

Demonstratives in English and Arabic :

A Contrastive Study

أسماء الإشارة "دراسة مقارنة باللغة العربية والانكليزية"

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1.1 Introduction

This paper studies the demonstratives as deictic expressions in Standard Arabic and English by outlining their phonological, syntactic and semantic properties in the two languages. On the basis of the outcome of this outline, a contrastive study of the linguistic properties of this group of deictic expressions in the two languages is conducted next. The aim is to find out what generalizations could be made from the results of this contrastive study.

1.2 Demonstratives in Standard Arabic

1.2.1 Definition

Grammarians of Standard Arabic (henceforth, SA) classify demonstratives in the language within the word class of *names*, under the subset of (أسماء الإشارة = *Names of Reference*, or *Reference Names*). Their definition of a reference name is: 'Any name that denotes what is named and refers to it' (الفاكهي: 73). Thus, a demonstrative noun is that which indicates a denominate. So, when demonstrating a person named *Zaid*, one says:

هذا زيد (1)

(Howell, 1886: 563)

Here, (هذا) indicates the person (زيدُ), and (هذا) is the demonstration of that person. This means that (هذا) functions as a pronoun for (زيدُ). The definition above entails the following semantic distinctive features:

1. The demonstrative should be a linguistic lexical item of the class of Nominal.
2. This item must denote a meaning; i.e. is meaningful.
3. This item has also the feature of referring to that meaning that it denotes.

Only a visible object, near or far, is originally referred to by a demonstrative. Scholars of SA also classify demonstratives within the larger set of what is termed (المعارف = the defined nouns), in contrast with (النكرات = the indefinites). However, they are also termed (المبهمات = ambiguous nouns) because of their generalized deictic function of reference to both animate and inanimate entities (الأنصاري, I: 306).

1.2.2 Set Membership

The group of Demonstratives in SA includes basic demonstratives as well as marginal ones. Basic demonstratives are of greater frequency, both in speech and writing. In contrast, marginal demonstrative are rarely used; some of which are archaic, others are dialectal variants.

1.2.3 Primary Demonstratives

There are five basic demonstratives in SA. These are:

ذا ، ذه ، ذي ، ته ، أولاء (2)

In the subset above, the first two items denote the singular "this", whereas the last three items denote the plural "those". There is also a specialization in their gender use; the first one (ذا) refers to males only, the second three (ته ، ذي ، ذه) to females only, whereas the last one (هؤلاء) has a global reference to both male or female referents (عيد ، 1975: 158).

1.2.3.1 Morphological Features

1. All the demonstratives above are normally prefixed with the allocutional particle (ها), whose final (أ) is pronounced in spoken forms, but is deleted in written forms. Thus, there are the usual allocutional forms of: (هؤلاء، هاته، هذي، هذه، هذا) (Howell, 1886: 563).

(3)

- a. هذا كتاب نادر. (This is a rare book.)
- b. هذه قصة قديمة. (This is an old story.)
- c. هذي قبورنا تملأ الرُّحْبَ. (These are our graves that span the wide earth.)
- d. إشتريت هاتين الدراجتين. (I bought these two bicycles.)
- e. هؤلاء ضيوفي. (These are my guests.)

(عيد، 1975: 158-64)

In SA, demonstratives inflect for number (singular/dual/plural), gender (male/female), place (near/far), person (2nd/3rd) and case (nominative in contrast with the accusative/genitive) as shown in the following Table:

Table (1) Morphological Forms of Basic Demonstratives in SA

Ref. Item	Inflected Forms										
	Number			Gender		Place		Person		Case	
	Single	Dual	Plu.	Male	Female	Near	Far	2 nd	3 rd	Nom.	Acc/ Gen.
ذا	(هـ)ذا	(هـ)ذان	-	(هـ)ذا	-	(هـ)ذا	ذاك/ذَئِكَ	ذاك	ذلك	(هـ)ذا	(هـ)ذين
ذو	(هـ)ذه	(هـ)هذه	(هـ)هذه	-	(هـ)هذه	هذه	ذانك	ذانك	(هـ)ذه	(هـ)هذه	(هـ)هذه
ذي	(هـ)ذي	(هـ)ذِي	(هـ)ذِي	-	(هـ)ذِي	(هـ)ذِي	ذِئِكَ	ذِئِكَ	ذِي	ذِي	ذِي
تِه	(ها)تِه	(ها)تان	تِه	-	تِه	تِه	تلك	تانك	تِه	(ها)تان	(ها)تَيْن
أولاء	-	-	أولاء	أولاء	أولاء	أولاء	أولانك	أولانك	أولاء	أولاء	أولاء

The table above illustrates the following morphological properties about the demonstratives in SA:

1. They inflect with the suffix (أَن) in the nominative, and (يَن) in the genitive to indicate dual plurality.
2. Singular forms can also be used with the plurals.
3. There is a specialized collective plural form of (هُؤَلَاءَ).
4. Both far entities and second person reference require the (كَاف) suffix.
5. There are separate forms specialized for the male in contrast with female gender.

In addition to the above, there are the following specialized forms for the expression of plural females (Howell, 1886: 571):

(4)

ذاكَن > ذاك

ذَانِكُن > ذانك/ ذينك

أُولئِكنَ أُولئِكنَّ > أولئك و أولاء

Moreover, demonstratives in SA have diminutive forms:

(5)

ذَا > ذِيَا

ذِيَاك > ذاك

ذِيَا > تَا

كَذِيَا > تَاك

ذِيَان > ذَان

أُولِيَا > أولياء

(Wright, 2005: 265-7)

1.2.4 Marginal Demonstratives

There are two marginal demonstratives in SA; the first is the form (أُولِي), clipped from (أُولَاءَ), which is used in the language variety of the

tribe of Banu Tameem (عيد، 1975; 160). The other is the singular masculine (تاك) and feminine (تيك).

To these demonstratives belong also the two collocatives (ذَيْتٌ وَ ذَيْتٌ = *so and so*) and (كَيْتٌ وَ كَيْتٌ = *such and such things*) (Wright, 2005: 268).

2.1 Demonstratives in English

2.1.1 Definition

Some grammarians of English term the demonstratives as *pronouns of pointing* since they are often accompanied by a pointing gesture (Jespersen, 1933: 156-7). Besides taking the place of a noun, they suggest the idea of a *position* with regard to the speaker (Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960: 110). Some of these pronouns are primary, others are marginal or archaic (cf. 2.1.2.2).

2.1.2 Set Membership

2.1.2.1 Primary Demonstratives

There are four primary demonstratives in English: *This, that, these,* and *those*. They can function either as pronouns or as determiners:

(6)

- a. *Oh you have to pay for **these**.* (Greenbaum, 2000: 136)
- b. *I spoke to him **this** morning.* (Alexander, 1988: 349)
- c. ***That's** a nice pair of jeans.* (Murphy, 1994: 156)
- d. ***Those** women knew what they wanted.* (Leech and Svartvik, 1994: 59)

Primary demonstratives present two types of contrast. The first is a contrast in number: *this* and *that* are singular, *these* and *those* are plural. The second is a contrast in proximity. *This* and *these* indicate relative

nearness, *that* and *those* indicate relative remoteness. The proximity may be in space or time.

(7)

a. *But in the presence of a scattering material, the light has travelled a very convoluted path, perhaps three or four times the distance between **this** side of the bottle and **that** side.*

b. *Lewis, with a kind of half smile playing around his lips... and just dropping off his work rate a bit in this second round after **that** fast start to it..*

c. *They would set out what **these** policy areas would be, and then the foreign ministers of the twelve would implement **those** policies on the basis of majority voting.*

(Greenbaum, 2000: 136)

Jespersen (1933: 157) observes that the contrast in the vowel sounds in *this* and *that* agree with the general tendency in English (and in many other languages such as French *ici* and *la*) to denote "near" by high-front vowels, and "far" by lower and more retracted vowels as in the play of vowels in: *riff-raff*, *zig-zag*, and *tittle-tattle*.

This is also used in informal speech as an indefinite determiner, roughly corresponding to *a* or *some*.

(8) *And there was **this** Frenchman who went to a cricket match.*

(Alexander, 1988: 323)

Similarly, *these* may be indefinite, introducing new information rather than referring to something in the situational or linguistic context:

(9) *There's all **these** horror stories about it happening, but I've never actually heard of it. . actually happen to anybody.*

(Greenbaum, 2000: 136)

2.1.2.1.1 Morphological Features

2.1.2.1.1.1 Number and Gender

The singular demonstratives: *this* and *that* are used for both count and non-count meaning.

(10) ***This*** room/water is too cold. ***That*** loaf/bread is stale.

(Quirk et al, 1985: 372)

Both the singular and the plural pronouns can be used as pro-forms to substitute for a noun phrase:

(11)

a. ***This*** chair is more comfortable than ***that***. (= that chair or that one)

b. ***These*** apples are sweeter than ***those*** (= these apples or these ones) (ibid.)

In addition, the pronoun can refer to some unspecified object(s):

(12)

a. Come and have a look at ***this***. ['this thing', 'this substance', etc.]

b. Have you heard ***this*** ? ['this piece of news', 'this joke', etc.]

c. Leave ***that*** alone ('that thing', 'that machine', etc.)

d. Can I borrow ***these***? ['these books', 'these tools']

(ibid.)

It is worth noting here that some grammarians (e.g. Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960; 109; Alexander, 1988: 85) distinguish between two types of demonstratives: *demonstrative adjectives* and *demonstrative pronouns*. The former are always used with nouns:

(13) I don't like ***this*** coat. (Alexander, 1988:

85)

The latter are used without nouns:

(14)

- a. ***This** is what I want you to do.*
- b. Well, ***that's** exactly what I did.*
- c. I believe you, but there are ***those** who wouldn't.*
- d. ***This** is my brother, and **these** are my sisters.*

(Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960: 110).

The demonstrative *this* can be used to introduce something new in a narrative:

(15) "I was walking along the street when ***this*** girl came up to me..." (= "a girl I'm going to tell you about")

(Leech and Svartvik, 1994: 60)

The singular demonstrative pronouns generally have only non-personal reference. The exceptions are when they are subject, and the speaker is providing or seeking identification:

(16)

- a. ***This** is my daughter: Felicity.*
- b. *Is **that** Jane Warren ?*

(Quirk et al, 1985: 372)

Co-reference in the demonstratives depends on the context shared by speaker/writer and hearer/reader. Also, their use may be considered under the headings of *situational reference* (reference to the extra-linguistic situation) *anaphoric reference* (co-reference to an earlier part of the discourse) and *cataphoric reference* (co-reference to a later part of the discourse) (ibid.).

2.1.2.2 *Other Demonstratives*

Such may have a demonstrative sense (like *that*) as a pronoun or (more frequently) as a determiner:

(17)

a. *Do I understand you to be saying that in **such** an accident uh a passenger would be thrown uh first of all forward and then backwards ?*

b. *He is entitled to **such** payments, subject only to the limited category of cross-claims which the law permits to be raised as defences by way of set-off in such circumstances.*

Greenbaum (2000: 137)

c. *If officialdom makes mistakes, officialdom deserves to suffer. **Such**, at least, was Mr. Boyd's opinion.*

(Quirk et al, 1985: 376)

In (17a) above, the determiner *such* precedes the indefinite article.

The former and *the latter* can also be regarded as demonstrative pronouns.

(18) *The orchestra played two Beethoven symphonies, the Third and the Fifth; **the former** was played magnificently; **the latter** was not so well done.* (Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960: 110)

In addition, the three archaic demonstratives: *yon*, *yond*, and *yonder* were used to indicate greater remoteness than that indicated by *that* and *those*, but these forms are obsolete now (Jespersen, 1933: 156).

3.1 Contrastive Analysis

On the basis of the outline above, the following points of similarity and difference between the membership of the two sets of demonstratives in the two languages can be identified.

3.1.1 Similarities

1. Demonstrative are found in both SA and English.
2. These demonstratives assume the same deictic functions of situational, personal, and non-personal co-reference.

3. In both languages there are basic, marginal, as well as archaic demonstratives.
4. In both languages the demonstrative precedes its antecedent.
5. Morphological contrasts (i.e. inflections) are made use of in both languages to mark nearness/remoteness, and to realize the grammatical category of number: singular/plural.
6. Strikingly, a large number of the demonstratives in the two language begin with the initial similar sound of [ð], orthographically realized as (th) in English, versus (ð) in SA.
7. Demonstratives in both languages can function as nominal proforms with or without the nouns they refer to.

3.1.2 Differences

1. Many demonstratives in SA morphologically can realize duality in number, express contrast in sex (male/female), as well as case (nominative versus accusative/genitive) and person (2nd/ 3rd). Demonstratives in English do not realize such grammatical categories via morphological markers.
2. Because of the main difference in (1) above, there are more morphological forms of demonstratives in SA than in English.

4. Conclusions

Demonstratives in SA and English share far more syntactic and semantic features than one might think in the first place, given that the two languages belong to different, remote groups. The main difference between the two stems from the realization of certain grammatical categories (gender, case, etc.) in some of these forms in SA, versus the absence of such morphological contrasts in English.

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أسماء الأشارة "دراسة مقارنة باللغة العربية والانكليزية"

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الخلاصة

يهدف البحث الى دراسة اسماء الاشارة لتكون دراسة مقارنة في اللغتين العربية والانكليزية وتحاول الباحثة مقارنة جميع الصيغ النحوية والصوتية والدلالية في اللغتين. صنف النحويين اسماء الاشارة في اللغة العربية الى اساسية وثانوية وفي اللغة الانكليزية الى اساسية وثانوية ايضاً واخرى قديمة. لقد تم تصنيف اسماء الاشارة في اللغتين من الناحية الدلالية والنحوية وقد اظهرت النتائج عدداً من اوجه التشابه بين اللغتين على سبيل المثال فان كل اللغتين متشابهتان من حيث امتلاكها مجموعة من اسماء الاشارة بانواعها الرئيسية والثانوية بالاضافة الى القديمة . وهي ذات وظائف متشابهة شخصية وغير شخصية واخرى مكانية. وتحتل اسماء الاشارة الموقع نفسه في كل من اللغتين الانكليزية والعربية حيث تسبق الاس م المشار اليه. اما من الناحية الصرفية تستعمل كل من اللغتين العربية والانكليزية الاشكال الصرفية (التصارييف) وذلك للتعبير عن القرب او البعد او للاشارة الى المفرد او الجمع. وتبدأ معظم اسماء الاشارة في اللغة العربية بالحرف (ذ) وهو الصوت نفسه الذي تبدأ به اسماء الاشارة في اللغة الانكليزية والذي يعبر عنه باستعمال الحرفين "th" - / / و عليه تستعمل اسماء الاشارة في كلتا اللغتين بدائل اسمية وذلك للتعويض عن ذكر الاسم الذي تستعمل للاشارة به. اما اهم اوجه الاختلاف بين اللغتين الانكليزية و العربية فهو تنوع اسماء الاشارة في اللغة العربية من الناحية الصرفية فمنها مايشير الى المثنى، ومنها مايشير الى المذكر والمؤنث ومايكون في حالة الرفع او النصب او الجر حيث تفتقر اللغة الانكليزية الى العلامات الصرفية للتعبير عن مثل هذه الاشكال النحوية. لأسماء الاشارة في كلتا اللغتين العربية والانكليزية الكثير من الصفات المشتركة التركيبية (النحوية) والدلالية على الرغم من الاختلاف الكبير الموجود بين هاتين اللغتين ولكن الفارق هو تعدد الاشكال النحوية منها (الجنس، حالة اسم الاشارة) لأسماء الاشارة في اللغة العربية على العكس من اللغة الانكليزية التي تفتقر للإشكال الصرفية.