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Morphologically Annotated Corpora and Morphological Analyzers for Moroccan and Sanaani Yemeni Arabic

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Abstract

We present new language resources for Moroccan and Sanaani Yemeni Arabic. The resources include corpora for each dialect which have been morphologically annotated, and morphological analyzers for each dialect which are derived from these corpora. These are the first sets of resources for Moroccan and Yemeni Arabic. The resources will be made available to the public.

Keywords: Corpus, Arabic Dialects, Morphological Analysis

1. Introduction

Traditionally, Arabic dialects have been mainly spoken, and only rarely written. Most written Arabic has been Classical Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and therefore most natural language processing (NLP) tools address these two variants of Arabic. However, this situation is currently undergoing change. The expanding use of social media and electronic forms of written communication has been accompanied in the Arab world by an increase in the production of written dialect. As a result, there is a growing interest in NLP tools for written Arabic dialects, for example from companies that would like to perform sentiment data mining on regional web forums to determine what consumers think about their products. However, few such NLP tools for Arabic dialects exist. An important factor that contributes to the lack of NLP tools for the dialects is that there are many distinct dialects and few annotated corpora. This paper presents coordinated resource creation efforts for two Arabic dialects: Moroccan (MOR) and the Sanaani Dialect of Yemen (YEMS). For each dialect, we present a new morphologically annotated corpus and a morphological analyzer. These are the first such resources for Moroccan and for Yemeni, to our knowledge.

This paper is structured as follows. We start with related work (Section 2.). We then present some linguistic facts for our two dialects (Section 3.). Section 4. contains details about our two corpora, and we sketch our annotation scheme in Section 5.. We discuss the creation of the morphological analyzers in Section 6., and then conclude. The conclusion also contains information about how to obtain our resources.

2. Related Work

There has been a fairly large amount of descriptive work on Moroccan Arabic, with prominent publications including a reference grammar (Harrell, 1962) and a dictionary (Harrell et al., 2004), as well as in-depth work on Moroccan syntax (Brustad, 2000). For Yemeni Arabic, there has also been a fair amount of work in theoretical and descriptive linguistics (Jastrow, 1984; Behnstedt, 1985; Abdullah, 1991; Watson, 1993; Naïm-Sanbar, 1994; Al-Iryani, 1996; Behnstedt, 2006).

There have been several data collections centered on Arabic dialects, specifically spoken Arabic. A very useful resource is the Semitisches Tonarchiv at the University of Heidelberg in Germany¹ under the direction of Prof. Werner Arnold. We have included one Yemeni transcription from this resource in our Yemeni corpus (see Section 4.). Further data collections include (al Salam Al-Amri, 2000).

There are few *annotated* corpora for dialectal Arabic. We note three corpora in particular: the Levantine Arabic Treebank (specifically Jordanian) (Maamouri et al., 2006), the Egyptian Arabic Treebank (Maamouri et al., 2014) and Curras, the Palestinian Arabic annotated corpus (Jarrar et al., 2014). Additionally, (Tratz et al., 2014) present a corpus of Moroccan dialect which has been annotated for language variety.

Our work follows the work of Curras (Jarrar et al., 2014), which consists of around 43,000 words of a balanced genre corpus. The corpus was manually annotated using the DIWAN tool (Al-Shargi and Rambow, 2015), which we also use. The annotation in Curras is done by first using a morphological tagger for another Arabic dialect, namely MADAMIRA Egyptian (Pasha et al., 2014), to produce a base that was then corrected or accepted by a trained annotator. Since Arabic dialects do not have spelling standards, the team working on Curras followed previous efforts to create conventional orthographies (or CODA) for the dialect they worked on (Habash et al., 2012a; Zribi et al., 2014). We also follow this approach and define CODAs for MOR and YEMS.

The effort to annotate corpora in context is a central step in developing morphological analyzers and taggers (Eskander et al., 2013; Habash et al., 2013). Other notable approaches and efforts have focused on developing specific resources manually or semi-automatically, e.g., the Egyptian Arabic morphological analyzer (Habash et al., 2012b) which is built upon the Egyptian Colloquial Arabic Lexicon (Kilany et al., 2002), the multi-dialectal dictionary Tharwa (Diab et al., 2014), multi-dialectal corpora (Bouamor et al., 2014; Smaili et al., 2014), the Gulf Arabic corpus (Khalifa et al., 2016) or extending MSA analyzers and resources (Salloum and Habash, 2014; Smaili et al., 2014; Boujelbane et al., 2013).

¹<http://www.semarch.uni-hd.de>

‘eleven’. There are of course many open-class words that make YEMS different from MSA and other dialects. In particular, there are Turkish loanwords like *بردق* *brdq* ‘cup’ and *ساني* *sAny* ‘direct’.

4. Corpora

The MOR and YEMS corpora consist of sources of various genres, collected from both online and print materials, to cover all the aspects in these dialects. The MOR corpus has 64K words, while the YEMS corpus has 32.5K words; the genres and sources are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 for MOR and YEMS, respectively.

The data collected from the Internet was all written in Arabic characters using spontaneous orthography. We transcribed the Roman alphabet sentences from the textbooks into the Arabic alphabet using Conventional Orthography for Dialectal Arabic (CODA).

4.1. MOR Corpus

Because much of the data comes from the Internet, there is some amount of code-switching between MOR and MSA, and sometimes French. The boundary between MOR and MSA is not always clear, especially for nouns and adjectives. In the corpus, tokens that exhibit MSA-only morphology are marked as MSA, so that they can be excluded from the morphological analyzer (e.g. *هذين* *hadayni* ‘these [m.dual]’). Words that might seem like MSA but nonetheless exhibit Moroccan morphology, such as technical terms, are considered dialectal.

The material in the various genres spans a wide range of content and registers. Comments on the Moroccan news website *hespress.com* have to do with issues such as sports, cinema, and education policy. The material from the forums includes advice on social, religious, and economic issues. The oral interviews are transcriptions of people telling stories, most of which are events from their lives. The folktales come from a Moroccan website that reprinted stories originally published in an encyclopedia of traditional Moroccan folktales. The textbook examples include many basic greetings and expressions, as well as sample dialogues. The blog posts range in topic, but include relationship advice, recipes, and philosophical musings. The humor includes both short and long jokes from a few Facebook pages and one other website.

4.2. YEMS Corpus

The social texts are taken from a Sanaani Radio Station program called “*msqd w msqdh*”, the program addressed social issues and problems of the community. The oral interview transcripts are taken from the Semitisches Tonarchiv (see Section 2.). The interviews describe daily life, history and lifestyle in Sana’a. The folktales come from internet forums; they describe traditional stories handed down in Sana’a.

The wisdom and tales come from internet websites. These collected texts are a summary of the Wisdom and the Tales of the famous wise-man of Yemen “*çly wld zAyd*”, a traditional oral tale passed through generations. Other texts are taken from social media, and include political

Genre	Source	# Tokens
Internet comments	<i>hespress.com</i>	8,909
Forums	<i>anaqamaghribia.com</i> <i>esrar.7olm.org</i>	2,554 2,509
Oral interviews	Appendix of (Brustad, 2000) Humans of Morocco	1,172 7,012
Folktales	<i>maghress.com</i>	5,704
Textbook examples	(The Peace Corps, 2011) (Chekayri, 2011)	2,585 4,858
Blog posts	<i>twishiat.com</i> <i>mysite.ma</i>	9,525 621
Humor	Facebook posts <i>as7apcool.com</i>	16,756 1,965
Total		64,170

Table 1: Sources of the Moroccan Arabic Corpus (MOR)

Genre	Source	# Tokens
Oral interviews	Heidelberg uni.	15,124
Social texts	SanaaRadio	5,515
Wisdoms and tales	<i>yel.org</i>	1,500
Sanaani folktales	<i>yel.org</i>	3,339
Sermons	Facebook posts	699
Poems	<i>gily.com/vb</i>	906
Humor	Facebook posts	3,332
Explanation	<i>n-shbab.com</i>	1,704
Political text	<i>marebpress.net</i>	326
Total		32,445

Table 2: Sources of Sanaani Yemeni Corpus (YEMS)

events in Yemen, Sanaani jokes, religious sermons and transcripts that clarify the Sanaani dialect in MSA. The corpus shows distinctive sentences and phrases such as the sentence *عضوي نشارك شركة شرق عيغلقوا* *çndwy nšrk šrkħšrq çyylqwa* ‘we will go to purchase meat before the store closes’, which contains words that distinguish Sanaani dialect from the other Yemeni dialects.

Each corpus is divided into three parts: DEV (roughly 10%), TRAIN (roughly 80%), and TEST (roughly 10%). Each part contains material from each genre, though not every source is divided into DEV, TRAIN, and TEST since some sources are quite small. Moreover, no document is split across multiple parts of the corpus. For example, there is no story or post where the beginning is in TRAIN and the end is in TEST. This ensures that a system is never trained and tested on data from the same document.

5. Annotation

The corpora are annotated using the DIWAN interface (Al-Shargi and Rambow, 2015). DIWAN assists a human annotator in annotating each token with morphological and semantic information, including the following fields:

- **Diac** is the token with spelling adjusted to be conform with the CODA guidelines, which specify a consistent orthographic system for writing Arabic dialects (Habash et al., 2012a). We created specific CODA guidelines for MOR and YEMS. However, despite the

feature name, we do not use diacritics for MOR and YEMS.

- **Lex** is the lemma, or the citation form, of the token. For example, the lemma of صحابه و صحابه *wSHAbuh* ‘and his friends’ is صاحب *SAHb* ‘friend’.
- **BWhash** is the word broken down into prefixes, a stem, and suffixes, with each morpheme annotated with part of speech (POS) and other morphological information. The stem is marked by the symbol # on either side.
- **Gloss** is the English gloss of the word.
- There are features indicating proclitics and enclitics. The clitics are assigned slots: *prc3*, *prc2*, *prc1*, and *prc0* for proclitics, and *enc0*, *enc1*, and *enc2* for enclitics. A lower index indicates closer proximity to the stem.
- There are features indicating part of speech (POS), functional number and gender, and aspect. Functional number and gender refer to a word’s function, rather than its form. For example *طلبة Talabah* ‘students’ is functionally masculine plural, even though it ends in *ō h*, which is formally feminine singular.

For example, in the MOR sentence راه برآف دناس ما فاهمينش *rAh bz~Af dnAs mA fAh-miynš* ‘A lot of people really don’t understand’, the word فاهمينش *fAhmiynš* ‘understand-NEG’ gets the following annotation (which we show in transliteration for convenience; the annotation happens with the Arabic alphabet).

- **Diac:** *fAhmiynš*
- **Lex:** *fAhm*
- **Bwhash:** *+#fAhm/ACT_PARTIC#+yn/NSUFF_MASC_PL +š/NEG_PART*
- **Gloss:** understanding
- **Clitics:** *enc2:part_neg* (‘*enc2*’ refers to the second slot for an enclitic. The other clitic slots are empty for this word.)
- **Other features:**
 - *part of speech:* active participle
 - *formal gender:* masculine
 - *functional gender:* neutral
 - *formal number:* plural
 - *functional number:* plural

The Moroccan corpus is currently 40.3% annotated. The annotation effort is ongoing.

The annotations follow the same format for the YEMS corpus. For example, in the sentence عضوي نشارك شركة شرق عيقلقوا *snDwy nšrk šrkššrq syqlqwa* ‘we will go to purchase meat before the store closes’, the word عيقلقوا *syqlqwa* ‘they will lock’ gets the following annotation:

- **Diac:** *Eyqlqwa*
- **Lex:** *galaq*
- **Bwhash:** *+E/FUT_PART+y/IV3MP+#glq/IV# +wA/IVSUFF_SUBJ:3MP*
- **Gloss:** lock
- **Clitics:** *prc1:E_fut* (‘*prc1*’ refers to the first slot for a proclitic. The other clitic slots are empty for this word)
- **Other features:**

- *part of speech:* verb
- *formal gender:* masculine
- *functional gender:* masculine
- *formal number:* plural
- *functional number:* plural

The YEMS corpus has been annotated to 75%. The annotation effort for YEMS is also ongoing.

6. Morphological Analyzer

Next, we create two ALMOR databases (Habash, 2007) that represent the morphological analyzers for MOR and YEMS. The analyzers are constructed first by building complete inflectional classes (ICs) based on the corpus annotations. The construction of the ICs follows the technique we presented in (Eskander et al., 2013), where the ICs have all the possible morphosyntactic feature combinations for every lemma in TRAIN. Moreover, we extend the work presented in (Eskander et al., 2013) to cover any POS type, whether with clitics or without, in order to obtain rich morphological analyzers.

First, the entries in TRAIN are converted into paradigms, where each paradigm lists all the inflections of all morphosyntactic feature combinations for a specific lemma. The paradigms are then converted into inflectional classes (ICs), where stem entries are abstracted as templates by extracting out the root letters. We use the SCHLR template we defined in (Eskander et al., 2013), in which all long vowels, diacritics and hamzated letters remain in the template, and anything else is part of the root. (Note that this does not always result in the traditional notion of “root”, but rather in an operational notion that is useful for our purposes.) The generated ICs are then merged together into a smaller number of more condensed ICs, where two ICs merge if they share the same inflectional behavior. The ICs are then completed by exchanging affix and stem information among each other.

Table 3 shows the initial IC of the lemma *زاد zAd* ‘increase’ in YEMS. (We again show the entire in transliteration for convenience, though the system uses the Arabic alphabet.) The IC has initially three entries, which represent all the seen entries that correspond to the lemma *زاد zAd* ‘increase’ in TRAIN. The ICs are then completed for all morphosyntactic feature combinations. A portion of the completed IC of the lemma *زاد zAd* ‘increase’ is shown in Table 4.

Next, we use the completed ICs to build the MOR and YEMS morphological analyzers in the form of an ALMOR database (Habash, 2007), where the prefixes and suffixes are read directly from the ICs, while the stems are constructed by plugging the roots associated with the ICs into the stem templates in the ICs. We then construct three compatibility tables; prefix-stem, stem-suffix and prefix-suffix, based on the co-occurrence of the prefixes, stems and suffixes in the completed ICs.

We then extend the analyzers to allow for the recognition of spontaneous orthography that is not in CODA. We convert such input into a CODA-compliant form. This is done based on the orthographic transformations seen in the corpora between the raw input and the annotated data.

Tables 5 and 6 list the evaluation results of the MOR analyzer (ALMOR_{MOR}) on DEV and TEST, respectively,

Lemma: ﺍﺫ <i>zAd</i>				
Features	Word	Initial IC		
		Prefixes	Stem	Suffixes
IIS	A+zyd	A	$\square y \square$	
P3MS	zAd		$\square A \square$	
P3MP	zAd+wA		$\square A \square$	wA

Table 3: The initial IC of the lemma ﺍﺫ *zAd* ‘increase’ in YEMS. The first column lists the morphosyntactic features, while the second column lists the corresponding words segmented into prefixes+stem+suffixes. The third column shows the IC forms after stem abstraction.

Lemma: ﺍﺫ <i>zAd</i>				
Features	Completed IC			Word
	Prefixes	Stem	Suffixes	
IIS	A	$\square y \square$		A+zyd
P3MS		$\square A \square$		zAd
P3MP		$\square A \square$	wA	zAd+wA
C2MS		$\square y \square$		zyd
I2FS	t	$\square y \square$	y	t+zyd+y
PART:\$+IIS	\$A	$\square y \square$		\$A+zyd
CONJ:w+P3MP	w	$\square A \square$	wA	w+zAd+wA
CONJ:w+IIP	wn	$\square y \square$		wn+zyd
NEG:mA+P3MS+NEG:\$	mA_	$\square A \square$	\$	mA_+zAd+\$
CONJ:w+P3MS+DO:3MS	w	$\square A \square$	h	w+zAd+h

Table 4: A portion of the completed IC of the lemma ﺍﺫ *zAd* ‘increase’ in YEMS. The first column lists the morphosyntactic features, while the second column represents the abstracted forms of the completed IC. The third column lists the corresponding words segmented into prefixes+stem+suffixes after plugging the root "zd" into the stem templates.

while tables 7 and 8 list the evaluation results of the YEMS analyzer (ALMOR_{YEMS}) on DEV and TEST, respectively. (When evaluating on TEST, TRAIN and DEV are combined together and become the new TRAIN of the evaluated analyzer.) We compare the performance of the analyzers versus the SAMA_{MSA} analyzer (Graff et al., 2009) (our MSA baseline), the ALMOR_{EGY} analyzer (Habash et al., 2012b) (our EGY baseline) and a dialectal extended version of SAMA_{MSA} (SAMA_{ext}) combined with ALMOR_{EGY}, which is the base for MADAMIRA, in addition to a simple lookup baseline (Lookup_{MOR} for MOR and Lookup_{YEMS} for YEMS). We also show the results when combining the different systems.

We use two main evaluation metrics to measure the performance of a morphological analyzer: 1) **Analyzer Token Recall**, which measures whether the hand-annotated analysis is automatically generated by the analyzer (usually, among other analyses), and 2) **OOV**, which represents the analyzer out-of-vocabulary cases.

The Analyzer Token Recall evaluates the following components:

- **POS** is the core POS tag of the word; a set of 36 tags that are used in MADA-ARZ.
- **POS5** is a reduced tag set of five tags based on traditional Arabic grammar.
- **Lemma** is the fully diacritized lemma.
- **CODA** is the undiacritized conventional spelling of the input word with normalized Alefs.

- **Stem** is the undiacritized stem of the word with normalized Alefs.
- **ALL** represents the conjunction of all five preceding metrics in one analysis.

7. Conclusion and Future Work

We have presented new corpora for Moroccan and Sanaani Yemeni dialectal Arabic. For both dialects, we have developed an orthographic convention for use in NLP. These corpora have been annotated morphologically. We have used the annotated corpora to train morphological analyzers and taggers.

To obtain the corpora and the morphological analyzers and taggers, please consult <http://volta.ccls.columbia.edu/~rambow/arabic-nlp/home.html>.

In future work, we will extend our approach to more Arabic dialects. We also intend to perform experiments to see whether we can leverage annotations from different dialects in training the morphological taggers.

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System	Analyzer Token Recall							OOV	<i>Analyses Word</i>
	POS	POS5	Lemma	CODA	Stem	All			
SAMA _{M.S.A}	88.2	97.8	86.0	95.8	92.3	79.9	17.1	9.5	
ALMOR _{EGY}	79.7	93.5	67.0	95.5	86.5	58.7	20.5	3.7	
SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	90.0	98.3	87.6	96.4	94.3	81.7	11.8	15.9	
Lookup _{MOR}	62.3	80.0	57.2	92.5	69.7	55.2	45.6	0.6	
ALMOR _{MOR}	70.9	84.8	60.7	93.5	76.8	57.7	33.8	1.4	
Lookup _{MOR} +ALMOR _{MOR} +SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	98.0	99.4	96.7	98.4	98.0	95.1	6.9	17.9	

Table 5: MOR morphological analysis recall on DEV. The columns are described in Section 6.

System	Analyzer Token Recall							OOV	<i>Analyses Word</i>
	POS	POS5	Lemma	CODA	Stem	All			
SAMA _{M.S.A}	94.3	99.0	94.7	97.9	95.8	90.4	16.2	9.1	
ALMOR _{EGY}	83.0	93.3	72.0	97.2	88.0	64.8	19.7	3.7	
SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	95.0	99.1	95.2	98.1	97.2	91.0	10.8	15.7	
Lookup _{MOR}	62.8	78.4	55.4	94.7	70.7	54.0	46.2	0.7	
ALMOR _{MOR}	71.6	83.7	58.1	95.6	77.8	56.2	33.5	1.5	
Lookup _{MOR} +ALMOR _{MOR} +SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	99.6	100.0	99.9	99.9	99.7	99.1	6.9	17.9	

Table 6: MOR morphological analysis recall on TEST. The columns are described in Section 6.

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System	Analyzer Token Recall							Analyses Word
	POS	POS5	Lemma	CODA	Stem	All	OOV	
SAMA _{MSA}	86.5	96.1	81.5	94.1	89.4	75.1	14.9	10.7
ALMOR _{EGY}	81.3	91.9	69.6	93.5	86.3	60.5	19.3	4.4
SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	91.1	97.4	86.7	94.6	93.5	80.5	8.7	19.3
Lookup _{YEMS}	72.5	83.6	71.2	93.2	77.9	68.6	41.9	0.9
ALMOR _{YEMS}	77.9	88.5	75.3	94.0	85.4	69.3	27.6	2.6
Lookup _{YEMS} +ALMOR _{YEMS} +SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	97.1	99.2	95.7	96.6	97.6	92.4	5.4	22.8

Table 7: YEMS morphological analysis recall on DEV. The columns are described in Section 6.

System	Analyzer Token Recall							Analyses Word
	POS	POS5	Lemma	CODA	Stem	All	OOV	
SAMA _{MSA}	89.8	96.8	83.7	95.5	89.6	77.8	12.7	11.7
ALMOR _{EGY}	83.0	92.5	69.1	94.5	86.7	60.6	17.5	4.8
SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	93.9	97.9	89.3	95.8	93.5	83.0	7.3	21.0
Lookup _{YEMS}	71.4	82.6	69.3	93.3	75.7	67.6	43.3	1.0
ALMOR _{YEMS}	77.8	87.6	75.1	94.6	84.4	69.3	27.5	3.4
Lookup _{YEMS} +ALMOR _{YEMS} +SAMA _{ext} +ALMOR _{EGY}	98.3	99.3	97.4	97.6	97.9	95.1	4.6	25.4

Table 8: YEMS morphological analysis recall on TEST. The columns are described in Section 6.

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