



Maria Persson

I am a lecturer of Arabic and a scholar of Semitic languages with focus on linguistic studies. I have taught several years at Swedish universities. However, a large part of my more recent teaching experience (2002-2010) comes from working as a senior lecturer and head of the department for Modern Standard Arabic at a language school in the UAE and Oman. I have stayed closely connected with Swedish universities also while living abroad, in addition to actively taking part in international conferences and creating a network of contacts with research colleagues internationally. I have been continuously employed by Lund University since 2005; as a part-time researcher in linguistics (2005-2011) and, as of January 2012, as a full-time senior lecturer of Arabic and assistant director of studies. During the academic year of 2010-2011, I worked as a senior lecturer of Arabic at Uppsala University.

I have recently completed two research projects, one in Lund and one in Uppsala. In both of these I have worked within the field of Arabic dialectology. Most of my research, both in dialectological studies and in other areas of research in Semitics, is corpus based and lies within the realm of typological syntactic studies.

Scientific profile and research

My scientific profile is within Arabic linguistics and most of my research has been conducted within the realm of typology and functional grammar. Whereas my PhD thesis explored areas of morphology, semantics and syntax in Modern Standard Arabic, my focus for several years now has been Arabic dialectology, particularly Syrian and Gulf Arabic dialects.

Semitic research covers a range of scientific disciplines. While aiming for depth in my research, I have also been careful to maintain a broad competence within my field. Apart from my core activities in linguistics, I have also conducted minor projects within the fields of literary, cultural and theological research related to Arabic and the Arab world as well as studies in translation theory and didactics.

- Arabic dialectology

My main object of study during the past years has been Gulf Arabic dialects defined as the varieties of Arabic that are spoken in southern Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, eastern Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The chief focus has been on the dialects of Oman and the UAE.

A general and rather comprehensive survey of the verbal system of these dialects was conducted within a long term project (VEGA) funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (<http://www.rj.se/1/211/var/fundID/383>). A large and comprehensive database of authentic speech was collected from local informants and analyzed as to the use of finite and infinite verb forms and the relationship between sentence type and choice of verb form. In particular the dialect group's methods for expressing tense/mode/aspect (TMA) distinctions were examined. Among the important results of the study was the discovery that the Gulf Arabic b-prefix, formerly assumed to be a future marker, is, in fact a more general marker for irrealis. (Persson 2008). Analyses of the data also showed that past habitual is expressed by way of a shift of verb forms that is known also from classical forms of Arabic. This clearly indicated that the introduction of auxiliary verbs, that has been observed in other, well studied Arabic dialects, such as the Levantine and Egyptian dialects, has not happened to any comparable extent in Gulf Arabic. On the other hand, asyndetic verb combining was shown to be fairly common in the dialect and a possible future source for auxiliaries and other verbal modifiers. The need for documentation of these dialects is immense and the collected corpus constitutes a valuable tool for continued research on Gulf Arabic. Besides furthering functional typological study on tense, aspect and mode marking in Arabic dialects, VEGA contributed to general linguistic research within language typology. The results of the study have increased our understanding of Gulf Arabic grammar, particularly verb syntax, thus creating material for comparative Arabic dialectological studies, but they have also enhanced our knowledge of language universal processes of grammaticalization for tense/mode/aspect.

The project "Circumstantial Qualifiers in Semitic", funded by the Swedish Research Council, (<http://vrproj.vr.se/detail.asp?arendeid=42903>) covered several forms of Arabic as well as classical Hebrew. My focus within the project was on Gulf Arabic dialects and my contribution to the project publication (Isaksson et. al. 2009) comprised an overview of the various syntactic forms that circumstantial qualifiers assume in Gulf Arabic and the syntactic relation between these qualifiers and their

head clauses. Furthermore, I described the semantic content and function of these qualifiers. The project stemmed from an awareness of the need for rethinking and redefining the concept of circumstantial qualifiers in Semitic languages within the context of general linguistic studies. Circumstantial clauses in Arabic have mainly been associated with actions and events that are simultaneous with the actions and events in their head clauses. The project showed that this is only one of several uses and functions that these qualifiers assume. I found that the relationship between head (clause) and circumstantial clause in my Gulf Arabic data is either descriptive (describing the time, place, manner etc of the head action or event) or logical (providing information on the conditions, result, reason etc of the head action or event). The study also showed that circumstantial clauses in Gulf Arabic is an area of rather extensive processes of grammaticalization and vague syntactic marking that, together, produce frequent cases of ambiguity. In connection with this project, I expanded on the form and function of circumstantial clauses in Arabic in general in an article in Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online (2011).

My study of clause junctures that express various types of circumstantial qualification was continued within the realm of an expanded project, Circumstantial Clause Combining in Semitic (<http://vrproj.vr.se/detail.asp?arendeid=67991>), also funded by the Swedish Research Council. My focus in this project was on the Syrian Arabic dialect, and specifically the dialect of Damascus. One of the conclusions of the project, that comprises all major varieties of Semitic languages, is that verb form switch in Arabic and Hebrew is often used as the sole marker of hypotax. For my Syrian Arabic data, I was able to show that so called circumstantial clauses do not constitute a separate category or type of clauses but, rather, are part of an overarching system for marking hypotax. Non-main clause status of clauses with varying semantic values is signalled by a range of marking devices whereof verb form switch is one. On the other hand, the specific semantic value of the clause; whether it in traditional terms is a relative clause, a circumstantial clause, a conditional clause etc., is often not morphologically marked but interpreted from context. (Persson, forthcoming a).

- Doctoral thesis – syntax and semantics in modern Arabic prose

My doctoral dissertation (Persson 2002) comprised a survey of the relationship between the semantics of main clause predicates and the choice of finite or infinite verb forms in direct object complement clauses in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The study was corpus based and conducted within the realm of typological methodology and functional linguistic theory. Eight types of object complement clauses were found in the MSA data; four of these were finite, two participial and two were (infinite) masdar clauses. The analysis of the data showed how different clause types in MSA are connected with specific semantic surroundings. Main clause predicates conveying a sense of manipulation, cognition or utterance were surveyed. A majority of the main clause predicates clearly and solely belonged to one of these three semantic classes. I was also able to show, however that the semantics of some of the main clause predicates varied according to the choice of complement clause. The method developed for the dissertation and the experience in corpus linguistics gained from this work created a firm foundation for my later research, especially my surveys of verb forms and verbal syntax, in Arabic dialectology.

Didactic profile and experience

I have always been comfortable in my role as a teacher. My aim is to provide the students with a safe environment and strengthen their self-confidence while also encouraging them to stretch beyond their perceived limits and excel. Years of being part of an ambitious and innovative team of teachers has meant a considerable degree of responsibility. I have become acquainted with various methods of learning, taken part in continuous teacher training, and been inspired to try new paths in my teaching. This has given me a rich and broad teaching experience and prepared me to handle a large variety of teaching situations.

My teaching experience in Arabic (1994-2012) is rich and varied. I have taught full-time and intensive courses at universities and language schools as well as evening classes; both private tutorials and large classes. The levels of language learning have ranged from complete beginners to advanced classes and post-doctoral students in linguistics and Arabic studies, and the students' origin have varied from homogenous groups of Swedes to mixed classes of international students from all continents. I have, in other words, taught everything from the alphabet to literary analysis of poetry, both grammar and practical, oral and written, language skills. I have recently lived for seven years in the UAE and Oman where I was the senior lecturer and head of the department of Modern Standard Arabic at Gulf Arabic Programme (www.gapschool.net). My total teaching experience in Arabic comprises over five thousand hours and my formal training in didactics comprises fifteen weeks. My personal interest in didactics ensures that I will continue to take part in educational opportunities in this field.

As a teacher, I perceive my main task to be to provide the student with optimal conditions for achieving knowledge and skills. My teaching is learner oriented, i.e. my focus is on the student's learning process and active language skills; results are not measured in how much material I have covered but in how much the student has internalised and is able to actually apply. I perceive my role as more of a coach than a lecturer. Instead of giving a direct answer to a question, I try to answer back with another question or an example that puts the student on the track to find the right answer. My goal is to provide the students with the tools they need to use and develop their language by themselves. Experience has taught me that struggling with a question rather than receiving an immediate answer often leads to more lasting knowledge as well as a feeling of self-confidence.

At various stages of my teaching career I have worked on course development and the creation of teaching material. During the academic year of 95/96, while teaching at Lund University, I used a Swedish children's book in Arabic translation as my course material. I developed grammatical comments, word-list and exercises to go with the text. In short, I transformed the children's book into a course book for teaching Arabic grammar and vocabulary. Due to its focus on practical language proficiency, my much more recent teaching experience at Uppsala University, similarly, inspired me to produce a rich array of teaching material of my own such as laminated pictures, memory cards, flash cards, restaurant menus, charts, maps etc. to use in role play and dialogues and I have continued to build this tool bank after moving to Lund.

For a more comprehensive description of my philosophy of teaching in theory and practice the reader is referred to my Teaching Portfolio.

Leadership profile and administrative experience

I have often been appointed a leader in formal and informal settings. My latest long-term task in leadership and administration was to head the department of Modern Standard Arabic at the Gulf Arabic Programme in Oman. Upon returning to Lund I was appointed assistant director of studies for Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew and Middle Eastern studies.

As a person I am naturally task-oriented; driven and ambitious. I want to see growth and development wherever I am. Since real growth comes from within I believe in working with people in a team-based structure where everyone contributes with his or her skills and profile to joint projects of change and improvement. I am diligent and I never leave a task before I am satisfied with the results. I expect similar involvement from my co-workers and encourage people around me to do their best. I am ready to deal with conflicts, should such appear, and I work to find constructive solutions to day-to-day issues. Co-workers have expressed appreciation for my involvement and enthusiasm, as well as my reliability and the sense of trust and security that this imparts in them. I am not, anymore, a student counsellor, but students anyway seek me up to talk about their studies and any problems they are facing. They recognize my involvement in their personal development when I teach, paired with my work for the progress of the department. Several times, students have left my office expressing a sense of having been seen and heard. Job satisfaction to me is to see that both students and staff enjoy their work and to know that I have been a part of making it happen.

Being the head of a department at the Gulf Arabic Programme (2002-2010) meant both the responsibility and the privilege of designing the Modern Standard Arabic programme and taking part in hiring and training co-workers. In my role as senior teacher, I was independently responsible for planning and supervising the higher levels of Arabic. This included administering tailored courses for university students at BA and PhD level from various European countries wishing to further enhance their language proficiency. One of my tasks was to set up and facilitate a one year study programme for BA students in cooperation with the University of Southern Denmark, Odense who sent a group of students to Oman for their year of Arabic immersion studies. My responsibilities ranged from planning the course, creating the curriculum, and finding and training the teachers to assuring that the testing procedures were done according to Danish university standards and requirements.

In my present role as assistant director of studies it is my task to ensure that the teaching load is distributed on the teachers in ways that allow each teacher to excel in his or her teaching and that schedules are laid in ways that promote a good work situation for both students and teachers. I am responsible for good management of finances and adhering to the allotted budget. I initiate and supervise course development and the on-going revision of course descriptions and curricula and I collect and analyse course evaluations. I also function as a link between teachers and students on one hand, and between teachers and the acting head of the department on the other hand. Immediately upon my appointment, I started work on a re-modelling of the BA program for Arabic and Middle Eastern studies. The new course model will run as a pilot project in 2013 and, subsequently, be further revised. For more details on this and other course-administrative projects, see my Teaching Portfolio.

Degrees and qualifications

Education

A. Degrees

- Doctor of Philosophy in Semitic languages 2002
- Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française 1er degré, Centre d'Examen de Damas, Ministère de l'éducation nationale, République Française. 1998
- Bachelor of Arts in Modern Standard Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Middle Eastern Studies and Translational Theory, 1994
- Upper-secondary (High school) degree with specialisation in languages and humanities 1989

B. Didactic training

- Att handleda uppsatser (Supervision of essay writing), Centre for Educational Development, Lund University, 2012
- Teacher Training Course, Division for Development of Teaching and Learning, Uppsala University, 2010/11
- Rösten som arbetsredskap (Voice as a Tool at Work), Division for Development of Teaching and Learning, Uppsala University, 28/9 2010
- Suggestopaedic teaching methods/French course, Lund University, 1995/96
- Communication course for PhD candidates, Lund University, 1995
- University Didactics, Lund University, 1995

C. Other training

- Introduction to Endnote, Division for Development of Teaching and Learning, Uppsala University, 24/9 2010
- Elementary Law for interpreters (Arabic), Katrineberg och Härnösand Folkhögskolor, 2005
- Interpretation in the medical field (Arabic), Studieförbundet, Lund. 2001
- Stage de perfectionnement en langue arabe pour la recherche, Institut Français d'Études Arabes de Damas, Syria. 1996-97
- Russian, introduction course, Lund University, 1994
- Interpretation in the fields of social security and insurance (Arabic), Axevalla Folkhögskola, 1993
- Introduction course for interpreters, Axevalla Folkhögskola. 1993

Relevant positions and rewards

A. Language teaching, research and translation

Senior lecturer of Arabic (Lund University), 100%, whereof 20% research	12-01-01 – onwards
Senior lecturer of Arabic, Researcher (Uppsala University), 80% (corresponding leave of absence from Lund Univ.)	10-08-01 – 12-07-31
Researcher (Uppsala University), 20-25%	07-01-01 – 10-07-31
Researcher (Lund University), 20-25%	06-01-01 – 11-12-31
Lecturer of Arabic (Lund University), 25%	05-09-01 – 05-12-31
Senior lecturer of Arabic, Teacher trainer, Head of dept	

(Gulf Arabic Programme, UAE and Oman)	02-09-20 – 10-06-31
Position as PhD candidate including teaching and administrative tasks. (Lund University)	95-01-01 – 02-09-30
Teacher of Arabic (Lund University)	94-09-01 – 94-12-31
Translator (Kristianstad County Council)	93-09-01 – 94-12-31

B. Administration

Assistant director of studies, Lund University	12-06-01 – onwards
Secretary and coordinator of “The 5 th Conference on Christian Arabic Studies” (Lund University)	95-01-01 – 96-09-14
Administrative assistant (Lund University)	94-02-01 – 94-12-31
Student counsellor (Lund University)	94-02-01 – 94-12-31

C. Research projects

- a) *VEGA*, funded by The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. <http://www.rj.se/1/211/var/fundID/383> (finished)
- b) *Circumstantial Qualifiers in Semitic*, funded by the Swedish Research Council. <http://vrproj.vr.se/detail.asp?arendeid=42903> (finished)
- c) *Circumstantial clause combining in Semitic*, funded by the Swedish Research Council. <http://vrproj.vr.se/detail.asp?arendeid=67991> (results forthcoming)

D. Awards: Kockska priset för framstående doktorsavhandling, (The ”Kockska priset” award for an outstanding PhD thesis) The New Society of Letters at Lund, 29 nov 2002.

E. Scholarships: The Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation 1996/96

F. Periods as visiting researcher: Institut Français d’Études Arabes de Damas (now IFPO), Damascus, Syria 1997/98

Published works; academic and popular lectures

A. Articles, published works

- Persson, Maria. forthcoming a. "Circumstantial clause combining and verb form switch in Syrian Arabic," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Clause Linking in Semitic*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, edited by B Isaksson and M Persson, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz
- Persson, Maria. forthcoming b. "Verb form switch as a marker of clausal hierarchies in Gulf Arabic dialects," in *Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium on Arabic Linguistics*, edited by S. Boudelaa, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Persson, Maria. forthcoming c. "Asyndetic clause combining in Gulf Arabic dialects. Auxiliary, adverbial and discourse functions." *Journal of Arabic Linguistics*.
- Eades, Domenyk, and Maria Persson. forthcoming. "Aktionsart, word form and context: On the use of the active participle in Gulf Arabic dialects." *Journal of Semitic Languages*.
- Persson, Maria. 2011. "Circumstantial Clause," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online*. ed. by Lutz Edzard and Rudolf de Jong. Leiden, Boston: Brill
- Persson, Maria. 2009. "Circumstantial qualifiers in Gulf Arabic dialects," in Isaksson, Bo; Kammensjö, Heléne and Persson Maria. 2009. *Circumstantial qualifiers in Semitic: The case of Arabic and Hebrew*. ed. Bo Isaksson. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp 206-289.
- Persson, Maria. 2008. "The Role of the *b*-prefix in Gulf Arabic dialects as a marker of future, intent and/or irrealis" in *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* vol. 8/4, 26-52 (2008). http://www.uib.no/jais/docs/vol8/v8_4_Persson_26_52.pdf
- Persson, Maria. 2002. *Sentential Object Complements in Modern Standard Arabic*. Studia Orientalia Lundensia. Nova Series. Vol II, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Persson, Maria. 1999. "Semantic Considerations in the Syntactic Structures of Complement Clauses in Modern Literary Arabic", in Yasir Suleiman (ed.) 1999. *Arabic Grammar and Linguistics*, London: Curzon, pp 182-202.

B. Research papers

1. Pärland av verb i syrisk arabisk dialekt: form, funktion och förutsättningar. (Chains of verbs in Syrian Arabic: form, function and footing.) *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 8-10/8 2012.
2. Circumstantial Clause Combining and Gram Switch in Syrian Arabic, *International Symposium on Clause Linking in Semitic Languages*, A Marcus Wallenberg Symposium, Kivik, Sweden, 5-7/8 2012.
3. "Verbformsväxling som markör för satshierarkier i gulfarabisk och syrisk dialekt" (Verb form switch as a marker of clause hierarchy in Gulf Arabic and Syrian Arabic dialect). *Grammatik i Fokus*, Lund University, 9-10/2 2012.
4. "The use of verb form variation and verb form switch in Gulf Arabic dialects." *5th International Symposium on Arabic Linguistics*, Al-Ain University, UAE, 20-21/11, 2011.

5. "Crossing borders and terminological boulders. A cross linguistic approach to verb combinations in Arabic dialects." *Forskarseminarium i arabiska*, Gothenburg University, 22/3 2011.
6. "Semantic and syntactic considerations in asyndetic circumstantial clause combining in Damascene Arabic." *Workshop on Circumstantial Clause Combining in Semitic Languages*. Uppsala University, 17-18/3 2011.
7. "Aktionsart, ordform och kontext. Om bruket av aktiva particip i gulfarabisk dialekt." *Grammatik i fokus*, Lund University, 10-11/2 2011.
8. "Asyndetisk satsfogning i gränslandet mellan omständighetssatser, hjälpverb och Parallellism." *Semitiska seminariet*, Uppsala University, 7/12 2010.
9. "Det aktiva participet i stadsdialekter och landsortsdialekter på den arabiska halvön - en jämförande studie." *Forskarseminariet i Semitiska språk*, Lund University, 25/11 2010.
10. "Asyndetisk satsfogning och verbserier i gulfarabisk och syrisk arabisk dialekt" *Forskarseminariet i Allmän språkvetenskap*, Lund University, 25/11 2010.
11. "Omvända omständighetssatser i syrisk arabisk dialekt, en stilfråga?" (Inverted circumstantial clauses in Syrian Arabic dialect – a matter of style?) *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 10-13/8 2010.
12. "A Comparative Study of the Active Participle in Rural and Urban Dialects of the Gulf Region" joint paper with Dr. Domenyk Eades presented at the 2nd *International Conference*, Dept. of English, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, 10-12/3 2010.
13. "Circumstantial Qualifiers in Gulf Arabic Dialects" *Linguistics in the Gulf II*, Qatar University, Doha, 11-12/3 2009
14. "Omständighetsbestämningar: Adverbiella uttryck och bakgrundsmarkörer på olika språkliga nivåer i Gulfarabiska dialekter"(Circumstantial qualifiers: Adverbial expressions and background markers at various language levels in Gulf Arabic dialects), *Grammatik i Fokus*, Lund University, 5-6/2 2009
15. "An interesting typological compromise. Report from a corpus based study of modal and aspectual markers in Gulf Arabic dialects". *AIDA 8*, Essex University, Colchester 28-31/8 2008
16. "Progressiv och habituell aspekt i gulfarabiska". (Progressive and habitual aspect in Gulf Arabic). *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 13-16/8 2008.
17. "Det gulfarabiska b-prefixet – en irrealismarkör snarare än markör för futurum/intention"(The Gulf Arabic b-prefix – a marker of irrealis rather than future/intention). *Grammatik i fokus*, Lund University, 7-8/2 2008.

18. "Jag ville jag vore i Arabia land – om några sätt att uttrycka futurum gulfarabisk dialekt" (I wish I were in Arabia – some ways of expressing the future in Gulf Arabic dialect) *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 2-4/8 2006
19. "The use of the Active Participle in Gulf Arabic," *Divisions of Culture and Heritage and of Language and Communication*, United Arab Emirates University, Al-Ain, 18/2 2006
20. "The AP in Gulf Arabic" *Nordic-Arab Research Conference on Arabic Literature and Linguistics*, Alexandria, 13-15/4 2005
21. "Bitter, sweet and salty - a taste of modern literature from the Gulf" *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 6-8/8 2003
22. "Modern standardarabiska - en skvader bland världsspråken"? (Modern Standard Arabic - a centaur among the world's languages?) *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 10-12/8 1999
23. "Meningsfull syntax - om komplementsatser i modern litterär arabiska" (Meaningful syntax - on complement clauses in Modern Literary Arabic) *Grammatik i Fokus*, Lund University, 11-12/2 1999
24. "Al-jumla al-‘arabiyya bayna al-ma‘naa wa-al-tarkiib" (The Arabic clause between meaning and structure) *Arabic department, American University of Beirut*, Beirut, 28/5 1998
25. "Al-jumla al-ma‘dariiya: ma‘naa wa-tarkiib" (The complement clause, meaning and structure) *Institut Français d’Etudes Arabes de Damas*, Damascus, 25/5 1998
26. "Meningsfull syntax - om syntax och semantik i arabiska komplementsatser" (Meaningful syntax - on syntax and semantics in Arabic complement clauses) *Nordiska semitistsymposiet*, Kivik, Sweden, 6-8/8 1997
27. "The Dictionary of Arabic Syntax: Interpreting the Semantics of Syntactic Structures" *Colloquium on Arabic Grammar and Linguistics*, University of Edinburgh, 26-28/8 1996
28. "Semantic Influences on the Syntactic Structure of Complement Clauses in Modern Literary Arabic" *Forskarseminariet i Semitiska språk*, Lund University, 1995
29. Översättning av administrativ text. (Translation of administrative texts) *Dept. of Linguistics*, Lund University, 1994
30. När svenska punkare talar egyptisk dialekt - om översättning till svenska av stilnivåer och nivåväxlingar i arabiska (When Swedish youth speak Egyptian dialect - on translation into Swedish of literary styles and changes of style in Arabic) *Dept. of Linguistics*, Lund University, 1994

C. Popular lectures and articles. Several (in Swedish). List available on request.