

# Coreferential Dative Constructions in Syrian Arabic and Modern Hebrew

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## Abstract

In this paper we will provide a description of what we term here the Coreferential Dative Construction. The languages under consideration are Syrian Arabic, which has never been studied before from this respect, and Modern Hebrew. We will show that this construction, related to other constructions containing non-selected datives, expresses the speaker's stance or emotional attitude towards the described eventuality by seeing it as having weak relevance. We will also show that the most important grammatical difference between the two languages is that in Syrian Arabic the presence of the Coreferential Dative obligatorily triggers a special type of modification in the VP: it must be modified by an attenuative vague measure. The comparative approach will help to shed new light on previous analyses of Modern Hebrew data.

*Keywords:* Non-selected datives; Coreferential Dative; Event modification; Speaker's Stance; Syrian Arabic; Modern Hebrew.

## 1. Introduction

This paper will examine constructions in Syrian Arabic and Modern Hebrew that contain the element *l(e)*- inflected for person, number and gender matching those of the subject DP. These constructions, previously examined in Hebrew (Berman 1982, Borer & Grodzinsky 1986, Hovav 1996, Halevy 2004), have been given various names, none of which seem adequate enough.<sup>1</sup> We will refer to it here as *Coreferential Dative Constructions*, in the manner of Berman (1982).<sup>2</sup>

(1) **salma** raʔšet-**l-a**   šway   Syrian Arabic  
Salma dance.PAST.3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little  
'≈Salma (just) danced a little (it's a minor issue).'

(2) **salma** rakd-a   **l-a**   Modern Hebrew  
Salma dance.PAST-3SG.F to-3SG.F  
'≈Salma (just) danced (it's a minor issue).'

'≈Salma danced (she indulged in it with some delight).'

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<sup>1</sup> Terms proposed in the literature include *co-agentive dative* (Halevy 2004), *coreferential dative* (Berman 1982), *pleonastic dative* (Gesenius 1910) *redundant l-ā* (Cowell 1964), *Reflexive Dative* (Borer & Grodzinsky 1986).

<sup>2</sup> The term *Dative* comes from the fact that *le-* is used to mark goals and recipients:

- |     |      |       |                          |           |      |       |       |                               |           |
|-----|------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|------|-------|-------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| i.  | tali | raca  | l-a-xanut                | M. Hebrew | iii. | raħ   | saami | la-l-mahaţta                  | S. Arabic |
|     | Tali | ran   | to-the-store             |           |      | went  | Sami  | to-the-station                |           |
|     |      |       | 'Tali ran to the store.' |           |      |       |       | 'Sami went to the station.'   |           |
| ii. | tali | natna | le-gal sefer             |           | iv.  | ŕaţaa | saami | l-ktaab                       | la-muna   |
|     | Tali | gave  | to-Gal book              |           |      | gave  | Sami  | the-book                      | to-Muna   |
|     |      |       | 'Tali gave Gal a book.'  |           |      |       |       | 'Sami gave the book to Muna.' |           |

Very similar constructions also exist in French, a non-Semitic language.<sup>3,4</sup>

- (3) **Isabelle se fume une petite cigarette** French  
 Isabelle SE smoke a small cigarette  
 ‘≈Isabelle is indulging in smoking a cigarette.’

In Modern Hebrew, Syrian Arabic and French, Coreferential Datives are often listed with other non-selected datives such as possessive and ethical datives or interested hearer datives (cf. Berman 1982, Borer & Grodzinsky 1986 for Modern Hebrew; Al-Zahre 2003 for Syrian Arabic; Herslund 1988 and Rooryck 2001 for French). These constructions are exemplified in (4-6) for Hebrew, Syrian Arabic<sup>5</sup> and French, respectively.

- (4) a. rina šavr-a **le-gil** ?et ha-miškafayim Possessive dative  
 Rina break.PAST-3SG.F to-Gil ACC the-glasses  
 ‘Rina broke Gil’s glasses on him.’
- b. hem nixnes-u **l-i** be-?emca ha-seret Ethical dative  
 they enter.PAST-3PL to-1SG in-middle the-film  
 ‘They entered in the middle of the film (this aggravated me).’
- c. [*In a dialog; the speaker is explaining to the addressee*]  
 hu mexaber **le-xa** recu?a ve... Interested hearer dative  
 he attach.PAST.3SG.M to-2SG.M strap and...  
 ‘(you see) He attaches a strap and...’
- (5) a. saamikasar-**l-o** ən-naḏḏaar-aat **la-?ali** Possessive dative  
 Sami break.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M the-glasses-pl to-Ali  
 ‘Sami broke Ali’s glasses on him.’
- b. ?ali ?am-yətfalsaf-**l-a** **la-salma** Ethical dative  
 Ali PROG-3GS.M.philosophize-to-3SG.F to-Salma  
 ‘Ali is philosophizing on Salma (this aggravates Salma in a certain way).’
- c. šəftə-**l-ek** ša?fət šab! Interested hearer dative  
 see.PAST.1SG-to-2SG.F piece guy  
 ‘I saw one of these guys!’

<sup>3</sup> In French, however, this construction is not as general as in Hebrew and Arabic; it is found with verbs such as *fumer* ‘smoke’, *boire* ‘drink’ and mainly with the verb *faire* ‘do’:

- i. a. Je me bois une petite bière.  
 I SE drink a small beer  
 ‘≈I’m drinking a beer (and I am enjoying it).’
- b. On s’est fait une bouffe.  
 we SE did a meal  
 ‘≈We had a nice dinner/lunch.’
- c. On se fait une toile ?  
 we SE do a “screen”  
 ‘Fancy a movie?’

We mention French to facilitate comprehension of the Semitic data; we do not intend to provide an exhaustive description of this data (cf. Boneh & Nash *in preparation*).

<sup>4</sup> French, contrary to the Semitic languages exemplified above, features a reflexive anaphor.

<sup>5</sup> Standard Arabic has possessive/benefactive dative constructions, but not ethical datives, coreferential datives or interested hearer datives.

- (6) a. Je **lui** ai radiographié l'estomac, **à Pierre** Possessive dative  
 I to-him have x-rayed the stomach, to Pierre  
 'I x-rayed Pierre's stomach.'
- b. Pourquoi il **me** tombe malade maintenant?! Ethical dative  
 why he to-me fall sick now  
 'Why is he becoming sick on me now?!'
- c. Je **te** lui ai donné une de ces baffes Interested hearer dative  
 I to-you to-him have given one of these blows  
 '(see how) I smacked him good!'

In all of these constructions, including the one featuring the Coreferential Dative, the dative pronoun is optional: its presence is not necessary for the well-formedness of the sentence. However, Coreferential Dative Constructions differ from others in two respects. First, it is the only construction that does not include a non-selected participant – the dative element is associated with an existent participant in the clause. In the other constructions the dative introduces a possessor in the a-examples, an affected participant in the b-examples, and an addressee in the c-examples. Second, it seems that in all three languages exemplified above, the same semantic effect is produced in the case of possessive, ethical and interested hearer datives. Namely, in the case of possessive dative constructions, the direct object DP is understood as being in the possession of the DP introduced by the dative; in the case of ethical datives, the eventuality described in the clause affects the individual introduced by the dative in a certain way; and finally, in the case of the interested hearer dative, the addressee is seen as related to the propositional content. Coreferential Datives Constructions do not give rise to the same meaning effects across languages.

As the approximate translations of the examples above attest, it is not easy to provide an accurate description or definition of the use of the Coreferential Dative. In the most general terms, the common feature of all three languages is that the Coreferential Dative expresses the speaker's stance or attitude towards the degree of relevance of the described eventuality, and her attitude towards the referent of the subject DP. In French, the main interpretative contribution of the Coreferential Dative is in adding an evaluative nuance, that the action had an emotional effect on the subject, interpreting it – by default but not as a matter of necessity – as being performed leisurely to the subject's delight and contentment. In Syrian Arabic, the presence of the Coreferential Dative implies that the eventuality (in example (1), *dancing*) is judged by the speaker to have little significance or weak relevance. The implication of performing an action leisurely or for one own's delight is also present in Arabic, but it is not salient. Finally, regarding Hebrew, authors have identified two interpretative components added to the basic propositional content by the Coreferential Dative in Modern Hebrew (Berman 1982, Borer & Grodzinsky 1986, Hovav 1996, Halevy 2004),<sup>6</sup> which are illustrated in

<sup>6</sup> In Biblical Hebrew this was the only non-selected dative available alongside the *dativus commodi* (Gesenius 1910 termed it pleonastic dative). It was widely used, especially in the second person:

- i. a. lēk lə-kā  
 go.IMP.2SG.M to-2SG.M  
 'Get thee away.' (Genesis, 12:1)
- b. šəv-ū lā-kem pō  
 sit.IMP-2PL to-2PL here  
 'Sit ye here.' (Genesis, 22:5)

the translation of example (2). As in Arabic, one refers to an eventuality of weak relevance, occurring by the way, with no great significance to the speaker; the second adds the nuance that the described eventuality is autonomous, which happens with no external intervention, thus creating an isolating effect for the referent of the subject DP. In this case, the subject can be seen as engaging in the activity for her/his own pleasure or sake, as in French (Berman 1982 and Halevy 2004). Various authors have suggested that the Coreferential Dative, contrary to other non-selected datives, functions as an operator on the predicate or the eventuality, or as a modifier of the argument structure. However, as we will show in the next sections, it is not clear how all the interpretative effects could be derived from it being an operator of this sort. Conversely, our description portrays a different picture. We will show that the interpretative impact of the CD is pragmatic, rather than semantic. We will suggest that the related interpretative effects having to do either with argument structure or aspect depend on the construction's pragmatics. In this we join Horn's (2008) discussion of similar constructions in dialects of American English.

The main aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive description of Coreferential Dative Constructions (henceforth CDCs) in Syrian Arabic and Modern Hebrew, and to show that the core meaning shared by both is the expression of the speaker's perspective on the low relevance or significance of the described eventuality.<sup>7</sup> The interest of this paper lies in the fact that the Syrian Arabic constructions were not studied at all (for mentions of them, see Cowell 1964 and Al-Zahre 2003). As for Hebrew, by means of the comparison with the Arabic data we hope to shed new light on the descriptions of it already available in Berman (1982), Borer & Grodzinsky (1986), Hovav (1996), Halevy (2004), Borer (2005).

The organization of the paper is as follows: section 2 deals with the nature of the dative elements, showing that they are affix-like in Syrian Arabic (SA) and clitic-like in Modern Hebrew (MH). In section 3, we describe the grammatical constraints operating on the construction in both languages. Section 4 presents the interpretative effects conveyed by these constructions in SA and MH. Section 5 concludes with some questions and hypotheses raised by our description.

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<sup>7</sup> Strauss (2003) reports that in Spanish, Korean and Japanese, there are specific constructions used to express what seems to be a reverse perspective of the speaker towards the eventuality's relevance/significance, i.e. a perspective in which the speaker attributes high relevance to the described eventuality:

- |     |    |   |                        |
|-----|----|---|------------------------|
| i.  | a. | (ellos) comieron mis galletas.<br>they eat.PAST my cookies<br>'They ate my cookies.' [neutral]  | Spanish                |
|     | b. | (ellos) <b>se</b> comieron mis galletas.<br>they SE eat.PAST my cookies<br>'(to my regret, surprise, relief, etc.) they ate up my cookies.'                         | (Strauss 2003, ex. 21) |
| ii. | a. | ku-tul-i nay kwaca-lul meke-ss-ta.<br>he-PL-SM my cookie(s)-OM eat-PAST-DEC<br>'They ate my cookies.' [neutral]   | Korean                 |
|     | b. | ku-tul-i nay kwaca-lul meke- <b>pelie</b> -ss-ta.<br>he-PL-SM my cookie(s)-OM eat-PELI-PAST-DEC<br>'(to my regret, surprise, relief, etc.) they ate up my cookies.' | (Strauss 2003, ex. 14) |

Curiously, this nuance is also expressed in Spanish by use of the pronoun *se*, a reflexive dative pronoun associated with the subject (cf. also Fernández Lagunilla & de Miguel 2000, Barra-Jover 2003).

## 2. The dative pronouns

CDCs contain a dative element *l(e)*- ‘to’, inflected, similarly to other prepositions in Semitic languages, for person, number and gender:

(7)		MH		SA
	1SG	l-i		l-i
	2SG.F	la-x		l-ek
	2SG.M	le-xa		l-ak
	3SG.F	l-a		l-a
	3SG.M	l-o		l-o
	1PL	la-nu		l-na
	2PL	la-xem		l-kon
	3PL	la-hem		l-on

CDs, like other non-selected datives, and contrary to selected datives, appear adjacent to the verb in both languages (the MH facts are reported in Borer & Grodzinsky 1986).

- (8) a. **l-a**, rani natan                      ʔet ha-matana                      MH  
       to-3SG.F, Rani give. PAST.3SG.M ACC the-present  
       ‘Rani gave HER the present.’
- b. **\*l-o**, rani rakad  
       to-3SG.M, Rani dance.PAST.3SG.M
- (9) a. saami ʕaʔa                                      l-hdye                      ʔil-aa                      SA  
       Sami gave. PAST.3SG.M the present to-3SG.F  
       ‘Sami gave the present to her.’
- b. **\*salma** raʔʕet                                      ʔil-a                      šway  
       Salma dance.PAST.3SG.F to-3SG.F a little
- c. **\*ʔil-a**, salma raʔʕet                                      šway  
       to-3SG.F, Salma dance.PAST.3SG.F a little

In MH, whereas the selected dative in (8a) can be preposed, the coreferential one cannot (8b). Similarly, in SA, *l-* is always a weak element and has to be phonologically supported by *ʔi* if it is not adjacent to the verb (9a); in the case of CDCs, *l-* cannot be separated from the verb, even if *ʔi* is inserted.

Furthermore, contrary to selected datives (10), CDs cannot be coordinated (11a) and cannot be stressed (11b) (Borer & Grodzinsky 1986):

- (10) a. rani natan                                      ʔet ha-matana                      **l-a**                      ve-**l-o**  
       Rani give. PAST.3SG.M ACC the present to-3SG.F and-to-3SG.M
- b. rani natan                                      **LA**                      ʔet ha-matana

Rani give.PAST.3SG.M to-3SG.F ACC the present  
 ‘Rani gave the present to her (and not to anybody else)’

- (11) a. \*rani ve-dina    ʔaxl-u            **l-o**        ve-**l-a**            tapuxim le-hanʔa-tam  
           Rani and-Dina    ate. PAST-3PL    to-3SG.M and-to-3SG.F    apples    for-pleasure-their  
           *intended*: Rani and Dina ate apples for their own pleasure.’
- b. \*rani        rakad                            **LO**  
           Rani    dance. PAST.3SG.M    to-3SG.M

These two properties are attested in SA:

- (12) a. ʕaTet            təffaaha    ʔil-**aa**    w    ʔil-**o**  
           give.PAST-1SG apple        to-her    and    to-him  
           ‘I gave an apple to her and to him.’
- b. ʕaTet            təffaaha    ʔ**IL-AA**  
           give.PAST-1SG apple        to-her  
           ‘I gave her an apple (and not to anyone else).’
- (13) a. \*ʔakal-tə-**l-ak**                            w    (ʔi-)**l-aa**    kam təffaaha  
           ate. PAST-2SG.M-to-2SG.M    and    to-3SG.F    several apple  
           *intended*: ‘you ate the apple for you and for her.’
- b. \*ʔakal-tə-**L-AK**                            kam təffaaha  
           ate. PAST-2SG.M-to-2SG.M    several apple

The impossibility to coordinate CDs also attests that *l(e)-* is not a preposition, despite its being homonymous with the directional preposition *l(e)-*. SA (14) shows that inflected prepositions can indeed be coordinated (cf. ex. 10a in MH) (Aoun 1996, Al-Zahre 2003).

- (14) ʔakee-t            maʕ-ak            w    maʕ-aa  
           speak.PAST-1SG with-2SG.M    and    with-3SG.F  
           ‘I spoke with you and with her.’

Moreover, in SA, the dative element is not only clitic-like but truly an affix, a second agreement marker on the verb.<sup>8</sup> The affix-like behavior of the CD is demonstrated in the following examples (from Cowell 1964), where a reduction in the length of the pre-consonantal vowel occurs when the dative pronoun is prefixed directly onto a stem containing a long vowel:

- (15) a. ʔaam                            + l-o            →    ʔam-lo                            SA  
           stand.PAST.3SG.M    + to-3SG.M
- b. ʔaal                            + l-o            →    ʔal-lo  
           say.PAST.3SG.M    + to-3SG.M

Additionally, in the feminine conjugation, the final vowel *e* is reduced to a schwa:

- (16) waʔʔafet            + l-a            → waʔʔafət-la                            SA

<sup>8</sup> This is true not only for CDCs, but for all other constructions involving non-selected datives; when the non-selected dative is a full phrase there is always a dative like affix on the verb. See examples (5a-b).

stop.PAST.3SG.F + to-3SG.F

Finally, contrary to MH, it cannot be associated with a group of coordinated verbs:

(17) a. \*salma raʔʂət w ɛannət-**l-a** šway SA  
 Salma dance.PAST.3SG.F and sing.PAST.3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little

b. salma raʔʂət-**l-a** w ɛannət-**l-a** šway  
 Salma dance.PAST.3SG.F-to-3SG.F and sing.PAST.3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little  
 ‘Salma danced and sang little.’

(18) rani šar ve-rakad **l-o** MH  
 Rani sing.PAST.3SG.M and-dance.PAST.3SG.M to-3SG.M  
 ‘Rani was singing and dancing.’

The relation between verb and dative element is more intimate in SA than in MH, since in a coordinated structure the dative element has to be adjacent to each verb. Although in MH, (18) can be understood as a coordination of a simple verb with a verb and a CD, the clause can also easily be comprehended in a sense of the two activities performed leisurely, for Rani’s own pleasure, or judged by the speaker as having low significance.

To sum up, the element *l(e)-* in these constructions is not prepositional, despite its being homonymous with the directional preposition *l(e)-* in both languages. We have shown that the CD is clitic-like in MH, and affix-like in SA.

### 3. Grammatical constraints on the appearance of the CD

In this section we will be concerned with grammatical constraints related to the appearance of the CD. Throughout this section examples will be translated approximately, without commenting on the interpretative effects, which will be done in the following section.

In terms of grammatical constraints at work in CD constructions, Syrian Arabic and Modern Hebrew differ with respect to two major properties. First and most importantly, as already evident from examples (1)-(2), repeated here, SA obligatorily features a type of modification in the VP (19), which we will characterize in subsection 3.1. No such modification is needed in MH (20).

(19) **salma** raʔʂ-ət-**l-a** \*(šway)  
 Salma dance.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little  
 ‘≈Salma danced a little.’

(20) **salma** rakd-a **l-a** (kcat / harbe)  
 Salma dance.PAST-3SG.F to-3SG.F a little / a lot  
 ‘≈Salma danced (for her own pleasure, delight).’

The SA constructions featuring the CD are ungrammatical without a minimizing modification (19). The replacement of the weak expression by a maximizing one is not possible (21).

(21) \***salma** raʔʂ-ət-**l-a** ktir  
 Salma dance.PAST.3SG.F-to-3SG.F much/a lot

The ungrammaticality of (21) with the adverb *ktiir* ‘much/a lot’ shows that the speaker is not entirely free in his choice of adverb.

This is a crucial property of SA CDCs, which sets it apart from other constructions involving non-selected datives, and from the parallel MH constructions, as we will see in greater detail in the next subsection.<sup>9</sup> We will refer to this type of VP modification as *attenuative vague measure*. The term is adopted from Filip (2000), who uses it to refer to the verbal prefix *po-* in Russian:

- (22) a. Ivan guljál  
 Ivan walk.PAST  
 ‘Ivan walked.’ / ‘Ivan was walking.’
- b. Ivan *po*-guljál po górodu  
 Ivan PO-walk.PAST around town  
 ‘Ivan took a short walk around the town.’ (Filip 2000, ex. 9)

In borrowing this term we do not wish to establish a semantic parallelism with the prefix *po-*, but we do, however, feel that at a descriptive level this term is the most adequate.

The second property which sets the SA CDCs apart from the MH ones is compatibility with non-verbal predicates. In SA, the RD is strictly incompatible with non-verbal predicates (23), while in MH (24) it is possible with some stage-level ones.

- (23) a. \*salma nahifet-**l-a** šway  
 Salma thin.F-to-3SG.F a little  
*intended*: ‘\*Salma is being a little thin.’
- b. \*salma maridet-**l-a** šway  
 Salma sick.F-to-3SG.F a little  
*intended*: ‘Salma is being a little sick.’
- c. \*salma taʕbaanet-**l-a** šway  
 Salma tired.F-to-3SG.F a little  
*intended*: ‘Salma is being a little tired.’
- d. \*salma kaanet-**l-a** bi-l-bet šway  
 Salma was.3SG.F-to-3SG.F in-the-house a little  
*intended*: ‘Salma stayed at home some.’
- (24) a. **dan** (šuv) xole **l-o** hayom  
 Dan (again) sick.M to-3SG.M today  
 ‘Dan is being sick again today (it somehow aggravates me, he might be doing it on purpose).’
- b. <sup>?</sup>**dan** ʕayef **l-o** me-ha-boker  
 Dan tired.M to-3SG.M from-the-morning  
 ‘Dan is being tired since this morning (it somehow aggravates me, he might be doing it on purpose).’

<sup>9</sup> Notice that in the examples from French the word *petit* ‘small/little’ tends to appear more often than not. Although this is reminiscent of Arabic *šway* ‘a little’, it is not obligatory, as is the case in Arabic. It seems that in French the presence of *petit* is not directly linked to the CD in the clause.



- c. \***dan** yafe **l-o**  
 Dan pretty.M to-3SG.M  
*intended:* ‘\*Dan is being pretty.’
- d. ?**dan** haya **l-o** (kcat) ba-bayit  
 Dan was.3SG.M to-3SG.M (a little) at-home  
 ‘Dan spent (a little) time at home.’ (said somewhat disapprovingly)

In MH, the CD is compatible with stative predicates as long as they can be interpreted as involving some intentionality attributed to the referent of the subject DP.<sup>10</sup> This will be elaborated on in section 4.2.

We turn now to a detailed presentation of the *attenuative vague measure* modification obligatory in CDCs. In subsections 3.2 and 3.3 we will discuss issues related to argument structure and aspectual properties of CDC, and show that SA and MH do not differ in these respects.

### 3.1 Attenuative vague measure modification in SA CD constructions

This subsection contains a presentation of the forms attenuative vague measure modification takes in CDCs. The SA examples presented above have already illustrated modification by the adverb *šway* ‘a little’. The following offer additional examples of adverbial modification.

- (25) a. **ṭ-ṭaabe** edaḥrajat-**l-a** šway  
 the-ball rolled.PAST.3SG.F-to-3SG.M a little  
 ‘≈The ball rolled a little.’
- b. **l-walad** keber-**l-o** šway  
 the-boy grow.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M a little  
 ‘≈The boy grew a little.’
- c. **saami** mat-**l-o** kam moote ʕabəl ma ylaaʔii beet  
 Sami die.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M several death before that 3SG.M.found house  
 ‘≈Sami suffered so much before he found a home.’
- (26) a. **salma** sakn-ət-**l-a** šway bi-haada l-beet  
 Salma live.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little in-this the-house  
 ‘≈Salma lived a little while in this house.’

<sup>10</sup> Examples (24a-b) minimally differ from constructions containing the Ethical Dative, where the dative element is inflected for first person singular and is not co-referential with the subject. It seems to us that the difference has to do with the degree of involvement of the speaker in the described eventuality. In the CDC, the speaker is felt to be less directly affected by the happenings than in the case of the Ethical Dative. In CDCs, as opposed to Ethical Dative constructions, the emphasis is on the subject and its relation to the event.

- i. a. dan (šuv) xole **l-i**  
 Dan (again) sick.M to-1SG  
 ‘Dan is sick on me again.’
- b. ?dan ʕayef **l-i** me-ha-boker  
 Dan tired.M to-1SG from-the-morning  
 ‘Dan is being tired on me since this morning.’

- b. **salma** xaaf-ət-l-a šway b-hal-fələm  
 Salma be.afraid.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little in-this-movie  
 ‘≈Salma was a little bit afraid during this movie.’
- c. **salma** baas-ət-l-a ʕali kam boose  
 Salma kiss.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F Ali several kiss  
 ‘≈Salma gave Ali several kisses.’
- d. **salma** ʔahn-ət-l-a l-ʔahwe kam marra  
 Salma grind.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F the coffee several time  
 ‘≈Salma ground the coffee several times.’
- e. **l-baladye** wassaʕ-ət-l-a ət-ʔariiʔ šii xams mtaar  
 the-municipality widen.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F the-road sm five meters  
 ‘≈The municipality widened the road some five meters.’
- f. **salma** ʕazaf-et-la ʕal-piano šii tlet saaʕaat  
 Salma play.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F on-piano sm three hours  
 ‘≈Salma played the piano for three hours.’

These examples feature transitive and intransitive verbs, and the attenuative vague measure modification is introduced adverbially, either by the by-now-familiar adverb *šway* ‘a little’ (25a-b, 26a-b), or by the quantifier *kam* ‘several’ selecting a singular noun (25c, 26c-d). An additional manner of introducing this modification is by *šii* ‘sm’ (26e-f), which is a weak quantifier like narrow scope *some* which precedes an NP containing a numeral. In these last two examples, the measure is approximate. Note that in (25c) and (26c) this modification is introduced via the cognate object (cf. Al-Zahre 2003). Semantically speaking, all these expressions denote small quantities of the lower part of a scale.

However, this is not the entire picture. Attenuative vague measure modification may also be introduced via argument DPs, either in object or subject position. In these cases, the modified DP is subject to numerous constraints on definiteness and quantification. These will be illustrated now with object DPs:

- (27) a. **salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a kam təffaahə  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F several apple  
 ‘≈Salma ate several apples.’
- b. **salma** ʔaklə-t-l-a šwayet təffaah  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little apple  
 ‘≈Salma ate a few apples.’
- c. **salma** ʔaklə-t-l-a šii təffaahə  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F sm apple  
 ‘≈Salma ate some apple.’
- d. **salma** ʔaklə-t-l-a təffaah-t-een tlate  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F apple-DUAL three  
 ‘≈Salma ate a couple of apples.’

As in the case of the examples with adverbial modification above, here too we find the expressions *šway*, *kam* and *šii*. Additionally, there is the one in (27d), with the form *N-dual tlate* ‘a couple of’. This expression is a vague cardinal expressing a low quantity.

As we have seen above in example (21) with adverbial modification, the DP quantifier cannot designate a large quantity:

- (28) \***salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a                      ktiir tæffaah  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    a lot apple  
 ‘≈Salma ate a lot of apple(s).’

Crucially, the object cannot be definite or strongly quantified over:

- (29) a. \***salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a                      ət-tæffaahaat  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    the- apples  
*intended:* ‘≈Salma ate the apples.’  
 b. \***salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a                      kəl ət-tæffaahaat  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    all the apples  
*intended:* ‘≈Salma ate all the apples.’

Nor can the direct object be pronominalized in the presence of a CD. Although (30) is grammatical, it can only be interpreted as involving a possessor dative or a benefactive one. The dative cannot be associated with the pre-verbal DP.

- (30) (\***salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a                      yaaha  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    it.3SG.F  
 ‘Salma ate it for her.’ / ‘Salma ate hers.’ *Not:* ‘Salma ate it.’

Bare indefinite direct objects cannot do either.

- (31) \***salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a                      tæffaaha  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    apple  
*intended:* ‘≈Salma ate an apple.’

The only bare indefinite DP that can appear in these constructions is the generalized indefinite *šayle* ‘something’ (32a) or *waahed* ‘someone’ (36c). Other abstract indefinite DPs, which are not otherwise properly modified, are excluded from appearing in CDCs (32b):

- (32) a. ʕməl-u-l-kon    šayle                      tinfaʕ  
 do-2PL-to-2PL    something    useful  
 ‘Do something useful.’  
 b. \*ʕməl-u-l-kon    ʔabiix / ʔraaye / barmaze  
 do-2PL-to-2PL    cooking / reading / programming  
*intended:* ‘≈Do the cooking / reading / programming!’

A cardinal number can precede the NP only if it itself is preceded by a weak quantifier such as *šii* (33) (see also example (26e-f)):

- (33) a. \***salma** ʔakl-ət-l-a                      sət tæffaahaat  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    six apples

- b. **salma** ʔaklə-t-l-a                      **šii** sət təffaahaat  
 Salma eat.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F sm six apples  
 ‘≈Salma ate some six apples.’

Finally, the CD cannot appear with clausal complements without any attenuative vague measure modification:

- (34) \***saami** ʔal-l-o                              ʔinno raḥ-yətʔawaz  
 Sami say.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M that FUT-3SG.M.marry  
*intended:* ‘≈Sami (only) said that he is going to get married.’

Here are additional illustrations of the constraints on attenuative vague modification in the DP:<sup>11</sup>

- (35) a. \***salma** šaafət-l-a                      l-fələm  
 Salma watch.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F the movie  
*intended:* ‘≈Salma watched the movie.’
- b. \***salma** šaafət-l-a                      l-mirʔaat la-Tarkovsky  
 Salma watch-PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F the-mirror by-Tarkovsky  
*intended:* ‘≈Salma watched "The Mirror" by Tarkovsky.’
- c. \***salma** šaafət-l-a                      ktiir ʔaflam  
 Salma watch.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F many movies
- d. **salma** šaafət-l-a                      kam fələm  
 Salma watch.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F several movies  
 ‘≈Salma (only) watched some movies.’
- (36) a. \***salma** ḥabb-ət-l-a                      saami  
 Salma love.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F Sami  
*intended:* ‘≈Salma loved Sami.’
- b. **salma** ḥabb-ət-l-a                      saami kam yom  
 Salma love.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F Sami several day  
 ‘≈Salma loved Sami for several days.’
- c. bit-kuun      **salma** ḥabb-ət-l-a                      (**šii**) waḥed maḏnuun  
 MOD.3SG.F-be Salma love.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F sm one crazy.SG.M  
 ‘≈Salma must have loved someone crazy.’

Beyond the constraints on what counts as attenuative vague measure modification illustrated above, there is no ban on the locus of this modification. It need not appear only VP internally; subject DPs may also introduce it.

- (37) a. raʔṣ-ət-l-a                              **kam bənet**  
 dance.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F several girl-F  
 ‘≈Several girls danced.’
- b. ʔakal-l-o                              **kam waḥed** min l-sandwiše

<sup>11</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting example (36c), as well as (32c).

eat.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M several one from the-sandwich  
 ‘≈Several people ate from the sandwich.’

- c.  $\zeta$ azaf-et-**l-a**                      **kam bənet**     $\zeta$ al-piano  
 play.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F several girl-F on-piano  
 ‘≈Several girls played the piano.’

- (38) a. wəʃel-**l-o**                              **kam ʃafḥ-a**    mbaareḥ  
 arrive.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M several page-F yesterday  
 ‘≈Several pages arrived yesterday.’

- b. mat-**l-o**                                      **kam waḥed**    bi-hal-ḥades  
 die.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M several one in-this-accident  
 ‘≈Several people died in this accident.’

- c. nkatab-**l-o**                                      kam ʃafḥ-a    b-hal-ʔuṭruuḥa  
 write.PAST.PASS.3SG.M-to-3SG.M few page-F in-this-dissertation  
 ‘≈Some pages were written in this dissertation.’

- d. nṭaḥan-**l-o**                                      šwayet ʔahwe    b-hal-ʔaale  
 grind.PAST.PASS.3SG.M-to-3SG.M a little coffee.F on-this-machine  
 ‘≈Some coffee was ground.’

- e. wəʃl-et-**l-a**                                      **kam ʃafḥ-a**    mbaareḥ  
 arrive.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F several page-F yesterday  
 ‘≈Several pages arrived yesterday.’

The examples in (37) and (38) offer an apparent contrast between unergative and transitive verbs on the one hand (37), and unaccusative and passive verbs on the other (38). In the former, the verb and the CD manifest full agreement with the features of the post-verbal subject DP, whereas in the latter the verb and the CD affixed to it manifest no-agreement with the post-verbal subject. This is evident from (38a), where the argument *ʃafḥa* ‘page’ is feminine while the gender marking on the verb and on the CD is masculine. This pattern of agreement is not special to CDCs; it is attested with plain unaccusative verbs in dialects of spoken Arabic (cf. Cowell 1964 for Syrian Arabic; Hoyt 2000 for Palestinian Arabic).<sup>12</sup> However, contrary to CD-less structures, no-agreement is preferred to full agreement, although the latter is by no means excluded, as (38e) indicates.

The post-verbal modified DPs in (37-38) cannot appear in pre-verbal position, irrespective of whether they are arguments of an unaccusative or unergative verb type and of agreement pattern:

- (39) a. \*kam bənet    raʔṣ-ət-l-a  
           several girl.F dance.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F
- b. \*kam ʃafḥ-a        wəʃel-l-o / wəʃl-et-l-a  
           several page-F arrive.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M / arrive.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F
- c. \*kam ʃafḥ-a    nkatab-ət-l-a                                      b-hal-ʔṭruuḥa

<sup>12</sup> This is not an instance of poor agreement, a phenomenon present only in Standard Arabic, not in the spoken dialects, and which involves lack of number agreement only.

few page-F write.PAST.PASS-3SG.F-to-3SG.F in-this-dissertation

- d. \*šwayet ʔahwe nṭaḥn-ət-l-a  
 a little coffee.F grind.PAST.PASS-3SG.F-to-3SG.F

This word order restriction is not due to the CD, but to the presence of a weakly quantified DP. (40b), without the CD, is just as ungrammatical as the examples in (39). (40b) can be saved by inserting the locative expletive *fii* (40c).

- (40) a. wəʃel / wəʃl-et kam ʃafḥ-a  
 arrive.PAST.3SG.M / arrive.PAST-3SG.F several page-F  
 ‘Several pages arrived.’  
 b. \*kam ʃafḥ-a wəʃl-et  
 several page-F arrive.PAST-3SG.F  
 c. fii kam ʃafḥ-a wəʃl-et  
 EXPL<sub>LOC</sub> several page-F arrive.PAST-3SG.F  
 ‘There arrived several pages.’

The same ‘rescue’ strategy, however, is not available where the CD is present. This point of difference seems to us significant, and we will address it shortly at the end of section 3.2.

- (41) a. \*fii kam bənet raʔʃ-ət-l-a  
 EXPL<sub>LOC</sub> several girl.F dance.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F  
 b. \*fii kam ʃafḥ-a wəʃel-l-o / wəʃl-et-l-a  
 EXPL<sub>LOC</sub> several page-F arrive.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M / arrive.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F

To sum up this subsection, we have shown that constructions with the CD obligatorily feature vague measure modification introduced either adverbially or via one of the argument DPs. In the latter case, the need for attenuative vague measure modification severely restricts definiteness and the quantificational properties of the DP. We have also seen that the presence of vague attenuative measure modification introduced via the subject DP also imposes word-order constraints on this DP, confining it to a post-verbal position. The numerous examples of this subsection also make it clear that there are no constraints on the types of verbs that can appear in CDCs. The same holds also for MH CD constructions, as will be shown in the next subsection.

### 3.2 Argument structure and CD constructions

Borer & Grodzinsky (1986) claim that the distribution of CDs in MH depends on argument structure, namely that the CD is associated solely with verbs that have an external argument:

- (42) a. **ha-praxim** navl-u **la-hem**  
 the-flowers wilt.PAST-3PL to-3PL  
 ‘≈The flowers wilted.’  
 b. **ha-kelev** hitrocec **l-o**  
 the-dog run-around.PAST.3SG.M to-3SG.M  
 ‘≈The dog ran around.’

This of course excludes passives and unaccusatives from appearing with a CD, according to them. However, the following attested examples make it clear that MH speakers do accept sentences in which the CD is associated with a derived subject (cf. also the examples in Berman 1982, Hovav 1996 and Halevy 2004):

- (43) a. harxek be-šuley taʕasiyat ha-muzika ha-israʔelit,  
far-away in-edges industry the-music the-israeli  
šugar                                    **I-o**            lifney šavuʕot axadim **EP maksim ve-meʕaneg**  
launch.PAST.PASS.3SG.M to-3SG.M before weeks several EP charming and-delighting  
‘≈In the distant edges of the Israeli music industry a charming and delighting EP has been released several weeks ago.’ (Internet)
- b. **ha-mixtav** hunax                                    **I-o**            b-a-teva  
the-letter put.PAST.PASS.3SG.M to-3SG.M in-the-box  
‘≈The letter was put in the box (mysteriously).’ (Internet)
- (44) a. **ha-ʕuga** neʔexl-a                                    **I-a**            be-hanaʔa raba  
the-cake eat.PAST.MPASS.3SG.F to-3SG.F in-great delight  
‘≈The cake has been eaten with great delight.’
- b. **ha-tinok** nilkax                                    **I-o**            le-ʔey šam  
the-baby take.PAST.MPASS.3SG.M to-3SG.M to-somewhere  
‘≈The baby was taken to some unknown place.’ (Internet)
- c. ʔat          ʔat          nivne-ta                                    **I-a**          **ha-mangina**  
slowly slowly build.PAST.MPASS-3SG.F to-3SG.F the-melody  
‘≈Little by little the melody was getting constructed.’ (Internet)
- (45) nišbar                                    **I-o**            ʕod          kaic          ʕal ha-mirpeset  
break.PAST.MPASS.3SG.M to-3SG.M another summer on the-balcony  
‘≈Another summer came to an end (as we were sitting) on the balcony.’ (Internet)

The sentences in (43) are passive constructions. The examples in (44) contain verbs in the medio-passive voice (Doron 2003). In (45) the verb template is the same as in (44) but the verb itself is an unaccusative.

MH, like SA, thus poses no restrictions on the types of verbs that may appear in CDCs. The CD in both languages must be associated with an argumental subject, but there are no restrictions on the type of argument it can be associated with. It may even be associated with the quasi-argument, as in SA sentences featuring meteorological verbs:<sup>13</sup>

- (46) a. ʕallaj-et-**la**                                    šway  
snow.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little  
‘≈It snowed a little.’
- b. maʕar-et-**la**                                    šway  
rain.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F a little  
‘≈It rained a little.’

<sup>13</sup> Parallel constructions in MH are not available since there are no meteorological verbs, as in SA or English.

In MH, the CD may not be associated with an overt expletive (47a), nor with an implicit one (47b):

- (47) a. **ze** hirgiz (\***l-o**) ʔoti še-rani šuv ʔexer  
 EXPL irritate.PAST.3SG.M to-3SG.M me that-Rani again late  
 ‘It irritated me that Rani was late again.’
- b. nirʔa #**l-o** še-ha-šamayim kxulim  
 seem to-3SG.M that-the-sky blue  
 ‘It seems **to him** that the sky is blue.’  
*intended*: ‘It seems that the sky is blue.’

(47b) is grammatical only if the dative element is interpreted as associated with an individual in the discourse. The parallel construction in SA also excludes the CD:

- (48) dayaʔ-ni(-\***l-o**) šway ʔanno saami tʔaxxar marra tanye  
 irritate.PAST.3SG.M-1SG(-to-3SG.M) a little that Sami late time second  
 ‘It irritated me a bit that Sami was late again.’

In this case, however, it is not clear whether the impossibility of the CD is due to its impossible association with an implicit expletive, since the existence of such elements in dialectal Arabic is subject to debate (for a supporting view, see for example Mohammad 2000, and Boneh & Sichel *to appear* for the opposing view). Alternatively, as suggests an anonymous reviewer, the impossibility of a CD in this context may be due to the fact that the CD must be associated solely with entities and not with propositions.

Importantly, however, the implicit character of the subject is not itself at stake, since in both SA and MH the CD freely occurs with referential *pro* subjects:

- (49) a. ʔakal-**na-l-na** kam kaʕke  
 eat.PAST-1PL-to-1PL several cake  
 ‘≈We ate some cake.’
- b. ʔaxal-**nu la-nu** glida  
 eat.PAST-1PL to-1PL ice cream  
 ‘≈We ate ice-cream.’

When the implicit subject is non-referential, as in (50), the CD is excluded:

- (50) a. šallaḥ-uu(-#**l-on**) l-kondišen šway SA  
 repair.PAST-3PL-(to-3PL) the-air condition a little  
 ‘They<sub>ARB</sub> repaired **their** air condition system.’  
*intended*: ‘They<sub>ARB</sub> repaired the air condition system some.’
- b. tikn-u (#**la-hem**) ʔet ha-mazgan MH  
 repair.PAST-3PL to-3PL ACC the-air condition  
 ‘They<sub>ARB</sub> repaired **their** air condition system.’  
*intended*: ‘They<sub>ARB</sub> repaired the air condition system some.’

In both SA and MH, the examples in (50) can be interpreted as conveying a possessive or benefactive interpretation, but cannot give rise to interpretation according to which the inflection on the element *l-* is associated with the implicit arbitrary subject.



Thus, SA is no different than MH regarding concerns related to argument structure, for the CD in both languages must be associated with a referential thematic DP, be it external or not, a *pro* or an overt DP.

At this point we wish to speculate that the CD is actually related to a topic in an A'-position, itself associated with a thematic-argument. Several facts point in this direction: first, its impossibility of association with an expletive, which is not assumed to be a topic; second, the impossibility of association with non-referential arbitrary subjects; third, the contrast between (40c) and (41) concerning the possibility of inserting the locative expletive *fii*. This expletive, which surely does not introduce a topic, is available in (40c) in the absence of a CD, but banned when it is present, as in (41). It is also probable that DPs modified by vague attenuative measure modification are not good candidates for topics. Finally, note that the word order in CDCs is prevalently SVO,<sup>14</sup> while the unmarked word order in SA is VSO;<sup>15</sup> this also argues in favor of conferring a topic status to the DP associated with the CD. In order not to undermine this suggestion we would have to say that in the case of SA unaccusative and passive verbs featuring a post-verbal subject (38), as well in that of weather verbs, a spatio-temporal topic is present (46). In this case, the preference for no-agreement can be explained.

### 3.3 The CD as an aspectual operator

It has been suggested in the literature on MH that CD functions as an aspectual operator. Borer (2005) suggests that the CD in MH operates at the level of the lexical aspect by blocking culmination of the underlying eventuality:

- (51) **rani** harag **l-o**                                   ʔet ha-yatušim           le-ʔito bemešex / \*tox xaci šaša  
 Rani kill.PAST.3SG.M to-3SG.M ACC the-mosquitoes slowly for / in half an hour  
 ‘≈Rani killed the mosquitoes slowly for half an hour / \*in half an hour.’  
 (Borer 2005, Ch. 17, ex. 38)<sup>16</sup>

For her, CDs operate at the level of the inner aspect as an event operator preventing the projection of the syntactic position responsible for the assignment of the role *subject-of-quantity* to arguments (her ASP<sub>Q</sub>). The DP that is co-indexed with the CD can only be an *originator* or a *subject-of-state*. In her analysis this fits in nicely with the absence of CDs with passive verbs. But again, we have shown that MH speakers *do* use the CD with passives, irrespective of whether they are telic or atelic:

- (52) a. **ha-mixtav** hunax                                   **l-o**                   b-a-teva  
 the-letter put.PAST.PASS.3SG.M to-3SG.M in-the-box  
 ‘≈The letter was put in the box (mysteriously).’  
 b. **ha-šuga** neʔexl-a                                   **l-a**                   be-hanaʔa raba tox / bemešex xameš dakot  
 the-cake eat.PAST.MPASS.3SG.F to-3SG.F in-great delight in / for five minutes  
 ‘≈The cake has been eaten with great delight in/for five minutes.’

<sup>14</sup> In the case of VSO CDCs, the verb is prosodically emphasized.

<sup>15</sup> In SA the unmarked order for suffixed verbs denoting perfective/past is VSO, and the vast majority of the examples in this paper bear this form. The unmarked order in clauses featuring the prefixed verb is SVO.

<sup>16</sup> These are H. Borer's judgments, which we do not share.



‘Someone died.’

- b. saami mat-(\*l-o) šway  
Sami die.PAST-3SG.M-to-3SG.M a little  
‘Sami died a little.’

Example (56) contrasts with (25c), where iterative (metaphorical) events of dying are described, and with (38b), where a semantically plural subject is present, giving rise to more than one punctual event. Similarly, in example (57a) the occurrence of a singular object transforms the VP into one that describes a strictly punctual event, thus excluding the CD, in contrast to (57b), where the object is again plural.

- (57) a. salma waʔʔafət-(\*l-a) šii ləʕbe  
Salma stop.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F smgame  
‘Salma stopped some game.’  
b. salma waʔʔafət-l-a ləʕb-teen tlate  
Salma stop.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F game-DUAL three  
‘Salma stopped a couple of games.’

(57b) may be uttered, for instance, in a context where an athlete cancels several games due to an accident.

Interestingly, the only contexts which allow single punctual events with the CD are intensional contexts:

- (58) a. bi-kuun mat-l-o šii waaħed u ʕam-yʔul-uu mye  
MOD.3SG.M-be die.PAST-3SG.M-to-3SG.M sm one and PROG-3.say-PL hundred  
‘Only one person probably died and they are saying a hundred.’  
b. mat-l-o šii waaħed?  
die.PAST-3SG.M-to-3SG.M sm one  
‘Someone died?’

In (58a) the VP is embedded in a modal context, and in (58b) it is conveyed as an interrogative, in both cases circumventing denotation to a strictly punctual event. At this point we do not fully understand the nature of this lexical aspect restriction and its circumvention in intensional contexts. It is no doubt linked to the obligatoriness of vague measure modification operating in SA CDCs. However, we still maintain that the CD is not a lexical aspect operator affecting (a)telicity. The same restriction does not appear in MH, as illustrated by examples (52-53).

We turn now to consider the opinion that the CD is a viewpoint aspect operator. Several authors have also observed that the CD in MH has an aspectual effect of ongoingness. They suggest that these constructions are imperfective (Borer & Grodzinsky 1986, Halevy 2004). Although the ongoingness flavor is present in some of these constructions, it is certainly not the case that the CD introduces a progressive operator (see also Borer 2005), since there is no ongoing flavor to the passive and unaccusative examples of (52)-(53) above. These examples contain VPs describing instantaneous non-iterative eventualities, neither of which can be said to be ongoing. In MH, where morphological markings of viewpoint aspect are absent, the presence of the CD does not "compensate" for this lack. Aspectually speaking, the readings associated with MH CDCs are not different from those yielded by parallel simple

constructions, without the CD. Consider the following contrast, featuring an achievement VP in the present tense, where ongoingness is the only possible option for interpreting the clause:

- (59) a. ha-matos noxet axšav  
the-plane land.SM now  
‘The plane is landing now.’
- b. ha-matos noxet **l-o** axšav  
the-plane land.SM to-3SM now  
‘≈The plane is landing now.’

In SA, which displays overt morphological markings, the CD can combine with a progressive clause, exactly as with any other verb form, and again no alternation of the aspectual properties is observed.

- (60) Salma ʕam-tləfə-lla kam warʔet ʕəneb  
Salma PROG-roll.3SG.F-to-3SG.F several leave vine  
‘≈Salme is rolling several vine leaves.’

The following table summarizes the similarities and differences between the two languages presented in section 2 & 3.

(61)

	SA	MH
Nature of the CD	Affix-like	Clitic-like
Grammatical constraints	Obligatory AVMM	None
Verb types	All	All
Non-verbal predicates	No	Yes
Argument structure	association with any individual denoting arguments	association with any individual denoting arguments
Lexical aspect	Punctual events are excluded	No restrictions
Viewpoint aspect	No restrictions	No restrictions

#### 4. Interpretative effects

In the introduction, we provided a cursory description of the CD's interpretative contribution in SA and MH. After demonstrating, in the previous sections, the grammatical constraints operating in CDCs, and in particular after showing that the presence of the CD does not affect the argument structure nor the aspectual properties of a given sentence, we now turn to consider the CD's pragmatic contribution, showing that it does not alter the basic truth conditions of the sentence.

Before turning to discuss the pragmatic import of the CD, a general observation is in order: in both SA and MH, sentences containing the CD are not simple affirmative sentences conveying assertions. This can be shown by restrictions on uttering them out of the blue, as for instance in the following context, where person A runs into person B in the hallway, and after saying excitedly "You'll never guess what Mary just did!", continues with (62):

- (62) a. #salma ʕazaf-et-l-a                      ʕal-piano    šway                      SA  
           Salma play.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F    on-piano    a little  
           ‘Oh, nothing much, Salma played the piano a little.’
- b. #salma    nign-a                      l-a                      ba-psanter                      MH  
           Salma    play.PAST-3SG.F    to-3SG.F    on-piano  
           ‘Oh, nothing much, Salma played the piano.’

In uttering CDCs, speaker and hearer must share a quite substantial common ground regarding occurrences and participants, in comparison to a CD-less sentence. In the context provided here, persons A and B may both be familiar with Salma, but if B is, say, an accidental by-passer in the hallway, who does not know anything about A's relation or attitude towards Salma, B will not be able to accommodate (62). However, if the sentences in (62) were uttered without the CD, they would, at worst, convey information uninteresting to person B.

In the following two subsections, we will turn to examine similarities and differences between the two languages regarding the specific interpretative effects of the CD having to do with the speaker's stance. We will identify two meaning components: the first of which is related to the speaker's evaluation of the relevance of the underlying eventuality, and will be described in subsection 4.1; the other concerns the speaker's attitude towards the speaker, and will be presented in subsection 4.2.

#### 4.1 The expression of the eventuality's weak relevance

The presence of the CD adds to the basic assertion the impression that the events it describes are somewhat vague, or modest. Consider first those cases where there is no distinction between speaker and subject referent. The following example constitutes an answer to the question "What did you do this summer during your vacation?"

- (63) mši-təl-li                                      šway    w    rtəḥ-təl-li                                      šway  
           take.walks.PAST-1SG-to-1SG    a little    and    rest.PAST-1SG-to-1SG    a little  
           w    ʔare-təl-li    kam    ktaab  
           and read.PAST-1SG-to-1SG    several books

‘I just went for walks, I rested, and read some books, (you know, nothing very exciting).’

In (63), the speaker describes trivial activities that concord with the speaker's capabilities. Interestingly, the use of the CD in this way can give rise to effects of irony, as exemplified in (64), which can equally be considered an answer to the above question:

- (64) rəḥ-təl-li                                      kam yom                      ʕala tokyo  
           went.PAST-1SG-to-1SG    several day    to Tokoy,

tʃaʃe-təl-li                      kam marra    maʃ George Clooney  
 dine.PAST-1SG-to-1SG    several time    with George Clooney

‘I just went to Tokyo for several days, I dined several times with George Clooney, (you know, nothing very exciting).’

Here we witness fake modesty, which gives rise to irony. The speaker must be aware of her distinguished status and uses it in order to boast about activities that are extraordinary to the average person, but modest to her. Here is an additional example, where the subject is not stated in the first person.

(65) a. wəʃəl-l-o                                      kam maktuub    mbaareh  
 arrive.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M    several letter    yesterday  
 ‘Some letters arrived yesterday.’

b. wəʃəl-l-o                                      kam maktuub    xaʃiir            mbaareh  
 arrive.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M    several letter    dangerous    yesterday  
 ‘(≈only) Some dangerous letters arrived yesterday.’

In (65) the speaker notes the insignificant arrival of letters. An ironic effect can be obtained in (65b) with the insertion of the adjective *xaʃiir* ‘dangerous’. A contradictory import provides the sentence with an ironic flavor, as if the speaker wants to attenuate a grave situation. The same sentences without the CD express neutral facts. Accordingly, in (65'b) the effect of irony disappears:

(65') a. wəʃəl                                      kam maktuub    mbaareh  
 arrive.PAST.3SG.M    several letter    yesterday  
 ‘Some letters arrived yesterday.’

b. wəʃəl                                      kam maktuub    xaʃiir            mbaareh  
 arrive.PAST.3SG.M    several letter    dangerous    yesterday  
 ‘Some dangerous letters arrived yesterday.’

It is crucial to note that the interpretative effects in SA are mainly due to the presence of the CD, and not brought about by the obligatory attenuative vague measure modification. As illustrated in section 3.1, this modification is obligatory in the presence of the CD, and is not subject to the speaker's choice. The above examples without the CD clearly show that the attenuative vague measure modification alone, without the CD, does not give rise to the discussed effects. Moreover, MH CDCs convey similar interpretations without the grammatical requirement of attenuative vague measure modification. The following MH examples all specify that the described eventuality is viewed by the speaker as rather insignificant, an eventuality of weak relevance or blurred purpose. Here is the "vacation" example repeated in MH:

(66) a. tiyal-ti                                      l-i,            nax-ti            l-i            ve-kara-ti            l-i  
 take.walk.PAST-1SG to-1SG, rest.PAST-1SG to-1SG    and-read.PAST-1SG to-1SG  
 sfarim  
 books



MH and SA thus share the meaning component whereby the eventuality is seen as one of weak relevance, a banal happening.

#### 4.2 The speaker's attitude towards the subject

In both languages, CDCs also express the speaker's attitude towards the subject. However they differ with respect to its exact nature. We shall start by returning to the example at the beginning of this paper, to place it in a contrastive context that highlights the input of the CD. Consider first SA:

- (68) A tender encouraging mother (M) tells her husband (F), a strict father who is undermining his children's talents, about the children's performance at the end of the year show. The father proceeds to ask:

F. salma w saami raʔʂu-**l-on** šway ?  
 Salma and Sami dance.PAST.3PL-to-3PL a little  
 ‘Salma and Sami did some dancing around?’

The mother, bothered by the question, answers:

M.raʔʂu-**l-on** šway ?! raʔaʂ-uu ktiir mniiḥ !  
 dance.PAST.3PL-to-3PL a little dance.PAST.3PL-to-3PL very well  
 ‘Did some dancing around?! They danced very well!’

In the mother's answer we cannot find the CD, since for her it is not a minor issue and she believes in her children's dancing abilities, as opposed to the father, who does not. (68) cannot be reproduced in MH, where the speaker's attitude towards the subject is different. This will be presented a bit further below.

Additional SA examples illustrate the same effect, making more salient the speaker's attitude towards the referent of the subject DP, namely how she judges the subject's capabilities to accomplish the event described by the VP, as well as implying a certain degree of acquaintance or intimacy between speaker and subject.

- (69) a. **saami** hay əs-səne ʔaraa-**lo** šway  
 Sami this the-year read.PAST.3SG.M-to-3SG.M a little  
 ‘This year Sami actually did some reading (said contrary to the speaker's expectations from Sami).’
- b. **saami** hay əs-səne ʔaraa šway  
 Sami this the-year read.PAST.3SG.M a little  
 ‘This year Sami did some reading.’

In (69), the speaker, who does not hold Sami's intellect in high esteem, expresses that she is impressed with Sami's modest achievement. The same sentence without the CD neutrally expresses the fact that Sami has done some reading this year.

- (70) a. **salma** ʔar-ət-**l-a** kam ktaab bə-l-ʔəqtisaad  
 Salma read.PAST-3SG.F-to-3SG.F several book in-economics  
 (w ʕaamle ḥaala fahmaane!)



and making herself intelligent

‘Salma did nothing but read several books in economics (and now she acts as if she is so intelligent).’

- b. salma   ʔar-ət                      kam ktaab    bə-l-ʔəqtisaad  
Salma    read.PAST-3SG.F    several book    in-economics  
‘Salma read several books in economics.’

Similarly in (70a) the speaker does not attribute much importance to Salma’s book reading, evaluating it as insignificant. The addition in brackets illustrates that the speaker diverges from the referent of the subject DP *Salma* with respect to how they evaluate the described situation: for Salma the reading is significant, for the speaker it is not. (70b) expresses a neutral fact.

In the following example of an imperative, the speaker orders the addressee to do something that should be very easy and accessible, and not very significant. Again the speaker's estimate of the subject's capabilities is present in (71), but not in the neutral (71').

- (71) ʔraa-**l-ak**                      kam    kəlme    ʔabl l-faḥəṣ!  
read.IMP.2SG-to-2SG.F    several    word    before the-exam  
‘Just read a few words before the exam.’

- (71') ʔraa                      kam    kəlme    ʔabl l-faḥəṣ!  
read.IMP.2SG    several    word    before the-exam  
‘Read a few words before the exam.’

The reality of the speaker's attitude towards the subject's referent in constructions containing the CD is evident in situations that call for a formal register. Here the CD is pragmatically banned. Its inappropriateness is due to the somewhat demeaning nature of this attitude which is unacceptable in formal registers.

- (72) a. #saʕaadət    **l-safiir**                      waqʕə-**l-ak**                      hal-kam warʔa  
Excellency    the-ambassador    sign.IMP.SG.M-TO-2SG.M    this-several page  
‘Just sign these pages, your Excellency the ambassador.’  
b. saʕaadət    l-safiir                      waqʕə                      hal-kam warʔa  
Excellency the-ambassador    sign.IMP.SG.M    this-several page  
‘Sign these pages, your Excellency the ambassador.’

We now turn to show how the speaker's attitude towards the subject in the MH constructions differs from what we have seen in SA. Here the speaker distances herself from the subject, thus creating an effect of isolation to the referent of the subject DP. With non-animates, this creates an effect whereby the eventuality is perceived as autonomous, i.e. as happening without any external intervention.

- (73) a. **ha-masaʔit**    mitgalgel-et    **l-a**    leʔita  
the-truck    roll.PRES-SG.F    to-3SG.F    slowly  
‘The truck rolls (its way) slowly.’  
b. ʔat    ʔat    nivne-ta                      **l-a**    **ha-mangina**  
slow    slow    build.PAST.PASS.3SG.F    to-3SG.F    the-melody  
‘Little by little the melody was built up.’ (Internet)

- c. **ha-mixtav** hunax                      **l-o**              b-a-teva  
the-letter put.PAST.PASS.3SG.M to-3SG.M in-the-box  
‘The letter was put in the box (mysteriously).’ (Internet)
- d. **rut** yodaʕ-at                      **l-a**              ʔet ha-tšuva  
Ruth know.PRES-SG.F to-3SG.F ACC the-answer  
‘Ruth knows the answer (and keeps it to herself).’
- e. **dan** ʔohev                      **l-o**              ʔet gal  
Dan love.PRES.SG.M to-3SG.M ACC Gal  
‘Dan loves Gal (despite what anyone would think or say).’
- f. **tal** heʔemin                      **l-o**              be-xayzarim  
Tal believe.PAST.3SG.M to-3SG.M in-aliens  
‘Tal believed in aliens (despite what anyone would think or say).’

In examples (73a-c) the subject DP is involved in an eventuality without any information regarding how it came about, and what caused it. Although this information is retrievable from the passive voice in (73b-c) or from the inanimate nature of the subject DPs (73a), the presence of the CD confers the additional nuance that the eventuality happened independently of any external intervention. In examples with stative verbs (73d-f), a strong effect of isolation of the referents of the subject DPs is present. In these examples, the speaker is also understood to express some disapprobation of the subject’s actions or thoughts (see also fn. 10).

The two meaning components are not bound to appear separately; they can co-occur. Consider for instance (74):

- (74) yašavnu              šnenu    betox    ota meʕara ve-bentayim  
sat PAST-1PL two-1PL inside that cave and-meanwhile
- hi** ʔaxla                      **l-a**              kama dagim rekuvim  
she eat.PAST-3SG.F to-3SG.F several fish rotten

‘The two of us sat in that same cave, and meanwhile she ate some rotten fish.’ (Internet)

Here, the speaker both distances her-/himself from the other person, and expresses with marked irony the "insignificant" and "banal" eating of rotten fish.

However, it seems that in the case of positional verbs (see example (67c)), stative verbs (e.g. (73d-f)), and some adjectival predicates (cf. (24a-b), repeated below), it is easier to encounter the second meaning component.

- (75) a. **dan** (šuv) xole              **l-o**              hayom  
Dan (again) sick.M to-3SG.M today  
‘Dan is being sick again today (it somehow aggravates me, he might be doing it on purpose).’
- b. <sup>?</sup>**dan** ʕayef              **l-o**              me-ha-boker  
Dan tired.M to-3SG.M from-the-morning  
‘Dan is being tired since this morning (it somehow aggravates me, he might be doing it on purpose).’

The salience of this effect with statives does not mean that the first meaning component may not be present either. At this stage it is not our intention to try to provide an explanation of this observation. We will limit ourselves to the suggestion that in the absence of eventiveness, the CD merely conveys the speaker's attitude towards the referent of the subject DP, distancing herself from it, which gives rise to the observed isolating effect. The isolating effect is entirely absent in SA.

### 4.3 Summary

In this section we examined the interpretative effect of the CD, and attempted to isolate the core meaning conveyed in CDCs. We identified two axes, which are by no means necessarily independent of one another: the attitude of the speaker towards the relevance of the eventuality, which is manifested in a highly similar manner in the two languages, and the attitude of the speaker towards the subject of the clause, in which the two languages differ. In SA, the speaker does not expect much of the subject, whereas in MH the speaker distances herself away from the subject, creating an isolating effect. This picture is reminiscent of the one drawn by Horn (2008) with respect to non-selected dative constructions in dialects of American English. He argues that these datives contribute a conversational implicature of subject affect "relating to the satisfaction of the actual or perceived intention, goal, or preference of the subject" (p. 188).

In closing this section we wish to suggest that previous observations of authors who worked on MH CDCs regarding the specific aspectual flavor of these constructions, namely that they convey ongoingness or atelicity, are due to the backgrounding effect of these constructions illustrated at the outset of this section through the examples in (62). Similarly, we speculate that Borer & Grodzinsky's (1986) analysis of the CD as associated exclusively with the external argument may stem from the speaker's attitude towards the subject in MH, creating an isolating effect that portrays the eventuality as happening without external intervention, conferring "external argument-like properties" on the DP associated with the CD.

## 5. Conclusion

We have shown in this article that constructions containing Coreferential Datives express the speaker's view on the eventuality, seeing it as one of weak relevance, and the speaker's attitude towards the subject. We have also shown that the most important difference between the two languages is that in Syrian Arabic the presence of the Coreferential Dative obligatorily triggers a special type of modification: it must be modified by an attenuative vague measure. This modification is introduced either via argumental positions or via adverbial modification. Although most of the observations concerning the interpretative effects in MH are not new, we hope that we have made two novel contributions in this article: first, that we have succeeded in pinpointing more precisely the interpretative effects of MH constructions through the comparison with parallel SA ones; second, that we have discarded past views stemming from the literature on the MH CDCs, that the CD operates on event structure or argument structure.

From a broader typological perspective, it would be interesting to explore whether non-selected datives as the ones described here and in Horn (2008, and references cited therein) are only expected to occur in spoken language, such as SA, MH and the variety of French

mentioned in the beginning of this paper, rather than in written languages – the constructions, for instance, are absent from Standard Arabic.

Finally, the constructions surveyed in the present work and their interpretative effects lend strong support to the idea that pragmatic readings are not only computed post-compositionally, but may be directly introduced by grammatical elements at the subclause level (this idea is also present in Chierchia, Fox & Spector *to appear*). We hope that the comparative data collected and described here will enable an investigation of how grammar directly constrains pragmatics. For this purpose the comparison of SA and MH seems particularly valuable, since the two languages, which present many similarities in their CDCs, crucially differ regarding the issue of whether attenuative vague measure modification is imposed or not. The task would be to examine how the obligatoriness of attenuative vague measure modification is linked to the meaning differences between the languages. We leave this for future research.

### **Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Léa Nash, Ora Matushansky, Hagit Borer, Ivy Sichel, the audience of the “Structure of the verb phrase in Afroasiatic” conference at the University of Leiden 2005, and an anonymous reviewer for very helpful comments. All errors are our own.

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