

ORIGINALNI NAUČNI RAD

DOI: 10.5937/reci2518025M

UDC: 811.411.21'36

orcid.org/0009-0002-4877-4841

Madyan T. Matar*
Paris Cité University

ARABIC GRAMMATICAL TEXT: VARIATION, PROLIFERATION, AND EVOLUTION IN KNOWLEDGE CIRCULATION

Abstract: Situated within the lineage of two hubs of grammatical tradition (the Sanskrit and the Hellenistic traditions), the Arabic grammatical tradition represents a captivating intellectual domain that preserves a rich assemblage of linguistic resources. The output of Arab grammarians culminated in a vast textual corpus production, a manifestation of the multiplicity of methodological frameworks and intellectual aspirations that propelled their erudition. However, the textual medium's role in the circulation of grammatical knowledge is an area that has received scant attention in academic circles, marginalizing a crucial aspect of its intellectual evolution. Employing an epistemological approach that questions the substance of grammatical doctrines and the conditions of possibility for their elaboration and dissemination, this article proposes to sketch a synthetic analysis of the textual typologies in the Arabic grammatical tradition and to map their trajectories of evolution. It further aims to argue that such textual plurality was instrumental in advancing the Arabic grammatical knowledge and ensuring the vigorous and efficacious circulation of its theoretical tenets.

* madyan.rain1992@gmail.com

Key words: Arabic, grammar, text, epistemology, variation, evolution, proliferation, circulation.

1. Thematization of grammatical texts: orientations

1.1 Absence of early canonical texts and initial oral transmission

The incipience of the Arabic grammatical tradition is rooted in an era when the Middle East was home to a flourishing intellectual culture. According to extant sources, the beginnings of this tradition crystallized in the city of Basra, located in the south of present-day Iraq (cf. Larcher, 2007). Notwithstanding evidence from historical sources that grammarians active during the tradition's formative century (the 1st/7th century)¹ undertook significant linguistic exploration into the Arabic language, their complete output has not endured. This lacuna is exemplified by the absence of treatises such as the *Ikmāl* and the *Ġāmi'*, works of grammar credited to 'Īsā b. 'Umar al-Ṭaqafī (d. 149/766), an attribution subsequently challenged by Ibn al-'Anbārī (d. 577/1181) (Ibn al-Anbārī, 1985: 30). The erudite undertakings of grammarians in the inaugural century of the tradition consequently did not culminate in a definitive canonical text to serve as an orthodoxy for the field of *naḥw* "grammar". The epistemological character of the period was instead defined by a predominantly oral tradition, as evidenced by the oral declension of the accusative case in Qur'anic readings (Zubaydī, 1973: 33). This tradition was perpetuated through a formalized chain of transmission tracing back to 'Abū al-'Aswad al-Du'alī (d. 69/689) - the putative founder of Arabic grammar- and subsequently maintained by a succession of scholars including 'Anbasa b. Ma'dān al-Fīl (m. ?)², Maymūn al-'Aqran (m. ?), Naṣr b. 'Āṣim al-Layṭī (d. 89/708), 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abī 'Ishāq al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 117/735), and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz (d. 117/735). Despite the constraints of writing as an onerous and technically underdeveloped practice, the culmination of this early period of oral transmission was not achieved until the late 2nd/8th century with the composition of *al-Kitāb* by Sībawayhi (d. 180/796), the first exhaustive systematization of Arabic linguistic norms. Beyond its status as a near-definitive descriptive analysis of Arabic language, the volume serves as an invaluable documentary resource for reconstructing the methodological and intellectual practices that characterized the formative phase of the Arabic grammatical tradition (Baalbaki, 2008 : 2-23).

¹ The dual dating (Hijri/Gregorian) will be used consistently in this paper. The transliteration of Arabic terms into the Latin alphabet follows the Arabica phonetic system. This framework, distinguished by its scholarly precision and methodological consistency, is the established standard for academics and Arabists and is published by Brill.

² This suggests that information regarding the date of this grammarian's death is unavailable.

1.2 Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*: descriptive codification and hermeneutic construction

Sībawayhi's *Kitāb* is widely regarded as an unprecedented theoretical achievement that profoundly shaped the Arabic grammatical tradition. Building upon the teachings legacy of his predecessors, especially his mentors al-Ḥalīl (d. 170/786), 'Īsā b. 'Umar al-Ṭaqafī (d. 149/766), and 'Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' (d. 154/770), the erudite Persian authored a magisterial volume that systematized the foundational tenets of grammatical reasoning. This treatise, however, while ostensibly a descriptive compilation aimed at codifying the nascent norms of Arabic, is constituted by a text of manifest complexity, a difficulty which proliferates across numerous levels. Firstly, the hermeneutic challenge posed by the author's methodology is particularly acute, as the opus is incapable of addressing a broad readership. This inaccessibility is principally attributable to its pervasive and under-defined technical jargon. The epistemic transmission of the *Kitāb*'s content predicates an indispensable mediation process, the objective of which is the decryption of its specialized nomenclature and the concretization of its derivative theoretical constructs. This interpretive imperative, fundamental to rendering the text intelligible, extends beyond initiates to encompass even erudite grammarians outside the immediate scholarly lineage of Sībawayhi (d. 180/796). The historical testimony of al-Zubaydī (d. 379/989)- that al-'Aḥfaṣ (d. 215/830) instructed al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/805) in the *Kitāb*'s meanings-serves to corroborate this very phenomenon of intellectual mediation (Zubaydī, 1973: 73). Secondly, the treatise's structure is characterized by a thematic arrangement that stands in contrast to the organizational paradigms conventional to grammatical textbooks. These later works are normatively structured around a methodical syllabus, partitioned into balanced units and subunits, to optimally serve the pedagogical objectives of instruction, specifically the explication of grammatical categories such as pronouns, verbal systems, adverbial modifiers, appositive constructions, and related phenomena. The Sībawayhian presentational matrix finds its historical rationale in the nascent stage of the Arabic grammatical tradition at the time of the *Kitāb*'s composition, which predated the maturation of the conceptual apparatus required for a systematic taxonomy.

2. Manualization of grammatical texts: didactic aims

2.1 Development and specialization of post-Sībawayhian period

Steeped in the doctrinal legacy of Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, subsequent grammarians engaged in prolific production, yielding a vast corpus of grammatical works that ranged from comprehensive systematic treatises to meticulous commentaries (cf. Troupeau, 2000). Their writings, which deploy the analytical tools, methodological procedures, and theoretical constructs of the grammatical system, hold a position of unrivalled canonical authority within the Arabic grammatical tradition. Their canonical status is predicated on the successful elaboration of grammatical norms and their circulation across successive scholarly generations. This tradition is exemplified by a corpus of seminal works, including al-

Mubarrad's (d. 285/898) *Muqtaḍab* (on systematizing the grammatical domain), Ibn al-Warrāq's (d. 381/991) *ʿIlal al-naḥw* (on grammatical rationales), al-Zağğāgī's (d. 337/949) *ʿĪdāḥ fī ʿilal al-naḥw* (on elucidating grammatical causes), al-Suhaylī's (d. 581/1185) *Natāʾiḡ al-fikr fī al-naḥw* (on the processes of grammatical thought), al-ʿUkbarī's (d. 616/1219) *Lubāb fī ʿilal al-bīnāʾ wa-l-ʾiʾrāb* (an analysis of the underlying causes of grammatical constructions), and al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Iqtirāḥ fī ʿilm ʾuṣūl al-naḥw* (on theoretical and methodological foundations of Arabic grammar). Even a cursory examination of this corpus illuminates the central theoretical and methodological debates that engaged grammarians, particularly concerning the *qiyās* "analogy" and the precedence of *samāʾ* "attested data" (e.g., Ibn al-Warrāq, 1999: 514-515; Suhaylī, 1992: 328).

While the primary impetus behind early grammatical texts resided in the normative codification of the Arabic language and the systematic parsing of its elemental components (Owens, 1990: 35-54), these texts concurrently exhibited a concern with particular sociolinguistic facets, thus furnishing a record of stratified linguistic practices across social groups, as exemplified by the differentiated behavior of the negative particle *mā* among the Banū Tamīm and the ʿAhl al-Ḥiğāz (Sībawayhi, 1983: I, 57-59). This suggests that the trajectory of Arabic grammatical thought was defined by an ongoing epistemic recalibration of its core paradigms (cf. Versteegh, 1982). Transcending the narrow purview of formal grammar, a significant number of grammarians pursued a more expansive research agenda, methodologically incorporating broader linguistic inquiry into their analytical frameworks. Philological textbooks illustrating this expansion include Ibn Durayd's (d. 321/933) *Ġamharat al-luġa* (a complete inventory of the Arabic language), Ibn Ġinnī's (d. 392/1002) *Ḥaṣāʾiṣ* (on Arabic linguistic particularities), Ibn Fāris's (d. 395/1004) *Šāḥibī fī fiqh al-luġa* (theoretical foundations of Arabic linguistics), al-Baṭalyawsi's (d. 521/1127) *Risāla fī al-luġa* (theoretical essay on language), and al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Muzḥir fī ʿulūm al-luġa* (encyclopedic treatment of linguistic sciences). The advent of this philological inclination engendered a significant enlargement of the domain of Arabic linguistic analysis, thereby permitting a substantially more rigorous investigation of the foundational texts through the methodical incorporation of rare data, termed *nawādir* (ʿAnsārī, 1981: 325-340). This development subsequently institutionalized linguistic study as a fundamental element of Arabic grammarians' scholarly endeavors (cf. Peña Martín, 1988), which witnessed a concomitant and pronounced diversification and intensification of intellectual pursuits. Put another way, though initially characterized by a generalist orientation, ultimately supplied grammarians with the epistemological rationale to pursue more refined lines of exploration. This engendered a process of progressive specialization within the Arabic grammatical tradition, manifesting in the composition of specialized treatises aimed at illuminating the operational principles of specific linguistic structures in Arabic. The phenomenon of specialization is materially evidenced in a series of handbooks dedicated to distinct linguistic

features. The tradition produced Quṭrub's (d. 206/821) and Ibn al-'Anbārī's (d. 328/940) *Addād* (lexical antonymy), al-Farrā's (d. 207/822) and Ibn al-Tustarī's (d. 361/972) *Muḍakkkar wa-l-mu'annaṭ* (gender morphology), al-Zağğāğ's (d. 311/923) and Ibn Fāris's (d. 395/1004) *Lamāt* (the polyfunctionality of the particle *lām*), and Ibn Ğinnī's (d. 392/1002) *Ilal al-taṭniya* (morpho-phonological rules of the dual) and *'Alfāz al-mahmūza* (phonology of the glottal stop), etc.

2.2 The foundational pedagogical vocation of arabic grammar

Arabic language has historically exhibited multifaceted linguistic complexity (Versteegh, 1997a: 9-147). This inherent complexity was exacerbated by non-standard linguistic practices, adversely affecting native command. Consequently, grammarians embedded pedagogical aims at the very heart of their project from the tradition's incipient stages (cf. Kashner, 2018). The primary manifestation of this trend was the methodical inculcation of grammatical rules, which engendered an explanatory enterprise to resolve points of obscurity. Unsurprisingly, a considerable corpus of scholarship eventuated in didactic handbooks. The grammatical text underwent evolutionary transformations, oriented toward optimizing knowledge dissemination in compliance with evolving pedagogical exigencies. This didactic turn mirrors a process of pedagogization, gradually institutionalized within Arabic grammatical studies, which transformed the epistemic channels of linguistic knowledge dissemination (cf. Aljassar & Owens, 2015). The etiology of this development is illuminated by grammarians' pronounced commitment to promulgating their idiosyncratic pedagogical methodologies. This intellectual drive impelled them to devise personalized treatises, inscribing the tradition with their didactic authority. This paradigm was implemented by grammarians such as al-Zamaḥṣārī. His *al-Mufaṣṣal* provides a learner-oriented, systematic synthesis focused on case-ending mechanisms. Rather than overwhelming the learner with the complexity of grammatical theory, the author distills the fundamental principles of grammar, establishing them as the central framework of his simplified methodology. A parallel project is evident in Ibn Hišām al-Anṣārī's *Muğnī al-labīb*, conceived to emancipate students from auxiliary literature (commentaries, glosses, treatises) which made the learning process long, tedious, and disorganized. The book is defined by its detailed explanation of particles and schematization of linguistic attributes, furnishing a pedagogy rooted in categorization. Its aim is to furnish students with an autonomous reference work, both thorough and lucid, thereby obviating the need for them to navigate an extensive library. It constitutes the functional equivalent of a modern course manual.

2.3 Taxonomic innovations and didactic structuring of treatises

The pedagogical efficacy of grammatical manuals was intrinsically linked to their textual architecture, which governed the reception and cognitive assimilation of linguistic knowledge, prompted grammarians to undertake a methodical effort of classifying grammatical principles (cf. Taha, 2018). In response, they engaged in a project of epistemic organization, constructing expository systems and taxonomic structures optimized for their pedagogical textbooks. This undertaking was necessitated by the imperative to reformulate canonical texts into simplified expositions. Within the surviving texts, Ibn al-Sarrāḡ's (d. 316/929) *ʿUṣūl* stands as the earliest example of a systematically organized didactic handbook. His contribution constitutes an epistemic break from the taxonomic paradigm established by Sībawayhi (d. 180/796) and perpetuated by al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898). He pioneered a coherent textual architecture that introduced a transformative didactic framework. This reorganization is materially realized through the systematic institution of *ʿabwāb* "chapters" devoted to distinct grammatical categories, such as *tamyīz* "specification" and *nidāʾ* "vocative" (Ibn al-Sarrāḡ, 1999 : I, 222-261 ; 329-378), thereby reconfiguring the comprehensive structural approach of prior scholarship. The grammatical text was thus subject to a gradual transformation, characterized by refined taxonomic reorganizations consciously engineered to attenuate its intricacy and maximize its functional congruence with instructional exigencies. Ibn al-Sarrāḡ's innovation exerted a discernible influence on subsequent grammarians like al-Zaḡḡāḡī (d. 337/949), al-Fārisī (d. 377/987), and Ibn Ğinnī (d. 392/1002). Their works exhibit a commitment to architectural coherence and expository lucidity, incorporating granular categories that signal a profound realignment in presenting linguistic thought (Zaḡḡāḡī, 1984: 105-146; Fārisī, 1969: 81-139; Ibn Ğinnī, 1972: 55-71). This development highlights a long-standing focus on pedagogical architecture within the Arabic grammatical tradition, a concern that achieved its most refined expression in Ibn ʿĀḡurrūm's (d. 723/1323) *Naẓm al-ʿāḡurrūmiyya*. The genesis of these manuals exemplifies the grammarians' erudite attainments, whose interlinked grammatical formalization with meticulous organizational schemata to enable the unencumbered propagation of erudition.

2.4 The proliferation of versified grammars texts

Grammarians employed a pluralism of writing patterns, indexically tracing shifts in epistemic and socio-cultural frameworks. Notwithstanding prose predominated, they demonstrated a concomitant recourse to poetic composition, capitalizing on its mnemonic efficacy and instructional utility. Carter (2020: 460) has observed that this methodology was utilized in classical antiquity and emulated within Latin scholarship, proposing that the emergence of scientific verse in Arabic constitutes an extension of this enduring transmissional paradigm. Our research into the Arabic grammatical tradition shows that al-Ḥalīl (d. 170/786) executed a key innovation by crafting his *al-Manẓūma al-naḥwiyya*, a 293 verse poetic composition that marks the earliest endeavor to systematize the foundational

principles of Arabic grammar within a metrical and rhyming framework³. Despite ongoing debate regarding its parenetic intentions, versified grammars became a recognized element within the corpus of Arab grammarians. Defying expectation, this tradition persisted beyond al-Ḥalīl's precedent, evolving into a prolific intellectual current. It was adopted by a substantial plurality of grammarians, including Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933), Niṭawayhi (d. 323/935), al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), Ibn al-Dahhān (d. 569/1174), al-Yashkurī (d. 370/980), al-Bārāzī (d. 467/1075), al-Naṭanzī (d. 497/1103), and 'Izz al-Dīn b. Ma'qīl (d. 644/1246), signaling its entrenched scholarly status. In the 6th/12th century, Ibn Mu'ī (d. 628/1231) pioneered a novel form of grammatical verse termed the *'Alfiyya*, a poetic composition of approximately a thousand distichs. This innovation precipitated a paradigm shift, gaining traction as hermeneutic commentaries and analytical refinements escalated the intricacy of pedagogical acquisition. Coeval with these developments, Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274) composed his own *'Alfiyya*, which garnered a more profound reception and secured a far more lasting legacy than his predecessor's work (cf. Glazer, 1941). Nor should one disregard the deliberate recourse to versification by grammarians, who engaged in this practice not only for the pleasure of textual composition, aimed at cultivating a heightened sensitivity to grammatical importance among neophytes, as illustrated by the attributed work of al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/805) (Muqri', 1993: 53-54), but also to formulate incisive apologetic responses, epitomized by Mu'āḍ al-Harrā's (d. 187/803) poetic polemic, which systematically critiques and devalues the arguments of his adversarial interlocutor (Zubaydī, 1973: 125-126). Synthesizing these data, it is empirically demonstrable that the strategies employed by grammarians to consolidate their intellectual efforts toward textual production precipitated a paradigm shift not solely in writings conventions but also in the very epistemic representation of grammatical scholarship. This shift assumed critical importance, as it engendered a transformative reconfiguration of the mechanisms governing the circulation of grammatical learning.

2.5 The emergence of grammatical synoptic texts

The proliferation of scholarly expertise in grammar throughout the tradition's development engendered a commensurate amplification in textual production. This correlation is principally attributable to the preeminent position of grammar within the hierarchy of Islamic sciences and the continuous regeneration of pedagogical exigencies among learners (cf. Levin, 2004). This recognition prompted numerous grammarians to conclude that the intricate explanatory scaffolding characterizing grammatical volumes

³ If Arabic prosody is constituted by an inventory of sixteen canonical meters, Carter (2020: 449) underscores that the *rağaz* meter is most conventionally deployed in pedagogical poetic compositions, specifically in its *muzdawīğ* form, a structure wherein paired hemistichs rhyme and alternate lineally.

ultimately compromised their didactic utility. This epistemological shift highlighted the pedagogical insufficiency of their extant treatises relative to the heterogeneous aptitudes of learners, particularly when engaging with linguistically intricate content. In response, they embarked upon a project of textual adjustment, producing synoptic versions that encapsulated core grammatical principles to provide easier access to mastery of this knowledge. The impetus for this trajectory emerged in the post-Sibawayhian era, notably through al-Zağğāg (d. 311/923), credited as the first grammarian to formalize this method within a dedicated grammatical compendium. Notwithstanding the unfortunate loss of the work, its title, *Muḥtaṣar al-naḥw* "Synopsis of Grammar", furnishes us with a foundation for inferring its thematic and structural contours. This innovation engendered an erudite tradition wherein numerous grammarians produced epitomized texts to optimize pedagogical accessibility to rudimentary grammatical constructs for initiates. Key exponents of this intellectual current encompass figures such as Ibn Kaysān (d. 299/912), al-Tibrīzī (d. 502/1109), Ibn al-'Anbārī (d. 577/1181), and Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274). It demonstrates that the advent of epitomized grammatical treatises represented a critical juncture in the codification of pedagogical methodologies. It confirms that grammarians' deliberate simplification of textual form in didactic compendia coincided with a historical moment wherein the exigency of widespread knowledge propagation superseded epistemic refinement. It illustrates the grammarians' conscious, methodological project of transmuting knowledge into a structured corpus of didactic instruments, calibrated to the pedagogical requirements of their field.

3. Commentary on grammatical texts: extensions

3.1 Centrality of grammatical commentary in the arabic grammatical tradition

The elaboration of commentaries pertaining to the Arabic language and its grammatical structures occupied a position of paramount prestige within grammarians' pursuits. This remains the case despite Versteegh's thesis that the entirety of the Arabic grammatical tradition may be interpreted as a commentary on the foundational text of Sibawayhi (Versteegh, 1997b: 39). An analysis of surviving texts indicates that grammarians methodically aimed to explain both the formal structure and the theoretical foundations inherent in the corpuses produced by prior authorities within the tradition. This explicative continuum is corroborated by the remarkable efflorescence of commentary literature, each volume representing an epistemic node in the perpetuation and refinement of the grammatical tradition. Exemplary cases include Ibn Ġinnī's (d. 392/1002) commentary on al-Māzinī's (d. 248/862) *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf*, Ibn al-Ġabbān's (d. 425/1034) commentary on Ṭa'lab's (d. 291/904) *Faṣīḥ*, Ibn al-Ḥaššāb's (d. 567/1172) commentary on al-Ġurġānī's (d. 471/1078) *Kitāb al-Ġumal*, Ibn Ya'īs's (d. 643/1246) commentary on al-Zamaḥṣārī's (d. 538/1144) *Mufaṣṣal*, and al-'Astarābādī's (d. 688/1289) commentary on Ibn al-Ḥāġib's (d. 646/1249) *Šāfiya*. In spite of the lacunose record of some Arabic grammatical

commentaries⁴, wherein a substantial number of texts survive in fragmentary form, remain untraceable, or are merely cited in ancillary sources, a hermeneutic engagement with the extant corpus facilitates a nuanced retrospection of the evolving explanatory paradigms employed by grammarians over successive centuries. The structural foundation of these methodologies resides in the dialectical relationship between two textual strata: the *matn* "core text" and its commentary superstructure, which simultaneously incorporates the *matn* and amplifies it through exposition and ancillary information.

It is evident that Sībawayhi's *Kitāb* and Ibn Mālik's *'Alfiyya* constitute the canonical stand of the tradition, having generated the most sustained readership and the most voluminous commentary literature historically. Be that as it may, the emergence of grammatical commentaries was driven by the epistemic objective of cultivating a more nuanced comprehension of grammatical knowledge through explanations, ranging from concise annotations to comprehensive dissections of interpreted elements. These commentaries functioned as instrumental mechanisms for elucidating implicit postulates and resolving interpretive ambiguities embedded within antecedent thought, thereby facilitating their critical reassessment and doctrinal refinement. Embedded within this paradigm, Ibn al-Ṭarāwa's (d. 526/1132) composition *Risālat al-'Ifṣāḥ* exemplifies a critical-philological engagement with the fallacies discerned in al-Fārisī's (d. 377/987) core text (Ibn al-Ṭarāwa, 1996 : 57-60, 98-99). Such revisionist praxis reconfigured the epistemological boundaries of the core text, simultaneously catalyzing the systematization of a more holistic and epistemically robust body of grammatical knowledge. This practice enabled grammarians to sustain a dialectical continuity with the core text whilst archiving the epistemic transformations inherent in its theoretical propositions throughout its spatio-temporal dissemination and its hermeneutic re-engagements across varied fields. The grammatical commentary is thereby reconceptualized as a complex heuristic apparatus, engineered to actualize and optimize the generative theoretical potential of the core text.

3.2 Heuristic and epistemological functions of commentary

Research into the epistemological foundations governing the construction of grammatical commentaries indicates that this practice originated from a concerted desire endeavor to mediate and disseminate knowledge. This impulse was necessitated by the

⁴ This was the case for several commentaries written between the late 2nd/8th century and the first half of the 3rd/9th century, including (1) al-Bāhilī's (d. 257/871) *Nukat 'alā Kitāb Sībawayhi*, (2) al-Mubarrad's (d. 285/898) *Šarḥ Kitāb Sībawayhi*, (3) al-'Anbārī's (d. 328/940) *Šarḥ al-'alifāt al-mubtadi'āt fī al-'asmā' wa-l-'af'āl*, al-Zağğāğī's (d. 337/949) (4) *Šarḥ Kitāb al-'alif wa-l-lām*, (5) Ibn Durustawayhi's (d. 347/958) *Šarḥ al-Muqtaḍab*, among others.

profound complexity and often esoteric character of primary texts, which constituted obstacles for initiates. The foundational text thus underwent a process of adaptive reinterpretation, aimed at resolving ambiguities and enhancing its accessibility through elucidative exemplification. This methodology is typified in the interpretive treatment of *binā* 'indeclinability' within al-Fārisī's (d. 377/987) *ʿĪdāh* and subsequently subjected to comprehensive analysis in al-Ġurġānī's (d. 471/1078) commentary, *al-Muqtaṣid* (Fārisī, 1969: 15-16; Ġurġānī, 1982: I, 125-154). It must be acknowledged, however, that occasional presence of terminological imprecision in the core text, which is at times replicated without critical intervention in the subsequent commentary (Owens, 1990: 159). While grammarians transcended mere replication, their hermeneutic fidelity to the core text remained coherent, despite necessary conceptual rearticulations. The commentarial text establishes a generative dialogue with the core text, whilst simultaneously affirming its canonical primacy. It functions as a magnifying lens, amplifying and clarifying the core text's subtleties while operationalizing its theoretical premises. Thereby, the commentarial text institutionalizes itself as a mechanism for epistemic refinement, surpassing the core text's limitations by providing analytical frameworks. Crucially, grammarians attended not only to grammatical subject matter but also to the formal tradition they transmitted. Their methodological and stylistic approaches were heterogeneous, marked more by divergence than procedural uniformity. A fundamental bifurcation is evident: one group prioritized formal fidelity to the core text's architecture, while another pursued its transformation through reconceptualization. This divergence is exemplified by commentators who transposed poetic grammatical compositions into prose, altering their presentation while preserving theoretical essence. Although the poetic structure of the core text serves a mnemonically essential function, the prose commentary offers a hermeneutically superior framework for the polyvalent examination of grammatical phenomena. The most salient illustration of this dynamic is Ibn Ḥālawayhi's (d. 370/980) exhaustive commentary on Ibn Durayd's (d. 321/933) *Maqṣūra*, an extensive poetic treatise of some 250 verses, which he analyzes through diverse analytical lenses (Ibn Ḥālawayhi, 1986: 155-557).

3.3. Emergence of Autocommentary : self-reference hermeneutics

A systematic study of the commentary tradition must recognize that grammarians' engagement with this tradition exhibited often sophisticated interpretive and analytical frameworks across centuries, thereby epitomizing the dynamic intellectual development of Arabic linguistic scholarship. The extant historical corpus reveals that late-period Arabic grammarians engineered a novel commentarial modality characterized by self-referential commentary. Select grammarians engaged in producing glosses on their own theoretical output, utilizing metalinguistic strategies to optimize the relevance and comprehensibility. The inaugural example of this practice is attributed to Ibn al-Ḥāḡib (d. 646/1249), who generated an autorcommentary on his grammatical textbook, *al-Kāfiya fī al-naḥw*. Building

upon this model a century after its establishment, Ibn Hišām al-'Anṣārī (d. 761/1360) advanced the tradition by generating two autocommentaries, one elucidating his *Šuḍūr al-ḡahab* and another expounding upon his *Qaṭr al-nadā*. These grammatical textbooks systematically unpacked the theoretical underpinnings and formal apparatus deployed in his core texts (Ibn Hišām, 1994: 491-497; 2004: 189-208). So, autorcommentary assumed considerable epistemological significance in the terminal phase of Arabic grammatical scholarship. By engaging in continuous hermeneutic dialogue with their own textbook, grammarians elaborated a sophisticated framework that enabled conceptual precision and optimized the didactic dissemination of grammatical knowledge.

4. Refutation of grammatical texts: confrontation of ideas

4.1 Grammatical polemic as a driving force of grammatical elaboration

The trajectory of Arabic grammatical writing reflects considerable epistemological advancement, shaped by dialectical engagement with developing linguistic questions and transformative social imperatives that directed scientific investigation. The theoretical pluralism and accelerated circulation of ideas among grammarians necessarily generated a multiplicity of hermeneutic approaches, reconfiguring grammatical disputation into a constitutive element of Arabic grammatical thought (cf. Gully, 1997). Historical evidence from sources confirms that the earliest intellectual divisions in the Arabic grammatical tradition materialized through the institution of two competing doctrinal paradigms, one in Basra and the other in Kufa, which served as the principal epistemic hubs of linguistic knowledge production under Abbasid rule (2nd-8th/7th-13th centuries). For example, the grammarians of Kufa and Basra disagreed on preposing of the *ḡabar* "predicate" over the *mubtada'* "subject": an inversion that was impermissible for the Kufans, whether it was a single word or a clause, but permitted for the Basrans (Ibn al-Anbārī, 2003 : I, 56). Notwithstanding the fact that numerous grammarians maintained doctrinal eclecticism rather than strict allegiance to a particular position, the polemical intensity characterizing their scholarly debates, conducted within a field of high sociocultural prestige, arguably catalyzed the emergence of a sophisticated and critically nuanced grammatical epistemology (Weil, 1913 : 29-68). Accordingly, the output of grammarians, irrespective of their doctrinal affiliations, was routinely interrogated and critiqued through both oral disputations in sovereigns' palace and written refutations in their own handbooks (e.g., Tibrīzī, 1983).

4.2 Genesis of *Radd* form in Arabic grammatical tradition

In spite of the inherent challenge of developing a grammatical framework wholly resistant to criticism, the grammatical text's imposed itself as an interpretive apparatus for articulating demonstrative evidences, deconstructing polemical propositions, and elucidating their theoretical vulnerabilities. The historical record suggests that al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898) produced the earliest documented erudite refutation of Sībawayhi's canonical *Kitāb*. His

polemical book, *al-Radd 'alā Sībawayhi*, constitutes a systematic engagement with Sībawayhi's theories, enumerating nearly 130 specific points of doctrinal contention with the master of Arabic grammatical tradition. Despite al-Mubarrad's subsequent disavowal of his critical positions⁵, his work institutionalized the *radd* "refutation" as a new form within grammatical production, constituting a watershed moment in the evolution of Arabic linguistic thought. The hegemonic status of Sībawayhi's theoretical legacy resulted an uneven reception of al-Mubarrad's refutation within the erudite community of his era. This hermeneutic contention is further exemplified in Ibn Wallād's (d. 332/944) dedicated apologetic treatise, conceived as a direct counter-discourse to al-Mubarrad's criticisms. Framed around 133 grammatical points, *al-Intiṣār li-Sībawayhi 'alā al-Mubarrad* constitutes an exhaustive defense of Sībawayhi's theoretical framework, coupled with a methodical deconstruction of al-Mubarrad's polemical arguments (Ibn Wallād, 1996 : 43- 271). The endorsement of Ibn Wallād's volume prompted proponents of grammatical orthodoxy to systematize in writing their arguments on the disputed subjects of the field. This process established a textual paradigm wherein the rigorous critique of received doctrines and the structured refutation of antithetical propositions became the cardinal space for the production and dissemination of grammatical knowledge.

4.3 Geographical propagation and development of the *radd* form

While al-Mubarrad and Ibn Wallād provided the initial momentum for the *Radd* form, this polemical modality rapidly proliferated among Eastern grammatical tradition. Ibn Durustawayhi (d. 347/958) exemplifies this trend, producing critical refutations directed against such authoritative figures as Ibn Ḥālawayhi (d. 370/980-981), al-Farrā' (d. 207/822), and Ṭa'lab (d. 291/904). Likewise, Ibn al-Ḥaššāb (d. 567/1172) produced systematic refutations directed against the works of Ibn Bābašād (d. 469/1077) and al-Tibrīzī (d. 502/1109) (al-Qiftī, 1986: IV, 352-353). Significantly, this practice of erudite criticism achieved particular vibrancy in the Western Islamic territories, notably in al-Andalus, where the fractious political milieu of the Iberian Peninsula arguably catalyzed a distinctive intellectual pugnacity among grammarians. One of the first attempts to articulate a grammatical refutation within the Andalusian context are ascribable to Ibn Maḍā' (d. 592/1196), who composed the polemical book *al-Radd 'alā al-nuḥāt*. Within this polemical treatise, the author endeavored to instigate a reform of grammar through a critical reassessment against the theoretical necessity of core constructs in Arabic grammar, notably

⁵ The primary sources lack a sufficient explanation to shed light on this reversal. Given that *al-Radd 'alā Sībawayhi* was composed by al-Mubarrad early in his career amid a highly competitive intellectual milieu, a hypothesis is that he later recognized certain of his initial critiques as having been hastily formulated and deficient, as his understanding of the *Kitāb* deepened.

'illa "cause", *qiyās* "analogy", and *taqdīr* "suppletive insertion" (cf. Guerrero, 1984). His analysis contended that these principles encumbered the grammatical system, thereby alienating the domain from its fundamental mission: to provide a functionally oriented and pedagogically accessible approach to the Arabic language. Despite the limited reception of Ibn Maḍā's iconoclastic critique, which directly confronted the hegemonic 'āmil "government" paradigm (Ibn Maḍā', 1979: 69-84), his intellectual legacy has shown its fertility in two significant dimensions. Primarily, it elucidated the inherent limitations in the societal assimilation of grammatical systems, thereby emphasizing the imperative for theoretical simplification and syntactic transparency, while simultaneously repudiating metaphysical speculations and the rationalist extremities associated with the application of *qiyās* "analogy". Secondly, it consolidated the entrenchment of the *Radd* form in the Andalusian intellectual landscape, catalyzing an efflorescence of texts committed to this critical trend and thereby validating its autonomy as a full-fledged intellectual genre. Exemplifying this trend, Ibn Ḥarūf (d. 609/1212) engaged directly with Ibn Maḍā's (d. 592/1196) propositions in his book *Tanzīh 'a'immat al-naḥw*, establishing himself as a foremost practitioner within this domain of critical erudition. He formulated rigorous and acute refutations directed at prominent grammarians of his era, notably al-'A'lam al-Šantamarī (d. 476/1084), 'Abī 'Alī al-Rundī (d. 616/1219), al-Suhaylī (d. 581/1185), Ibn al-Ṭarāwa (d. 526/1132), Ibn Malkūn (d. 581/1185), and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). This phenomenon illustrates how *Radd* texts became an epistemic tool within the Andalusian scholarly milieu, systematically addressing the polemical disputes and hermeneutic contradictions that fragmented grammatical field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of the Arabic grammatical tradition has brought to light the dynamics of a perpetually evolving textual corpus, which embodies the wealth of grammarians' methodological and theoretical outlooks. This research establishes that the text's form is fundamentally and inextricably bound to its functional purpose. Spanning the tradition's incipient stages to its most mature expressions, the grammatical text established itself as a full-fledged entity of knowledge. Its evolution was defined by a dual impetus: a simultaneous descriptive-normative vocation and an escalating imperative for pedagogical systematization. This tension generated a remarkable formal diversification, epitomized by the emergence of structured manuals, grammatical poems, synoptic treatises, exhaustive commentaries, and polemical refutations. Hence, the Arabic grammatical text represented the fundamental arena wherein knowledge was contested, crystallized, and conveyed through the centuries. It established a dialectic between seminal intellectual outputs and their continual

reworking and recasting, guaranteeing the resilience and enduring vitality of a millennial tradition.

References

Primary sources

- Ansārī. (1981). *Al-Nawādir fī al-luġa*. M. 'Aḥmad (Ed.). Beirut: Dār al-šurūq.
- Fārisī. (1969). *Al- 'İdāḥ al- 'aḍudī*. Ḥ. Farhūd (Ed.). Riyadh: Kulliyyat al- 'ādāb fī ġāmi' at al-Riyād.
- Ġurġānī. (1982). *Al-Muqtaṣid fī šarḥ al- 'İdāḥ*. K. al-Marġān (Ed.). Baghdad: Dār al-rašīd.
- Ibn al-Anbārī. (2003). *Al- 'Inšāf fī masā'il al-ḥilāf bayna al-naḥwiyyīn al-Bašriyyīn wa-l-Kūfiyyīn*. M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Ed.). Beirut: al-Maktaba al- 'ašriyya.
- Ibn al-Anbārī. (1985). *Nuzhat al- 'alibbā' fī ṭabaqāt al- 'udabā'*. I. al-Sāmarrā'ī (Ed.). Zarqa: Maktabat al-manār.
- Ibn al-Sarrāġ. (1999). *Al- 'Uṣūl fī al-naḥw*. A. al-Fatī (Ed.). Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla.
- Ibn al-Ṭarāwa. (1996). *Risālat al- 'İfšāḥ bi-ba'ḍ mā ġā'a min al-ḥata' fī al- 'İdāḥ*. Ḥ. al-Ḍāmin (Ed.). Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub.
- Ibn al-Warrāq. (1999). *Ilal al-naḥw*. M. al-Darwīš (Ed.). Riyadh : Maktabat al-rušd.
- Ibn Ġinnī. (1972). *Al-Lami' fī al- 'arabiyya*. F. Fāris (Ed.). Kuwait: Dār al-kutub al-ṭaqāfiyya.
- Ibn Ḥālawayhi. (1986). *Ibn Ḥālawayhi wa-ġuhūduhu fī al-luġa ma'a taḥqīq kitābihi Šarḥ Maqṣūrat Ibn Durayd*. M. al-Muḥammad (Ed.). Beirut : Mu'assasat al-risāla.
- Ibn Hišām. (1994). *Šarḥ qaṭr al-nadā wa-ball al-šadā*. M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Ed.). Beirut: al-Maktabat al- 'ašriyya.
- Ibn Hišām. (2004). *Šarḥ šudūr al-ḍaḥab*. M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Ed.). Cairo: Dār al-ṭalā'i'.
- Ibn Madā'. (1979). *Al-Radd 'alā al-nuḥāt*. M. al-Bannā (Ed.). Cairo: Dār al- i'tiṣām.
- Ibn Wallād. (1996). *Al-Intiṣār li-Sībawayhi 'alā al-Mubarrad*. Z. Sulṭān (Ed.). Beirut : Mu'assasat al-risāla.
- Muqri'. (1993). *Aḥbār al-naḥwiyyīn*. M. al-Sayyid (Ed.). Tanta: Dār al-šaḥāba li-l-turāṭ.
- Sībawayhi. (1983). *Al-Kitāb*. A. Hārūn (Ed.). Cairo: Maktabat al-ḥanġī.
- Suhaylī. (1992). *Natā'ig al-fikr fī al-naḥw*. A. 'Abd al-Mawġūd & A. Mu'awwad (Eds.). Beirut: Dār al-kutub al- 'ilmiyya.

- Tibrīzī. (1983). *Tahdīb 'Islāh al-manṭiq*. F. Qabāwa (Ed.). Beirut: Dār al-'āfāq al-ḡadīda.
- Zaḡḡāḡī. (1984). *Kitāb al-Ḡumal fī al-naḥw*. A. al-Ḥamad (Ed.). Beirut /Irbid: Mu'assasat al-risāla/Dār al-'amal.
- Zubaydī. (1973). *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn wa-l-luḡawiyyīn*. M. 'Ibrāhīm (Ed.). Cairo : Dār al-ma'ārif.

Secondary sources

- Aljassar, T. & J. Owens. (2015). Variation, pedagogization, and the early Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān tradition. *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik*, 62, 5-37.
- Baalbaki, R. (2008). *The Legacy of the Kitāb: Sībawayhi's Analytical Methods within the Context of the Arabic Grammatical Theory*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Carter, M.G. (2020). The Use of Verse as a Pedagogical Medium, Principally in the Teaching of Grammar. In S. Günther (Ed.), *Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning Between Continuity and Change*, vol.2, (449-474). Leiden : Brill.
- Glazer, S. (1941). The Alfiyya of Ibn Malik, its Importance and Place in Arabic Grammatical Science. *The Moslem World*, 31, 274-279.
- Guerrero, A.R. (1984). El Cordobés Ibn Madā (1119-1196) y la Reforma de la Gramática Árabe. *Anejos de Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebráicos*, 3, 9-66.
- Gully, A. (1997). Arabic Linguistic Issues and Controversies of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 42, 75-120.
- Kasher, A. (2018). Early pedagogical Grammars of Arabic. In G. Ayoub & K. Versteegh (Eds.), *The Foundations of Arabic Linguistics III: The Development of a Tradition: Continuity and Change* (146-166). Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Larcher, P. (2007). Les origines de la grammaire arabe, selon la tradition : description, interprétation, discussion. In E. Ditters & H. Motzki (Eds.), *Approaches to Arabic Linguistics. Presented to Kees Versteegh on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (113-134). Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Levin, A. (2004). The Status of the Science of Grammar Among Islamic Sciences. *Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam*, 29,1-16.
- Owens, J. (1990). *Early Arabic Grammatical Theory: Heterogeneity and standardization*, Amsterdam : John Benjamins.

- Peña Martín, S. (1988). *La obra lingüística y filológica de Ibn Al-Sid Al-Batalyawsi: teoría y método de las ciencias árabes islámicas del lenguaje y el texto a través de un especialista del siglo V-VI H.-XI-XII C* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Granada, Granada.
- Taha, Z. (2018). The Classification of the Verb in the Arab Grammatical Tradition: From Sibawayhi to al-Jurjānī. In G. Ayoub, K. Versteegh (eds.), *The Foundations of Arabic Linguistics III: The Development of a Tradition: Continuity and Change* (229-244). Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Troupeau, G. (2000). La période post-classique de la linguistique arabe: d'Ibn Ġinnī à al-'Astarābādī ». In S. Auroux & al. (Eds.), *History of the Language Sciences*, vol.1, (280-286). Berlin/New York : Walter de Gruyter.
- Versteegh, K. (1982). Progress and change in the history of Arabic grammar. In S. Daalder & M. Gerritsen (Eds.), *Linguistics in the Netherlands* (39-50). Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- Versteegh, K. (1997a). *The Arabic Language*. New York : Columbia University Press.
- Versteegh, K. (1997b). *Landmarks in linguistic thought III: The Arabic linguistic tradition*. London : Routledge.
- Weil, G. (1913). *Die grammatischen Streitfragen der Basrer und Kufer*. Leiden: Brill.

Madjan T. Matar

ARAPSKI GRAMATIČKI TEKST: VARIJACIJA, EKSPANZIJA I EVOLUCIJA U CIRKULACIJI ZNANJA

Rezime: Ovaj rad predstavlja istraživanje istorije arapskog gramatičkog teksta, pozicionirajući ga unutar putanje ove tradicije, čiji se razvoj odvijao kroz opsežan istorijski kontinuum, od njegovih osnivanja u 2./8. veku do perioda konačne sistematizacije u 10./16. veku. Utemeljen u epistemološkom okviru, članak govori o zvaničnim varijacijama gramatičkog teksta i prati njegove raznovrsne namene tokom ovog dugog vremenskog perioda. Na taj način, autor razjašnjava različite tematske orijentacije gramatičkog teksta, obrazlaže didaktičke faze njegove primene u pedagoške svrhe, mapira zamršene mreže širenja i objašnjava njegov domet kao mesto naučne debate. Shodno tome, ovo istraživanje je pokazalo da izuzetne varijacije i ekspanzije u okviru duge tradicije razvoja nadilaze pedagoške okvire i suprotstavljaju se intelektualnoj stagnaciji. Štaviše, razmatrana dela se osvetljavaju kao dinamičan i neophodan epistemološki mehanizam za cirkulaciju gramatičkog znanja. Imajući u vidu da naš rad ne teži epistemološkoj sveobuhvatnosti u obradi istorije arapske gramatičke tradicije, izražavamo težnju da će predstojeća istraživanja otkloniti postojeće propuste i razraditi druge pravce istraživanja, omogućavajući tako potpunije razumevanje dubokog bogatstva ove oblasti.

Ključne reči: arapski jezik, gramatika, tekst, epistemologija, varijacija, evolucija, ekspanzija, cirkulacija.

Datum prijema: 31.8.2025.

Datum ispravki: 6.11.2025.

Datum odobrenja: 9.11.2025.