Semitic Languages (esp. Sudanese Colloquial Arabic [SCA])

Suggested questions to address:
• What kind of unusual morphological properties does the language have?
• How does the morphology interface with the syntax?
  o What kinds of features / meanings are expressed by those morphemes?
  o Is there any evidence for morphological / phonological processes across distinct syntactic words and / or distinct roots?
• How does the morphology interface with the phonology?
  o What kinds of phonological rules are present?
  o To what extent are the proposed phonological rules synchronic (v. diachronic)?
  o Are any of the phonological rules keyed to particular morphemes?
• What kinds of new perspectives on linguistics do you see in this work (perhaps inspired by the language)?
• How do the regular and idiosyncratic interact in this language?

Unusual morphological properties:
Templatic / distributed morphemic system:
“root” of (usually 3) consonants
[for relatively independent evidence that the triconsonantal root is a linguistic reality, see Prunet et al. (2000)]
grammatical / relational information conveyed by vowel pattern manipulations / “augmentations” of consonantal and vocalic pieces
Also affixes (for subject-verb agreement and pronominal objects; perhaps prefixes for some verb types)

Verbal “measures” in SCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Ex.</th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Ex.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1a2a3</td>
<td>kasar</td>
<td>ya12a</td>
<td>yaksir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>1a:2a3</td>
<td>kassar</td>
<td>yi1a:2i3</td>
<td>yikassir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>1a:2a3</td>
<td>ka:tab</td>
<td>yi1a:2i3</td>
<td>yika:tib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>?a12a3</td>
<td>?a:lan</td>
<td>ya12i3</td>
<td>ya:lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>t1a:2a3</td>
<td>?itkassar</td>
<td>yit1a:2a3</td>
<td>yitkassar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>t1a:2a3</td>
<td>?itka:tab</td>
<td>yit1a:2a3</td>
<td>yitka:tab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>n1a2a3</td>
<td>?i:nkasar</td>
<td>yin1a2i3</td>
<td>yi:nkasir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>lta2a3</td>
<td>?istalam</td>
<td>yi1ta:2i3</td>
<td>yistalim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>sta12a3</td>
<td>?istafham</td>
<td>yista12a3</td>
<td>yistafham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanings of measures:
I: general meaning of root
II: causative / intense / evaluation
III: reciprocal
IV: virtually identical to measure I in SCA
V: reflexive of measure II
VI: reflexive of measure III
VII: reflexive of measure I
VIII: reflexive of measure I, sometimes identical to measure VI
X: reflexive of measure IV or V

These “measures” can be considered to be the conglomeration of at least three individual morphemes—the root (the set of 3 ordered consonants or “radicals”), the manipulation of that root (particularly the gemination or lack thereof of the second radical), and the vowel melody.

**Phonological processes across word boundaries:**

There are a number of phonological processes that occur more-or-less freely across word boundaries. Here are a few examples:

* The preservation of syllable well-formedness – SCA syllables must have onsets of one and only one consonant. So, for words in isolation that begin with consonant clusters epenthesis must occur (e.g., measures V-X above). However, the epenthesis can be lessened or even eliminated if the word in question follows another word and so can syllabify with it:

  /ʃtara/ → /ʃif.tara/ ‘he bought’
  /kama:l # ʃtara/ → /ka.ma.l # if.ta.ra/ ‘Kamal bought’
  /waladu # ʃtara/ → /wa.la.du # f.ta.ra/ ‘his son bought’

* The deletion of non-stressed high vowels (when acceptable syllable structure can be maintained) across word boundaries:

  /ʔukul attamur → /ʔukl attamur/ ‘eat the dates’
  /ʔalkalib allakalu → /ʔalkalb allakalu/ ‘the dog that ate it’
  /ʃugul ahmad → /ʃugl ahmad/ ‘Ahmad’s job’

* The assimilation of features across word boundaries:

  def ‘guest’
  dev zaki ‘Zaki’s guest’
  dev gassim ‘Gasim’s guest’
def kabir  ‘an old guest’
bit  ‘daughter/girl’
bid bakri  ‘Bakri’s daughter’
bid gasim  ‘Gasim’s daughter’
kitab  ‘book’
kitaf farid  ‘Farid’s book’
kitap samja  ‘Samia’s book’
kitab zaki  ‘Zaki’s book’
balad  ‘country’
balat farid  ‘Farid’s country’
balas samja  ‘Samia’s country’
balad3 d5ala:  ‘Jalal’s country’
balad gasim  ‘Gasim’s country’
samak  ‘fish’
samak farid  ‘Farid’s fish’
samag zaki:  ‘Zaki’s fish’
samag d5ala:  ‘Jalal’s fish’
samak xalid  ‘Khalid’s fish’
samay yali  ‘expensive fish’

**Interaction between morphology and phonology**

Besides the various types of feature assimilations that occur due to consonants becoming adjacent due to morphological processes, the initial /h/ of some suffixes is deleted when the suffix is attached to a (non-geminate) consonant-final stem:

\[
\begin{align*}
/darab+ha/ & \rightarrow \text{da.rá.ba} \quad \text{‘he hit her’} \\
/darab+hum/ & \rightarrow \text{da.rá.bum} \quad \text{‘he hit them (m)’} \\
/darab+hin/ & \rightarrow \text{da.rá.bin} \quad \text{‘he hit them (f)’} \\
/naxal+ha/ & \rightarrow \text{na.xá.la} \quad \text{‘her palm trees’} \\
/naxal+hum/ & \rightarrow \text{na.xá.lum} \quad \text{‘their (m) palm trees’} \\
/naxal+hin/ & \rightarrow \text{na.xá.lin} \quad \text{‘their (f) palm trees’} \\
/kutub+ha/ & \rightarrow \text{ku.tú.ba} \quad \text{‘her books’} \\
/kutub+hum/ & \rightarrow \text{ku.tú.bum} \quad \text{‘their (m) books’} \\
/kutub+hin/ & \rightarrow \text{ku.tú.bin} \quad \text{‘their (f) books’}
\end{align*}
\]

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1 When the final consonant of the stem is geminate, an epenthetic [a] is inserted between the stem and the consonant-initial suffix, preventing deletion of the /h/ (e.g., ma.sán na.hum, ‘their (m) sharpener’).
cf.:

dawa(:)² + ha → da.wá:.ha  ‘her medicine’
dawa(:) + hum → da.wá:.hum  ‘their (m) medicine’
dawa(:) + hin → da.wá:.hin  ‘their (f) medicine’
?abu(:) + ha → ?a.bú:.ha  ‘her father’
?abu(:) + hum → ?a.bú:.hum  ‘their (m) father’
?abu(:) + hin → ?a.bú:.hin  ‘their (f) father’

also cf. the following, which show that [h] is not epenthetic:

galam + ak → gá.la.mak  ‘your (m sg) pen’
galam + u → gá.la.mu  ‘his pen’
dawa(:) + ak → da.wá:k  ‘your (m sg) medicine’
dawa(:) + u → da.wá:  ‘his medicine’
?abu(:) + ak → ?a.bú:k  ‘your (m sg) father’
?abu(:) + u → ?a.bú:  ‘his father’

This seems to be limited to inter-morpheme situations, since when one of the radicals is [h] it is not deleted when it comes after another radical (e.g., ?a.na # fi.him.ta → ?a.na # f.him.ta, ‘I understood’; see also the examples of measure X above).

References:


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² The underlying length of these root-final vowels is not clear. Word-finally (i.e., in unsuffixed cases), they are short. Hamid (1984) comes to the tentative conclusion that these are underlyingly short vowels with a lengthening rule before consonant-initial suffixes (as well as a rule of vowel assimilation to account for such forms as da.wáa and ?a.búuk below). However, it is far from clear that this is the correct analysis.