

Johnstone 6

STUDIES IN LANGUAGE

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
SPONSORED BY THE FOUNDATION
"FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE"

VOLUME 11, NO. 1(1987)

Offprint

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

STUDIES IN LANGUAGE

International Journal sponsored by the Foundation
"Foundations of Language"

ISSN 0378-4177

MANAGING EDITOR

John W.M. Verhaar
Divine Word Institute
Madang, Papua New Guinea

REVIEW EDITOR

Werner Abraham
University of Groningen
The Netherlands

EDITORIAL BOARD

Richard D. Brecht, *University of Maryland*
Bernard Comrie, *University of Southern California, Los Angeles*
Bruce Fraser, *Boston University*
T. Givón, *University of Oregon, Eugene*
Ferenc Kiefer, *Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest*
John Robert Ross, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*
Sandra A. Thompson, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

CONSULTING EDITORS

A.L. Becker, *University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*
Ruth M. Brend, *Michigan State University*
Noam Chomsky, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*
Robert M.W. Dixon, *Australian National University*
J.A. Edmondson, *University of Texas, Arlington*
W. Foley, *Australian National University*
George W. Grace, *University of Hawaii*
Amram Halim, *National Language Institute, Jakarta*
Dell H. Hymes, *University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia*
John M. Lawler, *University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*
Donald C. Laycock, *Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University*
W.P. Lehmann, *University of Texas, Austin*
Charles N. Li, *University of California, Santa Barbara*
J. Lyons, *University of Sussex*
Herman Parret, *Universities of Louvain and Antwerp*
W.A. de Pater, *University of Louvain*
H. Seiler, *University of Cologne*
Roger W. Shuy, *Georgetown University, Washington DC*
Michael Silverstein, *University of Chicago*
P. Ziff, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

For subscription-rates and other business-information see last page.

John Benjamins B.V.
Amsteldijk 44—P.O. Box 52519
1007 HA AMSTERDAM
The Netherlands
Tel.: (020) 73 81 56—Telex 15798

John Benjamins North America, Inc.
One Buttonwood Square
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19130
USA
Tel.: (215) 564 6379—Telex 497-2813

Studies in Language 11-1. 85-98 (1987). All rights reserved

PARATAXIS IN ARABIC: MODIFICATION AS A MODEL FOR PERSUASION

Barbara Johnstone
Georgetown University

It is traditionally thought that the strategies a speaker uses to persuade someone of something are constrained only by psychological and historical factors. In this paper I argue that *linguistic* constraints on persuasive strategy are equally significant. I suggest that the syntax of phrase- and clause-level modification in written Arabic is a model of the sentence- and paragraph-level structure of rhetorical discourse. Arabic persuasive discourse, in the contemporary texts I have examined, is rhetorically effective through paratactic repetition. An idea is made believable by being stated, restated, and paraphrased; Arabic authors use a great deal of coordination, and very little of the subordination which is so highly valued in English persuasive writing. Arabic modificational syntax is also characterized by the paratactic juxtaposition of items. Adjectival modification with adjectives and certain relative clauses, as well as adverbial modification with cognate accusatives and *ḥāl* clauses, all involve structures which are appositive in nature, juxtaposing items from the same syntactic category. This structural homology between persuasion and modification is not coincidental; persuasion can in fact be seen as a function of a kind of modification. My more general claim is that the availability of syntactic strategies like parataxis in a language is precisely what accounts for their pragmatic use in discourse, and vice-versa.*

* This paper is a revised version of one presented at the LSA Annual Meeting, December, 1983. A.L. Becker, Ernest McCarus, and Mahmoud Al-Batal provided invaluable help with earlier formulation of these ideas. I would also like to thank Bruce Mannheim, Edith Hanania, and an anonymous reviewer for pointing out a number of infelicities in a previous draft. Errors and misinterpretations that remain are of course my own responsibility.

1. *Parataxis in discourse*

Arabic persuasive discourse¹ is complexly repetitive and almost entirely paratactic. Synonymous terms are coordinated in lexical couplets (Koch 1983b); morphological roots and morphological patterns are repeated; repetitions of syntax create parallel phrases and clauses; expressions are paraphrased. Example (1), taken from a work of literary criticism, is a particularly appropriate one, since it not only illustrates the phenomenon but also attempts to explain it.²

- (1) *wa-ka'anna-hu yarā 'anna al-'adaba al-jadīra*
and as-if he thinks that the literature the worthy
bi-hādā al-ismi, huwa allaḍī yarū^ʿu al-sam^ʿa
of this the name it that-which delights the hearing
kamā yarū^ʿu al-qalba fī 'ānin wāḥidin: wa-huwa
as delights the heart at time one and he
li-ḍālīka yuwaffiru li-ṣawti-hi kulla jamālin
thus furnishes of sound its all beauty
mumkinin. wa-min al-ḡaribi, 'anna-hulā
possible and among the strange that he (neg.)
yu^ʿaddilu ʿibāratan yumlī-hā wa-lā yu^ʿiddu
corrects phrase dictates it and (neg.) prepares
muḥāḍaratan qabla 'ilqā'i-hā. fa-qad 'asbaḡa
lecture before delivering it for (perf.) became
hādā al-'uslūbu juz'an min nafsi-hi wa-ʿaqli-hi,
this the style part of soul his and mind his
fa-huwa lā yumlī wa-lā yuḥāḍiru 'illā
for he (neg.) dictates and (neg.) lectures except
bi-hi. wa-kaḥīran-mā, tajidu fī-hi al-'alfāda
in it and often you-find in it the expressions
al-mukarrarata, wa-huwa ya^ʿmidu 'ilā ḍālīka ʿamdan,
the repeated and he intends to that intending
ḡattā yastitimma mā yurīdu min 'iqā'ātin
so-that complete what wants of rhythms

wa-'anyāmin yanfuḍu bi-hā 'ilā wijḍāni
and melodies penetrates with them to emotions
sāmi^ʿi-hi wa-qāri'i-hi
hearer his and reader his

(And it is as if he thinks that literature worthy of the name is that which delights the hearing as it delights the heart at one time: and he thus furnishes its sound with all possible beauty. And it is strange that he [Ṭāḡā Ḥusayn] never corrects a phrase which he dictates and never prepares a lecture before delivering it. For this style has become part of his soul and his mind, for he never dictates and never lectures except in it. And often you find in it repeated expressions, and he does this on purpose in order to complete the rhythms and melodies he wants with which he penetrates the emotions of his hearer and his reader.)

There is a great deal of paraphrastic and near-paraphrastic conjunction throughout this text, especially in the predicates of sentences. In the first sentence we find a conjoined predicate, *huwa allaḍī yarū^ʿu ... wa-huwa li-ḍālīka yuwaffiru ...* '(is) that which delights ... and he thus furnishes ...,' the first part of which is also conjoined in a paraphrastic double: *yarū^ʿu al-sam^ʿa kamā yarū^ʿu al-qalba* 'delights the hearing as it delights the heart.' The predicate of the second sentence is also conjoined: *lā yu^ʿaddilu ... wa-lā yu^ʿiddu ...* 'he never corrects ... and he never prepares ...' The parallelistic effect of the two quite similar lexical roots here, ʿ-d-1 and ʿ-d-d, is not unintentional. In the third sentence we find the lexical couplet *min nafsi-hi wa-ʿaqli-hi* 'of his soul and his mind' and the doubled predicate, in the second clause, *lā yumlī wa-lā yuḥāḍiru 'illā bi-hi* 'he never dictates and never lectures except in it.' In the last sentence are two doublings: *'iqā'ātin wa-'anyāmin* 'rhythms and melodies' and *sāmi^ʿi-hi wa-qāri'i-hi* 'his hearer and his reader.'

All four sentences begin with coordinating conjunctions, three with *wa* 'and' one with *fa* 'for.'³ Apart from two indefinite relative clauses, to which I will return later, there is only one subordinate clause in the passage.

Item (2) is another example of highly paraphrastic discourse. It consists of a passage from an article in the same genre as the previous example: literary criticism.⁴

- (2) *al-ši^oru ta^obīrun wa-taṣwīrun li-mašā^oiri*
 the poetry expression and description of feelings
- al-šu^oarā^oi wa-'afkāri-him sawā'an kānat*
 the poets and thoughts their whether be
- al-tajribatu wāqi^oiyyatan 'aw min nasji*
 the experience real of from fabric
- xayāli al-šā^oiri. wa-fī kiltā al-ḥālatayni*
 imagination the poet and in both the two-cases
- fa-'inna al-tajribata saḍīqatun, li'anna-hu wa-law*
 (fa-'inna) the experience true because and if
- kānat al-tajribatu ṡayra wāqi^oiyyatin — 'ay*
 be the experience not real that is
- xayāliyyatan — fa-'inna al-šā^oira ya^oiṣu fī-hā*
 imaginary (fa-'inna) the poet lives in it
- muddatan ṡawīlatan qabla 'an yunaḍḍima*
 time long before that compose
- ši^ora-hu yuḥissu-hā fī nabaḍāti qalbi-hi*
 poetry his senses it in pulses heart his
- wa-yaṣ^ouru-hā tasrī fī dimā'i-hi. wa-bi-ḍālika fa-'inna*
 and feels it flows in blood his and by that (fa-'inna)
- kulla 'alwāni al-ši^ori ta^obīrun 'an mašā^oira*
 all colors the poetry expression of feelings
- saḍīqatin yuḥissu bi-hā al-šā^oiru wa-ya^oiṣu fī-hā*
 true senses them the poet and lives in them
- (Poetry is an expression and description of the feelings of poets and their thoughts, whether the experience be real or from the fabric of the poet's imagination. And in both cases, the experience is true, because even if the experience is not real — that is, imaginary — the poet lives in it for a long time before he composes his poetry, sensing it in the pulses of his heart and feeling it flow in his blood. And thereby all kinds of poetry are an expression of true feelings which the poet senses and in which he lives.)

This example is somewhat more complex in structure than the other. It

includes two subordinate hypothetical clauses, one with *sawā'an kāna* 'whether it be' and one with *wa-law kāna* '(even) if it be', and two circumstantial or *ḥāl* clauses, one of which modifies the other: *ya^oiṣu fī-hā ... yuḥissu ... wa-yaṣ^ouru-hā tasrī ...* 'he lives in it ... sensing ... and feeling it flow...' (While there is an obligatory reduction of the first clause in English which makes 'sensing' and 'feeling' participial modifiers, they are finite verbs in Arabic.) On the whole, the passage is somewhat less paratactic than many, although it is polysyndetic. However, the passage is typical in being highly repetitive. There are two paraphrastic doublings in the first sentence: *ta^obīrun wa-taṣwīrun* 'expression and description' (which is a morphologically parallel lexical couplet) and *li-mašā^oiri al-šu^oarā^oi wa-'afkāri-him* 'of the feelings of the poets and their thoughts.' In the second sentence we find *ṡayru wāqi^oiyyatin 'ay xayāliyyatun* 'not real, that is imaginary', which, given the fact that *wāqi^oiyyun* 'real' and *xayāliyyun* 'imaginary' are clearly contrasted in the preceding clause, is paraphrastic, if not redundant. The third sentence includes two doublings, both paraphrastic. One is *yuḥissu-hā fī nabaḍāti qalbi-hi wa-yaṣ^ouru-hā tasrī fī dimā'i-hi* 'he senses it in the pulses of his heart and feels it flow in his blood.' The other is *yuḥissu bi-hā al-šā^oiru, wa-ya^oiṣu fī-hā* 'the poet senses them and lives in them.'

The entire third sentence is also a paraphrase of the second. Both say the same thing: poetry expresses true experiences because the poet lives in the experiences and feels them whether they are real or not. What keeps one from noticing this paraphrastic relationship at first is the word *bi-ḍālika* 'thereby' at the beginning of the third sentence. *Thereby*, in English, is not a word we expect to see before a paraphrase. It is highly unlikely, though, that a writer who produced a text as complex as this one, as carefully structured and balanced, would use *bi-ḍālika* in the wrong place.

2. Presentation and persuasion

In Western, 'quasi-logical' rhetorics, in which the structure and phrasing of non-formal arguments mimic those of formal ones (Perelman 1969: 193-255), the canonical function of *therefore* and similar conjunctions, and the function for which the symbolic shorthand \therefore is used, is to signal the conclusion of a syllogistic deduction: All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal. Pragmatically, however, *therefore* and related expressions often signal claims that have been validated in other ways. For example, persuasion resulting from *ethos*, the arguer's presentation of self,

or from *pathos*, emotional appeal, can be described in the same way as logical persuasion:

- (3) Her statistics are impeccable and her argument flawless; therefore, we will accept her theory. (*logos*)
- (4) The senator insists that he is honest; he is highly respected and apparently a family man and goes to church every Sunday; therefore, we are dropping our case against him. (*ethos*)
- (5) Vice-President Nixon obviously loved his little dog so much that it made people cry; therefore, they believed that he had not accepted bribes. (*pathos*)

It is fair to assume that the pragmatic function of *therefore* is to signal that whatever it follows has substantiated the conclusion it precedes; the job of the contrastive rhetorician is to figure out how.

How, then, can a proposition substantiate a paraphrase of the same proposition? Why is it rhetorically more effective to say the same thing twice, or three times, than to say it once? And why is it that, in Arabic, repetition is by far the most common and most basic mechanism for persuasion?

Clearly, the choice of how to express an idea — how you say it — is often as important as the proposition expressed — what you say. Paraphrase is often persuasive, in many informal rhetorical contexts ('Oh, now that you put it *that way* ...'), and, in American society, in some formal ones (though the dominant model for persuasive writing subordinates presentation, or style, to invention and arrangement). This kind of persuasion can be called *presentation* (Koch 1983a). Presentation makes things believable because it forces them into the affective field of the hearer and keeps them there. Repetition makes ideas present by keeping them in the here and now of discourse. The use of the present tense, in English, can also bring ideas closer to here and now. This happens when the present tense is used to talk about the past, and it has been discussed recently by Schiffrin (1981) in an article about the historical present in narrative. 'Emotional deixis' (Lakoff 1974), as exemplified by the *here* and *now* in 'Here's an idea' or 'Now, my next point is this' also creates presence. Visual metaphors are another way in which presence is created; speakers can suggest that ideas are affectively close by having hearers *look* at them, or by claiming that they can be easily *seen*. Writers of Arabic make use of all these strategies in persuasive discourse to create presence. Repetition, both structural and paraphrastic,

embedded in parataxis, is the most salient.

Presentation, and the paratactic repetition associated with presentation, are the keys to how Arabic persuasive discourse is built. That is to say that the need for presentation affects the form of discourse in crucial ways. The question to which I now turn is, why this particular strategy for persuasion, with its particular attendant formal correlates?

3. *Parataxis in syntax*

In the broadest sense, the way we make discourse coherent reflects the way we make the world coherent.⁵ In the narrower context of discourse, there are two important sources of constraint. On one hand, the form of a discourse is constrained by its intended function: rhetorical discourse differs from non-rhetorical discourse,⁶ and culture-specific epistemologies and rules about who can persuade whom and how this can be done bear upon topics for rhetorical discourse and on persuasive strategies. Examination of the traditional Arab-Islamic reverence for the Word, as well as the history of Arabic discourse forms and Near Eastern politics, are crucial for understanding Arabic persuasive discourse, as I have attempted to show elsewhere (Koch 1983a).

On the other hand, the form a discourse takes is a function of what it is made of: the words and structures of a language. In other words, the syntactic constraints of a language are constraints on discourse in that language. In what follows, I suggest that at least some of the kinds of paratactic repetition that are responsible for persuasion in Arabic are actually rooted in the syntactic structure of the language itself. That is, there are ways in which Arabic itself, and not just discourse in Arabic, calls for paratactic repetition. In particular, the syntax of a number of kinds of verbal and nominal modification in Arabic is paratactic.

Most of the Arabic discourse features which I pointed out in examples (1) and (2) are the result of relatively conscious choice on the part of the writers. It is perfectly possible to write grammatically correct Arabic without, for example, using lexical couplets or conjoined, parallel verb phrases. The criteria for choosing a lexical couplet over a single word are not criteria of grammaticality, but criteria of acceptability at a different level: the kind of criteria an editor might use in deciding whether something was well-written or not. There are, however, cases in which the choices are not so free; cases in which a repetitive, paratactic structure is chosen because it is pre-

ferred by the grammar of Arabic, or even because it is the only choice that the grammar allows. There is a kind of cline of freedom of choice in discourse. One end approaches choices that are completely free, from the point of view of grammaticality, such as the choice of purely ornamental figures of speech, if purely ornamental items are even possible.⁷ The other end approaches 'choices' that are completely constrained by syntactic rules, such as, perhaps, the choice of a verb which agrees with its subject.⁸

A structure which falls somewhere in the middle of this cline is the cognate accusative, a structure in which a verbal form (verb, participle, or verbal noun) is accompanied in a phrase by a verbal noun from the same root. An example from text (1) above is

- (6) *yc^omidu 'ilā δālika 'amdan*
intends to that an-intending
(he does this on purpose)

The verbal noun is usually, and preferably, of the same verb form as the verbal element, thus creating a two-faceted repetition (repetition of root and repetition of verb class). The verbal noun is often modified, either by an adjective (in which case both verbal noun and adjective are in the accusative case),

- (7) *taxtalifu ixtilāfan 'asāsiyyan*
differs a-differing basic
(basically differs)

or by being made the second term of an *iḏāfa* (genitive construct) construction,

- (8) *kānū iltazamū al-mabda'a 'ašadda al-iltizāmi*
were adhered-to the principle strongest the adherence
(they had adhered the most strongly to the principle)

or in a number of other ways. The function of the cognate verbal noun together with its modifier is to provide adverbial modification for the main verbal element.

Arabic has few adverbs. Adverbial modification can be expressed in various other ways, such as with prepositional phrases (*jā'a bi-sur'atin* 'he came with speed [quickly]'), with certain verbs (*kidtu 'aqa'u* 'I almost fell'), with certain nouns in the accusative (*'ahyānan* 'sometimes'), with *ḥāl* constructions, about which I will say more shortly, and with cognate accusative. Thus, while a writer may have a certain amount of freedom in deciding

whether to use a cognate accusative or some other construction for adverbial modification, he rarely has a choice between a cognate accusative and an adverb. The cognate accusative serves an essential syntactic function, and, while it is never completely obligatory, it is highly favored by the syntactic structure of the language, in the sense that the choices are limited. Furthermore, certain adverbial uses of adjectives in the accusative are said to be derived from cognate accusatives: *ḍarabtu-hu šadīdan* 'I hit him hard' is explained in at least some grammars (e.g. Haywood and Nahmad 1965:332) as the result of the omission of the verbal noun in *ḍarabtu-hu ḍaraban šadīdan* 'I hit him a hard hitting.' In these cases, if this analysis is correct, root repetition plays a role at an abstract level of syntax.

Circumstantial (*ḥāl*) clauses are another example of paratactic modification. A circumstantial clause provides adverbial modification by telling about the condition or the circumstances attendant on the modified clause. Examples are these (from Abboud, et al. 1975:435):

- (9) *wašala wa-bayna kutubi-hi risālatu al-ra'īsi*
he-arrived (wa) among books his letter the president
(He arrived with the president's letter among his books.)
- (10) *ḥaḍara 'ilā 'amrikā wa-huwa šayṭrun*
he-came to America (wa) he young
(He came to America when he was young.)

One example from text (2) above is this:

- (11) *ya^oišu fī-hā ... yuḥissu-hā fī nabaḍāti qalbi-hi*
he-lives in it senses it in pulses heart his
wa-yaš^ouru-hā tasrī fī dimā'i-hi
and feels it flows in blood his
(He lives in it ... sensing it in the pulses of his heart and feeling it flow in his blood)

Here there are two *ḥāl* clauses, one modifying the main clause and one modifying *yaš^ouru-hā* 'he feels it.' In all *ḥāl* clauses there is a pronoun coreferential with the head NP in the modified clause, or a verb or participial form whose subject is this NP. The word order is the same as that of an independent clause. In most cases, the *ḥāl* clause is introduced with *wa*. Abboud et al. (1975:435) label this *wa* as a subordinating conjunction homophonous with the coordinating *wa* 'and;' in Arabic it is called *waw al-ḥāl* 'the *wa* of condition.' Whether or not the *wa* of condition is best consid-

