which takes place in universities or in specialized institutes. Standard Arabic and French are used in the educational system. When children enter primary school at the age of seven, having learned the language of the family, they start being taught in Standard Arabic for two years. At the age of nine, children are introduced to French which will serve as the vehicle for learning mathematics and natural sciences, while Arabic is reserved to the study of

Islamic civilization, history and geography. During these years the mother tongue is formally banned from the classroom, but in practice the Moroccan dialect is often used by teachers as language of instruction. French is not taught as a foreign language, but rather as a tool of access to scientific and technical subjects. At the secondary level 95 % of the students receive the bilingual education where Standard Arabic is used for social science and humanities subjects while all scientific courses are presented in French. At the University, the Departments of Theology, History and Geography, Sociology, Philosophy and Arabic Literature are entirely arabised. Law and Public Administration are offered in both Arabic and French. The other subjects are taught only in French. (Adil, 2009)

### 3.2 The explanation of the theory of sentence types in Moroccan textbooks

Having given an introduction to the Moroccan educational system, let us now turn to our topic: the explanation of the theory of sentence types in the Moroccan educational system. The question is how this theory is explained in the Moroccan educational system. To analyse this, I used several textbooks of Arabic grammar that are used and printed in Morocco and issued by the Moroccan Ministry of Education. The books are meant for students in primary secondary school, which they attend from the age of 12 to 16. I looked at 15 books for definitions of terms only and at 4 books in detail. The explanation of the nominal sentence will be treated first.

#### *3.2.1 The nominal sentence*

In most textbooks, the following definition of a nominal sentence is given:

***al-jumla l-ismiyya hiya allatī tabtadi’u b-ism wa tatakawwanu min muftada’ wa xabar***

‘The nominal sentence is the one that starts with a noun and consists of a *muftada’* and a *xabar’*

Both *muftada’* and *xabar* stand in the nominative case. Also the *xabar* agrees with the *muftada’* in number and gender. About the term *muftada’* several things are said: it can be an explicit noun or a pronoun and in principle it is definite. *Qawā’id al-luġa l-’arabiyya* gives the following definition:

***al-muftada’ ism marfūc, yaqqa’u fī ’awwali l-jumla ġāliban.***

‘The *muftada’* is a noun in the nominative, which stands at the beginning of the sentence most of the time’

(*Qawā’id al-luġa l-’arabiyya*, 129)

Regarding the *xabar*, the following (or similar) definition is given:

***’ammā l-xabar, fa-huwa lladhī yukammilu l-jumla ma’ca l-muftada’, wa yutammimu ma’cnā-hā***

‘Regarding the *xabar*, it completes the sentence with the *muftada’* and it complements its meaning.’

(*Qawā’id al-luġa l-’arabiyya*, 129)

All textbooks I have seen for the purpose of this thesis, except for one, presented similar definitions for the terms. The definition of *mubtada'* is based merely on the position in the sentence and the *xabar* is explained as the thing which 'completes the sentence with the *mubtada'* and complements its meaning'. This description of the *xabar* is similar to definitions of *al-musnad* and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* by Sibawayh: *al-musnad* is the first indispensable part of and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* is the second indispensable part of the sentence. Sibawayh emphasizes the mutual indispensability of *al-musnad* and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi*. If the *xabar* completes the sentence, the sentence cannot exist without the *xabar*. Implicitly, this points at the indispensability of the *xabar*. One of the textbooks explicitly mentions the terms *al-musnad* and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* in their definition of *mubtada'* and *xabar*:

*Al-mubtada' ism 'usnidat 'ilay-hi şifa 'aw<sup>c</sup>amal...,wa-l-xabar huwa aş-şifa 'aw al<sup>c</sup>amal al-musnad ila al-mubtada'. Wa yakūnu l-mubtada' muxbaran<sup>c</sup>an-hu (musnad 'ilay-hi) wa-l-xabar muxbaran bi-hi (musnad)*

'The *mubtada'* is a noun on which an attribute or action leans...,and the *xabar* is the attribute or action leaning on the *mubtada*. The *mubtada'* is the subject (*musnad 'ilay-hi*) and the *xabar* is the predicate (*musnad*)'

(Unknown, 118)

In the first sentence, we see the verb '*usnida ilā*. Literally, this passive verb means 'to be made to lean upon something'. The meaning of '*usnida ilā* as a technical grammatical expression occurs once in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*. It must be interpreted as 'to become the *musnad 'ilay-hi*, i.e. to become the second indispensable part of the sentence'. In later sources, the passive form of the verb '*asnadahu 'ilā*, '*usnida ilā* is used in the sense of 'to be assigned as a predicate to[a subject] (Levin, 1981). The second sentence shows us that this later interpretation of '*usnida ilā* is used here. In the AG's terminology there is a correspondence between grammatical terms which derive from the roots *s-n-d* and *x-b-r*: the subject is called *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* and *al-muxbar<sup>c</sup>an-hu* and the predicate is called *al-musnad*, *al-xabar* or *muxbar bi-hi*. (Levin, 1981) This example clearly shows how the terms *al-musnad* and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi* occurs in Moroccan textbooks for high school students in their meaning as a syntactical distinction between predicate and subject respectively.

We also see the noun *‘amal* in this definition of *mubtada’*. Here it is not used in the meaning of the AG’s theory of governance, but in its literal meaning of the verbal noun of the verb *‘amala* ‘to act’. The term *ṣifa* ‘attribute’ is introduced as well. Both terms are semantic descriptions of the *xabar*.

The *xabar* can be either simple, a sentence (nominal or verbal), a preposition and its complement or a circumstantial noun followed by a genitive. More importantly, some books explicitly state that:

*‘iḍa kāna al-xabar jumla fa-lā budda la-hu min rābiṭ yarbutu-hu bi-l-mubtada’*

‘If the *xabar* is a sentence, then it is necessary to have a word that refers back, that connects it [i.e.the *xabar*] with the *mubtada’*.

(*Qawā'id al-luġa l-‘arabiyya*, 128)

The *rābiṭ* is a pronoun in the *xabar*, being a sentence, referring back to the *mubtada’*. The following examples illustrate this.

Ex. 5(a)

<i>al-‘azhār-u</i>	<i>shaklu-hā</i>	<i>jamīl-un</i>
the.flowers-NOM	shape.NOM.her	beautiful.NOM
‘The flowers, their shape is beautiful’		

Ex. 5(b)

<i>al-full-u</i>	<i>yuḥibbu-hu</i>	<i>n-nās-u</i>
the.jasmin-NOM	Love.3.sg.IMP.-him	the-people.NOM
‘Jasmin, people love it’		

In 5(a) the *xabar* is a nominal sentence (*shaklu-hā jamīlun*) consisting of a *mubtada*; (*shaklu-hā*) and a *xabar* (*jamīlun*). The *mubtada’* contains the possessive pronoun *-hā* ‘her’, which refers back to the *mubtada’* of the whole phrase (*al-‘azhār-u*). This pronoun *-hā* serves as a *rābiṭ* here. In the second example, the *xabar* is a verbal sentence consisting of a verb (*yuḥibbu*), an agent (*n-nās-u*) and a direct object (*-hu*). This direct object *-hu* refers back to the *mubtada’* (*al-full-u*) and acts as a *rābiṭ*.

The books talk about several occasions in which the *xabar* must be fronted:

- If the *xabar* is a preposition followed by a genitive or a circumstantial noun followed by a genitive, and the *mubtada'* is indefinite.

Ex.6(a)    *fī l-qafaṣ-i 'uṣfūr-un*  
in the.cage.GEN bird.NOM  
'There is a bird in the cage'

- if the *xabar* is a question word

Ex.6(b)    *'ayna 'ahmad-u*  
where Ahmad.NOM  
'Where is Ahmad?'

-if the *xabar* is limited(*maḥṣūr*) by the *mubtada'*

Ex.6(c)    *mā xāliq-un illā llāh-u*  
NEG the.creator.NOM except for God.NOM  
'There is no creator but God'

- if the *mubtada'* contains a pronoun referring back to the *xabar*

Ex.6(d)    *fī -l-bayt-i 'ahl-u-hu*  
in the.house.GEN people.NOM.his  
'In the house are its people'

Remarkably, the books only speak about the cases in which the fronting of the *xabar* is obligatory and not about the cases in which it is possible or preferred, which Ibn Mālik discusses in his *'Alfiyya*.

### 3.2.2. The verbal sentence

In all textbooks, the following (or similar) definition of a verbal sentence is given:

*al-jumla al-fi<sup>c</sup>liyya hiya allatī tabtadi' u bi-ff<sup>c</sup>l wa tatarakkabu  
min ff<sup>c</sup>l wa fā<sup>c</sup>il*

‘The verbal sentence is the one that starts with a verb and is composed of a verb and an agent.’

It consists minimally of a verb (*ff<sup>c</sup>l*) and an agent (*fā<sup>c</sup>il*). The term *ff<sup>c</sup>l* is most of the times not defined. The term *fā<sup>c</sup>il* is defined in the following way:

*al-fā<sup>c</sup>il ism marfū<sup>c</sup>, ya'tī zāhiran 'aw ḍamīran*  
‘The agent is a noun in the nominative, that comes substantively or pronominally’

Another, more semantic definition, as given in *Qawā'id al-luġa al-<sup>c</sup>arabiyya*, is the following:

*yadullu<sup>c</sup> alā alladhī qāma bi-l-ff<sup>c</sup>l*  
‘It points at the one who performs the action’ (p27)

In this first definition of *fā<sup>c</sup>il* it is stated that it can be either an explicit noun or a pronoun. If it is a pronoun, it can be either *muttaṣil* ‘joint’ or *mustatir* ‘hidden’. The explicit pronoun is the one that is expressed, the ‘hidden’ pronoun is the one which is not expressed. The hidden pronouns in the verb in the perfect tense are *huwa* ‘he’ and *hiya* ‘she’ (p.100). This is exemplified in example 7 below, in which 7(a) has an explicit pronoun *-tu* for the first person singular in the perfect, whereas for the third person masculine singular, the perfect verb has a ‘hidden’ pronoun, as can be seen in 7(b).

Ex. 7(a)

*sharaḥ- tu d-dars-a*  
explain.PERF 1.sg the-lesson.ACC  
‘I explained the lesson.’

Ex. 7(b)      *sharaḥa*      Ø      *d-dars-a*  
 explain.PERF    3.sg    the-lesson.ACC.  
 ‘He explained the lesson.’

In the discussion of the explicit pronouns functioning as a *fā'il* attached to the verb in *Qawā'id al-luġa al-<sup>c</sup>arabiyya*, the verb *usnida 'ilay-hi* appears again:

*'anna aḍ-ḍamā'ir al-bāriza llatī yusnadu 'ilay-hā l-fīl al-māḍī hiya: tā' al-fā'il, wa (nā) ad-dālla <sup>c</sup>alā l-fā'ilayn, wa 'alif al-ithnayn, wa wāw al-jamā'a' wa nūn an-naswa. Wa llatī yusnadu 'ilay-ha l-fīl l-muḍārī wa -l-'amr hiya: 'alif al-ithnayn, wa wāw al-jamā'a, wa yā' al-muxāṭiba, wa nūn an-niswa*

‘That the explicit pronouns that lean upon the perfect verb are: *tā'* of the *fā'il*, *nā* of the two *fā'ils*, *'alif* of the dual, *wāw* of the plural and *nūn* of the women. And those which lean upon the imperfect and the imperative verb are: *'alif* of the dual, *wāw* of the plural, *yā'* of the second person singular feminine and *nūn* of the women.’

From this statement, it follows that the pronouns acting as a *fā'il* ‘lean upon’ the verb, and are thus *musnad*. The verb is the thing being leant upon, and is thus the *musnad 'ilay-hi*. This is more evidence that the Moroccan textbooks for high school students adhere to the classification of *musnad* and *musnad 'ilay-hi* in their meaning as a syntactical distinction between predicate and subject respectively.



## Chapter 4. Comparison between the Classical and the modern approach

In general, it seems to be the case that in the explanation of the sentence types in the Moroccan textbooks, the system of the Classical Arabic grammarians is used. Some of the books even quote the Arabic grammarians. In *Qawā'id al-luġa l-ʿarabiyya*, the 'Alfiyya of Ibn Mālik is quoted 11 times and the *Ājurrūmiyya* 4 times. The theory of the Arabic grammarians clearly serves as the basis for the current explanation of sentence types in the Moroccan textbooks.

They both speak of the difference between nominal and verbal sentences, the first consisting of a *mubtada'* and a *xabar*, the second of a *ffl* and a *fā'il*. In the definition of the terminology, a difference in focus can be noted. Whereas the modern definitions are mainly descriptive and semantic, the definitions of the AGs are more theoretical in nature. Compare for example the definitions of *fā'il* and *mubtada'* the current and traditional one respectively:

*yadullu ʿalā alladhī qāma bi-l-ffl*

'It points at the one who performs the action' (*Qawā'id al-luġa l-ʿarabiyya*, 27)

*al-fā'il huwa al-ism l-marfūʿ al-madhkūr qabla-hu fflu-hu*

'The *fā'il* is the noun standing in the nominative whose verb is mentioned before it' (*Ājurrūmiyya*, 14)

*Al-mubtada' ism 'usnidat 'ilay-hi šifa 'aw ʿamal..., wa-l-xabar huwa aš-šifa 'aw al-ʿamal al-musnad ila al-mubtada'. Wa yakūnu l-mubtada' muxbaran ʿan-hu (musnad 'ilay-hi) wa-l-xabar muxbaran bi-hi (musnad)*

'The *mubtada'* is a noun on which an attribute or action leans..., and the *xabar* is the attribute or action leaning on the *mubtada*. The *mubtada'* is the subject (*musnad 'ilay-hi*) and the *xabar* is the predicate (*musnad*)' (Unknown, 118)

'The *mubtada'* is the noun standing in the nominative, which is free from overt governors' (*Ājurrūmiyya*, 17)

The modern definitions of *fā'il* and *mubtada'* are clearly semantically orientated and the traditional definitions more syntactically orientated. Whereas the modern definition of *mubtada'* is a more semantic, descriptive one, talking about the type of words that can lean on it, in the Classical definition the theory of <sup>c</sup>amal is interwoven. The *mubtada'* is described as a noun which is 'free from overt governors.' It is according to them governed by the aforementioned principle of *ibtidā'*. The term *ibtidā'* only occurs once in the textbooks used for this thesis, on page 128 of *Qawā'id l-luġa l-<sup>c</sup>arabiyya* in the sentence

'anna l-mubtada'āt fī-l-judūl <b> 'atat nakira, fa-limādha ṣaḥḥa l-ibtidā' bi-hā?

'The *mubtada'*s in table <b> come indefinite, why is it correct to begin [the sentence] with them?

This phrase comes after a table with a list of cases in which the *mubtada'* can be an indefinite noun. The author poses his readers the question why it is in these cases grammatically correct to start the sentence with an indefinite *mubtada'*, since it is generally a definite noun. Here, *ibtidā'* is the masḍar of the verb *bada'a* 'to begin' and refers to the act of the beginning of the sentence. The author could also have used the verbal form instead of the masḍar to express this, by saying: *fa-limādha ṣaḥḥa 'an yubda'a bi-hā?* Clearly, the term *ibtidā'* is not used in the same meaning of the principle of *ibtidā'* that the AG were talking about.

Just like the principle of *ibtida'*, the modern textbooks hardly ever talk about the theory of <sup>c</sup>amal either. No explanations for the case-endings are given: it is just stated that the *xabar* is a noun in the nominative, but it is not explained why this is the case. The theory of 'isnād on the other hand is clearly interwoven in the textbooks. It is not explicitly explained, but it is assumed the reader knows the concepts *musnad* and *musnad 'ilay-hi*. These two terms appear throughout the books. In the introduction to *Dalīlī fī-l-qawā'id* the author states in the explanation of the book's structure: *'inṭilāqan bi-l-kalām (fi l- 'ism - ḥarf) murūran bi-l-kalām (al-musnad wa-l-musnad 'ilay-hi), muxtatiman bi-l-faḍalāt (al-manṣūbāt - al-majrūrāt - at-tawābīf)* 'starting with the word (verb-noun-particle), passing through the sentence (*al-musnad* and *al-musnad 'ilay-hi*), concluding with the remainder (the nouns in the nominative - the nouns in the genitive - the dependencies)'.

This implies that all sentences consist of a *musnad* and a *musnad 'ilay-hi*. In the corresponding chapter, the types of sentence (i.e. nominal and verbal) and their components are explained, but it does not tell us in which sense the terms are used. From the other books however, it could be deduced that the textbooks adhere to the classification of *musnad* and *musnad 'ilay-hi* in their meaning as a syntactical distinction between predicate and subject respectively, in which *mubtada'* and *fā'il* are both *musnad 'ilay-hi* and *xabar* and *fīl* are both *musnad*.

As for the *taqdīr* or abstract representation the AG speak about, it is not discussed even once in the modern textbooks. They do treat the cases in which the fronting of the *xabar* is obligatory, hence implicitly they are talking about two levels of the nominal sentence here: the first level (i.e. the *taqdīr*), in which the order is *mubtada'-xabar*, and the second level (i.e. surface structure) in which the order is *xabar-mubtada'*. However, the principle of *taqdīr* is not explained as such and the term does not occur in any of the textbooks used for this thesis.

The modern textbooks hardly ever talk about theoretical principles and if they do only implicitly. There are no chapters entirely devoted to the description of a theoretical principle such as *'isnād* or *taqdīr*. It is only in definitions and statements that we see how these principles do lie at the basis of the modern textbooks. This simplification of the explanations can be a consequence of the call for a reform of the methods of language teaching by scholars such as Šawqī Dayf. It probably has to do with the purpose of the books as well. The modern authors write their books to describe grammatical rules to a wide range of students. Primary secondary school is mandatory for all children in the age range 12-16 and Standard Arabic is a compulsory subject for all students. Since it is nobody's native tongue, the main goal of the training in Standard Arabic is to teach the students how to use Standard Arabic properly. The textbooks are thus mainly prescriptive.

A consequence of the fact that the modern textbooks are used as a training in Standard Arabic for all students are the many exercises and examples. The examples are clearly intended for a wide public of high school students. In principle anybody should be able to read and understand them. Also the use of schemes is very frequent in the modern textbooks, whereas the Classical works' consist of text only. A last difference can be found in the examples that are used.

One of the modern Moroccan versions of the traditional '*zaydun kabīrun* 'Zayd is big' is *al-mağribu waṭanun jamīlun* 'Morocco is a beautiful nation.'

The Classical books were probably only written for a select group of student whose main interest lies in grammar. Everybody's native tongue was supposed<sup>9</sup> to be Standard Arabic and hence the main goal of the training in Standard Arabic was not to teach how to use Standard Arabic correctly, but how to explain the phenomena and apparent inconsistencies of the language. This training was more explanatory in nature. This could be a reason why the Classical works are more technical and why technical principles such as '*ibtidā'*, '*isnād* and '*amal* are not mentioned explicitly in the Moroccan textbooks.

The modern textbooks do not go into detail about these principles nor do they deal with other technical explanations, for instance the cases in which the fronting of the *xabar* is possible or preferred. These principles lie at the basis of the authors' understanding of Arabic grammar, but as their books are meant for all students between 12-16, they just chose to simplify their explanations and not bring in unnecessary terminology. Technical discussions about grammar are not necessary for a high school student with a major in Mathematics. It could be the case that in textbooks for students who chose a humanities major in their Baccalauréat and pursue their training in Standard Arabic, these theoretical principles are explained.

To conclude, the works of the AG still lie at the basis of modern language education, but their explanations are simplified to suit the needs of the target group. A possible influence of the Western grammar on language education in Morocco is the mentioning of *musnad* and *musnad 'ilay-hi* in their meaning of predicate and subject respectively. However, the AG already used these terms and even used the specific terms *mawdū'* and *ma' mūl* to denote subject and predicate respectively. Furthermore, the distinction between nominal and verbal sentences, consisting of *mubtada'* and *xabar* and *fā'il* and *f'īl* is still being made in modern textbooks. So far, we cannot conclude that Western grammar influenced the language training in Standard Arabic in Morocco.

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<sup>9</sup> Although Standard Arabic was the official language of the Arab empires, it was nobody's mother tongue. At the time of the AG, and already before that, Arabic had already diverged into several dialects.

## Chapter 5: Theory and practice

As shown in the previous chapter, it seems that the Arabic grammatical tradition still serves as a basis for the modern explanation of the theory of sentence types in Moroccan textbooks of the Arabic language. The French language, however, is explained entirely by the French method, using French textbooks and sometimes French teachers. In French (i.e. Western) grammar, the presence or absence of a verb in the observable form of a sentence makes it either verbal or nominal. In Arabic grammar, it is the word the sentence starts with at the underlying level which determines its type: if it starts with a noun, it is a nominal sentence, if it starts with a verb, it is a verbal sentence. Students are confronted with the Standard Arabic system of grammar and the Western system of grammar at the same time. If no remarkable sign of influence of the Western system on the Arabic system can be found in the textbooks of the Arabic language, it might be found in the way students analyse language. Being exposed to the two systems at the same time, high school students might mix up the two systems.

To test whether this is the case, I interviewed 9 students in the age range of 16-27, in which I asked them to indicate for the sentences presented in the Appendix 1 whether they considered them nominal or verbal and to parse them and name their components. The set of sentences includes verbal sentences, nominal sentences with a noun as a *xabar* and nominal sentences with a clause (either nominal or verbal) as a *xabar*. Especially nominal sentences with a verbal clause functioning as a *xabar* are of interest here. For example, the sentences 2 and 7 from the Appendix 1, *al-qitṭa, shāhadtū-ha* 'The cat, I've seen it' and *al-muʿallimūna katab-ū* 'The teachers wrote' are both nominal sentences with a *jumla fʿliyya* as a *xabar*. The AG would parse this last sentence as a *mubtadaʿ* (*al-muʿallimūna*) and *xabar* (*katab-ū*), being in its turn a verbal sentence consisting of a *fʿl* (*katab-*) and a *fāʿil* (the pronoun *-ū*). This opposed to sentence 2 *kataba al-muʿallimūna* 'The teachers wrote', which would be a verbal sentence, since it starts with a verb. It consists of a *fʿl* (*kataba*) and a *fāʿil* (*al-muʿallimūna*).

According to the Western grammar, sentences 2 and 3 would both be verbal sentences, consisting of a subject (*al-muʿallimūna*) and a verb (*kataba* and *katab-u* respectively). It is considered a verbal sentence because of the presence of a verb

(being a non-modal verb). This analysis does not account for the difference in the verbs *kataba* and *katab-u*. Western grammar only presents the ad hoc explanation that if a verb is preceded by its subject, it is inflected for number, and if the verb precedes its subject, it remains uninflected for number. So in the eyes of Western grammar, sentences 2 and 3 of Appendix 1 are just stylistically different and are both just as much verbal sentences. In other cases, Western grammar gives the same label to the sentence as Arabic grammar; a *jumla ismiyya* with a noun or a nominal sentence as a *xabar* is seen as nominal sentences also by Western grammar and a *jumla fʿliyya* is always a verbal sentence for Western grammar as well.

### 5.1 Analysis of the responses

1. al-jaww bārid: *jumla ismiyya* (9x), al-jaw: *mubtada' bārid xabar* (9x)
2. kataba al-mu<sup>c</sup>allimūna: *jumla fʿliyya* (9x), kataba: *fʿl*, al-mu<sup>c</sup>allimūna: *fā'il* (9x)
3. al-mu<sup>c</sup>allimūna katab-ū: *jumla fʿliyya* (9x), al-mu<sup>c</sup>allimūna: *ism*, katab-ū: *fʿl* (9x)
4. al-jaww, 'uḥibbu-hā: *jumla fʿliyya* (9x), al-jaw: *ism* (3x), *maf'ul bi-hi*(6x), 'uḥibbu: *fʿl*(9x), -ha: *maf'ul bi-hi* (9x)
5. 'uḥibbu al-jaw: *jumla fʿliyya*: 'uḥibbu *fʿl*, al-jaw *maf'ul bi-hi* (9x)
6. 'alī, abū-hu kabīr: *jumla ismiyya* (9x): 'alī: *ism*, abū-hu *mubtada'*, kabīr *xabar* (3x); 'alī: *mubtada'*, abū-hu kabīr *xabar*, [*abū-hu mubtada'*, kabīr *xabar*]<sub>2</sub> (6x),
7. al-qitṭa, shāhadtu-ha: *jumla fʿliyya* (9x), al- qitṭa: *ism* (3x), *maf'ul bi-hi*(6x), shāhadtu: *fʿl* -ha: *maf'ul bi-hi* (1x); shāhadtu: *fʿl* -ha: *fā'il*(1x); shāhad: *fʿl*, -tu: *fā'il* -ha: *maf'ul bi-hi* (7x)
8. aṭ-ṭuyūr tuḡarridu 'alā l-'ashjār: *jumla fʿliyya* (9x): aṭ-ṭuyūr: *fā'il*, tuḡarridu: *fʿl*, 'alā l-'ashjār: *jar wa majrūr* (9x)
9. shāhadtu-ha: *jumla fʿliyya* (9x), shāhadtu: *fʿl* -ha: *maf'ul bi-hi* (1x); shāhadtu: *fʿl* -ha: *fā'il*(1x); shāhad: *fʿl*, -tu: *fā'il* -ha: *maf'ul bi-hi* (7x)

The respondents presented most of the time the same analyses. In sentence 1 and 2 nothing special is happening: they are typical examples for nominal and verbal sentences in Arabic and in Western grammar too they are considered to be nominal and verbal sentences respectively. It starts to get interesting with the analysis of sentences 3, 7 and 8, which are according to Arabic grammar nominal sentences, since they start with a noun. However, according to Western grammar they are all verbal sentences, since they contain a verb and in sentence 7 the direct object *al-qitṭa* 'the cat' is topicalized.

All (!) respondents considered sentences 3,7 and 8 to be verbal sentences. When I asked them for their motives, most of them answered that sentences such as *al-muʿallimūna katab-ū* are not correct Arabic, since the agent should always follow the verb, and not precede it. This is indeed the case, however the participants did not say the agent of the verb *katab-ū* is the attached pronoun *-ū*, but rather *al-muʿallimūna*. Since the Agent-Verb order is in their eyes incorrect, at the underlying structure the order should be Verb-Agent. So the underlying structure of sentence 3 is sentence 2, only the agent is pulled to the front to put more emphasis on it. In the underlying structure sentence 3 starts with a verb and accordingly they consider it a verbal sentence. Sentences 7 and 8 are analyzed in similar ways. All participants indicated them to be rare or incorrect. The underlying structure of sentence 7 would be according to them, *shāhadtu al-qitṭa* 'I saw the cat', from which the direct object *al-qitṭa* is fronted for emphasis. However, this leaves the nominative of *al-qitṭa*, and the difference between *kataba* and *katab-ū* unexplained.

One of the participants indicated that she actually only knows sentences consisting of two nouns or a noun and a prepositional phrase as a *jumla ʾismiyya*, such as in *al-jaww bārid*. That sentences like *al-muʿallimūna katab-ū* are considered to be nominal sentences by the Arabic grammarians, was unknown to them. The participants know how to recognize a *jumla fʿliyya* in a Verb-Agent order. They also classify nominal sentences (according to Arabic grammarians) as such, if the *xabar* is either a noun (1) or a nominal sentence (6). However when the *xabar* is a verbal sentence such as is the case in sentences 3,7 and 8 the participants did not classify the sentences as nominal, but analyzed them as verbal sentences.

#### 4.2 Results

Why did all participants classify sentences like *al-muʿallimūna katab-ū* as verbal sentences, although in the Classical view they are nominal sentences with a verbal clause functioning as a *xabar*? It seems to be the case that in the modern view of the students, a sentence such as *zayd kataba* is very exceptional and hypothetical. I must admit Although in Media Arabic, especially in headlines, S-V-O order is frequently used, the basic order in ‘correct’ Fuṣḥa is still considered to be V-S, with the agent normally following the verb. (Badawi, 347)

All participants indicated the sentences with Agent-Verb order incorrect. According to them the the underlying structure the order should be Verb-Agent. In the Moroccan dialect, the standard order is S-V-O. Possibly, the participants learn that the vernacular form of Arabic is the lower and incorrect form. As a consequence, they might classify all sentence with S-V order as incorrect, as it reminds them of their Moroccan dialect. Perhaps the fact that the sentences were presented in isolated form, and not in a text, plays a role too. The order Agent-Verb is the marked order, which emphasizes the Topic. This only makes sense in a longer piece of text.

Another possible explanation for the fact that all sentences containing a verb were classified as verbal sentences by all participants is the influence of French grammatical teaching on their view upon grammar. During French class, they have learned that all sentences containing a (non-modal) verb, are verbal sentences. This is incompatible with the view about sentence types in Arabic grammar. It is possible that the students were confused and mixed the two grammars: they stuck to the ‘French’ classification of the sentence types, but used the Arabic terminology, classifying *al-muʿallimūna katab-ū* as a verbal sentence (as in French grammar), composed of a *fāʿil* and a *ffʿl* (the Arabic terms).

However, it probably also has to do with the respondents’ insufficient knowledge of grammar. They all followed grammar classes in high school and chose the ‘literature’ major, but some mistakes can be spotted in the analysis of the given sentences. For example in sentence 9 one participants classified the *-hā* in *shahadtu-hā* as being the agent of the verb, while it is actually the *mafʿūl bi-hi* ‘direct object’. Also they were not so precise in their parsings of the sentences. It is known that according to the Arabic grammarians a verbal sentence minimally consists of a verb



and an agent. The participants however only named the verb, and forgot to name the agent when it came in the form of a pronoun or implicitly.

## 6. Conclusion

Which system lies at the basis of modern language education in Morocco, the traditional Arabic Grammar, Western Grammar or a mix of both? It is hard to give a clear cut answer to this question. Comparing the modern textbooks to the works of the AG in chapter 4, it became clear that the modern textbooks have a more semantic and descriptive approach, whereas the AG have a more syntactic approach. The works of the AG still lie at the basis of modern language education, but their explanations are simplified to suit the needs of the target group. The modern books do not go into much detail and skip explaining principles as *'ibtidā'*, *'isnād*, *'amal* and *taqdīr* explicitly.

A possible influence of the Western grammar on language education in Morocco is the mentioning of *musnad* and *musnad 'ilay-hi* in their meaning of predicate and subject respectively. However, the AG already used these terms and even used the specific terms *mawdūf* and *ma<sup>ʿ</sup>mūl* to denote subject and predicate respectively. In addition, the distinction between nominal and verbal sentences, consisting of *mubtada'* and *xabar* and *fā'il* and *fī'l* is still being made in modern textbooks. It is also unclear whether it is Western grammar that caused the simplification and semantical approach of the textbooks. The call for simplification of grammar and modernization of linguistics education from within the Arab world, by scholars like Šawqī Ḍayf, might also be the cause of it.

As for the influence on the way that Moroccan students view grammar, there are various options, but it is impossible to have a clear answer to the question whether the Western grammatical system has an influence on it. It is possible that students understand grammar correctly, but have just never encountered the Agent-Verb order, which is rare. They consider this to be wrong and assume that such sentences have an underlying Verb-Agent order. It can also result from an opposition to the Moroccan dialect, deemed inferior to Standard Arabic, in which the standard order is V-S-O. The cause might also lie in the fact that the sentences were presented to the participants in an isolated way. The S-V order, emphasizing the Topic, does just not make sense without a context.

Another possibility is that French grammar did influence their views upon grammar. This made them analyze all sentences containing a verb as verbal sentences. A third option is that the students' knowledge of grammar was insufficient to say that this is the way grammar is taught in Morocco. I think this last option is the most probable one. The textbooks consider the sentences with Agent-Verb order as nominal sentences. They are just not very deeply worked out. Maybe this is more for students who pursue their studies of Arabic grammar at a higher level.

To conclude, it is hard to say whether Western grammar has an influence on the way Arabic grammar is explained in modern Moroccan textbooks and on the way students view grammar. We definitely see differences comparing the new textbooks and the way students view grammar with the AG's works, but it is hard to ascribe these changes to the influence of Western grammar. To have a better view on the influence of Western grammar, more and more extended research is needed, eliminating possible interfering factors such as the fact that isolated sentences were used. Asking students to parse pieces of text, looking at the students' grades in Arabic language class and asking students from the whole country could give us a deeper insight on the possible influence of Western grammar on Moroccan linguistic education. For now, the theories of the AG still seem to be the basis on which the explanation of the difference between verbal and nominal sentences in the Moroccan linguistic education is based.

## Appendix 1

1. al-jaww bārid

2. kataba al-mu<sup>ʿ</sup>allimūna

3. al-mu<sup>ʿ</sup>allimūna katab-ū

4. al-jaww, 'uḥibbu-hā

5. 'uḥibbu al-ja.z

6. <sup>ʿ</sup>alī, abū-hu kabīr

7. al-qiṭṭa, shāhadtu-ha

8. aṭ-ṭuyūr tuḡarridu <sup>ʿ</sup>alā l-'ashjār

9. shāhadtu-ha

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