The Lexicalization of Gender in Arabic: Two Lexicalization Scenarios in the Framework of Nanosyntax

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Abstract—*This paper discusses in detail the possible scenarios of lexicalizing gender in Arabic, which are made available by the nanosyntactic apparatus: the Superset Principle and Phrasal Spellout mechanism. I will argue in favour of a separate functional projection for gender parallel to the other functional projections that constitute the extended projection of the noun. Arabic is a two-gendered language, in which nouns are morphologically marked for gender distinctions. The feminine gender is marked by –t and/or –aat on the noun based on number whereas masculine gender is phonologically null as there is no lexical item to express masculine gender. Thus, I will provide the two alternative scenarios of masculine gender lexicalization, which follow from the nanosyntactic machinery. I will show in one of these possible scenarios of lexicalizing masculine gender that the noun stem lexicalizes gender along with the root, a scenario advocated by the Phrasal spellout mechanism. The other possible scenario is by allowing the lexical item that lexicalizes number lexicalizes gender as well, a scenario follows from the Superset Principle which assumes that a given lexical item can lexicalize a syntactic structure as long as it has a superset of the features contained in that syntactic structure.*

Keywords*: Arabic, Nanosyntax, Gender Lexicalization, Feminine Gender, MasculineGender, Superset Principle, Phrasal Spellout.*

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