Non-Agreement in Lebanese Arabic
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Outline:

- Facts about agreement in Lebanese Arabic
- Optional partial non-agreement in number following transdecimal numerals
- Optional complete non-agreement in V-first word order

1. Facts about agreement in Lebanese Arabic

Lebanese Arabic nouns show number and gender morphologically:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. a. mhandes</td>
<td>2. a. mhands-\textbf{een};</td>
<td>3. a. mhands-\textbf{iin};</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineer</td>
<td>engineer-DL</td>
<td>engineer-PLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. mhands-\textbf{eh}</td>
<td>'two engineers'</td>
<td>b. mhands-\textbf{et};</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineer-F</td>
<td></td>
<td>engineer-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. senjeeb</td>
<td>2. b. mhands-\textbf{t-\textit{een}};</td>
<td>c. sanaa\textit{a}je\textbf{b};</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squirrel</td>
<td>'two female engineers'</td>
<td>squirrel-PLBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'squirrels'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. c. sinjeeb-\textbf{een};</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>squirrel-DL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'two squirrels'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjectives in Lebanese Arabic agree in number (and gender) with the noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular → unmarked adj.</th>
<th>Dual/Plural → Plural adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. a. mhandes shaater</td>
<td>5. a. mhands-\textbf{een}/mhands-\textbf{iin}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineer smart-Ø</td>
<td>engineer-DL/engineer-PLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. mhands-\textbf{eh}</td>
<td>b. mhands-\textbf{t-\textit{een}}/mhands-\textbf{et}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shaatr-ah engineer-F</td>
<td>engineer-F-DL/engineer-PLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smart-F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. senjeeb zaki</td>
<td>c. sinjeeb-\textbf{een}/sanaa\textit{a}je\textbf{b}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squirrel clever-Ø</td>
<td>squirrel-DL/squirrel-PLBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The (non-)agreement facts that I look at here are distinct from cases of first conjunct agreement that occurs in several varieties of Arabic, and has been looked at a lot, e.g. Aoun, Benmamoun and Sportiche (1994), Munn (1999), Bhatia, Benmamoun and Polinsky (2010), among others. This is a work in progress.

*For meetings, discussions, judgments, and insightful comments at previous presentations, I am grateful to Jan Anderssen, Allan Bale, Hagit Borer, Gennaro Chierchia, Lina Choueiri, Kai von Fintel, Danny Fox, Irene Heim, Hrayr Khanjian, Sabine Iatrídou, Itziar Laka, Audrey Li, Roumyana Pancheva, David Pesetsky, María Polinsky, Sergio Robles Puente, Barry Schein, Vahik Soghom, Sergei Tatevosov, and Igor Yanovich. All errors are mine.
Verbs agree in number and gender:
Singular → unmarked verb  Dual/Plural → Plural verb

6. a. Feminine singular  Maryam studied-F-Ø
   daras-ø
   ‘Mary studied’

   b. Masculine singular:  Raafat studied-Ø
   daras
   ‘John studied’

7. a. Feminine plural
   l-mhandes-t-deen/l-mhands-eet
   Maryam studied-F-Ø
   the-engineer-F-DL/the-engineer-PLBR studied-PL
   ‘The (two) girls studied’

   b. Masculine Plural
   l-mhands-iin
   Raafat studied-Ø
   the-engineer-DL/the-engineer-PLBR studied-PL
   ‘The boys studied’

8. After quantifiers ‘many’, ‘few’, and cardinals 3-10, nouns are plurals, and
   adjectives and verbs agree:

   a. Ktiir m?allm-ee*t-m?allm-eh
      mneeH/*mniiHa
      Many teacher-PLF/*teacher-F
      good-PLBR/*good-PL
      ‘Many good teachers passed by’

   b. Shwayt mhands-iin/*mhandes
      feeshliin/*feshel
      few engineers-PL/*engineers-Ø
      failure-PL/*failure-Ø
      got_fired-PL/*got_fired-Ø
      ‘A few loser engineers got fired’

   c. Arba? Sabaaya
      neejH-ah/*neejH-ah
      sta’aal-u/*sta’aal
      four youngwoman-PLBR
      successful-PL/*successful-Ø
      quit-PL/*quit-Ø
      ‘Four successful young women quit’

9. After the quantifier ‘each’, nouns are singular and adjectives and verbs agree
   kell tebbeex-ah/*tebbeex-iin
   shaaTr-ah/*shaaTr-iin
   tra”-et/*tra”-u
   each cook-F-Ø/*cook-PL
   good-F-Ø/*good-PL
   got_promoted-F-Ø/*-PL
   ‘Every good cook got promoted’

2. Optional number non-agreement following cardinals larger than ten

The facts and analysis from this section were presented at NELS 2011, and now
appear in the NELS 2011 proceedings. I have therefore deleted them from this
handout. Please load that paper here:

The citation is:
Eds. Stefan Keine and Shayne Sloggett: Proceedings of NELS 42. GLSA Publications:
Amherst, MA.
3. Non-Agreement in V-first word order

An optional non-agreement in VSO word order was observed for Tunisian Arabic by Halila (1992). Associated scope effects were observed for Rural Palestinian Arabic by Hoyt (2002). Both facts carry over to Lebanese Arabic:

10. a. kell yom byouSal wleed
every day arrive.3ms kids

b. kell yom byouSal baneet
every da arrive.3ms girl-pl

-- possibly different kids/girls

11. a. kell yom byouSal-ou wleed
every day arrive-3pl kids

b. kell yom byouSal-ou baneet
every da arrive-3pl girl-pl

The facts also carry over to VOS order. In fact VOS order is even preferred in cases of non-agreement.

12. a. kell yom byeHDar s-saff wleed
every da attend.3ms the-class kids

b. kell yom byeHDar s-saff baneet
every da attend.3ms the-class girl-pl

-- possibly different kids/girls

13. a. kell yom byeHDar-ou s-saff wleed
every da attend-3p the-class kids

b. kell yom byeHDar-ou s-saff wleed
every da attend.3p the-class kids

-- same kids/girls

These non-agreement effects are different from the transdecimal facts in Ouwayda (2013) in various ways:
- In (10) and (12) there is no need for a cardinal
- In (10) and (12), the (apparent) subject is itself plural marked
- In (10) and (12) there is full non-agreement: The verb agrees neither in gender nor in number with the *apparent* subject, not only number non-agreement².

A further observation that holds in Lebanese Arabic for the non-agreeing verbs is that the *apparent* subject cannot be quantificational.

14. a. kell shahr byejtem?-ou ahl l-Hayy hon
every month gather.3pl habitants the-neighborhood here
‘All the neighborhood’s inhabitants get together every month’

   b. kell shahr byejeteme? ahl l-Hayy hon
every month gather.3ms habitants the-neighborhood here
‘All the neighborhood’s inhabitants get together every month’

15. a. *kell shar byejtee?-ou kell tlat ?iyal be-l-Hayy
every month gather.3pl each three families in-the-neighborhood
‘Every month, each three families in the neighborhood get together’

   b. *kell shar byejeteme? kell tlat ?iyal be-l-Hayy
every month gather.3sg each three families in-the-neighborhood

I propose that in sentences like (12a-b) and (Error! Reference source not found.a-b), the verb has an expletive subject that triggers default singular masculine agreement, much like *il 'he* in the French sentences in (16). What appears to be the subject is in a different position.

16. a. il pleut
   he rains
   ‘It’s raining’

   b. il arrive de nombreux accidents
   he happens of numerous accidents
   ‘Many accidents happen’

   c. Soudain, il arriva trois jeunes soldats
   suddenly he arrived three young.pl soldier-pl
   ‘Suddenly, there arrived three young soldiers’

² This is also a significant difference between the complete non-agreement in (10) and (12), and the partial non-agreement in Standard Arabic VSO, where the verb agree in gender but not in number with the subject.
Specifically, I propose that the fully agreeing verb in sentence (17a) is the result of the structure in (17b) where the full DP is the subject of the verb. The non-agreement appearing in (18a) has the structure in (18b), where the subject of the verb is an expletive default pronoun which triggers singular masculine agreement on the verb. The pronounced DP merges in a topic position that does not form an agree relation with the verb.

17. a. kell yom byeHDar-ou S-Saff baneet every day attend.3pl the-class girl-pl
   ‘Some girls attend class every day’

   b. [Diagram]

   18. a. kell yom byeHDar S-Saff baneet every day attend.3ms the-class girl-pl
   ‘Some girls attend class every day’

   b. [Diagram]

The VOS order is then reached by moving the TP above Top.

Assuming the covert pronoun that merges as the subject of the verb is a default pronoun that triggers singular masculine agreement, the facts in (10) and (12) are
fully explained by the proposal. Moreover, the observation in (15b) that the *apparent* subject cannot be quantificational supports the proposal that that DP is not the subject, but rather is merged in a topic position higher than the rest of the sentence.

**Work Cited in this handout:**


Bhatia, A, Benmamoun A, Polinsky M. 2010. Closest Conjunct Agreement in Head-Final Languages. Linguistic Variation Yearbook. 10

