Underlying Negative Stems: Load shifted Evidence from negatives in nominal clauses

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Abstract

Languages undergo changes and developments. Jespersen's Cycle, which is coined by Dahl (1979) after Jespersen's (1917) work, describes the changes and developments negatives undergo in different languages. To clarify, Arabic varieties use different negative particles that have been developed via morphological and phonological processes; these particles share two underlying stems. Adopting the theory of Walker's (1895) common negative stem, this paper argues that Hijazi Arabic (HA) has the common negative stem [m] as opposed to the common negative stem [l] found in both Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. A common negative stem is the stem found in almost all the negative forms in a variety, which means that the negative forms have been developed from that stem and their number outweighs the other negative forms that have been developed from another negative stem. If this is the case, the paper also argues that the load in negative stems must have shifted from [l] to [m], given that HA is a Classic Arabic descendant variety. The paper uses morphological and syntactic analyses of the negatives in support of its arguments.

Keywords: Arabic Varieties, Hijazi Arabic, Negation, Negative Stems, Load Shift

1. Introduction

The research on many Arabic varieties is rich. Nevertheless, the Hijazi variety (HA) has not been adequately investigated although it has attracted many linguists since 1975 for some traditional work (see for example, Bakalla, 1973; Ingham, 1971; Margaret, 1975; Sieny, 1978). In addition, a number of generative linguists have been exploring different linguistic issues in HA, as can be seen in their work (including Al Barrag, 2007, 2014; Al Barrag & Al Zahrani, 2017; Al Zahrani, 2008, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2016, 2018; Al Zahrani & Alzahrani, 2019; Alzaidi M, 2014; Alzaidi M,

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Yi Xu, & Anqi Xu, 2019; Bardeas, 2005; Eifan, 2017; Feghali, 1991; Kheshaifaty, 1996, amongst others).

Building on the findings of these linguists, this paper presents some more arguments to enrich the literature on HA. Adopting Walker's (1895) argument on common negative stems, this paper argues for a HA common negative stem. Hence, Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and HA have different common negative stems. That is, while CA and MSA have the common negative stem [*l*] from which the majority of CA/MSA negatives have been developed, HA has the common negative stem [*m*]. Given that the HA dialect is actually a descendant variety from CA, the paper consequently argues that the load must have shifted from the negative stem [*l*], which is very restricted morphologically and syntactically in HA, to its counterpart [*m*], which is more freer in occurrence and more productive in forms. The argument for a basic negative stem springs from a morphological analysis of the derivation of the negatives and the formation of some negative structures, as shown in the next section. The morphological investigation of the negative structure also provides evidence for my argument for the load shift from [*l*] to [*m*]. The occurrence of the negative stems in nonverbal clauses provides further syntactic evidence in favour of the argument of the load-shift.

1. 1 Morphological analysis of the negative stems

The literature shows a dispute about the number of the Arabic negative particles. For instance, it has been claimed that Classical Arabic (CA) negative particles include *laa*, *maa*, *lan*, *lam*, *lamma*, *laysa*, *laata* and *in* (see for example, Wright (1896, 1898, 1967) and Ryding (2005)). Harrama (1983), Onaizan (2005) and Ul-Haq (1984) claim that the variety of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) uses the eight above-mentioned negative particles that CA uses. Contrary, some other linguists like Wright (1898), and Al-Arja (2002) propose that MSA has lost the negative particles *in* and *laata*. Benmamoun (1996, 2000) claims that MSA negatives are only *laa, lam, lan, laysa,* and *maa*. What is common in these different arguments about the number of the negatives in CA and MSA is that the negatives containing the stem [*l*] are more in number.

Contrary to CA and MSA, current Arabic dialects do not use all these negative particles, but they use some of them along with some other developed particles. For instance, Baghdadi Arabic uses *maa* and *muu* (Abu-Haidar, 2006), Kuwaiti Arabic, Lebanese Arabic, Syrian Arabic, and

Moroccan Arabic use, more or less, the negatives *maa, miʃ, maʃi, muu*, *maa…ʃ,* and *maa …ʃi*, which appear with and without clitics (see Chapter 9 in Brustad, 2000). HA uses the negatives *laa*, *maa*, *muu* and *mee*. This variation across Arabic varieties has resulted from a historical development of the negative particles. The historical development of negatives is a linguistic phenomenon that is found across languages. Jespersen (1917: 4) states the following after having investigated some French negative forms.

> "The history of negative expressions in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in its turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word."

Dahl (1979) calls this linguistic phenomenon that describes the different processes by which negatives undergo some changes and developments *Jespersen's Cycle*. This cycle is notable in Arabic negative. Arabic negatives have some original form(s) that must have undergone some morphological (and sometimes phonological) developments and changes. All the different Arabic negative particles, irrespective of variety, centre on two main negatives. The dispute about the diversity of the Arabic negative particles springs from the origins of those two negatives. For CA, Cantarino (1974: 101) suggests that CA had only one original particle—namely, *laa*. The other negative particles *lam*, *lamma*, *lan*, and *laysa* are "compounds of the negative *laa*". Similarly, Ibn Manzuur (1970) and Wright (1898) argue that the negative *lan* has been compounded from the negative *laa* and the particle *an*, and then contracted to such a particle. In like fashion, the negatives *lam* and *lamma* are composites of the negatives *laa* and *maa*, and the negatives *lam* and *maa* respectively. It is also claimed that both *lan* and *lam* have been created from *laa* where the long vowel in *laa* becomes /m/ to produce *lam*, and /n/ to produce *lan*. Wright (1896: 96) argues that "…*laysa* is compounded of *laa* 'not' and the unused *aysa* or *yisa*".

For MSA, Benmamoun (1996, 2000) suggests that it has two original negatives from which other negatives have been developed. He claims that the five MSA negatives *laa*, *lam*, *lan*, *laysa*, and *maa* can be classified into

two groups. The first group contains *laa* and its suppletive forms: *lam*, *lan* and *laysa*. The second group contains the negative *maa*.

To put all these morphological claims in one picture, Walker (1895) argues for a common negative stem, which is the theory that this paper uses to argue for a HA common negative stem. Excluding the negatives *in* and *maa*, Walker (1895) argues that the other six negatives *laa*, *lan*, *lam*, *lamma*, *laysa*, and *laata* start with the common negative stem [*l*]. It is the common negative stem as it is present in almost all the negative forms. This consonant is followed by either long or short vowels which may be followed by other vowelled or unvowelled consonant(s).

Considering HA, it has four negative forms: *laa*, *maa*, *muu* and *mee*. Notice that the four negative forms show the long vowels [*aa*], [*uu*] and [*ee*] following the consonants [*l*] and [*m*]. Building on Walker's (1895) view of common negative stems, it turns out that HA has two underlying negative stems, namely— [*l*] and [*m*] and that [*m*] is the common negative stem as it is present in almost all negative forms. This assumption is supported morphologically and syntactically. This section continues to investigate the morphological properties of the negative stems while the syntactic properties are discussed in a following section.

The morphological perspective shows that the consonant [*l*], which is found in the negative *laa*, is not found in any other HA negative forms; whereas the negative stem [*m*] is used in all the other negatives. That is, the negative stem [*m*] can be followed by the long vowels [*aa*], [*uu*] or [*ee*] and this results in deriving the negative forms *maa*, *muu* and *mee* where the negative stem [*m*] is present in all forms. Unlike the negative stem [*m*], the negative stem [*l*] can only be followed by the long vowel [*aa*]. This shows that both negative stems share the long vowel [*aa*] but the other long vowels [*uu*] or [*ee*] are particular to the negative stem [*m*]. This, in turn, gives more dominance and formation priority to the negative stem [*m*]; this also accounts for the ill-formedness of the negative forms **luu* and **lee* since the negative stem [*l*] cannot be followed by these long vowels.

A further piece of evidence in favor of the [*m*] common negative stem argument comes from the following paradigm.

Paradigm 1: negative structures of the stem [*m*]

HA (all areas)	**HA (minority Jeddah/ Makkah)**
məna "I'm not"	*mənni* "I'm not"
məḥna "we're not"	*mənna* "we're not"
mənt "you're (M) not"	*mənnak* "you're (M) not"
mənti "you're (F) not"	*mənnik* "you're (F) not"
məntum "you're not"	*mənnakum* "you're not"
məhu "he's not"	*mənnuh* "he's not"
məhi "she's not"	*mənnaha* "she's not"
məhum "they're not"	*mənnahum* "they're not"

The left column of Paradigm 1 shows the common HA dialect spoken in all Hijazi areas, whereas the right column shows a vernacular style used by a minority of people in Jeddah and Makkah. One can notice that while HA uses the nominative pronouns with the negative stem [*m*], the other vernacular uses the direct object accusative pronouns, which normally follow some elements such as the complementizer *inn* = e.g., *innak "that you"* (see Al Zahrani 2013 for more on the complementizer *inn*). While investigating the differences between the HA dialects is beyond the scope of this paper, the crucial point here is that the paradigm shows how HA productively uses the negative stem [*m*] to derive 16 negative structures of the negative stem [*m*] followed by pronouns. Notice that the presence of the schwa between the negative stem and the pronouns is accounted for by the fact that HA phonotactic constraints do not allow for a consonant cluster of [**mn*] or [**mh*] in the onset (see (Ryding, 2014) chapter 2).

Interestingly, the negative stem [*m*] can be replaced by the negative stem [*l*] only in the left column of Paradigm 1 as shown in Paradigm 2.

Paradigm 2: negative structures of the stem [*l*]

HA	**HA (minority Jeddah/ Makkah)**
ləna "neither I"	**lənni* "*neither I"
ləḥna "neither we"	**lənna* "*neither we"
lənt "neither you (M)"	**lənnak* "*neither you (M)"
lənti "neither you (F)"	**lənnik* "*neither you (F)"
ləntum "neither you (Pl)"	**lənnakum* "*neither you (Pl)"
ləhu "neither he "	**lənnuh* "*neither he"
ləhi "neither she"	**lənnaha* "*neither she"
ləhum "neither they"	**lənnahum* "*neither you"

The data in Paradigm 2 shows that the negative stem [*l*] is not very productive when compared to its counterpart [*m*]. In addition, the negative structures in the left column are very restricted to express the concept of the English structure "neither … nor…", e.g., *ləna wa ləntum* "neither I

nor you(Pl)", *"ləhu wa ləhi"* "neither he nor she". Hence, one can posit that the negative stem [*m*] produces more negative structures than the negative stem [*l*]. This is also supported by the ill-formedness of the negative structures in the right column.

The ultimate conclusion so far is that the negative stem [*m*] is more productive in HA than the negative stem [*l*] because [*m*] derives three negative particles [*maa*, *mee*, *muu*] and 16 negative structures (shown in Paradigm 1) while the negative stem [*l*] derives only one negative form and eight negative restricted structures. Contrary to HA, the negative stem [*l*] is more productive in CA and MSA as it derives six particles as opposed to the negative stem [*m*] that only derives *maa*. Due to the fact that HA is descendant from CA, one can accordingly postulate that the load has shifted between the Arabic negative stems.

Having discussed the morphological properties of the negatives, I now move on to discuss the syntactic properties demonstrating that the negatives derived from the stem [*m*] occur more freely than the negative form derived from [*l*]. In turn, these syntactic distributions of the negatives provide evidence in favor of the [*m*] common negative stem argument.

1. 2 Syntactic analysis of the negative stems

The negatives under study manifest different syntactic distributions. However, this paper is confined to the HA negative forms when selecting for nominal clauses to support the argument that the load in negation has shifted from [*l*] to [m], and accordingly, the stem [*m*] is the common neative stem in HA; (for the syntactic properties of the negatives in verbal clauses, the reader is advised to see (Al Zahrani, 2014b; Al Zahrani & Alzahrani, 2019)).

It is worth noting that this paper alternately uses the expressions *nominal clauses* and *nonverbal clauses* to refer to those complete finite clauses that do not show any overt verbal forms in the superficial structure. In other words, the paper considers Radford's (1987; 1997a, 1997b, 2004, 2009) assumptions that all complete finite clauses are CPs headed by an overt or null C that selects for a TP clause. The paper also assumes Al Zahrani's (2013, 2014b, 2016, 2018) assumptions that HA nominal clauses are CPs dominating TPs where T is always null in present tense interpretations, but it is occupied by auxiliary verbal forms in past tense interpretations. However, the scope of the paper does not include the syntactic placement

of the negatives in nominal clauses and the reader is advised to see Al Zahrani (2014b). The next subsection explores the negative stem [*l*] in nominal clauses to show its restricted syntactic distributions.

1.2.1 The negative stem [*l*]

The negative stem [*l*] can only be followed by the long vowel [*aa*]. The resulting form is the negative particle *laa* that can precede nominal clauses to negate the existence of the subject and indicate the absolute negation. Its subject must immediately occur after it.

When used before indefinite subjects, the HA *laa* is restricted to the obligatory presence of the correlative structure *wa laa* for negating an entire category as shown in (1). The negative *laa* can also occur before definite subjects to indicate the simple negation of the clause as in (2). Notice that the negative *laa* when preceding definite subjects must also occur with the correlative structure *wa laa* in (2). Otherwise, the sentence is rendered ungrammatical as shown in (3).

(1) *laa rajul wa laa walad wa laa bent wa laa marah*
Neg man and Neg boy and Neg girl and Neg woman
"Neither a man, a boy, a girl nor a woman…"

In (1) the presence of the correlative clause *wa laa* is essential for the use of the negative *laa*. The absolute negation is clear in (1) as the negative *laa* scopes over the concept of any man, any boy, any girl and any woman. In other words, the inclusiveness of the categories negated within the domain of the negative particle *laa* is clear. This is due to the indefiniteness of these nominal forms following the absolute negative particle *laa*. This is not the case when the negative *laa* is followed by definite subjects. Consider the example in (2).

(2) *laa Ali wa laa Huda wa laa Salim hina*
Neg Ali and Neg Huda and Neg Salim here
"Neither Ali, Huda nor Salim is here."

(3) **laa Ali/rajul qawe*
Neg Ali/man strong
"*Ali/A man is neither strong."

In (2) the negative *laa* selects for definite subjects and the presence of the correlative structure is also obligatory. The absence of the correlative structure *wa laa* accounts for the ungrammaticality of the examples in (3) with the definite and indefinite subjects *Ali* and *rajul* respectively. This concludes that the presence of the HA negative *laa* in nonverbal clauses must always be accompanied by the presence of the correlative structure *wa laa*. Hence it is very restricted in occurrence as it must select for a subordinate clause headed by the coordinating conjunction *wa* that is followed by another instance of the negative *laa*. This requirement forms the structure of [*laa* X *wa laa* Y…] "neither X nor Y".

While the absence of the correlative structure *wa laa* in HA renders the sentence ungrammatical, as shown in (3) above and in (5) below, CA and MSA allow for the presence of the negative *laa* with indefinite subjects as in (4) without the presence of the correlative structure; hence, the use of *laa* is freer (not restricted) in these two varieties.

(4) *laa rajul-a fi al-bait*
Neg man-ACC P Det-house (CA/MSA)
"No man is in the house."

(5) * *laa rajul fi al-bait*
Neg man P Det-house (HA)

While it is ungrammatical in HA to use *laa* for the structure in (5), HA uses the negative *maa* for such a structure as shown in (6d). Examples (1-5) show a difference between HA and CA/MSA in that the presence of the negative *laa* in HA nonverbal clauses must always be accompanied by the presence of *wa laa*.

Having shown that the formation of the negative form derived from the stem [*l*] is restricted to the long vowel /*aa*/ (=*laa*) and that the syntactic distribution of the negative *laa* is limited to one structure where its occurrence is constrained by the presence of the correlative structure, the next section shows the three negative forms derived from the stem [*m*] when selecting for nonverbal clauses.

1.2.2 The negative stem [*m*]

The negative stem [*m*] produces three negative particles: *maa*, *muu*, and *mee*. It has been argued that *maa* is only for verbal predicates (Al Zahrani, 2008, 2013, 2014a, 2014b; Al Zahrani & Alzahrani, 2019; Alzahrani,

2016; Eifan, 2017; Margaret, 1975; Nydell, 1994; Nydell & Foreign Service Institute (U.S.), 1975; Sieny, 1978). However, the negative *maa* may immediately precede some complements and clauses whose superficial surface structures show no verbal predicates. Hence, contrary to the arguments of the above-mentioned linguists, this paper argues that *maa* also negates nonverbal structures. These nonverbal structures include different types known in the literature as nominal, nonverbal, Topic-Comment and/or equational clauses/complements (See Chapter 4 in Ryding (2005).

The question raises at this juncture is why some linguists call it a verbal negation marker. The analyses conducted by these linguists can be seen from two angles. First, the majority of the linguists (such as Al Zahrani, 2008, 2014b; Al Zahrani & Alzahrani, 2019; Alzahrani, 2016) have investigated *maa* only in verbal clauses without looking at its behaviour when immediately followed by nonverbal structures that show no overt verbal forms. These linguists have considered the main and the most frequent function of the negative *maa*, which is to precede perfective and imperfective forms. This in turn shows that these linguists have not considered other syntactic distributions of the negative *maa* when occurring with some nonverbal structures including prepositional and semi-prepositional complements, as well as with locative markers and before subject-predicate structures (see below).

Second, Eifan (2017:48) considers the HA negative *maa* "a verbal negation marker". Although her analysis shows the occurrence of *maa* with only three prepositions (*ʕind*, *maʕ*, and *fi*) that head some prepositional complements that do not have any verbal predicates, she argues that those prepositions have been grammaticalized and they have verb-like properties. However, Eifan does not consider the fact that the negative *maa* can also occur with some other prepositions such as *b*, *l*, *ʕan*, *ʕla, min,fi*, *fih* and *ila,…*etc. and also with some other elements such as *fouq* "above" *taħt,*"under", *gabl* "before"and *baʕd* "after", which are referred to by Ryding (2005: 173) as locative markers or semi-prepositions and by wright (1967:178) as prepositions. Now consider the following examples in (6) where the negative *maa* can precede prepositional clauses.

(6) a. *maa b-i-ʃai*
Neg P-1sg.Gen-thing
"Nothing is wrong with me."
b. maa maʕ-ha ʃai

Neg P-3sg.F.Gen thing
"She does not have anything."

c. maa ʕind Ali kutub
Neg P Ali books
"Ali does not have books."

d. maa fih rajul fi al-bait
Neg P man P Det-house
"No man is in the house."

e. maa min-ha faayidah
Neg P-3sg.F benefit
"There is no benefit out of it."

f. maa l-hum ħaðˤ
Neg P-3pl luck
"They are not lucky."

The examples in (6a-f) show the negative *maa* immediately preceding prepositional complements headed by the prepositions *b, maʕ, ʕind, fih, min* and *l* respectively. These clauses do not show any verbal forms in their surface structures. This provides evidence that *maa* can occur with nonverbal forms. Notice that (6d) is the grammatical counterpart of (5) (* *laa rajul fi al-bait*) which the negative *laa* cannot occur with due to its syntactic restrictions; hence, (6d) is negated by *maa* that is freer in occurrence than *laa*. The conclusion that can be drawn from these examples is that Eifan's (2017:48) argument about *maa* as "a verbal negation marker" is ruled out because *maa* can also occur with some other prepositions as shown in (6). Furthermore, the following examples in (7) also show that the negative *maa* can precede some other nonverbal forms that are referred to as locative markers or semi-prepositions (by Ryding 2005: 173) and as prepositions (by wright 1967:178).

(7) a. *maa fouq-na ʃugag*
Neg above-1pl.Gen apartments
"There are no apartments above us."

b. maa taħt-na ʃugag
Neg under-1pl.Gen apartments
"There are no apartments below us."

c. maa gabl Ahmad aħad
Neg before Ahmad one
"There is no one before Ahmad."

d. maa baʕd Ahmad aħad
Neg after Ahmad one

"There is no one after Ahmad."

The examples in (7) clearly show that *maa* can occur in nonverbal clauses. One can notice some of the different senses that the particle *maa* negates in these nonverbal structures including states (6a&f), possession (6b-c), existence (6d-e), and locations (7a-d).

It is not only (semi)prepositional elements that *maa* can occur with, the negative *maa* can also occur before subject pronouns followed by nonverbal predicates as shown in (8).

(8) a. *maa hum fi al-bait*
Neg 3pl P Det-house
"They are not in the house."
b. maa əḥna aɣbiyaa
Neg 1pl stupid
"We are not stupid."
c. maa əntum zaʕlaniin
Neg 1pl upset
"You are not upset."

The nonverbal affirmative subject-predicate clauses *hum fi al-bait* "they are in the house", *əḥna aɣbiyaa* "we are stupid" and *əntum zaʕlaniin* "you are upset" are all finite complete clauses with no overt auxiliary forms in T and are negated by *maa* in (8a-c) respectively. Hence, the negative *maa* is not particular to verbal predicates. When considering all the syntactic distributions of the negative *maa*, one can conclude that *maa* can occur in nominal finite clauses that do not show any auxiliary/verbal forms in the superficial structures, but they contain nonverbal predicates. This is clear in examples (6-8) that show that *maa* can be followed by prepositional complements, semi-prepositional complements, locative markers followed by nonverbal predicates and subject pronouns preceding nonverbal predicates.

The common negative stem [*m*] also derives the negative elements *muu* and *mee* that are particular to nonverbal predicates; more specifically they negate nominal and adjectival attributes. Both *muu* and *mee* are used more frequently with equational sentences. Their primary uses include negating adjectival or nominal attribute. In particular, they negate the reference of the subject to the predicate in the simple present interpretation as shown in (9a-b).

(9) a. *Sami muu/[*mee] Saudi*
Sami Neg/Neg Saudi
"Sami is not Saudi."
b. Maryam muu/mee Saudi-yah
Maryam Neg/Neg Saudi-F
"Maryam is not Saudi."
c. muu muhimm
Neg important
"It is not important."
d. mee ħilw-ah
Neg beautiful.3sg.F
"She/It is not important."

The presence of *muu* and *mee* in (9) clearly negates the reference of the subjects to the predicates. The examples in (9) also show that the negative *mee* is particular to feminine gender (see 9b&d); this explains the ungrammaticality of its use with the masculine subject *Sami* in (9a). Unlike *mee*, the negative *muu* can precede both masculine and feminine genders as shown in (9b). The gender inflection of the negative *muu* makes it less common in use compared to its counterpart negative *muu*. Future research may investigate the discourse and sociolinguistic properties of *mee* as it is beyond the scope of this paper.

1. 3 Conclusions

This paper has shown that CA, MSA and HA use the same underlying negative stems, i.e., [*l*] and [*m*] but they do not use the same negative markers, which in turn means that these varieties use the negative stems differently. Morphologically, the stem [*l*] is considered the common negative stem in CA and MSA as it derives a number of forms including *lam*, *lamma*, *lan*, and *laysa*; but it only derives one negative form in HA, namely— *laa*. Contrary, the stem [*m*] is considered the common negative stem in HA as it derives a number of forms including *maa*, *mee* and *muu*, but it only derives one negative form in CA and MSA, namely— *maa*. This proves that the stem load must have shifted from [*l*] in CA and MSA to [*m*] in HA. Syntactically, one the one hand, the syntax of the HA *laa* in nonverbal clauses is restricted to one, and only one structure; i.e., its presence requires the presence of the correlative structure *wa laa*; it is only used to express the structure of "neither… nor…". On the other hand, the syntax of *maa*, *mee* and *muu* shows freer occurrence with prepositional and semi-prepositional clauses, with locative markers and before subject

pronouns that are followed by nonverbal predicates. Ultimately, the negative stem [*m*] has more morphological forms and more syntactic representations, and in turn it is the HA common negative stem.

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