Announcements

- This class satisfies the following requirements:
  - The Arabic major – Linguistics track.
  - The Arabic minor.
  - The Linguistics minor.

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Today’s agenda

- What do we mean by ‘Arabic’?
- Overview of historical linguistics.
- The history of Arabic as a Semitic language.
- Spread of Arabic to where it is spoken today, and some examples for how modern Arabic is different from Classical Arabic.

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So, what’s Arabic, then?

- Where is it spoken?
- What other languages are spoken in the same areas where Arabic is spoken?

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 إن شاء الله

- The use of certain linguistic expressions can shed light on societal and cultural aspects.
- Consider إن شاء الله in Egyptian Arabic.
- But:
  - انت هتكون رئيس الجامعة في يوم من الأيام.
  - هاها. إن شاء الله!
  - Would you be able to help me with this please?
  - طبعا طبعا. بكره إن شاء الله.

- Let’s all go to the movies?
- No, I can’t.
- C’mon now. Let’s go out and watch a movie.
- I’m really sorry. I’m busy.
- OK, إن شاء الله ما جيت (roughly: ‘I don’t care if you don’t come.’)

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ARBC/LNGT 0227
Arabic Sociolinguistics
علم اللسانيات الاجتماعية في اللغة العربية

Lecture #2
Feb 14th, 2013
Arabic dialectal variation

- What do we know about the linguistic variation in Arabic-speaking countries?
- What is a language and what is a dialect?

- Let’s listen to some Arabic varieties.
  - [http://www.semarch.uni-hd.de/index.php43?&lang=en](http://www.semarch.uni-hd.de/index.php43?&lang=en)

Modern English (Shakespeare)

*A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.*

Middle English (Chaucer)

*Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droght of March hath perced to the roote.*

When April with its sweet showers
The drought of March has pierced to the root.

Old English (Beowulf)

*Wolde guman findan fíone fæ him on sweofote sære geteode.*

*He wanted to find the man who harmed him while he slept.*
Historical linguistics

- So, you get the obvious point: Languages do change over time, and sometimes in such a way that speakers of a later form of a language are no longer able to understand texts of that same language from an earlier stage.
- Linguists who are interested in the historical development and change of languages over time are known as historical linguists. They are also interested in determining if what are today different languages were at one point one language.

Reconstruction and the comparative method

- The 19th century was the century for the study of historical (aka diachronic) linguistics.
- Historical linguists, aka comparativists, were mainly concerned with “reconstructing” the properties of the parent language of a group of languages that are believed to be genetically related.
- Reconstruction was done by means of the comparative method, whereby earlier forms were determined via the comparison of later forms.
- The earlier forms are called proto-forms, and the earlier language is called a proto-language.

Cognates

- The forms compared were typically words that were believed to have developed from the same ancestral root. They are called cognates.
- Consider the following table of Germanic cognates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Danish</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>man</td>
<td>Mann</td>
<td>mand</td>
<td>man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>voet</td>
<td>Fuß</td>
<td>fod</td>
<td>fot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>brengen</td>
<td>bringen</td>
<td>bringe</td>
<td>bringa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Compare Arabic “non-cognates”: رجل (man), قدم (foot), and حضرأ (bring)

The discovery of Proto-Indo-European

- In 1786, Sir William Jones, a British judge and scholar working in India, noted that Sanskrit bore to Greek and Latin “a stronger affinity ... than could possibly have been produced by accident,” and he suggested that the three languages had “sprung from a common source”.
- This common source is what came to be known later as “Proto-Indo-European” (PIE), the parent language of most of the languages spoken today in Europe, Persia, and northern India.
Proto-Semitic

• Applying the comparative method to cognates from Arabic and other languages spoken in the region led to the postulation of a proto-language from which all the languages descended.
• The language is called Proto-Semitic, or simply Semitic.

Semitic cognates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Akkadian</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Ge'ez</th>
<th>Mehri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
<td>šala:m</td>
<td>sala:m</td>
<td>šalom</td>
<td>sala:m</td>
<td>salom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td>šum</td>
<td>šim</td>
<td>še:m</td>
<td>šim</td>
<td>nam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Similarities among Semitic languages:
  - tri-consonantal roots; pharyngeal and emphatic sounds, verbal systems with prefixes and suffixes.

Semitic similarities and differences

• Arabic shares certain linguistic features with South Arabian and Ethiopic, e.g.,
  1. The broken plural:
     رجل – رجلا
     كتاب – كتاب
  2. In most Semitic languages, there is a b/p distinction, but not in South Semitic languages, including Arabic. Hebrew paqad (‘to look after’) and Akkadian pagq-du (‘to take care of’) correspond to Arabic faqada (‘to lose, look for’) and Ge’ez faqada (‘to want, require’).

Semitic similarities and differences

• Arabic, however, shares certain linguistic features with Hebrew, to the exclusion of South Semitic languages.
  1. The suffixes of past tense in both Arabic and Hebrew have -t, but in Ethiopic have -k.
     Arabic: katab-ta/katab-ta
     Hebrew: katavt/katavta
     Ethiopic: -ku/-ka
  2. Arabic and Northwest Semitic languages are also the only Semitic languages to have developed a definite article.
  3. In both Arabic and Hebrew, the feminine marker -at developed a form without the -t.

Figure 2.1: The traditional classification of the Semitic languages
Beyond Semitic

- Some scholars have also proposed that the Semitic language family is actually part of a larger language family that included several of the languages of Africa, in addition to Semitic languages.
- The group is called Afro-asiatic (and sometimes Hamito-Semitic).
- It includes several language sub-families: Semitic, Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Ancient Egyptian (Coptic).

Afro-asiatic languages map

Arabic history

- Early Arabic: A few inscriptions, but very little is known.
- Classical Arabic العربية: 6th AD to around 10th AD.
- Middle Arabic: 11th to the 18th centuries.
- Modern Arabic: End of the 18th century to today, during which so-called Modern Standard Arabic developed.
Arabic history

- The differences between today’s spoken Arabic and Classical Arabic are comparable to those between Old English and Modern English, but the continuous usage of (some form of) Classical Arabic in several domains, most notably religious and literary, has always helped make the language much more familiar to Arabic speakers, particularly among the educated.
Two questions for our discussion today

- There are two fundamental questions typically debated in any discussion of Arabic history:
  - **First**, was the CLA of pre-Islamic poetry and the Qur’an, particularly with its case and mood marking الإعراب, also the spoken language of ordinary Arabs in daily life interactions?
  - **Second**, whatever the form of CLA was that came to Egypt, Syria, Iraq, North Africa, and other places in today’s Arab world, how did it develop into Middle Arabic and the Arabic dialects of today?
- We discuss both questions on Monday وإن شاء الله.

Next class agenda

- Finish reading Holes’ Chapter 1 on Arabic history.

References

- Ethnologue: The Semitic language family tree on Ethnologue.