

PIDGINIZATION BEFORE THE LINGUA FRANCA

BY

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ABSTRACT :

Given that the oldest attested pidgin, known as the Lingua Franca, is based on European Languages, many linguists tended to believe that pidgins are exclusively European phenomenon. However, Thomason and El-Gibali (1986) have argued that pidginized Arabic, namely Maridi Arabic, existed before the Lingua Franca. The main purpose of this paper is to provide further evidence that the origin of pidgins is not exclusively European and that Pidgin Arabic, namely, Berbers' Pidgin Arabic, existed before the Lingua Franca. This evidence has to do with an Arabic document written by one of the Berbers long before the 'Lingua Franca' (Ibn Khaldun 1959). The linguistic analysis of this document has revealed a number of features which, according to Thomason and Kaufman (1988) among others, are typical of pidgin languages. Among these features are morphosyntactic simplification, semantic extension of morphemes and lexemes, and the extension of functional domain. Thus, this paper provides further evidence that Pidgin Arabic existed before the Lingua Franca.

PIDGINIZATION BEFORE THE LINGUA FRANCA*

1. INTRODUCTION :

The oldest attested pidgin language in the literature has been assumed to be the Lingua Franca, which goes back to the time of the Crusades (i.e. starting in 1095 A.D.). Given that the vocabulary-base language of the Lingua Franca was a Romance Language, some scholars believe that the Lingua Franca may have directly influenced the later development of other European-vocabulary pidgins. Due to the European colonization and its dramatic effect on the political map of the world, many linguists - later on - tended to believe that pidgin languages are an exclusively European phenomenon. Although exceptions to this generalization are available, people who support the exclusively European hypothesis argue that such exceptions - directly or indirectly - are a response of the European presence. (For a critical discussion of the implausibility of such arguments, see Thomason and Kaufman, 1988) .

The best evidence for resolving such arguments

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would be pidgin languages that definitely lie outside the sphere of European influence. In their paper "Before the Lingua Franca : Pidginized Arabic in the Eleventh century A.D.", S. Thomason and A. Elgibali (1986) showed concrete evidence against the exclusively European origin hypothesis. Specifically, they dealt with a case of pidginized Arabic, namely Maridi Arabic. This is crucially significant not only because the pidginized Arabic predates the Lingua Franca but also because this pidginized form of Arabic - as Thomason and Elgibali put it - " would in effect be the precursor of that language " .

The main purpose of the present paper is to present further evidence that pidginized Arabic existed before the Lingua Franca. The source of data relevant to this argument is Ibn Khaldun's Tarikh Al-Allama Ibn Khaldun : Kitab Al-Ibar Wa Diwan Al-Mubtadaa wa Al-Khabar fi Ayyam Al-Arab wa Al-Ajam wa Al-Barbar Wa Man Aasarahum min Thawi Assultaan Al-Akbar (1959). " The History of the Scholar Ibn-Khaldun : Lessons of History and the Locus of the Beginning and End of the Days of Arabs, Non-Arabs, Berbers, and those of supreme Authority who lived with them " .

In this seven-volume work, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) deals with the issue of pidginized Arabic

in detail. Volume 6 is exclusively about the history of the Berbers, while volume 1 deals with the relationship between Islam and Arabic and with the question of how the adoption of Islam and Arabic by non-Arabs led to the development of what Ibn Khaldun calls 'broken and corrupted' Arabic (vol. 1:1080). Instances of this 'broken and corrupted' Arabic are provided. The crucial point, then, is to find out to what extent this 'broken and corrupted' Arabic can be considered pidginized, or even a stable pidgin language. Section 3 of this paper is devoted to this question.

2. BERBERS, ISLAM, AND ARABIC :

Ibn Khaldun presents a lengthy discussion of the history of Berbers which I will not discuss here. What is relevant is that when Berbers adopted Islam, (this was around 722 A.D.), they were so enthusiastic about the religion that they themselves undertook the responsibility of teaching and conveying it to others. And, given that Arabic is the language of the Quraan, Berbers - like other non-Arabs-accepted the premise that Arabic is the appropriate language for every Moslim to learn and speak.

The question, then, is what was the Arabic of Berbers like? The answer, in part, comes from

Ibn Khaldun :

"... And remember that Arabic used by town-dwellers is far from "Al-Fasih" [i.e. the classical or standard]. Due to the "lahn" [i.e. deviations from the standard], the Arabic of town-dwellers is almost another language... When Berbers mixed with Arabs in North Africa and Morocco, the former were exposed to the 'broken corrupted' Arabic of town-dwellers. Thus, Berbers developed a different type of Arabic" .
(Vol. 1 : 1078-79)

Ibn Khaldun also puts special emphasis on the 'broken corrupted' Arabic of Berbers vis-à-vis other non-Arab Moslems such as Turks, Persians, and Spaniards :

"... Berbers were distinguished from other non-Arab Moslems such as the Spaniards. The sea of their barbaric broken and corrupted Arabic was very deep" .
(Vol. 1 : 1091)

As an example of the 'corrupted and broken' Arabic of Berbers, Ibn Khaldun refers to a document written by one of the Berbers of Al-qayrawan in the Tenth century to a friend of his. This document constitutes the data for the linguistic analysis undertaken in section 3. Below, is the entire document in transliteration, with a morpheme-by-morpheme

translation and the full English translations. The Arabic original of this document is given in Appendix 1. Phonetic symbols used to represent the data are given in Appendix 2.

1. Ya ʔax-ī wa man la ʕadim-tu faqda-hu.
 vocative brother- and who Neg. lose-I loss-his
 particle my particle
 " My brother, whom I won't lose " .
2. ʔā-ʕlama-ni Abusa ʕid-in Kalām-an ʕaṅa-ka Kun-ta
 Caus. Know-me A -Gen. specch-Acc that-you be-you
 Past.3.m.s. Pst
- ḏakar-ta aṅa-ka ta-kunu maʕa ʔalāḏina ta-ʔti
 point out-you that-you ^m_s. - be with who you-
 Pst s. pl. come
- " I have known from A, that you mentioned that
 you would be with those who will come " .
3. Wa ʔaq-a-na al-yawm-u falam ya-tahayāʔ la-na
 and hinder-3-us the day-Nom. Neg. it-be ready for-us
 Pst ^m_s: Particle
 al-xuruj.
 the-going out
 " And time was inconvenient ; therefore we
 were not ready to go out " .
4. Wa ʔāma ʔahl al-manzil - i al-Kilāb min
 owners(of) the - house - Gen the dogs of

ʔamr-i iṣayn-i Fa qad kaḏab-u haḏa baṭil-an
matter- Shame- Emphatic disbelieve- this false-
Gen.(of) Gen. particle they Acc
Pst

" But the hostile and shameful house - owners
did not believe this " .

5- laysa min haḏa ḥarf - an wāḥid - an
Neg from this letter - Acc one - Acc
Particle

" not a single letter of this " .

6- Wa Kitāb - i ilay - Ka wa ʔana
and book - my to you and I

muṣṭāq - un ilay - ka in ṣā Allah
yearning - Nom. to - you willing God

" And I am writing to you while I am really
yearning to see you, God willing " .

3. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS :

In the following sections I will provide a lexical semantic analysis, a phonological analysis, and a morphosyntactic analysis of the data given above .

3.1. Lexical semantic analysis :

All the morphemes in the data, including the proper name Abusaḥid, are Arabic morphemes.

However, the use of some of these morphemes seems very odd. Three observations are relevant here:

First, some morphemes are used redundantly. For instance, the morpheme faqd 'lose or lose' in sentence (1) is redundant. The reason for this is that the adjacent morpheme ṣadim 'loss or loss' conveys the same meaning. Thus, the first sentence is not only semantically strange, but its meaning is almost the opposite of what the writer apparently intended to express. Specifically - as the standard Arabic version and the English equivalent show - instead of saying... " whom I may not lose ", the writer of that document conveyed the following meaning :

" whom I may not lose his loss " .

Also, the morpheme kalām 'speech' in sentence(2) is completely redundant. Thus, instead of saying " X informed me that he would come ", the writer of that document said " X informed me a speech that he would come " .

In sentence 4, the morpheme bātil "false" is not only redundant, but it is also semantically very odd, because of the presence of the morpheme kaḏāb 'to disbelieve' in the same sentence. The result here is similar to what was mentioned in sentence (1) : namely, the meaning conveyed is almost the reverse of the meaning intended .

Second, some morphemes are inappropriately

used. For instance, in sentence (3), the morphemes ḥāq 'hinder', and al-yawm 'the day' are inappropriately used. The morpheme yawm 'day' means in Arabic a unit of time (i.e. twenty-four hours); if the morphem al- 'the' precedes it, the dimorphemic word al-yawm will mean 'at present', 'nowadays', or 'today'. But it does not convey the apparently intended meaning, namely al-waqt "(the) time". On the other hand, the predicate morpheme ḥāq 'hinder' does not uaually occur with subjects that have temporal connotations (e.g. time, days, life-time, etc.).

Hence, constructions such as the ones below are not semantically aueptable in Arabic :

- ḥāqa - ni al - yawm - u
hindered - me the - day - Nom.
" The day hindered me. "

- ḥāqa - ni al - ām - u
hindered - me the - year - Nom.
" The year hindered me. "

- ḥāqa - ni aš - šhr - u
hindered - me the - month - Nom.
" The month hindered me. "

Third, the use of the lexical item Kilāb 'dogs' in sentence (4) is both ambiguous and vague. In Standard Arabic and also in Modern Colloquial Arabic, this word is the plural form of kalb 'dog'. However, the predicate kālab 'to show hostility' can be derived from the root klb. It is possible that the writer of that document wanted to use the adjectival nominal from this root, i.e. mu-kālib 'hostile person'. But, instead of doing this, he erroneously used the nominal kilāb, which - though it belongs to the same root of mu-kālib - does not make sense in this context, since it only means 'dogs' .

Finally, some morphemes are semantically uninterpretable. for instance, the morphemes ḥarf 'letter', waḥid 'one, and ʔamr 'matter' are semantically uninterpretable in their respective contexts.

The question that arises now is : To what extent are the lexical semantic features pointed out above pidgin-like ? As pointed out by Thomason and Elgibali (1986), Thomason and Kaufman (1988), and Versteegh (1984), a very common feature of pidgins is that the semantic domain of a given lexical item may be considerably broader than in the source language. This seems to be the case with two lexical items in the data :

al-yawn (the day) and al-kilāb 'the dogs'. The semantic domain of al-yawn "the day" in Arabic (Standard or Colloquial) is basically restricted to these two meanings : "twenty-four hours", and "today". As shown in sentence (3), al-yawn 'the day' is used to mean al-waqt 'time'. In other words, the semantic domain of this lexical item, as used in that document, is broader than in Standard Arabic or Colloquial Arabic. Similarly, as indicated in sentence (4) of the document, the semantic domain of al-kilāb 'the dogs' is broader than in Standard or Colloquial Arabic. While in Arabic this lexical item means 'the dogs', it is used in sentence (4) as a nominal adjective meaning 'the hostile'. Thus, following Thomason and Kautman (1988), this semantic extension exhibited in the document can be construed as a feature of pidgin.

3.2. Phonological analysis :

Given that the data under discussion is available only in writing, it seems very difficult to carry out a phonological analysis. If any phonological judgment is made here, it is going to be based on the orthography, which is - in most cases - misleading phonologically .

Considering the six sentences of the document, one does not note any spelling errors or peculiarities that might indicate some odd phonological

features. However, when commenting on the 'corrupted' Arabic of Berbers (vol. 1 : 8, 1078) , Ibn Khaldun refers to the pronunciation of the velar stop [k] instead of the uvular stop [q]. Yet , the Arabic grapheme that represents /q/ occurs in the data four times. In other words, the phoneme is orthographically represented by the letter "ق" not "ك".

3.3 Morphosyntactic Analysis :

The word order in the data is VS. Constructions that do not reflect the VS word order (e.g. sentences 5 and 6) lack predicates entirely. (The issue of predicate dropping and predicate nominalization will be discussed later). In constructions like (1), the pronominal subject is suffixed to the verb .

Thus, the word order in the data matches the word order in Standard Arabic, which is predominantly VS. This also fits the word order in Berber languages, which have both VS and SV orders.

Sentence (2) has three interesting syntactic features that can be interpreted as pidginization. The first feature has to do with the lack of the future prefix -sa in verbs ta-kūnu 'you are' and taʔti 'you come'. The reason these two verbs should have future markers is not only the context, but

also the nature of the Arabic copula. In both Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic, the copula is not phonetically realized in affirmative constructions, unless it is in the future or the past tense. This means that in order for ta-kūnu in (2) to be appropriate, it must be in the future or the past. Then the question is : why should the copula be in the future, and not in the past ? The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, the future marker in Arabic is a phonetically realized morpheme which is prefixed to the copula, while the past form of the copula is formed by the process of vocalic ablaut. My assumption here is that the future marker on the copula is more likely to have been reduced by a process of morphosyntactic simplification. Conversely, if the copula were in the past, it would not allow for the reduction of the past-marker, simply because the past marker in this case would be realized in terms of vocalic modification of the stem - not as an independent morpheme. On the other hand, if the writer of this document intended to use the past form of the copula, he would have used the correct form kun-ta 'you were', simply because this form occurs elsewhere in the document .

Now, if my assumption that the copula in the embedded clause in (2) should be in the future is correct, it follows that taʔti 'you come' in

the clause should also be in the future. This means that the future marker on taʔti was also reduced in a process of morphosyntactic simplification. Thus, in sentence (2), the forms ta-kūnu 'you are' and taʔti 'you come' lack the future marker sa-.

This morphosyntactic simplification is not typical of Colloquial Arabic and therefore can be construed as evidence of pidginization. And, given that the two forms under discussion - if used without the future markers - are identical to their present counterparts, one can assume that the writer of this document might have used the present forms of these two verbs to express the future. In other words, he might have extended the functional domain of the present forms of these two verbs to include both the present and future uses. This would be a pidgin-like feature.

The second feature in sentence (2) has to do with the lack of the agreement markers on the verb taʔti 'you come' in the relative clause. Given the relative pronoun ālādī-na 'who-pl.', the predicate that follows the relative pronoun must agree with it in number, person, and gender. But taʔti in (2) lacks the number agreement marker, and has the wrong person marker (i.e. 2 sg.m.). Thus, the correct form of taʔti - including the future marker discussed before - is sa-yaʔtūn

"they will come" .

The third feature in sentence (2) has to do with the omission of the perfective particle qad that must intervene between kun-ta 'you were' and ḏakar-ta 'you mentioned'. In Arabic constructions where the matrix verb is in the past, the verb of the first embedded clause must have the following agreement features :

be + qad	+	main verb
pst. α person β number γ gender		pst. α person β number γ gender

In sentence (2), the perfective particle qad is missing. However, the lack of this particle in Standard Arabic in such constructions is not permissible, though it is a common feature of Colloquial Arabic. The lack of this particle in this construction could, nonetheless, be viewed as a type of syntactic simplification.

In sentence (5) the use of laysa is peculiar. In standard Arabic, laysa is typically used with equational sentences, where a topic and a comment are involved. Besides the negative function of laysa, it assigns the nominative case to the topic and the accusative case to the comment. The problem

with (5) is that it contains a comment without a topic. This is not acceptable in Standard Arabic or Colloquial Arabic.

Finally, comparing (6) with its Standard Arabic counterpart, one notes two main differences. On the one hand, one notes that the use of the nominal form kitāb-i 'my book' in (6) as opposed to the verbal form ʔa-ktub-u 'I am writing'. The use of the nominal form in (6) is probably simpler than the use of its verbal counterpart in Standard Arabic. In Coll. Arabic, this form would be identical to the Standard Arabic form, except that the marker of the indicative mood -u would be absent in the former. Thus, one might tentatively assume that the use of the nominal form kitāb-i in (6) is a process of simplification which is typical of pidgins. On the other hand, one notes that in (6), the writer of the document used the phrase inšaʔ ālah 'God willing'. In standard and Coll. Arabic, the phrase inšaʔ ālah is generally used for future emphasis to literally mean "if Allah decrees (it)". Thus, the use of this phrase in Standard and Coll. Arabic is always associated with something in the future. It is not normally used to emphasize something in the present. A possible explanation for this is that the writer was expanding the functional domain of inšaʔ-alah to include both the present and the future. This also seems to

be a pidgin-like feature .

4. Conclusion :

The linguistic analysis of the data has shown a number of linguistic features which are not typical of Standard or Colloquial Arabic. As indicated in 3.1-3.3, the main linguistic features that characterize the Arabic of the Berbers are: morphosyntactic simplification, semantic extension of morphemes and lexemes, redundant and ambiguous use of morphemes, lack of agreement markers, extension of functional domain, and reduction of inflectional morphemes. According to Thomason & Kautman (1988), among others, these features are typical of pidgin languages. Thus, one can conclude that the document analyzed in this paper can be considered as an instance of Berbers' Pidgin Arabic. This conclusion can be construed as further evidence that Pidgin Arabic existed before the *Lingua Franca*.

5. APPENDICES :

APPENDIX 1

فأهل إفريقية والمغرب لما كانوا أعرق في العجمة وأبعد
عن اللسان الأول ، كان لهم قصور تام في تحصيل ملكته بالتعليم .
ولقد نقل ابن الرقيي أن بعض كتّاب القيروان كتب إلى صاحب له :
" يا أخي ومن لا عدمتُ ففده ، أعلمني أبو سعيد كلاماً أنك كنت ذكرت
أنك تكون مع الذين تأتي ، وعاقنا اليوم فلم يتهياً لنا الخروج . وأما
أهل المنزل الكلاب من أمر الشين فقد كذبوا هذا باطلاً ، ليس من
هذا حرفاً واحداً . وكتابي إليك وأنا مشتاق إليك إن شاء الله " .
وهكذا كانت ملكتهم في اللسان المصري ، وسببه ما ذكرنا .

* فاهل إفريقية والمغرب لما كانوا أعرق في العجمة وأبعد عن
اللسان الأول ، كان لهم قصور تام في تحصيل ملكته بالتعليم .
ولقد نقل ابن الرقيي أن بعض كتّاب القيروان كتب إلى صاحب
له : يا أخي ومن لا عدمتُ ففده ، أعلمني أبو سعيد كلاماً أنك
كنت ذكرت أنك تكون مع الذين تأتي ، وعاقنا اليوم فلم يتهياً
لنا الخروج . وأما أهل المنزل الكلاب⁽¹⁾ من أمر الشين فقد
كذبوا هذا باطلاً ، ليس من هذا حرفاً واحداً . وكتابي إليك وأنا
مشتاق إليك إن شاء الله . وهكذا كانت ملكتهم في اللسان
المصري ، وسببه ما ذكرنا .

١٠٨٩

* من " تاريخ العلامة ابن خلدون : كتاب العبر ، وديوان المبتدأ
والخبر في أيام العرب والعجم والبربر ومن عاشرهم من نوى
السلطان الأكبر " المجلد الأول ص ١٠٨٩ - بسيروت - دار
الشروق .

APPENDIX 2

The phonetic symbols used in this study are listed below with their corresponding Arabic orthography in parentheses :

[b]	voiced bilabial stop.....	[ب]
[t]	voiceless alveolar stop.....	[ت]
[t̤]	voiceless alveolar velarized stop.....	[ط]
[d]	voiced alveolar stop.....	[د]
[d̤]	voiced alveolar velarized stop.....	[ض]
[k]	voiceless velar stop.....	[ك]
[q]	voiceless uvular stop.....	[ق]
[ʔ]	voiceless glottal stop.....	[م]
[j]	voiced palatal affricate.....	[ج]
[ħ]	voiceless pharyngeal fricative.....	[ح]
[ʕ]	voiced pharyngeal fricative.....	[ع]
[f]	voiceless labio-dental fricative.....	[ف]
[θ]	voiceless dental fricative.....	[ث]
[ð]	voiced dental fricative.....	[ذ]
[ð̤]	voiced dental velarized fricative.....	[ظ]
[s]	voiceless alveolar fricative.....	[س]
[s̤]	voiceless alveolar velarized fricative.....	[ص]
[z]	voiced alveolar fricative.....	[ز]
[ʃ]	voiceless palatal fricative.....	[ش]
[x]	voiceless orular fricative.....	[خ]
[ʁ]	voiced uvular fricative.....	[غ]
[h]	voiceless glottal fricative.....	[ه]
[r]	voiced alveolar trill.....	[ر]
[l]	voiced alveolar lateral.....	[ل]

APPENDIX 2 (cont.)

[m]	voiced bilabial nasal.....	[م]
{n}	voiced alveolar nasal.....	[ن]
[Y]	voiced palatal glide.....	[ي]
[w]	voiced bilabial round glide.....	[و]
[i]	high front vowel.....	[<u>i</u>]
[a]	low back vowel	[<u>a</u>]
[u]	high back rounded vowel.....	[<u>u</u>]

Consonant gemination (tashdid) or vowel length are indicated by placing a dash (-) above the respective consonant or vowel symbol.

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