

**Elabbas Benmamounis, Reem Bassiouneyis (eds): The Routledge  
Handbook of Arabic Linguistics**

(London and New York: Routledge. 2018. 580 p.)

Thirty-five specialists contributed to this handbook by writing or co-writing 32 chapters, edited by Elabbas Benmamoun and Reem Bassiouney.

The book offers the reader a summary of different aspects of Arabic linguistics from different angles and viewpoints. The handbook is the final product of thirty-five experts who contributed by composing and co-writing these 32 chapters edited by Elabbas Benmamoun and Reem Bassiouney. The book's target audience is both students who desire to learn about the topic and academics who seek to explore the field's core issues more thoroughly and find new ideas for further investigations.

The book, which covers various aspects of Arabic, is divided into five essential parts. The first part, that comprises the first four chapters and is discussed in more detail below, deals with the phonetics, phonology, and morphology of the Arabic language. The second part, consisting of chapters 5 to 10, covers the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of the Arabic language, followed by the third part, chapters 11 to 15, which covers experimental and computational approaches. The fourth part, which includes chapters 16 to 25, covers history, contact, and variation. The fifth and final part of the handbook includes the last seven chapters, which addresses ideology, policy, and education.

What makes this volume exceptionally valuable, especially for research about Arabic, is that every chapter deals with different subjects, not only of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) but of both Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Arabic varieties (MAVs) as well. The handbook is convenient and easy to navigate, as, throughout the volume, the internal design of the chapters is consistent. Writers start by presenting the topic, then focus on providing a historical and theoretical overview, if any, introducing new questions and observations, finally posing several conclusions and recommendations for further study.

The whole book is considered essential and a solid reference while investigating any issue associated with Arabic linguistics. Hence, in relation to her research topic, the author of this review finds chapter one, two, and three of the first part to be the utmost directly allied, as Arabic Phonology and Phonetics are described in a very clear and coherent sequence.

In the first chapter, Mustawafi introduces a concise description of the phonemic MSA inventory and then provides a contrastive analysis with the CA sounds discussed by the popular grammarian Sibawayh in his book *Al-Kitāb*, written in the 8th century (Sibawayh, 1999). In this chapter, the author provides another further contrastive analysis between MSA patterns with each of the six MAVs major

clusters (i.e., Iraqi Arabic, Yemeni Arabic, Gulf Arabic, Levantine Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, and Maghrebi Arabic). Furthermore, he addresses certain phonotactic constraints and rules while concentrating on how affrication, lenition, alternation, pharyngealization, and assimilation of definite article function in various MAVs.

In chapter two, however, Broselow focuses on MSA and MAVs syllabic structures, as he tries to argue that the Arabic syllable system is constructed of only an abstract constituent of the sound structure's mental representation (Al-Ani and May 1973), which was very useful in illustrating how certain phonological processes function. Firstly, Broselow gives an excellent overview of the internal components of syllables, presenting concepts such as a nucleus, onset, coda, syllable weight, and rhyme. Secondly, by examining the syllable structures, she emphasizes several identifiable processes such as word stress and vowel insertion, shortening, and deletion, providing examples in various MAVs.

In Chapter 3, Shosted, Fu, and Hermes reviewed pharyngeal and emphatic sounds. They argue that somehow the Arab and Persian grammarians established various points of articulation for emphatic sounds and their equivalents, plain sounds, since the 11th century. The authors claim that some of these sounds are forming minimal pairs, while others are only allophones. This chapter explores potential places of articulation of emphatic and pharyngeal sounds in MSA and various MAVs, which first describes the pharynx's physiology to articulate to the reader the purpose of the investigation. It then goes on to introduce a recent study of magnetic resonance imaging.

As mentioned earlier, the chapters of this handbook are structured coherently and organized in thematic parts from micro linguistic aspects such as phonetics and phonology to macro sociolinguistic topics, all. Thus, while there are chapters associated with the same subject (e.g., chapters 4 and 14, 12 and 17), the findings are still sequential because the authors approach the topics from various perspectives, resulting in the organization of similar chapters throughout different parts. Another quality worth mentioning is the arrangement of the chapters. Not only do the authors consistently explain their research and interpretation, but they also discuss known subjects and guidance for the future if the reader wishes to explore any of the themes further. It is precisely this reason that makes the volume inclusive in regards to the audience. Furthermore, the theoretical context described in the chapters is clearly illustrated so that anyone can read and comprehend the subject material without requiring more research. The manual is not entirely free from shortcomings, however.

On the one hand, some writers discuss new approaches or aspects, assuming the reader would be familiar with them, while only further explaining these concepts in later parts. The strongest example is from Chapter 1, where Mustawafi refers to

components of the syllable structure, which is only clarified in Chapter 2. On the other hand, there is a repetition of explanation for specific issues; for example, diglossia, a common subject, in several chapters, where each author summarizes the concept. Nevertheless, this could be beneficial when reading only one or few chapters from the volume. However, a significant weakness of this book is the inclusion of chapters that are merely bibliographic lists, in which the writers introduce a theme without improving it, addressing only previous work. This may be helpful if more details in certain subjects are being sought, but the issue is that the titles are not clear about the chapter's content (except for Chapter 27, where stated 'An annotated bibliography'); thus, a reader may expect an argument on a specific topic, but the chapter may not meet such expectations. This confusion also happens in other chapters, the titles of which do not represent the essay's actual content, for example, Chapter 20, in which the Odoropoulou primarily emphasizes variation patterns not indicated in her title.

In conclusion, this useful handbook is highly recommended and is considered a vital tool for those investigating linguistics of the Arabic language and community. Scholars and experts in the field should read it.

## References

- Al-Ani, S. and May, D.** (1973) The phonological structure of the syllable. In S. Al-Ani (ed.) *Readings in Arabic Linguistics* 113–125. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Sibawayh, A.** (1999) *Al-Kitab. [The Book]*. Edited by E. B. Ya'qub. Beirut: Dar al-kutub al 'ilmiyya.

HALA SAED  
University of Pannonia  
Halasaed17@gmail.com