

The interaction of negation with tense in Standard Arabic

Morphologically, Standard Arabic has six negative markers. These are *laa*, *lam*, *lan*, *lammaa*, *laysa* and *maa* (see, e.g., Sibawayhi 8th Century, 1938 edn; Fassi Fehri 1993, Benmamoun 2000). The distribution of these negative markers falls into three broad classes:

- Negative markers restricted to negate verbal sentences (*laa*, *lam*, *lammaa*, *lan*).
- A negative marker restricted to negate nominal sentences (*laysa*).
- A free Negative marker negates both verbal and nominal sentences (*maa*).

The interaction of negation with tense is highly remarkable with these three different classes. The first class of negatives mark the tense of the sentence. This can be shown in the following examples:

- (1) a. takallama r-rijaal-u.
 talk-3m-past the- men-Nom
 “The men talked”.
- b. lam yatakallam-Ø r-rijaal-u.
 neg.past 3m-talk-JUS the- men-Nom
 “The men did not talk.”
- (2) a. kataba zaid-un l-qiSSat-a.
 write.3ms Zaid-Nom the- story-Acc
 “Zaid has written the story.”
- b. lammaa ya-ktub-Ø zaid-un l-qiSSat-a.
 neg.Pf 3m-write-JUS Zaid-Nom the- story-Acc
 “Zaid has not written the story yet.”
- (3) a. sa-ya-drus-u T-Tullaab-u ghadan.
 fut-3m-study-IND the- students-Nom tomorrow
 “The students will study tomorrow”.
- b. lan ya-drus-a T-Tullaab-u ghadan.
 neg.fut 3m-study-SUB the- students-Nom tomorrow
 “The students will not study tomorrow”.
- (4) a. ya-ðhabu T-Taalib-u ʔila l-madrasat-i kula yawm-in.
 3m-go-Pres the-student-Nom to the-school-Gen every-Acc day-Gen
 “The student goes to school every day.”
- b. laa ya-ðhab-u T-Taalib-u ʔila l-madrasat-i.
 neg.Pres 3m-go-IND the-student.Nom to the-school-Gen
 Kula yawm-in
 every.Acc day.Gen
 “The student does not go to school every day.”

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Each negative marker in (1-4) inflects for tense. As a result, we find *lam* and *lamma* make a morphological alternation in the verb form. *Lam* is associated with the past tense interpretation, whereas *laamma* is associated with the perfect tense interpretation. Accordingly, *lamma* in (2b) negates the occurrence of the situation up to a given reference point. Thus, (2b) indicates that ‘*Zaid has not written the story but there was an intention to bring about the situation*’. As for *lan*, it allows only future tense interpretation. Finally, *laa* occurs in sentences with present tense interpretation.

Whereas the negative *laysa* in the second class selects a particular type of tense, namely present tense interpretation:

- (5) *laysa* *ahmad-u* *muṣallim-an*.
 Neg.Cop Ahmad-Nom teacher –Acc
 “Ahmad is not a teacher.”
- (6) * *laysa* *ahmad-u* *kana* *huna* *ʔamsi*.
 Neg.Cop Ahmad-Nom be.past here yesterday
 Intending reading: “Ahmad was not here yesterday.”
- (7) **laysa* *sa-yakuunu* *l-hall-u* *jaahiz-an* *ghadan*.
 Neg.Cop fut-be the-solution-Nom ready-Acc tomorrow.”

Interestingly, *maa* in the third class, being not a head negative, is not associated with a particular tense, and hence co-occurring with all predicate types (Fassi Fehri (1993:162):

- (8) a. *maa* *zaid-un* *kataba* *Ŝ-Ŝ iŕ-a*.
 Neg Zaid-Nom wrote.past.3ms the-poetry-Acc
 “Zaid did not write poetry.”
- b. *maa* *zaid-un* *ya-ktubu* *Ŝ-Ŝ iŕ-a*.
 Neg Zaid -Nom 3m-write-Present the-poetry-Acc
 “Zaid does not write poetry.”
- c. *maa* *Zaid-un* *kaatib-un*.
 Neg Zaid-Nom writer.Acc
 “Zaid is not a writer.”

Within the Minimalist Program, the latest theoretical model in transformational generative grammar, This paper aims to discuss The interaction of negation with tense in the previous data to indicate a tight relationship between negative heads and tense as proposed by Fassi Fehri (1993), Haegeman (1995), Zanuttini (1997) and Collberg & Håkansson (1999), among others.