

Frequency and Functions of Third-Person Zero-anaphora in Spoken Arabic and English

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(Received A.H. 3/8/1416; accepted for publication A.H. 19/11/1416)

Abstract. The paper reports on an experiment to determine if the third-person zero-anaphora in Arabic and English is influenced by discourse parameters, rather than just by linguistic factors. Forty male subjects were used: twenty native speakers of Arabic and twenty native speakers of English. In small groups, all subjects reviewed the six-minute film, "The Pear Film," and then in dyad situations of addressee/addresser, one retold what he had seen, with the addressee free to interpose commentary. These conversations were audio-taped. The data were transcribed and analyzed for the frequency and functions of third-person zero-anaphora displayed. Analyses revealed that the percentage of anaphoric coding devices is significantly lower in English than in Arabic. Concerning the functions of the third-person zero-anaphora, in English it seems to have a contextual/discourse function, while in Arabic its use is either syntactically or stylistically motivated.

The term "anaphora" denotes a linguistic situation "where some term picks out as a referent the same identity."⁽¹⁾ In reference to pronouns, an anaphoric relationship occurs when a pronoun is interpreted in terms of its relation to a referent noun phrase (NP) carrying the same syntactic and semantic information in the discourse. The following examples from English (with the anaphoric pronoun italicized) clarify the anaphoric relationship: "I want to visit Riyadh, but Ali doesn't want to go *there*"; "The memory of Prophet Mohammed's smile (Peace be upon *Him*) warmed all of those who knew *Him*." This type of relationship that holds between anaphoric pronouns and their referent NPs

⁽¹⁾ Steven Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 67.

is usually referred to as “cohesive chain”⁽²⁾ or “parameter-setting binding.”⁽³⁾

While pronouns play principally a cohesive, referential role throughout the world’s languages, the way in which they are used within different linguistic systems is highly dependent on the speech repertoire of the available anaphoric coding devices.⁽⁴⁾ Selections are not haphazardly executed but rather are highly systematic and governed by cognitive and discourse constraints.⁽⁵⁾ Such high levels of systematicity have great influence on the process of interpretation of anaphoric relationships.

Of the three referential coding devices, the full NP is the most explicit among the options which a language allows, as cross-linguistic studies by Fox,⁽⁶⁾ Payne,⁽⁷⁾ and Mithun⁽⁸⁾ have revealed. A second coding device is pronominalization, a more attenuated device since by using it the speaker assumes that certain coding information is present in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance.⁽⁹⁾ A third coding device involves the use of an elliptical element which functions as a pronoun, but which does not appear at the (surface) phonological level. Instead, there is an NP trace (a zero-pronoun).⁽¹⁰⁾ In discourse analysis this linguistic phenomenon is referred to as ellipsis⁽¹¹⁾ or zero-anaphora.⁽¹²⁾

It is this last referential choice on which this paper will concentrate. Zero-anaphors occur in most languages: however, they seem to be diverse in their distribution and

⁽²⁾ Michael A.K. Halliday and Rugaiya Hassan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976), 15.

⁽³⁾ Vivian J. Cook, “Timed Comprehension of Binding in Advanced L2 Learners of English,” *Language Learning*, 40, No. 4 (1990), 557.

⁽⁴⁾ M. Mithun, “Third Person Reference and the Function of Pronouns in Central Pomo Speech,” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 56, No. 3 (1990), 361-76.

⁽⁵⁾ See Patricia M. Clancy, “Referential Choices in English and Japanese Narratives,” in *The Pear Stories*, ed. Wallace L. Chafe (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980), 127-202; Barbara A. Fox, “Morpho-syntactic Markedness and Discourse Structure,” *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11 (1988), 359-75; Tamly Givon, ed., *Topic Continuity in Discourse* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1983); Cecile McKee, “A Comparison of Pronouns and Anaphors in Italian and English Acquisition,” *Language Acquisition*, 2, No. 1 (1992), 21-54; Thomas E. Payne, “Referential Distance and Discourse Structure in Yaguba,” *Studies in Language*, 12, No. 2 (1988), 245-392.

⁽⁶⁾ Barbara A. Fox, *Discourse Structure and Anaphora in Written and Conversational English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁽⁷⁾ Payne, “Referential Distance,” 245-392.

⁽⁸⁾ Mithun, “Third Person Reference,” especially 365-70.

⁽⁹⁾ Wallace L. Chafe, “The Flow of Thought and the Flow of Language,” in *Discourse and Syntax*, ed. Tamly Givon (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Murtadhaa J. Bakiir, “Aspects of Clause Structure in Arabic: A Study in Word Order Variation in Literary Arabic,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1979.

⁽¹¹⁾ Clancy, “Referential Choices,” 128.

⁽¹²⁾ Givon, *Topic Continuity*, 5ff; Beverly S. Hartford, “Zero Anaphora in Nonnative Texts: Null-Object Anaphora in Nepali English,” *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 17 (1995), 245-61.

function.⁽¹³⁾ For example, zero-anaphors in Chinese depend for their interpretation solely on pragmatic information (the native speakers' knowledge about the world) and are not limited in their co-referentiality or distribution to any grammatical function or syntactic slot.⁽¹⁴⁾ Von Stutterheim writes that German with its free word order allows a zero-anaphora to appear in object as well as subject position, but always it must be confined to a clause-initial position.⁽¹⁵⁾ Therefore, in German zero-anaphora distribution is influenced by organization of information through word order.

Like German, Arabic has a somewhat flexible word order that can include an array of several syntactic choices.⁽¹⁶⁾ However, in contrast with German, zero-anaphora distribution in Arabic, termed *dhamiir mustatir* (zero-pronoun), is restricted to the subject position when there is a following verb,⁽¹⁷⁾ although one should note that some Arab scholars, such as Ayoub,⁽¹⁸⁾ Assaamaraa?ii⁽¹⁹⁾ and Abdo,⁽²⁰⁾ consider the verb-attached "pronominals" as morphological markers of number and gender of the subject, and not as anaphors. A second feature of zero-anaphora in Arabic is that sometimes it is accompanied by pronoun reduplication: that is, there is the presence of a zero-anaphor and a "focusing" independent pronominal.⁽²¹⁾ The following examples illustrate the noun, reduplication, and zero anaphora in Arabic:

- a) ?al-?awlaad-u [noun] dhahab-uu ?ila l-madrasa
 the boys went to the school
- b) hum [pronoun] dhahab-uu ?ila l-madrasa
 they went to the school

- (13) Erica McClure, "Identifying Referents in Narrative Discourse: A Comparison of the Acquisition of Pronominal and Zero Anaphora by Native and Non-native Speakers of English," *Issues and Developments in English and Applied Linguistics (IDEAL)*, 4 (1989), 85-104. See also Fox, *Discourse Structure* and Givon, *Topic Continuity*.
- (14) Christopher Green, "Typological Transfer, Discourse Accent and the Chinese Writer of English," *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 14 (1991), 51-63; C. Li and Sandra A. Thompson, "Third Person Pronouns and Zero-Anaphora in Chinese Discourse," *Syntax and Semantics*, 12 (1979), 311-35.
- (15) C. Von Stutterheim, "Referential Movement in Descriptive and Narrative Discourse," in *Language Processing in Social Context*, eds. Rainer Dietrich and G. F. Graumann (B.V. North Holland: Elsevier Science Publishers, 1989).
- (16) A.I. Thalji, "Marked vs. Unmarked Structures in Modern Written Arabic," *Al-'arabiyya*, 19 (1986), 109-26.
- (17) A.A. Al-Fihri, *Allisaaniyat wa l-lughah l-9arabiyya: namadhij tarkiibiyah wa dilaaliyah* (Ad-daaru l-baydhaa?: Daar Tubgaal, 1982); Bakiir, "Aspects," *passim*.
- (18) A. Ayoub, *Diraasaat naqdiyya fi n-nahwi l-9arabii* (Cairo: The Anglo-Egyptian Library, 1957).
- (19) I. As-saamaraa?ii, *Al-fi9ilu: zamaanuhu wa ?abniyatuhu* (Baghdad: Matba'at ?al-9aamii, 1966).
- (20) Daud Abdo, *Abhaathun fi l-lughati l-9arabiyyah* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnaan, 1973).
- (21) Ariel A. Bloch, *Studies in Arabic Syntax and Semantics* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986). See also Noura Belazi, "Semantics and Pragmatics of the Tunisian Tenses and Aspects," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1993.

- c) dhahab-uu [zero anaphora] ?ila l-madrasah
 went to the school

In (c) there is no surface noun or pronoun filling the subject slot. Instead, there is an NP trace (a zero-pronoun) when enough information to recollect its reference is available to fill that slot.⁽²²⁾

Unlike Arabic and German, English has a rather rigid SVO word order, but like Arabic the distribution of zero-anaphora is principally restricted to the subject position. Discourse (the communicative context), not syntax (the linguistic context), appears to determine its choice, as the following examples illustrate:

- (a) I came, I saw, I conquered.
 (b) I came, saw, and conquered.

In the first example, pronoun reduplication (which like Arabic, English manifests) puts more stress on the actor than on the action, while in the second, where there is the use of zero-anaphora, the action is maximized. With first person English referents, zero-anaphors occur in familiar correspondents' oral or written interchanges ("See you later" or "Hope you enjoyed this letter") or in situations where economy is influenced by monetary as well as linguistic factors (a telegram's "Will arrive at 4" or a newspaper headline, "Will run," Clinton says"). With second person English referents, zero-anaphora, of course, are syntactically characteristic of the imperative mood, but discourse factors also are influential, as the following examples suggest:

- (a) You get out of my room.
 (b) Get out of my room!
 (c) You! Get out of my room!

The first example has the independent pronominal, the second has the zero-anaphor, and the third the reduplicative pronoun accompanied by the zero-anaphor. Which option of the three the speaker chooses will be determined by discourse boundaries or communicative factors, not just by linguistic constraints. (Since this paper will concentrate on third person referents, no examples of third person zero-anaphora will be given at this point.)

This prelude discussion suggests there is cross-linguistic evidence that the zero-anaphora in two unrelated languages, English and Arabic, are influenced by some of the same contextual and discourse parameters, rather than by linguistic relations alone.

²² Bakir, "Aspects."

Since there has been little previous research dealing with the comparison of zero-anaphora in spoken Arabic and English narratives,⁽²³⁾ what I set out to develop in this study is a method to measure the frequency and functions of one type of anaphoric relationship, the third-person zero-anaphor in the two languages. Specifically, I sought to answer the following two questions:

(1) Does third-person zero-anaphora occur more frequently in English or in Arabic?

(2) If there is a significant frequency differential, what linguistic and particularly discourse factors indigenous to each language may explain this differential?

Such a study may provide the field of discourse analysis with information about cross-linguistic findings by testing theories about anaphora in a broader linguistic context, outside of the Indo-European languages that have principally attracted the attention of previously cited discourse analysts, e.g., Fox, Clancy, and Givon.

Methodology

Subjects

The data collected for this study are twenty audio-taped oral narratives. Forty people participated in the narration. Twenty of them were native speakers of Arabic (variety of Arabic spoken in the Assir Region, part of the Southern Province of Saudi Arabia) in ten dyads of an addresser and an addressee (see Table 1). Twenty were native speakers of American English (mid-western dialect), also in ten dyads of an addresser and an addressee (see Table 2). All participants were between the ages of 18-28 and were undergraduate or graduate students; all participants were male. Subjects participating in each pair of "addresser" and "addressee" were friends. Thus the process of the speech event was natural and not hindered by complicated edicts as sometimes happens between strangers.

Table 1. Summary of information about Arabic participants (ASs).

Pair	ADR age	EDU1	ADSE age	EDU2
1	26	GR	26	GR
2	20	UG	21	UG
3	28	GR	28	GR
4	28	UG	22	UG
5	21	UG	20	UG

⁽²³⁾ Except for Abdallah H. Al-Kahtany, "Anaphoric Relations in Arabic and English Spoken Narratives," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University at East Lansing, 1992.

Table 1. Contd.

Pair	ADR age	EDU1	ADSE age	EDU2
6	23	UG	18	UG
7	19	UG	18	UG
8	22	UG	28	UG
9	22	UG	18	UG
10	20	UG	26	UG

Table 2. Summary of information about American participants (AFs).

Pair	ADR age	EDU1	ADSE age	EDU2
1	28	UG	27	UG
2	23	UG	24	GR
3	21	UG	21	UG
4	23	GR	19	UG
5	26	GR	23	UG
6	18	UG	18	UG
7	22	UG	23	UG
8	21	UG	21	UG
9	23	UG	23	UG
10	21	UG	21	UG

Pair – the participants. ADR age = age of the addresser. EDU1 = education of the addresser. ADSE age = age of the addressee. EDU2 = education of the addressee. GR = graduate. UG = undergraduate.

Subjects were requested to participate in the data collection process in groups of four to six. After the group had assembled, they were divided into two subgroups, with each “friend” dyad divided between the two subgroups. Group (a), the addressers, watched a video presentation of “The Pear Film” (see Appendix A for a synopsis of the film.) After watching the six-minute-and-eighteen-second film, each then rejoined his colleague in the original “friend” dyads to retell what he had watched. Group (b), the addressees, at that time, were waiting in different separate rooms where there was a preset tape recorder to tape the narration and interaction that took place. After interactions between participants came to an end, the researcher requested the addressers to write down what they remembered after seeing the film. Addressees also were requested to write down what they recalled from their colleagues’ retelling. (The resulting written data will be analyzed in future studies, but not in the present study).

The data collection for Arabic oral narratives took place on the campus of King Saud University, Abha Branch, Saudi Arabia. English oral narratives were collected at

the Michigan State University campus, East Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.

There are differences between the data collection process of this study and previous studies of discourse elements using "The Pear Film." Studies by Tannen, Clancy, Chafe, and Du Bois⁽²⁴⁾ were based on one-sided narratives, in which a subject watched the film and narrated what he had seen to the researchers or another person who might have watched the film several times; the speech event was not "authentic" in that the events were not new to the audience anymore. A close look at some of the previously transcribed data of "The Pear Film" in Chafe⁽²⁵⁾ suggests that they may lack the kind of interpersonal interaction that is central in everyday face-to-face communication.

In the current study, participants narrated what they had seen in the movie to colleagues of their choice who had not seen the film. This approach assists the enhancement of pseudo-natural narration. Participants involved in each narration were males and close friends, who shared a similar social and cultural background. These shared characteristics among participants probably increased the mutual interaction between each speaker and recipient during the narrations. In fact, recipients in this study turned out to be not merely passive listeners; they were active in asking for clarification and in commenting on events, similar to any conversational narration speech event.

Materials

"The Pear Film" was originally produced as a sound-and-color 16mm film without dialogue, which was designed to be used for academic research in discourse analysis. It has had value as an elicitation tool for narration for the following reasons:

- (1) The film was designed for research purposes in order to provide insight into how people talk about things they have experienced and later recalled.⁽²⁶⁾
- (2) The film was designed to be easily interpreted by people from different cultural backgrounds through the use of an uncomplicated plot.
- (3) The film depicts a group of people and objects participating in the events in various modes, thus providing good raw material for anaphoric operations.⁽²⁷⁾
- (4) There is no dialogue; therefore, the film is a candidate for retelling by people who speak different languages.

⁽²⁴⁾ Deborah Tannen, "A Comparative Analysis of Oral Narrative Strategies," in *The Pear Stories*, ed. Wallace L. Chafe (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980), 51-87; Clancy, "Referential Choices," 127-202; Wallace L. Chafe, ed., *The Pear Stories* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980); J.W. Du Bois, "Beyond Definiteness: The Trace of Identity in Discourse," in *The Pear Stories*, ed. Wallace L. Chafe (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980), 203-73.

⁽²⁵⁾ Chafe, *The Pear Stories*.

⁽²⁶⁾ Deborah Tannen, ed., *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1984).

⁽²⁷⁾ Chafe, *The Pear Stories*.

(5) The film has proven useful in previous research involving anaphora, among them Clancy's⁽²⁸⁾ study of referential choices in English and Japanese.

(6) Genre is consistent. Tannen suggests that some of the generalizations about the dichotomy of speech and writing can be attributed to differences in genre in the texts involved.⁽²⁹⁾

Since speakers of both languages, Arabic and English, are telling the same story, they are dealing with the same referential tasks during the course of the narration process. However, the indexical forms of reference commonly used by speakers of each language incorporate different amounts of information about their referents. Arabic has grammatical gender, and therefore it is required that all referents have gender markings, male or female, regardless of whether they are animate or inanimate. English, on the other hand, does not have grammatical gender; inanimate objects are not marked for gender.

Statistical analysis

This computer-assisted research used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS PC+) in the qualitative analysis of the spoken Arabic and English narratives.

Results

Tables 3 and 4 list by each pair the number of clauses and the number of anaphoric patterns used by the ASs and AESs. The total of clauses employed is similar: 1039 for ASs and 1181 for AESs, as is the total of anaphoric patterns: 1502 for ASs and 1422 for AESs.

Table 3. Number of clauses (CL) and anaphoric patterns (ANP) used by Arabic participants (ASs).

Pair	CL	ANP
1	86	121
2	84	149
3	192	248
4	86	138
5	122	131
6	139	192
7	54	96
8	81	132
9	112	181
10	83	114
Total	1039	1502

⁽²⁸⁾ Clancy, "Referential Choices," 127-202.

⁽²⁹⁾ Tannen, *Coherence*.

Table 4. Number of clauses (CI) and anaphoric patterns (ANP) used by American participants (AESs).

Pair	CI	ANP
1	106	135
2	254	215
3	86	137
4	90	118
5	157	167
6	72	102
7	84	85
8	92	113
9	156	205
10	84	145
Total	1181	1422

Table 5 provides a summary of frequencies that represent different referential choices (RCs) in Arabic and English narratives. Arabic narratives provide strikingly similar percentages of the distribution of their referential choices, 33.9% for full NPs and zero-anaphors, and 32.3% for pronouns. When compared with the distribution of such RCs in English narratives, English pronouns ranked highest in their distribution with 47.1% of the RCs used. Full NPs composed 41.7% of RCs. The percentage of zero-anaphora coding devices was significantly low. It composed only 9.4% of the RCs employed in English. Comparing the frequencies of the attenuated RCs with the strongest coding devices (NPs) in Arabic and English narratives, Arabic provided more freedom to use pronouns and zero-anaphors; 66.1% of the number of RCs was distributed in these domains. English narratives on the other hand allowed 58.3% of RCs to take anaphorically attenuated forms (pronouns and zero-anaphors).

Table 5. Referential choices (coding devices) in Arabic and English narratives.

RC	Arabic		English	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Noun	509	33.9	593	42.1
Pronoun	485	32.3	684	48.5
Zero	508	33.8	133	9.4
Total	1502	100.0	1410	100.0

As summarized in Table 6, zero-anaphors in English represent 23.63% of RCs occurring in subject position, in comparison to 76.37% pronominals. Zero-anaphors compose only 9.4% of the anaphoric choices involved in English narratives (see Table 5). Arabic subject pronouns, on the other hand, represent 19.36%, a minority compared

to 80.64% of zero-anaphors (Table 7).

Table 6. Distribution of attenuated coding devices in English according to their grammatical functions.

RC	Subject		Object		Obj of pre		Others	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Pronoun	430	76.37	120	100	23	100	110	100
Zero	133	23.63	00	00	00	00	00	00
Totals #	563		120		23		110	
%	69		14.70		2.82		13.48	

Table 7. Distribution of pronouns and zero-pronouns in Arabic according to their grammatical functions.

RC	Subject		Object		Obj of pre		Others	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Pronoun	122	19.36	148	100	118	100	97	100
Zero	508	80.64	00	00	00	00	00	00
Totals #	630		148		118		97	
%	63.45		14.90		11.88		9.77	

Interpretation of Results

A first look at Table 5 suggests that English narrators, when compared with Arabic narrators, use full NPs with a higher percentage to establish reference, since full NPs in English exceed those in Arabic by about 7.8%. However, less influencing on the hierarchy of referential choices is whether a language allows a certain coding device; rather, the greater influence is how much distribution a specific coding device is allowed and under what conditions in relation to other RCs. As shown in Table 5, referential choices by Arabic narrators are distributed almost equally in terms of their frequencies. Although English narrators have access to a similar array of choices, establishing reference by using zero-anaphora is restricted to certain syntactic contexts.

Interpretation of such frequencies can be misleading because of the complex relations among the different RCs, and because of the constraints each language places on the distribution and selection of these coding devices. Both languages have referentiality as a part of their discourse functions. However, besides referentiality, the distribution of zero-anaphors in Arabic and in English narratives is influenced by the different discourse functions they play. The zero-anaphor in Arabic is the unmarked coding device to establish reference in most subject positions. The zero-anaphor in English, as I will discuss later, plays an additional role besides referentiality. On the other hand, Arabic pronominals occurring in subject position often do not have referentiality as their main function since they do not provide additional information to referentiality. Either they are syntactically motivated as in copulative clauses where they

can have anaphoric function, or they have other stylistic roles to play.

Factors affecting Arabic zero-anaphora

To account for the appearance of Arabic and English zero-anaphors, a detailed analysis of the distribution and contextual function of each coding device was executed. The analysis of the Arabic data revealed not so much the discourse function of the zero-anaphora, but of the reduplicative Arabic subject pronouns. An analysis of the data shows that Arabic pronominals occurred in subject position for one of the following reasons. First, they are certain syntactic constraints in Arabic, as in copulative structures where a surface structure verb is not available. I have marked these pronominals in bold face in the following examples 1A and 2A:

Ex 1A

A: ... ?al-muhimm jaa? rajul ?amrikii .. Ka?ann-ah min haa?ulaa?

the important came a man American similar he from those

l-fursaan

the knights

“... The important thing is that an American man came .. as if he were from those knights ..” [Native Arabic Speaker, No. 5].

Ellipsis marks indicate the time of the speaker’s pausing; two dots represent approximately a two-second pause; three dots, approximately a three-second pause, and so forth.

Ex 2A

A: ... kaan rajul fii mazra9ah .. wa huu waaqif 9alaa shajarah

was a man in a farm .. and he standing on a tree

yaltaqi t t ba9dh ?a-thimaar .. wa haadhi- hii ?ath-thimaar ..

collecting some the fruits .. and this the fruit ..

hiyyaa l-kimithraaa ..

she the pears ..

“... a man was in a farm .. he was standing on a tree .. collecting some fruits .. and these fruits .. they were pears ..”

[Native Arabic Speaker, No. 9].

In such a context, the use of pronouns instead of zero-anaphors is obligatory in

Arabic grammar. These situations represent 37.77% of the subject pronouns used. Furthermore, in non-copulative structures, subject pronouns have discourse functions completely different from referentiality. They occur by themselves or are often preceded by a certain set of discourse particles to establish emphasis on certain referents during the narration. 51.11% of subject pronouns acted to establish emphasis. Bloch referred to these pronouns in Arabic as “focusing devices” which “stand out against the rest of the sentence, which contains the proposed or known information.”⁽³⁰⁾ Such occasions are illustrated by the following example:

Ex 3A

A: ...?il-muhim **Hummah** laqa t t -uu ma9-ah ?il-kimithra ... ?al-kabiir

the important they collected with him the pears the big

?akbar waahid .. wa a s- s aghiir ?akthar man laqa t t ... ?ilthaa

biggest one and the small more who collected this

?a ?a - hadhak saa9ad-hum l- wassitt ?illii 9umrah () ..

a .. a .. that helped them the middle one whose age

?ilghariib ?inn-ah **hu** maa 9amil shayy? .. fii ?inn-ah yijni

the strange that he he did not do a thing in that he harvest

l-kimithraa hadhaa llii hadhaa .. **Hum** jama9-uh-h .. wa-ba9da

the pears this which that they collected it and after

maa uhm wa- **hum** .. qaam yanfudh ban t t aluun - ah .. 9ala

and they stood clean pants his

?ill .. ?ill .. 9alaa darraajah .. haqqat - ah .. ?il-mihimm

on the the on the bike belong him the important

jama9u -uh la -h

collected it to him [Native Arabic Speaker, No. 3].

[() represents an unintelligible word].

In the above excerpts, there are situations (indicated by bold face) where

⁽³⁰⁾ Bloch, *Studies*, 1-2.

pronominals are used to establish emphasis through focusing on certain participants. These pronominals clearly have little to do with accomplishing anaphoric relations. In the first case, the pronoun [humma] was used after the word [ʔal-muhimm] “the important thing” which in this narration was frequently used to attract the attention of the addressee to a specific event or character. The use of the pronoun instead of the zero-pronoun, which was possible grammatically, took place after digression. This use had the effect of establishing focus by using the pronoun in a context where a zero-anaphor would have been adequate to establish reference. If a zero-anaphor had been used, the sentence would still be syntactically and semantically well-formed. The use of [hu] in the second occasion is also not for the purpose of establishing referentiality, but rather for the purpose of emphasizing that he (the middle boy) did not provide any help. The second use of the pronoun [hum], referring to the other boys who helped pick up the pears, is also used to establish emphasis through repetition, that it was the other two boys (the small and the big boy) who helped and not (the middle one).

Mithun suggests that “when emphatic pronouns are used, they do not represent entities that are already within the immediate focal consciousness of speaker and hearer; in those cases there is no overt reference at all. Their primary function is to draw already active referents back into focal consciousness after some disruption or discontinuing.”⁽³¹⁾

Factors affecting English zero-anaphora

Though English zero-anaphors carry a referential function, they play other discourse roles as well. In my data, the majority, 80.16%, refers to major or secondary topicworthy characters in the narrative. Only a minority, 19.84%, refers to minor characters. Zero-anaphors mostly occur, as illustrated in the examples below, in an environment of vivid actions where a sequence of rapidly occurring events is taking place. Probably the shorter the clauses, the more vivid the narration.

EX 1E

A: O.K.! .. and he’s wearing a red handkerchief around his neck and it’s () down .. uh .. in a sort of a triangle .. the kid was also wearing jeans.. the bike was uh .. uh . a men’s bike .. you know! .. and uh.. () just typical kid’s bike .. you know! .. and .. he rode up .. and Ø got off his bike .. then he .. he looked up .. and uh.. Ø picked up .. uh one of the .. one of the – baskets full of pears .. and Ø got back on his bike .. and Ø sets the basket .. uh .. down on his front . uh.. what would you call it? ... a hoop ... fender?

B: O.K.

A: It’s fender .. and Ø put it there .. and Ø drove away [Native American English Speaker, No. 2; Ø indicates zero-anaphora].

⁽³¹⁾ Mithun, “Third Person Reference,” 375.

The excerpt above is one of the few instances where zero-anaphors were employed with some frequency. The episode that describes the bike boy's maneuvers to steal the basket of pears was the most vivid and thrilling episode in all narrations. Therefore, it was not surprising that this episode attracted the most cases of zero-anaphora. The last episode of "The Pear Film" is also dramatic. This is the point where the pear picker realized the absence of one of his baskets and at the same time the three kids passed by eating pears. In this episode the suspicion and curiosity of the listener to know and the rush of the addressers to tell are reflected in the choice of anaphoric elements. Zero-anaphors in English, although very few in comparison to pronominals, occurred more frequently in these two episodes. The excerpt [1E] above is taken from the former episode, and the following excerpt [2E] is taken from the latter. I do not think the 133 zero-anaphors, composing only 9.4% out of 1410 RCs occurring in English narratives, are an adequate basis for a generalization about what determines their distribution. However, they appear to be associated with the most vivid and exciting events in the narratives, where attention to the rapidity of actions may have generated short clauses, causing some pronouns to be deleted.

EX 2E

A: uh ... uh and the three kids walked down the road .. eating the pears ... you know! .. and they go back to the Mexican .. uh .. in the tree ... he comes down the ladder .. an .. Ø looks at the pears .. and .. uh .. Ø frowns .. () .. scratching his head .. () what's going on here? .. then he looks .. there are three kids .. walking by his tree .. looks at them .. shakes his head .. I don't know what's going on .. the kids walked away .. it's the end of the story .. [Native American English Speaker, No. 4].

The existence of zero-anaphora in contexts that describe dramatic actions can be associated with the close relationship between the organization of thoughts in the narrators' minds and the instantaneous pressure they undergo during speech production, as Chafe has suggested.⁽³²⁾ More evidence is provided by Stevenson and Vitkhovitch during their experimental work on the role sentences with zero-anaphors and sentences with explicit anaphors play in discourse.⁽³³⁾ Sentences with zero-pronominals provide faster response time than pronoun sentences. They also mention that their results give evidence to the view that the reference assignment is delayed rather than immediate when a pronoun is used to establish reference, because of the mental process it requires. Particularly, this phenomenon holds true for elliptical sentences, where such evidence supports the view that the integration of subsequent information affects the speed of

(32) Chafe "Flow."

(33) R. Stevenson and M. Vitkhovitch, "The Comprehension of Anaphoric Relations," *Language and Speech*, 29 (1980), 314-44.

pronoun assignment.⁽³⁴⁾ These results of experimental work by Stevenson and Vitkhovitch provide some support for the view that the assignment of zero-pronoun in English is pragmatically manipulated to execute discourse functions beside referentiality.

Conclusions

Given the small size of the groups tested, caution must be taken not to overstate the implications of the findings listed above, but some predictive relationships do emerge from the study:

1. *Frequency*: The percentage of third-person zero-anaphora coding devices is significantly lower in English than in Arabic. Linguistic considerations seem to be the determining factor: In English, establishing reference by using zero-anaphors is restricted to certain atypical syntactic contexts; however, in Arabic zero-anaphors are the usual coding device to establish reference in the subject position.

2. *Function in English*: Selection of a third-person subject-position zero-anaphora in English narratives seems to be restricted principally by the content of the discourse, not just by referential function. In recounting vivid or rapid actions, the English speakers in this study tended to omit pronouns in subject positions, that is, to employ zero-anaphora.

3. *Function in Arabic*: However, the opposite prevails with Arabic speakers. A third-person subject-position zero-anaphor in Arabic narrative is principally an unmarked coding device to establish reference. Selection of an Arabic pronominal in the subject position is either syntactically motivated (obligated by Arabic grammar) or stylistically motivated (selected for emphasis or focusing).

Thus, discourse functions appear to play a role in facilitating the process of the selection of zero-anaphora in English and the non-selection of zero-anaphora in Arabic.

Further studies of the selection of zero-anaphora in relation to contextual factors like topicworthiness of characters and discourse boundaries (episodes) in Arabic and English narratives are needed to establish the role contextual and discourse factors play in the referential choices which native speakers make to establish referentiality. Also further study is needed to determine if the sex of the participants affects the use of zero-anaphora.

The comparative study of specific discourse features based on controlled discourse situations and external factors can contribute greatly to the understanding of cognitive

(34) Stevenson and Vitkhovitch, "Comprehension," 342-44.

and cultural conventions and restrictions and of universal grammar [Flynn⁽³⁵⁾ and Bennett and Progovac,⁽³⁶⁾ but for counter arguments against the anaphoric parameter-setting model, see Bley-Vroman and Chaudron⁽³⁷⁾ .] Apart from this theoretical significance, such research has implications for several other fields: artificial intelligence, second language acquisition, translation, and psycholinguistics. Cross-linguistic research in anaphora is very important to the study of the repertoire of cohesive devices, and thus important for educational practices such as the teaching of writing to native speakers and, equally as important, to non-native speakers.⁽³⁸⁾ Widdowson indicates that cohesive strategies used in a given text are excellent guides to coherence.⁽³⁹⁾ Thus, teaching cohesion devices can be a crucial issue in second language pedagogy.

Houghton and Hoey have emphasized the urgency of collaborative efforts between discourse analysts and second language acquisition researchers: "The linguists must build bridges between their various theories and studies before the students can build their bridges between the rhetorics of their first language and the language they seek to acquire."⁽⁴⁰⁾ I hope that my cross-linguistic study of the third-person subject-position zero-anaphora in Arabic and English has contributed to this effort.

Appendix A: Synopsis of "The Pear Film"

Chafe⁽⁴¹⁾ provides the following synopsis of the events that took place in the film:

The film begins with a man picking pears on a ladder in a tree. He descends the ladder, kneels, and dumps the pears from the pocket of an apron he is wearing into one of three baskets below the tree. He

⁽³⁵⁾ Suzanne Flynn, *A Parameter-Setting Model of L2 Acquisition: Experimental Studies in Anaphora* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1987).

⁽³⁶⁾ Susan Bennett and Ijiljana Progovac, "Evidence of Transfer and Universal Grammar in Second Language Acquisition of Reflexive Binding," *McGill Working Papers in Linguistics/Cahiers linguistiques de McGill*, 9 (1993), 77-101.

⁽³⁷⁾ Robert Bley-Vroman and Craig Chaudron, "Second Language Processing of Subordinate Clauses and Anaphora-first Language and Universal Influences: a Review of Flynn's Research," *Language Learning*, 40, No. 2 (1990), 245-85.

⁽³⁸⁾ McClure, "Identifying Referents," 85-104; Jong Chen, "Constraints on the Acquisition of Anaphora in Adult English as a Second Language; A Developmental Model," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C., 1993; Fred R. Eckman, "Local and Long-Distance Anaphora in Second-Language Acquisition," *Research Methodology in Second-Language Acquisition*, eds. Elaine E. Tarone, Susan M. Gass, and Andrew D. Cohen (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 207-25; Victoria C. Berkemeyer, "Anaphoric Resolution and Text Comprehension for Readers of German," *Teaching German*, 27 (1994), 15-22; Beverly O. Flanigan, "Anaphora and Relativism in Child Second Language Acquisition," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 17 (1995), 331-51.

⁽³⁹⁾ Henry G. Widdowson, *Explorations in Applied Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ D. Houghton and M. Hoey, "Linguistics and Written Discourse: Contrastive Rhetorics," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 3 (1982), 14.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Chafe, *The Pear Stories*, xiii-xiv.

removes a bandanna from around his neck and wipes off one of the pears. Then he returns to the ladder and climbs back into the tree.

Toward the end of this sequence we hear the sound of a goat, and when the picker is back in the tree a man approaches with a goat on a leash. As they pass by the baskets of pears, the goat strains toward them, but is pulled past by the man and the two of them disappear in the distance.

We see another closeup of the picker at his work, and then we see a boy approaching on a bicycle. He coasts in toward the baskets, stops, gets off his bike, looks up at the picker, puts down his bike, walks toward the baskets, again looking at the picker, picks up a pear, puts it back down, looks once more at the picker, and lifts up a basket full of pears. He puts the basket down near his bike, lifts up the bike and straddles it, picks up the basket and places it on the rack in front of his handlebars, and rides off. We again see the man continuing to pick pears.

The boy is now riding down the road, and we see a pear fall from the basket on his bike. Then we see a girl on a bicycle approaching from the other direction. As they pass, the boy turns to look at the girl, his hat flies off, and the front wheel of his bike hits a rock. The bike falls over, the basket falls off, and the pears spill out onto the ground. The boy extricates himself from under the bike, and brushes off his leg.

In the meantime we hear what turns out to be the sound of a paddle ball, and then we see three boys standing there, looking at the bike boy on the ground. The three pick up the scattered pears and put them back in the basket. The bike boy sets his bike upright, and two of the other boys lift the basket of pears back onto it. The bike boy begins walking his bike in the direction he was going, while the three other boys begin walking off in the other direction.

As they walk by the bike boy's hat on the road, the boy with the paddle ball sees it, picks it up, turns around, and we hear a loud whistle as he signals to the bike boy. The boy stops, takes three pears out of the basket, and holds them out as the other boy approaches with the hat. They exchange the pears and the hat, and the bike boy keeps going while the boy with the paddle ball runs back to his two companions, to each of whom he hands a pear. They continue on, eating their pears.

The scene now changes back to the tree, where we see the picker again descending the ladder. He looks at the two baskets, where earlier there were three, points at them, backs up against the ladder, shakes his head, and tips up his hat. The three boys are now seen approaching, eating their pears. The picker watches them pass by, and they walk off into the distance.

تردد ووظيفة ضمير الغائب المستتر في اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية

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ملخص البحث: أجريت هذه الدراسة للتحري عما إذا كانت هناك أسباب سياقية لظهور ضمائر الغائب المحذوفة (المستترة) zero - anaphora في اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية أم أن حدوثها لأسباب نحوية بحتة. وقد أجريت الدراسة على أربعين شخصا. عشرون منهم من متحدثي اللغة العربية والعشرون الآخرون من متحدثي اللغة الإنجليزية. وقد وُزِع المشاركون على مجموعات صغيرة لمشاهدة فيلم (قصة الكمشري) The Pear Film والذي أعد خصيصا لمثل هذه الدراسات، ومدته ست دقائق. وبعد ذلك قسم المشاركون إلى مجموعات صغيرة من شخصين أحدهما شاهد الفيلم والآخر لم يشاهده. يبدأ تسجيل الحوار حينما يبدأ المشاهد في الرواية للمستمع. وتم تفرغ المعلومات اللغوية بعد التسجيل وبعد ذلك تم التحليل لمعرفة مدى تكرار ضمائر الغائب المحذوفة وما مهمة الوظائف التي تقوم بها في اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية ولقد ظهر بعد التحليل أن نسبة ضمائر الغائب، المحذوفة في اللغة الإنجليزية أقل بكثير منها في اللغة العربية، فبينما كانت ضمائر الغائب المحذوفة في اللغة الإنجليزية تضطلع بوظائف سياقية، فإن مثيلاتها في اللغة العربية تظهر لأسباب نحوية أو أسلوبية. وعلى النقيض من وظيفة الضمائر في اللغة الإنجليزية كمظاهر قواعدية عامة، فإن ظهور الفاعل في صيغة ضمير يكون لأسباب سياقية في اللغة العربية، منها التأكيد لأنه مستتر في الغالب.