

The Department of English Linguistics (University of Debrecen)
cordially invites everyone to the following talks by Erasmus guest lecturer
MARWAN JARRAH (The University of Jordan)

The pragmatic functions of devil-related expressions in Jordanian Arabic

15 April 2024, 8:00, room 106

This study aims to explore the use and pragmatic functions of devil-related expressions in Jordanian Arabic (JA). To this end, a sample of 170 Facebook and Instagram posts and comments, which include devil-related expressions, was collected. We employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative assessments and qualitative measures to analyse the posts and comments to comprehensively examine the functions of these expressions in their respective contexts. The results demonstrated that there are three major pragmatic functions which can be achieved by the use of devil-related expressions in JA, conveying expressive meanings (astonishment, compliment, annoyance, and disapproval), expressing mock-impoliteness, and expressing unattainability or infeasibility. A discussion of these functions with representative examples was provided. The study concludes with implications on the relation between the expression of language and religion whose effects are found to be strongly rooted in Arabic discourse.

No adjective ordering preferences in Jordanian Arabic grammar

15 April 2024, 10:00, room 56

This article offers evidence, which is based on acceptability judgement tasks, in favour of the absence of unmarked linear serializations of stacked, non-coordinated adjectives in Jordanian Arabic (JA). Results from 16 experiments of acceptability judgements from 197 native speakers of JA point to the fact that JA places no adjective ordering. However, two factors are found to be significant. The first factor pertains to the number of stacked, non-coordinated adjectives. All possible word order patterns of different stacked adjectives are (fully) acceptable with two stacked adjectives. However, constructions with three or more stacked adjectives are significantly degraded. This is universally held, regardless of the type of the stacked adjectives (size, color, shape, etc.). We ascribe this to the third-factor effects (Chomsky 2005) (particularly with reference to working memory and processing load) in restricting the possible number of adjectives in a given construction. A second factor relates to the syntactic position of the adjectives (attributive vs. predicative). The results reveal that attributive adjectives are significantly more acceptable than predicative adjectives (which can also be freely stacked in JA). This is also attributed to the effects of these factors favoring minimal computations. We follow O'Grady (2021) in that the processing of across-clausal phenomena (as is the case with predicative adjectives) is more demanding than intra-clausal ones (as is the case with attributive adjectives).

Variation in verbal negation in Jordanian Arabic: A corpus-based analysis

17 April 2024, 12:00, room 111

Jordanian Arabic (JA) has two main patterns for verbal negation, i.e., preverbal negation (*ma: ...*) and discontinuous negation (*ma: ... -f*). This article provides a variationist account of the distribution of these two patterns in light of a number of social and linguistic factors. The social factors include age, gender, educational attainment and region. The linguistic factors, on the

other hand, include the transitivity of the verb, the tense of the associate utterance, the stativity and the lexical type of the verb (i.e., cognitive, desiderative, speech and perception), as well as the person, animacy and definiteness of the associate subject. Following distributional and multivariate analyses of 40 sociolinguistic interviews (more than 30 hours of audio-recordings), we find that all social factors (education, gender, region and age), the lexical type of the verb, the definiteness of the subject and the tense of the associate utterance have a significant impact on the selection of the negation patterns in JA. Such preferences are argued to follow from independent factors, including the speaker's regional background, gender identity and prestige.

On the derivation of subject wh-words and theory of cartography

18 April 2024, 14:00, room 106

In this article, we examine the syntactic derivation of subject wh-words in Jordanian Arabic (JA). Firstly, we provide empirical evidence that questions with a subject wh-word are syntactically derived by overt movement of the given subject wh-word to the left periphery. This empirical evidence is based on the position of the subject wh-words to the left of the high IP adverbials, including epistemic adverbials and evidentials, as well as the position of the subject wh-words relative to topical elements. Secondly, we examine the intriguing ban on the use of subject wh-words in VSO sentences although non-interrogative subjects are permitted to occur in such clauses, and other wh-words may appear in their thematic positions (given the appropriate context). We show that this ban results from the effects of a proposed economy-driven condition that disallows the use of an expletive (to fill Spec,TP) while the thematic subject is available (in Spec,vP). Additionally, we show that this ban results from the interactions of the effects of criterial freezing (Rizzi 2005, 2014; Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007) and the conditions that license elements in the low IP area (cf. Belletti 2004, 2005).



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