

Acquisition of Modern Standard Arabic by Speakers of Different Arabic Colloquial Varieties: Resumption in Object Relative Clauses *¹

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Abstract

It is often claimed that there are no native speakers of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) due to possible effect of late age of first exposure (AoE) and possible effect of the acquired colloquial variety of Arabic, which is considered as the first language (L1). This empirical study examined the impact of AoE and knowledge of the L1 on the ultimate attainment of resumption in MSA object relative clauses. 147 adolescent participants from Egypt, the Levant, and the gulf regions, were recruited to examine their underlying knowledge of resumption in MSA through completing an Acceptability Judgment Task. Using ANOVA and planned comparisons, the differences in participants' judgments to resumption were evaluated across 5 groups corresponding to different AoE and the colloquial varieties they speak. The analysis of the data showed no significant effect of AoE or of the L1, and post hoc tests showed no significant differences between the groups of participants. These results were discussed in relation to theories on L1 influence and to the critical period hypothesis.

Keywords: critical period hypothesis, first language influence, modern standard Arabic, resumption, second language acquisition

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Introduction

This article aims to make an empirical investigation of Arabic speakers' underlying ultimate knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) to see whether this knowledge is of a first language(L1) or of a second language(L2) type. The motivation for this research comes from the frequent claim in the literature that there are no native speakers of MSA (e.g., Kaye, 1970; Maamouri, 1998). This claim perhaps can be supported by the fact that Arab children do not acquire MSA naturally at home and their exposure to MSA starts only at the primary school when their innate ability to acquire language natively is assumed to be no longer available or to have started to deteriorate(Al-Dannan, 2010). Another support for such a claim comes from the fact that Arab children have already acquired and speak the local colloquial form by the time they start learning MSA at primary school. Because there are some differences between the colloquial forms and MSA across all linguistic domains(e.g., Altoma, 1969; Ayari, 1996; Maamouri, 1998; Khamis-Dakwar, 2011), this may lead different speakers to develop different MSA end-state grammars; which is a characteristic of a second language. However, as far as the researcher knows, there is a clear scarcity of empirical works in the literature that discuss Arabs' acquisition of MSA, investigate their underlying knowledge of it, and confirm or disconfirm claims about whether there are native speakers of MSA.

This research was conducted to examine the underlying end-state knowledge of MSA resumption in object relative clauses, which is represented differently in the native grammars of colloquial varieties of Egypt, the Levant, and the Gulf regions. If MSA is acquired natively, then the underlying end-state grammar of MSA object relatives is expected to be uniform in these different regions despite the syntactic differences between the colloquial varieties. This is based on the widely accepted assumption that all acquirers of the same first language or dialect achieve the same steady-state grammar (Guasti, 2002; White, 2003; Meisel, 2011). On the other hand, if MSA is learned or acquired as an L2, then the underlying steady-state grammar is expected to be represented differently, based on the assumption that L2 speakers differ from each other in their ultimate attainment, even in the case of speakers with the same L1 who have acquired the same L2 (White, 2003; Meisel, 2008).

This study should lead to answers to the following interrelated questions:

- I. Do Arabs across the Arab world represent 'uniform' (L1-type) or 'variant' (L2-type) versions of MSA end-state grammar?
- II. If variation in attainment exists, is it an effect of different age of first exposure to MSA?
- III. If variation in attainment exists, is it an effect of the differences between the colloquial varieties (the L1s)?

Background

Effect of AoE

Many of the studies on second language acquisition support the claim that age of first exposure to the acquired language has effects on how complete the outcome grammar will be. These studies, however, can be divided into four groups depending on their findings of whether or not there is a cut-off point before which native-like attainment is possible or

guaranteed. Studies in the first group (e.g., Oyama, 1979; Patkowski, 1980) suggest that native-like attainment is possible for those who start learning any time during the critical period. The second group includes studies like Selinger et al. (1975), Shim (1993), and Meisel (2008), which report that native-like attainment is only possible before a certain age during the critical period (9, 5, and 3;7 respectively), and a decline or variation of performance is noted thereafter until the end of the critical period. The third group of studies does not specify an age before which native-like attainment is possible or guaranteed; but they suggest that there is a general negative correlation between age and attainment that ends at puberty pointing to the end of the critical period (e.g., Johnson & Newport, 1989; Johnson, 1992). Finally, the fourth group consists of studies like Birdsong & Molis (2001), Stevens (1999) and Bialystok & Hakuta (1999) which report that the rule of 'younger is better' is true across the life span.

As of the L2 studies outlined so far suggest that a critical period applies in L2 acquisition, however, this proposal has been empirically challenged. A number of studies have found that native-like proficiency is apparently attainable even when L2 acquisition begins later than age 12; i.e., after the closure of any proposed critical period (e.g., White & Genesee, 1996; Cranshaw, 1997). In general, nonetheless, these studies and the others of the like (e.g., Neufeld, 1977; 1979) have been criticised as not sufficient for refuting the idea of a critical period in second language acquisition. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003), for example, argue that the cases of successful late starters of L2 in attaining native-like accents or knowledge are very limited in number, and cannot be considered as counterevidence for critical period existence in second language acquisition. In addition, they maintain that to count learners as 'native-like', they should behave in a native-like manner in all the domains of the language, not only in one particular domain like phonology. Thus, further research is needed to ascertain the validity of such claims.

L1 Influence

The issue of L1 influence on the grammar of a second language has been the topic of much research throughout the past few decades. L1 influence has been studied from a variety of perspectives and within a variety of approaches, and it has undergone significant reconceptualization over the years (for an overview, see, e.g., Odlin, 1989; 2003; Ellis, 2008). However, many studies during the past two decades have shown clear evidence of L1 transfer in second language acquisition (e.g., Hulk, 1991; Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994; 1998; Bohnacker, 2006; Gil & Marsden, 2010; Gil et al., 2011).

One common position that most researchers take about the L2 initial state is that L2 learners transfer their L1 grammar either fully or partially when they start acquiring the target language (see, White, 2000). These researchers, though, have different claims in relation to how L2 learners restructure their L1 knowledge to converge on the target language grammar and whether or not they will be completely successful in this task when reaching the end-state of L2 acquisition. Schachter (1990), for example, concludes from her study that "native language has a significant effect on knowledge of one principle of Universal Grammar [i.e., Subjacency] in post-puberty-acquired second language grammars", (Schachter, 1990, p. 116). She maintains that only universal grammar (UG) principles that have been instantiated in first language acquisition constitute an internal knowledge source for L2 learners. This

internal knowledge (i.e., L1-based instantiations of UG) together with the external evidence (i.e., L2 input) will guide the process of acquiring a second language and constrain much of the form of its grammar. According to Schachter, this predicts that L2 learners will fail to acquire the features of L2 grammar, which are not provided by the L1 grammar and are not made evident by L2 positive input.

In a similar vein, Bley-Vroman(1989), in his Fundamental Difference Hypothesis, argues that L1 knowledge defines the grammar that is possible for adult L2 learners. According to him, the difference between the attainments of children versus adults in acquiring a second language is due, in part, to the fact that UG is no longer available to adults after the closure of the ‘putative’ critical period, and, hence, L1 knowledge, together with general problem-solving systems, takes the role of guiding adults’ acquisition process. Bley-Vroman posits that adult L2 learners reconstruct much of the original scheme of Universal Grammar, which is not available after the critical period, by observing the native language. He adds that because of the L1 providing an indirect knowledge of UG, plus being ‘incomplete’ and ‘accidental’, “one can expect some partial success, little chance of perfect success, and some considerable individual variation” (Bley-Vroman, 1989, p. 53).

The Full Transfer/Full Access model, developed by Schwartz & Sprouse(1994), affirms the view that the native language has an impact on L2 ultimate attainment; but not by taking the place of UG. According to this model, L2 learners start their L2 acquisition with the final state grammar of L1 acquisition. Then, based on L2 input, and by having access to UG, the learners will start restructuring all the features of L1, which fail to represent L2 data, and keep those which apply to both languages as they are. However, this model does not guarantee a full convergence on the grammar of the target language. This is because L2 learners, unlike L1 acquirers, start with previously set values; it may be that the data needed to force restructuring simply do not exist, or that the needed positive L2 data are highly obscure, complex, or rare (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996, p. 42). Under this model, the starting point of acquiring a language as an L1 or an L2 differs, and the outcome of these two acquisition processes are likely to differ: “the final states of L2 acquisition do not systematically replicate the final state of L1 acquisition”(Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996, p. 42), and this is due to distinct initial states of the two processes.

Sorace(1993)concludes that the L1 determines what type of competence L2 learners will reach at the end of the acquisition process. According to her study, even near-native speakers of the second language who are at the most advanced stage of second language acquisition will not, most likely, attain a native-like competence; their underlying competence may be either incomplete (lacking some L2 grammatical properties) or divergent (certain L2 properties are presented differently) from the native competence of the target language. This feature of incompleteness or divergence is argued to be due to L1 influence.

The focus of research on L1 transfer has shifted recently from investigating transfer of knowledge of a single linguistic domain or part of it to investigating transfer at the linguistic interfaces (e.g., Slabakova, 2008; Sorace & Serratrice, 2009; White, 2009). To this point, structures at external interfaces, such as syntax-pragmatics, have been claimed subject to transfer more than structures at interfaces between internal domains of the grammar like

syntax-semantics or syntax-morphology (e.g., Tsimplici & Sorace, 2006; Sorace & Serratrice, 2009). While transfer at external and internal interfaces has been attested in the literature (e.g., Gabriele, 2010; Haznedar, 2010; Oh, 2010), the issue of which is more vulnerable to transfer is not resolved yet (White, 2009). Ionin and Zubizarreta (2010), in an introductory paper to selected articles discussing the issue of L1 transfer at the linguistic interfaces, point out that these articles provided evidence for the following claims. L1 knowledge of structures at both external and internal interfaces is subject to transfer more than knowledge of purely syntactic structures (see, Montrul, 2010). Also, it is possible to recover from negative transfer of knowledge of at least structures at the syntax-semantics interface (see, Oh, 2010).

Resumption in Object Relatives

One common way to form a relative clause in Arabic is by moving a wh-phrase (or a null operator) from the extraction site to [Spec-CP], leaving a bound gap behind:

1. العونُ الذي قَدِمْتَ للعراقِ ...
 ?al-9awn-nu [CP l-aðii_t [IP qaddamta-Ø_t li-l-9iraaq-i]] ...
 the-aid-nom which (you) offered to-the-Iraq-gen
 ‘The aid that you have offered to Iraq ...’

An alternative strategy is the resumption strategy. In relatives formed by this strategy, a resumptive pronoun is inserted in the extraction site as a variable bound by the wh-phrase, which is also directly inserted in [Spec-CP] position:

2. العونُ الذي قَدِمْتَهُ للعراقِ ...
 ?al-9awn-u [CP l-aðii_t [IP qaddamta-**hu**_t li-l-9iraaq-i]] ...
 the-aid-nom which (you) offered-it to-the-Iraq-gen
 ‘The aid that you have offered to Iraq ...’.

Relative clauses formed this way are claimed to be immune to locality constraints (see, e.g., Borer, 1984). This is because, by assumption, the resumption strategy does not involve movement; both the relativised element and the resumptive pronoun are claimed to be directly generated in their relevant positions.

In MSA, it is not always the case that both strategies are available when forming a relative clause. The availability of such optionality depends, for example, on whether or not the relative clause in question is definite or indefinite, and on the grammatical position of the relativisation site. However, both strategies appear to be available when extracting from the object position in a definite relative clause; a resumptive pronoun seems to vary with gaps in filling this extraction site (e.g., Aoun et al., 2010). The following sentence is an example of this case:

3. احترقَ البيتُ الذي بنيتُهُ
 ?iHtaraqa l-bayt-u l-aðii banaytu-(**hu**)
 burnt the-house which (I) built-(**it**)
 ‘The house which I built has burnt’

MSA uses relativisers of two types; relativisers of the first type denote specific referents in terms of gender and number, and relativisers of the other type can be used with any

referents of any gender or number (Ryding, 2005). Example relativisers of the former type include الذي *?allaḏii* for masculine singular, التي *?allatii* for feminine singular, الذان *?allaḏaani* for masculine dual, اللتان *?allataani* for feminine dual, الذين *?allaḏiina* for masculine plural, and اللاتي *?allaatii* for feminine plural. The second type relativisers are من *man* for animate referents of any number or gender, and ما *maa* for inanimate referents of any type and number.

In contrast, the colloquial dialects use only one relativiser *illi* ‘that’ for all types of referents. Also, these dialects seem to differ in relation to allowing gaps in object relatives. Alresaini (2012) stated, based on a corpus-based study, that resumptive pronouns are essential in definite object relatives in Colloquial Levantine Arabic (CLA) and Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA). Colloquial Gulf Arabic (CGA), on the other hand, is found allowing an option of resumptive pronouns or gaps to fill in the extraction site in definite object relatives, just like MSA. This difference between the dialects will be used as the dependent variable when examining knowledge of resumption in MSA definite relative clauses.

Finally, it is argued that resumptive pronouns add a portion of meaning to the sentence (Galal, 2004); they add specificity and more clarity to the reference of the relativised element (Alresaini, 2007). Consider the following examples:

4. سيجدُ عادلُ المرأةَ التي يُحب
sayajidu Adel-u ?al-mar?at-aallatiiyuHib
will-find Adel-nom the-woman-acc that (he) love
‘Adel will find the woman that he loves’
5. سيجدُ عادلُ المرأةَ التي يُحبُّها
sayajidu Adel-u ?al-mar?at-aallatiiyuHibbu-**ha**
will-find Adel-nom the-woman-acc that (he) love-**her**
‘Adel will find the woman that he loves’

Doron (1982) and Sells (1984) point out (using equivalent examples from Hebrew) that only in sentence (5), the reference of the object relativised element, *?al-mar?ah* ‘the-woman’, must refer to a particular individual woman that Adel loves. However, in (4), where the resumptive pronoun is lacking, this relativised element can refer to a particular woman, as in (5), or have a more generic reference to unspecified woman of particular properties. Also, the proposal that resumptive pronouns add clarity to the meaning of the sentence can be confirmed when considering examples like (6) where resumption helps for disambiguation:

6. هذا الولدُ الذي ضَرَبَ*(هُ) موسى
haḏaa l-walad-u ?allaḏiiDaraba-*(hu) Musaa
this the-boy-nom that hit-3ms-him Musaa-nom
‘This is the boy that Musaa hit’

The sentence in (6) is ambiguous without the resumptive pronoun: the relativised element, *?al-walad* ‘the-boy’, could be misinterpreted as the agent due to lack of overt nominative case marking on *Musaa* and due to the shared ϕ features in *?al-walad* ‘the-boy’ and *Musaa*. In such examples, the resumptive pronoun in the relativisation site is required to

disambiguate the meaning of the sentence by making it clear that the agent is Musaa and the theme is ?al-walad ‘the-boy’.

Method

Participants

147 speakers of MSA participated in this study, who are native speakers of one of the following varieties of colloquial Arabic: Colloquial Levantine Arabic (CLA); Colloquial Gulf Arabic (CGA); and Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA). Their age ranged between 12;0 and 18;9 (mean age 14;6). 60 of the participants started being exposed to MSA as early as from age 2 up to age 6, in preschools, which use MSA as the only medium of teaching and communication. The remaining 87 participants started being ‘properly’ exposed to MSA from age 6 when they enrolled in primary schools, and this is the normal case for most other speakers of Arabic.² The participants of the study were divided into five groups depending on two factors: age of first exposure to MSA (AoE), and the colloquial variety of Arabic that they natively speak (CV). The groups included (i) E-CLA group – 30 speakers of CLA with early exposure to MSA (before age 6), (ii) L-CLA group – 27 speakers³ of CLA with late exposure to MSA (after age 6), (iii) E-CGA group – 30 speakers of CGA with early exposure to MSA, (iv) L-CGA group – 30 speakers of CGA with late exposure to MSA, and (v) L-CEA group – 30 speakers of CEA with late exposure to MSA. It was not possible to recruit speakers of CEA with early exposure to MSA (before age 6) due to the fact that there are no preschools in Egypt that apply the MSA immersion program. Yet, having the L-CEA group is beneficial to compare their performance in this experiment with the performance of the participants in L-CLA & L-CGA groups to test for the L1 influence.

The age of first exposure to MSA was identified by the age of starting school because using MSA is almost limited to schooling environment in the Arabic speaking countries (Al-Dannan 2010). Also, when recruiting the participants of the study, the criterion of requiring minimum 5 years of exposure to MSA was adopted to ensure testing the end-state grammar. This criterion is common in the field and has been adopted by many researchers (e.g., Patkowski, 1980; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Johnson, 1992; Shim, 1993). Table 1 provides detailed information about the groups of participants and from where they were recruited.

Table 1 Information about the participants in the experimental study

Groups	No.	CV	AoE	School	MSA Preschools
E-CLA	30	CLA	Early	3 secondary schools in Harasta City of Syria	Al-Azhaar Arabiyyah Kindergarten
E-CGA	30	CGA	Early	A secondary school in Dammam City of Saudi Arabia	Al-Bassam Kindergarten
L-CLA	27	CLA	Late	A secondary school in Harasta City of Syria	N/A
L-CGA	30	CGA	Late	A secondary school in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	N/A
L-CEA	30	CEA	Late	A high school in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia ⁴	N/A

Finally, all the participants in this study passed a proficiency test designed for Advance Level. The test was developed by a non-profit organization in Saudi Arabia called ‘Arabic-For-All’.

Materials

The participants in this study were administered an acceptability judgment task (AJT) that was designed to assess the participants' underlying knowledge of resumption in object relative clauses. The task was composed of 60 sentences in total which included three types of sentences: i) 10 sentences with object relative clauses repeated twice, once with resumptive pronouns and once without them; ii) 20 sentences as distractors, 10 of which are clearly grammatical and the other 10 are clearly ungrammatical; iii) 20 sentences on another syntactic phenomenon, not reported in this paper. Examples of the relevant test sentences include what follows:

(1) Object Relatives with Resumption [10 sentences]

qara?a maajid-un l-kitaab-a l-ađiištaraa-**hu**l-?usbuw9-a l-maaDii
 readMajid-nom the-book-accthat-s.m. (he)bought-**it**the-week the-past
 ‘Majid read the book that he bought last week’

(2) Object Relatives without Resumption [10 Sentences]

qara?a maajid-un l-kitaab-a l-ađiištaraa-**Ø**l-?usbuw9-a l-maaDii
 read Majid-nom the-book-accthat-s.m. (he)bought-**Ø**the-week the-past
 ‘Majid read the book that he bought last week’

The distribution of the test items was randomised and counterbalanced. All the test sentences were declaratives except for two sentences of the ungrammatical distractor type which were questions with the question word ungrammatically remaining in situ. The length of the sentences was between 6-9 words long with the majority being 7 words long. The sentences in general were straightforward using simple vocabulary and structures.

Procedure

Several data collection sessions were conducted in each school during the school day. Each school kindly dedicated a quiet room for data collection like the school library, a free classroom, or a computer lab. In this task, groups of three participants viewed single sentences on a laptop screen and listened to these sentences simultaneously. The participants were asked to judge individually whether the sentence they saw and heard was grammatically acceptable or not by choosing one option for each sentence from a four-point scale ranging from 'Very strange, Unacceptable' to 'Perfectly good, Perfectly acceptable'. A fifth option of 'Can't decide' was also available. The scale used was presented in a form as in Figure 1:

Very strange. Unacceptable.	A bit strange. Not really acceptable.	Fairly good. Acceptable.	Perfectly good. Perfectly Acceptable	Can't decide
-2	-1	+1	+2	X

Figure 1 The scale used to judge sentences in the AJT

Each sentence in this task showed on the screen for 10 seconds only and then the next sentence appeared. Also, the participants were not allowed to go back and change their decisions about previous sentences. This procedure of attempting to obtain quick responses without allowing a long time of thinking was followed to ensure assessing the participants' knowledge of the grammar and not their knowledge of MSA formal rules (Gass & Mackey, 2007). Half of the participants in each of the five groups were shown the test items in a different order from that shown to the other half.

Before starting the test, the participants did a pre-test training session to acquaint themselves with the test format and the rating scale. This session included three sentences that are irrelevant to the syntactic variables under study in this task. The actual test started with two distractor sentences, one grammatical and one ungrammatical, to give the participants a chance to familiarize themselves with the rating system and the test format. The test also ended in the same way to avoid random answers due to possible boredom or lack of concentration, which may be caused by, for example, rushing to finish. The actual test lasted for approximately 10 minutes.

Scoring

Any choice of +1 or +2 on the rating scale was considered to indicate acceptance, and any choice of -1 or -2 was considered to indicate rejection of that test sentence. Responses of 'Can't decide' did not occur in this data. Once all the items were scored following this scoring scheme, judgments for sentences with object relative clauses were checked to compare each participant's response to a sentence with resumption versus the same sentence without resumption. If both sentences were accepted, these are given the **value 1** to indicate that resumption is optional for this pair. If the sentence with resumption is accepted and the same sentence without resumption is rejected, these are given the **value 2** to indicate that resumption is obligatory for this pair. The third possible scenario is that the sentence with resumption is rejected and the same sentence without resumption is accepted; this pair was given the **value 3**, to indicate that resumption is not accepted in object relative clauses in that item. The fourth possible scenario is when both sentences are rejected, and in this case, these were given the **value 4** to indicate that rejection has occurred for reasons other than resumption.

All pairs of sentences which received values bigger than two were excluded from the analysis and considered as random errors and were treated as noise. This is because value 3 indicates that at least overt resumption is not possible where the fact is that it is possible in all the varieties of Arabic, standard and nonstandard. Also, value 4 indicates that rejection is for an irrelevant reason and thus data of this type were irrelevant to the test. Finally, values of 1 or 2 were counted for each group to indicate how much resumption is perceived as optional or obligatory in object relative clauses.

Results

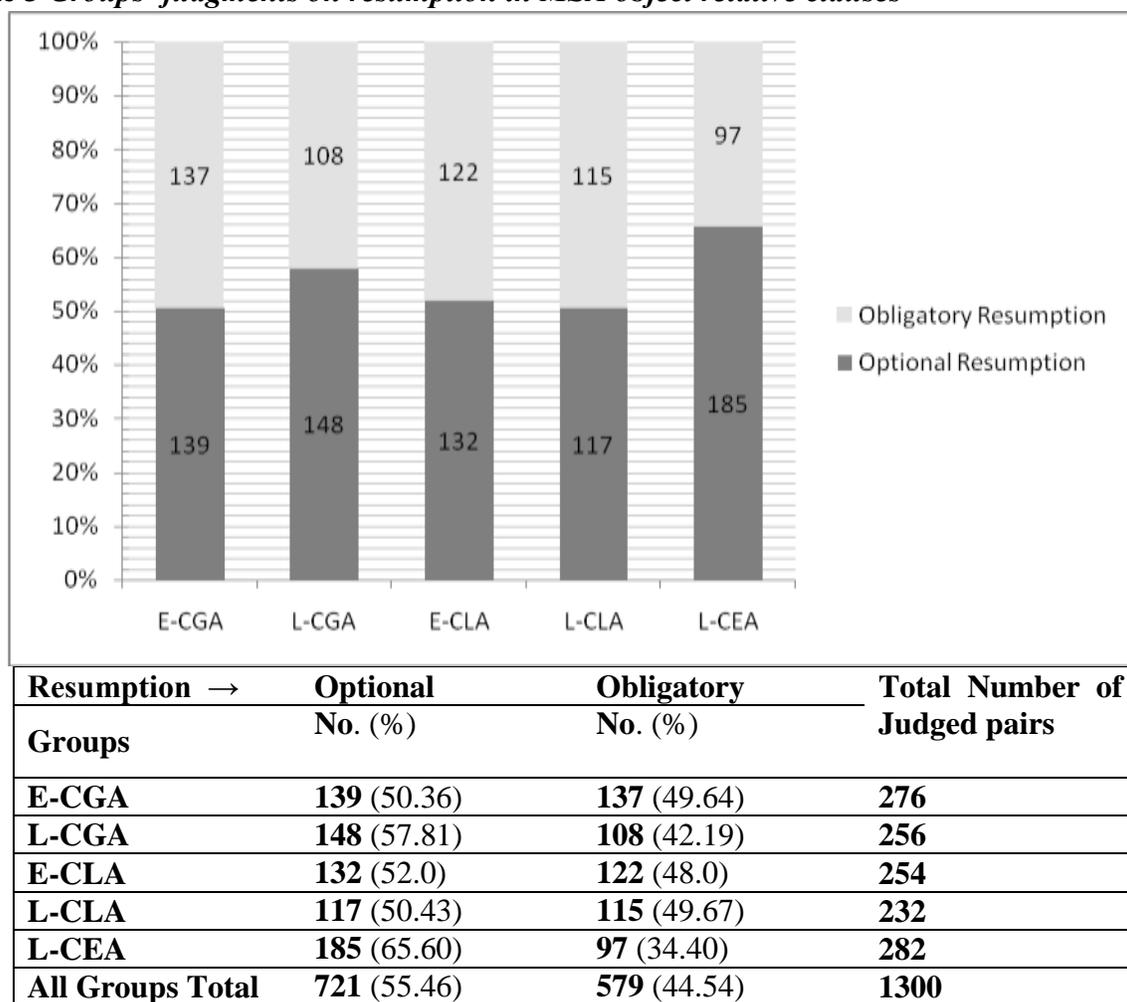
Table 2 shows the results of the 147 participants' judgments of these 10 pairs of sentences in terms of resumption in MSA object relative clauses.

Table 2 Total judgments on sentence pairs of resumption in MSA object relative clauses

Resumption →	Optional	Obligatory	Not Allowed	Irrelevant	Total No. of Judged Pairs
Sentence Pairs N (%)	721 (49%)	579 (39.4%)	47 (3.2%)	123 (8.4%)	1470

It was expected that groups with early exposure to MSA would treat resumption in MSA object relatives as optional regardless of the colloquial variety they speak. Also, it was expected that the colloquial variety (the L1) would have some effect on how the groups with late exposure to MSA would treat resumption in MSA object relatives. Based on this, it was expected that L-CLA and L-CEA participants would judge resumption in this study as obligatory, given that it is obligatory in the colloquial varieties they speak, and the L-CGA participants would continue to treat resumption as optional in MSA object relatives as it is optional in their colloquial variety. Table 3 shows the results of judging resumption by group.

Table 3 Groups' judgments on resumption in MSA object relative clauses



By looking at the figures in Table 3, these expectations do not seem to be supported. The Egyptian speakers, for example, achieved the highest rate of treating resumption in MSA object relatives as optional (65.6%) despite the fact that speakers of the same colloquial variety did not produce a single object relative clause without resumption in the colloquial corpus-based study (see, Alresaini, 2012). Also, there seems to be little difference between the judgments given by colloquial Levantine Arabic speakers with Early and Late exposure to MSA; the participants in both groups have judged resumption in half of the relevant test items as optional and as obligatory in the other half. Finally, although resumption in object relatives is optional in the colloquial Gulf variety of Arabic, as it is in MSA, the judgments given by the speakers of this variety do not seem to be different from the CLA speakers' judgments. In fact, the CGA speakers with late exposure to MSA treated resumption in MSA object relatives as optional more than those who had earlier exposure to MSA; 57.81% vs 50.36%, respectively. Statistical analyses were conducted to measure the effect of AoE and CV (the L1) separately by making various specific comparisons and manipulating groups of participants. These analyses are presented in the following two subsections.

Statistical Analysis: Effect of AoE

To check if early AoE has helped the participants to acquire a more native-like knowledge of resumption in MSA object relatives, data of groups with the same CV but different AoE were tested by two separate independent sample t-tests. This included comparing E-CGA with L-CGA and E-CLA with L-CLA participants' scores on optional resumption. The results of this test showed that there was no significant difference between the E-CGA and the L-CGA participants (E-CGA mean = 49.6, sd = 25.3, N = 30; L-CGA mean = 58.4, sd = 24.4, N = 30; the 95% CI for the difference in means is -21.72, 3.99; $t = -1.38$, $p = .173$, $df = 58$). Comparison between E-CLA and L-CLA also did not disclose a significant difference (E-CLA mean = 51.8, sd = 26.7, N = 30; L-CLA mean = 49.3, sd = 27.9, N = 27; the 95% CI for the difference in means is -12.00, 16.98 ; $t = .344$, $p = .732$, $df = 55$).

Statistical Analysis: Effect of CV (L1)

To verify if the colloquial variety (the L1) has an effect on the participants' knowledge of resumption in MSA relative clauses, data from groups with the same AoE but different CVs were entered into statistical tests. An independent sample t-test was conducted in SPSS Statistics 19 to compare between the E-CGA and the E-CLA scores in optional resumption. This test showed no significant difference between these two groups (E-CGA mean = 49.6, sd = 25.3, N = 30; E-CLA mean = 51.8, sd = 26.7, N = 30; the 95% CI for the difference in means is -15.70, 11.19; $t = -.335$, $p = .739$, $df = 58$).

This result was expected by the hypothesis here as it was assumed that earlier age of first exposure to MSA would help the participants to acquire a more native-like knowledge of resumption in MSA relatives and reduce the effect of the L1 if it exists. In fact, the L1 influence was expected to be found with the participants who had late exposure to MSA. A one way ANOVA was conducted in SPSS Statistics 19 to compare between L-CGA, L-CLA, and L-CEA groups in terms of their scores in optional resumption. The test showed that groups with late exposure to MSA but different CVs had no significant effect on data ($F(2,84) = 2.857$, $p = .063$). Tukey HSD and LSD post hoc tests showed that L-CLA and L-CEA groups are significantly different ($p = .050$ & $.019$, respectively). This difference,

however, cannot be due to L1 influence given that resumption in object relatives in both colloquial varieties is obligatory. The descriptive statistics for this test are given in Table 4.

Table 4 *Descriptive statistics for optional resumption scores of groups with late exposure*

Groups	No of Participants	Mean	Sd	95% CI for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower	Upper		
L-CGA	30	58.4	24.4	49.3	67.6	20.0	100.0
L-CLA	27	49.3	27.9	38.3	60.4	.0	90.0
L-CEA	30	65.5	24.5	56.4	74.7	20.0	100.0
Total	87	58.1	26.1	52.5	63.6	.0	100.0

General Statistical Effect of Independent Variables & Statistical Group Comparisons

The data of judging resumption as optional in MSA object relatives were entered into a Univariate Analysis of Variance using the software IBM SPSS Statistics 19 to measure the effect of the colloquial variety (the L1) and the age of first exposure to MSA on the participants' performance statistically. This statistical test showed that there was no significant effect of either the colloquial varieties (CV) or the age of first exposure to MSA (AoE) on judging resumption in MSA object relatives. For CV: $F(2,142) = 2.237$, $p = 0.111$; for AoE: $F(1,142) = 0.447$, $p = 0.505$. The interaction of CV and AoE was not significant either ($F(1,142) = 1.418$, $p = 0.236$).

Further statistical analyses were conducted to compare the means of the five groups on judging resumption in MSA object relatives as optional. This was done using a One Way ANOVA in SPSS Statistics 19 with the groups as the factor and optional resumption as the dependent variable. The ANOVA showed no statistical effect of different groups on data ($F(4,142) = 2.163$, $p = 0.076$). The descriptive statistics are given in Table 5.

Table 5 *Descriptive statistics for groups' scores on judging resumption as optional*

Groups	No of Participants	Mean	Sd	95% CI for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower	Upper		
E-CGA	30	49.6	25.3	40.1	59.0	11.1	100.0
L-CGA	30	58.4	24.4	49.3	67.6	20.0	100.0
E-CLA	30	51.8	26.7	41.9	61.8	.0	100.0
L-CLA	27	49.3	27.9	38.3	60.4	.0	90.0
L-CEA	30	65.5	24.5	56.4	74.7	20.0	100.0
Total	147	55.1	26.2	50.8	59.3	.0	100.0

Results of Acceptance & Rejection by Test Item

To check if there were certain test sentences that got accepted or rejected more than the other sentences, the rate of acceptance and rejection was calculated for each test sentence and presented in Table 6. As explained before, any sentence judged as +2 or +1 was considered to indicate acceptance whereas choices of -2 or -1 were considered to indicate rejection of that particular test sentence. Responses of 'Can't Decide' did not occur in this data.

The figures in Table 6 show no big differences between the groups of participants in terms of accepting or rejecting a certain test sentence. Also, these figures show that object relative clauses with resumptive pronouns were generally more accepted than those without resumptive pronouns. The average of accepting object relatives with resumptive pronouns by all the participants is 88.5% (range: 66.0% - 95.9%) compared to 52.2% (range: 36.1% - 94.6%) as the average of accepting these sentences without resumptive pronouns. This reflects the expected preference for resumption in object relatives.

Table 6 Rate of acceptance and rejection of test sentences with object relative clauses

Type	Items	Judgments		E-CGA	L-CGA	E-CLA	L-CLA	L-CEA	Total
		Acc. (%)	No. (%)						
Relative Clauses with Resumptive Pronouns	T1A0 1	Acc. (%)	No. 28 (93.3)	29 (96.7)	29 (96.7)	25 (92.6)	30 (100)	141 (95.9)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 2 (6.7)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	2 (7.4)	0 (0)	6 (4.1)	
	T1A0 2	Acc. (%)	No. 29 (96.7)	29 (96.7)	28 (93.3)	26 (96.3)	29 (96.7)	141 (95.9)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	1 (3.7)	1 (3.3)	6 (4.1)	
	T1A0 3	Acc. (%)	No. 26 (86.7)	21 (70.0)	24 (80.0)	20 (74.1)	22 (73.3)	113 (76.9)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 4 (13.3)	9 (30.0)	6 (20.0)	7 (25.9)	8 (26.7)	34 (23.1)	
	T1A0 4	Acc. (%)	No. 23 (76.7)	15 (50.0)	15 (50.0)	18 (66.7)	26 (86.7)	97 (66.0)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 7 (23.3)	15 (50.0)	15 (50.0)	9 (33.3)	4 (13.3)	50 (34.0)	
	T1A0 5	Acc. (%)	No. 29 (96.7)	28 (93.3)	24 (80.0)	25 (92.6)	29 (96.7)	135 (91.8)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)	6 (20.0)	2 (7.4)	1 (3.3)	12 (8.2)	
	T1A0 6	Acc. (%)	No. 27 (90.0)	22 (73.3)	26 (86.7)	24 (88.9)	28 (93.3)	127 (86.4)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 3 (10.0)	8 (26.7)	4 (13.3)	3 (11.1)	2 (6.7)	20 (13.6)	
	T1A0 7	Acc. (%)	No. 30 (100)	25 (83.3)	27 (90.0)	25 (92.6)	30 (100)	137 (93.2)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 0 (0)	5 (16.7)	3 (10.0)	2 (7.4)	0 (0)	10 (6.8)	
	T1A0 8	Acc. (%)	No. 29 (96.7)	27 (90.0)	27 (90.0)	23 (85.2)	29 (96.7)	135 (91.8)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)	3 (10.0)	4 (14.8)	1 (3.3)	12 (8.2)	
	T1A0 9	Acc. (%)	No. 29 (96.7)	30 (100)	25 (83.3)	23 (85.2)	30 (100)	137 (93.2)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 1 (3.3)	0 (0)	5 (16.7)	4 (14.8)	0 (0)	10 (6.8)	
T1A1	Acc. (%)	No. 27 (90.0)	30 (100)	29 (96.7)	23 (85.2)	29 (96.7)	138 (93.9)		

	0	(%)	(90.0)		(96.7)	(85.2)	(96.7)	
		Rej. (%)	No. 3 (10.0)	0 (0)	1 (3.3)	4 (14.8)	1 (3.3)	9 (6.1)
Relative Clauses without Resumptive Pronouns	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 10 (33.3)	13 (43.3)	10 (33.3)	7 (25.9)	16 (53.3)	56 (38.1)
	1	Rej. (%)	No. 20 (66.6)	17 (56.7)	20 (66.6)	20 (74.1)	14 (46.7)	91 (61.9)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 14 (46.7)	18 (60.0)	17 (56.7)	17 (63.0)	18 (60.0)	84 (57.1)
	2	Rej. (%)	No. 16 (53.3)	12 (40.0)	13 (43.3)	10 (37.0)	12 (40.0)	63 (42.9)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 11 (36.7)	11 (36.7)	12 (40.0)	11 (40.7)	19 (63.3)	64 (43.5)
	3	Rej. (%)	No. 19 (63.3)	19 (63.3)	18 (60.0)	16 (59.3)	11 (36.7)	83 (56.5)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 12 (40.0)	8 (26.7)	6 (20.0)	10 (37.0)	17 (56.7)	53 (36.1)
	4	Rej. (%)	No. 18 (60.0)	22 (73.3)	24 (80.0)	17 (63.0)	13 (43.3)	94 (63.9)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 10 (33.3)	14 (46.7)	12 (40.0)	10 (37.0)	16 (53.3)	62 (42.2)
	5	Rej. (%)	No. 20 (66.6)	16 (53.3)	18 (60.0)	17 (63.0)	14 (46.7)	85 (57.8)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 6 (20.0)	12 (40.0)	15 (50.0)	7 (25.9)	16 (53.3)	56 (38.1)
	6	Rej. (%)	No. 24 (80.0)	18 (60.0)	15 (50.0)	20 (74.1)	14 (46.7)	91 (61.9)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 12 (40.0)	11 (36.7)	9 (30.0)	12 (44.4)	19 (63.3)	63 (42.9)
	7	Rej. (%)	No. 18 (60.0)	19 (63.3)	21 (70.0)	15 (55.6)	11 (36.3)	84 (57.1)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 15 (50.0)	12 (40.0)	14 (46.7)	8 (29.6)	12 (40.0)	61 (41.5)
	8	Rej. (%)	No. 15 (50.0)	18 (60.0)	16 (53.3)	19 (70.4)	18 (60.0)	86 (58.5)
	T1B0	Acc. (%)	No. 28 (93.3)	30 (100)	26 (86.7)	25 (92.6)	30 (100)	139 (94.6)
	9	Rej. (%)	No. 2 (6.7)	0 (0)	4 (13.3)	2 (7.4)	0 (0)	8 (5.4)
	T1B1	Acc. (%)	No. 28 (93.3)	28 (93.3)	26 (86.7)	20 (74.1)	28 (93.3)	130 (88.4)
	0	Rej. (%)	No. 2 (6.7)	2 (6.7)	4 (13.3)	7 (25.9)	2 (6.7)	17 (11.6)

Although the general rate of acceptance of relative clauses without resumption is low, the last two sentences (T1B09 & T1B10) achieved a remarkably higher rate of acceptance (94.6% & 88.4%, respectively, compared with <58% on the other T1B tokens). The relative clauses in these two sentences were with the relativisers *maa* and *man*, respectively, which have different characteristics from the other relativisers used in the rest of the test sentences.

As explained in section 1.3, MSA uses different relativisers depending on the gender and the number of the referent like *?allaḏii* for masculine singular, *?allatii* for feminine singular, *?allaḏiina* for masculine plural, etc. However, *maa* and *man* do not have these gender and number specifications and can be used with referents of any gender and number. One difference between these two relativisers though is that *maa* is used with inanimate referents whereas *man* is used with animate referents. The test items results here seem to suggest that relative clauses using these two relativisers are more accepted in MSA than with other relativisers when the resumptive pronoun is absent.

Discussion

The research questions of this study seek to answer whether Arabs across the Arab world represent ‘uniform’ (L1 type) or ‘variant’ (L2 type) versions of MSA end-state grammar, and if variant, whether this is due to age of first exposure to MSA (AoE), influence of the colloquial dialect (the L1), or both. Briefly, the results of this study showed that participant groups of distinct AoE and L1 were found not significantly different in terms of performance acceptability judgment task (AJT), which aimed to assess the participants’ MSA competence of resumption in object relative clauses. Also, the results showed that there was no statistical effect of the two independent variables: AoE and the colloquial dialect.

Is MSA Competence of L1 or L2 type?

It is assumed in this study that E-CLA and E-CGA participants had acquired MSA as a second L1 along with the colloquial dialect. This is because they started acquiring MSA naturally via immersion when they were 2 or 3 years old while their acquisition of the colloquial dialect was still in process. In contrast, participants of the other groups with relatively late exposure to MSA (at age 6) are assumed to have acquired MSA as an L2 at least due to their knowledge of the previously acquired dialect when they started acquiring MSA.

Contrary to the hypothesis of this study, the data presented in the previous section strongly point to the suggestion that the participants with late exposure to MSA, who represent the majority of Arabic speakers across the Arab world, succeeded in acquiring a native-like (uniform) MSA competence, despite their late exposure to MSA and the variant colloquial dialects they speak; at least in relation to their ultimate knowledge of resumption in MSA object relative clauses.

These empirical findings do not support the acquisition theory-based expectation that L2 acquirers will not achieve native-like competence due to lack of access to UG (if it is assumed that the critical period had declined or come to its end before age 6) and/or due to L1 influence (e.g., Bley-Vroman, 1989; Schachter, 1990; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994; White, 2003). If it was true that L2 acquirers had no or only partial access to UG due to end of the critical period (Bley-Vroman, 1989; Schachter, 1990), the current findings could perhaps be explained by the fact that even the late acquirers of MSA in this study started acquisition at age 6 which is still early and may be within the age boundaries of the critical period during which access to UG is still available, and their innate ability is still active. If, however, full access to UG is available for L2 acquirers anyway regardless of AoE, as the FT/FA model by Schwartz & Sprouse (1994) assumes, then the participants in this study may have managed to

restructure their transferred L1 grammar to converge on native knowledge of the target language before reaching the end-state stage of acquiring MSA.

The syntactic phenomenon investigated was not expected to be salient in the L2 input due to the fact that it is optional in MSA and one of the two options is always available in the L1 grammar. Also, exposure to input was almost entirely limited to the written form of MSA for the *late* acquirers. Yet, if the participants are to be assumed to have managed to restructure their L1 grammars, they must have encountered clear and obvious cues in the MSA input during their acquisition process, which helped them to acquire the MSA syntactic structure under study. This, however, does not necessarily mean that speakers of MSA with *late* AoE have managed to restructure all the properties of their L1 grammar and acquire a full native-like competence of MSA. In fact, speakers of MSA may have failed to restructure other grammatical properties of their L1 that were not covered by this study, due to obscure or insufficient input. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate acquisition of other syntactic structures as well to confirm or disconfirm the present findings.

Moreover, there are further reasons why this finding that speakers of different dialects represent native-like competence in MSA cannot be considered to be conclusive based solely on the data presented here. As Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) suggest, it is essential to assess the learners' ultimate attainment in other sub-components of the target language as well, to come to a final conclusion about native-like attainment. The empirical data presented in this study assessed knowledge of grammatical competence within certain linguistic domains, whereas further empirical evidence must be sought in other linguistic domains (e.g., phonology) to heighten the validity of the current finding and reach a final conclusion about whether or not speakers of MSA have actually attained a comprehensive native-like proficiency. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) claim that close investigation of early L2 acquisition may reveal at the level of subtle details that the subjects are different from monolingual native speakers. Such a claim implies that differences between observed native-like and actual native competence may be missed when investigating general attainment of specific structures in a single linguistic domain. This possibility becomes even more probable with cases like the case of acquiring MSA for which there are no monolingual native speakers to compare with.

Although, in general, resumption was treated as optional in the present experimental study; the rates of obligatory resumption were still relatively high: up to 50% in some cases. This contrasts with descriptive grammars of MSA. According to these descriptive grammars, these two syntactic phenomena are optional not obligatory in MSA. Moreover, such judgements cannot be attributed to L1 influence as they occurred in data of participants who speak dialects that are not different from MSA with regard to resumption (CGA). Also, participants of groups with early as well as late exposure to MSA produced this type of data, which factors out the effect of AoE. Despite the fact that performance of the study's participants was uniform across the variant groups, existence of such data suggests that the MSA competence developed by these participants may be different from the competence of monolingual native speakers of MSA if they exist. Another explanation of the existence for such data could be that MSA has undergone some change, and descriptive grammars simply do not reflect the current version of it. The latter explanation though is less appealing, as

analysis of judgments by test items did not reveal clear patterns of judgment regarding specific test items as unacceptable without resumption or agreement. Unfortunately, it is not possible to investigate these explanations further because (by hypothesis) monolingual speakers of MSA do not exist.

The Critical Period and the Effect of AoE

The data of the current study showed that participants with AoE of 6 or before have managed to attain a uniform L1-type knowledge of at least the syntactic phenomenon under investigation. If a critical period exists for second language acquisition, this suggests that the participants of the current study were at the optimal phase of the critical period when they started acquiring MSA. Since all the participants in this study started acquiring MSA at age 6 or earlier, and they performed in a uniform manner, the present data cannot point to the end of the optimal phase. Future research may include participants with later AoE and make correlation analyses between AoE and attainment to contribute with specifications on when the optimal phase of the critical period starts and comes to an end.

The results of the current study contrast with Meisel's (2008) and Shim's (1993) results in relation to the end of the optimal phase. This is because the participants with late AoE in this study started acquiring MSA later than age 3;7 and age 5 and, yet, they managed to perform in a uniform manner that is comparable to that of the participants with early AoE to MSA. Although it is not clear from analysing this data alone when the optimal phase comes to its end with the case of speakers of Arabic dialects acquiring MSA, this extended optimal phase, compared to what Meisel and Shim reported, can be explained by the typological closeness between the Arabic dialects and MSA. This is in analogy to Birdsong & Molis's (2001) explanation of the extended optimal phase effects on their participants' performance compared to the results of Johnson & Newport (1989). Birdsong & Molis (2001) argue that because there is a great deal of similarity between Spanish (L1) and English (L2), compared to Korean and Chinese (L1) and English (L2) in Johnson & Newport (1989), even participants who arrived relatively late in an English speaking community could successfully master L2 properties. Similarly, in a partial replication of Johnson & Newport (1989) but with Spanish and Chinese learners of English, Bialystok & Miller (1999) found that the typological similarities between Spanish and English could be a reason for the slightly delayed age effects noted for the Spanish learners, compared to the Chinese learners. This applies even more so to the situation of the participants of the current study. Although there are differences between the colloquial dialects of Arabic and MSA, there are, at the same time, a large number of similarities between them across all the linguistic domains, compared to L1-L2 pairings in Meisel's (German-French) and in Shim's (Korean-English) studies. This may have helped the participants of the current study to have extended the period of optimal sensitivity to MSA input that shows specifications on the syntactic phenomena under investigation helping them to acquire these phenomena successfully.

Meisel (2008; 2009; 2011), following Seliger (1978) and Schachter (1996), argues that there are several sensitive periods within the critical period. According to him, the grammatical domains should not be expected to be affected during a single age period. Because past research has pointed out that different areas of grammar do not develop simultaneously, Meisel argues that "the critical period is better understood as a cluster of

sensitive phases during which the LAD [the language acquisition device] is optimally prepared to integrate new information into developing grammars” (2011, p. 205). In fact, he argues that even acquisition of properties within a single grammatical domain might not be affected during a single age period, as development of properties of a single grammatical domain may occur at different age periods. Moreover, Mesiel(2011) assumes that each sensitive phase during the critical period should be viewed as starting with a relatively short onset followed by an optimal period followed by a declining period toward a gradual offset.

If this assumption is correct, then it is safe to claim that at least the sensitive period for acquiring resumption in MSA object relative clauses had not faded out by the age of 6. In fact, it is safe to claim that the optimal period of this sensitive phase had not passed by this age. This is evident by the fact that participants with AoE at age 6 or before managed to acquire this syntactic phenomenon and perform in the task of the study in a uniform manner. By adopting this assumption about critical periods, the possibility of finding age related effects on the acquisition of other syntactic phenomena or the acquisition of other phenomena in different grammatical domains is not excluded; it is possible that the sensitive phase(s) for acquiring those phenomena could be over by the age of 6. Thus, further research is needed to confirm or disconfirm the major finding of this study in relation to the ultimate attainment of acquiring MSA starting at age 6.

The Effect of the Colloquial Dialects (the L1s)

The data of this study showed that the variant colloquial varieties of Arabic, which the participants speak as their L1, had no significant effect on the results. Keeping in mind the conclusion that participants who started acquiring MSA at age 6 did not miss the optimal phase of the sensitive period for acquiring the investigated syntactic phenomenon, it might be appropriate to claim that all the participants had full access to UG when acquiring MSA, regardless of which model of transfer in L2 acquisition is considered. In addition, the fact that participants performed in a uniform manner despite the variant colloquial dialects they speak suggests that they were successful in restructuring their variant L1 knowledge to converge on a uniform MSA grammar. This also leads to the conclusion that despite the fact that exposure to MSA was almost limited to the written form for the late acquirers, the required MSA input for restructuring L1 knowledge of the syntactic phenomena under study must have been adequately available to these participants together with their full access to UG.

Montrul(2010) claims that L1 knowledge of structures at both internal and external linguistic domain interfaces is subject to transfer more than L1 knowledge of purely syntactic structures. This claim places further emphasis on the assumption here that the participants with late AoE had at least transferred their L1 knowledge of resumption in object relative clauses when they started acquiring MSA, but they also managed to restructure this knowledge to a uniform representation of MSA. This is because acquiring resumption in MSA relative clauses can be claimed to involve knowledge from more than one linguistic domain as well. Resumption in object relatives can be claimed to be at the syntax-semantics interface if resumptive pronouns are viewed as adding more specificity to the reference of the relativised element (see Alresaini, 2007).

Oh (2010) concludes that it is possible to recover from negative transfer of L1 knowledge at the syntax-semantics interface. The results of the current study support Oh's (2010) conclusion. As mentioned earlier, L-CLA and L-CEA participants were successful in acquiring MSA properties of resumption in object relative clauses. If it is assumed that these learners had transferred their dialects' grammars, then they seem to have managed to restructure from these grammars that allow only base-generation strategy to form object relatives with resumptive pronouns to a grammar that allows both this base-generation strategy and a movement strategy to form this type of relatives with a gap filled with a trace instead of a resumptive pronoun depending on whether more specificity is needed.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the findings of an experimental study investigating whether participants with exposure to MSA at age 6 succeeded in acquiring a native-like competence in MSA. It was concluded that these participants have managed to attain native-like end-state knowledge of at least resumption in object relative clauses. However, further investigation of other phenomena in the syntactic domain and other linguistic domains is required for a comprehensive assessment of the ultimate attainment of MSA by learners who start acquisition at age 6. The paper also discussed the critical period and effect of the AoE on the ultimate attainment of the target language. It was argued that starting to acquire MSA at age 6 does not affect negatively the ultimate attainment of at least knowledge of resumption in object relative clauses. It seems that participants who start at this age do not miss the optimal phase of the relevant sensitive period. Further research with a wide range of AoEs is needed to determine specifications of the age boundaries of the sensitive period or the critical period as a whole. This paper also discussed the effect of the colloquial dialects on the end-state grammar of MSA. The participants seem to have managed to restructure their transferred L1 knowledge due to full access to UG and the adequate availability of the relevant MSA input. Thus, L1 knowledge was found not to have a significant effect on the results.

Notes

1. This paper is an extract from my PhD thesis titled: 'Acquisition of Modern Standard Arabic by Speakers of Different Arabic Colloquial Varieties' (2012), at the University of York, UK.
2. Children in normal situations may hear MSA on TV or Mosques, for example, before they go to the primary school, but the amount of exposure varies from one child to another, and for most, there is no chance to communicate by using it.
3. This group was originally planned to include 30 participants like the other groups, but the researcher had to leave Syria due to the growing political conflict in the country in April 2011, leaving behind the remaining 3 participants.
4. It was planned to collect data for this group from Egyptian students in Egypt in January 2011, but the data collection trip was hindered first by delay of sponsoring funds and then the Egyptian Revolution started and made it impossible to go to Egypt at that time. The members of this group, though, were Egyptians who had come with their families who work for a temporary time in Saudi Arabia, but they had had their primary and secondary education in Egypt.

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