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**VS THETIC STATEMENTS IN KUWAITI ARABIC**

**By**

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**A THESIS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **VS THETIC SENTENCES IN KUWAITI ARABIC**

By

Mousa Qasem

The syntactic order of constituents in a sentence has been argued to reflect the flow of information such that old information tends to precede new information in a number of languages. Given the association of old information (or topic) with the subject of a sentence on the one hand, and new information (or focus) with the predicate on the other, some authors proposed that SV(O) word order is a pragmatically ideal word order, e.g. Rivarol (1784) (cited in Lambrecht 1994: 199) and that VS(O) word order blatantly violates the old before new sequence of information, e.g. Raney (1984), Creider and Creider (1983) and Herring (1990).

In this thesis, I show that VS statements in Kuwaiti Arabic, which allow an SV alternative, represent “all-new” or thetic statements. This means that VS statements in Kuwaiti Arabic do not contradict the old-before-new principle of information structure. I show that thetic statements, which include VS statements, have certain discourse properties that distinguish them from categorical statements. Most importantly, the sentence non-initial subject in thetic statements should represent Discourse-new information.

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## **Chapter 1    Introduction**

It is believed that there are correlations between the syntactic order of constituents and the flow of information in a sentence. It has been observed that old information tends to precede new information in a number of languages. The subject is generally seen as the entity which represents old information. The verb, however, is a constituent that typically carries new information. Given the association between old information and the subject of a sentence on the one hand and new information and the verb on the other, some authors proposed that SV(O) word order is a pragmatically ideal word order, e.g. Rivarol (1784) (cited in Lambrecht 1994: 199) and that VS(O) word order blatantly violates the old before new sequence of information, e.g. Raney (1984), Creider and Creider (1983) and Herring (1990).

For the nineteenth century philosopher Franz Brentano and his pupil Anton Marty, human judgment was not always categorical in nature, having a subject-predicate structure (see Kuroda 1972, Lambrecht 1987, Lambrecht 1994, Sasse 1987, and Wu 1992). These philosophers proposed another kind of human judgment, the *thetic* judgment which, unlike the categorical judgment, was logically unstructured consisting of the act of recognition or rejection of a material in a judgment. Accordingly, sentences that were used *thetically* were viewed as ‘all-new’ utterances i.e. the whole utterance is considered new. The notions ‘thetic’ and ‘categorical’ were first treated as philosophical concepts. The speaker’s judgment is what made a given expression *thetic* and another *categorical*. Later, Mathesius (1882-1945) came to treat the difference between *thetic* and *categorical* as an issue of predication, a notion anchored in syntactic theory rather than being a philosophical concept (see Sasse 1987).

Proponents of the two types of human judgment view argued that the VS/SV word order difference exhibited by some languages is a reflection of thethetic/categorical distinction. For them, VS sentences werethetic or ‘all new’ sentences. For example, Sasse (1987: 535) claimed that using VS word order forthetic statements is a strategy employed by many SV languages including Modern Arabic dialects. Sasse (1987), however, does not go any further than the claim he put forward regarding the VS/SV word order difference. In fact, Sasse handles thethetic/categorical distinction as a matter of the speaker’s assumption about the hearer’s expectation. While this may be true, we cannot build linguistic theories solely based on the speaker’s or the hearer’s intentions, expectations, or assumptions since we do not have access to the speaker’s or the hearer’s mind and we cannot rely on their introspection. If we are ever going to claim that a statement isthetic only because a speaker chooses it to be so then we are not in the realm of linguistics. My concern is echoed by Lambrecht (1987: 372-373) who states:

This dilemma [of the contrast betweenthetic and categorical being cognitive and not always reflected in grammar] leads e.g. Ulrich (1985:34) to claim that the German sentence *Ich habe Angst* ‘I am afraid’ must be interpreted either as categorical or asthetic, depending on whether it is seen as a response to the question "What’s the matter?" or to "How are you feeling?" As far as I can see, the difference between the two contexts is not a difference of grammar but only of pragmatics. But pragmatic structure without corresponding grammatical structure cannot be captured with rules of grammar and lies therefore outside the domain of linguistics proper.

The claim I intend to make in this thesis is that if Sasse (1987) is correct i.e. if thethetic/categorical distinction is mirrored in the VS/SV word order difference in the Modern dialects of Arabic, then we must find certain discourse properties that distinguish between SV and VS word orders in one of these dialects, namely Kuwaiti Arabic, which is considered an SV language variety. I believe this discourse factor is what Lambrecht

(1987: 375) refers to as the ‘degree of cognitive and pragmatic *accessibility*’. Following Lambrecht (1987: 375), I argue that when a referent is insufficiently accessible in a discourse i.e. when an entity is new to the discourse, a categorical sentence containing it is infelicitous. Instead, the referent must be Discourse-old i.e. it must be previously mentioned in the discourse for the sentence to be categorical. I also believe the reverse is true. In other words, a thetic sentence can only be used when the subject noun phrase it contains is Discourse-new. This means that the subject in a VS sentence in Kuwaiti Arabic must be textually new. In this thesis, I am going to examine VS statements in Kuwaiti Arabic and find out if the subject always represents information new to the discourse. I am also going to briefly examine *fi/?aku*-thetic statements, which correspond to the existential *there*-constructions in English, and see if the same requirements for theticity are met by this type of construction. If the same requirements for theticity are met by both VS thetic statements as well as *fi/?aku*-thetic statements, then each type of construction should lend evidence that the other is thetic.

In my analysis of the Kuwaiti dialect, I used Kuwaiti TV dramas as my source for the data. Any example taken from TV dramas is indicated by the episode number in which that example appeared while any example without a source indicated is my own construction. I am going to consider VS statements which allow an unmarked SV word order as an alternative. I am going to see whether or not the subject in these statements represents information new to the discourse, or in Prince’s (1992) terms Discourse-new information. I will also see whether or not the subject in SV statements represents information old to the discourse, or Discourse-old information. I will consider the

beginning of a new scene that does not carry over from an immediately preceding scene or the arrival of a new participant as marking the beginning of a new discourse event.

It will be shown that the choice between SV and VS word order is triggered by prior mention in the discourse. Specifically, if an entity has not been mentioned in prior discourse, then VS word order containing that entity is deemed necessary. On the other hand, if an entity has been mentioned in earlier discourse, then a VSthetic statement containing that entity is infelicitous. Instead, an SV categorical statement is used. It will also be shown thatthetic statements in Kuwaiti Arabic are distinguished from categorical statements in different ways. First, the subject of thethetic statement cannot occupy the initial position of the sentence. Second, as I have mentioned above, the subject of thethetic statement must represent Discourse-new information. Third, the head of the subject NP and the verb inthetic statements tend to form a single prosodic unit whereas these constituents tend to be separated in categorical statements. Finally, the subject of thethetic statement must be a full lexical NP whereas this requirement is waived in categorical statements.

The outline of the remainder of the thesis is as follows: chapter 2 contains the background for the topic and a review of the main literature in information structure and thethetic/categorical distinction. In chapter 3, I will talk about Kuwaiti Arabic. Chapter 4 contains the findings. There, I am going to analyze VSthetic statements and find out the factor that triggerstheticity in Kuwaiti Arabic. Finally, chapter 5 includes the conclusion and remaining questions.

## **Chapter 2    Background**

### **2.1. The Functional Sentence Perspective**

Syntactic structure as represented by the order of constituents in sentences and utterances is believed to serve special pragmatic functions. According to Green (1996: 133), it has been “recognized for some time that there are correlations between the order of syntactic constituents in a sentence and the discourse role of the information which a particular constituent represents.” Lambrecht (1994: 16) argues that “just as there are no sentences without morphosyntactic and phonological structure, there are no sentences without information structure.” Given the range of syntactic structure possibilities and the alternative constructions available for speakers of each language in expressing the same proposition, choice among these structures is far from being arbitrary.

According to Dahlgren (1998), it was Weil (1818-1912) who first proposed that sentence constituents may be ordered according to principles other than usual syntactic and grammatical rules. Weil (1978: reprint) suggested that every statement is composed of a point of departure, ‘an initial notion,’ and a goal of discourse, the information to be imparted. The point of departure is known to both the speaker and the hearer i.e. it is common ground knowledge to both parties while the goal of discourse is the new information the speaker wants to impart to the hearer. Weil (1978: 29-30) gives an example from Latin to show how the same proposition that ‘Romulus founded the city of Rome’ can be expressed in various ways:

- (1)a.    Idem    Romulus Roman condidit.  
          himself Romulus Rome    built  
          ‘This same Romulus built Rome.’

- b.    Hanc urbem condidit Romulus.  
       this   town   built     Romulus  
       'This town was built by Romulus.'
  
- c.    Condidit Roman Romulus.  
       built     Rome   Romulus  
       'The building of Rome was by Romulus.'

Weil indicates that in all three sentences the grammatical relations are the same, i.e. in all the sentences, the logical subject is one and the same, Romulus; the attribute is the property of being founded, and the direct object is Rome. The first sentence, Weil (1978) suggests, can be stated when Romulus was the topic of the prior discourse. The second sentence may be said in the context of showing a traveler the city of Rome. The third sentence may be said following a mention of the great foundings. Although the proposition is the same, the point of departure as well as the goal of the discourse is different for each sentence. The points of departure are Romulus, Rome, and the idea of founding in the first, second, and the third sentences respectively. The facts are the same because the major syntactic constituents and the relation that holds among them is the same. For Weil (1978: 30) "syntax relates to the exterior, to things; the succession of the words relates to the speaking subject, to the mind of man." Weil (1978: 30) refers to the syntactic relation as the objective movement and the order of words as the subjective movement. It is important to note that Weil uses the term "syntax" to refer to the grammatical and logical relations between the words of a sentence.

Weil suggests that the point of departure and the goal of discourse may sometimes correlate with known and unknown information respectively. For example, in saying *Fred sold his house to pay his debts*, it is likely in an unmarked context that the speaker treats the sale of the house as the information known. But when he says *in order to pay*

*his debts, Fred sold his house*; the speaker intends the selling of the house as the unknown information.

Weil (1978) distinguished between two kinds of order: the ordinary order which introduces the point of departure (known, previously mentioned information, or the entity being spoken) first followed by the goal (unknown or new information), and the pathetic order which has the reverse order. The ordinary order, Weil (1978: 43-45) argues, mirrors “the movement of the human mind itself” while the pathetic order occurs “when the imagination is vividly impressed, or when the sensibilities of the soul are deeply stirred.” Pathetic order, Weil (1978: 47) argues, is characteristic of European languages like English, French, and German since these languages are normally hampered by rigid word order while Greek for Weil (1978: 47) is “one of the most perfect languages that has ever existed” since it is not constrained by rules in this regard. The following are examples of the ordinary and pathetic orders:

(2)a. Ordinary order: In the mansion, we passed by a room that was dark and dusty. From that room, scary voices could be heard.

b. Pathetic order: In the mansion, we passed by a room that was dark and dusty. Scary voiced could be heard from that room.

As can be seen from example (2-a), the second sentence begins with the known or previously mentioned information, i.e. *that room* followed by the unknown information, i.e. the hearing of scary voices. In example (2-b), however, this order is reversed. The order of information in the second sentence of example (2-b) is such that the new information, i.e. the hearing of scary voices, is introduced first followed by the old information, i.e. *that room*.

Thanks to Mathesius (1882-1945), the founder of the Prague School of Linguistics, the Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) approach in syntax was launched (see Dahlgren 1998). Under this approach, which Weil had opened, language was viewed as serving some function, a specific communicative goal. In 1942, Mathesius defined the notion of theme (východisko) as the thing which is being talked about in the sentence and the notion of the rheme (jádro) as what the speaker states about this theme. Halliday (1967) worked along the same lines of the other members of the Prague School. He used the term 'information structure' to describe the division of discourse into units of information. Each unit consists of an optional component of old or given information and an obligatory component of new information.

## **2.2. What is information structure?**

The organization of information in a sentence into old and new components came to be known as 'information structure,' 'information packaging,' or 'informatics'. The tendency of old information to precede new information in a sentence developed into a principle that is often referred to as 'the principle of information structure/packaging' or the 'old before new principle'.<sup>1</sup> Vallduví (1992) states that information packaging "reflects the speaker's beliefs about how this information fits that hearer's knowledge store" (p. 10). Lambrecht (1994: 5) defines information structure as:

That component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexicogrammatical structures in accordance with the mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts.

---

<sup>1</sup> I will treat 'the principle of information structure,' 'the principle of information packaging,' and the 'old before new principle' as terms which refer to one and the same notion.

Although information structure reflects a bundle of psychological processes involving a speaker making assumptions about the mental states of the hearer, these psychological processes are of interest to the linguist “only inasmuch as they are reflected in grammatical structure” (Lambrecht 1994: 3). Therefore, information structure is taken, by Lambrecht (1994), to be a “component of sentence grammar.” In other words, “information structure is not concerned with psychological phenomena which do not have correlates in grammatical form.” (Lambrecht 1994: 3).

Propositions (which are abstractions and objects of thought that describe states of affairs) and “lexicogrammatical structures” tend to be paired by speakers in a way that corresponds to the hearers’ mental store. This pairing of grammatical structure and propositional information captures the notion of information structure. To quote Lambrecht (1994: 5), “the information structure of a sentence is the formal expression of the pragmatic structuring of a proposition in a discourse”. A proposition which has been pragmatically packaged by a speaker is then unpacked by the hearer who presumably processes it as informational rather than structural units. Lambrecht (1994: 6) uses the expression “lexicogrammatical structures” as a cover term for the structural layout of linguistic expressions as manifested by: prosodic marking, special grammatical markers, certain forms of syntactic constituents, the position and ordering of such constituents in a sentence, the form of complex grammatical constructions, and specific choices between related lexical items.

### 2.3. Old and new information

Chafe (1976: 30) defines given information as “that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance.” As for new information, it is “what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee’s consciousness by what he says.” Chafe (1976: 30) says that there is a misconception about how the notions of “new” and “given” information are used. He argues that taking “given” information as already known to the addressee while taking “new” information as unknown to the addressee may not be the ideal way of defining “given” and “new” information. Instead, “given” and “new” information should relate to what the addressee is thinking about at the moment of the utterance. Consider the following example:

(3) I saw **your father** yesterday. (Chafe 1976: 30)

According to Chafe (1976: 30), *your father* in example (3) above is normally taken as new information; however, it is far-fetched that the addressee had no prior knowledge of his father. For that reason, the NP *your father* represents information old to the hearer since typically one would know his/her father. Therefore, this NP cannot convey information that is new to the hearer. Although, the NP *your father* is supposed to represent information old to the hearer, such information is not expected to be in the forefront of the hearer’s mind all the time. As a result, the first mention of the NP *your father* in the discourse would bring this information from the set of possible entities stored in the hearer’s background knowledge to the foreground of his mind. In this way, the NP *your father* acts as new information.

According to Prince (1981: 224), the speaker tailors the utterance in a way that meets the demands of the intended hearer. Accordingly, information packaging involves the speaker's assumptions about the hearer's beliefs and knowledge. The words 'old'/'given' and 'new' are used in two different ways in the literature. According to Prince (1992: 309), which is a revision of her earlier work of (1981), old information can be taken to mean that it is already known by the hearer i.e. Hearer-old or that it has been evoked in prior discourse i.e. Discourse-old. New information, Prince (1992: 309) states, can either indicate that the information is new to the discourse i.e. Discourse-new or it is unknown to the hearer i.e. Hearer-new. If something is Hearer-new it must necessarily be Discourse-new and if an entity is Discourse-old then it follows that it is Hearer-old information. The reason behind these correlations, Prince (1992: 303, 309) tells us, is that hearers are supposed to remember what they have been told at least in the course of the discourse. The intersection of hearer-status and discourse-status as old and new gives us three different possibilities as the following table illustrates:

**Table 1: Hearer- and discourse-status of a discourse entity**

|            | Discourse-new | Discourse-old  |
|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Hearer-new | Brand-new     | DOES NOT APPLY |
| Hearer-old | Unused        | Evoked         |

Adapted from Prince (1992) p. 309

Brand-new information occurs when the speaker introduces in the discourse an entity which he assumes not to be part of the hearer's model. Unused information (like "your father" in example (3) above) occurs when the speaker introduces information assumed to be known by the hearer and which was not mentioned in prior discourse

(Prince 1981: 235-236). According to Prince (1981: 236) Brand-new information is divided into two types: Anchored and Unanchored. In her words, “a discourse entity is Anchored if the NP representing it is LINKED, by means of another NP, or ‘Anchor,’ properly contained in it, to some other discourse entity” (Prince 1981: 236). Brand-new Unanchored entity lacks this anchor or discourse link. Thus, *a guy* in *a guy I work with* in example (4) represents a Brand-new Anchored discourse entity since it is anchored or linked to the NP *I* that stands for the speaker, a salient discourse participant and entity. However, *a bus* in example (5) is a Brand-new Unanchored entity since there is no discourse link to which this entity is anchored.

(4) **A guy I work with** says **he** knows your sister.

(5) I got on **a bus** yesterday and **the driver** was drunk. (Prince 1981: 233, ex d, c)

As for the evoked entities, they are divided into two types: textually evoked and situationally evoked. Textually evoked entities represent textually/discourse retrievable information whereas situationally evoked entities represents information recoverable from the extratextual context such as the discourse participants themselves (Prince 1981: 236) Therefore, *he* in example (4) above represents a textually evoked entity since it is co-referential with a discourse antecedent. On the other hand, *I* and *you* in example (6) below represent situationally evoked entities since they are recoverable from the physical context of utterance rather than the utterance itself.

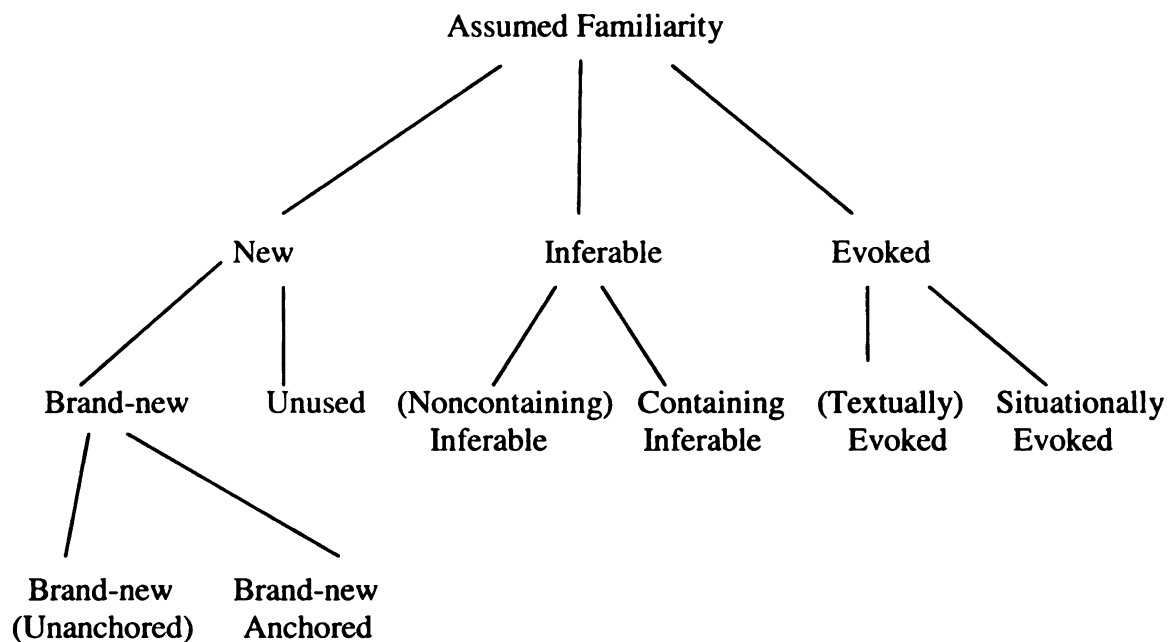
(6) May **I** help **you**?

Finally, the third type of discourse entities (not shown in the table) is the inferable. A discourse entity is said to be inferable when the speaker assumes the hearer is able to infer it by means of logical reasoning from Evoked discourse entities or other inferables (Prince 1981: 236). Accordingly, *the driver* in example (5) above is an inferable entity since an assumed knowledge about buses is that they have drivers. Another subtype of inferables is called Containing Inferables. Like Inferables, Containing Inferables are NPs which “require inferencing on the basis of certain background knowledge we have” (Prince 1992: 307). But unlike Inferables, the entity that causes the inference in the Containing Inferables lies within the NP rather than being in previous discourse (Prince 1992: 307). Thus, we note that starting with the NP *the pages* in example (7) below which maybe unfamiliar to the hearer does not make the sentence infelicitous even though the entity which triggers the inference has not yet been mentioned in the discourse.

(7) **The pages** of the book I bought fell out. (Prince 1992: 307, ex 21 b)

The following diagram (adapted from Prince 1981: 237) shows Prince’s full taxonomy of given and new information:

**Figure 1- Prince's taxonomy of given and new information**



Prince (1992: 305-306) argues that inferables behave like Hearer-old entities in that they relate to what the hearer is assumed to know e.g. that buses have drivers. Inferables also behave like Discourse-old entities since their assumed familiarity stems from the availability of an entity in the discourse that triggers the inference, e.g. *a bus*. Inferables, however, are similar to Hearer-new and accordingly to Discourse-new entities by virtue of the hearer not being expected to already have the relevant entity in their mind. From this it follows that inferables cannot be collapsed with any of the other categories.

Although very helpful, Prince's taxonomy as well as Chafe's distinction of old and new information are made in reference to the hearer and/or prior discourse alone. But is it only in relation to the hearer and/or previous discourse that we can characterize the information-status of a given entity? In the next section, we are going to look at different senses of old and new that may not fit well with Prince's taxonomy of old and new.

## 2.4. Other senses of old and new

Kuno (1972: 272) distinguishes ‘(non)anaphoric’ and ‘old/new information.’ According to him ‘(non)anaphoric’ is a concept applicable to lexical items whereas ‘old/new information’ is a “concept applied to the particular semantic relations which lexical items enter into in the given sentence”:

- (8)a. Among John, Mary, and Tom, who is the oldest?  
b. Tó m is the oldest. (Kuno 1972: 272, ex 1-5)

In sentence (8-b), *Tom* is anaphoric since it was mentioned in prior discourse. At the same time, *Tom* represents new (unpredictable) information while *is the oldest* conveys old (predictable) information and accordingly the sentence could be paraphrased into:

- (9) The one who is the oldest is Tom. (Kuno 1972: 272)

Gundel and Fretheim (2004: 176) suggest that there are two types of givenness-newness: referential givenness-newness and relational givenness-newness. For them, referential givenness/newness “involves a relation between a linguistic expression and a corresponding non-linguistic entity” (Gundel and Fretheim 2004: 176). Prince’s taxonomy of given and new information fits in this type of givenness-newness. As for relational givenness-newness, which corresponds to Kuno’s concept of “new” information, it “reflects how the informational content of particular event or state of affairs expressed by a sentence is represented and how its truth value is to be assessed:

- (10) A: Who called?  
B: Pat said SHE called. (Gundel and Fretheim 2004: 177, ex. 3)

In commenting on the above example Gundel and Fretheim (2004: 177) state the following:

If *SHE* in (3) is used to refer to Pat, it is referentially given in virtually every possible sense. The intended referent is presupposed, specific, referential, familiar, activated, in focus, identifiable, hearer-old, and discourse-old. But, at the same time, the subject of the embedded sentence in this example is relationally new and, therefore, receives a focal accent.

Kuno's (1972), and Gundel and Fretheim's (2004) definitions of given and new show that the same constituent may represent old information and new information at the same context depending on what "old" and "new" are taken to mean. For example, *Tom* in (8-b), and *SHE* in (10) above both represent Hearer-old information. The entities represented by *Tom* and *SHE* also convey Discourse-old information and accordingly they are given information under Prince's framework. In other words, these NPs are old if we disregard their relation to other constituents in the sentence. In combination with the other constituents, however, the NPs denote new, unpredictable information. For example, the NP *Tom* by itself represents Discourse-old and Hearer-old information. At the same time, the NP *Tom* conveys new information when it is viewed in combination with the whole utterance in (8-b). This means that viewing the whole utterance together rather than any other smaller constituents that make up this utterance is what brings the relational type of givenness-newness to life.

Thus, referential givenness-newness can be taken as that type of givenness-newness that is determined by knowledge of the hearer and/or mention in prior discourse. This type of givenness-newness is independent of any particular immediate context because no matter where the entity occurs in the current discourse its informational status is predetermined as old or new by virtue of being already (un)known by the hearer or

(un)mentioned in previous discourse. On the other hand, relational givenness-newness does not refer to the referential knowledge of the hearer nor to the previous discourse; it relates to the context in which the entity in question occurs. Thus, the NP *Tom* in (8-b) represents old or given information wherever it occurs given that the hearer already has a mental representation of that entity or that it was mentioned in previous discourse. At the same time, the subject NP *Tom* in (8-b) above represents new information if we take into consideration the context in which this NP occurred. Thus, *Tom* in *Tom is the oldest*, not the NP *Tom* by itself, can be said to convey new information since “the particular semantic relations which lexical items enter into the given sentence” cannot be realized without taking into considerations the larger picture in which *Tom* is only a part.

The following table summarizes the different types of given and new mentioned above:

**Table 2: Types of given and new information**

| Contributor         | Given/ Presupposed    | New/ Asserted     |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Chafe               | Chafe-given/activated | Non-activated     |
| Prince              | Hearer-old            | Hearer-new        |
|                     | Discourse-old         | Discourse-new     |
| Kuno                | Anaphoric             | Non-anaphoric     |
|                     | Old                   | New               |
| Gundel and Fretheim | Referentially-given   | Referentially-new |
|                     | Relationally-given    | Relationally-new  |

Crucial to this thesis is another type of newness which stretches over an entire utterance. This type of newness arguably occurs when a sentence or utterance is taken by the speaker as a whole unit rather than being composed of a topic and comment. Utterances of this sort correspond to the *thetic* or *simple*, rather than the *double*, type of judgment. As will be seen, such statements surface only when all of their constituent phrases are *Discourse-new*. In the next section, I am going to talk about the

thetic/categorical distinction. I will attempt to give a formal definition and provide examples for each type of judgment.

## **2.5. On the categorical/thetic distinction**

According to Wu (1992: 274) and Sasse (1987: 511), the 19<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Franz Brentano and his pupil Anton Marty challenged the traditional Aristotelian logic which states that human judgment is all categorical in nature consisting of a subject and a predicate. They proposed instead that there are two types of judgments: the categorical and the thetic judgments. The categorical judgment “conforms to the traditional paradigm of subject-predicate” structure (Wu 1992: 274). It consists of two distinctive and successive acts: “the act of recognition of that which is to be made the subject and the other, the act of affirming or denying what is expressed by the predicate about the subject” (Kuroda 1972: 154). In other words, the categorical judgment consists of the two acts of: “naming an entity and making a statement about it” (Sasse 1987: 512). Accordingly, it is also known as the *double judgment*. In contrast, the thetic judgment is “logically unstructured; it merely expressed an event or a state or a situation” (Sasse 1987: 512). Thus, it is also called the *simple judgment*.

The basic logical structure of the categorical judgment is something like ‘A is B’ or ‘A is not B’, while the basic logical structure for the thetic judgment is something like ‘A is’ or ‘A is not’ where ‘A’ stands for a whole situation (Wu 1992: 274). An example of a categorical judgment is a statement like *John is clever*, in which an entity is named and the property of being clever is attributed. An example of a thetic judgment is a

statement about the weather such as *it is raining*. What this sentence expresses is the fact/state/situation of raining rather than a statement about an entity.

(11) CATEGORICAL (double)       $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{John} \\ \parallel \\ \text{ENTITY} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{is clever} \\ \parallel \\ \text{STATEMENT} \end{array} \right\}$

(12) THETIC (simple)       $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{it is raining} \\ \parallel \\ \text{STATEMENT} \end{array} \right\} \quad (\text{Sasse 1987: 512, ex. 1, 2})$

Since a thetic statement lacks a topic then there is no presupposed information. In other words, an utterance has to be ‘all-new’ to qualify as a thetic statement. But what does it mean for an utterance to be ‘all-new’ in linguistic, not logical, terms, given the different senses of ‘new’ I have distinguished above? Also, is it necessary for a statement to contain a non-referential subject (as in the case of weather expressions in English) or even to lack the subject altogether<sup>2</sup> in order for it to qualify as thetic? In linguistic terms, a thetic statement is one in which there is no presupposed information at the level of the discourse and, accordingly, the statement lacks the topic-comment structure. Instead, the whole statement is a comment about some state of affairs. The requirement of being non-presupposed is equally applicable to all verbs and NPs the thetic statement contains. Moreover, it is not necessary for a statement to lack any syntactic constituent for it to be regarded as thetic. In fact, thetic and categorical statements can be syntactically identical (but morphologically or prosodically divergent). Therefore, a thetic statement can contain a subject but this subject has to be non-topical.

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<sup>2</sup> I do not intend to equate the notions of ‘subject’ and ‘topic’ here. But, because most subjects are topics I used the word ‘subject’ to capture this generalization.

Kuroda (1972: 161) proposed that the categorical/thetic distinction in Japanese is marked by the use of the particles *wa* and *ga* which are attached to the grammatical subject of the sentence:

(13) CATEGORICAL    Inu wa hasitte iru.  
                         dog    running is  
                         ‘The dog is running.’

(14) THETIC        Inu ga hasitte iru.  
                         dog    running is  
                         ‘There is a dog running.’      (Kuroda 1972: 161, ex 7.2, 7.1)

As can be seen above, the sentences are the same except for the particle *ga* and *wa* attached to the word *inu*. In both sentences the syntactic subject is the same, namely *inu*. However, the sentence with *wa* particle attached to the subject corresponds to the categorical type of judgment while the sentence with the *ga* particle corresponds to the thetic ‘subjectless’ (in the logical sense) type of judgment. Therefore, the sentence with the *wa* particle attached to the subject conforms to the subject-predicate structure where an entity is named and a statement about that entity is made. The sentence with the *ga* particle describes the same thing: an event of running which necessarily involves the agent of the action. The *ga*-sentence, however, merely asserts the existence of an event. Accordingly, the speaker’s attention is directed to the whole situation or event rather than a single entity in that event. This is not to say that the categorical judgment does not involve an event but that the speaker’s interest is directed towards the entity that initiates that action and to which he wants to relate the happening of the event. It follows that the subject of the *wa*-statements can only be a definite NP that represents an entity “familiar to the speaker or whose identity has already been established to the speaker and hearer” (Kuroda 1972: 163). On the other hand, the sentences with the *ga* particle tolerate

indefinite subjects. We, therefore, can paraphrase the Japanese sentences in (13) and (14) into (15) and (16) respectively:

(15) The dog, it is running.

(16) There is running of a dog<sup>3</sup>.

A thetic statement appears under several names: 'all new utterance/sentence,' 'neutral description,' 'presentational sentence,' 'news sentence,' 'event-reporting sentence,' and 'sentence focus.' Sasse (1987: 559) argues that the state of affairs that a thetic statement expresses may consist of:

- a. A single entity (= an *entity-central* or *presentative* thetic expression).
- b. A single event (= an *event-central* or *impersonal* thetic expression).
- c. An event part of which is an entity.

In an entity-central/presentative thetic statement, an entity is introduced but no event is reported about it. The event central/impersonal thetic statement contains no referential NP; thus there is no entity about which a statement can be made. It is noteworthy that types a and b thetic statements are inherently thetic because either the predicate is lacking (type a) or the predication base is lacking (type b). Typical examples of thetic statements include utterances like a, b, and c produced in an unmarked context:

- a. There is a God. (= an *entity-central* thetic statement).
- b. It is snowing. (= an *event-central* thetic statement).
- c. Henry is coming. (= an event part of which is an entity)

Sasse (1987: 566-567) provides a list of statements and expressions that are typically used thetically:

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<sup>3</sup> The foregoing description of Japanese is based on Kuroda (1972), and that according to Mutsuko Endo Hudson (p.c.), the situation is actually more complicated; see Shibatani (1990).

1. Existential statements (in a wider sense; presence, appearance, continuation, etc., positively and negatively)
2. Explanations (with or without preceding questions such as 'what happened?', 'why did it happen?' etc.)
3. Statements describing surprising or unexpected events.
4. General statements (aphorisms, etc.)
5. Background descriptions (local, temporal, etc., setting)
6. Weather expressions.
7. Statements relating to body parts.

The typical questions that elicit thetic statements can be:

1. What happened?
2. What was that?
3. What's that noise?
4. How's the weather?
5. What's the matter?
6. What's up/new?
7. Why are you happy/sad/angry?
8. What do you suppose I saw? (ex. 8 is from Kuno 1972: 298)

With the exceptions of (7) and (8), these questions do not contain entities as topics about which something can be predicated in subsequent discourse. Accordingly, these questions normally elicit topicless utterances containing no presupposed information at the level of the current discourse. This is also true of statements that follow warning expressions or expressions of getting someone's attention like:

1. Watch out!
2. Be careful.
3. Look out!
4. Look! / listen!
5. Oh look!

Of coursethetic statements are not restricted to certain situations or domains; they can surface anywhere during a discourse depending on the speaker's assumption about the hearer's knowledge and expectations. Thus, the same expression or sentence can in some situations be used to make a categorical statement and in other situations to make athetic statement. The questions that arise here: 1) how is it possible to distinguish between categorical andthetic statements? 2) Is the contrast between these two types of statements only mental, i.e. does it only lie in the mind of the speaker and therefore it is not reflected in his words?

## **2.6. The formal marking of thethetic and categorical statements**

According to Lambrecht (1994: 137-138), the contrast between categorical andthetic statements is made formally explicit across languages through the formal marking of the subject NP. Lambrecht (1994: 138) lists five ways in which these NPs are marked in some languages to signal the contrast betweenthetic and categorical judgments:

1. Accented vs. non-accented subject NP (English and German).
2. Postverbal vs. preverbal subject NP (Italian, German, Romance, Slavic, and Chinese).
3. Clefted vs. detached NP (French, Welsh, and Arabic).
4. Special morphological markings on the subject, e.g. *ga*-marked vs. *wa*-marked NP in Japanese (Japanese and Bantu).
5. Subject incorporation (Boni).

As can be noted, marking can be prosodic, morphological, or syntactic and it always targets the subject NP. The reason for this, according to Lambrecht (1994: 234-

235), is that “topichood of the subject (or highest-ranking argument) is the defining criterion for the unmarked topic-comment (or predicate-focus) structure.” Therefore, these different strategies target the subject in order to mark it as non-topical and leave the sentence without the topic-comment structure.

The claim that utterances representing thetic judgments are pragmatically not decomposable into topic-comment sequences, but rather represent a single unit of information was maintained by Chafe (1974: 115), who observed that the difference between thetic and categorical statements is intonationally marked in English. According to him, sometimes both the subject and the verb convey new information, and the verb-noun combination forms a conceptual unit. Sasse (1987: 569) gives the following example to illustrate this point:

(17) The dog is barking. (Sasse 1987: 569, ex 137)

In commenting on example (17), which is said in response to a question like ‘what is going on outside?’, Sasse (1987: 569) argues that the ability to bark is a distinctive property of dogs; thus, nothing except trivial information is conveyed by the verb. Accordingly, the utterance must be taken as a single unit. It follows that such utterance constitutes a thetic rather than a categorical statement since ascribing the act of barking to dogs in that particular situation adds little information to the knowledge store of the hearer. In another situation, this same utterance can be used to make a categorical/ double statement. For example, if the dog in question was mentioned in previous discourse as in the question: *What’s the dog doing now?* The dog in example (17) will act as the topic of the statement and a topic-comment structure is therefore established. Accordingly, it is

the context, not the expression itself, which causes the same sentence to be thetic in one situation and categorical in another.

## **2.7. VS(O) languages and the information structure principle?**

The old and new components of a sentence are associated with distinctions like presupposition and assertion, topic and comment, theme and rheme, topic and focus, background and foreground, and given and new. The subject is generally seen to represent old information. The verb, however, is a constituent that typically carries new information. Raney (1984) claims that “both subjects (a syntactic category) and topics (a pragmatic notion) typically, although not necessarily, convey old information” (p. 50). Raney (1984) attributes the rarity of VS(O) order to its violation of the universal communicative principle. The category of definiteness, Raney argues, applies to NPs and it may be not applicable to verbs, which are “not good candidates for topic status” (p. 50). This claim is supported by Du Bois (1987: 817). According to him “while new status is apparently the norm for verb tokens, given status is the norm for nominal reference; thus speakers should attend to new nominals as more unusual than new verbs.” This led some authors to propose that SV(O) is the pragmatically ideal word order, e.g. Rivarol (1784) (cited in Lambrecht 1994: 199) and that VS(O) word order blatantly violates the principle of information packaging, e.g. Raney (1984), Creider and Creider (1983) and Herring (1990).

As a result of the above, VS(O) word order displayed by VS(O) languages was viewed as casting doubts on the universality of the information structure principle. Lambrecht (1994: 200) raises the issue that some scholars oppose the proposal that the

principle of information structure is a universal one. These scholars argue that the existence of verb-initial languages provides a good reason for rejecting the universality of the information packaging principle since in these languages, the sentence-initial position is reserved for a 'non topical constituent,' namely the verb. Moreover, in footnote (1) Ward and Birner (2004: 173) remark that structuring of information on the basis of the old before new principle may only be applicable to SV languages and that new information has been argued to precede given information in some languages in which the VS order is canonical.

The claim that new information precedes old information in VS(O) languages is maintained by several authors. For example, Creider and Creider (1983) state that "any argument in support of the universality of the order theme + rheme (made on the basis of the presumed naturalness of the order old information + new information) are invalidated by the facts of thematization in VSO languages" (p. 4). Tomlin and Rhodes (1979) arrived at similar conclusions for Ojibwa, a verb-initial language (p. 307). The findings of Creider (1975), Tomlin and Rhodes (1979), and those of her own, led Herring (1990) to conclude that "generalizing, we may state that in languages in which the basic order is verb-subject, the order focus-topic is preferred, unless the topic is new or contrastive, in which case, it appears initially" (p. 167).

The view that the existence of VS(O) languages rules out the universality of the principle of information structure was based on the fact that these language have VS(O) word order as their basic word order (i.e. an order in which the verb precedes the subject). Therefore, the existence of VS(O) in itself caused troubles for the argument supporting the universality of the information packaging principle.

## 2.8. VS(O) word order revisited

Lambrecht (1994) distinguishes between two kinds of pragmatics: conversational and discourse pragmatics. According to him:

...while conversational pragmatics is concerned with the question of why one and the same sentence form may express two or more meanings, discourse pragmatics is concerned with the questions of why one and the same meaning may be expressed by two or more sentence forms (p. 5).

Our aim here is to find out why speakers would prefer one of two (or more) semantically equal sentence forms regardless of how marked any form may be. This aim is clear to Lambrecht (1994), who states that “information structure analysis is centered on the comparison of semantically equivalent but formally and pragmatically divergent sentence pairs” (p. 6).

Given the association of old information and subject NPs on the one hand, and the association between new information and the verb or the predicate on the other hand, it is not totally unfair to adopt claims such as that of Rivarol (1784) (cited in Lambrecht 1994: 199), who argued that SVO word order of French is the ideal word order. At the same time, it is more illuminating to investigate the applicability of the information structure principle to languages which possess different word orders that are on equal level or slightly varying degrees of markedness than languages with rigid canonical SV(O) order. It can be argued that speakers of the so-called free word order languages or languages with less rigid basic word orders have at their disposal a wider range of syntactic constructions allowed by the freedom to choose alternative word orders without imposing more cost on markedness. It is the task of pragmatics to influence these speakers in preferring certain constructions over other semantically equivalent constructions. I claim that VSO order which is the basic word order of Classical Arabic, for example, is less

rigid in that language than the SVO word order in English. The change from VSO of Classical Arabic to SVO of Modern dialects of Arabic (as we are going to see later) provides reasons to believe that the word order in Classical Arabic was flexible enough to have allowed such a change to take place. Also, the fact that SVO word order is a strong competitor and a perfectly acceptable alternative to the basic VSO order in both written and spoken Classical Arabic indicates that its basic VSO word order was less rigid. Thus, one can detect the rationale behind Weil's (1978: 47) view that Greek is a perfect language since "it allows the mind complete liberty to choose what can best express all the delicate shades of its thought." This advantage is not available for speakers of languages with rigid word orders; therefore, the pragmatic effect in question will not be so discernable in these languages. Thus, although it is true that VS(O) word order generally violates the 'old before new' principle; we should not lose interest in VS(O) word order and be tempted to exclude it from our functional analysis.

In chapter 3, I am going to start off with providing a brief background about Kuwaiti Arabic and finding out its basic word order. Next, I am going to talk about the change in the basic word order of Classical Arabic to that of Kuwaiti Arabic. After that, I am going to talk about verb-initial sentences in Kuwaiti Arabic and how they are to be analyzed. We are going to see some examples of verb-initial sentences and try to determine what is common in all those examples.

## **Chapter 3     Basic facts about Kuwaiti Arabic**

### **3.1. Kuwaiti Arabic**

The Kuwaiti dialect is a variety of Arabic spoken in Kuwait which is a small gulf country located in the north eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Like other Arab states, Kuwait represents a diaglossic community where two varieties of the same language co-exist. The high variety is Modern Standard Arabic which is considered today's version of Classical Arabic. Kuwaiti Arabic represents the low or vernacular variety used in Kuwait. Modern Standard Arabic is the variety used in formal situations and in written texts. Thus, Modern Standard Arabic is used in print, news broadcasts, historical drama, the speech of cartoon characters, religious sermons, academic settings and other formal situations. Kuwaiti Arabic, however, is the variety used in everyday interaction between people in informal settings. Thus, the Kuwaiti dialect is used in the communication between family members, friends, and laymen. Modern Standard Arabic is the native language of no one in Kuwait and the Arab world. It is taught formally in schools and accordingly it is the main language of written instruction in schools, colleges and universities. Kuwaiti Arabic is the variety spoken at home and thus is considered the native variety or the mother tongue of all Kuwaiti speakers since it is the first variety children are exposed to, whereas Modern Standard Arabic is not taught until the age of five i.e. in the first year of school. Kuwaiti Arabic is a spoken variety only and it is never written except in informal letters, e-mail, or text message exchanges. Holes (2004: 50) suggests that written colloquial Arabic is restricted to children's comics and political cartoons and certain types of informal writings not intended for public consumption such

as personal informal letters to friends, draft type-scripts, memoranda, informal documents and ephemera. But the major type of written colloquial language, according to Holes (2004: 50), occurs in some forms of nonfolkloric narratives, specifically drama, where written colloquial “may be put in the mouths of characters or actors where the creation of a naturalistic atmosphere is being aimed at.”

For non-Arabs as well as Arabs from outside the Persian Gulf region, Kuwaiti Arabic sounds very similar to some of the dialects of Arabic spoken in Iraq and other Arab Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. However, people of those countries can readily recognize and distinguish their dialects. Kuwaiti Arabic is even more distinguishable from other dialects in the Gulf region due to its popular TV dramas and comic plays. Other dialects of Arabic include: Jordanian, Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, Moroccan, Libyan, Tunisian, and Sudanese. The differences among these dialects and the Gulf dialects can be great to the point of mutual unintelligibility.

As for the relation of Modern Standard Arabic, which is considered today’s version of Classical Arabic, to other genetically related dialects of Arabic, specifically Kuwaiti Arabic, there are two contradictory claims. The first one holds that like other dialects of Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic is a daughter language of Classical Arabic. The second claim contends that today’s diaglossic situation in which both Classical Arabic and other dialects co-exist dates back as far as the history of the Arabic language goes.

It should be noted that some educated and cultured speakers of Kuwaiti Arabic tend to use Modern Standard Arabic instead of Kuwaiti Arabic depending on sociolinguistic factors like the situation and the topic. Other speakers use a mixture of

both Modern Standard Arabic and Kuwaiti Arabic known as *al-wusta*. However, it is an easy task for the hearer, Parkinson (1981: 25) argues, to identify which variety (i.e. colloquial or Modern Standard Arabic) is being used. The reason behind this is that each variety is distinguishable by its verbal prefixes, negative and demonstrative constructions and the common words used. I suggest that even pronunciation and word order play a role in setting apart Modern Standard Arabic from Kuwaiti Arabic. According to Parkinson (1981: 26), word order is one of the crucial markers that distinguish the high variety from the low one. In addition to that, Classical Arabic resisted lexical change while Kuwaiti Arabic has been influenced by many languages as evidenced by its lexicon which contains many foreign words especially from the English language.

### **3.1.1. The basic word order in Kuwaiti Arabic**

It is important to note that determining the basic word order of a language is not without problems. Greenberg (1963: 61) suggests that each language has one and only one dominant word order in addition to several alternatives. Greenberg (1963) offers no explicit definition for what he calls ‘dominant’ word order. He only sets up what he refers to as ‘the basic order typology’ which involves three criteria: 1) the existence of prepositions as against postpositions, 2) the relative order of subject, verb and object in declarative sentences with nominal subject and object, and 3) the position of qualifying adjective in relation to the noun (Greenberg 1963: 60-61). For Steele (1978: 587), dominant word order means the “surface ordering of subject, object and verb relative to one another that is at least more common than others.” Therefore, frequency is suggested by Steele to be the factor which determines the dominant word order in a given language.

Steele provides a list of what should be excluded when determining the dominant word order. The list includes subordinate clauses, non-declarative sentences, constituents other than the subject, verb and object (e.g. adverbs), pronominal subjects and objects as well as word orders that are highly marked (Steele 1978: 591-592).

In fact, subordinate clauses may lead the observer up the garden path when trying to determine the dominant word order in Classical Arabic, for example, which is a predominantly VSO language:

- (18)    jaʃi:ʃu as-samaku fi l-maa?  
          Live the-fish in the-water.  
          ‘Fish live in water.’
- b.    \*ʃalim-tu ʔanna jaʃi:ʃu as-samaku fi l-maa?  
          Knew-I that live the-fish in the-water.  
          ‘I knew that fish live in water.’
- c.    ʃalim-tu ʔanna as-samaka jaʃi:ʃu fi l-maa?  
          Knew-I that the-fish live in the-water.  
          ‘I knew that fish live in water.’

As can be seen above, sentence (a) consists of a main clause. The word order in this clause is VSO. Sentences (b) and (c) contain subordinate clauses. In subordinate clauses only SVO is allowed. Thus, sentence (c) is acceptable while sentence (b) is ruled out because the subordinate clauses display VSO word order instead of SVO.

El-Yasin (1985) offers a diagnosis which no doubt will uncover the unmarked word order in any variety of Arabic. This test requires constructing an example in which both of the NP arguments of a transitive verb would be equally definite nouns and in which no semantic focus or contrast is made (p. 112):

(19) Classical Arabic:

ḍaraba                mu:sa ʔi:sa  
hit (3 mas. sg.) Mousa Issa.  
'Mousa hit Issa'

[El-Yasin 1985: 112, ex. 9]

The NPs in the above example are proper nouns; therefore, both are definite NPs. Besides, no semantic focus is made. As can be seen, VSO is the natural way to express the notion that someone hit someone else in Classical Arabic. It follows that VSO is the basic word order in Classical Arabic. This same diagnostic serves as a test that reveals the basic word order in Kuwaiti Arabic as can be seen from the following example:

(20) Kuwaiti Arabic:

a.        mu:sa ʔag ʔi:sa  
          Mousa hit Issa  
          'Mousa hit Issa'

b.        \*ʔag mu:sa ʔi:sa  
          hit Mousa Issa  
          'Mousa hit Issa'

We can see from example (20) that the basic word order in Kuwaiti Arabic is SVO. In his study of Gulf Arabic which includes Kuwaiti Arabic, Holes (1990: 107) observed that the normal order in the Gulf dialects of Arabic is SVO (where S is normally the topic). This is consistent with my observation that SVO word order is the order of the majority of sentences in Kuwaiti Arabic, while VS word order comprises a very low portion of the sentences in that variety of Arabic.

### 3.1.2. The shift from VSO to SVO

The basic word order in Classical Arabic is VSO<sup>4</sup>. SVO order in Classical Arabic is considered marked:

(21)a. zaraʕa    zajd-un    šadʒara  
planted Zayd-Nom a tree  
'Zayd planted a tree.'

b. # zajd-un    zaraʕ    šadʒara  
Zayd-Nom planted a tree  
'Zayd planted a tree.'

In the grammar of Classical Arabic, verb-initial sentences are known as verbal sentences. A verbal sentence has an unmarked status and it constitutes the preferred sentence type compared to a noun phrase (NP)-initial or a nominal sentence which has marked status in the language. The verbal sentence in (21-a) is unmarked in terms of word order while the nominal sentence in (21-b) is considered marked (the symbol # stands for increased structural markedness). A nominal sentence is preferred over a verbal sentence in Classical Arabic only if the preverbal subject in the nominal sentence is contrastive or it is the focus of the utterance. For example, sentence (22-b) with a preposed subject is a more appropriate answer to the question in (22-a) than the VSO sentence (22-c) below. Similarly, sentence (23-b) is more apposite than (23-c) in signaling a contrast in the agent or the performer of the action:

(22)a. man zaraʕa    aš-šadʒara  
who planted the-tree  
'Who planted the tree?'

b. zajd-un    zaraʕa    aš-šadʒara  
Zayd-Nom planted the-tree  
'Zayd planted the tree'

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper, only surface word order is considered. Underlying word order is not taken into account.

- c. #zaraʕ    zajd-un        aš-šadʒara  
       planted Zayd-CASE    the-tree  
       ‘Zayd planted the tree.’

(23)a. ʔuxbir-tu        ʔanna zajdan ʔaʕadda aṭ-ṭaʕaam  
       told(PASS)-I that Zayd    prepared the-food  
       ‘I was told that Zayd prepared the food’

b. bal    ʕi:sa ʔaʕadda aṭ-ṭaʕaam  
       rather Issa    prepared the-food  
       ‘Rather, Issa prepared the food.’

c. #bal    ʔaʕadda ʕi:sa aṭ-ṭaʕaam  
       rather prepared Issa the-food  
       ‘Rather, Issa prepared the food.’

Unlike classical Arabic, the unmarked, canonical word order in Kuwait Arabic is

SVO:

(24)a. Classical Arabic:

nama al-waladu  
 Slept the-boy  
 ‘the boy slept’

b. Kuwaiti Arabic:

al-walad na:m.  
 the-boy slept.  
 # na:m al-walad

Parkinson (1981: 25) states that the dialects of Arabic he is familiar with have SVO as their basic word order departing from the VSO order in Standard Arabic. This change (from VSO in Classical Arabic to SVO in Kuwaiti Arabic) may be part of a universal tendency of natural languages to move from the marked to the unmarked typologies. Upon comparing the basic word order of Classical Arabic and that of Jordanian Arabic, El-Yasin (1985) concluded that a change in VSO order in the direction of the more common SVO order had taken place. Parkinson (1981) observes that there is

an ongoing change from VSO to SVO word order even in Modern Standard Arabic. This conclusion supports Greenberg's (1963: 61) claim that VSO languages are a minority among the world's languages. In fact, Raney (1984) states that only five to ten percent of the world's languages have VSO order as the dominant surface word order (p. 47).

Raney (1984) explains the shift towards SVO word order in Welsh and Breton by a tendency of languages to follow "a universal communicative principle of 'old before new'" in addition to the language contact situation which these languages were experiencing (p. 53). I suggest that the same thing holds for Arabic. In other words, Arabic through its modern spoken varieties demonstrates a pragmatically motivated change in the direction of the SVO word order. In fact, Raney (1984: 49) states that "it is fruitful to consider the general information structure of communication as a possible explanatory factor in word order change."

Alternatively, it can be argued that the shift from VSO of Classical Arabic to SVO of the modern dialects of Arabic is a syntactically motivated process. Under this view, the collapse of the Classical Arabic case system characterized by the loss of case endings resulted in a tendency to set the subject and the object apart in transitive constructions. The subject was increasingly placed in a preverbal position as opposed to the object which retained its postverbal position. Although it is possible that the loss of case markings in Classical Arabic contributed to a change in its basic word order, it would be unfair to claim that this change is chiefly attributable to the breakdown in the case system. This is so because case is not always marked on the arguments of the verb in Classical Arabic. There are nouns in the language which do not inflect for case in Classical Arabic. Still, VSO word order is preferred. Sentence

(19) above is a good example of a VSO sentence where both arguments of the verb *ḍaraba* ‘hit’ are not inflected for case.

The shift from VSO to SVO in Arabic suggests that both word orders were available to speakers of Arabic even before the change. This is supported by Greenberg’s findings. In his words, “All languages with dominant VSO order have SVO as an alternative or as the only alternative basic word order” (Greenberg 1963: 63). Raney (1984: 50) suggests that “topicalization of the subject is a stylistic option in VSO. If it becomes grammaticized, a VSO language can be said to have shifted to SVO.” This, in my opinion, describes the process of word order change undergone by Arabic.

The above examples demonstrate that Kuwaiti Arabic shows a pragmatic departure from Classical Arabic by demarking previously marked structures (i.e. SVO) and assigning other previously unmarked structures (i.e. VSO) a marked status. The question that arises here is: how are we going to treat the VS word order (the order in which the verb precedes the subject) in Kuwaiti Arabic? Should we consider it a remnant of a once dominant word order or simply a case of topicalization or verb fronting? Since treating VSO word order as a residue of once a dominant word order or as a case of verb fronting will not affect the claim made in this thesis, I will not pursue this point any further.

### **3.1.3. VS sentences in Kuwaiti Arabic**

Although presumably starting as a VSO language, Kuwaiti Arabic is now an SVO language variety. This means that Kuwaiti Arabic is expected to conform to the

information structure principle more than its ancestor Classical Arabic. Although the basic word order in Kuwaiti Arabic is SV, VS order (i.e. an order in which the verb precedes the subject) is still used in intransitive constructions. Therefore, the principle of information structure may not be so observed in Kuwaiti Arabic as in languages where SVO is strictly imposed. A legitimate question that arises here is: why does Kuwaiti Arabic still preserve VS word order when this order generally violates the ‘old before new’ principle of information structure? An answer to this question requires us to investigate the reasons behind the survival of this word order and in what situations it surfaces. In fact, using Prince’s terms the postverbal subject may represent Hearer-old information:

- (25)    tawwa dag    ʔala-j Rashid  
           just    called on-me Rashid  
           ‘Rashid has just called me.’                    (Adeel el-Rooh episode 4)

By using a proper name, *Rashid*, in example (25) the speaker assumes the hearer to already have a mental representation of that entity. In other words, the speaker is assuming that the NP *Rashid* is Hearer-old information. Otherwise the speaker might have said, for example, the following:

- (26)    tawwa dag    ʔala-j waahid  
           just    called on-me somebody (m)  
           ‘Somebody has just called me’

The verb *dag* ‘called’ in (25) introduces new information about the subject in question. As opposed to the general tendency for old information represented by the subject to precede new information conveyed by the verb, it may be argued that in sentence (25) the ‘old before new’ principle of information structure is not observed. My hypothesis here is that if verb-initial statements in Kuwaiti Arabic representthetic or

‘event-reporting’ utterances, then there must be certain discourse properties that distinguish between them and non-verb initial statements.

Reordering of syntactic constituents provides speakers with semantically equivalent yet syntactically distinct forms. The rules of syntax do not instruct speakers to choose between two well-formed sentences that converge on meaning and diverge in word order. Also, markedness would be expected to influence speakers to choose the least marked structure (among semantically equivalent sentences), but this does not seem to be the case in Kuwaiti Arabic where the marked VS order is sometimes preferred over the normal SV word order. Fukada (1987) states that “studies show that in situations where there is more than one form to express the same proposition, each alternative has distinct pragmatic value associated with it; i.e. choice between alternate forms is governed by pragmatic principles” (p. 7). In referring to the word order variation found in Nandi, a Nilotic VSO language, Creider and Creider (1983) argue that:

...for the language to utilize a word order so much at variance with its fundamental ordering principle must require some powerful reason which is extraneous to the linguistic system itself. The conversational interactional system in which the grammar is embedded provides such a powerful reason. (p. 13)

### **3.2. Examining VS sentences in Kuwaiti Arabic**

Several word orders are displayed by Kuwaiti Arabic. First, there is the dominant SV word order which accounts for the vast majority of the sentences in Kuwaiti Arabic. Second, there is the VS word order which is considered marked and serves as an alternative word order for the dominant SV. Third, there is the OVS word order which is considered highly marked but which nevertheless serves an important discourse function. Other word orders like OSV and SOV are normally impossible in Kuwaiti Arabic.

Finally, VOS word order is impossible in Kuwaiti Arabic except when the object appears as suffix pronoun on the verb (which from now on I will refer to as V-oS i.e. V-pronominal object S, see examples 25, 55, 59, and 60). It is noteworthy that VS, V-oS and OVS share something in common which SVO word order does not have. This thing is the relative order of the verb and the subject. In VS, V-oS and OVS word orders the subject comes after the verb i.e. the subject is postverbal.

In my analysis of the Kuwaiti dialect, I used Kuwaiti TV dramas as my source for the data. Any example taken from TV dramas is indicated by the episode number in which that example appeared, while any example without a source indicated is my own construction. I included representative instances of VS (and V-oS) statements I encountered, and I only considered clauses where a choice between VS and SV was possible and where both gave rise to the same meaning. Accordingly, subordinate clauses were ignored since the word order in them was relatively fixed. Negative constructions were also excluded because only the verb could occupy the initial position after the negation particle. Consider the following examples:

(27)a. ʔiʕtabri Khalid maat  
 consider Khalid died  
 ‘Consider that Khalid died.’ (Ittijaah Jebri, episode 11)

b. \*ʔiʕtabri maat Khalid  
 consider died Khalid  
 ‘Consider that Khalid died.’

(28)a. laa jiðin saalim inna-h faahim kil ʕaj  
 not think Salem that-he understanding every thing  
 ‘Let Salem not think that he knows everything.’

b. \* laa saalim jiðin inna-h faahim kil ʕaj  
 not Salem think that-he understanding every thing  
 ‘Let Salem not think that he knows everything.’

- (29)a. maa dʒa hasan illa jabi šaj  
 not came Hasan except (he)wants something  
 'Hasan would not have come except that he wants something.'
- b. \*maa hasan dʒa illa jabi šaj  
 not Hasan came except (he)wants something  
 'Hasan would not have come except that he wants something.'

As can be seen, the word order in sentence (27-b) is VS. Since VS word order is a possible word order in Kuwaiti Arabic, the ungrammaticality of (27-b) is not derived from the order of the words but rather from a restriction banning VS word order in embedded sentences. As for sentences (28-b) and (29-b), they are ungrammatical since the negation particles *laa* and *maa* impose a restriction on the order of words following them, namely that it has to strictly be a VS order.

There is another group of statements which regularly surface with a VS word order, but which we will not be considering in this thesis. These are: 1) conditional “if-then” statements signaled mainly by the presence of the conditional particles *law* or *ʔiða* both meaning ‘if’, 2) statements containing time clause modifiers *lamma*, *laj(n)*, or *kilmaa*<sup>5</sup> all meaning ‘whenever,’ 3) future tense constructions signaled by the use of the modal auxiliary *raaḥ* ‘will,’ which is to be distinguished from the verb *raaḥ* ‘gone,’ 4) statements introduced by the narrative *šaan* ‘all of a sudden/next/then,’ which is to be distinguished from *šaan* ‘would.’ The reason that these statements will not be considered despite seeming to be naturallythetic is that the VS order in these constructions may be

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<sup>5</sup> In some of its uses, the time clause modifier *kilmaa* has a closely related meaning equivalent to “the more/less..., the more/less...” construction of English. It should also be noted that *lamma* is usually accompanied by present tense verbs while *kilmaa* is usually accompanied by past tense verbs and *laj(n)* as well as *ʔiða* are strictly accompanied by past tense verbs. However, the reading obtained from sentences containing these items is usually generic or hypothetical; thus, they can be regarded as condition sentences and accordingly the distinction between the items in (1) and (2) is blurred.

attributed to purely syntactic considerations rather than being pragmatically motivated. Specifically, it may be argued that what triggered VS word order in these statements is the presence of particular lexical items. The following are some examples containing the above lexical items:

- (30) law/?iða waafaq il-mušrif tinħal il-muškillā  
 if approved the-advisor resolves the-problem  
 ‘if the advisor approves, the problem resolves.’
- (31) lamma jītig il-muṭar takθir il-ħawaadiθ  
 when falls the-rain increase accidents  
 ‘When rain falls accidents increase.’
- (32) laj(n) yaab il-gaṭu liṣaab il-faar  
 when disappeared the-cat played the-mouse  
 ‘When the cat disappears, the mouse plays.’
- (33) kilmaa qallat il-biḏaaṣah (kilmaa) zaadat il-ʔasṣaar  
 when decreased the-merchandise increased the-prices  
 When the merchandise decrease, the prices increase./The less the merchandise,  
 the higher the prices.’
- (34) baṣad saaṣah raah tyi:b iṣ-ṣams  
 after hour will set the-sun  
 ‘After an hour, the sun will set.’
- (35) ṣaan tinsag il-ʔarḏ  
 then cracks the-earth  
 ‘then the earth cracked’

Kuwaiti Arabic is considered a pro-drop language variety. In fact, the subject does not show up in many of the sentences that occur in Kuwaiti Arabic except as a marker: a suffix or prefix on the verb. Parkinson (1981: 33) observes that “the normal situation, of course, is simply a VO sentence with subject understood from the agreement of the verb and from context.” Sentences with null subjects as well as sentences with subject affixes were not included.

There are a set of expressions in Kuwaiti Arabic which also show fixed order in all of their occurrences. I decided not to include these expressions despite the fact that a great deal of them showed a VS order. The following sentences are few examples of these expressions:

- (36) baarak ʔallah fi:k  
blessed God you  
'God bless you.'
- (37) ʔaah l-ħaṭab  
fell the-wood  
= 'broke the ice'
- (38) ʔaag xulg-i  
shrank tolerance-my  
= 'I felt down'
- (39) zaarat-na l-barakah  
visited-us the-blessing  
'Blessing visited us' (= 'welcome')

Finally, I only considered declarative sentences with expressed and free-standing subjects and verbs. Sentences without expressed verbs i.e. verbless sentences or small clauses were also excluded from the analysis even if the subject was postposed. The following are a few examples of verbless sentences in Kuwaiti Arabic:

- (40) l-ħaraarah mirtaʔʔah  
the-temperature high  
'the temperature is high' (Ya Khooy, episode 2)
- (41) dziddaam-itʃ nuʃ saʔʔah  
a head-of-you (f) half hour  
'You have half an hour' (Ya Khooy, episode 1)
- (42) ʔubu-j naajim  
father-my asleep  
'My father is asleep' (Theman Omri, episode 1)

(43) ?intaj il-kbi:rah  
you the-eldest  
'You are the eldest.'

(Theman Omri, episode 1)

(44) waraa-j dawaam  
behind-me work  
'Work is awaiting me'

(Ya Khooy, episode 1)

## Chapter 4 Findings

### 4.1. Theticity in Kuwaiti Arabic

It seems that speakers of Kuwaiti Arabic use V(-o)S word order when they intend to convey that the whole utterance represents new information i.e. when they take an utterance to represent a thetic type of judgment. My claim in this thesis is that, unlike sentences with SV(O) word order, sentences that show V(-o)S word order in Kuwaiti Arabic are not subject to the topic-comment analysis and therefore they do not contradict the principle of information structure. Such sentences are instances of the thetic type of judgment. Under this approach, Lambrecht (1994: 139) states that the contrast between thetic and categorical judgments is viewed as “the manifestation of two different logical representations of the same propositional content.”

Interestingly, when the subject represents an entity that is unfamiliar to the hearer, speakers of Kuwaiti Arabic tend to move it away from the initial position of the sentence. This implies that the initial position of the sentence is reserved for topics, and non-topical constituents should not occupy the initial position of the sentence. Kuwaiti Arabic makes use of two different strategies to mark a subject NP as non-topical:

1. Post-verbal subject NPs
2. Insertion of the existential particle *fī* or *ʔaku*.

Both of these strategies would produce statements which I argued correspond to the thetic type of judgment. Moving what would normally be the topic of the sentence away from its usual position renders the sentence topic-less, or in Kuroda's (1972) terms “subjectless.” In the next section, I am going to talk about the first strategy and provide examples from Kuwaiti Arabic.

#### **4.1.1. VSthetic utterances in Kuwaiti Arabic**

##### **4.1.1.1.Types of VSthetic statements in Kuwaiti Arabic**

All the VSthetic statements I obtained are of type cthetic statements (see 2.5 above), i.e. an event part of which is an entity. In fact, type c ofthetic statements is the only type attested in VSthetic statements of Kuwaiti Arabic. Entity-central and event-centralthetic statements are simply non-existent and cannot be expressed with VSthetic statements in Kuwaiti Arabic. As mentioned above, in entity-centralthetic statements an entity is mentioned and nothing is reported about it. Since we are dealing with VS statements i.e. statements containing verbs and subjects, then there must be an entity and something reported about it. In other words, presentational constructions are impossible to express with VS statements and even with any statement containing a verb. As for event-centralthetic statements, they are impossible to express because Kuwaiti Arabic lacks the non-referential pleonastic pronouns, making it impossible for a VS statement to only contain an event.

There are some statements (of type c) which made up most of the data obtained. These are existential statements which include statements of appearance and disappearance. In fact, the vast majority of the VSthetic statements I found relate to statements of appearance and disappearance; however, other subtypes ofthetic statements do appear in Kuwaiti Arabic. Statements of appearance and disappearance almost exclusively surface asthetic statements. The reason for this may be that an entity's arrival or departure is taken as a change in the situation and it is accordingly viewed as a new event rather than a new action of the entity involved. The following are few examples ofthetic utterances which involve verbs of appearance and disappearance:

- (45) raah in-nahaar  
gone the-day  
'the day is gone.'  
(Daaret el-Ayyaam, episode 2)
- (46) ?wʃalat ?ixt ?ibli:s  
arrived sister Devil  
'The Devil's sister arrived.'  
(Daaret el-Ayyaam, episode 2)
- (47) bajjan Bu-Naser  
appeared Bu-Naser  
'Bu-Naser appeared.'  
(Daaret el-Ayyaam, episode 4)
- (48) jaat il-gubbisah  
came the-jinx  
'The jinx came'  
(Daaret el-Ayyaam, episode 3)
- (49) raah ʃiga ʃumr-i killa  
gone endeavor life-my all  
'All my life's endeavor is gone.'  
(Tash w Rash, episode 9)

This pattern tallies with Lambrecht's (1987: 373) observation about verbs of appearance or disappearance. According to him:

...the predicates most commonly permitted in SF [sentence focus] sentences involve 'presenting' verbs, i.e. intransit[i]ve verbs expressing appearance or disappearance of some referent in the internal or external discourse setting, or the beginning or end of some state involving the referent.

Even languages with rigid SVO word order like English permit subject-verb inversion when it comes to verbs of appearance. Consider the following examples:

- (50) There arrived two men.
- (51) Just behind him there came the mayor, handing out leaflets.

(Ward and Birner 2004, ex. 23-b, p. 164)

With other verbs, however, subject-verb inversion results in ungrammatical constructions:

- (52) \*There ate two men.
- (53) \*Just behind him there slept the mayor, snoring like a beast.

Although not as frequent, other subtypes of thethetic statements are attested in Kuwaiti Arabic. These subtypes ofthetic statements include: explanations, statements describing surprising or unexpected events, general statements, background descriptions, and weather expressions:

- (54) kimal mahar bahlulā  
completed bride price of Bahloola  
'Bahloola's bride price is completed!' (Madenat Erreyah, episode 11)
- (55) il-ʔadzu:z ʔittahmat-ni ʔin-ni ʔaana ʔaraami w ilʔigu:-ni iʃ-ʃurʔa  
the-old lady accused-me that-me I thief and followed-me the police  
'The old lady accused me that I am a thief and the police followed me.'  
(Madenat Erreyah, episode 11)
- (56) ʔag il-muʔar  
hit the-rain  
'It started to rain.'

As can be seen from example (56), weather expressions in Kuwaiti Arabic, thoughthetic, are not of type b i.e. event-centralthetic statements. They belong to type cthetic statements i.e. an event part of which is an entity.

#### 4.1.1.2. Characteristics of VSthetic statements

##### i. Discourse-newness

As stated above, it is generally accepted that statements with V(-o)S word order correspond to thethetic type of judgment as opposed to those with SV(O) word order which correspond to the categorical type of judgment. But, if we are going to accept such a claim without any linguistic evidence then we will end up making a hypothesis about the mind and not the language. Therefore, we should be able to find certain discourse properties distinguishing betweenthetic and categorical statements apart from the fact that the subject appears in a sentence non-initial position inthetic statements but not in

categorical statements. I believe this discourse property to be what Lambrecht (1987: 375) refers to as the degree of discourse and pragmatic accessibility a referent of a subject NP has in the discourse. Following Lambrecht (1987: 375), I argue that when a referent is insufficiently accessible in a discourse i.e. when an entity is new to the discourse, a categorical statement containing it is infelicitous and accordingly no topic-comment relation can be established. Instead, athetic statement is used.

The same requirement for theticity is pointed out by Sasse (1987) who states that: “A THETIC STATEMENT IS UTTERED ONLY IF THE ELEMENTS THAT WOULD CONSTITUTE THE PREDICATION BASE AND THE PREDICATE IN A CORRESPONDING CATEGORICAL STATEMENT BOTH CONVEY (TEXTUALLY) NEW INFORMATION” (567: small caps in original). The reason for this, Sasse (1987: 570) argues is that “when both the entity and the event are textually unestablished, the requirement of suddenness is fulfilled, and the background of expectation must be defined situatively rather than in terms of information structure.” In Prince’s terms, the referent of the ‘would-be predication base’ has to be Discourse-new for theticity to be achieved. Thus, the second clause in example (57) (which is a repetition of example (25) above) is anomalous because a VS thetic utterance cannot be used if the entity named *Rashid* had been previously mentioned in the discourse. And indeed, he was never mentioned previously in the actual discourse in which this example originally occurred:

- (57) Rashid maa daawam il-jum li?ann-ah mari:d # tawwa dag ʔala-j Rashid  
 Rashid not attend today because-he sick just called on-me Rashid  
 ‘Rashid did not come to work today since he is sick. Rashid has just called me.’

The same condition applies for presentational *there* sentences in English. According to Ward and Birner (2004: 164), the postverbal NP in presentational *there*

sentences cannot represent Discourse-old information for the sentence to be felicitous. In other words, the postverbal NP can represent Hearer-old but not Discourse-old information. When the postverbal NP represents Discourse-old information, the sentence becomes infelicitous:

(58) As they laughed, John and the mayor began to move forward in a deliberate way. John jiggled a tin cup in one hand and tapped a white cane in front of him with the other. #Just behind him there came the mayor, handing out leaflets. (Ward and Birner 2004: p.164, ex. 24)

Therefore, for a VS or a V-o S statement in Kuwaiti Arabic to be categorized as athetic statement we should find that the subject of that statement to represent a Discourse-new entity i.e. an entity which is newly introduced to the discourse. In fact, it is not unusual to find examples where the subject of the thetic statement is an indefinite NP. By their nature, indefinite NPs are used by speakers to convey Hearer-new information which of course means that they also represent Discourse-new information:

(59) tawwa min θalaaθat ?ayyaam yaa-k            ?inḏaar  
just from three days came-you(m) warning  
'Just three days ago, a warning came to you.' (Ya Khooy, episode 1)

(60) ?aana l-baarḥah daggaḡt ?alaj-k raddat    ?ala-j waḥda  
I the-last night called on-you answered on-me somebody(f)  
'I called you last night and a lady answered.' (el-Hareem, episode 28)

The speaker utters (59) to inform her husband that he received a warning from his employer for not showing up. It was the first mention for the warning during the conversation between the wife and the husband. Thus, 'warning' is Discourse-new as well as a full NP. This means that the subject of the V-o S statement satisfies the conditions of theticity; hence, the statement is a thetic statement. Likewise, the subject of the VS clause in (60) is indefinite and it is therefore intended by the speaker to represent

Hearer-new information. Again, this means that the subject of the inverted clause is a Discourse-new entity. In addition to that, it is a full NP. Therefore, the prerequisites for theticity are met and accordingly the statement must be thetic.

Once the referent of an NP is established, it can no longer be used in a thetic type of statement. Instead, a categorical statement in which the subject precedes the verb is used. The following detailed example illustrates this point:

(61) (*Salesman Sihrar knocks on the door and enters*) (Madenat Erreyah, episode 5)

a Salesman: ʔis-salaamu ʔalaj-kum  
the-peace on-you(pl)  
'peace be upon you.'

b Shahbandar: ha ʔalaj-kum ʔis-salaam, š-jajb-ik ʔint ʔišlu:n tji  
ha on-you the peace, what-brings-you you how come(you)  
'Ha! Upon you be peace. What brings you? How do you come and leave

wi thid ʔid-dikkaan mbaʔʔal w [...] ʔann-h  
and leave the-shop open and [...] about-it  
the shop open and [...] it.'

c Salesman: ʔwʕalat qaafilat ʔit-taadzir salaamah w jabi:-k tidzi wi  
arrived caravan the-merchant Salaamah and (he)wants-you come and  
'Merchant Salaamah's caravan has arrived. He wants you to come and

ʔsu:f-l-ah mukaan ʔatta jihiʔ biɖaaʔt-ah  
find-for-him place so (he)puts merchandise-his  
find him a place so he can keep his merchandise.'

d Shahbandar: ʔajjib ʔajjib ʔajjib xalaas xalaas ru:h ru:h ru:h ʔaana jaaj waraa-k  
OK OK OK enough enough go go go I coming after-you  
'OK. Enough. Go. I am coming after you. Go.'

e ʔaana jaaj waraa-k ru:h jallah ru:h jallah ru:h jallah jallah  
I coming after-you go ... go ... go

f Shahbandar (to daughter): ha, simaʔt-aj b-aðu:n-itʃ, ʔil-qaafilah [PAUSE] wʕalat  
ha? heard(you.f) with-ear-your the-caravan arrived  
'Ha? Have you heard? The caravan arrived

g wi t-taadʒir salaamah janʒir-ni ʕala ʕtibat baab ʔid-dikkan.  
 and merchant Salaamah waiting-me on step door the-shop  
 and Merchant Salaamah is waiting for me on the shop's doorstep.

h ja salaam ʔil-qaafilah l-mḥammilah wʕalat. ʕala fikrah ʔaana jimkin  
 how wonderful. the-caravan the-loaded arrived. By way I may  
 How wonderful. The loaded caravan arrived. By the way, I may

ʔatʔaxxar ha, li-ʔanni ʔittifaqt maʕa-h ʔaana ʔaʕu:f il-biɖaaʕah  
 be late ha, for-I agreed with-him I see the-merchandise  
 be late ha because I agreed with him to see the merchandise

w ba-ʕtiri:-ha kil-ha. maʕa s-salaamah.  
 and will-buy-it all-it. with peace.  
 and buy it all. With peace.”

Yasmine: maʕa s-salaamah jiba  
 With the-peace dad  
 ‘With peace dad.’

As can be seen above, the word *qaafilah* ‘caravan’ first appeared as a postverbal NP (line c). At that point, it was Discourse-new. Therefore, the statement containing it is athetic statement. When we look at the ensuing discourse, we find that the now-established or Discourse-old NP *qaafilah* ‘caravan’ also appears as a subject (line f). But this time it is a preverbal rather than postverbal subject. In other words, the second mention of the word *qaafilah* ‘caravan’ had to be made in a statement with an SV word order which I argued corresponds to the categorical type of judgment. Thus, VS statements may be viewed as preparing new subjects for further use as topics in subsequent discourse.

Even statements of appearance or disappearance, which normally initially surface as VS thetic statements, lose their theticity when the subject is established in previous

discourse. Instead, the words are permuted such that the statement is rendered categorical. The following example illustrates this point:

(62) (*Bahlool comes running to the Shahbandar and Merchant Salaamah*)

Bahlool: ʕamm-i, ʕamm-i, ʕamm-i š-šaahbandar, ʕamm-i salaamah, lihqaw,  
uncle-my, uncle-my uncle-my, the-Shahbandar, uncle-my Salaamah rush,  
'Uncle Shahbandar! Uncle Salaamah! Rush!

lihqaw. ʕamm-i ʕadzaadʒ lam ʔihdu:m-ah killihum w tirak  
rush. uncle-my Adgaag gathered clothes-his all and left  
Rush! Uncle Adgaag gathered his all his clothes and left,

ʔinħaaš w xalla l-madi:na  
fled and left the-city  
fled and left the city.'

Merchant Salaamah: ha aha haaða ʔint simaʕt bi-ðn-ik, simaʕt b-iðn-ik  
ha aha this you heard with-ear-your heard with-ear-your  
'Ha aha, now you heard yourself

ya šibhandar. haaða bahlu:lu, bhajli:l š-qaafid jigu:l  
oh Shahbandar. this Bahlool, Bahlool what-is saying  
Shahbandar what is Bahlool saying:

ʕadzaadʒ ʔixtifa  
Adgaag disappeared  
Adgaag disappeared.'

(Madeenat Erreyah, episode 11)

In the last line of the above example, the speaker restated the disappearance of 'Adgaag' in an SV statement which I argued is categorical statement. Since, 'Adgaag' is mentioned in previous discourse, its status as a discourse entity is established. In other words, 'Adgaag' represents Discourse-old information and therefore it cannot be used in a VSthetic statement.

The subject and the verb cannot be topical for a VS statement to be felicitous. Consider the following examples:

- (63) A: minu maat  
           who died  
           ‘Who died?’
- B: #maat dʒaasim  
           died Jassim  
           ‘Jassim died’
- C: dʒaasim maat  
           Jassim died  
           ‘Jassim died.’
- (64) A: wajn dʒaasim  
           where Jassim  
           ‘Where is Jassim?’
- B: #maat dʒaasim  
           died Jassim  
           ‘Jassim died.’
- C: dʒaasim maat  
           Jassim died  
           ‘Jassim died.’

As can be seen from example (63), when the verb is topical a VS answer becomes infelicitous. Likewise, when the subject is topical as in example (64) a VS statement cannot be used as an answer. This means that both the subject and the verb have to be new for a VSthetic statement to be felicitous.

## **ii. Full lexical NP coding**

Another requirement for theticity is that the postverbal NP has to be a full lexical NP. Pronominal subjects are strictly excluded in thetic statements since the referent of a pronominal subject is only known by virtue of being mentioned in previous discourse; a thing which makes the subject of the statement represent Discourse-old information. Or, if there was no prior mention of the entity in question then the statement containing the

pronominal subject will be infelicitous since the referent of that subject will be unknown. In normal situations the answer to question (65-A) below would contain a full NP as in (65-a). Sentence (65-b) would be an inappropriate answer for question (65-A) because it contains a pronominal rather than a full subject NP.

- |      |                       |                                         |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| (65) | A. What's the matter? | (Lambrecht 1994: p. 137, ex. (4. 10 A)) |
|      | a. My NECK hurts.     | (Lambrecht 1994: p. 137, ex. (4. 10 a)) |
|      | b. *It hurts.         | (Lambrecht 1994: p. 137, ex. (4. 11 a)) |

Lambrecht (1994: 142-3) suggests that “the correlation between the grammatical marking of theticity and the presence of an overt accented lexical NP in the sentence” has to do with the “functional difference between lexical and pronominal coding of referents.” He states that thetic statements introduce NPs whose referents have not yet been pragmatically activated into the discourse. Full accented NP coding is a necessary condition for the expression of such referents. This indicates that the first and the second requirements for theticity are interdependent. A postverbal NP has to be Discourse-new information and Discourse-new information is expressed only with a full accented NP coding.

### **iii. Prosodic unity**

Thetic and categorical statements in Kuwaiti Arabic tend to be distinguished yet by another property. Thetic and categorical statements tend to be prosodically distinct from each other. There is a strong tendency for the verb and the head of the subject NP in VS thetic statements to behave as a single prosodic unit and not to be interrupted by other lexical items. Consequently, the verb and the head of the subject in VS thetic statements show more signs of assimilation. Conversely, the head of the subject NP and the verb of

the SV(O) categorical statements tend to be separated either by short pauses or non-obligatory lexical items. These lexical items, which may serve as hedges on the head of the subject NP, range from single words like adverbs and adjectives to whole phrases like relative clauses. As a result, the head of the subject and the verb of the SV(O)thetic statements show little or no signs of assimilation.

When examining categorical statements in Kuwaiti Arabic, one sees that the head of the subject and the verb are separated in various ways. The simplest way is the use of a short pause. For instance, when Shahbandar first restates the arrival of the caravan to his daughter in (line f of) example (61), above a short pause intervenes between the subject and the verb. Then, Shahbandar restates the arrival of the caravan, but this time with the adjective *l-mhamilah* ‘the loaded’ intervening between the topic *ʔil-qaafilah* ‘the caravan’ and the comment *wṣalat* ‘arrived’ (line h). The following examples also illustrate this tendency of separating between the head of the subject NP and the verb of the categorical statement:

- a (66) Adel: jasmi:n jasmi:n ʔiṭ-ṭajr. ʔiṭ-ṭajr illi kaan ṣand-i ʔixtifa...  
 Jasmine Jasmine the-bird. The-bird which was with-me disappeared  
 ‘Jasmine! The bird which I had disappeared.’

[After Adel walks away]

- b Shahbandar: jasmi:n  
 Jasmine  
 ‘Jasmine!’

Jasmine: naʕam jiba  
 yes dad  
 ‘Yes, dad.’

c Shabandar: šini saalfat ʔit-ʔajr haaði  
what story the-bird this  
'What's the story of this bird?'

d Jasmine: mako saj jiba. ʔinta simaʔt is-saalfah. ʔir-rajjaal jaaj  
no there thing dad. you heard the-story. the-man (is)coming

e jigull-i ʔinna il-bibimattu [PAUSE] ʔaar  
to tell-me that the-Alexandrine Parakeet flew  
  
'There is nothing dad. The man came to tell me that the parrot flew.'

f Shabandar: ʔalhi:n jii-č nuš il-lajl wi ʔiq il-baab  
now (he)comes to-you mid the-night and knocks the-door

g ʕalaša:n jigull-ič ʔintaj min du:n ʔahal il-madi:na  
to tell-you you from apart people the-city  
  
'Now, he comes to you at midnight and knocks on the door to tell you  
and nobody else in the city?'

h Jasmine: ʔi jiba jimkin lajš ʔinna ʔaʔʔif ʕalaj-h ʕalaša:n  
yes dad may be because that (I)sympathize with-him for

i čiði jaaj jigull-i ʔinna il-bibimattu [PAUSE] ʔaar  
that (he)is coming to tell-me that the-parrot flew  
  
'Yes dad. Maybe because I sympathize with him, for that he is coming  
to tell me that the parrot flew.'

(Madeenat Erreyah, episode 12)

In this example, the first speaker announces that the bird he had disappeared (line a). As can be seen, the speaker separates the head of the subject NP *ʔit-ʔajr* ‘the bird’ which is the topic of the sentence and the verb *ʔixtifa* ‘disappeared’ which is the comment about the topic by a relative clause, the purpose of which is to provide more information about the topic. When Jasmine restates what the first speaker said (line e), she separates the topic and the comment of her statement by a pause instead of a phrase or other words.

The following example also shows the tendency to separate the subject and the verb of the categorical statement:

- (67) Ghaneema: ʔabašri-k        rawja il-ḥamdulillah        xaffat...  
 (I)reassure-you Rawia the-praise to God improved  
 ‘I would like to reassure you. Rawia, thank God, improved.’

(el-Hareem, episode 24)

As can be noted, the subject which is Discourse-old and the verb are separated by an expression which does not bear on the meaning of the statement. The sentential adverb *il-ḥamdulillah* ‘thank God!’ does not add new information about the subject of the sentence nor does it alter the meaning of the clause. Moreover, the locus of insertion of this adverb could have been before the subject or after the verb but the speaker inserts it between the subject and the verb possibly in order to separate the subject, which is the topic of the statement, from the verb, which is the comment of the statement.

Unlike categorical statements, the verb and the subject of VSthetic statements cannot be interrupted by other lexical items:

- (68) raašid    tawwa wišal  
 Rashid    just    arrived  
 ‘Rashid has just arrived.’

- (69) wišal    (\*tawwa) raašid  
 arrived    just    Rashid  
 ‘Rashid has just arrived.’

As can be seen, the insertion site for the word *tawwa* ‘just’ is between the subject NP and the verb in (68), which is an SV categorical statement. In fact, this site is the most preferred site for inserting non-obligatory lexical items in SV categorical statements compared to the sentence-initial or sentence-final position. Separating the verb and the

subject NP of VSthetic statements results in ill-formed constructions as example (69) illustrates.

#### **iv. Completed, past tense events**

Finally, there is a strong tendency forthetic expressions in Kuwaiti Arabic to involve completed past tense actions. The reason for this may be related to how a speaker views and processes completed events. In commenting on examples (70) and (71) below, Chafe (1974: 115) states that unlike the example in (70), the verb and noun in (71) have ‘coalesced’ to form a conceptual unit. He argues that if we were to compare (70) with (71), we would find that “the relationship of ‘my sister’ to ‘death’ has not been established as a unit in the speaker’s mind at the time she is dying; but after her death, he will have come to think of the event as a single idea.” Therefore, it seems that conceptual unity, hence, theticity is better expressed by completed actions and past tense verbs.

(70) My sister is dying. (Chafe 1974: 115, ex 5-b)

(71) My sister died. (Chafe 1974:115, ex 6-b)

As mentioned above, it is not necessary forthetic statements in Kuwaiti Arabic to involve past tense verbs because there arethetic statements in the present tense (72) and others which contain reference to the future

(73):

(72) ʔinsalla tiðhar il-ħaqi:qah w jiðhu:n ʔahal madi:nat ir-rijaah...  
God willing appears the-truth and awake people city Erreyah  
‘God willing the truth appears and the people of Erreyah city awake.’

(Madenat Erreyah, episode 14)

- (73) baʕad nuṣ saaʕah b-jirtifiʕ ʔashum širikat Sihaam bi:ʕ  
 after half hour will-rise stocks company Sihamm sell  
 ‘Sihaam company’s stock will rise after half an hour. Sell (the stock).’

(el-Qaraar el-Akheer, episode 1)

#### 4.1.2. *fi-/ʔaku*-thetic statements

Placing what would normally be the topic of the sentence in a postverbal position is not the only way for marking theticity in Kuwaiti Arabic. Sometimes, the speakers present thetic sentences in the usual progression of words, i.e. with an SV word order. These sentences are preceded by the existential particles *fi* and *ʔaku*. According to Sasse (1987: 540) when the entire statement is preceded by the existential particle *fi*, “the ‘subject’ loses its grammatical subjecthood and becomes a predicate noun.” Sasse (1987: 540) observes that subject in expressions introduced by the existential particle *fi* is regularly indefinite. The same thing holds for the existential particle *ʔaku*. The following are examples of thetic sentences introduced by the existential particles *fi* and *ʔaku*:

- (74) fi taadzir jigu:l ʔinna-h min bu:ristaan...  
 there merchant saying that-he from Buristan  
 ‘There is a merchant saying he is from Buristan’

(Madenat Erreyah, episode 3)

- (75) fi naas jabu:n jisufu:n-ik barra  
 there people requesting see-you outside  
 ‘There are people who want to see you outside.’

(Madenat Erreyah, episode 5)

- (76)   ʔaku qaafilah wṣalat l-madi:nha...  
           there caravan arrived the-city  
           ‘There is a caravan that arrived in the city.’

(Madenat Erreyah, episode 1)

As can be noted, the existential particles *fi* and *ʔaku* serve to introduce an event part of which is an unfamiliar entity which is syntactically indefinite; thus expressing type cthetic statements. Other types of thetic statements namely type a (entity-central) and type b (event-central) are possible in *fi/ʔaku*-constructions:

- (77)   *fi/ʔaku* rajjaal barra  
           there man outside  
           ‘There is a man outside.’

- (78)   *fi/ʔaku* ʔag/hu:ša barra  
           there hitting/fight outside  
           ‘There is hitting/fight outside.’

Since the entity is unfamiliar, it cannot be placed in a position normally reserved for old information. Thus, not only the existential particles *fi* and *ʔaku* are used to introduce thetic statements, but they also serve to displace new information from the initial position of the sentence. Weil (1978: 33) comments on such linguistic phenomena saying that:

It happens sometimes that we can find nothing which will prepare the hearer for that which we wish to communicate to him, and that, not wishing to enter into the matter without preparation, we begin with that which is most general, most indispensable, but also most insignificant; namely, with the idea of existence pure and simple. “There was a king.” I propose to tell you something that you do not yet know or that you are supposed not to know (otherwise I should not tell it); it is evident that I must lay hold of something that you already know, that I must make a beginning, be it only for form’s sake.

Of course the existential particle *fi* is not intended to repair a syntactically ill-formed sentence since the sentence is well-formed even without this particle. It rather serves an

important discourse function which is displacing new information away from the sentence initial position.

If statements introduced by the existential particles *fī* and *ʔaku* arethetic, then what we find in VSthetic statements must also be found in *fīʔaku*-statements. In other words, the same requirements fortheticity must be met by both VS and *fīʔaku* statements. Indeed, the same requirements fortheticity are met by *fīʔaku*-statements. First of all, the subject of *fīʔaku*-statements does not occupy the initial position of the sentence. Second, by virtue of being indefinite, the subject NP of the *fīʔaku*-statements represents Hearer-new information and accordingly it must be Discourse-new information. Finally, the subject of the *fīʔaku*-statements is always a full lexical NP. Thus, it seems thattheticity in Kuwaiti Arabic can be expressed by VS-statements and *fīʔaku*-statements and the properties we find in one of these constructions lend support for the other.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion and remaining questions

### 5.1. Summary

In this thesis, I hope to have shown that verb-initial statements in Kuwaiti Arabic correspond to thethetic type of judgment. The differences between categorical statements andthetic statements in Kuwaiti Arabic are listed in the following table:

**Table 3: Distinctions betweenthetic and categorical statements in Kuwaiti Arabic**

| Thetic statements                                                                                                                       | Categorical statements                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The subject has to be in a sentence non-initial position.                                                                               | The subject must precede the verb (and the object, if present)                                                                               |
| The subject has to be Discourse-new.                                                                                                    | The subject has to be Discourse-old.                                                                                                         |
| The subject has to be a full lexical NP.                                                                                                | The subject does not have to be a full lexical NP                                                                                            |
| The verb and the head of the subject NP in VSthetic statements form more of a single prosodic unit and show more signs of assimilation. | The head of the subject NP is usually separated from the verb by a pause or other lexical items; thus, there are less signs of assimilation. |

As shown in the table, the subject of athetic statement should occur in a sentence non-initial position. The subject of athetic statement in intransitive constructions as well as transitive constructions in which the object is a pronominal suffix occurs in a post-verbal position. The subject of a categorical statement, however, cannot be preceded by the verb or the object. It can only be in a preverbal position (and usually in the sentence initial position). Furthermore, for a statement to bethetic, the subject NP it contains should represent Discourse-new information. This makes it necessary for the subject NP inthetic statements to be expressed with full lexical NP coding. It is noteworthy that full lexical NP coding is necessary (but not sufficient) condition for Discourse-new entities. This means that in a categorical statement, the Discourse-old subject NP can be expressed with

full lexical NP coding. Finally, contrary to what we find in categorical statements, the verb and the head of the subject NP in VSthetic statements act as a single prosodic unit with nothing allowed to intervene in between.

VSthetic utterances in Kuwaiti Arabic were characterized as ‘all-new’ statements. This made them exempt from the principles of information structure. In other words:

...verb-initial clauses have relatively little articulation of information structure at the clause level - the whole utterance is neutral (or relatively new)... It is with non-verb-initial (S, O, etc.) structures that you get a more refined information structure - topic/focus, theme/rheme, given/new, what have you. (Hewitt 2004: e-mail)

The same findings for VSthetic statements were replicated in *fi/?aku*-thetic statements.

Accordingly, theticity conditions are the same in Kuwaiti Arabic regardless of how athetic statement is expressed.

## **5.2. Remaining questions**

### **5.2.1. What’s pragmatic about word-order?**

An important question arises here: Why is it the case that in the Kuwaiti dialect VS order is used for marking sentences asthetic? As mentioned above, placing the subject NP in a postverbal position is intended to mark it as non-topical. But, aren’t there other strategies for marking the subject NP as non-topical such as subject accentuation as in English or special morphological marking as in Japanese? According to Sasse (1987: 542), when SV(O) word order is used in a language to represent the categorical type of judgment, VS (or V-oS) word order is straightforwardly perceived asthetic and accordingly is ideally appropriate for marking theticity. This is so because with VS word order, the subject is moved “away from a position where it is most naturally interpreted

as the ‘theme’ (or ‘topic’) of the utterance” (Sasse 1987: 542). This change in word order, Sasse (1987: 560) states, is used to “avoid the predicative interpretation of an entity-event combination” and to “render the predicative relation nonpredicative.” Sasse (1987) continues to say:

There are several possibilities to choose from. The simplest strategy is to exploit the pragmatic implications of word order. According to the logical structure of the human mind a predicative relation is conceived in such a way that the predication base is stated first, because an entity must be conceived of before it can be commented on. It is therefore quite convenient and effective to signal a nonpredicative relation by placing the dangerous candidate for the predication base in a position where predication bases are not normally found. Not surprisingly, then, we find the word-order difference SV vs. VS to be a favorite grammatical device for marking the distinction between categorical (SV) andthetic (VS) statements. (p. 560)

Lambrecht (1994) shares the same opinion. In his words: “Once the function of the topic expression is no longer to ANNOUNCE the topic referent but to mark its role as an argument in a proposition, there is no longer any functional reason for the topic to appear at the beginning of the sentence” (p. 201).

### **5.2.2. Why aren’t there VSO thetic statements?**

If thetic statements are verb-initial, then why don’t we find VSO thetic statements? Why are verb initial statements restricted to intransitive constructions or V-oS constructions (where ‘-o’ stands for pronominal object suffix)? Moreover, if we assume that SVO statements where the subject occupies the sentence-initial position correspond to the categorical type of judgment, then what would its thetic counterpart be? When the subject is indefinite, an SVO categorical statement can be rendered thetic by

the insertion of *filʔaku*-theticity expressing particles in the sentence-initial position. But, what if the subject is a definite NP?

The reason why we don't find VSOthetic statements in which the object is a full lexical NP may be related to the cognitive status of the object itself. Usually, the object introduces entities that are unfamiliar to the hearer and new to the discourse. When, in a statement (where the subject is a definite NP), VSO order is used to express theticity, then the subject which is Hearer-old will intervene between the verb which normally expresses new information and the object which usually represents new information. Therefore, the flow of information will be disturbed and the resulting progression of information will have NEW-OLD-NEW sequence which is ruled by the principle of information structure. But, isn't this sequence of information found in V-oSthetic statements? A possible solution to this problem is to think of the pronominal object, which represents old information, as semantically incorporated into the verb it attaches to. According to this solution, the pronominal object V-oS statements may be considered invisible to principles of information structure and the resulting statement acts as VS rather than V-oS statement. Moreover, the verb + object combination forms a conceptual unit and for an element to intervene between the verb and the object would result in the break up of this unity.

As for thethetic counterpart of SVO categorical statements, Kuwaiti Arabic seems to mark such statements by the insertion of lexical items in the sentence-initial position. The most common lexical items inserted inthetic SVO statements are *tawwa* 'just,' and *tara* 'by the way.'

(79) *tawwa iṭ-ṭabi:b xallaṣ il-ṣamalija*  
Just the-doctor finished the-operation  
'The doctor has just finished the operation.'

(80) *tara ʕali ʃara sajjarah jidi:dah*  
by the way Ali bought car new  
'Ali bought a new car.'

As can be seen from examples

(79) and (80), *tawwa* 'just' and *tara* 'by the way' are normally used to warn the hearer that what is about to come is new information. It is not the insertion of such lexical items, per se, that makes an SVO statement acquire itsthetic reading but rather meeting theticity requirements that render such statementsthetic. Specifically, the subject should: 1) appear in a sentence non-initial position; 2) represent Discourse-new information, and 3) be a full lexical NP.

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