

Substrate Breaking Free: The Case of the Argument Flagging and Indexing Construction in the Jewish Dialect of Baghdad

ABSTRACT The Argument Flagging and Indexing Construction (AFIC) is commonly used in the Jewish Arabic dialect of Baghdad (JB) to mark arguments of the clause. Traces of equivalent constructions can be found in older Semitic languages as well as Modern Arabic dialects, and it is widely accepted that the existence of the AFIC in JB reflects Aramaic substrate. Nonetheless, neither Syriac nor any modern Aramaic or Arabic dialect present the diversity of syntactic functions and sub-constructions that the AFIC in JB does. Moreover, despite the peculiar semantic or pragmatic nuance that accompanies its use in JB, the AFIC is much more common in use in JB in comparison to other modern dialects. These differences motivated the current study, which aims at understanding the way the AFIC was absorbed into JB as well as the way it was further developed in the dialect.

KEYWORDS argument marking, historical linguistics, the Jewish dialect of Baghdad, Semitic languages, Aramaic, Arabic dialectology

1 The AFIC

The Jewish Arabic dialect of Baghdad (JB) employs a particular construction to mark constituents of the clause as arguments. This construction, which we call the Argument Flagging and Indexing Construction (AFIC), typically marks the argument twice—once by a flag and once by a person index:

- (1) *tənqáf-u* *l-əl-bərgəl*
steep.IPFV.2MSG-3MSG 1¹-DEF-bulgur
'you steep the bulgur'

1 As a central topic of this article, the morpheme *l-* will be glossed as is throughout the article.

when an indirect object is marked, the dative preposition *l-* is infix between the verb and the person index, and when an oblique argument is marked, a preposition other than *l-* comes between the verb and the person index. In addition, while the verb, the gram and the person index constitute a single phonological word when direct and indirect objects are marked, two separate phonological words are produced when an oblique argument is marked. As for genitive argument marking, it stands out from the other formulas since its person index is suffixed to a noun rather than to a verb. A pronominal suffix on a noun is a possessive pronoun, and thus the flagged argument that agrees with the pronoun is assigned with the function of the genitive.

Naturally, argument marking in JB does not have to be realised through the AFIC. There are additional ways to mark objects, or oblique and genitive arguments. Through the use of the AFIC, a specific semantic or pragmatic goal is achieved:

- When direct objects are marked, the AFIC serves as a differential object marking (DOM) instrument, whereby only definite objects are marked. Indefinite objects cannot be marked by the AFIC. The same goes for indirect objects, although indefinite indirect objects are, essentially, very rare.
- The AFIC will be used to mark oblique arguments in order to focus on them or to mark the bit before the climax in a narrative. Thus, to achieve pragmatic goals.
- Finally, when genitive relation is marked by the AFIC, the main noun must be inalienable.

To achieve these semantic or pragmatic goals, however, it is not necessary to use the full AFIC, namely a construction in which the argument is both flagged and indexed. In certain cases, only a flag or a person index might take part in the construction. Moreover, in the case of direct object marking neither a flag nor a person index has to take part. In total, four different constructions can, potentially, be used. We term them Strategy 1–4:

Strategy 1—indexed and flagged argument (full AFIC)

Strategy 2—indexed but flag-less argument

Strategy 3—index-less but flagged argument

Strategy 4—index-less and flag-less argument (marker-less construction)

The distribution of the different strategies across syntactic functions in our corpus² is presented in Table 1:

² This research is based on a corpus of JB oral texts (Bar-Moshe 2019).

TABLE 1. The distribution of the different strategies across syntactic functions.

	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4
Direct object marking	85	94	3	49
Indirect object marking	28	5	5	N/A
Oblique marking	10	2	N/A	N/A
Genitive marking	28	2	N/A	N/A

In Bar-Moshe (2021), the restrictions that dictate the distribution that we see in Table 1 are discussed in detail. Considerations such as the NP type of the argument, its definiteness and individuation, word order, the inclusion of additional arguments into the clause and others are taken into account. We will not repeat them here, but will, nevertheless, highlight the following points about the different marking strategies:

1. Strategy 1 is the most common way by which arguments are marked when the need to achieve the semantic or pragmatic goals that were noted above arises. The only exception is direct object marking, where Strategy 2 is slightly more common.
2. Strategy 2 is mainly used when the argument opens with a definite article. In fact, it is limited to these types of arguments in the case of oblique and genitive marking. While it is rarely used when the need arises to mark indirect objects and genitive or oblique arguments, it is the most common way by which direct objects are marked.
3. Strategy 3 is very rare. Due to the absence of the person index, which, as we know, is in charge of assigning the argument with the syntactic function, Strategy 3 is used only when the syntactic function of the argument can be clearly inferred otherwise from the clause. Moreover, when direct objects are marked using Strategy 3, they are limited to pronominal demonstratives.
4. The only function that is compatible with Strategy 4 is direct object marking. This means that definite direct objects can be marked (or rather can be left unmarked) in the same way that indefinite direct object are, which contradicts our claim above that the AFIC is used as an instrument of DOM. Indeed, DOM is, theoretically, violated under Strategy 4, but the reason for that is parallel unrelated historical developments which are discussed in details in Bar-Moshe (2022: 38–40) and will be further elaborated on in § 2.2.

That different strategies can be synchronically used, as reflected by Table 1, raises the suspicion that diachronic developments that are still ongoing are involved. In the following sections, we will find out whether this suspicion is justified.

2 The diachronic development of the AFIC

Arabic replaced Aramaic as the lingua franca in Iraq following the Arab conquests in the seventh century. The process of adapting Arabic was quicker in the urban centres and in southern Iraq. By the eleventh century, the Jews had stopped using Aramaic as a written language (Khan 2007: 106–107), which means that they ceased using it as a spoken language even before that.

That the AFIC reflects an Aramaic substrate in JB, as well as in Mesopotamian and Levantine Arabic in general, is widely accepted in the literature (Blanc 1964: 130; Diem 1979: 47; Hopkins 1997: 358; Rubin 2005: 106, 115; Palva 2009: 22; del Río Sánchez 2013: 135–136). Thus, looking at the construction in Aramaic and in neighbouring dialects might teach us about the way the four strategies have developed and the constraints that dictate their use.

2.1 The AFIC in Semitic

Marking a direct object by the AFIC³ received much more description in the linguistic literature in comparison to other syntactic functions. Indirect object marking is usually discussed together with direct object marking, many times without even noting the difference between them. Genitive marking received less treatment in comparison to direct object marking, but still much more than oblique marking, which is almost never mentioned. These tendencies correspond to the distribution of the different functions in JB, as reflected in Table 1, and they probably correspond also to the statistical prominence of the different functions in Semitic. The available information about marking the different syntactic functions with the AFIC in Semitic is gathered in the following paragraphs, function by function.

2.1.1 Direct object marking

Marking the direct object by the dative preposition is a known phenomenon in Semitic languages like Arabic, Aramaic, Late Biblical Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, Akkadian, Ge'ez, Tigrinya and Tigré (Khan 1984: 468–469; Mansour 1991: 44; Rubin 2005: 92, 95, 107, 109–110). Classical Arabic (CA) and Middle Arabic, as well as modern Arabic dialects,

3 The term AFIC as well as the division into four different strategies were, naturally, not termed and noted as such by scholars other than the author. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience, they will be used here to refer to equivalent constructions that were identified in the literature.

present the use of the preposition *li-* as a direct object flag (Rubin 2005: 110). This use is marginal, however, especially as far as CA is concerned (Blau 2017: 67).

The full AFIC was widespread in Syriac as well as in later Eastern Aramaic dialects like Babylonian Talmudic and Mandaic (Rubin 2005: 100–101, 103). In Arabic, it is found in Baghdadi sources dated as early as the eleventh century, as well as in Judeo Middle Arabic and Christian Palestinian Middle Arabic (Blanc 1964: 130; Levin 1994: 325; Rubin 2005: 106). As for Modern Arabic, it can be found in Lebanese dialects (Féghali 1928: 362; Koutsoudas 1978: 529), Syrian dialects (Cowell 1964: 435, 439; Grotzfeld 1964: 127), and *qəltu*-dialects like the Muslim dialect of Mosul (Jastrow 1979: 49), the Jewish dialect of Siverek (Nevo 1999: 75), the dialect of Tikrit (Johnstone 1975: 107) and the Karaite dialect of Hit (Khan 1997: 93). Specifically for the dialects of Baghdad, the full construction is present also in the Muslim (MB) and the Christian dialect (CB) (Blanc 1964: 128–130; Abu-Haidar 1991: 116; Erwin 2004: 332). Blanc claims, however, that it is rarer in both in comparison to JB.

Strategy 2 is attested to some extent in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and in Syriac (Nöldeke 1898: 218–220; Hopkins 1997: 351, 353). It is absent, as far as we could gather, from any other modern Arabic or Aramaic dialect apart from some *qəltu*-dialects and MB. Indeed, Blanc (1964: 128) notes the option to use Strategy 2 in all three dialects of Baghdad⁴ when a definite article precedes the object. This matches our findings about object-NPs that open with a definite article, but ignores other types of object-NPs that may be hosted under the unflagged strategies. Interestingly, no flag precedes the NP in all the examples that Blanc provides of object-NPs that open with a definite article in CB and JB.⁵ In some of the examples that he provides from MB, on the other hand, a flag precedes the definite article. In other modern Arabic dialects, all the examples of object-NPs that open with a definite article show that it is further preceded by a flag (see, for example, Levin 1987: 33–35 for the dialect of the Galilee, and Brustad 2000: 356–357 for Syrian dialects). This is, probably, not a coincidence—it is possible that the unflagged but indexed construction is a feature of *qəltu*-dialects⁶ that penetrated, to some extent, also into MB.

An equivalent construction to Strategy 3 can be found in Syriac (Hopkins 1997: 353–354), in Ge'ez (though rarely, Hopkins 1997: 354) and in Christian and Jewish Middle Arabic texts (Blau 1966–1967: 414). Neither Blanc (1964) nor Abu-Haidar (1991)

4 Interestingly, neither Abu-Haidar (1991) nor Mansour (1991) mention the option to leave the construction unflagged in CB or JB, respectively.

5 Only one example of object-NP that opens with a definite article and is also preceded by a flag is given by Blanc (1964: 128), but it seems to be a theoretical one, as it is shared by all three dialects.

6 The option to leave the flag out is attested also in the Jewish dialect of Arbīl (Jastrow 1988: 55), the Jewish dialect of Nusaybin/Qamišli (Jastrow 1989: 158) and the Jewish dialect of Siverek (Nevo 1999: 75). All three dialects belong to the *qəltu* group. Strategy 2 seems to be absent from the neo-Aramaic dialect of Maṣlūla (Hopkins 1997: 358; as well as the descriptions of Spitaler 1938, Correll 1978 and Arnold 1990).

mention such a construction in CB or MB. As for other Arabic dialects,⁷ Féghali (1928: 362) notes it in Lebanon, but mentions that it is not as common as Strategy 1 although it probably used to be quite common in the past. Both Spitaler (1938: 219) and Correll (1978: 15) agree that Strategy 3 occurs only rarely in Maflūla and that it should not be considered the norm.

Finally, the marker-less construction is not mentioned specifically in the available descriptions due to the absence of any formal marker. However, all the examples that Abu-Haidar provides for the use of the full construction in CB are repeated with the marker-less construction, giving the impression that they stand in free variation, or in her own words, that they have ‘the same semantic value’ (Abu-Haidar 1991: 116). As she only gives examples of object-NPs that open with a definite article, it is difficult to judge whether free variation is valid for other types of object-NPs as well. In any case, at least in JB we know that no free variation applies for the marker-less construction in terms of the types of the NPs that it can cover, as it is incompatible with proper nouns, with pronominal demonstratives and with pronominal quantifiers.

2.1.2 Indirect object marking

Not much could be said about indirect object marking using the AFIC in Semitic since it is rarely mentioned in the literature. Still, it is clear that the option to do that was available in Syriac (Diem 1979: 48; Khan 1984: 468) and Maflūla (Arnold 1990: 286, 300). As for modern dialects, Blanc (1964: 131) notes examples only from JB. One additional example from JB is given by Mansour (1991: 44), who provides an equivalent example from Mishnaic Hebrew.

2.1.3 Oblique marking

Oblique marking using the AFIC is attested in Syriac (Diem 1979: 48; Khan 1984: 468, 475), in Ge’ez (Rubin 2005: 107) and in Mishnaic Hebrew (Mansour 1991: 44). However, the Syriac and Mishnaic Hebrew examples that Khan and Mansour provide differ from those we find in JB. In both, the preposition repeats itself twice, once before the person index and once as the flag, as reflected from the following Syriac example: *beh bə-haw zabnā* ‘at it—at that time’ (Khan 1984: 468). On the other hand, in JB, as example (3) shows, the argument is always flagged by the morpheme *l-*.

7 Unindexed but flagged constructions were noted also in Cypriot Arabic (Borg 1985: 138), Malta (Aquilina 1959: 115) and Andalusian Arabic (Corriente 1977: 126), but they have probably developed for different reasons than the ones we will note below.

Back in 1964, Blanc wrote that he could not find traces of oblique AFIC in any other Arabic dialect but JB (Blanc 1964: 132). The only mention of an equivalent construction in modern Arabic dialects other than JB that, as far as we are aware, was gathered since is from the dialect of the Karaites in Hit, where Khan (1997: 93) noted one example with the preposition *ʕala-*. As for JB, Blanc provides a few examples using the prepositions *b-* and *ʕand-* and says that they are equivalent to examples without the AFIC (Blanc 1964: 131). Free variation as such is not the case, however, since, as we already established, the oblique AFIC is pragmatically marked.

Finally, oblique marking with the AFIC is attested also in the Neo-Aramaic dialect of Maṣlūla (Diem 1997: 48).

2.1.4 Genitive marking

A genitive construction equivalent to the AFIC can be found in Aramaic and Ge'ez (Rubin 2005: 106–107), but unlike JB, a relative pronoun (rather than the dative preposition) is the source of its flag (Rubin 2005: 328). Thus, *za-* is employed as a flag in Ge'ez and *zy* in Syriac. Nonetheless, the option to use the flag *l(a)-* in the genitive AFIC has developed in both languages, probably in analogy to the use of this flag to mark the direct object (Barth 1911: 50; Hopkins 1997: 355). This can be seen in Table 2:⁸

TABLE 2. Direct object and genitive marking through the AFIC in Syriac and Ge'ez.

Language/ Strategy	Syriac		Ge'ez	
	Accusative	Genitive	Accusative	Genitive
Marker-less	<i>qṭal malkā</i>	<i>bayt malkā</i>	<i>qatala nəḡuśa</i>	<i>beta nəḡuś</i>
Strategy 1	<i>qṭal-eh l-malkā</i>	<i>bayt-eh zy malkā</i> <i>bayt-eh l-malkā</i>	<i>qatal-o la-nəḡuś</i>	<i>bet-u la-nəḡuś</i>
Strategy 2	<i>qṭal-eh malkā</i>	<i>bayt-eh malkā</i>		
Strategy 3	<i>qṭal l-malkā</i>	<i>bayt(ā) zy malkā</i>	<i>qatala la-nəḡuś</i>	<i>bet za-nəḡuś</i>

The flag *l(a)-* is productive in the case of the genitive AFIC only in Strategy 1. Its absence from Strategy 3 in Ge'ez was explained by the rarity of the strategy in general (Hopkins 1997: 355). We can see, however, that it is also absent from Strategy 3 in Syriac, which is not a coincidence. Barth (1911: 50) believes that the development of the flag *l-* in the genitive AFIC in analogy to the accusative AFIC was facilitated by the occurrence of a third person index preceding the flag in both the accusative and

⁸ The data in Table 2 is gathered from Hopkins (1997: 353–354).

genitive construction. We believe, then, that the absence of a person index can explain why this analogy did not penetrate into Strategy 3 in both Syriac and Ge'ez.

According to Hopkins (1997: 356), the full genitive AFIC is rare, at least in Syriac and in other literary Aramaic dialects. When it is used, the main noun is usually *šmā* 'name' or some other inalienable noun. Hopkins (1997: 359) assumes, thus, that it was a colloquial feature. Indeed, in some Modern Aramaic dialects, the AFIC is the normal genitive construction (Rubin 2005: 104). In Maṣlūla, for example, object marking and genitive marking look exactly like in Ge'ez (Arnold 1990: 301–302; Hopkins 1997: 357–358). More specifically, *l-* is used in Maṣlūla as the flag in the case of the full genitive AFIC, whereas a relative marker is used in Strategy 3 (Diem 1979: 48; Arnold 1990: 301–302; Hopkins 1997: 357–358).

As for Arabic, the full genitive AFIC is absent from CA (Diem 1979: 48; Hopkins 1997: 359). However, the preposition *l-* may be used in CA to mark genitive relation (Brockelmann 1908–1913 II: 237; Procházka 1993: 48, 50–51; Versteegh 1997: 78; Brustad 2000: 70; Rubin 2005: 331). In the modern dialects, the full genitive AFIC is found in Lebanon (Féghali 1928: 363), Cypriot Arabic (Borg 1985: 130), Maltese and in the Maghreb⁹ (Diem 1979: 49). In *qəltu*-dialects, it was noted in Mosul (Jastrow 1979: 49) and in CB (Blanc 1964: 131; Abu-Haidar 1991: 116). Blanc (1964: 131) mentions the occurrence of the construction also in MB. In terms of the semantic constraint on the inalienability of the main noun in the construction, Blanc (1964: 131) notes that the genitive AFIC is common in use with kinship terms whereas the genitive exponent *māl-* is not. He compares the noun-noun phrase *abu Səlmān* to *abu-nu s-Səlmān*, both meaning 'Səlmān's father,' saying that the former can be used as 'kunya or teknonym' (Blanc 1964: 131). Melcer (1995: 75) also notes the same semantic restriction in his account of the analytical genitive in JB. As for CB, all the examples of the genitive AFIC that Abu-Haidar (1991: 116) provides conform to the inalienability constraint as well.

2.2 The diachronic development of the AFIC in JB

The survey in § 2.1, combined with what we know about the use of the AFIC in JB, as was generally sketched in § 1 and as elaborated in more detail in Bar-Moshe (2021), enables us to draw some conclusions regarding the diachronic development of the AFIC and its sub-constructions in JB.

9 Diem does not note a source or an example to support this statement. He might have referred to an equivalent construction that occurs 'in certain urban and mountain dialects' (Boumans 2006: 221) of Morocco. This construction makes use of the genitive exponent *d* as a flag when kinship terms are involved.

For reasons that will be discussed in § 2.3, we believe that Strategy 1 was absorbed into the Baghdadi superstrate at first and that Strategies 2–4 were developed later on internally in the dialect. In the next few paragraphs, we will describe the forces that led to the development of the sub-constructions one by one.

Since Strategy 2 is mainly employed to mark direct objects, its diachronic development can be mainly accounted for by this function. The motivation behind the development of Strategy 2 was originally phonetic—to avoid the repetition of the sound *l-* twice. Thus, it applied at first only to object-NPs that open with a definite article. Later on, the ability to host NPs that do not necessarily open with a definite article has developed. This development was enabled because in the absence of the flag, and taking into consideration that the AFIC is a vehicle of DOM, the definiteness of the object NP was generalised as a sufficient condition for its objecthood. The penetration of Strategy 2 into indirect object, oblique and genitive marking probably developed in analogy to direct object marking, and applies in the same environment, namely, when the argument opens with a definite article. When indirect object marking is concerned, like in the case of direct object marking, NPs that do not open with a definite article can also take part in the construction, given that they are definite and that the indirect objecthood of the argument cannot be challenged.

Strategy 3 is productive only in the case of direct and indirect object marking, with the limitation that the direct or indirect objecthood of the NP is clear, namely that the chances that the direct object would be confused as an indirect object, or vice versa, are low. In the absence of a person index that can point at the argument marked by the construction, confusion can be avoided mainly by the inclusion of an additional argument into the clause. The hearers can, then, reason out more easily which of the two arguments fulfills which syntactic function. In fact, it might be the case that Strategy 3 even developed out of the necessity to involve an additional argument in the clause. To avoid the production of a too heavy construction, the person index might have been sacrificed. It is also important to note that while only pronominal demonstratives can constitute the NP under Strategy 3 in the case of direct object marking, no such restriction applies in the case of indirect object marking. Considering the evidence provided in this paragraph, we would like to argue that the ability to mark direct objects using Strategy 3 has developed in analogy to the ability to mark indirect objects with the Strategy, and that it is still very restricted. As for oblique and genitive marking via Strategy 3, the former would yield an ungrammatical combination, while the latter cannot be considered a sub-AFIC construction. Putting a genitive argument into Strategy 3 would produce a definite noun-noun construction. This construction, as an old Semitic marker of genitive relation, cannot have developed out of the AFIC. Moreover, it is not restricted to inalienable nouns. Thus, it cannot be considered a sub-AFIC construction.

Strategy 4 is noted in Table 1 as applicable only to direct object marking. It is incompatible with indirect objects since the produced construction would lack any

trace of the dative preposition *l-*, whose existence is obligatory when indirect object marking is concerned. As for oblique and genitive marking with Strategy 4, the construction that would potentially be produced is grammatical indeed but cannot be considered a sub-construction of the full AFIC because it is diachronically unrelated to it. When an oblique argument is put into Strategy 4, we get a pragmatically neutral preposition phrase, and when a genitive argument is put into Strategy 4, we get an indefinite noun-noun construction, which is not restricted to inalienable nouns. Moreover, neutral preposition phrases and noun-noun constructions are, naturally, not a recent innovation. It follows, then, that Strategy 4 is restricted to direct object marking under the scope of the AFIC. But why do we even consider a marker-less construction as AFIC? The answer to that lies in the historical development of Strategy 4. Unlike Strategy 1–3, which mark only definite objects, Strategy 4 can mark both definite and indefinite objects. This is, however, a mere historical coincidence. In Bar-Moshe (2022: 39–40), we argue that the compatibility of Strategy 4 with definite direct object marking is a later development of Strategies 1–3. Basically, with the erosion of the marking power of the flag and the person index through the development of Strategy 2 and 3, definiteness was reanalysed as a sufficient condition for DOM. This opened the door to the omission of both the flag and the person index. Thus, the marker-less construction is homonymic: it can host indefinite objects and definite objects. The latter case is, however, a later development and is the only one that can be considered as AFIC.

The historical development of the AFIC, as described in the previous paragraphs, is simply a result of language use. Direct object marking with the AFIC underwent so many changes and presents such a diversity of marking strategies because definite direct object marking is quite a common habit. In comparison, definite indirect object marking is rarer. The only reason for the still quite high diversity in the case of indirect object marking is analogy to direct object marking, which results from the use of the same markers. The same cannot be claimed for oblique and genitive marking, which consist of a unique element. In the former case, a preposition (necessarily not *l-*) is involved in the construction and in the latter, a noun rather than a verb. These are considerable differences that allowed oblique and genitive marking through the AFIC to develop in different directions.

2.3 The absorption of the AFIC into JB

In the current section, we would like to address the question of the Aramaic-Arabic continuum in relation to the AFIC. More specifically, we will show that the different sub-constructions were not absorbed into JB but rather developed internally. Our discussion will be limited to direct object and genitive marking since they received

relatively more attention in the literature so far, thus enabling us to present quite a full picture of the distribution of the different AFIC strategies in Aramaic, Old Arabic and JB:

TABLE 3. The distribution of AFIC strategies in Aramaic, Old Arabic and JB.

	Aramaic	Old Arabic	JB
Direct object AFIC	1; 2; 3	3; (4, not DOM)	1 > 2 + 3 > 4
Genitive AFIC	1; 2; (3, not <i>l</i> -)	3	1 > 2

At the time of contact between Arabic and Aramaic, the full AFIC was clearly employed in Aramaic. It seems reasonable, then, that the Aramaic speakers who started to adopt the Arabic language forced the construction on their Arabic speech as well. Since the dative preposition was used in Old Arabic also for direct object and genitive marking, it might have also been used, even if in different circumstances, to mark these functions in the superstrate prior to the contact with Aramaic. If this is true then the use of the flag probably did not catch the speakers of the superstrate by surprise. The addition of the person index into the construction in the superstrate, on the other hand, was probably considered a more substantial innovation.¹⁰

Table 3 gives the impression that at the point of the language contact, the speakers also brought Strategy 2, and possibly even Strategy 3, with them and forced them on the superstrate. This is possible, but even if this was the case, the synchronic Strategy 2 and 3 are different than the ones that existed in Aramaic, and as we saw above, developed out of the full AFIC. In the following paragraphs, we shall provide additional evidence to support this claim.

The conditions that promoted the development of Strategy 2 in JB could not have given rise to Strategy 2 in Aramaic. As we already established, the repetition of the sound *l*, once as a flag and once as a definite article, opened the door to the exclusion of the flag from the full construction in JB. It could not have been the case in Aramaic, where no definite article in the form of *l*- had existed.¹¹ The fact that an unflagged

10 Having said that, taking into consideration that the diachronic material of the flag in Ge'ez and Syriac is a relative marker and that the relative marker in JB is identical to the flag, it might be the case that the Arabic speakers interpreted the construction as consisting of two appositive components—a person index and an NP. Following this logic, an expression like *abū-ha l-amm-i* ‘my mother’s father,’ in example (4), could be thought of as literally meaning ‘the father of her, who is my mother.’ In fact, Diem (1986: 238–239) explains the emergence of the genitive semantics by an erosion in the appositional relation between the two components. This is not limited to the genitive AFIC, however, as the same type of apposition occurs in Strategy 1 and 2 regardless to the syntactic function of the argument.

11 In Old Aramaic, the article was suffixed to the noun and in Syriac, it had already lost its meaning (Rubin 2005: 68, 86–88). Hence, similar sound reduction to the one that occurred in JB cannot be hypothesised for Aramaic.

construction had existed in Aramaic, however, might have facilitated the omission of the flag in JB more quickly.

Turning to Strategy 3, the case of the direct object AFIC should be distinguished from the case of the genitive AFIC. The genitive AFIC in JB could not have developed from the equivalent Aramaic one simply because the latter consisted of the relative marker rather than the morpheme *l*-. The chances that the Aramaic speakers adapted and used the JB relative marker, which is, coincidentally, also reflected by the morpheme *l*-, are very slim. As for direct object marking using Strategy 3, the clear and peculiar circumstances under which it occurs in JB simply render the scenario that it continues the Aramaic unindexed but flagged construction less likely. As we saw in § 2.2, Strategy 3 probably developed out of the necessity to mark an additional indirect object argument. In the case of direct object marking, it is restricted to a single type of NP—pronominal demonstrative. Moreover, this construction is barely taken advantage of since in the absence of a person index, the risk of confusing the object with the subject increases.

A final note is in order to explain the diversity of syntactic functions and sub-constructions that JB presents in comparison to other modern dialects, including *qeltu*-dialects and MB. It might simply have to do with the marginal role that the AFIC plays in other dialects in comparison to JB. As Levin (1987: 36) puts it, the occurrence of the AFIC ‘in Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian dialects is marginal and restricted in comparison to Iraqi dialects,’ and as Blanc noticed, the construction is more common in use in JB in comparison to CB, not to mention MB (Blanc 1964: 128–130). This is especially true to direct object marking in JB, where the AFIC serves strictly as a DOM instrument, which does not seem to be the case in any other Arabic dialect.

To conclude, the sub-AFIC strategies operate, synchronically, under different constraints than the ones under which they operated in the substrate or in the superstrate at the point of contact between Aramaic and the Arabic. Moreover, different constraints dictated the use of the sub-AFIC strategies that had existed in the substrate and in the superstrate back then. It follows, then, that the sub-AFIC constructions have developed out of the full AFIC internally in JB.

3 The diachronic development of the flag *llə*-

Bar-Moshe (2021: 436–438) showed that pronouns can also be marked by the AFIC. When that happens, the pronoun is flagged by the allomorph *llə*- rather than *l*-. Although the pronominal AFIC is not restricted in terms of the syntactic function of the argument, the corpus consists only of examples where it serves as the direct or indirect object. As a matter of fact, even those are rare—a pronominal argument was flagged four times by *llə*- as the direct object of the clause and five times as the

indirect object of the clause. Out of the total nine examples, seven reflect the use of Strategy 1 and two of Strategy 3. The flagless Strategies 2 and 4 would yield an ungrammatical structure. The seven examples of the use of pronominal argument marking under Strategy 1 are pragmatically marked. Their pronoun is contrastively focused. As for Strategy 3, it is unclear whether focus is involved in its use as well. In any case, it can only be used to flag indirect pronominal objects.

The intriguing question that we would like to address in this section is how come a separate allomorph developed to flag pronominal arguments, namely why was the flag *l*- replaced by *llə*- in the case of the pronominal AFIC? We will try to answer this question by focusing on the most prominent feature that distinguishes both allomorphs—the sound *l*, which repeats itself twice in the latter allomorph. The only evidence for a somewhat parallel phenomenon in other Arabic dialects comes from Daragözü and Maltese.

The genitive exponent in Daragözü presents two allomorphs: *lə*- preceding nouns, but *lil*- preceding pronouns. As for the dative preposition, its form is *l*-, and Jastrow does not mention any alternative allomorph for it in his detailed description of the dialect (Jastrow 1973: 49–50, 94–95).

The dative preposition in Maltese, which similarly to JB can also flag direct objects, presents the allomorphs *l*- and *lil*-. The latter may be used to flag both nominal and pronominal arguments. In practice, mainly highly individuated nominal arguments like proper nouns are flagged by it. As for pronominal ones, they may be flagged by *lil*- in coordinated constructions or when they are contrastively focused (Camilleri and Sadler 2012: 120–121).

Comparing JB to Maltese and Daragözü, JB correlates more closely with Maltese in terms of the syntactic roles (objects) and the semantic constraints (individuation) on the NP that the allomorphs flag, but it correlates more closely with Daragözü in terms of the manner by which the allomorphy is conditioned (nominal vs. pronominal argument flagging). Since both Daragözü and JB belong to the *qəltu* family, this similarity cannot be disregarded as it might point to an old *qəltu* phenomenon. The fact that traces of similar allomorphy cannot be found in any other *qəltu* dialect is, however, quite problematic, especially because Daragözü and JB are located almost at the north most and south most extremes of the *qəltu* area, respectively. It cannot be excluded, then, that we are looking at a phenomenon that has developed independently in each of the dialects. In the case of JB and Maltese, it seems quite safe to assume that the similarities have developed in each of the dialects independently. Anyway, the evidence is too circumstantial to make a clear cut conclusion about the genetic relation of the allomorphy in the three dialects.

Curiously, the sound *l*- occurs twice in the allomorph that precedes the pronoun in all three dialects. As far as we are aware, Daragözü, Maltese and JB are the only dialects that present such repetition. What could be the reason for this repetition? In

the following paragraphs, we would like to propose four explanations. Although the first three explanations will be refuted, at least as far as JB is concerned, they will be useful to lead us to the fourth explanation.

1. Anatolian dialects other than Daragözü exhibit genitive exponents whose origin is, most probably, a relative element. These include forms like *dīl-*, *dīla-*, *dēl-*, *dēla-* and *dēl-*. Equivalent forms, like *lēl-* in Āzəx or *līl-* in Daragözü have probably also been derived from a relative exponent (Jastrow 1978: 125; Eksell Harning 1980: 42). Generally speaking, a noun and a relative clause in Semitic exhibit the same kind of relation as a noun and an additional nominal attribute, and so, relative exponents are equivalent to genitive exponents (Cohen 2019: 9, 44), which can explain why the latter developed out of the former in Daragözü. However, this explanation does not satisfy the reality in JB (and most probably neither in Maltese) since the allomorph *llə-* reflects the dative preposition and not a genitive exponent.
2. Focusing on the allomorph *llə-* in JB, it is tempting to claim that it reflects a combination of the flag (or, diachronically, the dative preposition) and a definite article. However, since the allomorph is specifically limited to the flagging of pronouns and since a pronoun cannot be determined by a definite article, this claim can be rejected. If any, this kind of development should have influenced the allomorph preceding nominal arguments.
3. As we already maintained, the flag originates from the dative preposition. It might be claimed, then, that while its status as a flag was synchronically established, its diachronic value as a dative preposition in the speaker's mind was gradually forgotten. To compensate on that, the dative preposition might have been added with the time. Two issues invalidate this hypothesis, however. For once, there is no reason to assume such a development in the pronominal case and not in the nominal case. Secondly, while this might explain cases where a pronoun is assigned with the function of the indirect object, it cannot account for the marking of direct objects or genitive and oblique arguments.
4. Alternatively, we would like to argue that the morpheme *llə-* developed for pragmatic reasons. Apparently, *l-* is not the only preposition that changes its form when a pronoun is suffixed to it in JB. The preposition *mən-* 'from' also does. Moreover, the change in both prepositions involves a similar operation that geminates the consonant. Thus, like *llə-ha* 'to her' and *llə-ni* 'to me,' one finds *(m)mənn-a* 'from her' and *(m)mənn-i* 'from me' (Bar-Moshe 2019: 63). As one can see, in the case of the preposition 'from,' the last consonant, *n*, always geminates whereas the first, *m*, does not. Although Blanc (1964: 122) argues for a stable initial gemination of *m* before a pronominal suffix, it does not seem to be the case in practice. If initial gemination takes place when a pronoun is suffixed to the preposition 'from' in the corpus, it is quite difficult to distinguish from a single consonant. The decision

whether to geminate the first consonant is, possibly, pragmatically conditioned. When the pronoun is focused, the allomorph is *mmənn-* and when not, it is *mənn-*. This claim cannot be validated, however, since the need to focus on a pronoun following the preposition ‘from’ arises quite rarely and so the corpus does not consist of any example of a focused pronoun. Nonetheless, the few pragmatically neutral examples that involve the preposition in the corpus seem to lack initial gemination.

If the gemination of the first consonant of the preposition (*m*)*mənn-* occurs only when the pronoun is focused then focus might be the motivation behind geminating the first consonant also in the case of *llə-*. We already mentioned the close relationship that *llə-* has with focus—when the pronoun is flagged under Strategy 1, it is focused regardless of the syntactic function that it fulfils. The seven examples that are included in our corpus can support that. In these examples, the message can be conveyed differently, without involving the preposition *llə-*, but it would render the pronoun unfocused. If focus is indeed the reason behind the use of *llə-* then the motivation behind the gemination can be explained by iconicity, namely elongating the consonant to symbolically mark focus. As was mentioned above, the allomorph *lil-* in Maltese is also used to flag contrastively focused pronouns, and so, the gemination can also be explained by iconicity in the case of Maltese.

It should be noted that the argument that the morpheme *llə-* marks is not always focused. Apart from the two examples in which Strategy 3 is used, where the pronoun does not seem to be focused, there is only one example where the allomorph *llə-* takes part in the clause although the pronoun is unfocused:

- (5) *baħ^əġ* *ma* *llə-ha* *nəhāya*
 sea not llə-3FSG end
 ‘an endless sea’

Example (5) presents an argument of a semantic type that we have not encountered in our survey yet—an existential possessive one. Since the argument in this example is pronominal, the preposition changes its form into *llə-*. The pronoun, a 3FSG one, refers to the noun *baħ^əġ*¹² ‘sea.’ This noun is modified by a following relative clause, in which *llə-* plays the role of the predicate.

Unlike the seven examples of the use of *llə-* under Strategy 1, no special pragmatic value is assigned to the argument in (5). Moreover, while the same message can be conveyed without flagging the pronoun (despite the loss of the focus on the pronoun) in the seven examples, the message in example (5) cannot be conveyed

12 The noun *baħ^əġ* is a masculine noun, but the speaker refers to it with a feminine pronoun.

other than with *llə*-¹³. It is possible, then, that the allomorph *llə*- has generalised to become the vehicle by which pronominal datives are flagged, regardless of their semantic role.

To sum up, nominal arguments are flagged by *l*- while pronominal arguments are flagged by *llə*-. This allomorphy is quite unique in Arabic dialects and, as far as we could gather, a similar phenomenon can only be found in Daragözü and Maltese. However, the allomorphs of the flag in both dialects operate in quite distinct morphological or syntactic circumstances. Nonetheless, we attempted to understand the reason behind the allomorphy bearing these differences in mind. Four explanations were provided, but the first three were incompatible with the reality in JB. The only acceptable explanation is that the allomorph *llə*- developed iconically to mark focus by gemination. Synchronically, however, unfocused pronouns are also marked by the same allomorph. This, we maintain, is a result of the generalisation of the allomorph as reflecting the (diachronic) dative marker before pronominal suffixes, regardless of whether they are pragmatically marked or not.

4 A note about the name AFIC

The AFIC and its constituents received different names in the literature:

- The person index was termed ‘anticipatory object suffix’ (Rubin 2005: 100), ‘resumptive verbal object’ (Rubin 2005: 106), ‘anticipatory pronominal suffix’ (Blanc 1964: 128; Abu-Haidar 1991: 116), ‘resumptive agreement pronoun’ (Khan 1984: 468), ‘appositional pronoun’ (Brockelmann 1908–1913 II: 226–227) and ‘object pronoun’ (Blanc 1964: 131).
- The flag was termed ‘notae accusative/genitive’ (Hopkins 1997: 349; Rubin 2005: 109), ‘object marker’ (Khan 1984: 469), ‘direct object flag’ (Coghill 2014: 335) or simply ‘*l*’ (Blanc 1964: 128).
- The name of the construction itself has been derived in many cases from the combination of the different terms for the flag and the person index. Apart from these combinations, we also found the names ‘prepositional accusative construction’ (Rubin 2014: 104) and ‘object pronoun plus epexegetic object introduced by *l*’ (Blanc 1964: 131). Specifically for the genitive AFIC, the names ‘double construct state’ (Mansour 1991: 44) and ‘object of a noun’ (Blanc 1964: 131) were found as well.

13 Apart from the dative, however, the preposition *fənd-* is normally used to mark existential possession in JB.

Some of the names that were proposed above fit the needs of previous descriptions of the AFIC in Semitic since these descriptions focused on a certain construction or on a certain syntactic function. However, they fail to represent the diversity of functions and sub-constructions that the AFIC offers in JB. This applies, naturally, to all the names that involve words like ‘accusative,’ ‘object,’ ‘verb,’ ‘noun,’ ‘construct state,’ etc. Also, the adjective ‘anticipatory’ does not take into account possible changes in word order (Bar-Moshe 2021: 420–424, 428–429). Other names stress the diachronic essence of the construction and disregard its synchronic reality: ‘appositional’ cannot represent Strategy 3 or 4 and neither can ‘resumptive’ or ‘epexegetic,’ although they capture quite well the nature of the relation between the person index and the argument; ‘prepositional’ fails, at least in the case of direct and oblique object marking, where synchronically it can be argued that the flag lost its prepositional value. Moreover, it also cannot be applied for flag-less strategies.

The name that we chose for the construction, AFIC, is neutral and simply allows to capture the most basic synchronic and syntactic essence of the construction, namely that it involves a flag and/or a person index and that it marks arguments of the clause.

5 Conclusions

The AFIC, a construction that goes back to Aramaic, presents quite a diversity of syntactic functions and sub-constructions in JB in comparison to other Semitic languages or Arabic dialects. Moreover, there is quite a significant overlap between the different sub-constructions and between the different syntactic functions in JB, which suggests that the synchronic argument marking system is unstable, and which points to diachronic developments that have not finalised. The aim of this paper was to account for these diachronic developments.

In § 1, we introduced the different syntactic functions that the AFIC is capable of marking as well as the different sub-constructions by which each of the functions can be marked. We saw that the AFIC is semantically or pragmatically marked. In the case of direct (and indirect) object marking, the AFIC is a vehicle of DOM by which only definite direct objects are marked; in the case of oblique marking, the AFIC is used to focus on the argument or to achieve a narrative goal; and in the case of genitive marking, the AFIC is restricted to inalienable nouns. Constructions by which an argument is marked without achieving these semantic or pragmatic goals are not considered as AFIC.

In § 2, following a detailed survey of the AFIC in Semitic, we argued that at the time of contact between Aramaic and Arabic only the full AFIC was absorbed from Aramaic into JB, and that despite the occurrence of equivalent sub-constructions

in Aramaic, their counterparts in JB were developed later on under peculiar circumstances:

- The indexed but unflagged construction (Strategy 2) developed out of the phonetic necessity to avoid the repetition of the sound *l* twice, once as a flag and once as a definite article. Naturally, it was restricted, at first, to arguments that open with a definite article, but later on its use was extended to accommodate other types of NPs as well. At least in the case of direct object marking, the omission of the flag opened the door to the reanalysis of definiteness as a sufficient condition for DOM.
- The flagged but unindexed construction (Strategy 3) has probably developed to reduce the heaviness of the AFIC when the need to involve an additional argument in the clause arises. Indeed, the omission of the person index yields a lighter construction, but at the same time gives rise to syntactic ambiguity, which explains why this construction is used quite rarely and only when the syntactic function of the argument can be easily established otherwise. Moreover, in the case of direct object marking, Strategy 3 is restricted to pronominal demonstratives.
- Finally, the marker-less construction (Strategy 4), which is restricted to direct object marking, reflects a further step in the reanalysis of definiteness as a sufficient condition for DOM. If definiteness is sufficient then neither a flag nor a person index are needed to mark a definite direct object. This brought about the synchronic circular reality, whereby definite and indefinite direct objects are marked (or rather unmarked) similarly. This reality is, however, a mere historical coincidence.

In § 3, we accounted for the diachronic development of the allomorph *llə-* of the flag, which is used to mark pronominal arguments. Although synchronically the allomorph precedes any personal pronoun, we presented evidence to argue that it might have been used to precede focused personal pronouns only. The gemination in the allomorph, we believe, is an iconic reflection of the focus.

Finally, we attributed the substantial diachronic developments that the AFIC underwent in JB to language use—specifically, to the extensive use of the AFIC in JB in comparison to other dialects, and furthermore, to the extensive use of direct object marking over the other syntactic functions. These developments emerged independently in JB and changed the grammatical nature of the substrative construction, giving rise to the innovative synchronic variety.

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