Article:
Dickins, J orcid.org/0000-0003-0665-4825 (2023) Definiteness, pronoun suffixes, genitives and two types of syntax in Sudanese Arabic. Journal of Semitic Studies. fgac035. ISSN 0022-4480

https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgac035

DEFINITENESS, PRONOUN SUFFIXES, GENITIVES AND TWO TYPES OF SYNTAX IN SUDANESE ARABIC[1]

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Abstract

This article deals with Central Urban Sudanese Arabic, or 'Sudanese Arabic' for short—by which I mean, more specifically, the urban dialect spoken in Greater Khartoum (Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman), and in other urban areas of central Sudan, roughly to the towns of Atbara in the north, Sennar on the Blue Nile and Kosti on the White Nile.[2],[3] It considers the relationship between the definite particle *al-* (plus allomorphic variants), for example in *al-bēt* 'the house', and what I shall argue is zero (Ø) commuting with *al-* (amongst other things), for example in *bēt* 'a house', as contrasted with *al-bēt* 'the house'.[4] What I term here, the 'definite particle' is more traditionally termed the 'definite article'. For reasons why 'definite particle' is to be preferred to 'definite article' in the description of Sudanese Arabic, see Dickins (2009b; and Section 4 below). Henceforth, I shall, for brevity, refer to the definite particle as *al-*. I consider (i) Ø and (ii) *al-* in relation to (iii) pronoun suffixes, and (iv) annexes ('genitives').[5] I use the

[1] I thank Janet Watson, Barry Heselwood, Taj Kandoura and two anonymous reviewers (Reader 1 and Reader 2) for *Journal of Semitic Studies* for reading previous versions of this article and making very useful comments on it.

[2] For present purposes, Sudanese Arabic can be taken to have the following consonant phonemes (cf. Dickins 2007a: 24): /b/ voiced bilabial stop; /m/ bilabial nasal; /w/ bilabial glide; /f/ voiceless bilabial fricative; /d/ voiced apico-dental stop; /t/ voiceless, apico-dental stop; /z/ voiced, apico-dental fricative; /s/ voiceless, apico-dental fricative; /d̪/ voiced, emphatic, apico-alveolar stop; /t̪/ voiceless, emphatic, apico-alveolar stop; /z̪/ voiced, emphatic, apico-alveolar, fricative; /s̪/ voiceless, emphatic, apico-alveolar, fricative; /r/ (plain), apico-alveolar, trill/tap; /r̪/ emphatic, apico-alveolar trill/tap, /l/ (plain), apico-alveolar lateral; /l̪/ emphatic, apico-alveolar lateral; /n/ apico-alveolar, nasal; /j/ voiced, dorso-prepalatal, stop; /č/ voiceless, dorso-prepalatal stop (marginal phoneme); /š/ voiceless, dorso-prepalatal, fricative; /ñ/ dorso-prepalatal, nasal (marginal phoneme); /y/ dorso-palatal glide; /g/ voiced, post-dorso-velar, stop; /k/ voiceless, post-dorso-velar, stop; /ġ/ voiced, post-dorso-post-velar, fricative; /x/ voiceless, post-dorso-post-velar, fricative; /ʕ/ voiced, pharyngeal, fricative; /ḥ/ voiceless, pharyngeal, fricative; /'/ voiced, glottal, fricative (sometimes described as glottal stop); /h/ voiceless, glottal fricative.

[3] For present purposes, Sudanese Arabic can be taken to have the following vowel phonemes (cf. Dickins 2007: 25): /a/ open, unrounded, short vowel; /i/ front, close, unrounded short vowel; /u/ back, close, rounded short vowel; /ā/ open, unrounded, long vowel; /ī/ front, close, unrounded long vowel; /ū/ back, close, rounded long vowel; /ē/ front, mid, unrounded long vowel; /ō/ back, mid, rounded long vowel. (See, however, Dickins 2007a for a critique of this account and an alternative analysis.) The symbol ˆ indicates that the preceding syllable has a high tone (for tones in Sudanese, see Dickins 2007b: 560).

[4] The definite particle *al-* in Sudanese Arabic has numerous allomorphic variants, such as *az-* before a word beginning with 'z', such as *zaʕlān* 'angry', and forms without the initial 'a' after a preceding vowel. For simplicity of presentation, the definite particle الـ is written *al-* in all cases, regardless of whether it assimilates to the following consonant, or whether the initial 'a' disappears following a previous vowel. This is easier for the reader than using a very large number of allomorphic variants to represent the definite particle, and partially parallels the form of the definite particle in the Arabic script, where it is written, regardless of the allomorph involved, as…الـ, i.e. as the letter ا, which can be read (amongst other things) as 'a', and the letter…لـ, i.e 'l'.

[5] I have not, in this article, considered what Himmelman (2001: 840) calls 'nominal overdetermination', also sometimes referred to as 'double articulation', 'determiner spreading', 'determiner doubling' and 'polydefiniteness' (Kapitonov 2021: 16), i.e. 'multiple determiner marking' (Kapitonov 2021: 16). In Sudanese Arabic, as in the great majority of Arabic dialects, this reflects the fact that 'if a NP is determined by an adnominal demonstrative, it must also

following terminology: *annexion-head* meaning roughly the same as *muḍāf* (cf. Badawi, Carter and Gully 2015: 131) in traditional Arabic terminology (also termable *annexed term*, e.g. Watson 1993: 173, or *genitive head* in English), and *annex* (Watson 1993: 173) meaning roughly the same as *muḍāf ilay-hi* (cf. Badawi, Carter and Gully 2015: 131) (also termable *genitive modifier* in English). The entire phrase involving annexion I shall refer to as an *annexion structure*. I argue that not only do Ø and *al-* commute with one another, but that they also commute with pronoun suffixes and genitive annexes (incorporating also recursive elements), to give one form of syntax. In the linguistic model underpinning this paper—extended axiomatic functionalism (Dickins 1998; 2009a; 2020a)—this can be termed lexotactic. I also show, however, that these structures can be subject to a second, different, form of syntactic analysis in extended axiomatic-functionalism, termed delotactic. I finally consider in more detail the nature of definiteness and indefiniteness in Sudanese Arabic, justifying the grounds for definiteness which I identified in Section 2.2. Up to the end of Section 3 and in Section 5, this article draws heavily on Dickins (2013), which deals with Standard Arabic, having much the same structure as that article. The two articles can accordingly be partially read together, to provide a structural comparison between Standard Arabic and Sudanese Arabic in the relevant areas.

1. Commutation in Phonology

This section partially parallels Section 1 of Dickins (2013). The notion of commutation is chiefly associated with phonology, where it refers to 'a process of sound substitution to show contrastivity. It is especially encountered in the phrase 'commutation test', which is a systematic use of the substitutability technique of minimal pairs for establishing phonemes' (Crystal 2008: 90). Consider the following from English:

Table 1.

pin
bin
tin
sin

Here /p/ in 'pin', /b/ in 'bin', /t/ in 'tin', and /s/ in 'sin' commute. Specific comparison between /p/, /b/, /t/ and /s/ in an otherwise identical context (with following 'in' in all cases) is a commutation test,

be morphosyntactically defined by the article *al-*' (Manfredi 2017: 212). More strikingly, however, in Sudanese Arabic (though not, I believe, in most other Arabic varieties), the combination *al-…demonstrative* in an *al-* NOMINAL *demonstrative*-phrase functions as a quasi-article, the demonstrative frequently serving largely to signal the end of a long definite-phrase, rather than to express 'demonstrativeness'. I have dealt with this in Dickins (2009b: 561–5).

and minimal pairs are ‘p’ in relation to ‘b’, ‘p’ in relation to ‘t’, ‘p’ in relation to ‘s’, ‘b’ in relation to ‘t’— and so on for all combinations of two initial elements. The fact that all the different forms /pin/, /bin/, /sin/ and /tin/ represent (realise) different words demonstrates that /p/, /b/, /s/ and /t/ are different phonemes.

In all of the above examples, commutation is between one phoneme and another. It is also, however, possible to have commutation with zero, i.e. between a phoneme and zero Ø, i.e. nothing. An example is the commutation between /p/ in /pin/ (or /b/ in /bin/, /t/ in /tin/, or /s/ in /sin/) and the initial element, i.e. the non-consonant, i.e. nothing, Ø, at the start—before the vowel—of /in/.

2. Commutation in Grammar

While commutation is particularly associated with phonology, it can also be applied to grammar (morphology and syntax). Thus, in the case of *bēt-u* ‘his house’ vs. *bēt-a* ‘her house’ in Sudanese Arabic, for example, the suffix *-u* ‘his’ can be said to commute with the suffix *-a* ‘her’. *Bēt-u* ‘his house’ and *bēt-a* ‘her house’ are an example of commutation between two morphemes, *-u* ‘his’ and *-a* ‘her’.

2.1 The Relationship between Ø and al-

This section partially parallels Section 1 of Dickins (2013). In grammar as in phonology, commutation does not need to be with a positive element; it is also possible to have commutation with zero. An example is Sudanese Arabic *bēt* ‘a house’ vs. *al-bēt* ‘the house’, where a zero (nothing) ‘associated with’ *bēt* contrasts with the *al-* associated with *bēt* in *al-bēt* ‘the house’. This relationship of commutation with zero can be represented as in Table 2.

Table 2.

bēt	*al-*
bēt	Ø

Here *al-* and Ø here substitute for one another: one can have either *al-bēt* or *bēt.*

2.2 The Relationship between al-, Ø and Pronoun Suffixes

This section largely parallels Section 2 of Dickins (2013). Consider the following: *bēt* ‘a house’, *al-bēt* ‘the house’, and *bēt-u* ‘his house’. This yields the following commutational analysis:

Table 3.

bēt	Ø
bēt	*al-*
bēt	*-u*

There is one obvious difference between commutation in phonology and that in grammar. In the case of phonology, commutation can only be established where the realisational sequencing is the same. We can plausibly say that 'p' and 'b' commute with one another in 'pin' and 'bin' but not that 'p' and 'b' commute with one another in 'pin' and 'nib'. This is because phonology relates directly to phonetics, i.e. is realised directly by phonetic forms. There has to be a fairly direct relationship between phonological form and phonetic form for the claimed phonological form to be plausible. In the case of grammar, by contrast, the relationship between abstract analytical structures and concrete phenomena is not so direct, grammar being more abstract than phonology.[6] A language may have both prepositions and postpositions: the grammatical (syntactic) relationship between a noun and a preposition in such a language is, however, likely to be best analysed as the same as that between a noun and a postposition. Analogously, in the case of *al-bēt* 'the house' and *bēt-u* 'his house', although *al-* precedes the noun and *-u* follows it, we can legitimately analyse *al-* and *u-* as commuting with one another.

In this article, I will adopt the principles that an element (word or phrase) in Sudanese Arabic is definite on the following grounds:

1. It has as its domain the definite particle *al-*.
2. If it does not have as its domain the definite particle *al-,* agreement shows it to be definite; i.e. an element which agrees with it in a given linguistic context can be shown to be definite (on ground 1. above);[7]

I will correspondingly adopt the principle that an element in Sudanese Arabic is indefinite when it cannot be shown to be definite on one of these two grounds. I will work with these principles in this

[6] In some approaches to linguistics, phonology is considered part of grammar. In extended axiomatic functionalism, 'phonology' and 'grammar' are entirely distinct. For discussion, see Dickins (1998: 159–60; 2009a: 4–6; 2020a: 102–8).

[7] It might also prove necessary, on further investigation of examples, to add further grounds. A possible third ground would be that an element (word or phrase) in Sudanese Arabic is definite '3. If it does not have as its domain the definite particle *al-*, and if agreement does not show it to be definite, it only commutes in a given linguistic context with other elements which are definite (on grounds 1. and/or 2. above).' I have not done this here, because there are no obvious examples in the discussion in this article to which this ground applies.

section and sections 2.3–4 below. In sections 5–5.3, I will return to them from a more theoretical perspective in order to justify my choice of them.

Elements with pronoun suffixes in Sudanese Arabic are always definite when they are the head (i.e. main element) of an annexion structure, as indicated by the fact that modifying adjectives take definite agreement (ground 2, above); thus *bēt-u* 'his house' in *bēt-u al-kabīr* 'his big house' is definite because the element with which agrees with it in this context *al-kabīr* (literally: 'the-big') is definite by virtue of having as its domain the *al-* which immediately precedes it (ground 1. above).

2.3 The Relationship between Ø, al-, Pronoun Suffixes and Genitive Annexes

This section corresponds to Section 3 of Dickins (2013). Consider the following: *bēt* 'a house', *al-bēt* 'the house', *bēt-u* 'his house', *bēt jār* 'a house of a neighbour', and *bēt al-jār* 'the house of the neighbour'. This can be analysed in commutational terms as in Table 4.

Table 4.

bēt	*Ø*	'a house'
bēt	*al-*	'the house'
bēt	*-u*	'his house'
bēt	*jār*	'a house of a neighbour'
bēt	*al-jār*	'the house of the neighbour'

Table 4 presents a valid set of commutations. There are, however, a number of significant complications in the case of the analyses of *bēt jār* 'a house of a neighbour', and *bēt al-jār* 'the house of the neighbour'. Most importantly, *bēt jār* and *bēt al-jār* involve recursion. I will consider *bēt al-jār* first. Just as *al-* in *al-bēt* 'the house' commutes with Ø (in *bēt* 'a house'), the pronoun suffix *-u* (in *bēt-u* 'his house'), and the annex (genitive) noun *jār* (in *bēt jār* 'a house of a neighbour'), so the *al-* at the beginning of *al-jār* 'the neighbour' in *bēt al-jār* 'the house of the neighbor' commutes with Ø (in *bēt jār* 'a house of a neighbor), pronoun suffixes (e.g. in *bēt jār-u* 'the house of his neighbour'), and annex nouns (e.g. in *bēt jār ṣadīg* 'a house of a neighbour of a friend', or *bēt jār al-ṣadīg* 'the house of the neighbour of the friend'—and possibly so on in relation to *al-ṣadīg* 'the friend', etc.).[8]

[8] This analysis raises two issues. The first is whether recursion in relation to annexion structures in Sudanese Arabic is potentially unlimited, or whether it might be limited, perhaps to as few as three or four annexes *(bēt jār ṣadīg al-tarzi* 'the house of the neighbour of the friend of the tailor', for example, has three annexes). The second is the presence of an apparently alternative genitive structure in Sudanese Arabic, involving the elements *bitāʕ* and *ḥagg*, e.g. *al-bēt bitāʕ/ḥagg*

The same principles apply also to *bēt jār* ‘a house of a neighbour’. Here, *jār* has an accompanying zero Ø, which commutes with the definite particle *al-* (in *bēt al-jār* ‘the house of the neighbour’), pronoun suffixes (e.g. in *bēt jār-u* ‘his house’, and annex nouns (e.g. in *bēt jār al-ṣadīg* ‘the house of the neighbour of the friend’—and so on in relation to *al-ṣadīg* ‘the friend’, etc.). This situation can be diagrammed as in Table 5.

Table 5.

bēt	Ø			‘a house’
bēt	*al-*			‘the house’
bēt	*-u*			‘his house’
bēt	*jār*	Ø		‘a house of a neighbour’
bēt	*jār*	*al-*		‘the house of the neighbour’
bēt	*jār*	*-u*		‘the house of his neighbour’
bēt	*jār*	*ṣadīg*	Ø	‘a house of a neighbour of a friend’
bēt	*jār*	*ṣadīg*	*al-*	‘the house of the neighbour of the friend’
			etc.	

Bracketing represents the recursion more precisely, as in Table 6, where (and) are used to represent the basic relationship, [and] the first recursive (embedded) element, and {and} the second recursive (embedded) element.

Table 6.

bēt	(Ø			)	‘a house’
bēt	(*al-*			)	‘the house’
bēt	(*-u*			)	‘his house’
bēt	(*jār*	[Ø		])	‘a house of a neighbour’
bēt	(*jār*	[*al-*		])	‘the house of the neighbour’
bēt	(*jār*	[*-u*		])	‘the house of his neighbour’
bēt	(*jār*	[*ṣadīg*	{ Ø}])		‘a house of a neighbour of a friend’
bēt	(*jār*	[*ṣadīg*	{*al-*}])		‘the house of the neighbour of the friend’
			etc.		

The second issue raised by this analysis is whether the relationship between *bēt* and the other elements which can co-occur with it (*Ø, al-* (definite particle), pronoun suffix, annex noun, etc.) is morphological or syntactic. A distinction needs to be drawn between phonological dependence

al-jār ‘the house of the neighbour / the neighbour’s house’, which is frequently used in the case of more complex ‘of forms’. As I argue elsewhere, *bitāʕ/ḥagg*-structures are themselves annexion structures, while the relationship between a *bitāʕ/ḥagg*-structure and its head noun (*al-jār*, in *al-bēt bitāʕ/ḥagg al-jār*) is one of attribution (Dickins 2007b: 570).

('pseudo-morphology'), and true morphology (morphology proper). Consider English genitive-*s*. Phonologically, this is non-independent (dependent) on what comes before it; i.e. it never occurs as a phonologically independent feature. Thus in 'the man's book', genitive-*s* is an integral (non-independent) part of the syllable /mænz/. However, consideration of a phrase such as 'the man with the cat's book' (i.e. the book of the man with the cat) shows that this phonological dependence does not indicate that the relationship between genitive-*s* and what occurs before it is morphological. Rather it is syntactic. This conclusion is reached on two bases: (i) that 'the man with the cat' is a syntactic phrase (as this is obvious, I will not argue for this here); (ii) an element which forms a structure with a syntactic phrase necessarily enters into a syntactic (rather than a morphological) structure with that phrase. Thus, in 'the man with the cat's book', the relationship between genitive-*s* and the syntactic structure 'the man with the cat' is necessarily syntactic, and not morphological. Given, moreover, that 'the man with the cat' and 'the man' in a loose sense commute with one another (in 'the man with the cat's book' and 'the man's book')[9] and given the principle of consistency of analysis (i.e. the same analysis for all valid commutations), we can also deduce that in 'the man's book', the relationship between 'the man' and genitive-*s* is also syntactic (rather than morphological). English genitive-*s* is an example of a clitic; i.e. 'a morpheme that has syntactic characteristics of a word, but shows evidence of being phonologically bound to another word' (Loos et al. 2003). Spencer and Luis similarly define a canonical clitic as 'an element which has the form of a canonical affix and the distribution of a canonical function word' (Spencer and Luis 2012: 140).

In the case of a complex noun phrase such as *bēt jār al-ṣadīg* 'the house of the neighbour of the friend', it seems clear that the annex element (involving recursion/embedding) *jār al-ṣadīg* 'the neighbour of the friend' is syntactic (I will not try to prove this here—demonstrating it would be far more complex than might initially appear). If the annex element *jār al-ṣadīg* 'the neighbour of the friend' is syntactic, the relationship between this and the annexion-head *bēt* must also be analysed as syntactic (rather than morphological). This description can—and must—be further extended on the

[9] More technically, in 'the man with the cat's book', compared to 'the man's book', 'with the cat' commutes with zero Ø; i.e. where 'the man with the cat's book' has 'with the cat', 'the man's book' has Ø.

basis of consistency of analysis. Thus, given that *al-* in *al-bēt* ‘the house’ is a valid commutant with *jār al-ṣadīg* in *bēt jār al-ṣadīg* ‘the house of the neighbour of the friend’, we must conclude that the relationship between *al-* and *bēt* in *al-bēt* ‘the house’ is syntactic rather than morphological (phonological issues being irrelevant here, as they are in the case of ‘the man’s book’/‘the man with the cat’s book’).

In Sudanese Arabic, *al-* before nouns and adjectives is syntactic, rather than morphological not merely because of its commutants, but because, in some cases at least, its domain is clearly in other respects syntactic. In Standard Arabic and perhaps in some, or even most, Arabic dialects, the definite particle *al-* before a noun or adjective looks morphological, because it can only appear immediately before that noun or adjective and can only make that one noun or adjective definite. Thus, whereas in English one can say ‘the men and women’ to mean ‘*the* men and *the* women’, in Standard Arabic it is necessary to say *al-rijāl wa-al-niswān* (‘the men and the women’) to make both *rijāl* ‘men’ and *niswān* ‘definite’. Similarly for adjectives, in Standard Arabic, one has to say *al-kibār wa-al-ṣiġār* (‘the old and the young’) in order to make both *kibār* (‘old’) and *ṣiġār* (‘young’) definite.

The same principles, in general, apply to Sudanese Arabic. There are, however, cases in which Sudanese Arabic has only a single *al-* applying to an entire conjoined noun phrase, along the lines of English ‘the men and women’ (= *the* men and *the* women’). The following are examples, with a gloss translation immediately below the Arabic, followed by a more idiomatic translation beneath that:

1. *bi-sm al-dīn ū-šarʕiyya*

   In-name the-religion and-legitimacy

   In the name of religion and legitimacy

This is taken from a song of the 2018–19 Sudanese revolution entitled *ʕašān waṭan-ak*, *ʕašān waṭan-i*↑ ‘For your country and for mine’ (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fkMxNpf1Ng, words on screen, 2 mins., 18 secs.). Here the domain of *al-* is the entire following phrase *dīn ū-šarʕiyya* ‘religion and legitimacy’.

2. *al-nāzḥīn ū-ġalāba*

   the-displaced and-downtrodden

   the displaced and downtrodden

This is taken from a song of the 2018–19 Sudanese revolution entitled *gulna li-al-šēṭān al-lēla tasguṭ bass* 'We told the Devil, 'Today you're just gonna fall'' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEX5rtU6Rzc; words on screen, 2 mins. 46 seconds; complete written version on: https://www.facebook.com/daliaaltaher/posts/1894456543925201/). Here the domain of *al-* is the entire following phrase *nāzḥīn ū-ġalāba* 'displaced and downtrodden'.

That *nāzḥīn* 'displaced' and *ġalāba* 'downtrodden' are both nouns (unlike their English translations 'displaced' and 'downtrodden') is demonstrated by the possibility of annexion structures such as *muʕaskar nāzḥīn* 'a camp for displaced people' (literally: 'camp displaced [m.pl.]') where *nāzḥīn* is the annex, and of phrases in which *ġalāba* is the dependent element ('object') of a preposition, as in *ma aẓunn-u tāni yifakkir fi ġalāba* 'I don't think he thinks any more about downtrodden [people]' (literally: 'not I~think-him again he~thinks in downtrodden').[10]

The following examples involve adjectives, rather than nouns:

3. *šukran li-al-kalām al-samiḥ ū-jamīl*

   thanks for-the-words the-nice and beautiful

   thanks for the nice and beautiful words

This is taken from an online Sudanese chatroom: https://sudaneseonline.com/cgi-bin/sdb/2bb.cgi?seq=msg&board=120&msg=1191352774&rn=94. Here the domain of *al-* is the entire following phrase *samiḥ ū-jamīl* 'nice and beautiful'.

[10] One way of distinguishing a broad class of what can reasonably be called nouns in Sudanese Arabic from another broad class of what can reasonably be called adjectives is to consider whether the basic (indefinite) form in question can occur as 1. the object of a verb; 2. the dependent element ('object') of a preposition; and 3. the annex of an annexion structure (cf. Dickins 2010: 249). Most words which we are 'intuitively' inclined to call nouns (probably because they are most naturally translated by nouns into English) can do all three. Thus, we can say 1. *šufta rājil* 'I saw a man'; 2. *maʕa rājil* 'with a man'; and 3. *bēt rājil* 'a house of a man'. Most words which we are intuitively inclined to call adjectives (probably for the same reason) can do none. Thus, we cannot say 1. **šufta zaʕlān* 'I saw an angry one'; or 2. **maʕa zaʕlān* 'with an angry one'; or 3. **bēt zaʕlān* 'the house of an angry one'. All the corresponding forms with *al-* are possible—thus not only 1. *šufta al-rājil* 'I saw the man', 2. *maʕa al-rājil* 'with the man', and 3. *bēt al-rājil* 'the house of the man', but also 1. *šufta al-zaʕlān* 'I saw the angry one', 2. *maʕa al-zaʕlān* 'with the angry one', and 3. *bēt al-zaʕlān* 'the house of the angry one'.

4. *ū-baʕad da kull-u yasrig zahrat-ak al-šēna ū-gabīḥa di*

   and-after that all(of)-it he~steals flower-your the-ugly and-repugnant that

   and after all that he steals that ugly and repugnant flower of yours

This is taken from an online Sudanese chatroom: http://www.sudanelite.com/vb/showthread.php/11469-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D9%80%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%89/page. Here the domain of *al-* is the entire following phrase *šēna ū-gabīḥa* 'ugly and repugnant'.

All the above examples have in common that the two elements are closely related semantically; *samiḥ* 'nice' and *jamīl* 'beautiful' in 3., for example, are virtually synonyms (in fact, they are rather closer in meaning to one another than are English 'nice' and 'beautiful'), as are *šēna* 'ugly (f.sg.)' and *gabīḥa* 'repugnant' (f.sg.)—*gabīḥ* 'repugnant (m.sg.)' being much stronger than *šēn* 'ugly (m.sg.)'—in example 4. A number of the examples are taken from songs and can, therefore, be regarded as poetic. It would be interesting, but falls outside the scope of this article, to consider to what extent the use of *al-* plus nouns and adjectives with an extended' domain in Sudanese Arabic is tied to near-synonymy and poeticness. The important point, for the purposes of this article, is that *al-* can, within the syntactic system of Sudanese Arabic, function over such an extended domain. I will consider, further, cases where the definite particle *al-* in Sudanese Arabic is clearly syntactic, and the implications of this for headship in Section 4.

There is at least one other situation in which the domain of *al-* with adjectives is clearly greater than a single word. This occurs in what might be called 'distributive reduplication'. An example is:

5. *al-ṣanādīg al-suġār suġār*

   the boxes the-small small

   the small boxes [which are] in various places

Here the domain of the second *al-* is the entire following phrase *suġār suġār* 'small small'. The situation with pronoun suffixes and Ø is intuitively rather more problematic than that with the definite

particle. In English, that possessive pronouns stand in a syntactic, rather than morphological, relationship with their following nouns is demonstrated by the possibility of 'their houses and gardens', in which 'their' relates to the entire phrase 'houses and gardens', i.e. *their houses and their gardens* (as well the alternative structure, in which it relates only to 'houses', giving the sense *their houses and [some] gardens*). In Sudanese Arabic, forms such as **biyūt u-janāyin-um* 'their houses and gardens' do not seem to be possible. One apparently has to say *biyūt-um ū-janāyin-um* 'their houses and their gardens'. But the principle of consistency of analysis also applies. Once it has been determined that Ø, *al-*, pronoun suffixes, and annex nouns are all valid commutants, and that at least one of this set (in this case, annex nouns most clearly) are in a syntactic (rather than morphological) relationship to the head noun, it follows that all other members of the set are also in a syntactic relationship. Thus, we conclude that phonological issues notwithstanding, both pronoun suffixes and Ø stand in a syntactic relationship to the preceding head noun.

The final complication to be identified here is that of definiteness and indefiniteness. Nouns in Arabic are definite or indefinite; there is no other alternative. This is an important issues, and I will return to it when I consider definiteness and indefinites in Arabic in more detail in sections 5–5.4). As seen from the preceding examples, in annexion structures involving more than one noun, all nouns in the structure are the same in terms of definiteness: either indefinite or definite. Thus in *bēt jār ṣadig* 'a house of a neighbour of a friend' each of *bēt* 'house', *jār* 'neighbour and *ṣadīg* 'friend' are indefinite (the plausibility of an English translation 'the house of the neighbour of a friend' notwithstanding). By contrast in *bēt jār ṣadīg-u* 'the house of the neighbour of his friend' each of *bēt* 'house', *jār* 'neighbour and *ṣadīg-u* 'his friend' are definite. This has structural implications of a rather different kind from the ones so far considered. I will discuss these in the following section.

3. Ø, *al-*, Pronoun Suffixes, and Genitives: Lexotactic vs. Delotactic Structuring

This section partially parallels Section 5 of Dickins (2013). Nouns/noun phrases in Sudanese Arabic, it was suggested in Section 2 (and as will be argued in sections 5–5.4) are either definite or indefinite, and where they involve an annexion structure (with either a pronoun or noun/noun phrase annex)

every noun in the phrase has the same degree of definiteness: either definite or indefinite. I will take it that this is the case here, but come back to it at the end of this article (Section 4). I have proposed a structural (syntactic) analysis for nouns/noun phrases involving Ø*,* *al-*, pronoun suffixes, and genitives as in Table 6 (Section 2.3), reproduced immediately below as Table 7, with additional information on the definiteness or indefiniteness of the noun(s)/noun phrase(s).

Table 7.

					DEF. or INDEF.?
bēt	(*Ø*		)	'a house'	NDEF.
bēt	(*al-*		)	'the house'	DEF.
bēt	(*-u*		)	'his house'	DEF.
bēt	(*jār*	[*Ø*	])	'a house of a neighbour'	INDEF.
bēt	(*jār*	[*al*	])	'the house of the neighbour'	DEF.
bēt	(*jār*	[*-u*	])	'the house of his neighbour'	DEF.
bēt	(*jār*	[*ṣadīg*	{*al-*}])	'the house of the neighbour of the friend'	DEF.
			etc.		

What the syntactic analysis given in Table 7 does is to show how *words* (here defined informally) and *morphemes* (here defined informally as elements constituting words) commute with one another. This syntax of words (and morphemes)— i.e. entities which have both form (expression) and meaning (content)—is known in extended axiomatic functionalism as lexotactics (Dickins 2020a: 107–9). Table 7 thus provides a lexotactic analysis. It is however also possible to strip away the words themselves and simply look at meaningful entities and how these combine. Syntax of this kind—dealing with meaning abstracted from all consideration of form/expression—is known in extended axiomatic functionalism as delotactics. Table 8 (below) provides an initial delotactic analysis of the structures discussed in this article. I use a forward slash with an italicized form inside it to indicate an 'abstract meaning' (devoid of form/expression), contrasting with a forward slash with a plain form inside it to indicate an 'abstract sound', i.e. what is technically known as a phonological form. Thus, when /*bēt*/ is written, this is to be read as 'the abstract meaning expressed by the word *bēt* in the sense 'house' (which might also be expressed by other words, e.g. *manzil,* borrowed from Standard Arabic) without reference to the form/expression involved)'. When, by contrast, it is written as /bēt/, with

plain text between the slant brackets, it is to be read as a phonological form / figura. (For a discussion of the symbols used in this article, see Dickins 2020b.)

Having presented Table 8, I will discuss the precise meaning—and limitations—of each analysis below. Consider the following:

Table 8.

1. *bēt*	'a house'
2. *al-bēt*	'the house'
3. *bēt-u*	'his house'
4. *bēt jār*	'a house of a neighbour'
6. *bēt al-jār*	'the house of the neighbour'
6. *bēt jār-u*	'the house of his neighbour'
7. *bēt jār ṣadīg*	'a house of a neighbour of a friend'
8. *bēt jār al-ṣadīg*	'the house of the neighbour of the friend'

We can present the lexotactic analysis (already discussed; cf. Section 2.3), and proposed delotactic analysis of these as in Table 9.

Table 9.

Lexotactic analysis					**Delotactic analysis**
1. bēt	(*Ø*		)	'a house'	/*indef.*/+/*bēt*/
2. bēt	(*al-*		)	'the house'	/*def.*/+/*bēt*/
3. bēt	(*-u*		)	'his house'	(/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← (/*def.*/+/*-hu*/)
4. bēt	(*jār*	[*Ø*]	)	'a house of a neighbour'	(/*indef.*/+/*bēt*/) ← (/*indef.*/+/*jār*/)
5. bēt	(*jār*	[*al-*]	)	'the house of the neighbour'	(/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← (/*def.*/+/*jār*/)
6. bēt	(*jār*	[*-u*]	)	'the house of his neighbour'	(/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← ((/*def.*/+/ *jār* /)←/*-hu*/))
7. bēt	(*jār*	[*ṣadīg* { *Ø* }])		'a house of a neighbour of a friend'	(/*indef.*/+/*bēt*/) ← ((/*indef.*/+/*jār*/)← (/*indef.*/+/*ṣadīq*/)))
7. bēt	(*jār*	[*ṣadīg* {*al-*}]	)	'the house of the neighbour of the friend'	(/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← ((/*def.*/+/*jār*/)← (/*def.*/+/*ṣadīq*/)))
			etc.		

Taking each of these in turn:

1. *bēt* ‘a house’ can be analysed delotactically as /*indef.*/+/*bēt*/, i.e. /*indef.*/ ‘indefiniteness’ (relayed by *Ø*) and /*bēt*/. The ‘plus’ symbol + is to be read as meaning a simple combination of two elements, i.e. /*indef.*/ ‘indefiniteness’ (relayed lexically by *al-*) and /*bēt*/.
2. *al-bēt* ‘the house’ can be analysed delotactically as /*def.*/+/*bēt*/.
3. *bēt-u* ‘his house’ can be analysed delotactically as (/*def.*/+/*bēt*/)←/*-u*/. The arrow symbol ← is to be read as a combination of two elements, the one to which the arrow points being the head (in this case (/*def.*/+/*bēt*/)) and the one away from which the arrow points being the modifier (in this case /*-u*/). Thus *bēt-u* ‘his house’ is analysed delotactically as /*def.*/+/*bēt*/ (= ‘the house’) ← /*of his*/ (to use English glosses).[11] For justification of why the genitive ‘of his’ element should be regarded as the modifier, see the discussion of example 7. *bēt jār al-ṣadīg* ‘the house of the neighbour of the friend’ below.[12]

4. *bēt jār* ‘a house of a neighbour’ can be analysed delotactically as (/*indef.*/+/*bēt*/) ← (/*indef.*/+/*jār*/), i.e. an indefinite head ‘a house’ plus an indefinite modifier ‘a neighbour’ (using English glosses).

5. *bēt al-jār* ‘the house of the neighbour’ can be analysed delotactically as (/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← (/*def.*/+/*jār*/), i.e. a definite head ‘the house’ plus a definite modifier ‘the neighbour’ (using English glosses).

6. *bēt jār-u* ‘the house of his neighbour’ can be analysed, in the first instance, as (/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← ((/*def.*/+/*jār*/) ← (/*def.*/+/*-u*/)), i.e. as a head-modifier combination of two definite elements, the head of which is ‘the house’, while the modifier is ‘the neighbour of his’ (using English glosses). The second of these definite elements (/*def.*/+/*jār*/) ← (/*def.*/+/*-u*/) can then itself be further analysed as a head-modifier combination of two elements, the head being (/*def.*/+/ *jār*/), while the modifier is ← (/*def.*/+/*-u*/)‘his’. Note that the pronoun suffix *-u* (the relevant morpheme having allomorphs /u/ and /hu/) can be shown to be ‘internally’ definite on ground 2 (Section 3.2); when used as an independent word *hu* ‘he’ agrees with *da* ‘this/that (m.sg.)’, in the phrase *hu da* ‘he [emphatic]’ (literally: ‘he this/that’).[13] *Da* can be shown to be definite on the basis that it agrees with elements which have *al-*, e.g. *al-bēt da* ‘this/that house’.

7. *bēt jār ṣadīg* ‘a house of a neighbour of a friend’ can be analysed as, in the first instance, as (/*indef.*/+/*bēt*/) ← ((/*indef.*/+/*jār*/) ←/(/*indef.*/+/*ṣadīg*/)), i.e. as a head-modifier combination of two definite elements, the head of

[11] I believe that the *-u* ‘of his’ element in *bēt-u* ‘the house of his’ should itself be further analysed as containing a /*def.*/. I have not, however, pursued this in this article.

[12] In Sudanese Arabic, nouns with pronoun suffixes may be indefinite when they modify a previous noun. An example is *rājil jār-na* ‘a man who is our neighbour’ (more literally, ‘a man our-neighbour’). Taking it that a definite noun has to have an indefinite modifier (noun or adjective) and that the head noun *rājil* is here indefinite, we have to conclude (correctly, I believe) that *jār-na* ‘our neighbour’ is also indefinite (cf. sections 5–5.3). In various languages it is possible to combine an indefinite article directly with a possessive pronoun, e.g. Turkish *bir arkadaşım* ‘a friend of mine’, where *bir* means ‘a’, *arkadaş* is ‘friend’, and the suffix *ım* is ‘my’.

[13] Other corresponding forms are found with all other personal pronouns, e.g. *ana da* ‘I (m.) [emphatic]’, *ana di* ‘(f.) [emphatic]’, *inta da* ‘you (m.sg.) [emphatic]’, *inti di* ‘you (f.sg.) [emphatic]’, etc.

which is ‘a house’, while the modifier is ‘a neighbour of a friend’ (using English glosses). The second of these definite elements (/*indef.*/+/*jār*/) ←/*índef.*/+/*ṣadīg*/) can then itself be further analysed as a head-modifier combination of two elements, the head being (/*indef.*/+/*jār*/) ‘a neighbour’, while the modifier is (/*indef.*/+/*ṣadīg*/) ‘a friend’.

8. *bēt jār al-ṣadīg* ‘the house of the neighbour of the friend’ can be analysed as, in the first instance, as (/*def.*/+/*bēt*/) ← ((/*def.*/+/*jār*/) ←((/*def.*/+*ṣadīg*/)), i.e. as a head-modifier combination of two definite elements, the head of which is ‘the house’, while the modifier is ‘the neighbour of the friend’ (using English glosses). The second of these definite elements (/*def.*/+/*jār*/) ← (/*al-ṣadīg*/) can then itself be further analysed as a head-modifier combination of two elements, the head being (/*def.*/+/*jār*/), while the modifier is (/*def.*/+/*ṣadīg*/) ‘the friend’.

Examples 7 and 8 show why the relationship between the annexion-head (i.e. the first noun/noun phrase in the annexion structure) and the annex (the subsequent noun/noun phrase, perhaps itself complex, as in example 7) is a head-modifier relationship, rather than one of parity between the two elements (i.e. rather than a simple + relationship). Thus, to take example 7, the thing described by ‘a house of a neighbour’ is both ‘a house’ and ‘a neighbour’s [house]’ (i.e. it belongs to a neighbour, or similar). It is not, however, (necessarily) also ‘a friend’s [house]’. (The same analysis can applied to example 8, merely by substituting ‘the’ for ‘a’ throughout.) Thus, the further one moves away from the annexion-head in terms of annexes, the less direct the connection between the referent of the relevant noun and the referent of the annex. Such ‘referential distancing’ can be taken to be a signal of modifier status (peripherality to a head) (cf. Zwicky 1993; also Corbett, Fraser and McGlashan 1993: 1). This establishes the general principle that an annex is peripheral to (i.e. it modifies) an annexion-head, and thus that the relationship between annexion-heads and annexes throughout (as applying to examples 3–7 above) is a head-modifier relationship.

4. *Al-* and Definiteness as Two Kinds of Syntactic Elements

I have argued in Section 2.3 that *al-* is a syntactic element in Sudanese Arabic, while in Section 3, I have considered the distinction between (i) *al-* as a lexotactic element—i.e. the morpheme *al-*, understood to have both form and meaning (or, better, expression and content; cf. Dickins 2020a: 6–7), and (ii) definiteness as a delotactic element—a purely meaningful element, without form (Dickins 2020a: 103–7). In Dickins (2010; 2020a), I consider wider occurrences of *al-*, where it is clearly

syntactic, and which, initially at least, may appear to be rather different from its standard uses before nouns and adjectives (though see also, Section 2.3). In this section, I will summarize the relevant material from Dickins (2020a and 2010). In Dickins (2010; 2020a: 8–11), I argue that the definite particle *al-* can occur with various elements, not only: 1. nominals (e.g. *al-walad* 'the boy' (literally: 'the-boy') and 2. adjectivals (e.g. *al-zaʕlān* 'the angry (one)' (literally: 'the-angry), and *al-zaʕlān minn-ak* 'the one who is angry with you (m.sg.)' (literally: 'the-angry with-you'), but also 3. adverbials (e.g. *al-fī al-bēt* 'the one who is in the house' (literally: 'the-in the-house'), 4. verbals (verb phrases) (e.g. *al-ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'the one who got angry (with you (m.sg.)' (literally: 'the-got~angry (with-you)'), and 5. bipartite clauses (clauses comprising two elements; cf. this section below), as in *al-bēt-u garīb* 'the one whose house is near' (literally: 'the-house-his near').

I also argue that these are the definite counterparts of the corresponding forms without *al-*, i.e. 1. *walad* 'a boy' (literally: 'boy'), 2. *zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'angry (with you (m.sg.))' (literally: 'angry (with-you'), 3. *fī al-bēt* 'in the house'; (literally: 'in the-house'), 4. *ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'got angry (with you (m.sg.))' (literally: got~angry (with-you)'), and 5. *bēt-u garīb* 'his house is near' (literally: 'house-his near'). That is to say these latter forms without *al-* are indefinite.[14]

This situation can be represented as in Table 10, in which I have added further glosses, where appropriate, to bring out the parallelism between the forms with and without the definite particle:

[14] More precisely, in the case of in the case of the bipartite clause 5. *bēt-u garīb* 'his house is near', the entire clause is 'globally' or 'externally' indefinite, since within *bēt-u garīb*, the *bēt-u* 'his house' element is 'locally' or 'internally' definite, *bēt* 'house' being made definite by the pronoun suffix *-u* 'his'; see Section 3.

Table 10.

Indefinite phrases and phrases starting with *al-* in Sudanese Arabic

	Indefinite: without definite particle	**Definite: with definite particle**
1. Nominal	*walad* 'a boy' Literally: 'boy'	*al-walad* 'the boy' Literally: 'the-boy'
2. Adjectival	*zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'angry (with you)' Literally: 'angry (from-you)' Also glossable as: 'an angry (with-you) one'	*al-zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'the one who is angry (with you)' Literally: 'the-angry (from-you)' Also glossable as: 'the-angry (with-you) one'
3. Verbal	*ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'got angry (with you)' Literally: 'got~angry (from-you)'[15]	*al-ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'the one who got angry (with you)' Literally: 'the-got~angry (with-you)' Also glossable as: 'the got~angry (with-you) one'
4. Adverbial	*fī al-bēt* 'in the house' Literally: 'in-the-house' Also glossable as: 'an in-the-house one'	*al-fī al-bēt* 'the one who is in the house' Literally: the-in-the-house' Also glossable as: 'the in-the-house one'
5. Bipartite clause	*bēt-u garīb* 'his house is near' Literally: 'house-his near' Also glossable as: 'a his-house-near one'	*al-bēt-u garīb* 'his house is near' Literally: 'the house-his near' Also glossable as: 'the his-house-near one'

The two elements of bipartite clauses can be termed the *predicand* and the *predicate*, corresponding fairly closely to what are known in traditional Arabic grammar as *mubtadaʿ* and *xabar* respectively (cf. Dickins 2010; 2020a: 11).

On the basis of the kind of material summarized in Table 10, I further argue in Dickins (2010; 2020a: 7–11) that bipartite clauses in Sudanese Arabic may be of various combinations of definite and indefinite, typically with one definite and one indefinite element. Thus in all of 1. *al-walad tarzī* 'the boy's a tailor' (literally: 'the-boy tailor'), 2. *al-walad zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'the boy is angry (with you)' (literally: 'the-boy angry (from-you)'), 3. *al-walad ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'the boy got angry (with

[15] In Dickins (2010: 254), I suggest that *ziʕil (minn-ak)* is also glossable as: 'a got~angry (with-you) one'. I think this is essentially correct (to the extent that it parallels the glossability of *zaʕlān (minn-ak)* as 'an angry (with-you) one', *fī al-bēt* as 'an in-the-house one', and *bēt-u garīb* 'a his-house-near one'). However, as Reader 2 has pointed out to me, this might be interpreted, as suggesting, wrongly, that one can use *ziʕil minn-ak* as a standalone noun phrase without adding a head comparable to English 'one' (Sudanese Arabic *wāḥid* 'one' being the general equivalent of English 'one' in this case). In fact, putative bipartite clauses involving a verb-phrase predicand in which both the predicand and predicate are indefinite, and where the predicand is not a noun / noun phrase), e.g. **fi ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'there is one who got angry (with you)' and **jā-ni↑ ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'someone angry (with you) came to me', are in almost all cases ungrammatical. So too, it should be noted, are other putative bipartite clauses which do not involve a noun / noun-phrase and where both of the predicand and predicate are indefinite, e.g. **fi zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'there is one who is angry (with you)' **jā-ni↑ zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'one who's angry (with you) came to me', and **fi fi-al-bēt* 'there is one who is in the house' **jā-ni↑ fi-al-bēt* 'one who's in the house came to me'. There are, however, some interesting exceptions to this, e.g. *fi nāzil* 'Is anyone getting off?' (said by bus conductors; literally: 'Is there getting off / a getting-off one?'), with the indefinite m.sg. active participle *nāzil* 'getting off', and *ma fi jadīd* 'there's nothing new' (literally: 'there's not new / a new-one'; also *jadīd ma fi*). Dickins (2010: 240–55) deals in more detail with constraints on bipartite clauses in Sudanese Arabic where the predicand and predicate are both indefinite. A further complication is presented by the fact, that, as argued in both Dickins (2010: 251) and Dickins (2020: 110–26), the predicand-predicate distinction in Sudanse Arabic is, properly speaking, not syntactic, but only quasi-syntactic – though it can be 'operationalized' in such a way that it can be treated as if it was syntactic (Dickins 2010: 153; and for more details, Dickins *in preparation*, Section 2.2).

you)', 4. *al-walad fī al-bēt* 'the boy is in the house' (literally: 'the-boy in the-house'), and 5. *al-walad bēt-u garīb,* 'the boy's house is near' (literally: 'the boy house-his near') the first element (*al-walad* 'the boy') is definite, while the second element (1. *tarzī* 'tailor', 2. *fī al-bēt* 'in the house', 3. *zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'angry (with you)', 4. *ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'got angry (with you)') and 5. *bēt-u garīb* is indefinite. In 5., the element *bēt-u garīb* 'his house is near' itself constitutes a further, embedded (recursive) bipartite clause in which the first element *bēt-u* 'his house' is definite, and second element *garīb*.

As noted in Table 10, to bring out the indefiniteness of the adjectival, verbal, adverbial and bipartite clauses here, 2. *zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'angry (with you)' might also be glossed as 'an angry (with-you) one', 3. *ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'got angry (with you)' as 'a got~angry (with-you) one', 4. *fī al-bēt* 'in the house' as 'an in-the-house one', and 5. *bēt-u garīb* as 'a his-house-near one'.

Other combinations are possible. Thus, it is not necessary for the initial element – as considered without the *al-*—to be a nominal. It can, for instance, be an adjectival, as in *al-zaʕlān (minn-ak) walad* 'the one who is angry (with you) is a boy' (literally: 'the-angry (from-you) boy'), or a verbal, as in *al-ziʕil (minn-ak) fī al-bēt* 'the one who got angry (with you) is in the house' (literally: the got~angry (from-you) in-the-house), or an adverbial, as in *al-fī al-bēt zaʕlān* 'the one who's in the house is angry' (literally: 'the-in-the-house angry').[16]

Nor does one element have to be definite and the other indefinite. It is also possible in limited cases for both elements to be indefinite. This is most common where the two elements are a verbal and a nominal, as in *gāmat nār* 'a fire broke out', but are also found in other cases. Thus, two indefinites are, for instance, very common with the existential particle *fi* (a kind of adverbial) plus a nominal, as in *fi sukkar?* 'Is there any sugar?' (literally: 'there sugar?'(also *sukkar fi*? 'Is there any sugar?'—often with a sense of contrast with something else other than sugar), and with some other adverbial phrases and nominals, e.g. *maʕā-k girūš* 'Do you (m.sg.) have any money on you?'

[16] It is also in fact possible to have the indefinite element first and the definite second, as in *zaʕlān (minn-ak) al-walad* 'the boy is *angry* (with you)' (literally: 'angry (from-you) the-boy') or *fi-al-bēt al-tarzī* 'it's the tailor who's in the *house'* (literally: in the house the-tailor').

(literally: 'with-you money?') (also *girūš maʕā-k*? 'Do you have any money on you?'—often with a sense of contrast with something else other than money).

Finally, it is possible, again in limited cases, for both central elements in a Sudanese Arabic bipartite clause to be definite. Examples are, with adjectival plus nominal, *al-zaʕlān al-walad* 'the angry one's the boy' (literally: 'the-angry the-boy', with verb phrase plus nominal *al-ziʕil al-walad* 'the one who got angry's the boy' (literally: 'the-got~angry the-boy'), and with clausal plus nominal *al-bēt-u garīb al-walad* 'the one whose house is near is the boy' (literally: 'the-house-his near the-boy').

One fairly generally accepted criterion, going back as far as Bloomfield, for determining syntactic headship is that 'the head characterizes a construct in the sense that it is the one constituent that belongs to a category with roughly the same distribution as the construct as a whole' (Zwicky 1985: 11, which also discusses six other possible criteria for headship; cf. Hudson 1987, and Corbett, Fraser and McGlashan 1993). The examples of bipartite clauses in Sudanese Arabic discussed earlier in this section illustrate that what most obviously determines possible bipartite clauses in Sudanese Arabic is definiteness vs. indefiniteness. Thus, as seen, definite+indefinite bipartite clauses occur fairly freely, while indefinite+indefinite ones, for example, only occur with limited combinations of nominals, adjectivals, verbals, adverbials and (embedded) bipartite clauses. By this criterion, therefore, it might be agued that *al-* is the head of the phrase which follows it. If this were the case, the entire *al-* + nominal, adjectival, adverbial, verbal or clausal could, accordingly, be called an '*al-*phrase'.

This analysis would, however, seem to give rise to a contradiction. In Section 3, I argued that *al-* is syntactically dependent on the noun with which it associates; it is the modifier of the noun, rather than its head. Here, I am seeming to suggest that *al-* is the head not only of a noun (and by extension, nominal) which follows it, but of any element (nominal, adjectival, adverbial, verbal or bipartite clause) which follows it. This apparent contradiction is solved as follows. It should be recalled that in Section 3 I argued that *al-* is the head of a lexotactic *al-*phrase, while I suggested that

delotactic phrases involving definiteness can be marked along the lines /*indef.*/+/*bēt*/ for *bēt* 'a house' and /*def.*/+/*bēt*/ for *al-bēt* 'the house' (Table 9). In fact, the distribution (possibilities of syntactic occurrence) of all 'definite phrases' is essentially the same as that of '*al*-phrases'. As an illustration, we may reconsider the examples of definite plus indefinite bipartite clauses discussed earlier in this section, where the 'definite' was relayed by *al-walad* 'the boy'. In all these cases, we may substitute for *al-* another element which makes the noun *walad* 'boy' definite, such as the pronoun suffix *-ak* 'your (m.sg.)'. Thus, the following are all possible: 1. *al-walad tarzī* 'the boy's a tailor' and *walad-ak tarzi* 'your boy's a tailor'; 2. *al-walad zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'the boy is angry (with you)' and *walad-ak zaʕlān (minn-ak)* 'your boy is angry (with you)'; 3. *al-walad ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'the boy got angry (with you)', and *walad-ak ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'your boy got angry (with you)'; 4. *al-walad fī al-bēt* 'the boy is in the house', and *walad-ak fī al-bēt* 'your boy is in the house'; and 5. *al-walad bēt-u garīb,* 'the boy's house is near' and *walad-ak bēt-u garīb,* 'the boy's house is near'.

What is therefore important for delotactic analysis is not the element in question begins with *al-*, but rather that it is definite (rather than indefinite). Thus, all proper nouns, for example, are standardly definite, regardless of whether they have the definite article, like *al-sūdān* 'Sudan' or do not, like *maṣur* 'Egypt'.[17] As discussed (esp. Section 3), nouns can be made definite not only by the prefixing of *al-*, but also by the suffixing of pronouns and definite annexes. It is not possible to similarly make adverbials, verbals or bipartite clauses definite through pronoun suffixing[18]. However, this is possible with at least some adjectives, as in the following:

6. *ū-kull al-ḥubb al-samiḥ šadīd lē-kum min <u>saġayyir-kum</u> laḥaddi <u>kabīr-kum</u>*
   and-all the-love the-beautiful very to-you from young-your until old-your
   and all the very beautiful love to you from the youngest to the oldest of you

[17] It is possible for proper nouns like *al-sūdān* 'Sudan' and *maṣur* 'Egypt' to be indefinite. In the case of proper nouns which standardly have the definite article, like *al-sūdān*, the article is 'dropped'; thus *sūdān jadīd* 'a new Sudan' (*sūdān* being masculine). In the case of proper nouns which do not have the definite article, like *maṣur* 'Egypt', the form of the noun remains the same: *maṣur jadīda* 'a new Egypt' (*maṣur* being feminine).

[18] Prepositions (as a type of adverbial head) do, of course, take pronoun suffixes; e.g. *maʕā-k* 'with you (m.sg.)'. Thus does not, however, make *maʕā-k* 'globally' or 'externally' definite. This can be seen by the fact that there is a definite correspondent of *maʕā-k*, this being *al-maʕā-k* 'the one who/which is with you' (this section, above).

The original Arabic-script form reads: وكل الحب السمح شديد ليكم من صغيركم لحدي كبيركم: https://www.picuki.com/profile/ahmedaminz

7. *law nisītu* *gadīm-kum* *nizakkir-kum*

   If you forget (com.pl.) old-your, we~remind-you

   If you forget your past, we'll remind you

The original Arabic-script form reads: لو نسيتوا قديمكم نذكركم; https://bajnews.net/%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A3%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7/)

That *kabīr-kum* in example 6 is definite can be shown by ground 2 (Section 2.2) for definiteness—agreement. Here *kabīr-kum* 'the oldest of you' is definite because *kabīr-kum* agrees (in other examples) with *da* 'this/that', in attribution structures, as in the following: *šūf lē-y↑ ṭarīga aṣāḥib kabīr-kum da* 'find a way for me to accompany that one who is the oldest of you' (literally: 'see for-me way I~accompany old-you this/that') (شوف لي طريقة اصاحب كبيركم ده: http://www.sudaneseoffline.net/forums/showthread.php?p=338287). That *da* 'this/that' is itself definite is shown by the fact that it agrees in attribution structures with nouns having *al-* (ground 1, Section 2.2), e.g. *al-bēt da* 'this/that house'. Corresponding arguments can be made for *gadīm-kum* 'your past' in example 7).

Thus, as can be seen from proper nouns, like *maṣur* 'Egypt', which lack the definite article, and the fact that nouns in general and some adjectives can be made definite by a following pronoun suffix or other definite article, in the case of *al*-phrases (whether followed by a nominal, adjectival, adverbial, verbal or bipartite clause), the head element is not *al-* as a morpheme (i.e. a lexotactic entity; cf. Section 3), but the meaning which *al-* conveys, i.e. definiteness, i.e. a semantic—delotactic—entity

(Section 3). Thus, while *al-* is to be analysed as a lexotactic modifier, the sense /*def.*/ which it conveys is to be analysed as a delotactic head.[19]

5. Definiteness and Indefiniteness

Since definiteness and indefiniteness play a crucial role in the arguments made in this article, it is important to establish what they are. At various points (in particular, Section 3), I have taken it that nouns and other elements in Sudanese Arabic are either definite or indefinite. I have also suggested (Section 2.2) that definiteness can be established on two grounds:

1. It has as its domain the definite particle *al-*.
2. If it does not have as its domain the definite particle *al-,* agreement shows it to be definite; i.e. an element which agrees with it in a given linguistic context can be shown to be definite (on ground 1. above).

I correspondingly adopted the principle that an element in Sudanese Arabic is indefinite when it cannot be shown to be definite on one of the two grounds listed above.

In sections 5–5.4, I will attempt to show in particular why more general 'universal' notions of definiteness (and indefiniteness) cannot provide coherent criteria for definiteness (or indefiniteness) in Sudanese Arabic—or, in fact, any other language—and why we have to rely on system-internal language-specific criteria. I will argue that for Sudanese Arabic, grounds of the type outlined immediately above (and in Section 2.2) are the only coherent basis for identifying definite and indefinite.

5.1 Objective and Subjective Reference and Agreement

In Dickins (2009b: 542–6), I argue for a distinction between objective and subjective reference, showing how this provides for a novel conception of agreement, which can be applied not only to gender (as well as the other traditional aspects of agreement—number and person), but also, in the case of Arabic, to definiteness. In the following paragraphs, I will summarize the argument made

[19] In this article, I have assumed that syntactic relations (whether lexotactic or delotactic) always involve head-modifier relations, or what I term in Dickins 2020a, *nucleus-peripheral entity* relations. These involve *ordering*, i.e. *subordination* (Dickins 2020a: 112). As I note there, however, it is also possible in an extended axiomatic-functionalist approach to have syntactic relations which do not involve ordering, i.e. they are *unordered* (Dickins 2020a: 112). If we accept the possibility of unordered syntactic relations, it seems possible to describe the relationship between */def/* and the other element in a 'definite phrase' as one which does not involve ordering.

there. Consider a context in which someone is looking for a cooking plate—known in Sudanese Arabic as either a *ṣāj* (m.sg.) or a *dōka* (f.sg), depending on which regional dialect of Sudanese Arabic one is using.[20] In response to a question from person A, *wēn-u*↑ 'Where is it?' (i.e. *wēn* 'where' + *-u*↑ m.sg. suffix), person B can only legitimately, linguistically, reply *bi-tagṣudi al-ṣāj?* 'Do you mean the cooking plate', where the masculine word *ṣāj* 'echoes' the masculine suffix *-u*↑. Similarly, in response to a question from person A, *wēn-i*↑ 'Where is it?' (i.e. *wēn* 'where' + *-i*↑ f.sg. suffix) Arabic, person B can only legitimately, linguistically, reply *bi-tagṣudi al-dōka?*. 'Do you mean the cooking plate?'. Here the feminine word *dōka* 'echoes' the feminine suffix *-i*↑ (Dickins 2009b: 542).[21]

I further argue that this reflects Hjelmslev's insight that '…by virtue of the content-form and the expression-form, and only by virtue of them, exist respectively the content-substance and the expression-substance, which appear by the form's being projected onto the purport, *just as an open net casts its shadow down on an undivided surface*' (Hjelmslev 1963: 57; italics mine). Here 'content-form' is the abstract semantic organisation of language, and 'expression-form' is the abstract formal organisation of language (roughly phonology, if conceived as an abstract system). 'Purport' is extra-linguistic reality. 'Expression-substance' is phonetic reality, informed by abstract linguistic analysis; e.g. not just a sound represented as [p], but a sound [p] conceived as a function (realisation) of a phonological entity, for example /p/ in English. 'Content-substance' is extra-linguistic reality as informed by an abstract semantic analysis of a particular language (English, Arabic, etc.) (Dickins 2009b: 542–3).

Most basically, Hjelmslev's analysis of the relationship between abstract semantic structure and purport provides an account of the view that language does not simply describe pre-existing boundaries between concepts, but rather defines those boundaries, and therefore in a very real sense

[20] Because they are, in origin at least, regionally restricted forms—*ṣāj* is Northern Sudanese and *dōka* is Western Sudanese—these two words are not ideal forms to illustrate synonymy between masculine and feminine words referring to inanimate objects in Arabic. Better forms are provided by Standard Arabic *miṭraq* vs. *miṭraqa*, both meaning 'hammer', without, apparently, any dialectal-like complications. However, as the focus of this article is on Sudanese Arabic, I have preferred to use Sudanese *ṣāj* and *dōka* here.

[21] Reader 1 has pointed out to me that this analysis is not entirely correct for the Arabic of Khartoum. 'It is also true that in Khartoum Arabic *wēn- u*↑ tends to be lexified as *wēn-u*↑ (with no gender/number distinctions), whereas rural dialects (e.g. Shukriya) retain the whole interrogative inflection'.

defines the concepts themselves—echoing Saussure's dictum 'C'est le point de vue qui crée l'objet' (Saussure 1975: 23), 'It is the viewpoint which creates the object' (Saussure 1959: 8). In Hjelmslev's terms, the rope-like structure of the 'open net' imposes conceptual boundaries in the real world.

A further interpretation could, however, also be given to Hjelmslev's analogy. We might think of a semantic account as a net which casts a shadow (necessarily because there is light shining through it). In this case, the shadow which it casts not only divides up the entities (the purport) onto which it shines; it also produces an impression (a shadow) of itself on these entities: the semantic reality which language as a net defines is not simply a divided up (conceptualized) version of external reality: it is a version of external reality onto which the trace of language is itself superimposed (Dickins 2009b: 543).

For the relevance of this to *ṣāj* and *dōka* 'cooking-plate' in Sudanese Arabic, recall that we cannot say *bi-tagṣudi al-dōka*? 'Do you mean the cooking plate' if someone else says *wēn-u*↑ 'Where is it (m.sg.)?' because the masculine form *-u*↑ only 'picks out' in the world those entities which are conceived masculinely. *Dōka* conceives a cooking plate femininely; it casts a 'feminine' element from Hjelmslev's open net of content-form onto the extra-linguistic reality (purport) of cooking-plates. We might say that *ṣāj*, by contrast, conceives a cooking plate masculinely; it casts a 'masculine' element from Hjelmslev's open net of content-form onto the extra-linguistic reality (purport) of cooking-plates (Dickins: 2009b: 543).

On this basis, we should regard masculine and feminine, even where these are a matter of 'grammatical gender' (they do not indicate maleness or femaleness in the real world), as having a kind of reference. Such reference is not objective: it does not exist 'out there' in the extra-linguistic world independently of language, but is established by the 'shadow' of the 'net' of language itself, and only exists in the context of that shadow. It can be called 'subjective reference': it requires something in language as its 'subject' to—at least in a certain restricted sense—bring it into existence (Dickins 2009b: 543–4).

I further go on to argue that there is a continuum between objective reference (reference to entities/phenomena which exist out there in the real world, such as maleness and femaleness) and subjective reference. In *labbān* (m.sg.) 'male milk seller' and *labbāna* (f.sg.) 'female milk seller', the gender has (purely) objective reference, while in *ṣāj* (m.sg.) and *dōka* (f.sg.) 'cooking-plate', it has (purely) subjective reference. However, 'sand' or 'grains of sand' used to refer to a pile of sand falls somewhere between (purely) objective and (purely) subjective reference: it is a matter of our perspective ('it's the viewpoint which creates the object'), rather than simply a question of the objective reality of the referent ('purport') itself (Dickins 2009b: 544).

I reaffirm the standard view that agreement (or concord) is a matter of grammar: thus forms involving wrong agreement, such as *ṣāj kabīra* 'big (f.sg.) cooking-plate (m.sg.)' (literally 'cooking-plate big') and *dōka kabīr* 'big (m.sg.) cooking-plate (f.sg.)' (literally 'cooking-plate big') are grammatically incorrect. However, I note that the example *wēn-uˀ* 'Where is it?', *bi-tagṣudi al-ṣāj*? 'Do you mean the cooking-plate?' (not **bi-tagṣudi al-dōka?*) make plain that agreement-like phenomena are not simply the domain of grammar. I also adopt the standard view that the maximum domain of grammar is the sentence, taking it that a sentence is an abstract entity which is instanced in utterances (Dickins 2009b: 545).

I note that the agreement-like features of an example such as *wēn-uˀ* 'Where is it?', *bi-tagṣudi al-ṣāj?* 'Do you mean the cooking-plate?', are not a matter of grammar. Firstly, these features extend beyond the sentence (the maximum domain of grammar); and secondly, the restrictions on gender occurrences (the impossibility/unacceptability of the reply *bi-tagṣudi al-dōka?* 'Do you mean the cooking-plate?' vs. the possibility/acceptability of the reply *bi-tagṣudi al-ṣāj?*) must be a feature of the utterance-level, rather than the sentence-level. Given that the sentence is the maximum domain of grammar, it is only utterances (as instances of sentences) rather than sentences themselves which can occur in sequence (Dickins 2009b: 545).

The view that incorrect sentence-internal agreement yields a non-grammatical would-be sentence seems at first sight curious, given the argument that agreement-like phenomena arise from

incompatible/contradictory subjective references (as in utterance-sequences such as *wēn-u*↑ 'Where is it?', *bi-tagṣudi al-ṣāj?* 'Do you mean the cooking-plate?'). If such subjective incompatibility/contradiction between utterances is not a grammatical matter, we would imagine that similar incompatibility/contradiction within utterances would similarly be a non-grammatical matter (Dickins 2009b: 545–6).

A partial answer to this puzzle is that such intra-utterance subjective semantic incompatibility/contradiction would be a non-grammatical matter, if such utterances could legitimately occur in a language. However, if we accept that utterances instantiate sentences, and that the corresponding would-be sentences are non-grammatical (i.e. properly speaking non-sentences), they cannot, by definition, legitimately occur, and are therefore not part of the grammar. We may further compare real (objective) semantic (referential) incompatibility/contradiction, as in 'We saw them tomorrow'. Here the problem of interpretation is located in the real world as we know it. In the case of 'failed agreement' such as *ṣāj kabīra* 'big (f.sg.) cooking-plate (m.sg.)' (literally: 'cooking-plate big'), there is no objective real-world incompatibility. However—suspending for the moment disbelief in the grammatical possibility of *ṣāj kabīra*—an utterance involving the phrase *ṣāj kabīra* would involve a subjective semantic (referential) incompatibility. Because this incompatibility has no objective status in the world beyond language, however, it is perceived as a 'disturbance' more than anything else, as is apparent in an exchange such as *wēn-u*↑ 'Where is it?' (*wēn* 'where' + *-u*↑ m.sg. suffix) / *bi-tagṣudi al-dōka?* 'Do you mean the cooking-plate ('*dōka*' – f.sg.)?'. The exchange is unacceptable but not for any reason which is definable outside language. Given, then, that source of the 'disturbance' is not located in the real extra-linguistic world, it must be located in language, i.e. in grammar. 'Disturbed' utterances (or parts of utterances) such as *ṣāj kabīra* 'big (f.sg.) cooking-plate (m.sg.)' are thus ruled out of the grammar, along with the sentences which these utterances would instantiate. (Dickins 2009b: 546).

5.2 Definiteness Agreement

Having considered in the previous paragraphs agreement in relation to gender, I will turn now to agreement in relation to definiteness, as this applies to Sudanese Arabic. Definiteness agreement obtains in Sudanese Arabic in attributive phrases, most obviously where the initial element (to be taken as the head) is (i) a noun or (ii) a noun with a preceding definite particle *al-*, both of which we can refer to here as nominals. This can be illustrated as in Table 11.

Table 11.
Attributive Definiteness Agreement in Sudanese Arabic

	Indefinite	**Definite: with definite particle *al-***
1. Nominal plus Adjectival	*walad zaʕlān* 'an angry boy' Literally: 'boy angry' *walad zaʕlān minn-ak* 'a boy who is angry with you' Literally: 'boy angry with-you'	*al-walad al-zaʕlān* 'the angry boy' Literally: 'the-boy the-angry' *al-walad al-zaʕlān minn-ak* 'the boy who is angry with you' Literally: 'the-boy the-angry with-you'
2. Nominal plus Verbal	*walad ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'a boy who got angry (with you)' Literally: 'a-boy got~angry (from-you)'	*al-walad al-ziʕil (minn-ak)* 'the boy who got angry (with you)' Literally: 'the-boy the-got~angry (with-you)'
3. Nominal plus Adverbial	*walad fī al-bēt* 'a boy [who is] in the house' Literally: 'boy in the-house'	*al-walad al-fī al-bēt* 'the boy [who is]in the house' Literally: the boy the-in the-house'
4. Nominal plus Bipartite clause	*walad bēt-u garīb* 'a boy whose house is near' Literally: 'boy house-his near'	*al-walad al-bēt-u garīb* 'his house is near' Literally: 'the-boy the-house-his near' Also glossable as: 'the his-house-near one'

As Table 11 shows, attributive definiteness agreement in Sudanese Arabic is 'transparent'. If the nominal head is indefinite (lacking *al-*), the adjectival (*zaʕlān,* and in expanded form *zaʕlān minn-ak*), verbal (*ziʕil (minn-ak)*), adverbial (*fī al-bēt*), and bipartite clause (*bēt-u garīb*) is also indefinite. If the nominal head is definite (with *al-*), the adjectival (*al-zaʕlān,* and in expanded form *al-zaʕlān minn-ak*), verbal (*al-ziʕil (minn-ak)*), adverbial (*al-fī al-bēt*), and bipartite clause (*al-bēt-u garīb*) is also definite. Note that in all cases, the domain of *al-* ist the entire element which follows it (whether this is one word or more than one word). Thus, the domain of *al-* in *al-zaʕlān* is *zaʕlān*; its domain in *al-zaʕlān minn-ak* is *zaʕlān minn-ak*; its domain in *al-fī al-bēt* is *fī al-bēt*; and its domain in *al-bēt-u garīb* is *bēt-u garīb*, etc.

The same principles which apply to gender agreement (also number and person agreement) apply to definiteness agreement: agreement is required in Sudanese Arabic for identity of reference. Thus in *walad zaʕlān minn-ak* 'a boy who is angry with you', for example, the reference is both to *a boy* and *an angry-with-you-one*. In *al-walad al-zaʕlān minn-ak* 'the boy who is angry with you', the reference is to both *the boy* and *the angry-with-you-one*. If we were to use a form in which one of the nominal or adjectival/verbal/adverbial/bipartite in the attributive structure was indefinite and the other definite, e.g. **walad* ***al-****zaʕlān minn-ak* 'a boy who is angry with you' we would be saying, incoherently, that the person (entity) in question is simultaneously indefinite (unknown, etc.) in that context and indefinite (known, etc.).[22] Assuming definiteness and indefiniteness to involve objective reference (an issue I will come back to in Section 5.3), this would mean that we were simultaneously describing the person (entity) in question in incompatible ways, just as if we simultaneously described a person using masculine and feminine forms in a context in which these had objective male and female reference: e.g. *rājil ṣāḥbat-ī*↑ 'a man who is my female friend'. (**Walad* ***al-****zaʕlān minn-ak* as a would-be attributive form is ungrammatical; whether *rājil ṣāḥbat-ī*↑ 'a man who is my female friend' is, or is better regarded as more like the contradictory 'We saw them tomorrow' (Section 5.1) is, perhaps a moot point.)

There are some complications with this analysis, which I have tried to tease out in Dickins (2009b: 557–61). Readers who wish to pursue them should consult that article. The current account is, however, sufficient for current purposes.

5.3 Grounds for Definiteness Revisited

In Section 2.2, I suggested two grounds for determining definiteness in Sudanese Arabic. An element is definite:

1. It has as its domain the definite particle *al-*.

[22] A second complication is that an utterance such as *walad al-zaʕlān minn-ak* 'a boy who is angry with you' would in practice be interpreted as (realising) not an attributive phrase, but as an indefinite+definite bipartite clause 'it's a *boy* who is angry with you', or 'the one who is angry with you is a boy', in which the first element *walad* was indefinite and the second *al-zaʕlān minn-ak* definite; see Section 4.

2. If it does not have as its domain the definite particle *al-*, agreement shows it to be definite; i.e. an element which agrees with it in a given linguistic context can be shown to be definite (on ground 1. above).

Otherwise the element in question is indefinite.

Here, I will consider further the rationale for these grounds. Regardless of whether definiteness has objective or subjective reference in Sudanese Arabic, or something in between (or even a variety of '(sub-)functions', some of which are more objective and others more subjective), it seems reasonable to say that any element in Sudanese Arabic which has as its domain the definite particle *al-* is definite (see, however, Dickins *in preparation,* sections 2.5.2, 5.10.6, for some uses of *al-* which involve more than simple definiteness). Indeed, to do otherwise would be bizarre; it is the presence of the definite particle *al-* in Sudanese Arabic which, in the first instance, makes it meaningful to talk about 'definiteness' as an (intrinsic) features of the Sudanese Arabic linguistic system at all (as opposed to a rather vaguer, 'general' notion of definiteness, which might, for example, 'emerge' through translation into another language, such as English).

Having established (i) that definiteness agreement (like agreement generally) involves 'referential compatibility' (whether of objective or subjective reference) (sections 5.1, 5.2), and (ii) that definiteness is established by the presence of *al-*, we can now 'theorematically' show that ground 2 is for the definiteness of an element is valid: 'If it does not have as its domain the definite particle *al-,* agreement shows it to be definite; i.e. an element which agrees with it in a given linguistic context can be shown to be definite (on ground 1. above)'. This can be shown in relation to ground 1, the element '(…) has as its domain the definite particle *al-*', through consideration of attributive forms like:

8. *bēt-u al-kabīr*

   house-his the-big

   his big house

Given (ii) above, that definiteness is established by the presence of *al-*, we know that *al-kabīr* is definite. Given (i) above, that definiteness agreement (like agreement generally) involves 'referential compatibility' (whether of objective or subjective reference) and given that such 'referential

compatability' is a feature of attributive structures (Section 5.2), we know that *bēt-u* is definite, because *al-kabīr* agrees with it—thus proving ground 2.

5.4 Definiteness as a Universal vs Language-specific Notion

Having established definiteness as a semantic feature of Sudanese Arabic, it might be thought that we could directly equate defniteness in Sudanese Arabic with a universal notion of definiteness. This is not the case. This has partly—though not entirely—to do with the fact that definiteness has proved impossible to define precisely, apparently evident definitions such as the knownness of an entity failing to work in various ways (e.g. Lyons 1999: 253–81; cf. Aguilar-Guevara, Loyo, and Maldonado 2019, for a recent overview). The problematic nature of finding a 'universal' definition of definiteness is also at least hinted at by the fact that in Arabic in *bēt jār* both *bēt* 'house' and *jār* 'neighbour' are indefinite (see Section 3). The phrase, however, is in most contexts more naturally translated into English as '**the** house of a neighbour' than as '**a** house of a neighbour'.[23]

The two examples of *bēt jār* 'the/a house a neighbour' and abstract usages in English and Arabic are illustrative of a more general theoretical problem with the presupposition of universal features notions etc. in linguistics, i.e. what is sometimes termed 'universalism'. Elsewhere, I have argued that universalism (universalist theories) undermines its own theoretical presuppositions by imposing on the data notions which the theory requires it has, thereby prejudicing its analysis of the data (Dickins 2020a: 4). This is true for all areas of linguistics, from phonology, e.g. distinctive features (Dickins 2002: 94) through to semantics, e.g. theme and rheme (Dickins 2020a: 93–4)—and applies also to 'definiteness', when conceived as a universal feature. This is not to say that generalized notions such as 'definite' are not useful in relation to linguistic analysis. However, we have to view them as 'general semantic' (Dickins 2020a: 101; 104–5) models which may, or may not, apply in whole or in part to the semantic systems of individual languages (cf. Dickins 2020a: 93–4). It is this perspective on definiteness which I have adopted in this paper.

[23] Another obvious dissimilarity between definiteness in English and Arabic occurs with abstract usages. In Sudanese Arabic 'beauty' as a general abstract notion is *al-jamāl*, while in English the abstract notion 'beauty' is indefinite.

5.5 Definiteness and Objective Reference

I will not attempt to address in detail the extent to which definiteness in Sudanese Arabic involves objective reference; this would require an analysis of the uses/functions of definiteness in Sudanese Arabic which goes well beyond the scope of this article. It is worth noting, however, that Standard Arabic provides clear evidence of non-objective definiteness reference, in relation to superlative usage. Consider the following:

9. *al-mušarriʕ al-aqdam al-maʕrūf*
   the-lawgiver the-oldest the-known
   the oldest known lawgiver

10. *aqdam mušarriʕ maʕrūf*
    oldest lawgiver known
    the oldest known lawgiver

In 9, the attributive phrase *al-mušarriʕ al-aqdam al-maʕrūf* is definite, as shown by the fact that the noun *al-mušarriʕ*, as well as the adjectives *al-aqdam* and *al-maʕrūf* all have *al-*. In 10 *aqdam muššariʕ maʕrūf*, by contrast, the annexion structure *aqdam mušarriʕ* 'oldest legislator' (more literally: 'oldest of~legislator') is indefinite, as shown by the fact that the attributive adjective *maʕrūf* 'known' is indefinite (it does not have an *al-*). *Al-mušarriʕ al-aqdam al-maʕrūf* and *aqdam mušarriʕ maʕrūf*, however, both mean—objectively—the same thing. If definiteness reference in Standard Arabic were purely objective, it would not be possible for a definite structure (*al-mušarriʕ al-aqdam al-maʕrūf*) and an indefinite structure (*aqdam mušarriʕ maʕrūf*) to mean the same thing. Given that definite and indefinite are referentially different (as argued for Sudanese Arabic in this article, but the same arguments apply to Standard Arabic), this referential difference, here, must be subjective.

6. Conclusion

I have shown that commutation can be used in relation to nouns to establish syntactic (lexotactic) structures in Sudanese Arabic covering Ø, the definite particle *al-*, pronoun suffixes, and nominal annexes. I have argued for two different types of syntactic structuring: lexotactic vs. delotactic. I have shown that a delotactic analysis of the features covered in this paper yields significantly different results from a lexotactic analysis, and in particular that a clear distinction needs to be drawn between

al- as grammatical feature (entering into syntactic combinations in lexotactics) and /*def.*/ (definite) as a semantic feature (entering into syntactic combinations in delotactics). I have argued for a distinction between objective and subjective reference, showing that a grammatical feature like masculine or feminine may have either an objective reference (to a male or female person/entity) or a subjective reference (to an entity which is conceived masculinely or femininely). Both objective and subjective reference are, however, from a language-particular perspective properly referential. I have considered definiteness, arguing that this has to be viewed from the perspective of the analysis of individual languages, rather than being imposed from outside language-specific analysis as a proposed universal feature. In relation to definiteness agreement, I argue that, like gender agreement, this involves proper referentiality, whether objective or subjective.

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