


Ana Iriarte Díez

**The Communicative
Grammatical Function
of Cognate Infinitives
in Lebanese Arabic**

Colección ESTUDIOS DE DIALECTOLOGÍA ÁRABE
Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza

Colección  Estudios de Dialectología Árabe

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إلى لبنان وشعبه الحرّ

To Lebanon and its free people

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Preface

Cognate Infinitives have been identified and described as productive linguistic features within Arabic language and along the Semitic continuum. However, the full range of function of Cognate Infinitives remains largely unstudied in the spoken varieties of Arabic.

This study aims at elucidating the communicative grammatical function of Cognate Infinitives (CI) in Lebanese Arabic (LA) in the light of socio-cognitive and functional-pragmatic linguistic theories. It is a data-driven study, which means that the corpus of data I gathered during the data collection process was the main source for all the subsequent analyses I propose in this study.

It consists of six chapters, Chapter 1: Introduction to Cognate Infinitives; Chapter 2: Methodological and Theoretical Approaches; Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework; Chapter 4: The Cognate Infinitive in Lebanese Arabic as a Focus Marker; Chapter 5: Modeling the Grammar of Cognate Infinitives in Lebanese Arabic; and Chapter 6: Conclusions.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the CI construction in LA, defining its formal boundaries while exploring what has been said in the literature about CIs in other Arabic and Semitic varieties. This exploration helps the reader identify the gaps and challenges of the existent literature of CIs in Semitic, elucidating the objectives of this research.

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the main theoretical decisions underlying the study, and systematically explains the methodological strategies that followed both in the data collection and in the data analysis processes of this research.

Chapter 3 presents the 'Multidimensional Model of Communication' (MMC), a theoretical construct that serves as the overarching theoretical

framework of this study, integrating the communicative, pragmatic, cognitive and social theoretical concepts necessary for the analysis of the data that takes place in subsequent chapters. The objective of this chapter is to establish a common language for the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The MMC thus ensures a shared understanding of the theoretical terms used in the analysis as well as of the concepts behind them.

Chapter 4 explores the limitations of the existing definitions and classifications of focus using examples from the CI corpus while probing contextualized CI data for functions and motivations beyond the informational. As a result, this chapter provides concrete evidence for the need for an alternative conceptualization of focus, and uncovers the multidimensionality of LA speakers' motivations to use the CI, highlighting the importance of the affective nature of CIs in LA.

Chapter 5 provides the reader with a new communicative grammatical model for the CI in LA that relies on the results of the analysis of the social and communicative contexts in which, according to my corpus, the CI is currently used by LA speakers. Within this communicative model, this chapter provides a comprehensive and detailed description of the full functional range of CIs in LA.

Chapter 6 synthesizes the main findings of this study and puts forward the ways in which these findings have contributed to current theories of general and Arabic linguistics, as well as on the broader theoretical implications of these contributions. The chapter closes with a discussion on further research and the author's desiderata.

Notes on Transcriptions and Glosses

This study focuses on the analysis of a syntactic structure, specifically, a syntactic reduplication; hence, the transcription of the data in this study is phonemic rather than phonetic. The absence of audio recordings no doubt affected the phonetic accuracy of the data transcriptions; however, since this study does not address the sociolinguistic distribution of this feature, the lack of phonetic accuracy does not affect the reliability of the data or of the study's results.

Two transcription details deserve clarification: (1) All short unstressed vowels are transcribed as schwa /ə/. (2) Given the abundant use of French and English borrowings and of the occurrence of code switching with these two languages, both borrowings and code-switched items are not phonetically transliterated, but rather keep their written form in the language of origin, which appears as subscript (EN-English; FR-French).

CONSONANTS			VOWELS		
<i>Standard Arabic</i>	<i>Lebanese Arabic Transcription</i>	<i>Phonemic Transliteration</i>	<i>Standard Arabic</i>	<i>Lebanese Arabic Transcription</i>	<i>Phonemic Transliteration</i>
أ	أ / ء	ʔ	ا	ا	ā / ē
ب	ب	b	و	و	ū
ت	ت	t	ي	ي	ī
ث	ت/ث	t/s	و	و	ō
ج	ج	ǧ	ي	ي	ē
ح	ح	ħ	[schwa]		ə
خ	خ	x			
د	د	d			
ذ	ذ/د	d/z			
ر	ر	r			
ز	ز	z			
س	س	s			
ش	ش	š			
ص	ز/ص	s/z			
ض	ض	ḍ			
ط	ط	ṭ			
ظ	ظ	ẓ			
ع	ع	ʕ			
غ	غ	ǧ			
ف	ف	f			
ق	ق	q/ʔ			
ك	ك	k			
ل	ل	l			
م	م	m			
ن	ن	n			
هـ	هـ	h			
و	و	w			
ي	ي	y			

Lebanese Arabic in the Arabic Script

All the Lebanese Arabic data has been transcribed as well into the Arabic script to facilitate reading for those Arabic speakers who might not feel comfortable when reading phonetic script. The following conventions are followed in the transcription, with the aim of balancing the dictates of Lebanese pronunciation and writing conventions on one hand, with maintaining the relationship between LA and Standard Arabic:

- Short vowels are only marked when necessary to avoid potential ambiguities.
- Possessives and object pronouns of the third person *3ms*, *3fs* and *3p* (*-(h)a*, *-(h)o*, *-(h)on*) are written هـ، ها، هن respectively. While this هـ is not pronounced by many LA speakers, it is heard, and preserving it also maintains morphological transparency as noted above. Lebanese phonemes /ē/ and /ō/ (typical from the Beirut koiné) are represented as ي and و respectively. This decision is also representative of those Lebanese varieties where these vowels are pronounced as diphthongs –ay and –aw.
- Foreign words (but not full sentences or codeswitched words and phrases) are transliterated phonetically as pronounced by LA speakers.
- Following the convention of many LA writers, the orthographic *alif* appearing at the end of the perfective verbs in the 3rd person plural, e.g. صاروا, and at the end of the 2nd and 3rd person plural of imperfective verbs, e.g. يصيرون، تصيرون، is not preserved.
- *Hamzas* are only written in those few cases where they are pronounced as a glottal stop.
- Following Standard Arabic conventions, monoliteral prepositions and conjunctions such as *ʕa-*; *ta-*; *la-* and *b-* appear attached to the word after them (ع، ت، ل، ب). This is also applicable to the demonstrative *ha-* (هـ), habitual verbal markers *b-/bə-*; *m-/mə-* for 1st person plural (بـ، مـ), and future verbal marker *ʕa-* (حـ). Progressive marker *ʕam-* (عم) appears separated from the verbal form.
- The feminine singular subject pronoun *?ente* is written with a final –ي.
- Letter qaf is maintained as such in transcription for transparency as noted above, and also because several LA dialects pronounce it as /q/.

Interlinear Glosses

Given the space and format limitations, interlinear glosses line up vertically with the phonemic transliteration, but not with the Arabic transcription. In the Semitic examples in Chapter 1, the examples have been copied exactly from the original source, and interlinear glosses have been added only to those

examples belonging to Arabic varieties where the morphological-syntactic description in the gloss was necessary to illustrate the explanations in the text. Glosses I have added to examples cited from other works appear between brackets. Examples from Semitic languages cited from other works appear as originally glossed in the original source. However, in these examples, the CIs and CHs are identified and marked within all the examples.

Abbreviations in glosses

1/2/3	1 st /2 nd /3 rd person	M	Masculine
ACC	Accusative	NEG	Negative
ACT	Active	NOM	Nominalizer
DET	Determiner	NSI	Noun of single instance
DIS	Discourse marker	OBJ	Object marker
F	Feminine	P	Plural
FOC	Focus	PASS	Passive
FUT	Future	PFV	Perfective
HAB	Habitual	PROG	Progressive
IMP	Imperative	PRSN	Presentative
INF	Infinitive	PTCP	Participle
INT	Interjection	S	Singular
IPFV	Imperfective	TOP	Topic
		VOC	Vocative

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Data Tag Abbreviations

AKK	Akkadian	MEH	Mehri
BH	Biblical Hebrew	MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
CA	Classical Arabic	NENA	Northeastern Neo-Aramaic
CRA	Christian Arabic	OA	Omani Arabic
EA	Egyptian Arabic	OAR	Old Aramaic
EB	Eblaite	PH	Phoenician
JA	Jordanian Arabic	RPA	Rural Palestinian Arabic
LA	Lebanese Arabic	SSA	Sason Arabic
MAL	Maltese	SYR	Syriac
MEH	Mehri	UG	Ugaritic
MAN	Mandaic		

Acronyms

CCG	Core Common Ground
CE	Communicative Environment
CG	Common Ground
CG	Common Ground
CH	Cognate Head
CI	Cognate Infinitive
CO	Cognate Object
DDM	Dynamic Model of Meaning (Kecskes, 2008)
ECG	Emergent Common Ground
FE	Focus Environment
IABS	Infinitive Absolute
ICNS	Infinitive Construct
IS	Information Structure
MMC	Multidimensional Model of Communication
NSI	Noun of Single Instance
S	Speaker
SOA	Set of Alternatives
X _{FOC}	Focused Constituent (Alternative)

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Cognate Infinitives

1.1. Introduction

For centuries, Semitic scholars have noticed the existence of Cognate Infinitives and attempted to describe their formal and functional nature. However, unfortunately for researchers such as myself, the common interest of these scholars did not help them reach a consensus as far as terminology is concerned, as different grammatical approaches gave rise to many distinct nomenclatures for one single linguistic form: *Maḥṣūl muṭlaq mubham* in Classical Arabic (Al-Zamaxṣarī, 1870: 111); Paronymous Complement in Syrian Arabic (Cowell, 1964); Unmodified Cognate Complement in Rural Palestinian Arabic (Shachmon & Marmorstein, 2018); Tautological Infinitive in Biblical Hebrew (Goldenberg, 1971); Infinitive Absolute in Syriac (Nöldeke, 2003); Paronomastic Infinitive in Akkadian (Cohen, 2004), etc.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the lack of agreement in terminology surrounding cognate infinitive structures we are able today to group together this myriad of grammatical labels because both the formal and functional characteristics of Cognate Infinitives seem to be clear enough for scholars to identify them and describe their functions in their works, shaping the valuable body of literature that the present work stands on.

In an attempt to contribute to this body of Semitic literature on the topic, while also reminding the reader of the importance of Arabic within Semitic studies, the present chapter presents an introduction to the formal and functional features of Cognate Infinitives in Lebanese Arabic. This description is situated within a brief review of the existing literature in some Semitic varieties, to the extent that is required to elucidate a broader, more inclusive vision of the grammatical nature of this linguistic construction that

represents a valuable contribution to the commonplace explanation of ‘emphasis’ that dominates the literature written in Arabic on the topic.

Before embarking on CI’s formal description and literature review, it is pertinent for me to inform the reader that the literature about CIs in Semitic and Arabic is relatively scarce and unevenly distributed; while full dissertations have been written on the Tautological Infinitive of Biblical Hebrew, the very existence of CIs in many spoken varieties of Arabic still remains undocumented. I believe a full picture of this family of constructions can only be achieved with time, by building on the existent literature with a critical eye, which is precisely what this chapter aims to do. In this spirit, I would like to encourage the reader to think of each piece of information given in this chapter as a tiny fragment of the tridimensional mosaic that CI represents —despite providing valuable information, it will only truly help us imagine how the bigger picture looks when placed in the context of other pieces.

1.1.1. Cognate Infinitives vs Cognate Objects

In this section, I will describe and introduce terminology for two types of cognate constructions that I argue are discrete formally and functionally.

At the formal level, a Cognate Infinitive construction is formed by two essential elements: (1) a finite verbal form that functions as the lexical head of a predicate (from now on ‘cognate head’ or CH¹) and (2) a less finite verbal form (usually an infinitive) that depends syntactically on and is cognate with the cognate head and stands indefinite and unqualified (from now on ‘cognate infinitive’ or CI). The following is an example in Lebanese Arabic; as we see, the infinitive *barəm* is unspecified and unmodified:

[LA.1]	برمت يرم السيارة	
<i>baram-ət</i>	<i>barəm</i>	<i>əs-siyāra</i>
PFV.circle-3FS.CH	circle.INF.CI	DET-car
‘The car [really] spun (lit. *The car circled circling)’		

In contrast, the following examples contain variants of a construction that looks quite similar, but with a difference that the infinitive in this case is specified, modified or qualified in some way as shown in [LA.1a] and [LA.1b]:

¹ The term ‘cognate head’ has been taken from Bond & Anderson, 2014.

[LA.1a] برمت برمة السيارة

<i>baram-ət</i>	<i>barm-e</i>	<i>əs-siyāra</i>
PFV.circle-3FS.COGNATE HEAD	circle-NSI.COGNATEOBJECT	DET-car

‘The car toured once (lit. The car toured one tour)’

[LA.1b] السيارة برمت برمة سريعة

<i>əs-siyāra</i>	<i>baram-ət</i>	<i>barm-e</i>	<i>sarīṣ-a</i>
DET-car	PFV.circle-3FS	circling-NSI	fast-F.S

‘The car did a quick tour (lit. The car toured a long tour)’

In [LA.1a], the prefix *-a(t)/-e(t)*, which in Arabic may be used to form the noun of single instance — also called *nomen vicis*, or اسم المرة *ism al-marra*— modifies the CH indicating that the action has taken place once. Cognate nouns of single instance in Lebanese Arabic are often qualified, as in [LA.1b], where the noun with the adjective ‘fast’ modify the verb adverbially, explaining how the action took place. The infinitive may also be made definite by a genitive construction or إضافة *iḏāfa*, as in the following example:

[LA.1c] السيارة برمت برمة العروس

<i>əs-siyāra</i>	<i>baram-ət</i>	<i>barm-et</i>	<i>əl-ṣarūs</i>
DET-car	PFV.circle-3FS	circle-NSI	DET-bride

‘The car took a long detour (lit. The car circled the circle of the bride)’

Each of these three examples shows a kind of specification or qualification of the cognate infinitive that contrasts with the bare infinitive in [LA.1]. It is my contention that this formal difference is significant for functional reasons as well. Therefore, I propose to distinguish them from each other terminologically: I will call the bare infinitive construction Cognate Infinitive (CI), and the specified or modified infinitive Cognate Object (CO).

In Arabic, these two concepts have been traditionally studied as two faces of one grammatical category: المفعول المطلق *al-mafʿūl al-muṭlaq* (Ibn As-Sarrāj, 1985)² —which has often been roughly and literally translated as ‘Absolute/Inner Object’.³

² Despite being undoubtedly the most widespread denomination among Arab grammarians, the term “*mafʿūl muṭlaq*” is a well-known post Sibawayhian denomination coined by Ibn As-Sarrāj’s (d.929 CE) in the 9th century in his كتاب الأصول في النحو *kitāb al-ʿuṣūl fī n-naḥw*.

³ According to Arab grammarians, the term *mafʿūl* “denotes the sense of the act performed by the agent” (Levin, 1991: 920), hence, strictly speaking, it does not denote an object. As for the term *muṭlaq*, contrary to many modern grammarians’ interpretations, it refers to the term *mafʿūl* itself, and not to the specific word that will be known by this term. In Levin’s words, “the word *al-muṭlaq* in the term *al-mafʿūl al-muṭlaq* is opposed to *muqayyad bi-ḥarfī l-*

Sībawayh (d.796 CE) provided us with what remains until today one of the most detailed and exhaustive accounts of *maḥḥūl muḥḥaq* in Classical Arabic (CA), which he referred to as *المصدر المنصوب* *al-maḥḥdar al-manḥūb* (lit. infinitive accusative). According to Sībawayhi's description, *al-maḥḥdar al-manḥūb* may fulfil three functions (Sībawayhi, 228-235):

- (1) Reinforcing or strengthening the meaning of what precedes it (e.g. *جلست جلوساً* [lit. I sat a sitting]). This type of *maḥḥdar*, analyzed by Sībawayhi in a section of his *Kitāb* entitled: *ما ينتصب من المصادر توكيداً* *mā yantaḥib min al-maḥḥādir tawkīdan limā qablahu* (lit. on accusative infinitives emphasizing what precedes them), does not add any new content to the verb. Ibn Ya'īṣ also notes that it appears always undefined and in the accusative case and refers to it as *manḥūb mubham* (منصوب مبهم) (lit. ambiguous accusative) (Al-Zamaxṣarī, 1870: 111).
- (2) Expressing quantity or number (e.g. *فعد قعدة أو فعدتين* [lit. he sat a sitting or two sittings]). This type of *maḥḥūl muḥḥaq* indicates the number of times that the action of the verb has taken place. Sībawayhi referred to this type as *مصدر منصوب لبيان العدد* *maḥḥdar manḥūb li-bayān al-ḥadad* (lit. infinitive accusative expressing number).
- (3) Expressing manner (e.g. *ضربه ضرباً شديداً* [lit. I hit him a hard hitting]). This type of *maḥḥdar* appears accompanied by a qualifier that adds information on manner that could not have been known from the verb. Sībawayhi referred to this type as *مصدر منصوب لبيان النوع* *maḥḥdar manḥūb li-bayān an-nawḥ* (lit. infinitive accusative expressing manner). Later grammarians grouped (2) and (3) together arguing that both types of *maḥḥdar* are qualified and add otherwise unknown information to the sentence. This group has been traditionally referred to as *manḥūb muwaqqit* (منصوب موقت) (lit. accusative determining the time) (Al-Zamaxṣarī, 1870) or later as *manḥūb muxtaṣṣ* (منصوب مختص) (lit. accusative of distinction) (Hasan, 2009).

The three functions of the *maḥḥūl muḥḥaq* specified by Sībawayhi are equivalent to the functions of both CI and COs illustrated in the previous LA

ḡarr (lit. complements bound by a preposition [other types of complements whose names in Arabic grammar include prepositions] (Levin, 1991: 921) and its purpose is to differentiate the *maḥḥūl muḥḥaq* from the other *maḥḥūl* (i.e. *al-maḥḥūl bihi*, *al-maḥḥūl fihi*, *al-maḥḥūl lahu*, and *al-maḥḥūl ma'ahu*) that seem to be restricted by a combination of *ḥarf ḡarr* + genitive.

examples: [LA.1] and [LA.1a/b/c] —while Sībawayhi’s example (1) above would be classified as CIs, (2) and (3) would be classified as COs. The functions are similar, but distinct, and it is especially important to distinguish the ‘undefined’ and ‘strengthening’ function of (1) from the qualifying and quantifying functions of (2) and (3).

The combined analysis of CIs and COs in Classical Arabic —which strongly influenced the analyses in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and other Semitic varieties such as Syriac— can only be explained due to an excessive reliance on morphological and syntactic elements. Most probably, it was the cognate and accusative⁴ features that both elements share in CA that led traditional grammarians to pair them up together; unfortunately, this analysis neglects the abundant Semitic evidence of analogous constructions that draw a clear grammatical line between these two structures, both on formal and functional grounds.

Table 1 illustrates this differentiation in a variety of Semitic languages. In the column titled Cognate Infinitive, we can see that CHs (underlined) appear always accompanied by a cognate infinitive (in **bold**), thus indefinite and unqualified. In contrast, the examples in the Cognate Object column show that the CHs are accompanied by cognate verbal nouns that appear consistently qualified by adjectives or genitive constructions.

⁴ Although the accusative case seems to be a shared feature of CIs and COs in Classical Arabic, this is not the case in other Semitic languages such as Ugaritic or Akkadian. For more details on the CI’s syntactic case see 1.2.2.1.

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El objetivo de la colección Estudios de Dialectología Árabe consiste en publicar estudios científicos que permitan ampliar el conocimiento de la realidad lingüística del mundo arabófono a lo largo de la historia. De esta manera, incluirá tanto descripciones gramaticales de cualquiera de las variedades vernáculas del árabe, como otro tipo de trabajos de corte lingüístico y sociolingüístico (colecciones de textos, estudios comparativos y diacrónicos, de contacto de lenguas, etc.), en forma de monografía o bien de libro colectivo.

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