The Derivation of Vocative Exclamatives with the Particle *ʔaya* in Gulf Arabic

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Abstract: Research into vocative exclamatives (VocEs) is based on the traditional grammar of Standard Arabic (SA) which considers the structure of VocEs to be like that of vocatives due to the use of the vocative particle *yā*. The problem with this traditional view lies in the fact that it only accounts for VocEs in terms of their similarity to vocatives, and identifies only one type of VocEs with the particle *yā* that exists in SA. However, other types of VocEs, their underlying structure and derivation have not been given much attention. Therefore, this paper examines the syntactic structure and the derivation of vocative exclamatives in Gulf Arabic with the particle *ʔaya* which does not exist in SA. It provides an analysis of the data within the Minimalist Framework and sheds light on the main differences between their structure and that of vocatives in terms of definiteness and projection.

Keywords: Vocative Exclamatives, Exclamative Particles, Derivation of Exclamatives, Vocatives, Vocative Exclamative Particles, Gulf Arabic

1. Introduction

Exclamatives are a type of sentence that expresses surprise or feelings. Their structure has not been focused on as much as the structure of interrogatives and declaratives. Researchers, including [15] divided exclamative sentences into two main types based on their syntactic structure: *exclamation* and *exclamative*. The term *exclamation* is used to refer to utterances which express surprise in the form of a declaration. The term *exclamatives* refers to the utterances which express surprise in three different forms: Determiner Phrases (DPs), inversion and *wh*-questions.

Certain issues have been raised about the structural, semantic and pragmatic analysis of exclamatives. However, there is insufficient analysis of vocative exclamatives to the best of my knowledge. In Arabic, the studies on exclamatives have been concerned with Standard Arabic rather than the varieties of Arabic. Nowadays, Standard Arabic is no longer used as a spoken language. Rather, the colloquial Arabic is the spoken language which varies between the Arab countries according to their geographical regions [18]. Because of the wide range of Arabic dialects, there is insufficient syntactic data as it is the case with Standard Arabic. Moreover, the grammatical rules of the spoken dialects are continuously changing over time. Therefore, the rules of the grammar are not comprehensively documented [4].

Since Arabic dialects are not much studied, this research aims at investigating the syntactic structures and properties of vocative exclamatives with the particle *ʔaya* in Gulf Arabic to enrich the linguistic data. This type of VocEs is worth investigation because it does not exist in SA, and therefore, it has not been tackled in the traditional grammar. The aim of this paper, then, is to examine their underlying structure and their derivation. This paper argues that vocative exclamatives with *ʔaya* are derived from a *wh*-exclamative via ellipsis. It also proposes that Focus contributes to the derivation of vocative exclamatives and that the VocE particle *ʔaya* licenses the ellipsis.

The structure of this paper is divided into four sections including this introduction. Section 2 mentions the previous studies related to vocatives, vocative exclamatives, particles and *wh*-exclamatives. Section 3 is dedicated for the syntactic analysis of vocative exclamatives with *ʔaya* in Gulf Arabic

(GA) shedding light on the contrast between vocatives and vocative exclamatives. Finally, the paper ends with a conclusion in Section 4.

2. Previous Studies

2.1. Vocatives

Since the core of this research focuses on vocative exclamatives, it is important to mention the relation between vocatives and exclamatives pointing out the reason for labelling such type of exclamatives as vocative exclamatives. A vocative is a "*form of direct address*", as defined by [11]. Vocatives in SA have four main properties:

a) They include a vocative particle[1].
b) The vocative particle acts as a pragmatic marker that selects a DP.
c) This particle has a second person [2p] feature.
d) The DP has a semantic value of animacy.

The following are two examples of vocatives in SA and GA:

(1) a. *yā* raʒul-an   **[SA]**
       prt man-acc
       Hey, man

    b. *yā* raʒāl   **[GA]**
       prt man
       Hey, man

Besides the slight variation in the lexical word "*man*" in (1-a) and (1-b), the accusative case marker is overt in SA, while case is not phonologically realized in GA. The internal structure of vocatives in SA, according to the traditional grammar of Arabic and contemporary linguists including [10] and [17], covertly contains the verb *ʔu-nādī "pres-call"*[2]. This verb has been deleted after the insertion of the vocative particle *yā*. What remains is the object which becomes the vocative noun (DP that occurs after the vocative particle). This assumption justifies the accusative case marker on the vocative noun. Therefore, the underlying structure of (1-a) would be the following:

(2) ʔu-nādī raʒul-an.   **[SA]**
    I-call man-acc[3]   [3]
    I call a man.

2.2. Vocative Exclamatives

The Arabic language has extended the use of the vocative particle to express an exclamative. A vocative exclamative, then, is a type of exclamatives that includes a vocative particle. In SA, the only vocative particle that is used in vocative exclamatives is *yā*. In the traditional grammar of SA, the structure of vocative exclamatives is considered as that of vocatives without a thorough analysis, [10] and [19].

(3) a. *yā* ʒamal-a   al-ħadīqat-a!   **[SA]**
       prt beauty-acc the-garden-acc
       How beautiful the garden is!

    b. *yā* ħiluw   al-ħadīqah!   **[GA]**
       prt beauty   the-garden
       How beautiful the garden is!

The main differences between the properties of vocatives and vocative exclamatives can be summarized below:

1) The purpose of vocatives is a call or an address in which the addressee is present. In vocative exclamatives, however, the function of the particle is to mark an exclamative.
2) The vocative particle is only used to address animates, whereas the VocE particle can be used to exclaim about animate and inanimate.

Besides having the VocE particle *yā* in GA, another vocative particle is used for exclamatives which is *ʔaya*.

(4) *ʔaya* al-ħannan!
    prt   the-nagging
    How nagging you are!

2.3. Particles

In the literature of Arabic language, the study of particles has been limited to the descriptive approach, focusing mainly on their grammatical function and case-marking system. It is until recently that researchers of Arabic have become interested in the syntactic properties of particles based on a Minimalist approach [1] and [2]. The syntactic properties of particles have become the interest of recent researches including [3], [13], [20] and [21].

2.4. Wh-Exclamatives

The most common type of exclamatives in Arabic as well as in English is the *wh*-exclamatives. They include a *wh*-operator which has led to a comparative analysis between interrogatives and exclamatives. Some researchers considered exclamatives and interrogatives as distinct sentential types syntactically and semantically, such as [8], [14] and [24]. Others, including [5] and [7], argued that exclamatives are derived from interrogatives, and thus, they are similar.

As proposed by [8], the constructions of exclamatives and interrogatives are different for several reasons. First, interrogatives require subject-auxiliary inversion, yet exclamatives do not. In the following (5-b), he shows that inversion is ungrammatical in exclamatives.

(5) a. What lovely teeth you have, my dear!
    b. *What lovely teeth do you have, my dear! (p. 233)

Second, questions permit the negative polarity items (NPIs) *any* and *ever*, while exclamatives are ruled out if they include any of these NPIs.

(6) a. How does Joe save **any** money?
    b. *How Joe saves **any** money!

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[1] There are six vocative particles used in SA: *yā, ʔaya, haya, ʔā, ʔa* and *ʔai*.
[2] pres = present
[3] acc = accusative case

Reference [8] concluded that exclamatives are not a type of interrogatives even though they share some similarities. This view has been supported by [14] who considered the similarity between these two constructions lies in the fact that both begin with a *wh*-word which moves to the specifier (spec) of a Complementizer Phrase (CP) position. However, exclamatives and interrogatives differ in their linear order, as exemplified in the following:

(7) a. *ʔiaʃ*   sawi-t   ʕaʃa   al-yūm?   **[interrogative]**
     what   did-you   dinner   the-today
     What did you prepare for dinner today?

   b. *ʔiaʃ* ki θir ʔint tiħin!   **[wh-exclamative]**
     how much you   nag
     How nagging you are!

3. Framework and Data Analysis

The data of this research consists of vocative exclamatives with the particle *ʔaya* from the Gulf Arabic dialect. These examples are commonly used in daily life conversations and are uttered frequently in TV series. The analysis is based on the minimalist framework following [6].

This type of vocative exclamatives is formed by the conjunction of the particle *ʔaya* and an adjectival phrase (AP). This particle functions as a vocative marker in SA which is only used for addressing a distant addressee. For this reason, the researcher considers this type of exclamatives as a vocative exclamative.

(8) *ʔaya* muʕalim-an! **[Voc]**
     prt   teacher-acc
     Hey, teacher!

The vocative in (8) exemplifies the following structure: Voc particle + indefinite DP. The Voc particle is associated with a [2-p] feature which justifies the absence of the pro-drop *you*. It might be confusing having an accusative case marked on the vocative noun instead of a nominative case. The reason for this is traced back to the traditional grammar of SA which considers the underlying structure of vocatives to include the Verb Phrase (VP) *ʔu-nādī "pres-call"* in which the overt DP is treated as the object of this underlying VP, [10] and [19]. In Gulf Arabic, this vocative particle *ʔaya* is used as a vocative exclamative particle with a [2-p] feature.

3.1. Syntactic Properties of Vocative Exclamatives with ʔaya

The following are examples of common vocative exclamatives found in Gulf Arabic:

(9) *ʔaya*   al-saχīf-ah!
     prt   the-silly-[fm][4]
     How silly you are!

(10) *ʔaya*   al-ʒarīʔ!
      prt   the-bold[msc][5]
      How bold you are!

(11) *ʔaya* al-maʒnōn!
      prt   the-crazy[msc]
      How crazy you are!

(12) *ʔaya*   al-ħannan-ah!
      prt   the-nagging-[fm]
      How nagging you are!

The above data indicates that vocative exclamatives with the particle *ʔaya* have a specific structure and syntactic features. Concerning the structure, the VocE particle has a c-selectional restriction in which the particle only selects a specific type of adjectives. This type of adjectives is called epithet adjectives. They describe a negative human personal trait, such as (*greedy, lazy, stupid, nagging*, etc.). Other types of adjectives do not fit in the construction of the vocative exclamative with *ʔaya*.

(13) a. *∗ʔaya*   al-qasʔīr!
        prt   the-short[msc]
        How short you are!

    b. *∗ʔaya*   al-ʔaʃgar!
        prt   the-blond[msc]
        How blond you are!

An adjective which describes a positive human personal trait can be only used in a sarcastic way, so that its proposition would denote the opposite.

(14) *ʔaya*   al-ðakī!
      prt   the-smart[msc]
      How smart you are!

The interpretation of (14) conveys that the addressee is stupid rather than smart. To identify the structural features and the derivation of the vocative exclamatives with *ʔaya*, I raise the following two questions:

  1) Why does the adjective include a definite article? Can it be formed without this article?
  2) What is the possible underlying structure from which VocEs are derived?

Unlike English, adjectives in SA, as well as the Gulf dialect, can have the definite article *al-"the"* [6]. The realization of a definite article appears to be obligatory in the structure of VocEs with *ʔaya* because its absence would be considered ungrammatical.

(15) a. *∗ʔaya*   saχīf-ah!
        prt   silly-[fm]
        How silly you are!

    b. *∗ʔaya*   ʒarīʔ!
        prt   bold[msc]
        How bold you are!

    c. *∗ʔaya*   maʒnōn!
        prt   crazy[msc]
        How crazy you are!

    d. *∗ʔaya*   ħannan-ah!
        prt   nagging-[fm]
        How nagging you are!

The researcher, hence, proposes that the VocE particle *ʔaya* has an uninterpretable definite [D] feature that needs to be checked. Therefore, when forming the vocative exclamative, a definite article is merged with the adjective to form a definite phrase (DP). In line with [9], an adjective can be definite because of an agreement with the D feature when it is located under a DP.
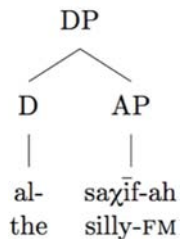

Figure 1. *Tree representation of DP.*

The VocE particle *ʔaya* is mainly associated with a [2-p] feature and with a [3-p] feature in some constructions. It has an uninterpretable [2-p] feature which is valued by the covert pronoun *ʔinta "you"*.

3.2. Proposal

The researcher proposes that vocative exclamatives with the particle *ʔaya* are derived from a *wh*-exclamative whose structure can be represented as in the following tree:
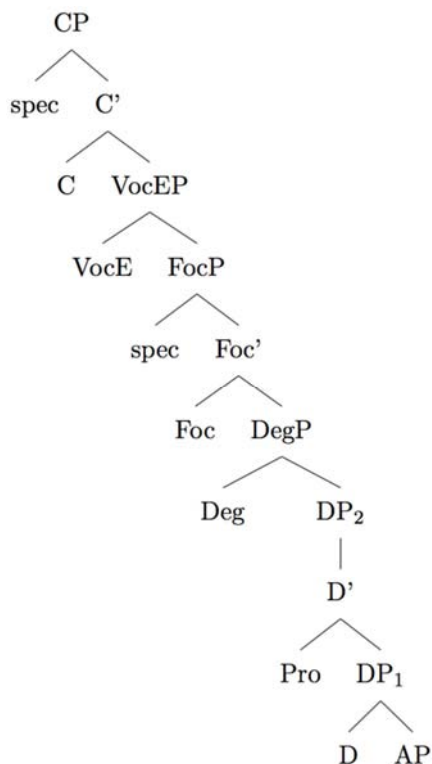

Figure 2. *Tree representation of the derivation of VocEs.*

Based on Figure 2, the following are two examples to present the derivation of the vocative exclamatives:

(16) a. *ʔaya*   al-ħannan!
       prt   the-nagging
       How nagging you are!

   b. *ʔiaʃ* ki θir ʔint ħannan!
     how much you nagging
     How nagging you are!

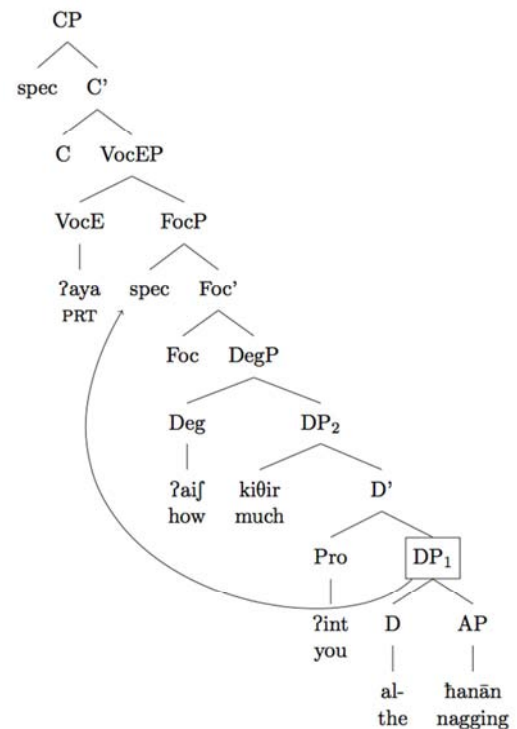The vocative exclamative in (16-a) is derived from the *wh*-exclamative in (16-b).

Figure 3. *The derivational process of example (16).*

The derivational process in Figure 3, as an example of a VocE with the particle *ʔaya*, can be summarized as the following:

a) The adjectival phrase (AP) is merged with D to be checked for definiteness under the DP_1 domain. However, agreement in gender and number does not exist between this particle and the adjective because it does not have gender or number restrictions.
b) A [2-p] feature is associated with the VocE particle. The presence of this particle, then, justifies the ellipsis of the pronoun *ʔinta" you"*. Arabic is a language characterized by covert pronouns, which justifies the ellipsis of the pronoun in VocEs.
c) Prior to the ellipsis of the Degree Phrase (DegP) and the lower elements, DP_1 raises to the spec of Focus phrase (FocP).
d) The remnant elements after ellipsis is what create a vocative exclamative.

The analysis indicates that there is a relationship between Focus and ellipsis in VocEs. This relationship has been the interest of recent researchers including [16], [22] and [23].

3.3. Vocatives Vs. Vocative Exclamatives with ʔaya

An interesting comparison can be raised between the structure of vocative exclamatives with ʔaya and vocatives with the ʔaya particle which exists in SA to test whether they share a superficial similar structure or they are structurally distinct.

(17) ʔaya al-ʒaħūd!   [VocE]
    prt   the-ungrateful[msc]
    How ungrateful you are!

(18) ʔaya ħakīm-an   [Voc]
    Hey   wise[msc]-acc
    Hey, wise

The superficial difference between the VocE in (17) and the Voc in (18) is related to definiteness and c-selection. Definiteness is obligatory in the VocE, whereas the latter disallows the definite article in its construction. The VocE particle selects an AP, while the Voc particle selects a nominal phrase. The other difference which leads to the conclusion that VocEs and Vocs should not be treated similarly can be related to the particle's position in the projection.

In vocatives, the Voc head position remains empty and the Voc particle occupies the spec of VocP position, as shown in Figure 4, [12].
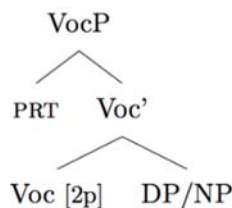

***Figure 4.** Tree representation of VocP.*

Contrary to vocatives, the VocE particle in vocative exclamatives occupies the position of the head of the VocEP rather than its spec. FocP also appears in the structure of the vocative exclamative due to its necessity in hosting DP$_1$ prior to the ellipsis operation of the pro.
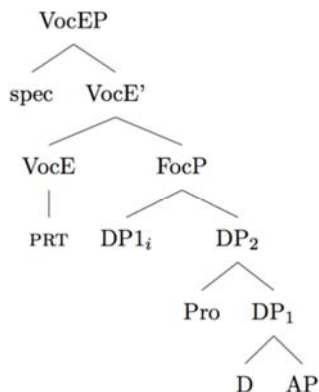

***Figure 5.** Tree representation of VocP.*

4. Conclusion

Vocative exclamatives with the particle ʔaya in Gulf Arabic have a specific syntactic structure and properties which make them a distinct type of exclamatives. Their superficial structure is formed by the conjunction of this VocE particle with a definite epithet adjective, whereas it is derived from a *wh*-exclamatives in its underlying structure through ellipsis. For the ellipsis process to occur, DP$_1$ should move first to the spec of FocP. Then, the DegP with its lower elements are then elided. The remnants of the ellipsis process create an overt VocE construction.

Acknowledgements

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