

Modern Arabic Linguistic Discourse According to Mustafa Ghalfan: A Reading and Analysis in Light of His Book Arabic Linguistics: Questions of Methodology

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Abstract

The linguistic critique of modern Arabic linguistic writing presented by Mustafa Ghalfan is among the most recent and significant contributions to this field. This research paper therefore seeks to examine the methodological and theoretical questions that Mustafa Ghalfan attempted to address, as well as the methodological alternatives he proposed to overcome the crisis of contemporary Arabic linguistic discourse and establish an authentic Arabic linguistics. His book Arabic Linguistics: Questions of Methodology was selected because it brings together the entirety of his methodological views previously published in earlier studies.

Given the nature of the research, the descriptive-analytical approach was adopted. The study examines Mustafa Ghalfan's linguistic critique by investigating its methodological foundations, identifying his analysis of the problems confronting modern linguistic writing, and discussing the alternatives he proposed to overcome the crisis of contemporary Arabic linguistic writing. It also critically examines and evaluates the methodological vision he advanced. The findings indicate that the linguistic critique proposed by the Moroccan scholar Mustafa Ghalfan does not, in essence, go beyond compilation and systematization. In our view, the Arabic linguistic model should be considered within the framework of its broader Islamic heritage, and more specifically in light of the logic of the Arabic linguistic tradition, in order to construct a modern Arabic linguistics along the lines proposed by the linguist Abd al-Rahman al-Haj Saleh. In conclusion, Mustafa Ghalfan's studies constitute some of the most recent linguistic works to have offered an almost comprehensive view of modern Arabic linguistic writing, both descriptively and critically. They therefore deserve close examination and should encourage the production of serious Arabic linguistic research that moves beyond the issues he raised toward studies devoted to the structure of the Arabic language itself.

Keywords: Arabic Linguistics; Heritage Linguistics; Linguistic Criticism; Linguistics; Mustafa Ghalfan

Introduction

The Arabic scholarly library contains a substantial body of linguistic research and studies informed by the modern conception of language. Some of these works aim to introduce Arab readers to modern linguistic scholarship by addressing its subject matter, methodologies, theories, schools, history, and levels of linguistic analysis. Others investigate linguistic issues from the perspective of modern linguistics, while still others practice linguistic criticism of the Arabic linguistic heritage through the use of modern linguistic concepts. A

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relatively smaller body of work approaches Arabic linguistic scholarship from a modern linguistic perspective, based on a profound understanding of the epistemological and methodological interrelationship between Arabic linguistic studies and general linguistics. Given the plurality of perspectives and the differences among researchers in their approaches to Arabic in relation to modern linguistics—between those who advocate the complete adoption of modern linguistic theories, those who remain firmly attached to the ancient Arabic linguistic heritage and reject any alternative to it, and those who call for reconciling the two orientations by rereading the heritage and demonstrating its precedence and its inclusion of findings later reached by modern linguistics—we are confronted with a linguistically troubled situation. This situation requires serious researchers to propose a roadmap capable of easing this tension and resolving these conflicting positions through an analysis of the situation according to scientifically grounded critical procedures and principles, functioning as scientific assumptions through which this reality can be examined and the methodological and theoretical problems that have impeded the qualitative transformation long expected to emerge can be identified. The Moroccan linguist Mustafa Ghalfan has studied the reception of general linguistics in the Arab world. He concluded that the crisis of linguistics in Arab culture is a crisis of theoretical and methodological foundations. He identified a number of theoretical and methodological problems surrounding linguistic research in the Arab world, employing scientific and linguistic foundations as a basis for examining and overcoming the current state of modern Arabic linguistic scholarship.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the central question: How can a qualitative transformation in Arabic linguistics be achieved in a manner that enables Arabic to enter into a reciprocal relationship of influence with Western linguistics? To address this question, the following questions are raised:

1. What critical foundations did Mustafa Ghalfan rely on in questioning modern Arabic linguistic discourse?
2. What are the principal problems that have produced the troubled condition of Arabic linguistic discourse?
3. What alternatives have been proposed to overcome this linguistic crisis?

I. Foundations of Linguistic Criticism According to Mustafa Ghalfan

Mustafa Ghalfan relies on critical procedures that function as principles governing his critical and scientific reading of the state of linguistic scholarship in the Arab world. He states that linguistic critical analysis can become effective in Arab linguistic culture only through establishing clearly defined methodological and theoretical foundations against which the evaluations produced by critical analysts can be examined. These critical foundations may be classified into scientific foundations imposed by scientific discourse and linguistic foundations arising from the requirements of general linguistic discourse. (Ghalfan, n.d., p. 57)

1. Linguistics as a Model for the Analysis of Natural Languages

Linguistics has become a major scientific field for the analysis of natural languages and has developed into a shared intellectual culture among specialists in languages and particular grammars as well as among other educated scholars. Linguistic studies have expanded into disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and education, as well as abstract sciences such as mathematics and physics, in an attempt to employ all means that lead toward scientificity and abstraction. Describing linguistics as the scientific study of language distinguishes it from the individual efforts, reflections, and observations made by people interested in language throughout history. Because of its scientific character and its general aim of describing different natural languages, Mustafa Ghalfan regards linguistics as one of his critical and evaluative foundations for examining linguistics in the Arab world. Through comparison between general linguistic research and its Arabic counterpart, he argues for approaching linguistics as a body of epistemological and methodological tools capable of producing effective analyses of linguistic phenomena, rather than merely translating linguistic theories or mastering their individual components. What matters is benefiting from their epistemological foundations and operational concepts. Thus, according to Ghalfan, linguistics should be treated as a scientific tool and a methodological model through which modern Arabic linguistic scholarship can be examined by employing linguistic models and principles in the analysis of Arabic. Any adopted model, whether Arab or Western, must be treated within the intellectual context that produced it and critically examined so that its use yields methodological benefits and advances linguistic research toward new horizons. Every model is embedded in an intellectual and epistemological context that contributed to its production. Consequently, a model cannot be evaluated while ignoring the epistemological and philosophical environment that produced it or played a fundamental role in establishing it. Critical evaluation of linguistic practice should therefore be based on the premise that the study of the works of Arab grammarians must proceed by extracting the principal axes governing their achievements and comparing them with the axes of contemporary linguistics,

rather than limiting comparison to superficial correspondences. Arabic linguistics, or the linguistics of any other language, represents another manifestation of the general hypotheses and methodological principles used in linguistics to analyze and process languages. What differs from one particular linguistics to another is the linguistic material under investigation, whereas the various theoretical frameworks and methodologies associated with them are, in principle, applicable to all languages, subject only to limited adjustments between the material studied and the proposed method of analysis. Linguistics may therefore be viewed as a general epistemological linguistic model whose mechanisms and methodological principles serve as tools for describing and explaining different languages and their particular grammars, including Arabic, English, German, and others, provided that the descriptive apparatus is compatible with the material being described. If compatibility is lacking, the apparatus or model requires limited modification. Such adaptation expands the practical capacities of the linguistic model while enabling Arabic, in this case, to be analyzed scientifically on the basis of general epistemological and linguistic principles. Otherwise, linguistics may become an epistemological obstacle preventing access to the essence of linguistic inquiry. (Ali Yunus, 2004, p. 9) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 50) (Ghalfan, 2013, pp. 52–53) (Alawi & Al-Mallakh, 2002, pp. 61–62)

2. Techniques of Linguistic Analysis

If linguistics is distinguished by its scientific approach to language, what elevates it to the status of a science is its reliance on epistemological principles in establishing scientific knowledge. The epistemological dimension of linguistic research may be understood at two levels: the specialized level, which concerns theoretical and methodological decisions about how the properties of natural language are investigated and described and how methodological constraints governing linguistic description are justified; and the language-user level, which concerns how human beings have adapted their linguistic apparatus so that it functions flexibly across multiple domains.

This epistemological authority in linguistic research functions as a set of premises assumed by the linguist or other researcher in order to uncover the nature of the material being analyzed. Mustafa Ghalfan maintains that evaluating the experience of modern linguistics in Arab culture first requires clarifying the nature and techniques of linguistic work by presenting the general methodological framework that defines linguistics as a set of theoretical and methodological principles broadly accepted among linguists. Linguistics is therefore a methodological point of view. As Saussure puts it, rather than saying that the object determines the point of view, the point of view is what creates the object. Although linguistic schools and methodologies differ in their conceptions and analyses of language, there is a unity of general linguistic principles underlying scientific linguistic knowledge. Among the theoretical and methodological principles that establish the methodological autonomy of linguistics are the following:

- defining the nature, scope, subject matter, and objectives of linguistic research;
- determining the relationship between the proposed general theory and particular natural languages;
- distinguishing between synchronic and diachronic dimensions in linguistic analysis;
- recognizing that language consists of hierarchical levels that must not be conflated;
- recognizing the systematic nature of language and the resulting methodological principles and operational concepts, such as structure, relations, and value. There are also general theoretical concepts of an operational nature, such as phonemes, opposition, distinctive features, segmentation, distribution, substitution, compensation, contextual relations, paradigmatic relations, and the axis of selection in structural and particularly distributional linguistics. Some principles of linguistic analysis are associated with particular linguistic orientations. Functionalism, for example, considers communicative function to be the fundamental function of natural languages and regards the description of communicative competence as a principal concern of linguistic study. These theoretical, methodological, and operational principles enable linguists to analyze human language objectively. Linguistic analysis should therefore take into account general and specific theoretical foundations, methodological principles, and operational concepts, whether the aim is a structural, descriptive, functional, or generative analysis. These principles constitute a scientific linguistic foundation for constructing descriptions of natural languages and provide knowledge of the mechanisms through which linguistic activity operates in speakers, thereby making it possible to describe and explain linguistic structures and the ways in which they function. (Alawi & Al-Mallakh, 2002, p. 27) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 10) (de Saussure, n.d./1986, p. 19) (Alawi & Al-Mallakh, 2002, p. 53) (Ghalfan, 2013, pp. 27–28) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 28)

3. Requirements of Scientific Practice

Since linguistics is a scientific discourse, it operates according to the requirements of scientific practice. The scientific discourse, in essence, is theoretical discourse that can be conceived as an explanatory structure linking a number of phenomena to concepts, assumptions, and principles through an inferential apparatus. Its explanatory structure is more precisely determined by the domain of inquiry, the domain of explanation, and the domain of argumentation. Mustafa Ghalfan's scientific conception of linguistic discourse is established within these domains. His critique of linguistics in Arab culture can therefore be outlined through the following scientific practices: Theory and experimentation. Ghalfan defines the relationship between theory and application by arguing that, methodologically, within the framework of the theory of science, correspondence between theory and experiment—in this case, Arabic—need not be necessary. This does not mean that empirical investigation should be adopted before scientific judgments are made; rather, it means that the requirements of scientific discourse and methodological practice should be respected. When a researcher studies a phenomenon in purely theoretical terms, they formulate appropriate hypotheses for explaining it without establishing in advance, at the level of scientific practice, a necessary connection between those hypotheses and the practical applications that may subsequently arise from them. Many scientific discoveries, at the time they were made, had no direct practical applications. Applied research thus begins where theoretical research ends, without intruding upon its aims, concerns, formulation, or inferential structure.

Theoretical knowledge is certain when it is derived through formal demonstrative rules whose premises do not necessarily refer to reality. The truth value attributed to certain knowledge is therefore determined by the methodology through which it is inferred rather than by its correspondence to reality.

Scientific hypotheses remain open to modification, supersession, and rejection through direct engagement with linguistic facts and broad induction. The researcher tests the hypotheses against the facts and data they were designed to explain, and consequently adopts, modifies, or abandons them. A distinction must be maintained between hypotheses necessary to scientific inquiry and subjective *a priori* assumptions whose adoption may obstruct the emergence and development of science. The generality of theory. Ghalfan argues that a genuine theory is one that applies to the greatest possible amount of diverse linguistic data rather than being restricted to a single linguistic system. Theoretical knowledge is therefore characterized by the generality of its conclusions. A theory cannot be scientific unless it seeks to formulate general laws. This does not imply that scientific linguistic samples must encompass all linguistic facts, since such comprehensiveness is incompatible with scientific activity. Theory as falsifiable and modifiable. Constructing an explanatory account of linguistic facts within a particular theoretical framework does not give that framework absolute validity. One of the conditions of theoretical knowledge is that a theory must at least be open to refutation or supersession. Theories are not fixed entities; they change and are modified in accordance with scientific requirements. Otherwise, they become subjective assumptions imposed upon the material under study.

Accordingly, a scientific theory must: - construct an explanatory structure linking phenomena and facts to principles and assumptions;
- display generality in its laws and conclusions;
- produce predictions that remain open to rejection or modification. (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 30) (Al-Majdoub, 1998, p. 14) (Al-Majdoub, n.d., p. 17) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 102) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 210)

4. The Historical Perspective

Understanding the nature of contemporary Arabic linguistic discourse in terms of its epistemological references and methodologies requires knowledge of the historical dynamics that contributed to its formation. This constitutes an epistemological entry point through which the discourse can be described methodically and objectively. The historical dimension of linguistic discourse in Arab culture and its circumstances is therefore necessary because the ways in which it was initially formed usually control patterns of reception, particularly when reception becomes intertwined with a general intellectual structure inherited without critical reasoning or questioning.

This is also the case with contemporary Arabic linguistics. It is necessary to bridge the temporal gaps of methodological and epistemological significance that influenced representations of contemporary Arabic linguistic issues. Ghalfan explains that approaching the current state of modern Arabic linguistics from a historical perspective helps us understand what has happened and what is happening now, thereby allowing a

more precise interpretation of many phenomena experienced by modern linguistic scholarship and a deeper exploration of the factors that have influenced the course of modern Arabic linguistic research.

The historical perspective is not intended merely to chronicle the stages of the development of linguistic thought. Rather, it concerns the historicity of discourse as an epistemological entry point for examining the foundations that shaped modern Arabic linguistic discourse and generated a set of methodological and theoretical problems. (Alawi, 2009, p. 19) (Gholfan, 2013, p. 67)

II. Problems of Modern Arabic Linguistic Writing According to Mustafa Gholfan

Because modern Arabic linguistic scholarship has moved away from the foundations of linguistic work and the requirements of scientific research identified above, contemporary Arabic linguistic discourse has developed within what is commonly known as the debate between authenticity and modernity. Most linguistic works and studies can be situated within this framework. Yet the question of authenticity and modernity is not, in itself, closely connected to scientific research: what is the criterion for one or the other? Is it priority of emergence, indirect influence, direct influence, agreement, or disagreement? None of these questions by themselves advances our understanding of the emergence and development of sciences. The dialectic of authenticity and modernity has simultaneously been a source of enrichment and an obstacle to research, among other epistemological and ideological barriers that have often prevented the productive discussion of issues requiring scientific and epistemological treatment. It has diverted Arabic linguistic scholarship away from important questions that should constitute its proper field of inquiry. Nevertheless, this judgment does not deny the benefits of the dialectic, which enriched Arabic linguistic research by opening the way to investigation of numerous linguistic issues that had previously been considered exhausted. It also encouraged many traditional scholars to study Western linguistics in order to discover new developments and to demonstrate the value of the Arabic linguistic heritage by rereading it in light of linguistic concepts.

This phenomenon has constituted epistemological and ideological barriers to a qualitative transformation or epistemological breakthrough capable of establishing an Arabic linguistics that applies the proposals of Western linguistic discourse within scientific requirements while remaining fully compatible with the linguistic facts and structures of Arabic. Mustafa Gholfan discusses these obstacles extensively; the present paper summarizes them as follows. (Al-Rajhi, 1986, p. 10) (Alawi & Al-Mallakh, 2002, p. 19)

1. The Logic of Historical Priority and the Absolute Sanctification of the Heritage

Many modern Arab linguists regard the Arabic linguistic heritage, as well as the wider heritage, as an epistemological authority that cannot be transcended, with all forms of knowledge, including linguistics, revolving around it. Consequently, Arabic is sometimes approached subjectively rather than objectively and scientifically. This has given modern Arabic linguistic scholarship several characteristics:

Sanctity and superiority. Arabic is sometimes presented as distinct from other natural languages and described in Arabic linguistic writings through superlative expressions such as “the master of the world's languages,” “a highly sophisticated language,” “the ideal language for expressing philosophical thought,” “a noble language,” “an ancient language,” and “a language endowed with genius.” This is largely related to the association of Arabic with the sanctity of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is sacred, and the language of the Qur'an derives its sacred status from that association. Arabic certainly possesses the characteristics of a scientific and international language, but this does not mean that it is the only such language. Nor should such judgments be determined by anything other than scientific linguistic research. From the perspective of modern linguistics, all languages, including dialects, are equal in linguistic status. Epistemological priority. Some scholars insist that many linguistic concepts and ideas already existed among ancient Arab linguists, seeking thereby to demonstrate the value and originality of the Arabic linguistic heritage. Similarity between ideas is indeed possible, but such similarity should not lead us to claim that earlier scholars were necessarily the first to formulate those ideas merely because of the resemblance. Their epistemological mechanisms must be examined carefully. Every text carries a specific content, and every content is constructed through particular means and formulated according to specific procedures; therefore, understanding both the immediate and broader meaning of a text requires knowledge of the means and procedures through which those levels of meaning were constructed.

Homogeneity of the heritage. The homogeneous view of the Arabic heritage assumes that the linguistic and other dimensions of the heritage constitute a single epistemological system. This is a methodological pitfall,

since epistemological systems with different foundations and conceptions cannot be subsumed under a single homogeneous system. Such an approach allows the reader to select heritage texts that support the position they wish to establish, regardless of the nature, origins, or sources of those texts, and consequently to derive general conclusions that do not correspond to the reality of the issues under investigation. It also eliminates manifestations of development and change by treating an internally coherent structure as closed.

These conceptions governing modern Arabic linguistic writing are founded on ideological intellectual positions rather than scientific ones. We are therefore faced with subjective linguistic practices that do not proceed from epistemological perspectives and methodological principles. Ghalfan calls for distinguishing between two approaches to the Arabic linguistic heritage: a civilizational approach that enriches our historical epistemological specificity by considering linguistic thought a historical stage within the broader history of human linguistic thought, and a scientific approach that regards the heritage as an epistemological product with a historical framework, intellectual sources, and circumstances that shaped it, and which, like all human thought, is epistemologically and temporally relative. (Ghalfan, n.d., p. 23)

2. Linguistic Practice and Grammatical Practice

Modern Arabic linguistic writing often neglects the methodological links between linguistics and grammar established in general linguistic scholarship. Ghalfan points out that, in modern linguistic literature—drawing particularly on descriptive linguistics and generative grammar—grammar is no longer regarded simply as a normative practice in which the grammarian imposes rules on speakers and judges their usage as correct or incorrect. Rather, grammar has become closely associated with linguistics itself and benefits from its achievements. In Arab culture, however, and in some European and other cultural contexts, grammar continues to be studied normatively and independently of actual linguistic usage, with emphasis placed on the ideal form language ought to take. There remains, nevertheless, a distinction between linguistics and grammar in terms of their general and specific dimensions, a distinction that requires further examination. (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 156)

3. The General and Specific Dimensions of Linguistic Research

Much modern Arabic linguistic writing overlooks the relationship between the general and specific dimensions of linguistics, despite the fact that they differ from and complement one another simultaneously. General regularities cannot be discovered without studying particular languages, and particular languages cannot be analyzed without beginning from general hypotheses. The general linguistic theory itself remains subject to modification and adaptation whenever new facts emerge, whether at the theoretical level or at the level of the particular grammar of a language. Ghalfan therefore calls for abandoning the project of establishing an Arabic linguistics based on a theory and methodology exclusively designed for Arabic. Instead, research should begin with Arabic as a language whose structure is to be investigated. A truly scientific linguistic theory is characterized by generality and should apply to the greatest possible number of languages. The distinction between the general and specific dimensions thus corresponds to the distinction between theory and experimentation.

This limited understanding of the general and specific dimensions has led many linguists to believe that linguistics, in its methods and theories, cannot be applied to Arabic. Ghalfan nevertheless emphasizes that the relationship between the general and specific dimensions does not imply that every issue raised by general linguistic theory must necessarily apply to Arabic; the same is true in many cases of English, French, and other languages. (Ghalfan, 2013, pp. 27–29) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 30)

4. Failure of Arabic Linguistics to Keep Pace with the Accumulation of General Linguistic Knowledge

Modern Arabic linguistic writing, with only a few exceptions, has not kept pace with the advances achieved by linguistics in Western universities at the levels of research, application, and teaching. Most linguistic research and publications in the Arab world have not yet moved beyond descriptive structural linguistics. Many researchers possess insufficient knowledge of Simon Dik's functional grammar and of the developments of transformational-generative grammar leading to the standard model. At the applied level, the use of the theoretical and methodological concepts and principles of general linguistics in analyzing Arabic often remains limited to a small number of repetitive examples detached from their theoretical and methodological contexts. This situation is partly attributable to the educational status of linguistics in the Arab world. This does not mean that such studies are completely absent. Ghalfan acknowledges that the works of Ahmed al-Mutawakkil

within functional grammar and Abd al-Qadir al-Fassi al-Fihri within transformational-generative theory constitute pioneering efforts in tracing linguistic theory and applying it systematically to Arabic. (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 14)

5. Superficial Treatment of Linguistic Terminology

Terminology constitutes the key to scientific disciplines because terms carry epistemological content, and they should therefore be understood within the scientific environment that contributed to their production. Modern Arabic linguistic writing often treats many linguistic terms superficially, without sufficient methodological or conceptual precision, except in rare cases. This is particularly evident in the distinction between the terms language system and speech, which are differentiated in general linguistic literature. Such ambiguity indicates a broader crisis in Arabic terminology and linguistic terminology in particular: What do these designations refer to? What is the scope of inquiry associated with them? How do they differ from the Arabic linguistic heritage? What methodology governs them? And what is their relationship to modern linguistic theories?

The seriousness of this terminological situation is illustrated by the use of the expressions “Arabic linguistics” and “linguistics of Arabic” interchangeably to refer to linguistic work undertaken by Sibawayh, al-Jurjani, and others. This may create the impression that Arab linguists preceded modern linguistics and that each of them developed a distinct form of linguistics. The term linguistics, however, is loaded with the theoretical and methodological implications of Western linguistic thought, whereas in modern Arabic linguistic discourse it is sometimes used broadly to refer to any linguistic study, regardless of its historical period, intellectual orientation, or objectives. Ghalfan distinguishes between the two expressions: “Arabic linguistics” refers to everything written in Arabic about linguistic scholarship, whereas “the linguistics of Arabic” refers specifically to the study of the linguistic system of Arabic. He attributes this distinction to Abd al-Qadir al-Fassi al-Fihri.

The absence of distinctions among basic concepts such as grammar, linguistics, and philology has further complicated the situation. It has resulted in a failure to recognize the differences among grammar, linguistics, and philology and consequently in an indiscriminate comparison between grammar and linguistics at the same level, which has sometimes led to an outright rejection of general linguistics. (Ghalfan, 2013, pp. 40–41) (Ghalfan, 2013, p. 47)

6. Departure from the Subject Matter of Linguistic Study

As noted above, employing linguistics as a linguistic model for studying particular languages, including Arabic, requires techniques of linguistic analysis. Theoretical and methodological foundations and general and specific operational concepts must be taken into account. Among the most important principles is defining the nature and scope of linguistic research and specifying its subject matter and objectives.

The reality of modern Arabic linguistic writing, however, differs considerably from that of general linguistics. It often lacks one of the most important elements required by knowledge in the human sciences, particularly linguistics: the study of the given linguistic, social, psychological, and anthropological reality. Linguistics and other human sciences are not simply continuations of Arab intellectual thought; rather, they were imported from Western intellectual culture, which created a historical and epistemological rupture between two bodies of knowledge and between knowledge and the given reality. One consequence of the absence of this methodological and theoretical dimension is that modern Arabic linguistic writing continues to address linguistic topics that offer little benefit from a linguistic perspective and that general linguistics has already moved beyond, such as the origin of languages and the emergence of grammar. While their intellectual value should not be denied, Arabic linguistics under its current troubled conditions does not need topics that may be regarded as forms of intellectual luxury. (Ghalfan, 2013, pp. 53–54)

III. The Methodological Alternative for Arabic Linguistics

After analyzing the state of linguistic scholarship in Arabic writings on the basis of a set of linguistic and scientific criteria, Mustafa Ghalfan proposes alternatives intended to overcome the troubled condition of Arabic linguistics. The establishment of an Arabic linguistics with an international dimension depends on its ability to discover its specific object—Arabic itself or one of its dialects—and to examine it as data amenable to analysis and research through a general linguistic model capable of revealing the characteristics and features of that object. Accordingly, direct engagement with the structure of Arabic is necessary within a clearly defined linguistic framework, whether descriptive, functional, generative, or pragmatic. The essential requirement is a

clear methodological vision based on defining the object of study—the structure of Arabic—specifying concepts and operational tools, and developing an appropriate terminology in order to achieve methodological autonomy. All of this should take place without positing a special linguistic exceptionalism for Arabic, but within general linguistics and its broad methodological principles, conceptions, and analytical procedures.

Gholfan argues that the problem does not lie in the identity or origins of the model, whether Arab or Western, but in its suitability for what is to be described. Contrary to the position of many others, what should be pursued is a description of natural language through a theory concerned with identifying the properties of natural language and generating particular grammars from it. It is not necessary to formulate a special grammar for Arabic; otherwise, such a grammar would have no practical value. This approach would enrich and develop general linguistic theories by providing them with data from Arabic. In this way, and only in this way, the problem of authenticity and modernity and its methodological and theoretical consequences in modern Arabic linguistic scholarship can be overcome. This linguistic conception of Arabic also makes Arabic linguistics open to falsification and refutation whenever new theoretical and methodological principles or conceptions emerge in general linguistics. Correcting and redirecting the course of Arabic linguistics, according to Gholfan, is also linked to reforming its educational conditions in the Arab world. He argues that correcting the course of Arabic linguistics requires reconsidering the educational status of this important field of knowledge, since some of the methodological obstacles identified above are nourished by the way linguistics is taught in Arab universities. Linguistics is often taught as a Western model that is not sufficiently transformed into a source for redescribing Arabic. Linguistic applications in French, English, or German may be presented, while Arabic appears only in brief examples that do not adequately describe the Arabic linguistic system. (Gholfan, 2013, p. 66) (Gholfan, 2013, pp. 31–32) (Gholfan, 2013, pp. 222–223) (Gholfan, 2013, p. 251)

IV. A Critical Perspective on Mustafa Gholfan's Linguistic Criticism

The linguistic criticism presented by the Moroccan researcher Mustafa Gholfan is based on a clear vision consisting of two principal elements: the requirements of scientific practice and the requirements of linguistic discourse. Through these two elements, he examines linguistic writing in the Arab world and arrives at a description—relatively comprehensive—of the problems and obstacles that have directly or indirectly contributed to the emergence of contemporary Arabic linguistic discourse. He then proposes a methodological alternative for overcoming this troubled condition. Nevertheless, the proposed alternative or linguistic model is not entirely new within modern Arabic linguistic scholarship. Rather, it reflects the influence of the ideas of the Moroccan scholars Abd al-Qadir al-Fassi al-Fihri and Ahmed al-Mutawakkil. Gholfan himself praises these two scholars and identifies their works as among the sound scientific contributions to linguistics. This position is understandable given that his proposed alternative is fully consistent with the linguistic orientation of these scholars and draws extensively on their work.

1. A Striking Contradiction

A fundamental contradiction can be observed in Mustafa Gholfan's writings concerning the relationship between the linguistic model and the structure of the language to be described—in this case, Arabic. On the one hand, following al-Mutawakkil, he maintains that the problem does not lie in the identity or origins of the model, whether Arab or Western, but in its suitability for what is to be described. He also argues that the aim should be to describe natural language through a theory concerned with its properties and from which particular grammars may be derived, rather than constructing a grammar specifically for Arabic.

On the other hand, he rejects any modeling of Arabic linguistics in the absence of the theoretical and methodological principles of general linguistics. Although he acknowledges the existence of procedural problems that may require modification, rejection, or supersession when describing Arabic, he nevertheless rejects the construction of a special grammar for Arabic. Yet, in the passage cited above, he concedes that the problem does not concern the linguistic model or its Arab or Western origins but rather its suitability to the structure of Arabic. This raises a question: why does he restrict pioneering linguistic work to the two scholars mentioned above? Why does he not discuss the work of the Algerian linguist Abd al-Rahman al-Haj Saleh? This scholar proceeded from a profound understanding of the heritage and developed an Arabic linguistic model known as the Modern Khalilian Theory without ignoring the achievements of Western linguistics. His approach was characterized by a clear methodological vision and an epistemological apparatus, and his theory opened experimental and applied perspectives in computational linguistics and Arabic language teaching.

Are linguistic models not themselves scientific premises? Why, then, should the starting point not be an Arabic model that takes the specificity of Arab culture into account while benefiting from general linguistic methodologies, without falling into arbitrary projections and superficial rereadings of the heritage? (Ghالفan, 2013, pp. 31–32)

2. The Idea of the Homogeneity of the Heritage

We agree with the researcher that it is scientifically unreasonable to analyze the Arabic linguistic heritage and other dimensions of the heritage according to a single epistemological system. This is a methodological pitfall because epistemological systems with different foundations and conceptions cannot be reduced to one homogeneous system. The researcher is correct that every epistemological system has its own origins and philosophical and intellectual context. Nevertheless, it should also be recognized that there is a general epistemological structure encompassing the Arabic heritage as a whole, alongside a more specific structure associated with the Arabic linguistic heritage. Did the researcher himself not make the historical perspective one of his critical and epistemological foundations? Anyone examining the formation of the Arabic heritage will find that it developed within a religious culture that accords sacred status to the religious text and its contents and principles. Linguistics, like other forms of knowledge, emerged within a philosophical and epistemological context, and its theoretical and methodological principles and conceptions were undoubtedly influenced by that background. Ghالفan himself acknowledges this on more than one occasion.

There is also an increasing call for interdisciplinary scholarship and epistemological integration among the sciences. Accordingly, the application of certain linguistic concepts cannot be based exclusively on the linguistic model in isolation from all other dimensions. For example, the concept of structure and the internal reading of a text in the absence of its author cannot always be applied without qualification to Arabic texts, given the epistemological content associated with a religious culture, the concept of monotheism, and the teachings of Islam and the Prophetic tradition. It is therefore understandable that Arab linguists may be concerned about intellectual approaches that could negatively affect aspects of the intellectual and cultural structure of Arab society.

This does not mean rejecting the application or effectiveness of linguistics in studying linguistic reality. Rather, it highlights the necessary precautions and the importance of taking the coherence and specificity of the heritage into account.

Conclusion

Mustafa Ghالفan's study belongs to a body of critical linguistic writing that seeks to describe the state of modern Arabic linguistic writing on the basis of critical foundations defined by the requirements of linguistic discourse, including the general linguistic model and techniques of linguistic analysis, as well as the requirements of scientific discourse, including the relationship between theory and application, the generality of theory, and the possibility of refuting or modifying it whenever the description of particular grammars requires such intervention. These critical foundations, together with his examination of modern Arabic linguistic writing, led him to the following conclusions: 1. He characterizes contemporary Arabic linguistic discourse as weak, following, to some extent, the characterization offered by Abd al-Qadir al-Fassi al-Fihri. 2. He demonstrates that the crisis of this discourse is fundamentally a crisis of foundations and methodology. It is a discourse that operates apart from the requirements of linguistic work and scientific practice. It remains caught in the problem of authenticity and modernity, leading it into issues that distance it from general linguistics and generate numerous methodological problems, including the unscientific sanctification of the heritage, excessive and fragmented use of linguistic terminology without methodological definition, and failure to distinguish between the general and specific dimensions of general linguistics, which has contributed to rejecting intellectual exchange between linguistics and Arabic. 3. To overcome these problems, he proposes an alternative based on working directly with the structure of Arabic or one of its dialects and treating it as data amenable to analysis and research through a general linguistic model capable of revealing its characteristics and features. 4. In reality, the Moroccan researcher Mustafa Ghالفan does not introduce a fundamentally new model; rather, he mainly compiles and organizes the views of the Moroccan researchers Ahmed al-Mutawakkil and Abd al-Qadir al-Fassi al-Fihri. Through our discussion of Mustafa Ghالفan's proposals, we conclude that: 1. It is possible to construct an Arabic linguistic model based first on a profound understanding of the Arabic linguistic heritage and then on benefiting from the Western linguistic model without arbitrary projections or superficial readings under the heading of rereading the heritage.

This is what the Algerian linguist Abd al-Rahman al-Haj Saleh undertook within the framework of the Modern Khalilian Theory. 2. Arabic should be treated as an Arabic heritage within the framework of linguistic theory and Arabic heritage theory, recognizing that the historical and epistemological character of the Arabic heritage has given it a certain degree of linguistic coherence, without denying that each linguistic, philosophical, or other discipline possesses its own theory and methodology. 3. Applying a linguistic model requires consideration of the philosophical and intellectual environment that shaped and produced it. This is particularly relevant to the variables of the Arabic linguistic heritage, which emerged within Islamic thought. This helps explain why many linguists have expressed reservations about Western linguistics and the risks of applying it directly to Arabic, even though the scientific and practical contributions of linguistics to the development of Arabic should not be denied.

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