

THE DISCOURSE MARKER 'BUT' IN ENGLISH AND STANDARD ARABIC: ONE PROCEDURE AND DIFFERENT IMPLEMENTATIONS*

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Abstract

This paper investigates the different meanings encoded by the discourse markers *but* in English such as 'denial of expectation', 'contrast', 'correction' and 'cancellation' (Lakoff 1971, Blakemore 1987; 2002, Horn 1989, Bell 1998 and Iten 2005). The paper rejects the ambiguity account of *but* (Horn 1989, Abraham 1979) which argues that *but* in English is an ambiguous linguistic expression. The paper gives a unitary account of the meaning encoded by *but*. It argues that *but* in English encodes a general procedure that can be implemented in four different ways to derive these meanings. In this sense, *but* is not ambiguous but rather *sense-general* linguistic expression. The argument is supported by data from Standard Arabic. Data, in this paper, show that there are four different non-synonymous linguistic expressions that can translate *but* in Standard Arabic. These are *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin* which represent the four different meanings of 'denial of expectation', 'contrast', 'correction' and 'cancellation' respectively.

1. Introduction

The discourse marker *but* has been widely studied in the literature—Lakoff (1971), Anscombe & Ducrot (1977), Abraham (1979), Horn (1989), Bell (1998), Blakemore (1987, 1989, 2002) and Iten (2005). These theorists argue that *but* encodes several meanings. Lakoff (1971) and Blakemore (1987, 2002) claim that *but* encodes a denial-of-expectation meaning between the two conjuncts it links. Consider Lakoff's example (1971:67):

- (1) John is a Republican **but** he is honest.

According to Lakoff, *but* in this example involves an implication relation between two conjuncts based on the suggestion that Republicans are not normally honest. The idea is that the first conjunct (John is Republican) implies an assumption which is contradicted by the second conjunct (he is honest). In other words, on the basis of the first conjunct, the hearer might be led to expect something which is then denied.

Lakoff (1971:133) points out that there is another use of *but* where the relation between the two conjuncts is not of a denial of expectation or implication but rather one of a simple contrast:

- (2) Peter is rich **but** John is poor.

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As can be noticed, *but* in the above utterance simply encodes a contrastive relationship between the states of affairs, represented in each clause.

Anscombe & Ducrot (1977) claim that *but* can have a yet further meaning which is different from the first two discussed above. Consider the following scenario where both A and B attending a Christmas party; A comments on the person who sees for the first time with B.

- (3) a. Oh! Your brother looks exactly like you.
b. He is not my brother **but** my friend.

The use of *but* in (3b) does not involve contradiction. It is not the case that the first conjunct (he is not my brother) implies the negation of the second conjunct or vice versa. This use of *but* is called the ‘correction’ use, where the clause introduced by *but* provides a correct replacement for the assumption given in the first clause.

There is a fourth use of *but*, which is called by Bell (1998: 527) the ‘discourse’ or ‘sequential’ *but*. Usually, *but* in this case has an utterance-initial use. Consider the following example:

- (4) a. I am very happy; we’ve had a very nice dinner today.
b. **But** did anybody see my wallet?

Bell claims that this use of *but* signals a return to the main topic of discourse. He describes the *but*-clause as a cancelling clause which cancels what comes before in discourse.

Since *but* has been seen as encoding a variety of meanings, some theorists including Anscombe & Ducrot (1977), Abraham (1979) argue that it is linguistically ambiguous, i.e. there is more than one lexical *but* in English. Horn (1989) supports this argument by referring to cross-linguistic data which show that *but* in English could be translated to different lexical items in other languages. For instance, the denial *but* is translated as *aber* in German and *pero* in Spanish, while the correction *but* is translated as *sondern* in German and *sino* in Spanish.

Data¹ from Standard Arabic (SA) show that there are four non-synonymous linguistic expressions that translate *but* in English namely, *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin*. These expressions will be discussed in more detail later in this paper. It will be argued that they are translations of the different implementations of the general procedure encoded by *but* in English. The denial *but* is normally translated as *lakinna* in SA:

- (5) kana min aṭ-ṭullabi al-mumtaẓīn **lakinnahu** lam yaşil ’ila
was+he from students excellent **but+he** not reach to

mustawana ad-dirasī ḥaiṭu kuntu wa farouq min al-’awa’il.
our level study where was+I and Farouq from the first

¹ Standard Arabic data in this paper come from novels, newspapers and from the Holy Quran as well as some composed examples.

“He was an excellent student, **but** he has never reached our level. I and Farouq were the first in the class.”

(Swimming in the Mud² p.21)

Lakinna in this example is similar to *but* in Lakoff’s example (1) in the sense that it indicates a denial-of-expectation relation between the two clauses based on the fact that ‘excellent students should be the first in their classes’. However this expectation has been denied by the second conjunct.

As for the contrastive *but*, it is translated as *bainma*³ in SA. Consider the following example:

- (6) ḡalasa walad abi yusuf al-qurfuṣāa **bainama** ibn al-ṣabrah
 Sat down son Abi Yusuf squat **but** Ibn Al-Sabrah
- baqiya wāqifan
 remained standing

“Walad Abi Yusuf squatted **but** Ibn Al-Sabrah remained standing”.

(Raspberry Tree p.135)

Bainama in (6) indicates a contrastive relation between two states of affairs (squatting) and (standing) in a similar way to what is indicated by *but* in (26):

Concerning the correction *but*, it is traditionally translated as *bal* in SA as demonstrated in the following example:

- (7) a. ahbir-nī ‘an ziarati-ka li-london fi nisān 1995
 tell-me about visit-your to-London in April 1995
- b. ’naa lam ’zur london fi nisān 1995 **bal** zurtu-ha fi ’yyār 2001
 I not visit London in April 1995 but visited-it in May 2001
- a’. Tell me about your visit to London in April 1995.
 b’. I did not visit London in April 1995 **but** (visited it) in May 2001.

² Al-Suleibi (2002). *Sibaha fi Al-Wahal* (Swimming in the Mud). Damascus: Dar Al-Ilm.

³ There is another DM (*innama*) used in SA to encode a contrastive relationship between the two elements it connects. It differs from *bainama* in the sense that it is always preceded by negation:

- a. la ’uridu al-milḡa ’**innama** al-bihāra
 not want the salt **but** the pepper
 ‘I don not want the salt **but** the pepper.’

- b. ma ḡahabtu ’**innam** ’intazrtuka ḡatta al-ṡaniaya zuhran
 not went way **but** wait for you until 2.00 pm
 ‘I have not gone **but** waited for you until 2.00 pm.’

As can be noticed, the clause introduced by *bal* in (7) corrects the assumption communicated in the first clause.

Bell's (1998) utterance-initial *but* is translated as *lakin* in SA. Consider (8) where *lakin* indicates a return to the main topic in discourse and cancels what comes before in discourse.

- (8) a. ‘ala ’ayyati ḥāl, laisat hiyya al-marah al-oula al-latī tašḥad fihā al-qiwa al-qolonialiyah al-ḡašimah anyabahā ḍidda souriya, wa lan takouna al-khirah...

‘Anyway, this is not the first time that the brutal colonial forces sharpen their teeth against Syria and it will not be the last time.’

- b. **lakin** ’aswa’-u ma yumkin ’an yurtakab min ḥata’ fi muwaḡatha tarikhiyyah kahadihi huwa al-taqlīl – wa law lilahza waḥida- min ahammiyet kul min al-’iqtisād wa al-’idārah ’ada’an wa nata’iḡan...

“**But** the worst thing that can be committed as a historic confrontation is belittling- even for awhile- the importance of the economics and administration at the performance and consequence level.”

(Al-Baath Newspaper No 12774— 4/1/2006)

Iten (2005:125) argues against the ambiguity account of *but*. She maintains that the presence of a word in one language which can have more than one translation in another language does not mean that the word itself is ambiguous. She gives an example of the word *cousin* in English which can be translated (in German) as *Vetter* for the male cousin and as *Base* for the female cousin. However, nobody would say that the word *cousin* in English is ambiguous. She also claims that if *but* in English is ambiguous, then this should lead to sentences containing *but* being ambiguous. But this is not intuitively the case.

I agree with Iten (2005) and Blakemore (1987, 2002) that *but* in English is not ambiguous. It is counter-intuition to judge sentences containing *but* as being ambiguous. Furthermore, if one word in L1 has more than one translation in L2, it does not mean that this word is lexically ambiguous in L1. *But* is different from linguistic expressions which encode real ambiguity. Take, for instance, the word *šahāda* in SA. This word is lexically ambiguous; it has four different linguistically encoded meanings. It can be translated as *evidence*, *martyrdom*, *degree* (BA, MA, PhD etc.) or *the seen*⁴ (as compared to the unseen). As can demonstrated in (9), (10), (11) and (12) respectively:

- (9) wa la taktumu al-šahāda⁵
and not conceal the **evidence**
“And conceal not the **evidence**.”

⁴The word *šahāda* in this sense (as well as when it means *evidence*) is often used in religious text, especially in The Holy Quran.

⁵The Holy Quran, Al-Baqarah Verse. 283

- (10) al-qitāl ḥatta al-**šahāda**⁶ aw al-našr.
 fighting until the **martyrdom** or the victory
 “Fighting until **martyrdom** or victory.”
- (11) al-musābaqa li-ḥamalti al-**šahāda**⁷ al-ḡāmi‘iyya
 the competition for people the **degree** the university
 “The competition is for people with a university **degree**.”
- (12) ‘alimu al-ḡaibi wa al-**šahāda**⁸
 knower the unseen and **the seen**
 “All Knower of the unseen and **the seen**.”

It is generally agreed that the meaning encoded by *but* cannot be analysed in terms of the contribution it makes to the truth conditions of the utterance in which it occurs:

- (13) It was snowing **but** John went out cycling.

In other words, the meaning encoded by *but* does not affect the truth or falsity of the (13). The utterance is true if and only if the first and the second conjuncts are true regardless of the relationship encoded by *but*.

Similarly, the meanings encoded by *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin* do not contribute to the truth conditional content of utterances in which they occur. Consider (14) below:

- (14) al-samā-u mumṭirat-un **lakinna** al-ḡaw-wa dāfi’-un
 the sky raining **but** the weather warm
 It is raining **but** the weather is warm.

As can be noticed, *but* in (14) indicates that there is a denial-of-expectation meaning. However this meaning does not affect the truth or falsity of the utterance. (14) is true if and only if the two conjuncts ‘it is raining’ and ‘the weather is warm’ are true no matter whether there is a denial-of-expectation relation between the two conjuncts or not. Similar analyses could be composed of *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin*.

2. *But*: a concept of procedure?

It is quite hard to find a concept that covers all the meanings encoded by *but*. In this respect, it is more appropriate, following Blakemore (1987, 1989, 2002) and Iten (2005), to argue that *but* is best accounted for in procedural terms. My claim will be that *but* in English encodes a general procedure which can be implemented to generate four different interpretations: ‘denial of expectation’, ‘contrast’, ‘correction’ and ‘cancellation’. It will be argued that the four linguistic expressions corresponding to *but*,

⁶ News report Sunday 6th August 2006. Retrieved at the following link
<http://www.inbaa.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=14451> on 17/01/2008

⁷ The Bridge of Death p. 33

⁸ The Holy Quran, Al-An‘am Verse. 73

i.e. *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin* are translations to the different implementations of the general procedure encoded by *but*. Before I do that, I would like to give more evidence about the procedural nature of *but* in English.

If we examine *but* in the light of Wilson and Sperber's (1993) tests, it would become clear that the meaning encoded by *but* is procedural rather than conceptual. The first test—'accessibility to consciousness' shows that *but* lacks conceptual content. Unlike linguistic expressions with conceptual encoding, such as *cat*, *tree*, and *table*, *but* cannot be brought into consciousness. It would be very hard for a native speaker of English to answer a question such as 'What does *but* mean?'. It would be much easier for her to answer a question such as 'How is *but* used?'.
 Regarding the second test 'truth evaluability', it is widely accepted that the meaning encoded by *but* is not truth evaluable. Consider Iten's example (83) used here as (15):

- (15) a. John is gay **but** he's a nice guy.
 *b. That's not true— there's no incompatibility between him being nice and him being gay.
 *c. Come on. You can't seriously suggest that being gay is incompatible with being nice.

As can be noticed, the hearer cannot object to the sense of 'contrast' or 'incompatibility' encoded by *but* in (15a). Thus, the hearer's reply in (15b) is not accepted.

As for the 'semantic compositionality' where conceptual representations can combine with other conceptual representations to form larger complex conceptual representations, it is obvious that *but* could not combine with other linguistic expressions in the same way as conceptual words do. Consider the following examples given by Iten (2005:132):

- (16) Sheila is rich [I strongly suggest this contrasts] she is unhappy.
 (17) Sheila is rich [I don't suggest this contrasts] she is unhappy.
 (18) * Sheila is rich **strongly but** she is unhappy.
 (19) * Sheila is rich **not but** she is unhappy.

Iten points out that there is a difference between *but* and the linguistic expressions (between square brackets) which would have to be taken as synonymous with *but* on conceptual accounts. She maintains that unlike (16) and (17) which are perfectly acceptable, (18) and (19) are neither grammatical nor interpretable.

This section has presented a brief analysis which supports the procedural account of *but*. Next section discusses Blakemore's relevance-theoretic account of *but*. The section that follows investigates the general procedure encoded by *but* and shows how this procedure is implemented to reach the four interpretations derived in *but*-utterances.

3. *But*: a relevance-theoretic account

Blakemore (1987, 2002) concentrates on the two main interpretations of *but* namely, 'denial of expectation' and 'contrast'. Her account demonstrates that *but* encodes a procedure which constrains the relevance of the utterance in which *but* is used.

According to her, the procedure encoded by *but* reduces the processing effort by pointing the hearer towards the contextual effect of the clause it introduces. In other words, the use of *but* helps the reader see how the clause it introduces is relevant to what is expressed in the first clause.

Blakemore (1987, 2002) argues for a unitary account of *but*. Her claim is that the procedure encoded by *but* puts a single constraint on the relevance of the utterance in which it occurs, no matter whether it encodes a ‘contrast’ or ‘denial of expectation’. This procedure encoded by *but*, as given by Iten, (2005:147) is the following:

- (20) What follows (Q) contradicts and eliminates an assumption that is manifest in the context.

Blakemore uses the procedure given in (20) to account for both ‘denial’ and ‘contrast’ meanings of *but*. In the case of ‘denial of expectation’, she uses examples such as the following:

- (21) John is a lawyer **but** he is in prison now.

The assumption manifest in the first clause of (21) is that ‘John should not be in prison’. It is usually known that lawyers work to save people from being in prison; thus it is unexpected (and rather strange) for John himself to be in prison. However, this assumption is denied by the conceptual content in the *but*-clause ‘he is in prison now’. Blakemore calls this type of denial as a ‘direct denial’.

Blakemore gives another type of denial where the propositional content of the *but*-clause does not contradict and eliminate the assumption, but rather the implicature communicated in the preceding clause. Consider the following example:

- (22) It is freezing outside **but** John needs milk for the kids.

As can be noticed, what is denied is not the truth-conditional content expressed in the first clause of (22) but rather the contextual implicature communicated in the first clause—that ‘John might be expected *not* to want to get out’. Blakemore calls this type of denial as an ‘indirect denial’.

Blakemore accounts for the contrast *but* in two different ways. She (1987, 2002) argues that the contrast *but* is a special case of the denial *but*. She treats it the same way as the denial of expectation *but* as in (21) where *but* encodes a procedure of contradiction and elimination. Consider her example used below as (23):

- (23) John is tall **but** Bill is short.

Blakemore (1987, 2002) accounts for this use of *but* as follows: we might take the first clause ‘John is tall’ to imply that ‘Bill is tall too’ if John and Bill are twin brothers. In this case the implicature manifest in the first clause ‘Bill is tall too’ is denied by the *but*-clause ‘Bill is short’. However, Blakemore (1989:17) accounts for the contrast *but* in a different way. She claims that the contrast case of *but* involves a different procedure from that involved in the denial case. Thus, she claims that *but* should be treated as having more than one single meaning.

Hall (2004:199) develops an interesting account of *but*. She claims that the procedure encoded by *but* suspends an inference that would result in a contradiction with what follows. Consider (22) repeated below as (24) for convenience:

(24) It is freezing outside **but** John needs milk for the kids.

As can be noticed, *but* in (24) introduces a clause the propositional content of which provides a suspension of an inference that might be derived from the first clause such as ‘people do not get out in freezing weather’. This inference is cut-off or suspended by the *but*-clause.

The discussion presented above shows that theorists have different views regarding the procedural meaning encoded by *but*. Blakemore and Hall analyse the procedure encoded by *but* in different ways. Building on that, I argue that *but* in English encodes a general procedure the different implementations of which put constraints on the interpretation of the utterances in which it occurs. Thus, the implementation of this general procedure results in generating four different constraints on the interpretation of the utterance in which *but* occurs, namely ‘denial’, ‘contrast’, ‘correction’ and ‘cancellation’. I will claim that these four implementations of the procedural meaning of *but* are translated as different linguistic expressions in SA: *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin*, as will be discussed in the next section.

4. *But* as encoding a general procedure

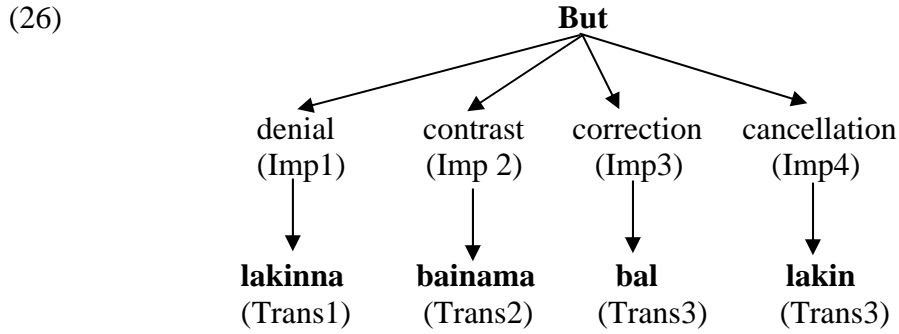
As mentioned, the ambiguity account of *but* proposed by Anscombe & Ducrot (1977) and Horn (1989) has been argued against by Iten (2005). Iten’s argument is based on two claims. On the one hand, she maintains that a word which has more than one linguistic expression equivalent to it in other languages does not mean that the word is ambiguous and she gives an example of the word ‘cousin’ in English. On the other hand, she argues that if *but* in English is ambiguous then sentences containing *but* must be ambiguous which, we do not find in English.

Iten’s argument seems to be correct. *But* in English is never ambiguous. The different readings of *but*, i.e. ‘denial’, ‘contrast’, ‘correction’ and ‘cancellation’ stem from the fact that *but* is a sense-general linguistic expression. *But* is not an ambiguous expression because the different interpretations communicated in *but*-utterances are related. ‘Denial’, ‘contrast’, ‘correction’ and ‘cancellation’ come under one procedural umbrella. This, I claim, is the ‘contrast’ encoded by the linguistic expression *but*.

My argument will be that *but* is a DM that encodes the general procedure given below:

(25) Treat the proposition communicated by the *but*-clause as *contrasting* with the assumption explicitly or implicitly communicated by the utterance of the preceding clause.

The above procedure is implemented in particular contexts to generate the different meanings communicated by *but*-utterances namely: ‘denial’, ‘contrast’, ‘correction’ and ‘cancellation’ as demonstrated below:



My claim is that the four SA linguistic expressions corresponding to *but* are not exact translations of the linguistic expression (*but*) but rather translations of the specific implementations of the procedure encoded by *but*. These expressions are discussed in more detail in section 6. Before that, a brief introduction about their syntactic behaviour is given.

5. Syntactic behaviour

These four linguistic expressions have been little studied in SA. They have never been studied from a pragmatic point of view. A couple of studies in the literature discusses their syntactic functions and how they differ from each other as linguistic categories. My purpose is not to discuss the syntactic nature of these markers at a great length here, since it is not my main interest, I will rather give a very brief description of their syntactic nature and functions.

Ibn Hisham (1340), Al-Murādī (1324) and Ibn Jinni (961) call such linguistic expressions *al-ḥurūf* (particles) and claim that they have different syntactic functions. Ibn Hisham (1340:382) argues that *lakinna* is a particle which is only used in nominal (subject - predicate) sentences. It assigns the ‘accusative’ case to the subject and the ‘nominative’ case to the predicate as is shown in the examples below:

(27) a. al-ḡaw dāfi’ haḍa al-yawm
 the weather warm this today
 “The weather is warm today.”

b. al-samā’u mumṭiratun **lakinna** al-ḡaw-**wa** dāfi’-**un**
 the sky raining **but** the weather (Acc) warm (Nom)
 “It is raining **but** the weather is warm.”

(28) al-riḥlatu ṭawīlatun ḡiddan **lakinna** al-sayyara-**ta** ḡadīdat-**un**
 the journey long very **but** the car (Acc) new (Nom)
 “The journey is very long **but** the car is new.”

As can be noticed, the use of *lakinna* in (27b) which is a nominal sentence changes the case of the subject (al-ḡaw) into accusative (al-ḡaw-**wa**) and the case of the predicate (dāfi’) into nominative (dāfi’-**un**). The same goes for (28) where *lakinna* assigns the accusative case to ‘al-sayyara’ (the car) and the nominative case to ‘ḡadīda’ (new).

Unlike *lakinna*, *lakin* does not have this function of case assigning. The first noun after *lakin* does not occur in the accusative case. *Lakin* is usually used in a

discourse initial position to introduce a new topic. *Lakin* is regularly used in news reports and can be followed by a question. Consider the following examples:

- (29) a. 'indamā taqaddamta bi-ṭalabi 'ijazah li-taqdīm al- musbāqa
when asked+you to apply leave to participate the competition

lam 'abkhal 'alaik
not stingy on you

- b. **lakin** ma ma'na 'an tuḡādir ṭiwāla an-nahār wa lam ta'ūd
but what meaning to leave all the day and not come

'illa fi sā'a muta'khira min al-lail
just in hour late from the night

- a. When you applied for a leave to participate in the competition , I gave you.
b. **But** why have you been away all the day and have not come back until very late at the night.

(The Bridge of Death⁹ p.38)

As regards *bainama*, it is only used on the sentential level. It relates two noun (or verb) clauses. It is similar to *lakin* in the sense that it does not have the function of case assigning. However, unlike *lakin*, *bainama* cannot occur in discourse-initial position. Consider the following examples:

- (30) a. 'umar-un ṭawīl-un **bainama** zaid-un qaṣīr-un
Omar tall **but** Zaid short

“Omar is short **but** Zaid is tall”

- b. dahaba 'umar-un 'ila al-sinama **bainama** baqiya zaid-un fi al-bait
went Omar to the cinema **but** stayed Zaid at home

“Omar went to the cinema **but** Zaid stayed at home”

Concerning *bal*, Ibn Hisham (1340:152) claims that it can be used in utterance-initial positions where the utterances are uttered by two different speakers. It can also be used in utterance-middle positions when the utterance is articulated by a single speaker.

- (31) a. dahabta 'ila al-sinama?
went-you to the cinema?

- b. **bal** dahabtu 'ila al-masrah
but I went to the theatre.

- (32) lam adhab 'ila al-sinama **bal** 'ila al-masrah
not go to the cinema **but** to the theatre
'I did not go to cinema **but** to theatre.'

⁹Abdo, I. (1997). *Ġisr Al-Mawt* (The Bridge of Death). Damscus, Dar Al-Marifa.

6. Four different implementations

6.1. *Lakinna* the ‘denial but’

The first implementation of the general procedure encoded by *but* in English leads to the denial-of-expectation meaning communicated in *but*-utterances. The translation of this implementation would be *lakinna* in SA. The implementation can be put as follows:

- (33) What follows *lakinna* denies and replaces an assumption communicated by what precedes it.

Consider the following example for demonstration:

- (34) jon lişş-un **lakinna**-hu tayyibu al-qalb
 John thief **but**-he good heart
 “John is a thief **but** he is good-hearted”

As can be noticed, the assumption communicated in the first clause in (34) is that John is not a good-hearted person on the expectation that ‘thieves are not good-hearted’. However, this assumption is denied by the proposition communicated in the clause introduced by *lakinna*. The use of *lakinna* in (34) does not contribute to the truth-conditional content of the utterance. The utterance is true if and only if the two propositions ‘John is a thief’ and ‘John is good-hearted’ are true. The contribution of *lakinna* lies on the implicit level. It constrains the inferential phase of the utterance interpretation by guiding the hearer to interpret the proposition communicated in the *lakinna*-clause as denial and replacement of the assumption in the first clause. In other words, this implementation of the procedure points to the hearer that the *lakinna*-clause achieves relevance as denial and replacement of the assumption communicated in the first clause.

The other three translations (in SA) cannot be used for this implementation of the procedure encoded by the English *but*; the use of *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin* is not accepted in (35):

- (35) a. John is a thief **lakinna** he is good-hearted.
 *b. John is a thief **bal** he is good-hearted.
 *c. John is a thief **bainama** he is good-hearted.
 *d. John is a thief **lakin** he is good-hearted.

6.2. *Bainama* the ‘contrast but’

Unlike *lakinna*, which is the translation of the ‘denial’ implementation of the general procedure encoded by *but*, *bainama* is translation of the ‘contrast’ implementation. Given that, *bainama* in SA is analysed as encoding a contrastive relationship between two propositions:

- (36) What follows *bainama* contrasts a proposition explicitly communicated by what precedes it.

Consider the following example in which *bainama* indicates a simple contrast between two states of affairs:

- (37) ‘umar-un qaṣīr-un **bainama** zaid-un ṭawīl-un
 Omar short **but** Zaid tall
 “Omar is short **but** Zaid is tall”

As can be noticed, *bainama* in (37) indicates a contrastive relationship between two states of affairs: ‘Omar is short and ‘Zaid is tall’. Similar to *lakinna*, the contribution made by *bainama* does not affect the truth-conditional content of the utterance. The utterance of (37) is true if and only if both propositions ‘Omar is short’ and ‘Zaid is tall’ regardless of any contrastive relationship between them. The contribution made by *bainama* is operative on the implicit level by guiding the hearer to see that the proposition communicated by *bainama*-clause achieves relevance as a contrast of the proposition communicated in the first clause. There is no denial-of-expectation meaning involved when *bainama* is used. In addition, the other two translations, i.e. *bal* and *lakin* cannot be used for the contrast implementation referred to here:

- (38) a. Omar is short **bainama** Zaid is tall.
 ?b. Omar is short **lakinna** Zaid is tall.
 *c. Omar is short **bal** Zaid is tall.
 *d. Omar is short **lakin** Zaid tall.

It is interesting to say that *lakinna* can be used instead of *bainama* in (38b). However the interpretation would be different. If *lakinna* is used, the proposition communicated in the *lakinna*-clause is interpreted as a denial of the assumption communicated in the first clause. This could happen in scenarios where Omar and Zaid are taken to be twin brothers, which indicates that both are tall. The implication then is that ‘Zaid is tall’ too. However this implication is denied by the proposition introduced by the *lakinna*-clause.

6.3. *Bal* the ‘correction *but*’

The translation of the third implementation of the general procedure encoded by *but* is *bal* which is used as a correction marker in SA. It is usually used by speakers to correct previous assumptions in discourse. It is regularly used in religious texts specially the Holy Quran¹⁰. Consider the following example:

- (39) ‘am yaqulūna bihi ġinatun **bal** ġa’ahum bilḥaq
 Or they say in him madness **but** brought them with truth
 ‘Or say they: “There is madness in him?” Nay, **but** he brought them the truth.’

(The Holy Quran: Part 23, Verse 70)

In this verse, the Almighty God (Allah) defends his prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The disbelievers referred to in the clause that precedes *bal* accuse the prophet of

¹⁰ This translation of The Holy Quran is provided by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan; available online on <http://muttaqun.com/quran/e/index.html>.

being mad because he is asking them to worship just one god. In the *bal*-clause, Allah corrects the disbeliever's assumption and points out that the prophet is not mad but is the messenger of truth to mankind.

Bal in (39) does not encode a denial-of-expectation meaning. It is not the case that the disbelievers in the first clause expect that the prophet to be mad, but rather accusing him of madness. So, the purpose of the *bal*-clause is not to deny any contextual expectation. The use of the *bal*-clause is rather to correct the disbeliever's judgement 'prophet is mad' and replace it with 'a messenger of truth'. Building on that, the claim is that 'correction' is an implementation of a general procedure encoded by *but* and that the translation of this implementation into SA is *bal*:

- (40) What follows *bal* corrects and replaces an assumption explicitly communicated by what precedes it.

Consider another example:

- (41) a. 'uhtu-ka tušbihu-ku tamamān
 sister-your like-you exactly
- b. hiya laisat 'uht-ī **bal** 'umm-ī
 She not sister-my **but** mother-my

“a. Your sister looks exactly like you.”

“b. She is not my sister **but** my mother.”

The use of *bal* in (41b) contributes the inferential part of the utterance interpretation in the sense that it guides the hearer to see that the proposition expressed in the *bal*-clause is relevant as a correction and replacement of an assumption communicated in the previous clause. Similarly, the other three translations are not acceptable in the correction case:

- (42) a. She is not my sister **bal** my mother.
 *b. She is not my sister **lakinna** my mother.
 *c. She is not my sister **bainama** my mother.
 *d. She is not my sister **lakin** my mother.

6.4. *Lakin* the 'cancellation *but*'.

The last implementation of the procedure encoded by *but* is translated as *lakin* in SA. *Lakin* is a DM which is used in an initial position in discourse. It is used to introduce a clause which communicates a proposition that relates to a previous proposition in discourse in the sense that the proposition in the *lakin*-clause cancels the importance of the proposition in the previous discourse. Consider the following example:

- (43) a. maštabatu baitika šabihatun bi-maštabati baiti 'abi yusuf
 the terrace your house similar to the terrace house Abi Yusuf

b. **lakin** 'aba yusuf tarak baitahu wa 'abna'ahu 'iqtala'u
but dad Yusuf left his house and his kids pull out
 al-šağarah wa hadamū al-bait.
 the tree and demolished the house.

“a. The terrace of your house is similar to the terrace of Abi Yusuf’s house.”

“b. **But** Aba Yusuf left his house and his kids pulled out the tree and demolished the house.”

(The Raspberry Tree¹¹: p80)

Unlike *lakinna* and *bal*, the use of *lakin* does not deny or correct an assumption communicated in the preceding clause. The clause introduced by *lakin* in (43): ‘Aba Yusuf left his house and his kids pulled out the tree and demolished the house’ neither denies the preceding clause ‘the terrace of your house is similar to the terrace of Abi Yusuf’s house’ nor corrects it.

The clause introduced by *lakin* in (43) is a cancellation and replacement of the proposition communicated in the preceding clause. In this sense, *lakin* points to the hearer that the proposition of the *lakin*-clause is more important and significant than the proposition of the preceding clause and that it has to cancel and replace it: The implementation can be put as follows:

(44) What follows *lakin* cancels and replaces a proposition communicated by what precedes it.

Consider another example to demonstrate that *lakin* is the best translation of this implementation:

(45) a. 'unzur al-'adīd-u min al-nās yatağmma'una fi sāḥti al-baldah
 look many of people gathering in square the town
 b. **lakin** limāda ḡamī'u-hum yarfa'una 'a'lām-an ḥudr-an
but what all of them carry flags green

“a’. Look! Many people are gathering in the town square.’

“b. **But**, why are they all carrying green flags?”

Lakin in (45) introduces a clause, the proposition of which relates to the proposition in the previous clause. It guides the hearer to see that the proposition it introduces cancels the importance and significance of the proposition in the previous clause. There is no denial or correction involved in this case of *lakin*, which means that the other three translations cannot be used instead:

¹¹ Abdul-Kareem, H. (2002). *Šağart Al-Tūt* (The Raspberry Tree). Damascus: Dar Al Kitab Al-Arabi.

- (46) a. **Lakin**, why are they all carrying green flags?
 *b. **lakinna**, why are they all carrying green flags?
 *c. **bal**, why are they all carrying green flags?
 *d. **bainama**, why are they all carrying green flags?

7. Conclusion

This paper was a rejection of the ambiguity account of *but* developed by some theorists such as Anscombe & Ducrot (1977) and Horn (1989). It argued that *but* in English is never ambiguous but rather a sense-general linguistic expression. The argument in this paper was that *but* in English encodes a general procedure that can be implemented to derive different meanings in different contexts. Such meanings are separate—though related in the sense that they can all come under a general umbrella of ‘contrast’. It was also argued that the four linguistic expressions that correspond to *but* in Standard Arabic, i.e. *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal* and *lakin* are translations of the four different implementations (‘denial of expectation’, ‘contrast’, ‘correction’ and ‘cancellation’) of the general procedure encoded by *but* in English.

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