

# THE VERB-NOUN AGREEMENT IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC

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## ABSTRACT

This article deals with comparing two quite different languages – English and Arabic – in the field of the verb quantity. Our research involves morphology, syntax and semantics. The hypothesis that richer morphology reduces notional effects during agreement production within and across languages is the central idea of this study. In the course of time the English language has changed from grammatical into lexical one and currently has few morphological means to express different grammatical meanings but more hidden notional features involved in subject-verb agreement. The notional features are manifested in the so-called “agreement attraction”, the cases of imbalance in subject-predicate and collective-verb agreement. The graphic style of thinking of the Arabs penetrates into the verb number category, displayed by the diversity of morphological markers and peculiar full person-number-gender or partial person-gender agreement depending on the sentence word order and subject’s belonging to the category of Human or non-Human nouns. Verb number phenomenon is highly complex, but despite this complexity it is systematic.

**Key-words:** quantity, verb number, morphology, syntax, semantics, English, Arabic.

## 1. Introduction

The problem of verb number has been studied from different points of view, subject-verb number agreement being the central. This phenomenon was widely studied by K.M. Eberhard (1997, 1999), J. Barker, J. Nicol (2000), G. Veyhman (2006), M. Foyal, C. Totereau, P. Barrouillet (2006), M. C. Baker (2011), E. Contini-Morava (2011), M. den Dikken (2011), W. Reid (2011), R. Foote, K. Bock (2012) and others. Some researches studied it strictly from the point of view of morphosyntactic theory, without semantics playing a role at all. Some scholars highlight the importance of the human sentence-processing mechanism. Others attribute semantic contradictions to the choice of inflectional forms (1). So, Eberhard explores the nature of the representation that underlies singular and plural count nouns in English and how that representation interacts with the processes that implement agreement during production and concluded that agreement with singular count nouns is implemented by a default process whereas agreement with plural count nouns is implemented on the basis of unambiguous number information. Then he investigates whether the conceptual number of a subject phrase can control verb agreement in English. In his paper the implications of these results for theoretical issues concerning the interaction between conceptual and grammatical encoding are discussed (2). Barker’s and Nicol’s joint work examines the role of word frequency in the computation of subject–verb number agreement. They come to the conclusion that the agreement process is, indeed, sensitive to this factor and this finding is compatible with activation-based accounts of the implementation of number agreement (3). Veyhman analyses the new ways of using some grammatical points in Modern English. Foyal, Totereau and Barrouillet test two alternative hypotheses which may provide an account of the difference in the acquisition of the nominal plural (-s) occurs and of the verbal plural (-nt) by exploiting a particularity of written French (4). Baker emphasizes that agreement involves different factors: syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics, and can be treated by making lexical or morphological stipulations of one sort or another: in some languages verbs display full person-number-gender agreement with the subject, as well as partial agreement that is systematically found in the grammars of natural languages. For Baker structure is essential (5). Reid studies the agreement as an account of verb number marker in English from a communicative and functionalist perspective (6). As den Dikken points out, Reid’s work contains detailed investigation of a large variety on corpus examples of “unusual” number inflection on the verb, for which explanations are provided within the discourse contexts. Contini-Morava reviews retrospectively some of the notions taken for granted by the contributors to a phenomenon called “agreement” that study it as part of the syntactic structure of many languages, including English, and in her commentary on the Reid’s paper she provides the alternative to the status of the notion of “agreement”, what counts as data, what counts as an explanation, the theoretical constructs posited and what counts as evidence in support in them (7). Den Dikken brings together a collection of papers and commentaries reflecting on phi-feature (a cover for at least person, number and gender) inflection and agreement in various ways. Foote and Bock test the predictions of two contrasting claims about the role of morphology in subject–verb number agreement production and support the hypothesis that richer morphology reduces notional effects during agreement production, both within and across languages (8).

## 2. Methodology

Our research is aimed at comparing two quite different languages, belonging to different language families: English (Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family) and Arabic (southern branch of the

Semitic language family) in the field of verb-noun agreement supporting the hypothesis that richer morphology reduces notional effects during agreement production, both within and across languages. Our analysis predicts the following implicative universal:

- The more morphological means – the less hidden notional features.
- The less morphological means – the more hidden notional features.

### 3. The analyses of English and Arabic verb-noun agreement

English verb has a highly developed system of tenses, the opposition of the active voice and the passive voice, the opposition of the Indicative, the Conditional and the Imperative mood. These are the main verb categories that embrace the entire system of verb in general. In addition, there are categories of person and number – inside paradigmatic categories.

These categories of the verb serve to show the connection between the subject and the predicate of the sentence - the subject agrees with the predicate in person and number. There are three verb persons (the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the 3<sup>rd</sup>), and two verb numbers (the singular and the plural).

Over its history, the English language has undergone significant change and presents rearrangement from the grammatical system to lexical one.

Old English had the category of verb number, but it was lost over time. Old English verbs had the categories of person, number, tense and mood. The category of person had already been weak in Old English: it was completely absent in the Conditional mood, but in the Indicative mood it had a formal expression only in the singular of both tenses. In all other cases, the action related to person was expressed by nonverbal means – pronouns and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person nouns.

The following indicators can be distinguished in the Indicative mood of the present singular strong verbs: the 1<sup>st</sup> person had the ending **-e**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person had the ending **-est**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person had the ending **-eth**. The vowel of the singular in the past depended on the Ablaut-class, it was the second stem, having the same form for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons. The vowel of the Preterite in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular expressed the third class of Ablaut, i.e. it coincided with a vowel of the third stem. The 1<sup>st</sup> person singular form of the Imperative mood did not have the inflection: the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural coincided with the Infinitive form. The 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural had the same form as that of the present Indicative mood.

All above-mentioned can be traced in the following conjugation of the strong verb *writan* "to write" in the present and past:

| Present         |                |         |
|-----------------|----------------|---------|
| person          | singular       | plural  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | write          | writath |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | writest        |         |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | writeth (writ) |         |
| Past            |                |         |
| person          | singular       | plural  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | wrat           | writon  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | write          |         |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | wrat           |         |

The conjugation of the weak verbs of the first class in the present was not very different from that of the strong verbs. There were the following markers: the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular had the ending **-e**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular had the ending **-est**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular had the ending **-eth** and the plural ending was **-ath**. The vowel did not change. As for the conjugation of the weak verbs in the past, it was different of that of the strong verbs. The conjugation of the first class weak verb the *fremman* «to fulfill» in the past was the following:

| person          | singular  | plural   |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | fremede   | fremedon |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | fremedest |          |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | fremede   |          |

So, the endings of the weak nouns were: **-(e)de** in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, **-(e)dest** in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and **-(e)don** in the plural.

The Imperative Mood had the endings in the past: the 1<sup>st</sup> person - **-an**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person – **-ath**.

The irregular strong V-class verb *beon* "to be" was suppletive and had two parallel different root paradigms in the present and the suppletive Preterite.

The conjugation of the verb "to be" *beon* " in the present and past was as follows:

| Present         |           |            |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| person          | singular  | plural     |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | eom beo   | sind beoth |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | eart bist |            |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | is bith   |            |

| Past            |          |        |
|-----------------|----------|--------|
| person          | singular | plural |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | wæs      | wæren  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | wære     |        |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | wæs      |        |

Thus, the following number indicators of verb conjugation can be distinguished in Old English:

1. The Indicative Mood is marked by the following endings of strong verbs in the present singular: **-e** is for the 1<sup>st</sup> person, **-est** is for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, **-eth** is for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person; and the present plural is marked by the ending **-ath**. The past form is not marked.
2. The Imperative Mood of the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular has no endings, the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural form coincides with the Infinitive, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural form coincides with the plural form of the present Indicative Mood.
3. The endings of the weak verbs in the present were: **-e** – in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, **-est** – in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, **-eth** – in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, **-ath** – in the plural. There were the following endings in the past: **-(e)de** – in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, **-(e)dest** – in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, **-(e)don** – in the plural.

In the Middle English period, a further change of the verbal paradigm of the present, the divergence of strong and weak verbs, mostly reduced to the method of forming the past tense forms; in the conjugation of the present these divergences were not so significant. Phonetic vowel weakening of the verb endings was traced from the XI-XII centuries, and it was expressed by the letter **e** in writing, and phonetically, probably, it became the neutral vowel /ə/. This general weakening brought together the paradigm of strong and weak verbs in the present. Small differences in the conjugation of Old English second class weak verbs retained for some period in the South, but mostly the present tense forms coincided in all types except the preterite-present verbs.

Clear dialectal differences are found in the Middle English in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural forms. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verbs had the ending **-eth** in central and southern dialects and **-es** in the northern dialect: thus, central and southern dialects had the forms *bindeth*, *telleth*, but the northern one had the forms *bindes*, *telles*. Plural forms were different in three dialects: for the northern dialect it was **-es**, for the central one **-en**, for the southern **-eth**.

At the end of the XIV century and, of course, in the XV century the final sound /n/ was not stable and disappeared in many forms. The vowel **-e** dropped as all final unstressed vowel sounds /ə/ after final disappearing of the formant **-n** in the ending **-en**, and thus the plural form acquired its current state, i.e. the zero ending. Before that time the ending **-e** had dropped in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular form and in the Subjunctive Mood; the general stem without any formants that could express the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and plural of the Indicative Mood, and the Subjunctive Mood appeared. Verbs essentially had almost lost the ability to convey the meaning of person; this function becomes lexico-syntactical, because the person was expressed by the subject – a noun or pronoun. Only the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form preserved the morphological function of expressing the meaning of person but it also had important changes: in the XV-XVI century the ending **-es** was used alongside with the endings **-eth**. The origin of this ending is unclear. Why did the ending of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person penetrate into the national language? There is a hypothesis that the analogy with the verb *is* played the main role there; it is acceptable, especially because at that time there were passive forms, and continuous forms were developing. Thus the paradigm of the verb "to be" had been already widely used in the forms of simple predicate. Probably these both facts are the source for the form with **-s**.

For some time, both forms with the endings **-eth** and **-es** could be found in one and the same text, as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: *Who hath relieved you? Bernardo has my place* (9). During the XVIII century the ending **-eth** disappeared completely and was occasionally used in poetry as the rhythm required. The 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular form disappeared simultaneously with the pronoun *thou* in the XVII century.

Thus, the category of person almost completely disappeared in the non-analytic forms of the present paradigm. In some modern dialects the ending **-es** penetrated into the 1<sup>st</sup> person form (*I says*, *I goes*); the form with the ending **-es** (the 2<sup>nd</sup> person is often kept in the dialects) denoting the singular form was opposed to the plural form. Unification of present tense paradigm destroyed the difference in this tense form between the former strong and weak verbs. However, the distinction was preserved in the past tense.

In Middle English the formation of strong verbs had substantial changes. It broke the relative harmony of strong classes, and at the same time it was a step to a modern system of three stems. In connection with the general line of development - the intention of unification of various types and simplification of paradigm - many verbs became of the weak type in Middle English.

There were also major changes in the past tense verbs which retained alternation. Singular past tense paradigm was unified. Instead of vowel alternation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes (1. *wrāt*, 2. *write*, 3. *wrāt*, plural *writon*) all singular forms had the same 2-class vowel. Therefore person wasn't distinguished even in that form: the singular *wrōt*, the plural *written*.

Thus, the following verb conjugation indicators can be distinguished in Middle English:

1. Present tense markers are the following: **-e** (*write*) in the 1<sup>st</sup> person and **-est** (*writest*) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person. Plural forms were different in three dialects: **-es** - in the northern dialect, **-en** - in the central and **-eth** - in the southern dialects. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular had the endings **-es** and **-eth**.

2. The category of person disappeared in the past tense.

3. The category of person almost disappeared in the non-analytic form present tense paradigm.

In the XVI-XVII centuries, the difference between the singular and plural forms in the past tense disappeared at the beginning of Modern English period. That time was a period of variant forms because both forms *wrote* and *writ*, *band* and *bound* were used. Classes of strong verbs finally were ousted. It should be noted

that since the XVII century the change of strong verbs into weak ones lost its intensity and almost stopped. Unification of two past tense forms led to a very important consequence in the verb system paradigm: the past tense conjugation completely lost the person and number categories.

So, the conjugation was simplified at the beginning of Modern English period and almost lost the person and number categories in the present tense, only the ending **-est** was preserved in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, and the number and person categories in the past tense completely disappeared as the conjugation was lost.

Person and number are weakly expressed in Modern English. Most researchers believe that the English verb has person and number distinctions although they understand the number expression differently. So, A.I. Smirnitkiy, comparing English noun and verb numbers, wrote: "plural verb form does not imply any differences in the action as the plural process, i.e. it does not refer the notion to several processes. It just shows that this process belongs to the plural subject. Thus, the verb number only serves to express the connection between words, and it does not express the singularity or plurality of the process denoted by this form" (cit. 10).

I.P. Ivanova points out that the English verb has no number and person categories. She writes "... the ending **-s** doesn't express the number because there is a form denoting singularity without **-s** – it is the 1<sup>st</sup> person form where a pronoun denotes the person (cit. 10).

Nevertheless, according to the others English verb has number category that is expressed by the opposition of the form with **-s** to the zero form, i.e. the opposition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form in the present tense with the ending **-(e)s** and the plural form, except the verb *to be*.

More clearly the verb number is displayed in the present tense conjugation of the verb *to be* where the forms *am* for the 1<sup>st</sup> and *is* for 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and *are* for the plural are distinguished, and only the coincidence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and plural pronouns require the context. The verb *to be* expresses the category of number also in the past tense differentiating the singular form - *was* and the plural form – *were*.

As mentioned above, all the other verbs have only one form expressing the meaning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. Morphological paradigm is quite asymmetric: the ending **-s** doesn't convey the category of number alone because there is a form denoting singularity and without **-s**, as well as it does not express the category of person alone, because the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural has no this ending. Paradigmatically the verb form with **-s** is isolated. However, it is clearly opposed to the subject: *the train stop-s* – *the train-s stop*. Morphologically isolated form is syntactically integrated.

As for the future tense paradigm it has no morphological means for expressing number but only person: *shall* – for the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and plural, *will* - for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, though there is a tendency to use *will* with the 1<sup>st</sup> person as well.

The verb quantity can also be expressed by the verbs with momentary and repeated action meaning. The lexical and morphological means are distinguished in this sphere. Momentary action is expressed in the verbs: *to glance*, *to click*, *to shoot*, *to cast* etc. The suffixes **-er** and **-le** are distinguished in the formation of repeated verbs: *to flutter*, *to chatter*, *to tremble*, *to shudder*, *to shuffle* etc.

Hence, in contrast to Old English, Modern English has few morphological means to express grammatical meanings but more hidden notional features. Number and gender have purely formal and notional manifestations. It influenced the English verbal sentence that has VSO strict order. English verb number is syntactically dependent. Verb number manifestation is clearly seen only in the verb "to be" and the present 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular ending **-s** opposed to all the other forms. As den Dikken notes there is a considerable imbalance between, on the one hand, cases in which the subject is plural and the finite verb is singular (Spl – Vs), which can be found with relative ease in English, and, on the other hand, situations in which a singular subject shows up together with a plural finite verb (Ss – Vpl) which are quite rare (11). Sometimes it is connected with "agreement attraction" effects when finite verb agreement is attracted to some element other than the subject of non phrase itself. It's possible only with number. Grammatical number is a powerful force in attraction. There is a major split in the number system between grammatical singulars and grammatical plurals: the latter lead to attraction quite frequently. Veyhman points out that it is the spoken language tendency or American English influence, for example when collectives like *committee* and *team* are concerned. These nouns agree both with the singular and plural verbs now: *The committee meet/ meets tomorrow*. As for the constructions with *there* its pragmatic properties are involved (12). All above-mentioned aside, singular subjects strongly tend to combine with a singular finite verb (Ss – Vs) and plural subjects strongly tend to combine with a plural finite verb (Spl – Vpl).

The Arabic verb has the grammatical forms of aspect, tense, voice, person, number, gender and mood.

There are three verb persons, expressed with the help of affixes, and three verb numbers: singular, dual and plural. The 1<sup>st</sup> person has no dual, the singular and plural only, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person dual has one form for masculine and feminine (13). The verb number is clearly expressed in the past and present tenses of the indicative mood – they are the main forms of the verb. All the other grammatical forms are connected with them.

Firstly, in Standard Arabic, the past tense of the verb is the central one that is formed by adding the suffixes. It can be traced in the following conjugation of the verb [kataba] "to write" in the past:

| person          | gender    | singular       | dual              | plural            |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | masculine | <b>katabtu</b> | -                 | <b>katabnaa</b>   |
|                 | feminine  | <b>katabta</b> |                   | <b>katabtum</b>   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | masculine | <b>katabti</b> | <b>katabtumaa</b> | <b>katabtunna</b> |
|                 | feminine  | <b>kataba</b>  | <b>katabaa</b>    | <b>katabuu</b>    |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | masculine | <b>katabat</b> | <b>katabataa</b>  | <b>katabna</b>    |
|                 | feminine  |                |                   |                   |

The past tense of the verb [kataba] in its 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular form is considered to be the basic form that adds the suffixes.

The indicators of person, number and gender are interwoven in the singular and marked as follows: the 1<sup>st</sup> person has the suffix **-tu** without differentiating gender, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine has the suffix **-ta**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine has the suffix **-ti**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine is not marked, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine is **-t**-suffixed.

The indicators in the dual are the same for all forms: it is the suffix **-aa**. The suffixes **-ta** and **-t** are the gender markers. The dual suffix **-aa** is added either to the singular form as in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person: [kataba] “he wrote” - [katabaa] “they wrote (masculine dual)” and [katabat] “she wrote” - [katabataa] “they wrote (feminine dual)”, or to the plural form as in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person: [katabatum] “they wrote (masculine plural)” – [katabatumaa] “they wrote (masculine and feminine dual)”.

Some linguists (D.Astrauskaite, A.Steponavicivis) think that the dual number is a subdivision of the plural, hence, it can not be considered equal to the singular and plural. They think that the dual and plural forms are in synonymic relations to each other. The same can not be said about the singular and dual number (cited in 10)

The indicators in the plural are different: the 1<sup>st</sup> person is the suffix **-naa**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine has the suffix **-tum**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine has the suffix **-tunna**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine has the suffix **-uu**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine has the suffix **-na**.

The person indicators are so clear in the Arabic verb and the use of pronouns is excessive though possible to stress the person. In this light, the sentences: [nahnu katabnaa arrisaalata] and [katabnaa arrisaalata] have the same meanings “we wrote the letter”. As for the English verbs, for example, its person indicators were lost in the middle period of the historical development of the English language.

One of the peculiarities of the Arabic verbal sentence is dominant VSO order. In a way it contradicts Greenberg’s linguistic universal number 32 that claims “Whenever the verb agrees with a nominal subject or nominal object in gender, it also agrees in number” and universal number 33 “When number agreement between the noun and verb is suspended and the rule is based on order, the case is always one in which the verb precedes and the verb is in the singular” (14). The Arabic predicate in VSO order agrees in gender, but not in number. The verb is always in the singular be the subject in the dual or plural, but number agreement between the noun and verb is not suspended. In such case the verb agrees with the subject in person and gender: [zahaba a-tullaab ila al-djaami’a] – The students went to the university.

The verb [zahaba] “went” is in the third person, masculine, singular form, the subject [a-tullaab] “students” is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine, plural noun (Vs - Spl): [zahaba a-taalibaani ila al-djaami’a] – Two students went to the university.

The verb [zahaba] “went” is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine, singular form, the subject [a-taalibaani] “two students” is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine, dual form (Vs - Sd).

In this case the subject agrees with the predicate only in person and gender.

As in Greenberg’s linguistic universal number 6 “All languages with dominant VSO order have SVO as an alternative or as the only alternative basic order” the Arabic language has SVO as the only alternative basic order and the verb in such case displays full person-number-gender agreement with the subject: [zahaba a-tullaab ila al-djaami’a ua raau al-ustaaza] – The students went to the university and saw the teacher. The second verb [raau] fully agrees with the noun [a-tullaab] “students”, they are the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine, plural forms (Vs – Spl - Vpl).

The other peculiarity of the Arabic verbal sentence is the fact that all above-mentioned rules work only with the Human plurals. Non-human singular nouns display full person-number-gender agreement with the verbs, Non-human plural nouns agree only with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular verbs in a clause both with SVO or VSO:

[taqa’u al-hadiiqa fii markazi al-madiina] “The garden is situated in the centre of the city”. The verb [taqa’u] is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular verb, the subject [al-hadiiqa] is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular noun (Vs/f – Ss/f).

[taqa’u al-hadiiqataani fii markazi al-madiina] “Two gardens are situated in the centre of the city”. The verb [taqa’u] is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular verb, the subject [al-hadiiqataani] is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine dual noun (Vs/f – Sd/f).

[taqa’u al-hadaaiqu fii markazi al-madiina] “The gardens are situated in the centre of the city”. The verb [taqa’u] is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular verb, the subject [al-hadaaiqu] is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine plural noun (Vs/f – Spl/f).

The verb in the present form has the following markers: prefixes indicate the person and gender, suffixes – number and gender. The conjugation of the verb [kataba] “to write” in the present is as follows:

| person          | gender                | singular          | dual              | plural            |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | masculine<br>feminine | <b>aktubu</b>     | -                 | <b>naktubu</b>    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | masculine             | <b>taktubu</b>    | <b>taktubaani</b> | <b>taktubuuna</b> |
|                 | feminine              | <b>taktubiina</b> |                   | <b>takyubna</b>   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | masculine             | <b>jaktubu</b>    | <b>taktubaani</b> | <b>jaktubuuna</b> |
|                 | feminine              | <b>taktubu</b>    |                   | <b>jaktubna</b>   |

So, there are the following indicators of verb person, gender and number in the singular: the 1<sup>st</sup> person has the prefix **a-** without differentiating gender, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine has the prefix **ta-**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine has the prefix **ta-** and the suffix **-iina**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine has the prefix **ja-**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine has the prefix **ta-**. The indicators in the dual are as follows: the 2<sup>nd</sup> person has the prefix **ta-** and the suffix **-aani** without differentiating gender, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine has the prefix **ja-** and the suffix **-aani**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine has the prefix **ta-** and the suffix **-aani**. The indicators in the plural are as follows: the 1<sup>st</sup> person has the prefix **na-**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine has the prefix **ta-** and the suffix **-uuna**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine has the prefix **ta-** and the suffix **-na**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine has the prefix **ja-** and the suffix **-uuna**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine has the prefix **ja-** and the suffix **-na**.

Hence, the certain morphological means of expressing verb number in Arabic can be traced. The singular is not marked both in the past and present. The dual markers are the suffix **-aa** in the past and the suffix **-aani** in the present. As for the plural markers they are different: the general suffix **-uu** in the past and present.

The imperative mood of the Arabic verb has only two persons and only affirmative forms:

| person          | gender    | singular       | dual           | plural         |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | masculine | <i>ijlis</i>   | <i>ijlisaa</i> | <i>ijlisuu</i> |
|                 | feminine  | <i>ijlisii</i> |                | <i>ijlisna</i> |

The number markers of the imperative are as follows: masculine singular is not marked, feminine singular has the suffix **-ii**, the dual has the suffix **-aa**, masculine plural is indicated by **-uu**, feminine plural is marked by the suffix **-na**.

So, the morphological means of expressing Arabic verb number can be reduced to the following: the singular is not marked either in the past or present, the indicators of the dual are the suffix **-aa** in the past and **-aani** in the present, the plural is expressed with the help of different suffixes: the common be the suffix **-uu** both in the past and present.

#### 4. Conclusion

The verb number involves different aspects of natural languages: syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics, the letter is not touched upon in this work. This category can also be treated by making lexical or morphological stipulations of one sort or another in some languages that is systematically found in their grammars. English verb number has been almost lost in the course of time and only few morphological number markers are left. So, the hidden notional features are displayed in so-called "agreement attraction", the cases of imbalance in subject-predicate and collective-verb agreement. Arabic verbs display full person-number-gender agreement with the subject, as well as partial person-gender agreement depending on the sentence word order and subject's belonging to the category of Human or non-Human nouns. The person indicators are very clear in Arabic, the use of pronouns is excessive though possible. As for the English person verb indicators they were lost in the middle period of the historical development of the English language. All above-mentioned proves the hypothesis that richer morphology reduces notional effects during agreement production, both within and across languages supporting the implicative universal that the more morphological means the language has the less hidden notional features it displays and on the contrary the less morphological means the language has the more hidden notional features it displays. It is shown in the following table:

|                                     | English  | Arabic  |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>morphological number markers</b> | A lot in Old English.<br>In Modern English the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular has <b>-s</b> in the present, the plural is not marked. | The singular is not marked. The dual: <b>-aa</b> in the past, <b>-aani</b> in the present, the plural is expressed with the help of different suffixes: the common is the suffix <b>-uu</b> |
| <b>sentence word order</b>          | SVO  | VSO<br>SVO  |
| <b>agreement</b>                    | Ss – Vs<br>Spl – Vpl<br>Ss – Vpl<br>Spl – Vs   | Human subject:<br>Vs – Spl<br>Vs – Sd<br>Spl – Vpl<br>Non-Human subject:<br>Vs/f – Ss/f<br>Vs/f – Sd/f<br>Vs/f – Spl/f  |

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